

## LINER NOTES FOR OPEN SPACE CD 27

Benjamin Boretz: Violin Concerto: Charles Castleman, violin;  
Eastman Composers' Orchestra, Geoffrey Pope, conductor;  
OPEN SPACE CD 27. Recorded and mastered by Paul Coleman,  
2010

### ***Aspen summer 1956:***

Stanley Hoffman was solo violinist, studying with Roman Totenberg (whose daughter Nina was there too, running around the tent with her bf Ursula Oppens, two 11-year-olds on their way to stardom); it was David Epstein's first concert assignment as a conducting student of Izler Solomon; legendary cosmologist George Gamow was as usual snorting (or was it snoring?) unselfconsciously somewhere in the audience in the Aspen concert tent in the middle of its mudfield - there was hardly anything paved in Aspen then - and my summer friend/teachers Darius Milhaud and Charles Jones were playing it very cool as this thing they had midwived got reasonably unwound (it was difficult in its time) by the Aspen orchestra; neither Stanley nor David had really solicited much input from me - fine points were not in play, nor did the Aspen trustee who supplied the tape for the concert remember to erase the Mozart 20th Piano Concerto slow movement indelibly engraved thereon. So I have only memory, no record. But the memory is crystalline, sound and even sight, and this is where I - finally - can give it daylight.

That was the first movement; back at Brandeis, Arthur (Berger) tolerated me through the rest, offering minimal interference (I did know the ranges, and what else is there to know? And anyway no one would think of actually *playing it*)... After the fact, at UCLA, it was my passport to friendship with Lukas (Foss). But then another life ensued.

These - Milhaud, Charles Jones, Stanley Hoffman, David Epstein, Arthur, Lukas: people who made this period of my young musical life so intensely exhilarating, and it is them I think of when I channel the concerto down from its hiding place right below the surface of bright memory.

My young-composer colleagues at Aspen and Brandeis too: John Herbert MacDowell, Tony Strilko, David Ward-Steinman, Jack Gottlieb, Joel Spiegelman, Marty Boykan, David Burrows, Barclay Brown, Elaine Barkin...; we all stimulated and inspired each other so much that I imagined that the life of a composer was a perpetual celebration of communal engagement and mutual appreciation. And *Perspectives of New Music* was conceived in that time, the communitarian expression of that euphoria. In the present instance, 55 years on, that shared euphoria, battered but only exomorphically bowed, renaisses in the soul-colleagueship of Bob Morris: this is, astonishingly, his project, the endpoint of a chain beginning with a notational encoding in Sibelius with midi-box output which somehow he could penetrate as a music, to give me its rehearing even in midi, and then to enlist Charlie Castleman and Geoff Pope in a project of actual realization.

Listening, though, is not nostalgia; no buried sensations flood back; there's just this piece that I can't quite imagine having composed - though I can conjure. distantly, the astral projections of conceiving and writing each passage: a desolate attic of an abandoned church in Aspen where the opening solo materialized in the light of a forlorn ceiling bulb; a pathetic upright in a Boston slumflat whose thunky noises undermined conviction about risky 2nd- and 3rd-movement soundthoughts.... But I recognize, rather than identify; consume, rather than impersonate; witness, rather than re-live. It's not me; but it was.

-B. A. B. 12/2010