



CAMA

"Artist Lecture Series" | musicologist David Malvinni, Ph.D.

Sound/Stage #7: Solitude

Online Pre-Event Lecture by Musicologist
David Malvinni, Ph.D.

Friday, November 6, 2020



Sound/Stage #7 Program

Episode: “**Solitude**”

➡ Thomas ADÈS

Dawn (U.S. premiere)

➡ Duke ELLINGTON

Solitude

“While the **physical toll** of the global pandemic is measured in a mountain of data, the **emotional impact** of our separation from family, friends, and neighbors is not as obvious. In this episode, Dudamel explores the **essence of solitude**, from one of Duke Ellington’s classic songs to the U.S. premiere of a work by Thomas Adès – composed specifically for a socially distanced orchestra.”

[my emphasis—DM]



Thomas Adès (b. 1971, London)

- Renowned contemporary composer
- Three operas, one premiered at Salzburg Festival in 2016
- Many orchestral works:
 - 1999 *Asyla*
 - 2005 Violin Concerto, *Concentric Paths* ‘
 - 2007 *In Seven Days*
 - 2013 *Totentanz*, for mezzo-soprano, baritone and orchestra (Dance of death, inspired by the medieval plagues)
- Often conducts Boston Symphony Orchestra; as well as in LA, Czech, London
- Solo piano recitals; studied with UCSB Prof. Paul Berkowitz!
- Influences: visual arts (paintings), draws influences from high and low art, synth bands from the mid 80s, writes tonally



Dawn- *Chacony for orchestra at any distance*

- “A Flexible Work for the Covid Era”
- Seven minutes long; premiered at BBC Proms, 31 August 2020; S. Rattle
- ‘In this piece the sunrise is imagined as a constant event that moves continuously around the world’ writes the composer. ‘This eternal dawn is presented as a “chacony” - in the word that Purcell used some 330 years ago, a mile or two away.’
- Famous chaconnes from the Baroque era, culminate in Bach’s Ciaccona as the final movement for Partita no. 2 in D minor (BWV 1004), a funereal piece (tombeau) for his first wife Barbara
- Chaconne: variation piece, over a bass line that repeats; Dawn begins in strings, features flute, harp, and uses tonality, is neo-Baroque in style and texture



Duke Ellington (1899-1974)

- From Washington D.C.
- A pianist who led a swing band starting in the 1920s
- About 1000 credits for compositions, many standards, recorded by all the great singers and played by the greatest jazz players; signed on with Mills in 1926
- Got his start at the Cotton Club in Harlem, playing "jungle music"
- "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Mood Indigo," "Sophisticated Lady," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)"
- 1960s: Money Jungle, with Charles Mingus and Max Roach, proved he was still relevant; "Fleurette Africaine"



Duke Ellington: “(In My) Solitude”

- ▶ 1934 song, beginning of Depression when bottom fell out of music industry; Ellington was still able to find work
- ▶ Reflects the mood change of the Depression; regretful song of despair at the loss of a lover
- ▶ “In my solitude
You haunt me
With dreadful ease
Of days gone by”
- ▶ Lyrics by Eddie DeLange (“Darn That Dream,” “Moonglow”); recorded by Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Billy Eckstine among others
- ▶ Irving Mills (manager) got 50% of the song
- ▶ Ellington says he wrote the song in 20 minutes waiting to go on the stage in Chicago
- ▶ Lots of his songs were composed by Billy Strayhorn, but this one is pure Ellington



What to listen for:

Contemporary Tonal Work, Neo-Baroque + Swing Standard marking the transition to the Depression

- What is solitude? Philosophical question that haunted great thinkers
- The opposite of music-making and public performance
- Reflection, meditation on the self, could be responsible for the creative drive
- In the silence of solitude (*Einsamkeit*) we discover authentic Being and our true essence (Heidegger); determination of man as a realization of finitude; opposite of busy, distracted nature of modern life
- Dawn: the beginning of something new, a new day
- **Playlist for further exploration:**
<http://bit.ly/solitude-malvinni>



Martin Heidegger, a thinker of solitude