

November 21 2020

"How would you describe the character of Plait?"

Hmmm... a character... I think when I was imaging this piece, one sort of influence or character I was influenced by was shakuhachi music played by zen buddhist monks in Japan, but I should stress this was in a very abstract, somewhat unconscious way. I didn't seek to imitate anything in terms of pitch, rhythm, form, ect. That is to say I don't think that I'm trying to convey the aesthetic of the music in any tangible or noticeable way through what I wrote. Rather, I think I was considering/exploring/inspired by the underling philosophy of the musical practice, Suizen, which is essentially a zen practice of achieving self-realization through playing shakuhachi.

Now, the piece I wrote is not at all intended for spiritual purposes, (although, people are free to use it for that, if they wish....) but I think that that philosophical perspective is the "root" so to speak of my inspiration for the piece, the closest thing to a character I might speak of. That's probably why I wrote the piece to be "meditative" and talked about methodical practices in the program notes. Even the act of plaiting is arguable a repetitive and methodical practice, that... could potentially be meditative.

Even the parts of the piece that are rhythmically faster, more chromatic, unstable ect. I think should still maintain an air of serenity. I would imagine a tree whose leaves dance in a flurry of

activity; there is more energy certainly, but the tree itself is unbothered.

I think for me at least, an attractive aspect of a monophonic line is that it attracts different sort of concentration from me. Something that is more polyphonic and multifaceted can of course be very attractive and beautiful, but perhaps with increased complexity it can be harder to pay attention to the constituent "parts", or we at least pay attention to them differently. The piece is essentially a study of lines, and of course how they become interlinked, but I think it is also about a sense of clear concentration and stability; in paying close attention to the line.

I think the element of music this piece is trying to showcase is a sort of mindfulness. The joy of listening, and being able to exist in a moment. (After all, I believe a great value of music as a medium is that it exists, and is arguably inseparable from, time.) It's not really about going anywhere, or telling a story, or creating tension. It's an attempt to suspend time, so that we may better enjoy its passing.