

WORDS SURFACING . mid November 2006
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there is plenty of music,
but the listening here is scarce.
failure to compose the atmosphere
and to compose the focus
has again so graciously sponsored
tonight's overwhelming tension.
the music is once again long and slow and silent
and again the audience is sitting uncomfortably erect
daring not to touch one another
and painfully aware of their borders,
listening perhaps in many ways,
but none of them to their own satisfaction.
i mentally scream,
wondering if i scream in unison

we composers have not been thoughtful enough
to provide a menu of listening possibilities.
the purpose is not to prescribe -
we are not doctors
nor is your listening deficient,
nor do we speak of ailments and cures, or even betterment -
instead we should be so kind as to affirm those who have brought their own bagged
lunch-ears,
or then suggest the daily special, the soup du jour:
and with your salad we've a fine selection of dressings...
but no, instead the spectator has been left yet again
to their own guilty devices and dead ends, neglected,
no silverware either
"check pleeeeeease"

"oh wait - you're here!"
that might be the mantra of tomorrow's composer.
"what's good tonight?" asketh the grumbling stomach-ears...

instead we composers have been deaf
deaf to the listener
deaf to the body that listens
deaf to the mind that listens
deaf to the space that facilitates our musical missions...
'tis not their fault, 'tis not their fucking fault!
shall we be social outcasts to the bitter end?
even though music and performance are social celebration supreme?
i am left to simply sit and listen to you listening,
which may be interesting, but you fail to share your dictionary

for today's [neo][post]modernist flavor (which switched dialects from yesterday),
and i am not feeling psychic enough tonight to care.
dare you accuse my third eye of laziness?

meanwhile i sit and wonder:
might i listen differently if i were leaning against the stranger to my right
or if i were to recline
or if i were to be naked
or if i were to be smelling those around me up close.
we are stiff and uncomfortable and nervous
and you have not composed our coexistence
you have not composed us into the room
given our ears interpretive permission to improvise;
we are peripheral and distraction
and we have no part to play in tonight's extended masterwork
other than as slaveship oarsmen with paddles out our ears.
i listen to my spine ache
my leg sleep
my ankle crackle
my shoulder tense
my aura try not to touch his or hers or hers
tighten tighten tighten tight

tonight might be an amazing display of bodily performance perhaps,
an opus on the creaking of realtime skeleto-muscular atrophy
if it were not simply the product of our composerly laziness
our composerly naivety
our composerly autism...
yet tonight we composers were the deaf ones,
and our deafness to all but our music,
our mistaken opposite-endorsement of a world of deafness,
was sadly again that which was performed

our goal might could be to extend our composition beyond
the world of melody, of harmony, of tone-color-melody, of process,
and into the ears and minds and bodies of those who bravely listen...
"turn me on, open me up" is all they ask,
which doesn't necessarily translate to a request for song-and-dance.
your music + a word
your music + a suggestion
your music + a prop or pillow
your music + an atmosphere
your music + a menu
your music + permission
is all it might take
otherwise we are still all alone in our music
self-exiled outcasts displaying our melancholic musical adolescence for all to half-hear...
instead: welcome to the Listen-to-We generation, friends.