

The Discofication of the Mongols

The Discofication of the Mongols is a 36 Minute work for Violin and CPU composed in 2009. The original commission was in 1995 from the Vancouver choreographer Lee Su-Feh of Battery Opera (the dance title was 'Ten Thousand Things') and was also generously supported by the B.C. Cultural Fund.

The piece is based on eight choreographic gestures, each with it's own length, meter, and sensibility. These eight gestures became the basis of an eight chord bass passacaglia that is repeated over and over as the unifying structural. Meanwhile, the melodic/motivic material is derived from an ancient Chinese melody, which reemerges three times as a kind of unifying leitmotiv (followed by or precluded by a jazz duo version of the same melody).

The formal structure consists of; the first exposition is durationed into 64m. (intro), the second is shrunk into x2 /32m. (intro development), the third again shrunk into x3 /16m.(theme) , the fourth in x4/8m. (theme with eight note variation) , the fifth in x5/4m. (glissando development) , the sixth in x6/2m.(motivic development), and the seventh in x7/1m.(uber stretto). Then the piece unfolds backwards Bergian-like, only the passacaglia gradually turns into repeated cells of the pitch order, expanding and contracting. At the end of each backward, recurring regions, the piece breaks into a disco beat with a truncated 'row 'for material (while simultaneously mashing the four greatest disco tunes of all time). Throughout the unfolding backward structure, the bass passacaglia makes more melodic/motivic violin intersections with the melodic row until they become one. The final 64m. is the intro again, only here the Chinese theme plays overtop, while the jazz duo interjections.

The pieces' title concerns the loss of all indigenous culture to the monolith of the western sausage machine. A recurring image is one of a lonely herdsman in Mongolia listening to Tupac on his iPod. Within a very short period of 10 years, the 3 min. digital file has laid waste all music, including our own (especially art music and the recording industry). Another repeating image is the new-rich Chinese sending their kids to Susuki violin classes and going to western symphony concerts (lots of faux Bach voice leading and general orchestral rep. writing in the piece)-- abandoning their heritage for the west's dominant hegemony. The ever-approaching climax has an accumulative scaling in size, density, overlapping submixes, and pop references, until it eventual crushes everything under it's own weight (secretly inspired by the design of Stockhausens' Gruppen and Boulez' Tombeau).