

Dancing Prophets

I have a picture, a block print done by an artist I actually met in St. Petersburg, Florida in 1967. Robert Hodgell. Big man, wild curly red hair, booming voice, showed me around his studio, was delighted with my totally unannounced and reverential appearance on his doorstep. We have several prints by him, one showing Eve embracing Adam, winking to the observer, the famous apple extended to his open mouth, a little butterfly fluttering near her posterior,....well that is another story.

My favorite Hodgell print is "The Dancing Prophet." It is a two dimensional rendering of some frenzied bearded man in a tunic, arms extended, singing and reaching to his God, dancing on skeletal toes. It is obvious he is in a place, somewhere, seeing something we don't see.

Tonight I listened to ..."Dr. Karl Haas" on NPR. He does a daily segment called *Adventures in Music*. He always opens his segment with, "he-loooow, everybody," with pursed mellifluous tones, I imagine....because this is radio after all.

Dr. Haas is one of the most pedantic people ever to have walked the face of this planet. He doesn't pronounce Johannes Sebastian Bach like...well, like "Bok" or "Back."

He says, "Yo-**hann**-es Se**baaah**stian, Baa**chhhhhhhhhhh**," accents on the highlights, with a sound that challenges all but the most fastidious Yiddish pronunciation of "chazarai".... pronounced chaa-za-rye (incidentally, more or less translated as "crap," or "rubbish" or, sometimes, I am told, as "bullshit"), much mucus involved in the contraction of the thorax.

The "chh" is guttural. I can't do Dr. Karl's pretentious pronunciations of famous musicians and musical elucidations justice. Just take my word for it if you have never heard him, he is an amazing collection of musical trivia, some information very weird, on occasion bizarrely obscure, usually just informative, more music stuff than one might think possible to accumulate in a single lifetime, an expert who thinks it is important to pronounce composer names in an indisputably American accent trying to imitate Italian, French, Renaissance dialects.

Last evening I fixed a fine dinner of red snapper, marinated in a delicate wine sauce, placed upon baked sweet potato chunks slavered over with a pesto made from basil, much garlic, much parsley, olive oil Jesus would have liked, fresh ground pepper...well suffice it to be said that Dr. Haas would love it. He would pronounce it Baaah-sil and snaaapp-ah.

And, while I was cleaning up the kitchen, he came on NPR. I listen to "Prairie Home Companion" and the Tappit Brother's "Car Tawk" regularly, but I almost never listen to Dr. Haas because he comes on at a time when I am either eating or cleaning up. Tonight I was cooking and cleaning up longer than usual. Lucky me.

I had an immediate glandular, who knows at my age which gland, but something jerked, a spontaneous reaction. Dr. Haas said this was to be a night of Johannes Sebastian **Baaaaaach**.

I don't know how most people deal with cleanup in the kitchen after a meal involving a lot of olive oil and messy herbs, but I tend to get to business, soap, sponges, disinfectant...but I stopped everything suddenly. Dr. Karl Haas blessed me with a beloved Baaach violin concerto. I sat down. Closed my eyes. Put the dishes to one side. Sponge in the sink. Listened for some time. Tranquil. Contemplative.

Then he sonorously introduced the Brandenburg Concerto #3.

I couldn't help myself. Coming out of my violin concerto trance, I began to dance. In my kitchen. All by myself.

How many people do you know who dance to a Brandenburg Concerto while cleaning up in the kitchen? Anybody sane?

But I was dancing around in two thirds time in my kitchen, one leg out, the other pirouetting, not a bad interpretation of Jeremiah, boogieing on my own skeletal toes, lifting my arms with a dirty frying pan in one hand, a wine glass in the other, Johannes leading me to rapture dish cleaning and I was twirling, and humming, and actually whistling this marvelous tune, waving my arms around like a demented Ezekiel while scrubbing some scraps off plates, getting back to kitchen cleanup business, doing an Old Testament hully gully pot scrubbing and occasional cha-cha sink spraying, to Brandenburg, banshee-like, while

starting the wash cycle, tip-toeing over to put the milk back into the refrigerator celebrating all of our lives as best I can.

If this sounds like I am a very strange person, well I just don't care. Bach's music is what is the best and sublime with our species. God help us all if we don't become prophets and dance to Baaaach's Brandenburg Concerto #3..

And my note to Dr. Haas in tomorrow's mail...well I hope my wife never sees it. It will be really difficult to explain.