
Concert for Dead Composers

Some of the birth houses of the masters
need repairing and paint (Hapsburg yellow
for Mozart's), and the reputations
of the lately dead the esteem of violin,
percussion and horn, a swelling of their own
sung forms. Street sounds, a bit of jazz,
the twelve tones hung on a musky breeze
like attic smells of an eccentric aunt
swirl in the great outdoor room.
The audience is especially moved by the chord
structures of fever and deafness. Dead
by his own hand, one composer is applauded
a long time. He lies quietly within
his song, stirring from bar to bar no more
than the wings of a moth in a window. It is afternoon
on the lawn, and former students are here,
with their forget-me-nots of ear and tone—
This is where we are in music. I was there.
The last lover in his tuxedo
cannot think of anything else but how
the master once dipped a tin cup in a stream
and dripped cold water down his neck.
The day grows silent; the most beautiful hour
is behind the acoustic shell, but in failing to last
there is joy more fulfilling. The crowd thinks so.