

TRAUMA CLASSICAL: "FALLING MAN / DANCING MAN" AN INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER ANDREW SCHULTZ

As the header suggests, this "Trauma Classic" is neither a clinical perspective nor book. It is a discussion about an orchestral world premier performance occurring in Melbourne, November 18th 2005. The composer, Professor Andrew Schultz from University of Wollongong, sat in the audience as the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra delivered his concerto-style work to a capacity filled and enthralled Town Hall.

The composition "Falling Man/Dancing Man" was initially inspired by two photos contrasting the human experience of trauma. The first image, "Falling Man", captures one man, in the 9/11 World Trade Centre attacks. The second image, "Dancing Man", holds in midflight one man in Elizabeth street Sydney 1945. In the latter he jumps for joy at the end of war. In the former he leaps to his death. As is the way of photography, these moments in time are frozen, the men never land. As is the ontological nature of trauma, time is slowed and one image triggers so many memories.

Its deep tapestry of orchestra and solo pipe organ dragged the audience into a non-verbal (if not preverbal) narrative of both celebration and dread. Knowing the visual inspiration to this powerful musical landscape, I was compelled to bring Andrew Schultz to the traumatology community with a few questions:

Do you think "Falling Man / Dancing Man" is a work about trauma?

Defining the meaning of any musical work is almost always difficult because by its nature instrumental music is nebulous. I can remember as a child at school being played the famous Moldau River scene from Smetana's *Ma Vlast* and coming up with a completely unrelated scenario – nothing to do with rivers. No doubt the teacher thought I was a bit of a goose and obviously unmusical. Perhaps the meaning would be clearer to me now if I had just heard it for the first time as I would by now be more in touch with the musical clues composers use.

But we can never be sure, as listeners or composers, that what we are hearing is shared throughout an audience in terms of meaning or that the composer's apparent intentions are always what the real significance of the music may be for the composer. There can be hidden agendas with composers or deeply felt personal experiences and problems that lie beneath the musical surface.

But to answer the question I think there is an element of responding to trauma in this work – trying to find positives from the cycles of destruction and negativity that seem always ready to renew themselves. I drew the title, "Falling Man/Dancing Man", from two photos with contrasting depictions of human reactions to war. The first was the abject image of a Falling Man taken from the ground below the World Trade Centre attacks in New York in 2001. The image was later suppressed and remains a deeply contradictory photo given the choices and pain implicit in the subject's decision to jump. The second shows a Dancing Man who is celebrating in a Sydney street at the end of World War Two.

The seeming inevitability of human destructiveness and the way individuals struggle against that is something I allude to in the titles of the three movements of the work. The first, "Infinity Jinx", is taken from the children's playground taunt – where children make a game of outdoing each other with curses of bad fortune. "Deep Crossing" takes the idea that individuals have to rise above human misfortune to have any hope; I see that as an inner struggle against external circumstances and for that reason the movement is the most overtly expressive of the three.

Finally the third movement, "The Laughing Man", is playful and celebratory but somewhat ironic in intent as it takes its name from a short story by J D Salinger. Salinger is best known for "Catcher in the Rye" and this short story has a similarly droll and understated quality and draws on the experience and imagination of children for its shape. In the story, a group of pre-

teen children are held enthralled by their baseball coach's spirited but juvenile tales of glory and bloodshed enacted by a 'laughing man'; so-called, because a nasty experience with the bad guys in the story has left his face in a permanent disfigured smile. The story has a way of making light of heavy things.

The two images are iconic – how did they become the foundation for an orchestral composition?

I started thinking about the Falling Man photo after hearing a lecture by Peggy Phelan from Stanford University talking about the image and its interpretation in the US, post-9/11. The idea of a simple musical depiction of that image was not of great interest to me but the idea of it as a contrast to the celebrated Australian photo did appeal.

I was amazed as I started to research the images, quite casually via Google, to find countless images of falling and dancing bodies and to discover that very often they were similar, if upturned, images. They ranged from popular images, through to tarot cards and to sophisticated artworks from all periods.

My conclusion was that there are symbolic and psychological dimensions around falling and dancing as polarities of experience that seem to run deeply.

When we reflect about classical music, trauma is so often at its core. Would you agree?

Yes although much music is also driven by sonic and intellectual concepts that are quite independent of any specific experience; that depends a lot on the outlook and aesthetic view of the composer.

When you composed "Falling Man / Dancing Man" were you also engineering an emotive response from the audience?

The issue of emotion in music is both interesting and complex. More accurately I should say the issue of emotional response in an audience

hearing music as the emotion is not technically in the music. Many modernist composers would regard any engagement with an audience's emotional responses as suspect. The reasons for that view are not hard to find if you look at archival film footage of Hitler exploiting Wagner's music to incite an audience to his cause. Conversely, Hitler like Stalin, felt the message in some music to be unacceptable because it embodied values that were abhorrent to his ideology.

In contemporary film the emotional response of the audience is often manipulated by the director and its effectiveness may even be tested through focus group response prior to a film's release. Indeed film scores have been edited or rejected on that basis. Very often what happens is that music is used in film because it fits a kind of stereotype of what is desired by way of response from an audience.

For me, the emotional response to concert music is one of the great values of the art although one which can be abused and is rarely used skillfully in our era. The beauty and subtlety of it is that, like sexual arousal, the emotional response itself is not predictable or capable of being 'engineered' entirely. What makes the musical experience so potent emotionally is that it is a collective or shared experience for

an audience. I do believe that in shared mass experiences like music performance or sporting attendance or religious worship a significant part of the experience derives from its communal nature. What makes the musical experience even more potent is the familiar mode of concentrated and formal silence that the audience is expected to observe.

It's a bit of a black art but I have learnt some things about what causes a response to occur and some of them are obviously translated physical responses; sheer volume or intensity of sound, particular simple harmonic progressions, sudden contrasts, rising melodic lines, prolonged accumulations of material, simplicity contrasted with dense complexity and so on. These are examples which are potent because they tap into basic physical experiences. What is even more interesting to me is the kind of experience that is harder to define but which seems to me to be the experience of 'artistic truth' – namely when something touches a kernel of shared experience because the idea is so lucid and real. One might call this the hairs standing up on the neck and goose bump factor. It's an honest and unpredictable response; it cannot be engineered and seems ultimately to be deeply cathartic.



Andrew Schultz has held posts and residencies in Europe and North America including: Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music, Hincks Fellow – Villa Montalvo Arts Centre (California), Visiting Professor – Norwegian Academy of Music (Oslo) and Osaka School of Music, Artist in Residence, Banff Centre for the Arts, and Visiting Fellow – Institute for Advanced Musical Studies, University of London. Since 2002 Schultz has been Professor and Dean of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong.

The Dancing Man and his story is reported at:
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Who-is-the-dancing-man/2004/12/07/1102182297816.html>

The story and image of the Falling Man and its photographer can be found at:
http://kellyaward.com/mk_award_pup/pdf/junod.pdf

CHAPTER NEWS

With *Stress Points'* move to the technological, Chapter News has also moved. For information about your local Chapter, Chapter activities and becoming involved in your Chapter, go to "Chapters" in the website toolbar and select the Chapter of interest.

Each Chapter site holds information of interest to all ASTSS members: Victoria has photos from the Sudan, NSW has 'Cure is Not Enough': Research into the Long-Term Psychosocial Adjustment of Survivors of Childhood Cancer, their Parents, and their Siblings, SA introduces Chapter Research winner, Thomas J Nehmy, and WA has started a photo gallery.

Every Chapter is responsible for updating its page. Direct your ideas or requests to your Chapter Representative



[Stress Points' Summer 2006 contributors.](#)

From left to right, and in alphabetical order: Prof. Mark Creamer, Dr. Brian McCoy, Dr. Meaghan O'Donnell, Assoc. Prof. Carolyn Quadrio, Prof. Andrew Schultz, and Dr. Dulcie Veltman.