

start a center for composers in Big Sur maybe he would be genuinely interested. I told him that I compose in the baroque style. He moved on to someone seeking an autograph who had been drawn back to the edge of the stage by his reappearance. In that moment I realized that what my twenty-four-year-old self wanted from a meeting with Glass was for someone to take my music seriously. I should have answered his question. I should have said, “No one will play my music.”

On the way back to Carmel we were informed that one of the pianists who would be performing with Glass on Sunday, Maki Namekawa, was on the bus. The advice of a producer whom I had met the week before in Los Angeles still resonating in my ears, I resolved to introduce myself to her and ask if I could send her one of my compositions. I spent the ride fearing that my fifteen-year-old timidity would convince me that such an interaction was ultimately rude and pointless. When she stepped off the bus, I stepped off after her, and then I introduced myself, and she gave me her email. I doubt that I shall receive a response. The producer who told me to send him some samples of my music did not respond, I suspect to teach me the very lesson he had tried to impart with his words: whether a person responds does not matter, it is a question of statistics. One must not be possessed of the ridiculous notion that publishers, directors, conductors actually have singularly enlightened taste. One must disabuse oneself of the fanciful and ultimately self-flattering notion that those who are published, performed, produced, conducted, directed are somehow necessarily more enlightened, more skilful, more brilliant. There is one, and only one, element of the ephemeral, the ethereal which graces momentous artistic success: Luck. And in this scientific age, that is something in which we must not believe, so what is one to do? As I said, it is a question of statistics. There are three means of winning a lottery: entering an exceedingly small lottery, submitting a multitude of tickets, and entering a multitude of lotteries. Ideally one should engage in as many of these strategies as possible, and all at once. And so it has come to pass that I have descended from the idyllic to the mundanely bourgeois, all in the course of a Glass concert. I suppose that is the nature of wanting something: the action of desire is to paint a picture of the utmost longing beauty, which somehow combines the pain

of one’s imagined destitution with the potential splendor supposed to arise out of possession; yet, the act of fulfilling desire is to descend from the ideal state into the dark, constricted, rapaciousness that is reality ... In any case, if what I had wanted were words from a composer, then I had been given a whole book of them, and for free. I have not yet read the book, but so far what meeting Glass has made me realize is that I should stop throwing my pennies away. If I save them up, I could buy a lottery ticket, or better yet, some postage stamps.

RCA O’Neal enjoys Baroque music, fencing, travel, swing dance, and Graham Greene. He has played violin since the age of four, and composes in the Baroque style.

CHARLES SCHMIDT

Ephemera, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 42.5 x 64 in



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