

*Maya Fridman & Artem Belogurov*

# THE FIERY ANGEL

*The Fiery Angel or a True Story in which is related of the Devil, not once but often appearing in the Image of a Spirit of Light to a Maiden and seducing her to Various and Many Sinful Deeds, of Ungodly Practices of Magic, Alchemy, Astrology, the Cabbalistical Sciences and Necromancy, of the Trial of the Said Maiden under Presidency of his Eminence the Archbishop of Trier, as well as of Encounters and Discourses with the Knight and thrice Doctor Agrippa of Nettesheim, and with Doctor Faustus, composed by an Eyewitness.*

*Sergei Prokofiev*

# THE FIERY ANGEL *arr. for cello and piano*

*Maya Fridman & Artem Belogurov*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

*How I first met Renata and how she related to me her Whole Life*

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

*That which was foretold us by the Village Witch and how we were deceived by Mysterious Knockings*

## THE THIRD CHAPTER

*How we studied Magic and conversed with Agrippa of Nettesheim and of my duel with Count Heinrich*

## THE FINAL CHAPTER

*How Renata left me and was condemned to death by the Inquisitor in the Convent of Saint Ulf*

# THE FIRST CHAPTER

*How I first met Renata and how she related to me her Whole Life*

*Ruprecht takes lodgings at an inn where he encounters a beautiful maiden Renata who is possessed by demons.*

*As he saves her, Renata tells him her life story. As a young girl, she had seen a Fiery Angel, Madiel, who befriended her as a child, but who vanished when she developed a passionate desire for him. Later, she met Count Heinrich von Otterheim who she thought was Madiel himself.*

*They lived happily in his castle for a year but then he left her and she has been looking for him ever since. Ruprecht becomes fascinated with Renata. Even though she rejects his love and only wants his help in finding Heinrich, he offers her to continue their journey together.*

# THE SECOND CHAPTER

*That which was foretold us by the Village  
Witch and how we were deceived by  
Mysterious Knockings*

*On their way to Cologne Renata, and Ruprecht stop by the Village Witch who predicts Renata's bloody destiny. Ruprecht is furious while Renata remains silent for the rest of the journey.*

*In Cologne, they frantically look for Heinrich, who is nowhere to be seen. In their room, mysterious knockings are heard on the walls, and both Renata and Ruprecht are excited to expect Heinrich to appear. But as no one comes, Renata falls into a dark depression.*

# THE THIRD CHAPTER

*How we studied Magic and conversed with  
Agrippa of Nettesheim, and of my duel  
with Count Heinrich*

*Ruprecht decides to undertake the study of magic since he sees no other way of helping Renata.*

*A book dealer, Jacob Glock, brings him books on occult sciences and inspires Ruprecht to visit Doctor Agrippa of Nettesheim, a renowned scientist and magician.*

*Upon his return Renata tells him that she has seen Heinrich but he rejected her. Longing for vengeance, she implores Ruprecht to challenge the Count to a duel. But later Renata repents again and tries to prevent Ruprecht from killing her Angel. In the ensuing duel he lets himself be wounded and Renata, distraught, acknowledges her growing love for him.*

# THE FINAL CHAPTER

*How Renata left me and was condemned to death by the Inquisitor in the Convent of Saint Ulf*

*As Ruprecht recovers, Renata rejects him and leaves. This quarrel has been witnessed by Faust and Mephistophills, who invite Ruprecht to join them on their journey to Trier.*

*Renata has fled to the Convent of Saint Ulf to seek atonement. The Mother Superior has called the Inquisitor to enquire of the nature of the angel whom Renata claims to have an aid from.*

*When he arrives, the mysterious knockings are heard and the nuns become affected by the demons. The Inquisitor performs an exorcism but Renata denies her guilt. He condemns her to be burned at the stake for a sinful relationship with the Devil.*

We demand of the poet that he should constantly offer up his "holy sacrifices" not only in his verses, but in every hour of his life, every feeling, in his love, in his hatred, in his achievements, and in his failings. Let the poet create not his books, but his life. Let him keep the altar flame unquenched like the Vestal fire, let him make it burn like a mighty bonfire having no fear that his own life will be consumed within it. On the altar of our divinity we fling ourselves. Only a magician's knife, even as it cuts open the chest, gives one the right to be called a poet.

Valery Bryusov

The story of *The Fiery Angel* is symbolical and at the same time as real as any other creation born in the Silver Age. The way I understand it deeply affected my work on the arrangement. I do not attempt to explain or rationalize my adoration for both Bryusov's and Prokofiev's masterpieces here. My aim is to tell you about my relationship with *The Fiery Angel* and where it brought me. While the last saying may sound presumptuous, the only important thing for me is the music itself which obsessed me with its utmost beauty, madness and love.

The idea of this work came to me in December 2014. A few months before that, I started to play with Artem Belogurov. His genius and charisma prompted me to look for a piece which could develop into an exciting and mystic adventure. I knew what I wanted to find, the depth embracing the light and the dark, a story that could transcend time and language, music itself. Going back to December I was sharing my ideas with my mother, when she spontaneously suggested to arrange Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*. The prospective of working on this piece thrilled me and at the same time seemed impossible.

While working on the first movement, it still felt as an impossible task. Like watching life forming in smoke with its own laws and rules which I had to obey. I felt prisoned in Renata's delirium and lacked clarity. Just as her idea of an Angel was crystallizing in her mind, the music became tangible by itself. It triggered me and I could not stop working until the chapters were finished. Often, I had the impression that as in Renata's case, the radiant image of the Angel was fleeing from my hands. Just like her story this music is a paradox; the essence of which is the union of ecstasy and suffering. Her burning was an act of symbolic death in which she united with the Angel, through the ecstatic destruction of self. This music requires dissolution to exist and faith to surrender. It is the celebration of the Symbolists' idea that the material reality is nothing but a distorted echo of another realm.

Maya Fridman

Early in his American years, Prokofiev found a copy of Bryusov's *The Fiery Angel* in a New York City book shop. At the time, he did not know that it was a roman-a-def and read it chiefly for its descriptions of the Catholic Inquisition and the black arts - subjects that reflected his general interest in the occult. Prokofiev began to think of a scenario, but due to his busy concert schedule he could only give the work his full attention in March 1922, after he moved to the Bavarian village of Ettal, following the advice of Bryusov whom he coincidentally met in Berlin that year. The opera was finished in 1927 and was regarded by the composer as his true masterpiece. Unfortunately, except for a concert version of two scenes from act I, it was never staged during Prokofiev's lifetime.

Arranging an orchestral piece for cello and piano presents the obvious challenge of transmitting orchestral colours and texture to these two instruments. Arranging an operatic work makes the task that much more difficult. Maya made the arrangement with great acumen and care for preserving as much as possible of the original. My only contribution was an occasional reconciliation of her score with keyboard topography and pianists' abilities (in this case my own).

A good portion of the cello part is dedicated to the vocal parts in the opera. What instrument can be better suited to imitating the human voice than the cello - from the self-assured bass of Ruprecht to the possessed and often hysterical Renata? The role of the orchestra is thus mostly in the hands of the pianist. The player's challenge here is to reproduce an incredibly wide range of colours, textures, and the whole gamut of emotions Prokofiev invokes in the opera, without drowning the cello, while preserving clarity.

The decision to use a straight-strung 19th century piano came quite naturally. At that time, pianos had a more transparent and lighter sound, more colour differences between registers, and were quicker to respond to the touch than the concert grands of today. All of these qualities were instrumental in creating the rich and volatile sound world that characterises this music. The Erard piano from 1880 we used for this recording, generously provided by Frits Janmaat of Maison Erard, Amsterdam, is a prime example of such an instrument - to use Frits' words, "a Ferrari among pianos".

*Sebastien Erard was one of the most innovative and important instrument makers in piano history. Many of his improvements and designs are still used in modern pianos.*

*Born in Strasbourg, he moved to Paris at the age of sixteen and quickly made a name for himself as a talented harpsichord and fortepiano builder attracting commissions from royalty. Around the time of the French revolution he relocated to London. He spent the rest of his life traveling between London and Paris, expanding his business and incessantly registering new patents and improving the piano.*

*His instruments inspired young Liszt to write Huit Variations Op. 1 and were highly regarded by Chopin, Faure, Alkan, Beethoven, Haydn, Paderewski, and many others.*

*The piano we are using on this recording was played by Mahler and Diepenbrock, among others.*

*Artem Belogurov*



*Libera me, Domine,*



*de morte aeterna.*

*Very few works inspire such breathtaking sonic fantasies as the Fery Angel by Valery Bryusov, and its operatic adaptation by Sergei Prokofiev. From the deep and dark solemn depressions of Renata, to the blazing passion that drives the story and its characters forward, The Fery Angel is a chronicle with immeasurable contrasts.*

*Maya Fridman's arrangement of the opera could not have done more right to Prokofiev's and Bryusov's names; it captures the story of the novel and tells it by using only two instruments without ever missing a detail or rendering it too compact.*

*Capturing such a colossal spectrum of emotional timbres without losing the natural gradient in between, requires a recording technique able to both capture the brightest whites, the deepest darks, and every colour imaginable in between. At TRIPTH, we strive to preserve the emotional impact of the music by drawing a drastically transparent path from the artist to the listener, by using state of the art custom-built equipment and a passion for the absolute best quality in sound.*

*Brendon Heinst*

*TRIPTH proudly uses Sonodore microphones, Furutech cabling, KEF loudspeakers, Hegel amplifiers, and Merging Technologies converters at their recording and mastering facilities, carefully optimized by Acoustic Matters.*

*Maya Fridman, Artem Belogurov, and TRIPK would like to express their biggest gratitude to Frits Janmaat, for providing the magnificent 1880 Erard piano, and maintaining and tuning it to absolute perfection on this recording.*

*recording & mastering engineer*

*Brendon Heinst*

*assistant engineer*

*Luuk Meijssen*

*piano tuning*

*Michiel Strategier*

*Frits Janmaat*

*photography & artwork*

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*liner notes*

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