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DIALOG ABOUT ACOUSTIC PHILOSOPHY

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Інтерв'ю кандидата філософських наук, мандрівного філософа, керівника культурно-просвітницької програми «Образи людського спілкування», представника кафедри ЮНЕСКО «Філософія людського спілкування» і соціально-гуманітарних дисциплін Харківського національного технічного університету сільського господарства імені Петра Василенка Ігоря Нещерета з професором, диригентом хору Університету Вашингтона у Сіетлі Джоффри П. Боерсом.



Geoffrey Paul Boers



Igor Neshcheret

Музика - що це для Вас?

Що є спільне та що відрізняє людську бесіду та діалог інструментів?

Що спільного та що відрізняє структуру сімфонічного чи хорального твору та полілог людських характерів у житті нашої цивілізації?

Що ви думаєте про діалог між світською та духовною течіями у історії музичної культури?

Ви працюєте з світською та духовною течіями у ваших хорових та оркестрових творах. Як Ви змішуєте та поєднуєте ці хвилі?

Що Ви можете сказати читачам «Філософії спілкування» про Вашу особисту акустичну філософію?

Music - what is for you?

Music for me is allegory to the human experience. Singing especially expresses the human experience on so many levels. The most basic level is the text, the meaning and the emotions expressed in text, be it reverence of worship and faith, or patriotism, or story telling. Deeper levels of meaning come from the physical effort of singing, the colors of voices, intervals sung as they reflect language and inherent meaning. Bach knew that by asking a voice to sing to low, that the dark and gravelly sound of the voice could convey another layer of meaning. In his Cantata number 4 he asks the bass soloist to sing a low E for many measures on the word "death." Then suddenly in one beat jump nearly two octaves to nearly shout "the slayer can no more win the battle." Composers know that certain intervals reflect sighing, an outward cry, a derisive sound. They also know that certain instruments reflect the tone of voice of a human associated with certain emotions — the English Horn has a plaintive quality, the cello can be mournful, the trumpet militaristic or dramatic, etc. Still deeper level are the frequencies of resonance, the color of resonance, the vibration of resonance that "massage" our bodies. When we get excited or sad our breathing changes pace, our temperature changes — meaning our atoms vibrate at changing speeds, etc. music excites motion in our bodies, which creates emotion. Like the jackhammer of the worker on the street creates vibration to make the picture fall off of the wall in your house. So the singer creates vibration that transforms our hearts.

What common and what different between human dialog and instrument dialog?

Of course text, and that is the most important thing. In this internet age, we seem to be losing story tellers. Telling of age old stories of culture has been central to the development of cultures for millennia. Now Facebook and internet groups, short sound bytes, and short attentions are what we deal with. Stories are no longer told. We are losing the tradition of listening to stories, and then learning from them: we learn about our own human history, about how we are, about ourselves, about what to continue and what we dare not repeat. We also hear of the

stories of "other." In this digital era we can search for just the news we want to hear, for just the groups we want to belong to. In the age of stories we hear about stories of others. Which leads to greater empathic living. The more I understand your story, the more compassion I have for you. We learned that in the era of Glasnost, as America learned more and more about the Russian people, we learned to love you and not be afraid. I wish our governments could do the same.

So text is the most important difference. As I said above the instrumental world also has a narrative of color, musical gesture and shape, and resonance that reflects the voice and reflects the human experience, so we draw parallels, but they are more general. Instrumental music also tends to be longer than vocal music, and that is a positive thing. Leonard Bernstein said that when we make or hear great music, we breath a "strange, special, air." A longer piece helps immerse a listener in that strange special air for a longer time, which I feel creates a more profound concert experience for the listener.

Lastly, as a singer breathes, the depth and meaning, the effort and timing all communicate a narrative as well. The breath resonates with the listener. As choirs breathe together it transforms them. Heartbeats tend to unify, as do body function, as do attitudes and spirit.

What common and what different between structure of symphonic or choral artwork and polylog of human characters in our civilization life?

I don't really understand what you are asking here. But I have said above that I think all music is a metaphor of some kind. Not literal, I think when we have tried to be literal in our music making that leads to poor art. I think you saw that during Soviet times, that the music dedicated to the State for example Shostakovitch, is of lesser quality than his symphonies which were more human in expressiveness. In America, after September 11 bombings in New York, there was much patriotic or sentimental art created about the events. Virtually all of it is too sentimental and only had temporary meaning. Only now after 16 years is art being created that is more general that may refer to the pain of those events, but only in a generally human way.

What do you think about dialog between secular and spiritual streams in history of musical culture?

One informs the other. They move side by side, are almost always intertwined. I think only when they are separated does there become a problem. All music, even secular music I feel is spiritual — that of the human spirit. All of my discussion above is how the human spirit is touched by visual, aural, physical, empathetic, textual reference.

Perhaps we can liken spirit like a rainbow. That there are colors we can see, vibrations of the human spirit that we can see and feel, and then there are Ultra Violet, Infra Red and beyond, wavelengths we cannot see. Spiritual music in the religious sense is perhaps trying to create vibration in those areas we cannot see. When I stand in a Russian Orthodox worship, and the Cantor sings a long chant on one pitch, my mind or spirit seems pulled into a deep place, then as he breaks the intonation with a sudden silence, or the change of one tone, my whole body is shocked like being splashed with cold water. This is a spiritual journey, there is a subtle, unseen element of resonance and vibration occurring.

The seen and unseen.

Do you work with secular and spiritual streams in your chorus and orchestra artworks? How you mixing or uniting this ways?

We do. And we always approach it from the aspect of story telling. I feel that choirs and orchestras to a lesser extent are the most important story tellers of our time. So we sing a Rachmaninov Vespers, we tell the story of the Russian people in the early 20th c. the beauty, the com-

ing revolution, the tradition, the orthodoxy, the anonymity of the iconographer. If we sing a Magnificat, we tell the story of the composer, Mary, the tradition of Advent, of darkness and light, of contrast, of the paradoxes of Advent, the mountains made plain and the valleys lifted up.

We tell stories that are universal and which emanate from the specific. Like ancient story telling, the Epic poetry, the Kalevala, Just So Stories, Aesop's Fables, Jesus' Parables and not specifically about the characters, but what they point to. So too, every song we sing is not just about what we are singing, but the universal humanity that it points to. Many of our public schools in america do not allow sacred music. But if we look at all music, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, secular as having universal meaning and not sectarian, then there is no problem.

Can you talk readers of "Philosophy of Communication" issue about your personal acoustic philosophy?

When I listen to singers, I listen for resonance and acoustic rather than vowels and color. Are they resonating efficiently on that pitch. The vibrato, tension, vowel distortion all point to challenges in acoustics and resonance in the vocal tract. I can align the resonance by hand gesture metaphors as well as vocal tract vowel modification, by "breathing" in a particular vowel that will shape the pharynx appropriately. This allows all voice parts to resonate together on the different frequencies that they sing and create an unusual blend and tuning. Remember America is a melting pot, singers come from all over the world, there is much less ethnic uniformity than there is in most countries in the world. So helping choirs blend is always a challenge, but all choirs can benefit by matching resonance.

