Sheet Music and Recordings

Shortly after Gurdjieff’s death in 1949, his pupils became eager to preserve the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann piano music by making recordings and publishing sheet music. This was despite the fact that Gurdjieff promoted only experiential approaches to his teaching and music, and made no indication that he wanted the music to be fixed in any form. The care and attention pupils paid to the piano music by immediately organising for it to be collated and recorded shows that it was significant to them, and did not merely represent for them a trivial pastime or ephemeral teaching tool. From the 1950s private recordings and publications of the music emerged from within the Work, and these were carefully guarded within Work groups. Work members believe that the music should, ideally, be played live by a sensitive pianist, and only within the Work.

This chapter will begin with an assessment of the original manuscripts, and this will lead to a critical examination of the three published editions of the piano music. When de Hartmann left Gurdjieff in 1929, the original manuscripts of their piano music were stored at the Prieuré, and later closely guarded by de Salzmann until Gurdjieff’s death, when she began to arrange for the music to be published and recorded. The manuscripts were given back to de Hartmann, and after the death of Olga de Hartmann in 1979 they were bequeathed to her close pupil from her Montreal Gurdjieff group, Thomas C. Daly. Daly’s son Thomas A.G. Daly is now the custodian of the manuscripts. In Montreal on 16 and 17 April 2011 I was generously granted access to these original manuscripts, courtesy of Thomas A.G. Daly. Examining the manuscripts yielded a number of exciting discoveries, as will soon be discussed.

Three editions of selections of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann piano music have been published: five volumes were published by Janus in the 1950s, which were edited by de Hartmann, three volumes were published by Olga de Hartmann with the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York in 1970, and four volumes were published by Schott between 1996 and 2005, edited by Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketcham, and Laurence Rosenthal. The first two editions are privately circulated within Foundation groups while the Schott edition was made public. The latter was designated the ‘Definitive Edition’ of the music because it includes the majority of previously published and recorded pieces as well as additional pieces. Discussions of original manuscripts and the different
editions of the sheet music in this chapter were made possible by the kindness of Thomas A.G. Daly and Dorine Tolley, who allowed me access to original manuscripts and private editions of the music, respectively.

The chapter goes on to consider recordings of the piano music, and the negative reaction some Work members have towards them. These members argue that recordings cannot deliver the spiritual results that Gurdjieff intended for the music. This highly esoteric understanding and treatment of the piano music from within the Work could easily be overlooked nowadays, as Work members eventually made public a large quantity of sheet music and recordings. One might infer that these were released to the public in order to introduce outsiders to Gurdjieff and his music; the music is undoubtedly one of the most accessible avenues for approaching Gurdjieff and his teaching. However, it seems that Work members released the piano music for the main purpose of pre-empting unschooled interpretations of the music. One could argue that this was unsuccessful; the 2008 recording *Melos* includes arrangements of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann piano music for cello, piano, and drums, where the piece “Tibetan Dance” is played against syncopated jazz drumming. This rendition strays far from the original piano version, and it is known that Gurdjieff disliked jazz.1

Original Manuscripts

After de Hartmann's departure in 1929 the original manuscripts of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann piano music were stored in a suitcase at the Prieuré until its closure in 1933, when de Salzmann, who was close to both Gurdjieff and de Hartmann, took the suitcase, saving it from being auctioned off with the contents at the Prieuré.2 After Gurdjieff's death in 1949 she arranged for the manuscripts to be published and the music recorded. Between 1933 and 1949 the music was only occasionally played by pupils. Gurdjieff's daughter Dushka Howarth remarked that during the time she spent with Gurdjieff in

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2 Thomas A.G. Daly, pers. comm. (8 July 2010); C.S. Nott, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff: Journey Through This World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 71. In the liner notes to the Wergo recordings of the music it states that the original manuscripts were stored in a steamer trunk; see Laurence Rosenthal, Linda Daniel-Spitz, and Charles Ketcham, [Liner notes] *Gurdjieff/de Hartmann: Music for the Piano*, Vol. 1. (Sandhausen, Germany: Wergo, 1998), 1.