

Letters from our readers

8 December 2012

On “Elliott Carter (1908-2012) and the crisis of contemporary music”

Thank you, Fred, for an excellent and informative article about 20th century music and composers. I would add to your comments about the withdrawal of composers into their own little worlds after WWII the withdrawal of a musician: pianist Glenn Gould. He stopped performing in front of audiences and spent the later part of his life playing “for himself,” recording pieces in little sections and pasting them together when he was satisfied of their “perfection.” Needless to say, the performances were, at least in my opinion, cold and sterile. This is a shame, because I have heard earlier recordings of Gould playing in front of audiences and his playing was brilliant—full of fire, emotion and color. Audiences cheered. The products of his withdrawal resembled the dull obsessions of depression.

Carolyn
California, USA
6 December 2012

An excellent analysis of the dilemma which faced composers and other artists in the liberal West during the post-war era, when artists were officially encouraged to retreat into an extreme subjectivism that did not engage with the public or raise their consciousness to a higher level. Art can be difficult to access, but the rewards should be there for those who do the work to understand it—with some of the figures who were promoted in the mid-20th century as the West’s reply to stultifying Socialist Realism, such engagement is almost impossible. As a result it became easier, for those who control budgets, to claim there is a lack of public support for the arts.

Kamilla V
British Columbia, Canada
6 December 2012

On “The failure of land reform in South Africa”

A very important piece; very diligently covered and explained which shows the utterly hollow character of the ANC’s claims to being a “revolutionary” force while at the same time reinforcing the correct perspective advanced at the beginning of the last century by some of the most far-sighted thinkers of the socialist movement.

Nick
6 December 2012

On “Congressman Jack Brooks, Rex ‘84 and the Iran-Contra affair”

This article certainly was a revelation to me, as I had never read about “Rex ’84”. Under Bush/Cheney’s regime I read about huge detention centers being built in the central United States by Halliburton on Federal land. The story was that they were to contain captured illegal aliens, but they could contain anybody. Is this true? Did they get built? Where are they? I have heard nothing about them for years.

Thank you.

Richey H
Arizona, USA
6 December 2012

On “Large turnout at meeting on attacks on public schools in Michigan”

I was at the first meeting and I noticed that many of those in attendance were teachers. I told Dr. Markavitch afterwards that if this was simply a teachers’ fight, this movement would fail. The public owns these schools and the wealthy property owners would howl and

complain if somebody stole a birdbath or lawn ornament from their lawn but seem complacent when their schools are threatened. In reality, everybody would suffer unless they were wealthy enough to send their children to an exclusive private school.

Excuse me for saying it almost should be a fight for the capitalists since it is the capital of the public that is being squandered by privatization. It's ironic that somebody would move to an affluent district "for the schools" and then stand by and watch them be destroyed. What about "small government? What about local control? I remember the hue and cry over proposed cross-district busing. Why was "local control" so important then and now it matters not at all?

I just returned from a Christmas concert put on by my school. A ninety-year-old man who had started the program in 1949 was honored and I was struck by what you might call "socialism in action." The sacrifices over the years by everyone involved—parents, professionals, administrators and the dedication by students to put on this program made this possible. What a crime it would be to dismantle it all and hand it over to profiteers in search of the odd profit. When this program was started he had only 40 students and this affluent suburb was farmland. He had to use his car for an office and divide his duties between schools. There was no music room and the students had to practice in hallways or wherever space could be found. It seems we may have to return to those days before people realize that schools and programs didn't happen by accident and nothing guarantees their future except the will and support of the people.

Phillip S

7 December 2012



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