

tion. He changes the central pitch of a section with no modulation. Rhythmically he creates variety with differing lengths of rests or of sustained tones at the end of a phrase, and Haydnesque unexpected entrances. Above all, he “orchestrates” with voices, using extremes of ranges, unusual doublings, occasional *Sprechstimme*, *glissandi*, and changing numbers of voice parts. The powerful ending of “Jaanilaul,” the final song of *Jaanilaulud*, has the sopranos divisi a tre, and each of the other voice parts split into two lines, for a total of nine vocal lines, moving in parallel major triads and parallel seconds and thirds.

104 *Piu largo* (♩ = 56) *poco a poco crescendo e piu elastico*

Lää - mi val - lä Jaa - ni kai - ma, jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,
Come out, come out, look at Jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,
Lää - mi val - lä Jaa - ni kai - ma, jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,
Come out, come out, look at Jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,
Lää - mi val - lä Jaa - ni kai - ma, jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,
Come out, come out, look at Jaa - ni, jaa - ni - ka,

This song is one of those most frequently sung by itself, without the six other songs of the cycle from which it comes. Another song which choral conductors have sometimes chosen to program without the two songs which follow it in cycle III (*Shrovetide Songs*) is “Vistel-vastel.”

Less likely to be sung individually are the twenty songs in four cycles for women’s chorus which make up *Nature Pictures*. The exception to this is “Virmalised” [Northern Lights], song number 4 of the cycle *Talvemustrid* [Winter Patterns] which is the longest, by far, of these songs and is often sung by itself.

The first of the four cycles to be composed, *Sügismaastikud* [Autumn Landscapes] became cycle III of the series. It was later adapted by Tormis for mixed chorus. Photo copies of this version, published in Leningrad in 1986, circulated in the West until Fennica Gehrman brought out both the women’s chorus and the mixed chorus versions.

In a 1995 essay about the creation of this work Tormis wrote that he was 33 years old when he was shown the poems of **Viivi Luik**, then 16 or 17. They captivated him “with their direct perception of nature...” He further explained that in 1962 he was able to travel to Budapest for the celebration of **Zoltan Kodály’s** 80th birthday. “The person and the choral music of Kodály exerted a great influence over me,” Tormis wrote. The premiere of the cycle was in 1964, performed by the Women’s Chorus of the Estonian Academy of Sciences under the direction of **Arvo Ratassepp**. Their ninety voices made an extraordinary sound, Tormis told me. That sound, with its special range of dynamics, has not been duplicated in performance.

The entire series of cycles, each concerned with one of the seasons and each by a different

poet, was completed over a span of five years. Cycle I, *Kevadkillud* [Spring Sketches] uses haikus by **Jaan Kaplinski**; II, *Suvemotiivid* [Summer Motifs] sets the poems of **Aleksander Suuman**; III, *Sügismaastikud*, Viivi Luik; and *Talvemustrid* [Winter Patterns], **Andres Ehin**. The styles of the cycles are remarkably similar: tone painting of the poetic images is clear and effective, text setting is syllabic with no melismas, except the occasional sustaining of a vocable through many pitches for special effects. There are few repetitions of words except, again, for special effects such as “virmalised virvendavad” [shimmering northern lights] which is repeated almost throughout song no. 4 of cycle IV. Tormis uses these verbal sounds, pronounced very rapidly, along with chromatic scale passages (very rare in his oeuvre) to create aural northern lights. Other similarities among the songs are their brevity and the prevailing delicacy of their sounds, although they can also be very powerful.

Allegretto ♩ = 112 *ppp sotto voce*

Vir - ma - li - sed... vir - ma - li - sed vir - ven - da - vad...
Bor - e - al - is... bor - e - al - is gim - mer, shim - mer...
Vir - ma - li - sed... vir - ma - li - sed
Bor - e - al - is... bor - e - al - is

To my knowledge, there is no single recording containing all four cycles, although there are at least four CDs of *Autumn Landscapes*, all in the mixed chorus version. (See www.veljotormis.com for an up-to-date discography.) The women of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Chorus recorded the entire series in 1994, but the recordings have not been released. Tormis knows that any CD by this group is heard as definitive and he does not want the definitive recording of *Nature Pictures* done with just a few voices, as wonderful as those voices are. We can hope that Kaljuste puts together the women’s voices of the three professional choruses he has directed, to record this 20th-century masterpiece. ■

END NOTES

1. This article is an adaptation of chapter IX of *Ancient Song Recovered: The Life and Music of Veljo Tormis* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004).
2. This and the following quotations are from Mall Hiie-mäe, “The Estonian Folk Calendar” in *Estonian Customs and Traditions*, Ülo Tedre, ed. (Tallinn: Perioodika, 1995, 3rd edn.) pp. 16, 17, 27.

Ancient Song Recovered: The Life and Music of Veljo Tormis includes chapters on Estonian choral tradition, biography of Tormis and discussion of his major works. Included also is an article by and an interview with Tormis – all of which appear for the first time in English. A works list, discography and CD of sound examples conclude the volume by musicologist and choral conductor **Mimi S. Daitz**.
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