

From: SAGReiss

Date: 23 November 2009

Subject: How to talk music to chi(l)dren

My neck is still sore from its last trip to the gallows, so I'll try to emphasize the positive first, in order to thwart the wrath of the scorned women, who aren't scorned at all, just pissed off at me from time to time, and rightly so. Constructive criticism, right Pierre? I did buy it from Amazon, after all. The book & music are beautiful. I don't read paper books anymore, but I highly appreciate the beauty of the layout, the colors, the fonts, the images. I am no judge of music (and none of Amazon's sites gives a track listing), but the selections seem good, no synthetic xylophones to be heard. Nothing in this work is dumbed down. I am a little mad at the quantity of music, one hour and thirty-one minutes (I had to calculate that by hand, so the number is probably off.) is all you could fit on a CD? so many of the pieces are not even a full movement, but an extract of a movement, which seems like a petty thing to me. I won't quibble. No fucking Haendel? I guess you figured one fucking Roast Beef (Purcell) is enough. It does seem odd, however, to include the tamest possible Schoenberg piece. Either put in something earsplitting, or leave the fucker out. As to the text, some of which I read while Rose was napping, the article on counterpoint, which I've never understood, helped me, and I'm now thinking of how your paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes relate to ours. The problem is that we have parallel paradigms, but only one linear thread of language, whereas you seem to envision two in music. I'll work on this. The other articles I read, seemed (while not dumbed down) to leave out so many complications as to be of little interest, even to a non-musician such as myself. This may not apply to children. (By the way, I saw at Leclerc for 100euros a digital piano that would fit on Rose's little table with 61 keys in piano format. I can't find anything better online. Should I buy that?) This sentence I loved: "Ce 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' ouvre le Chidren's [sic] Corner, recueil de petites pieces pour piano solo." Is there a film related to this with Johnny Depp? I think someone was talking about that at Naia's on Saturday. And of course Murder's friend Berio: "[No, I must have got this from somewhere else, since the pun on the word "period" does not work in French, something about music not being like a woman...]" I needed that aborted quotation to segue into my last point, your unnatural (for a Jew) love of Bach. First of all, let's just say that I can think of a lot of things to like about Bach, a witty, punning mind, an innovative artist on so many levels and in so many forms, both digital & analog, massive production capabilities fully realized, etc. But women do have periods, and men do have balls, and I think that Bach's world, even given our admission that music doesn't really mean anything, neglects those salient facts. I know nothing about Beethoven, but his music contains excesses, terrible excesses. I can imagine Beethoven almost anywhere in Vienna, from the organ chair to the conductor's podium to the whorehouse to Freud's couch. I can imagine Bach nowhere other than in Saint Thomas's church in Leipzig, or maybe standing beside Luther at the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. That's a small world. When I said that I wanted to read Francois Rabelais' translation of the Bible, I did not say Montaigne's, which would read exactly like the Vulgate, but with fewer present participles and improved style. I have never read the Apology of Raymond whatever his name is that T.S. Eliot (a venerable prick) called: "an astonishing piece of writing," which I do not doubt. Bro, you live in Dordogne, you could go out once in a while, have a drink in Bordeaux, get laid or something. Rabelais knew how to do that. So did Shakes, who worked in the theater, so he probably went both, if not all, ways. And the absurdity of arguing about the "la plus grande oeuvre de l'histoire de l'art occidental

tout entier". Well, what's a work of art? Is the Bible one work of art, written by thousands of men in the course of two millennia? Is Dante privileged over Shakes (as T.S. fucking Eliot would have it) because the latter worked in shorter formats and supposedly believed in the wrong kind of Christianity? Is "Heart of Darkness" less of a work than "Moby Dick" because it contains fewer pages? This is ridiculous. Oh, and I forgot, Charles Ives' second symphony. How could you leave that out? How could you do this to me? Either the movement where he plays Yankee Doodle, or else the bit where the drums all go crazy. Chas came from Danbury, Connecticut, and I come from Cheshire, Connecticut, born in Monticel(l)o, Sullivan county, New York. Chuck was also a brilliant insurance salesman and music theorist. He said that most people listened to music to put them to sleep, and that he wrote it to wake them the fuck up. He said he derived his atonality and clustered rhythms (at the same time & independently of Schoenberg) from listening to parades, in which he could simultaneously hear several marching bands playing different tunes, and from the unschooled voices of the choir in his father's church, where they sang false. He wanted to write music like what he heard as a boy.

From: SAGReiss

Date: 24 November 2009

Subject: Angel Farts

One of the beauties of Shakes is how very little we know about the man. Everyone can project his own hopes & fears upon the poet with an equal chance of being wrong. He may have been queer, and he may have been a boring theater owner who merely tolerated the homosexuality of his workers, loved his wife Anne, faithfully telecommuted for the twenty years he lived in London, and took his frustrations out on his writing paper. I can live with either of those Shakespeares, and any Shakes in between. Anyone could have written those plays, an undead Marlowe, Bacon, Queen Elizabeth. It don't matter. For the text of the plays & poems does recognize that people fuck, a lot or a little, with men or women (and sometimes animals), lovingly & brutally, sober & drunk. And people also talk about fucking. A lot. I'll be a little more ready to concede to Bach when he will concede to me that when a woman lies down on her back it isn't always to get a better view of the face of God. Sometimes she just wants to get her rocks off. You like Bolero, Peter. You may have come up with a learned word I can't remember for "crescendo", but most of us call this "orgasm", and Nichelle calls it "stick music". Did Bach ever write any stick music? In his vast output, did he ever put out? Is there one little bawdy tune, set to words by the Leipzig town drunk? Something? Anything? No? Is there nothing in the whole body of his work that reflects that we are not just little icons of Jesus, but flesh & blood animals that eat & shit & fuck & sleep, often in that order. Shakespeare's work reeks of food & shit & sex & slumber. What does Bach's work smell like? Angel farts? I know you're wondering, Peter, if I always write like this, so well & especially so much, and no, you don't have to read it all. It's enough that I write it. I've been inspired of late, partly due to your arrival here. I also seldom work, don't live with my wife, and can't see my daughter more than four days a month. Some people have profited from prison stays to write. I will take whatever advantage I can of situations I can't make yield.