

Ked Adams

I Once Heard a Tree Tell Me

The composition of this piece is centered around sonic analogies for the identities found within speech, particularly in the poem I wrote two years ago with the same title. Each significant sound had a particular musical partner. For instance, "R's" at the beginning of the word were given a sound with an "opening" motion: *sul tasto* to *sul ponticello*. "B's" were assigned *pizzicatos*, "S's" assigned bowings of strings behind the bridge (due to their intense high-partial spectral profile).

The poem itself focuses on the particularity of personal identity, what matters in the associations of a given name, and whether it truly belongs in the language I speak or any language at all. There is duality between the God I was taught to believe and the "god" that actually formed my self: the Earth and her matter. Attempts at various metaphors throughout the poem lead us in circles until the poet cannot stand it. The spirals of metacognition lead to no recognition, and the communion with the beings of the Earth around us implore familiarity: trees, flowers, friends.

This piece concerns itself with three musics: a single chord which reflects the circular wilt of nature; the analogization of the sounds of the poem; and a canon which comes from Alfred Schnittke's third string quartet. The exchange of these profiles existing in a single space behave (in their composites) as metaphors for identity-searching. The point at which the voices remain still and the soprano speaks her line, finally intelligible to the listener, is the point at which metaphor fails, just as it does in the poem. The experience removes the listener from the space previously prescribed to the material. The overrepresentation and underrepresentation of ideas parallels that of language and cognition, and the abstraction of ideas within composition is a significant focus as well.

The experience of writing this piece took me through several different attempts in my journey of discovering the correct proportion of processes: beat sheets, following drawn shapes, analogizing text, borrowing material from other composers, etc. What I have discovered is that in combining these processes, a metaphorical toolbox has formed with its contents shifting—which can be applied this to any work in its unique context.

Therefore, creating this piece has helped me clarify my creative process: employing proportions and layers, recognizing composite shapes formed by superimposed identities, and understanding the boundary between communal expression and what is propaganda have been ideas I have enjoyed learning how to explore.