



In the Dark

I mentioned a few weeks ago that I have recently been listening to quite a bit of music that I haven't heard for many years. Doing so has refreshed many memories, especially of the days when I was deeply involved in music study myself. While I was in university, I was too 'junior' to be included in the school's orchestra, but that didn't bother me, because at that time, I was also the principal flute in the Youth Orchestra of the city.

The organizers of the youth orchestra program were of course very interested in encouraging our musical development, so they arranged a program whereby members of the orchestra could obtain very inexpensive season tickets to all the concerts of the professional orchestra in town. I jumped at this chance, as did one of my friends, and the two of us faithfully attended every concert throughout that year.

Because we were music students though, simply 'attending' the concerts wasn't enough; we wanted to 'dig in' and really get familiar with the music. So we cooked up a little plan: because I was a university student, I of course had library privileges there, and the school library was very comprehensive indeed, with a large selection of 'miniature scores' of orchestral music.

So before every concert, I went to the library and borrowed the scores to the music that would be played. Of course the auditorium was kept dark during the concerts, making it impossible to study the score during the performance, but that didn't stop us. We got a small flashlight and covered the end of it with aluminum foil, in which we made a small pin-prick hole. This let out just enough light to allow us to see the printed music (we were young, and had good eyes!), without unduly bothering any of the people in the neighbouring seats.

It worked very well, but was not completely without problems. The first of these was timing. It seems that we weren't the only students who wanted to study the music that was on the orchestra programs, and it sometimes happened that the score I wanted to borrow was already checked out. The solution to this was easy; when borrowing items from the library, there was a time limit during which they had to be returned - two weeks. So I simply looked ahead in the orchestra schedule, and checked out each score exactly two weeks before that item was due to be performed.

This took care of that problem, but the next one wasn't so easily solved. Because the section of the auditorium in which we sat was dedicated to season ticket holders, it meant that the people in the surrounding seats were always the same. We never learned each other's names, but we did become nodding acquaintances.

And one of our 'neighbours' - the man who sat directly in front of us - became difficult. I say 'he became difficult', but in truth, I guess he really can't be blamed ... You see, we were very enthusiastic students, and we followed the scores very closely. It was very difficult for us to keep completely silent.

"Did you hear that! He missed his entry completely!" Or ... "Wow, what a fantastic chord progression!"

We were of course only whispering, but when one whispers with exclamation marks, and one's neighbour is sitting only inches away, there are going to be problems. He would turn round, put his finger to his lips, and give us a "Shhhhhh!" We would not acceptance and apology, and return to our score.

Ten minutes later, he would turn around again, this time more insistent, "SSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHH!"

We really did try to keep quiet of course, and I don't want to suggest that we were so badly behaved that we spoiled everything for all the people around us. But there is no doubt about it, you can be sure that when

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>

that man arrived home each evening, he must have growled to his wife, "Those damn kids behind me were at it again tonight! They just couldn't keep quiet all through the whole concert! I have a good mind to complain to the orchestra management!"

But it seems that he never did, because nobody ever came to toss us out.

I of course have no idea who our neighbour was, and at this point can only apologize 'in absentia' for our behaviour. We learned a lot about music during that year; it's a pity we didn't learn a little bit more about manners!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>