

In *academe* and among some professional musicians a debate continues about what elements of style are art, and what elements are too reminiscent of the past to be considered original, important and contemporary. To me, the *audience* should be the arbiter of artistic accomplishment. If the audience is five Professors of Composition sitting in a concert hall on a university campus, they can say what is important. If the audience is Symphony-Season Subscribers filling Orchestra Hall, that audience should say what they care about, and often they do. I have heard enthusiastic ovations for several living composers. Applause feels good, for everyone. Even Hitler loved applause.

The current and future symphony-season subscribers are the audience I care about. They are the ones for whom my music is intended. I hope to reach their ears by providing enough common ground between what they already enjoy (the Masters of the Past) and what I need to say. I choose not to write music in languages only understandable to other composers. I feel free to use any musical elements which provide emotional impact and communicate effectively. I consider each element with care: Form, Melody, Harmony, Orchestration, Rhythm, Texture. I do my best to balance the elements against each other, so that one element does not over-ride all the others.

I like a good tune. Lyrical lines, or lines with memorable rhythms attract me. This does not mean a singable melody like a pop song, but any melody with shape and direction and emotional purpose. I view Melody and all the other elements of style as working together to create the storyline, the drama of a piece of music. Melody might be considered a lead character in much of my music. Emotional drama is the intention. I do not compose music for elevators and shopping malls, or for Zen meditation, or to impress any avant-garde music critic.

Practicality in musical performance is also essential to me. I went to concert performance of a famous contemporary composer, where the score required two wine glasses to be broken. As the performers had mislaid the glasses, the audience had to wait for an orchestra member to go to the local mall to buy the wine glasses. In performance, one could not hear the glasses being broken over the sound of the other instruments. Why would such a thing matter to the composer? The audience didn't mind the wait so much as being puzzled by the whole thing.

Musical style often depends on the specific inspiration which motivates my musical imagination. As I am writing this essay, I am listening to my *Five Upanishads for Orchestra*. This music was inspired by the great philosophic literature of ancient India, but I chose no elements from Indian Classical music (as much as I enjoy Indian Classical music). I wanted to describe the emotional impact the literature has had on me, using

the musical language of Classical Western music. The emotions are given shape with musical elements familiar to most Western audiences---strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion and a harp---playing chords and melodies in major and minor keys, with no reference to Indian music or the various obscure dialects of 20th Century Western Classical music.

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