

Musician Without Notes

(A Journal Entry, Memorial Day with Preface)

What did it mean to be a musician anymore? For ten years everything I was doing in the Social Sciences had been feeding music (the five year project of Prison Dirges was now complete) and I was emerging from an 8 month period -post Prison Dirges- of whitewashing. Whitewashing means doing non-creative (lets not talk about non-musical) jobs to survive. Like Bataille, it was difficult to know what to call myself at times.

For sure, any music I would write in future would have to come out of this well of current contemporary reality. No more insulated fabric for me. No more hiding in my art. For me a considerable portion of my life seems like a disaster; that's life, a series of mistakes, and lately all I do is regret.

Friends tell me that regretting helps you to move on to the next step, to new things, things you would not have done before, and that is how I got to where I am now. When I hear the works of young composers successful enough to have performances, recordings and musical jobs, I'm no longer envious. Something has happened to me. Without doubt I too once wanted what those successful young composers have, but now I see the kind of music that comes out of that particular kind of insulation. Let's call it the insulation of success.

I have been thrown into the experiences of life, of work in prisons. The music that I now must write will come out of my disenfranchisement, will literally grow out of the disasters and experiences of my life.

Two characters in a recent french film ask each other the following questions: "I wonder in the course of a life when an action is necessary?" I'm haunted by that question, 'why did I leave my wife' the pain I've caused. The woman character says: "I'm in the middle of taking the next step, I left, maybe I was wrong, maybe I was right." The male character responds: "What you do is not important, it's what you do next that counts. A false step matters less than the next step."

This makes me think of my friend Chuck Buchet, and how difficult it is to perceive reality, especially in a relationship with another. Perception is flawed. Chuck's square of core values was sqewered by his relationship with his girlfriend Rainy, yet he could not see it. I could see it as a friend outside looking in. His square of core values seemed to fit nicely into balance theory, and he is motivated to maintain harmony within the square. But Rainy had a discrepant set of attitudes that sqewered his project. He is just starting to see that his project has somehow been altered at all. This was a

hostile integration that caused my friend much difficulty, especially since he suffered when the attitudes within his square of core values were challenged for any inconsistency, he did not like the feeling of contradicting himself, while Rainy made it her mission to find a contradiction, a tough romance.

For me it points up the difficulty of perceiving reality, and of knowing in the course of a life when an action is necessary. Actions sometimes seem to move out from under us, especially when we are involved in a complex relationship with another - let alone a hostile integration - and then the mistakes, the false steps, the remorse. There are multiple perceptions, piled on top of one another. Chuck calls this "being cursed with acute perception, the artists life."

It does feel true for me, since it no longer seems to matter if I'm writing notes, doing research, playing piano, writing essays or giving interviews, teaching all of this at the blackboard, looking at art or reading current fire sources. It is all one acute introspective blurr that will eventually come back out in sound through current reality. In a word, or in several words, through the uses of simulation and by means of the weeds that grow up between dialectics.

All of this has been by way of a preface of thoughts that were on my mind as Memorial Day unfolded at my job as social worker level 1 at a transitional living house in Columbus.

Last night was some kind of culmination of 8 months. An envelope of 8 months of working jobs that did not feed into the acute creative introspection of the preface (or so I thought). A time in which my life took a very different turn, with much non-artistic work - doctoring and healing, that however has resulted in a certain frustration of not being able to compose.

This has taken the form of a kind of WHITEWASHING, coming out of the ashes, and feeling a great void. I wonder if taking care of myself is actually at cross purposes with leading what for me is a creative life, why in fact I became a composer at all, and now, for the time being, a musician without notes. (Fuck the others, I don't care about theorizing about why others went into the inner world of art).

It seems that everywhere I turn society is set up to make me not be, WHAT I AM, and by taking care of myself I whitewash (to what degree I have not figured out yet) what I am. You see I am not like most of my students, it's too late for all of that, what I am seems perfectly obvious to me, the trick is in actually pulling it off, in being what I am. This romantic thing? People

admire me secretly, but put me down for it, call me names - lofty, romantic etc., and really it does seem like a conspiracy within current social reality. Especially so, as it is constructed in America - it is nothing but an artificial construct after all - to keep me from composing and 'being romantic'?

But this would reduce it to a sociological question, which it is not, much too simple. My old and dear friend Russell Link remarked to me: "Why doesn't Rocco Di Pietro simply stop, why does he keep doing what he does? Most in his position (free lance in the world) simply stop! What is this hero's journey?"

This makes me eccentric of course, unusual and so here is this unusual person, now with many jobs, taking care of himself, coming at the end of 8 months of whitewashing in which annoying stressful job related incidents have accrued. Banal things, other peoples road rage, social work incidents, things that make me feel I was at Carnival again, working for my brother.

In those past summers at Carnival, when the whitewashing was so intense I sometimes thought I would have a nervous breakdown. Then this morning I woke up after a difficult and anxious night (in which I found myself moaning aloud, several times, alone) and almost in a sleep state I began reading things of a spiritual nature. Browsing through my library without knowing what I am doing, my body had apparently made the leap for me, to some other state. Looking at books I have not read recently: Man, Visible and Invisible by C. W. Leadbeater, Towards Cosmic Music by K. Stockhausen, The Shaman's Body by Arnold Mindell and certain statements by Joseph Beuys.

What the fuck was I doing in this half dream state, having my morning coffee, fresh on the heels of last nights harsh reality (which I fretted about intermittently all night long) concerning my shortcomings as a social worker. None of this made much sense to me, (my fretting over the social work job I mean) since it was little more than a babysitting job, and rather low on my scale of priorities (although not off the scale all together like my taxi job). It was in fact brought into sharp focus by a party that was not authorized at my site, but was in full swing as I arrived for work. I was set up, since the party was cleverly initiated by the youths at my site during a period of no staff supervision which happens occassionally.

Why did I feel I did not handle it well, and why was I beating myself up with this? (this party triggered this entire journal entry). True, I did shut the party down after a couple hours, true, I did page one of my colleagues for help - he found

beer in one of the youths dresser drawers, true, we worked it out, I filled out the report, my colleague was satisfied, my ass was covered, we dealt with the youths who lied.

Here I was, sitting having my morning coffee immersed in books on spiritual aspects of humanity, attempting to exorcise this damn party, when all of a sudden it hit me!

THE CHASM

I have experienced this chasm before, especially when I worked carnival, the harsh whitewashing reality of not composing. I would return to my motel room at night and read books on alchemy to refuel my whitewashed spirit. Especially back when my life was a dream, Calderon or no Calderon. When I got up in the morning and went back to work the harsh reality came flooding back, returning in the evening I might read Rudolph Stienner, and I went on and on like this for 4 or 5 months until the job was done.

BINGO, that is what happened to me last night after the party, only now I am conscious of this for the first time as a process, a MECHANISM IN MY LIFE. Amazing how slow I am. Am I just stupid? An ignoramous? In my dark moments like last night, when I called Bette, to tell her of my anxiety, but wait!

The point of this journal entry is that all this seemed to happen for a reason... the harsh reality snap, and the spiritual food backlash are interrelated in me and I'm just becoming conscious of this mechanism of individuation?

It makes me angry in a way, to become aware that I'm trapped between being an animal and an angel which means I can never be a simple person entirely, although if I continue with George (my therapist) I could learn more whitewashing techniques to go through the world denying my 'drama' and continue the process of leveling out the best that is in me, simply to live my life in the moment.

Of course, this work of trying to live my life in the moment is not an altogether bad thing, in my case it was most certainly necessary since I could always live in my art, but rarely in my life, but is it for everyone? Maybe some of us should simply burn like Artaud, until there is nothing left. Or maybe some of us should ask our therapists, can you live without remorse and still be alive? And anyway isn't remorse useful? Without remorse I would never take the next step, and the next step is all that is left to me.

Certainly, however, I have made wine, made gardens, enjoyed cooking, I am not a complete stranger to what George is talking about but can a person with the kind of perception I am speaking of be rid of himself, truly, no remorse? Of course in ego-psychology all things seem possible even if they are often far from possible, but George has been good for me, even if up till now something is always missing. I have made do with the useful part, and in good sessions I have walked out of the office able to walk, taking the next step, and that has been invaluable.

But to get back to this chasm caused by the reality snap of last night. Have I not made too much of this banal little incident, in my role as a social worker worrying about a party of youth in a transitional living house that almost got away from me?

Several weeks ago in Chicago, Boulez said something to me which answers this question. He described what for him was the function of art when he told me a story by Kafka (which I don't remember reading - although I read almost all of Kafka years ago) in which Kafka describes something as banal as an automobile accident, and he goes on to give this tiny insignificant incident, something Boulez called almost 'cosmic' importance. As Kafka elaborated the auto accident throughout the story, layers and layers of meaning accrued until finally according to Boulez: "you have no idea where you are anymore." For Boulez, this idea is essential, and I can see in my own case, that I must agree, since I have been creating this kind of 'drama' all my life without knowing why.

Does it have something to do with what Stockhausen said about Lucifer, that Lucifer was against mixing animals and angels (with regard to consciousness) "thus producing 'half-sick beings', incomplete bastards who have to go through a process of development of consciousness to unfold," i.e.: human beings.

Last night at this party of youths a pregnant, and beautiful African-American girl gyrated lasciviously in the street to the equally lascivious movements of a male youth. There was an air of defiant ritual in her movements. Her bare skinned swollen belly bounced, her large breasts went in different directions held in check by a small halter top, her eyes were on fire... 'don't break your water girl' her friend yelled out to her. The spectacle filled me with awe. For a brief moment I felt I was in Africa witnessing some strange childrens game, but no, she really was pregnant and I was at a different stage of life, watching her. That is where the chasm happened as I thought about this fabric of life before me. These half-sick beings, myself included, incomplete bastards who have to go through a process of

development of consciousness to unfold.

There I sat, watching this unfolding, thinking these thoughts, contemplating Chuck's square of core values. My own unfolding was taking place as the girl danced and the chasm appeared and then, there was nothing to be done. Perception is flawed, since multiple perceptions cannot be linked back to a transcendental core, without the attempt to do so engendering vertigo. It was emotional vertigo that I suffered from. I wondered if I would ever be able to watch the sun set again without feeling vertigo, trapped like Wozzeck, a simple man who had discovered something.

I turned away from the scene, from all this dispensed energy and thought of that character in the french film I had seen, when he said: "I'm sick of energy, it's an epidemic, energy, performance, action; all this energy, it scares me to death, finding the energy to act is easy, giving meaning to your actions, is the hard part."

Rocco Di Pietro

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