

Symphony No.8 and Symphony No.10 (The Mysteries) by Glenn Branca

Symphony No.8 (*The Mystery*)
First Movement (*THE PASSION*)
Second Movement (*SPIRITUAL ANARCHY*)

Symphony No.10 (*The Mystery Pt.2*)
First Movement (*THE FINAL PROBLEM*)
Second Movement (*THE HORROR*)

There are two great mysteries: life & death. And, there's an argument that they're the same thing. Everybody loves a good mystery, that's why they put the answer at the end. We're already dead and this is the afterlife. Whenever I'm feeling particularly paranoid re: the God problem, I imagine that we're all just brains in bottles somewhere, thoughts in a void, to paraphrase Mark Twain's vicious punchline to The Mysterious Stranger & this phenomenological world is some cheesy *Total Recall* vision we're renting from The Company who stays in business keeping us from the horrible ecstatic truth.

I'm assuming that everybody, not just me, has had moments where the cloying opacity of the daily grind shimmers translucent, the veil of Maya (most advanced, yet acceptable) blinks, the coordinates shift, the pineal eye opens, flesh dissolves arbitrary all boundaries, the flood of eternity, knowledge of true purpose, the unspeakable shudder, dimensions limitless, consciousness infinite, & all that cosmic *compos* hokum.

Some things are sacred. Like the cross.

My particular cross to bear of late has this tape of Glenn Branca's *THE MYSTERIES* (by the time you read this, you, the reader of these squalid notes, will have a Compact Disc in your mitts, high-tech digital codices, a Millennial key) which has been blasted @ work to the complete incomprehension of many ("what the FUCK are you listening to NOW????!!!!") & the utter chin-soaked drooling envy of others ("WHERE did YOU get THIS????!!!! WHO do YOU KNOW????"); the tape has made several trips to my overpriced dump of an apartment on Father Demo Square, where the thunderous irresolvable chords & anti-chords of *THE MYSTERIES* have woven their way into der nacht, skillfully weaving tonal clusters round boombox thrump of Jeep Cherokees & scarred Vietnam vets yarbbling the lyrics to Foreigner's "Hot Blooded" (to no particular tune: "I wanna know-wo-wo-wo whatchur DOING [snork] afterthaSHOW-ow-ow-ow"). I have also used *THE MYSTERIES* as low-volume Satie-like ambient "thinking" music, which is not recommended, but I must LIVE THIS MUSIC in order to understand it.

2

I feel no compunction about invoking Corpus Christi when analyzing my relationship to *THE MYSTERIES*. For weeks now, the problem of creating a verbal analog to these two symphonies has generated a multiplanar anxiety. I want to do this music justice. Glenn will read this (as will you) & the responsibility is as exhilarating as it is maddening. The screeds have poured forth, a long narrative involving a philosophic fist-fight & pornographic wading pool mud-wrestling tournament wherein the Muses—Calliope, Clio, Euterpe, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania, Thalia—jealous bitch goddesses all wear flesh, hair, fingernails, clawing eyeballs, each claiming **TRUE AUTHORSHIP & INSPIRATION** for *THE MYSTERIES*; they war, they spar, they connive, they each sing eloquent their case. *THE MYSTERIES* invoke some deep secret of unfathomable consequence, a root query of unbearable implication. A thing harbored mute, shackled in the unconsciousness.

At 6:30 AM, up all night, drinking iced expresso, chain-smoking Chesterfield Kings, cold autumn cardigan sun rising over Fru Demo drunks swaddled tramplike in yesterday's Post, I get into the shower w/"Spiritual Anarchy" blaring through the steam pellets & a thought squiggles black letter red ribbon across the back of my brain:

Music is **NOT** A LANGUAGE!

Language is a collection of referents and metaphors.

MUSIC IS NOT A METAPHOR!

NOT AT ALL!

Language approximates.

The Bible, you'll recall, opens by *literally* defining "God": "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was God." It figures you'd read **THAT** in a **BOOK**. Language uses sound as a conveyor belt of "meaning." (Except for Bob Dylan, but I don't feel like collapsing my argument... remember this is me in the shower thinking...) Language shares many of the attributes of Music: it can be broken down into attendant particles, there's "grammar" and "syntax," they each **USE** sound, but **MUSIC IS NOT METAPHORIC!** It came to me in a rush of soapsuds listening to *THE MYSTERIES*: language is **ALL** about **CONTENT**. Once you break language down to its smallest attendant part, you've got a phoneme, at best onomatopoeic; but there's no smallest component in Music, it's splitting the atom & the closer you examine the subatomic, the more infinities open up. Language is the **ENEMY** of Music. Language, like YHWH, is a **JEALOUS GOD** & will subvert, assimilate, and co-opt the **TRUE POWER** of **SOUND**. Language & Music are **AT WAR** over the "urf" of **SOUND!**

This was not the first time I'd perceived Branca's music as megalomaniacally Biblical (for lack of a better "description"). *THE MYSTERIES* is nothing less than an attempt to unleash the parallel "non-literal" "non-metaphoric" multiverses coexisting invisibly next to our own. Is it any wonder that The Company wants to merge language with music? That "songs" are what people will buy? ("Life," sang Madonna, "is a *mystery*.") But, & this is both horrible and awefull and beautiful, "songs" (words & music) at their best represent a kind of temporal "truce" in this **ANCIENT UNNAMED WAR!**

THE MYSTERIES do not attempt to resolve this conflict. This conflict lies in the heart of the dance of Kali, this is the **TRUE** consonance/dissonance of creation. The **TRUE** tension/repose cycle of the multiverse is not in the bullshit conspiracy-driven lie of "the dichotomy of masculine-feminine principles" (though such a schizoid does, in fact,

exist) or "class differences" or "tribal warfare." These are the straw men God ITSELF wants to use to divert you from what's REALLY going on.

The very titles of *THE MYSTERIES* movements give away the game: "The Passion," "Spiritual Anarchy," "The Final Problem," "The Horror." Especially, "Spiritual Anarchy," a celestial/sinister redundancy. All alleged art & music (& for that matter literature) is "spiritual." But the real "Final Problem" isn't spiritual, it's *religious*. If spirituality is anarchistic, then Religion is Power, Control, Hierarchical, Exquisite Order Circumscribing Chaos.

And I've seen that insane fervor in the faces of the audience at Branca's concerts. This music delivers a religious, as opposed to a spiritual, experience. God created the world, but she/he/it/whatever left it unfinished. It's the job of humans to do what God either CANNOT or WILL NOT do. Making *THE MYSTERIES* manifest is one of those jobs.

Servants are always miserable. Glenn Branca doesn't "write" this music any more than I am "writing" this. *THE MYSTERIES* is some Goddamn MotherFucking Thing that needed to express Itself in THIS world & It used Glenn Branca to do it.

We don't need another name for God. We need another Sound. You can hear it approximated on this recording.

But DON'T expect me to describe it.

###

Tom Holmes/
e/c/o Lino notes