

# In Memoriam: Jacob Druckman

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Death of Jacob Druckman, winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 for his colorful and engaging "Windows" for orchestra, at the age of 67 from lung cancer. May 24, New Milford, CT.

A master orchestrator, Jacob Druckman's many compositions for diverse media show an aesthetic informed by sonorific effect and timbral design. His works after "Animus I" (1966, for trombone and tape) also often employ theatrical elements and, beginning with "Animus IV" (1977, for tenor, six instruments, and tape), quotation.

Druckman's harmonic language is dissonant and complex, but his creation of this language after 1965 was rarely based on dodecaphonic methods. Druckman described this as a "Move toward a more intuitive approach to Music" [Druckman, 6] and that

... Basically, we are talking about the polarity between Classical and Romantic, or Apollonian and Dionysian. It's a matter of a delicate shift of balance between ideas that are always co-existent, the rational versus the intuitive. Obviously, both processes have to be there always. However, does one lean towards the intuitive, or does one lean towards the rational? [Dufallo, 250-51]

Druckman was convinced that he was not alone in this philosophical shift.

... One of the earliest signs of the new aesthetic in the 1960s was the music of the Eastern European avant-garde. Penderecki, Lutoslawski, Ligeti were moving away from an intellectual orientation toward an acoustic sensuality. The poignant nostalgia of Berio's "Sinfonia" . . . in Japan, Takemitsu, and in the United States, Crumb, and later Schwantner . . . were leading us into a mysterious and fragrant garden of dreams [Druckman, 44].

Appointed Composer-in-Residence with the New York Philharmonic in 1982, Druckman explored this notion of the "new romanticism" through a series of provocative concerts presented as the Horizons festivals. While some composers from the so-called Uptown school complained of favoritism, Druckman maintained that he was not advocating any one approach or another, but was simply recognizing a shift in the musical currents of the time. The diversity of the composers on the programs (Takemitsu, Del Tredici, Berio, Adams, Martino) demonstrated this shift across a wide range of compositional styles.

Druckman's influence on contemporary music in the latter half of the twentieth century was vast, extending far beyond his own energetic and vivid compositions. He was active as a conductor, often presiding over his own works as well as those of others. He also served as a leading member of various foundations devoted to the support of contemporary music (1972, president, Koussevitzky Music Foundation; 1980, co-chairman, NEA Composer-Librettist Panel; 1991, president, Aaron Copland Fund for Music). Finally, as a teacher (1957-72, Juilliard; 1961-67, Bard; 1976-96, Yale), Druckman became a mentor for many young composers, some of whom (notably Aaron Jay Kernis and David Lang) have gone on to great success. On a more personal note, Jacob Druckman paved the way for my opera "The Highway" to be performed at Yale, with orchestra, in 1992. This support reflected his generosity towards his students, but may also have been partly a reaction to his own tumultuous experience with the world of opera (his 1981 Metropolitan Opera commission -- a work based on the Medea story -- was cancelled in 1986 and a planned production in Bonn was also never realized).

Only history can ultimately reveal the legacy of any artist, but in his many and varied roles in the world of contemporary music, Jacob Druckman clearly left his mark.

... We composers begin again to talk about "morality" in music or "uplifting experiences. Being "touched" by musical pieces, we begin once again to use the word "beautiful," which hasn't been used in so many years. I think that many of us are looking for that kind of experience. There's no reason why we can't include that with all the sophistication that we have gained in more recent years [Ewen, 189].

No reason at all, especially with Jacob Druckman having helped to lead the way.

## References Cited

- Druckman, Jacob. "Stating the Case for the 'New Romanticism'." *Ovation* (June 1983)
- Dufallo, Richard. "Trackings." New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)
- Ewen, David. "American Composers." New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982.