

HAYHILLGALLERY

MASTER WORKS AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Oleg Prokofiev: The Poet



I like the music of the spheres
it hasn't punctuation marks
harmony doesn't stumble
poses are not clogged
and what you hear
from one muteness
imperceptibly moves into another
the clothes of sounds are thrown over
they can be taken off in layers
starting with sporadic shouts — of
costumes
then to light rustles — of underwear
to the undressed lack of sounds
down to the mystery of naked silence

Prokofiev, The Scent of Absence, 1995

Words affected Prokofiev as deeply as music, particularly English poetic speech that he longed to master fluently. Although he felt cut off, writing that he was in a no man's land, the poems still came to him at nighttime, settling about

him in Russian phrases. The detachment and peace of mind that he required for writing appeared under cover of darkness as his conscious mind grew sleepy. He would have to grab the words by the tail, and pin them to paper before morning forgot them.

A collection of his poetry *The Scent of Absence* was published in 1995, later put to music by the composer Elena Firsova. *I Like the Music of the Spheres* takes the elegant Pythagorean concept as its starting point, arguing that nature in its purest form has no need for speech. Without the bother of punctuation or explanation, the universe is full of meaning. In this poem, speaking another language is just another cumbersome 'costume' to dress up in, and if only we could strip down to a 'naked silence' we would understand each other perfectly. This metaphor brings us neatly back to music, the universal language that expresses feeling exactly. The simplicity of the poetic structure is suited to Prokofiev's complex philosophical ideas. He wrote and illustrated several of these small paper books, and when he died, Frances found many that she never knew existed.

Hay Hill Gallery, 35 Baker Street, London W1U 8EN
Tel: 020 7486 6006, 020 7935 5315, Fax: 070 5362 1735
info@hayhillgallery.com, www.hayhillgallery.com