

Between the Kiss and the Chaos

Program Notes

When I was little, I loved to play classical pieces on the piano and on the violin and imagine that, through some magical psychic connection, a musical séance of sorts, I had tapped into the spirit of the composer and that he imparted to me the secret to interpreting his music. I liked to imagine that I knew exactly what Mozart meant when he wrote a particular passage, or how Bach would really play his solo violin sonatas.

My inspiration for *Between the Kiss and the Chaos*, my second electric violin concerto, came from playing the same game with some great works of visual art—getting inside the artist’s head and letting them reveal to me how they created their masterpieces.

The title is a metaphor for the creative process. With any good work I think there is a spark of inspiration, the artist’s moment of vision and magic—artistic love at first sight. There is a reason why. This is the kiss.

And then there is a compulsive need to share that vision which drives the labor and frustration and joy of realizing it. This is the chaos—the ability to simultaneously retain that vision and yet to relinquish control of it, allowing the work, like a relationship, to evolve freely into the unknown.

In Matisse’s words, “In art, truth and reality begin when one no longer understands what one is doing or what one knows.” And from Picasso, “If there were only one truth, you couldn’t paint a hundred canvases on the same theme. Everything you can imagine is real.”

This is a collection of musical vignettes, each inspired by a particular iconic work of art. These Wichita performances will be the world premier of this work which was commissioned by the Wichita Symphony and is dedicated to its musical director, my good friend, Andrew Sewell, who also conducted the premier of my 1st Electric Violin Concerto in 2001.

David—Michelangelo

“Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” Michelangelo

[image of “David”]

“I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.”

“Sculpting is easy. You just go down to the skin and stop.”

The Dance—Henri Matisse

“There is nothing more difficult for a truly creative painter than to paint a rose, because before he can do so he has first to forget all the roses that were ever painted.” Matisse

[image of “Dance”]

This movement is created with the use of a loop recorder—I record myself live and then record layers of overlapping loops. I can’t imagine dance without music and I think the dancers are improvising their own music, singing freely with each other. To recreate the music of the dancers I record 5 layers with my loop and through the polyphony of these voices create a sense of rhythm, harmony and melody pulling and pushing each other as the 5 dancers spin themselves around in a circle. The orchestral accompaniment is dictated by the conductor who is also improvising, determining when the orchestra enters and exits, what dynamics it will play and other features.

“I don't paint things. I only paint the difference between things.”

The Starry Night—Vincent Van Gogh

“For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream.” Van Gogh

[image of “The Starry Night”]

“I experience a period of frightening clarity in those moments when nature is so beautiful. I am no longer sure of myself, and the paintings appear as in a dream. I dream of painting and then I paint my dream.”

Here is a possible libretto for this scene:

Listen to the stars
Listen to the moon
I am that lonely tree
Silhouetted by the stars
Strong and all alone
And I am that whirling cloud
Twisted and torn
Disappearing in the sky

“Poetry surrounds us everywhere, but putting it on paper is, alas, not so easy as looking at it.”

The Red Poppy—Georgia O’Keeffe

“I found that I could say things with colour and shapes that I couldn’t say in any other way—things that I had no words for.” O’Keeffe

[image of “Red Poppy”]

“In a way – nobody sees a flower – really – it is so small – we haven’t time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.. ..’So I said to myself – I’ll paint what I see – what the flower is to me but I’ll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it – I decided that if I could paint that flower in a huge scale, you could not ignore its beauty. I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see of flowers.”

Guernica—Pablo Picasso

“Art is a lie that makes us realize truth.”

[image of “Guernica”]

”It took me a lifetime to paint like a child.”

“Art is the elimination of the unnecessary”

“Inspiration exists, but it has to find us working.”

“Computers are useless. They can only give you answers”