

Notes for a string quartet that straddles a composing lifetime

I do want your attention. To my music. To my writing. To my writing about music. To my writing about my music. I think: I don't want to manipulate your intention. But what do I want from it, once I have it? Do I just want to engross it so that when we part when you depart my presence there will always be a piece of your psyche with my name on it?

When I listen to what I composed in my early twenties I hear myself happily fulfilled just to reflect and resonate the klang of music that most embraced me listening, sounding it in my voice too, like traditional musicians who most want to play exactly like their father does. Intention toward you, toward your attention? Mostly just to join it, probably, but not quite just as some music joining it anonymously. More like, we're in it together. (That means you and me, which means it includes me.) And here is where we're in together, a place we know and probably sort out as together or not by whether we're into being in that place or not – like teenagers of old who know “their” music station on the radio.

Words matter. you influence what is heard by what you say. you influence what gets listened to and what gets bypassed, within and

among musics. politics trumps aesthetics, every time. does this matter? if music matters (an open question) then this matters. but it should be obvious to everybody by now that the germination of alternatives which has traditionally been the source of aesthetic replenishment took place out of mass-public view, in relatively isolated cultural pockets, small-sized social environments far from the mainstream, such as don't exist anymore – the reach of globalized media is pretty total. It's one way to understand the death of music in the popular culture, increasingly stuck in nostalgia and pure word-texting and mutimediaizing. and outside of the popular culture, there isn't really anything outside of an uncomfortable set of lame euphemisms adding up to a plea for unearned popularity.

The desire of Postlude (2005: “with Jim Randall in mind”) to be a third movement of a formerly 2-movement string quartet of the '50s is inexplicable; but it is, literal, pervasive, total as Postlude's autoontological narrative. Apropos, Leszek Kolakowski has this to say (in *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 11):

“...The second form of nihilism consists in that we are satisfied with grasping the specific quality of every phenomenon or cultural epoch on the premise, expressed or implied, that the only factor of importance is that which constituted uniqueness of a particular historical complex,

every detail of which — although it may be indisputably a repetition of former ideas — acquires a new meaning in relation to that complex and is no longer significant in any other way. This hermeneutic assumption clearly leads to a historical nihilism of its own, since by insisting on the exclusive relationship of every detail to a synchronic whole (whether the whole be an individual mind or an entire cultural epoch) it rules out all continuity of interpretation, obliging us to treat the mind or the epoch as one of a series of closed monadic entities. It lays down in advance that there is no possibility of communication among them and no language capable of describing them collectively; every concept takes on a different meaning according to the complex to which it is applied, and the construction of critical or non-historical categories is ruled out as contrary to the basic principle of investigation.”

Flipped from apriori to aposteriori this sounds like a pretty believable placeholder for an imaginable compositional affect, at least as seen from the rear of Postlude. What else is there? Only that everything in Postlude is shared with the first two movements; except the music.

--B.A.B.