

In-Habit.

DJ SPOOKY – Symphonica Antarctica

Present: a contemporary music composer and an artistic director
Both regionally based artists. The composer is also a presenter for 'The Climate Project', a worldwide network of volunteers educating and inciting action amongst their peers on climate change.

Following the performance both artists were a little stupefied by the lack of ambition of the work and its clear (and poor) references to Nyman and Riley's works.

The composer said, "There's a lot to talk about – let's get a drink!"

Our conversation was conducted over one hour on the verandah bar next to the Spiegel tent.

The artistic director kept notes of the conversation:

AD – "Ok you're looking mad."

Composer – "I am mad! That was just so lame!"

That was so full of overblown good intentions that the real stuff really didn't come across. It was like a student project in compositional form. It was exactly like a student exercise – you're told about the form or the concept, get given a couple of examples then you go away and try to execute your own composition having worked out how the form's constructed.

It really makes me mad to think how much he's paid to pull off something like that with so little compositional depth!
No movement, no real work on composition just 4/4 after 4/4. It was bordering on romantic Electric Light Orchestra total cheese.
There was no working together, no one taking charge. It just wasn't a good concert.
That 4/4 rhythm – on and on just like some kind of Riley/Nyman pastiche!"

AD – "and what was it really about for the audience do you reckon?"

Composer – "It looked like he had this nice trip to Antarctica and used it as a tax deduction.

His video work was a nice tourist record and then all he's thought through is having it duplicated on two converging screens. Simple but so what?!

It was just like the music. In fact that was so disappointing. The whole show seemed to be about a lack of craft or just simply without the skill to pull it off.

The composition – the symphonica was the propaganda footage – that was the best. At least that was composed!”

AD – “yes that was the best bit for me too. There was something so incredibly sublime in that monumentalist propaganda footage wasn't there?...filmed in such an overwhelmingly monumental landscape. I loved the whole horrible futility. It was sublime and tragic and that was when I suddenly got into the work. I could have just watched that with - I don't know – one of Marcus Schmickler's compositions or even Schnittke's stuff for cello. I realised then what DJ Spooky was maybe TRYING to say – but then of course we already know we're small and pathetic in front of a sublime landscape like that. And what was all the data apart from the obvious?”

Composer – “He used data as an effect, this kind of free falling data that no one can absorb – he just used it as an effect and then just ran with it and yeah we're all so overwhelmed by statistics to do with climate change etc. but it's completely irresponsible to say “oh this is so overwhelming and now we're losing the Antarctica” – it's not something to be overwhelmed by – we have to take it at a level where we do something about it – no thanks to this guy, and it's certainly something that shouldn't be turned into some kind of mind numbing compositional pastiche.

Those poor instrumentalists. They were a gift to the guy.

Someone should remind him that the subject comes first then you find the form - It's probably his tax deductible trip that's the real concept and try as he might he hasn't found the form.”

AD – “What if we were to make a summary statement. What would it say?”

Composer – “OK. The composition wasn't there, the real crunching grindingly hard stuff wasn't there, and the film work wasn't there. It's a total Riley/Nyman pastiche. How's that?”

AD – “That's good. I like that. I'll probably quote you on that!”.

Composer – “How about I buy you a drink?”

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