

May 15, 1974 - Wednesday

TYGER (1970).....Thomas Clark

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

-----William Blake

Blake's Tyger is not so much a mythical beast as it is the embodiment of an intense spiritual or cosmic energy underlying creative activity. This image, a vital part of Blake's larger philosophy, serves in this piece to describe the energy and tension that is present not only in the harmonic intervals used consistently in the lyric sections, but most of all generated from a fundamental, uncompromised contrast between these two characters---a rhythmic, driving energy and a lyric stasis. These balanced yet opposing musical ideas are like the changing moods of the Tyger stalking the jungle of the mind.

Tyger was composed in the spring of 1970 at the University of Michigan.

SYNCHRONISMS (1963).....Mario Davidovsky

Argentine-born Mario Davidovsky settled in New York City in 1958, becoming associated with the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. His set of "synchronisms" for instrument solo and/or instrumental combination and tape displays a mark affinity for expressiveness in both the technical and musical aspects of electronic composition, and has done much to establish his reputation. All deal with the realization of two particular considerations; the proper synchronization of rhythm (the interplay and contrast of the two media), and pitch (instruments tempered pitch, tape non-tempered). The "Synchronisms for Flute and Electronic Sounds" is the first of the series, and through recordings and numerous performances has come to be regarded as a landmark and avant-garde "classic" in its own right.

Mr. Skowronek had the pleasure of performing the work with the composer himself some years ago in Puerto Rico--"with", since Mr. Davidovsky regarded the work as an ensemble piece, taking an active and even virtuoso role in advancing the taped segments on the playback equipment backstage. Subsequent logistics have suggested a calmer solution--a continuous tape with spliced silent sections to accommodate the solo flute passages. Such an approach however, requires that the flutist pace these solos to leave and enter each electronic section accurately, creating yet another "synchronization".

ANAKTORIA (1969).....Iannis Xenakis

Iannis Xenakis was born in Roumania of Greek parents in 1922. His early interests lay in the Byzantine and folk elements of traditional Greek music. In 1947 he left Athens to study in Paris, where his teachers were Honegger, Messiaen, and Milhaud. He was also active during this time as an architect, collaborating with LeCorbusier.

Although mathematical logic plays a large part in his compositions, Xenakis does not consider an understanding of his theories necessary to the listener's comprehension of the music. He thinks in terms of masses evolving and erupting, re-shaping themselves, vanishing. His elements are clouds of sound made up of an indefinite number of particles, glissandi being an especially characteristic effect.

Anaktoria, through the use of microtones, extended ranges, and other special effects, often demands extreme virtuosity and imagination on the part of the musicians. The result supports his reputation as a leader of the European Avant-Garde.

LA CREATION DU MONDE (1923).....Darius Milhaud

Milhaud first heard jazz in London in 1920. Typically, he sat right down next to the players and made notes on every bit of the new technique. Soon after, arriving in New York, Milhaud caused consternation by announcing to the press that Europe was now being influenced by American music for the first time -- jazz music. Again typically, Milhaud asked the head of the Negro Musician's Union to dinner, and found himself embroiled in restaurant complications wholly unknown to a Frenchman. Then -- he was taken to Harlem.

"We were the only white folk there," he writes in his very readable autobiography Notes Without Music. The music I heard was absolutely different from anything I had ever heard before and was a revelation to me...Its effect was so overwhelming that I could not tear myself away. From then on, I frequented other Negro theaters and dance halls...As I never missed the opportunity of visiting Harlem, I persuaded my friends to accompany me, as well as (Alfredo) Casella and (Willem) Mengelberg, who were in New York at the time. When I went back to France, I never wearied of playing over and over, on a little portable phonograph shaped like a camera, the Black Swan records I had purchased in a little shop in Harlem. More than ever, I was resolved to use jazz for a chamber work..."

And thus it happened that La Création was composed, for eighteen instruments including the jazz saxophone. The music...follows timeless classic procedures. It tells its own jazz story; but note, that the opening is a pan-European slow introduction in an almost pastoral sort of counterpoint, and that later on there is a masterful fugue on a jazz theme, straight out of Bach. The jazz, of course, is not our "modern jazz" but that of the true early "New Orleans" school, as transferred to Harlem in the days before jazz was either known or fashionable outside Negro circles. It is a sobering thought that, perhaps, here in Milhaud's precise observations we have a more accurate picture of that idiom than in most "authentic" jazz revivals of the present day. Milhaud, after all, was there -- live and in person. Which is more than most jazz players can claim.

(From notes by -- Edward Tatnall Canby)

ROHO.....The Contemporary  
Group Improvisation  
Ensemble

The Improvisation Ensemble has been together for a year and a half, and has pursued varying paths towards a balance of structure and improvisation. The overall structure of the present work is predetermined, whereas the details are left to the discretion of the individual performer. Although by definition, improvisation lacks the polish of pre-composed works, the aim is to emphasize directness and spontaneity.

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