



The Opera

'What a crowd! Who's paying? Some without instruments - Singers! Their tool's in their head! Some are truly appetising - no, I mean the women *and* the men. See, the instrumentalists cluster round in families, like sparrows and crows - brass with brass, fiddles with each other. Who sings louder gets to fuck more females - same with trombones....'

'And you, Hervé?' I ask: 'You've no family. Being a critic can't take all day....Why not put yourself in harmony?'

'No voice,' he says, 'But I've a scarlet rump and a red flag on my crest.'

There's a movement of disquiet, fragments of discontent. The percussionist says - 'Our parts. They're empty - nothing to play ? Or do we improvise?'

There's Giselda, looking red and moist, stuck in a corner, explaining absences - 'The machine,' she wails, 'It printed nothing out.'

Hervé laughs: 'Mine's an easy piece to write,' he says, 'Three acts of acufene, a drama of deaf-mutes'

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It isn't true. It's opera. The singers know their parts. The rest - will fit. In time.

'My subject, Hervé,' I tell him, as he pulls to get away, 'It's how once work made us; it filled our adult years with comrades and our politics. Now, these middle years are full of triviality - of family, fathers who failed, then lovers who don't love, or not enough and not exclusivelyAnd then you die, just like before.... Except you've had no politics, no mates, and nothing that you've done remains'

He stares at me: 'You don't like what's real and here to stay?' he asks: 'You're in the right trade: opera. Nostalgic bourgeoisie! - you've found your champion in my friend ... his silent music, quite unplayable - the hired hands in their penguin suits will sit and strum, then take a bow. Then, silent applause, from never-dirtied hands.'

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'I have to get away - can we begin?' asks a sturdy lad, Dromy: 'The protagonist,' I say: 'I don't see her.'

'Oh, she works bars in Haskovo,' says Dromy: 'Maybe she missed the bus to here. Anyway, my part is high. Who am I? Am I a trans?'

'If you can't do the part,' I say, 'You should have said - someone else ...'

'I need the money,' Dromy says: 'I'll make out.'

'Need's not a criterion here,' I say, 'Not on this earth. Everybody knows it.'

'We'll call it off,' Giselda says, recovered: 'The original parts aren't here ...'

'They were copied late,' I say: 'Give the band some cash, tomorrow we'll all come

That isn't possible - tomorrow is another country, other laws and different people.

'Can you write something, Hervé?' I ask: 'A puff? An exclamation, not what you'd call critique.'

'Oh yes,' says Hervé: 'Mine's not content, it's just style. Say what you want - music has no country, exists in no space, the words don't matter - I'll tell my public how good, how difficult, how awful it all is...No one needs hum along ...'

Everybody leaves: they're all busy, say they are, have futures determined somewhere else, everything will happen some time, but ... we can't reschedule...

Of course we can't. For things to happen, everybody has to organise, all serve perfection, exactly similar - that's why there's hordes of angels. 'Hosts', they're called, but they're not hospitable, don't have a place to entertain....

Dromy says, 'My club - it's not for gentlemen. It'll wind you down'

I'm fascinated by what seems to be - an adam's apple. 'It's a goitre,' Dromy says: 'If it goes on, it will throttle me. Your gig and my swan song.... will meet up in space, like every genre.....'

'It'll still happen, some time,' I tell him: 'Just - without you. It's better so....'

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