Poetics

In Motion

A Senior Recital by Ben Zucker
Thursday, March 5, 2015
7:00 PM Memorial Chapel
Wesleyan University

Litany For The Whale
(John Cage)

Ariadne Songs (Ben Zucker)
I. Prologue/The Beach
II. Icarus
III. Lullabye
IV. Life Line

Fifth Season (Ben Zucker)
I.
II.
III.
IV.

Poetics In Motion (Improvisation)

Ben Zucker, voice
BZ, vibraphone
Siri Carr, Dina Maccabee, violin
Ali Felman, viola
Vivian Deng, cello
BZ, vibraphone
Josh Davidoff, clarinet
Angus Macdonald, guitar
Ron Shalom, double bass
Tobias Froehnofer, drums
BZ, piano
Via Wikipedia: Poetics is the theory of literary forms and literary discourse. It may refer specifically to the theory of poetry, although some speakers use the term so broadly as to denote the concept of “theory” itself...The term “poetics” comes from the Greek ποιητικός poietikos "pertaining to poetry," literally “creative, productive.”

This is a concert about form. Why forms, and why these forms? What happens when the forms born from poetics are moved (not too far, really) to the realm of sound and music?

The Ariadne Songs is an act of exploration through translation. These songs, original written for a musical by Dylan Zwickel, have been removed from the context of voice, piano, and acting and remade as chamber music. What is lost without words, but conversely, what is gained in this new setting?

Fifth Season uses the domain of the poetic, language, to create forms and expressions that would be unfeasible or inefficient with conventional notation. Through a series of prose instructions, the performers move through a series of moments, eliding and dovetailing the described musical gestures in manners that owe more to the jump cut, montage, collage, and crossfade than to the principles of musical development. The narrative is exploded as much as it is constructed. The choice when and where to do so is the beauty of improvisation and open, indeterminate forms; but to do so magnifies the performer’s responsibility of keeping the narrative affective. A successful narrative can be captivatingly beautiful, or even merely interesting. Ideally, it is both.

Litany For The Whale is such a piece. A single word is made into music, and subsequently taken apart and recombined in every way imaginable, and let loose to echo through space. It is included here to honor the American experimental tradition from which my written thesis research comes from, my studies of the voice and technology, and to fulfill certain programmatic forms. (I was more than a little obsessed with the numerology of this concert: there 4 pieces of music, two with 4 movements, two each of solos and quintets, organized roughly symmetrically. Ahhhhhh, balance.)

This is a concert about form, and I must conduct some formalities: Thank you for being here to make music by listening, thank you to the performers who made this music sound, and to all performers and people who make the infinite variety of music possible by living life. Right now, we are only here to observe a little cut into the infinite variety, and leave different than we were before.

~Ben Zucker