

What It Means to Be Caught in the Storm

Perhaps my most recently acquired frustration with high school is its apparent lack of inertia. I don't mean the building itself; I'm sure that if the bricks and cement were thrown, they would take enormous force to halt. Instead, I am referring to the fact that people commonly make that mistake, thinking that the name "CB South" refers to those bricks and cement. What happens within these walls is not enough to overcome them: the base level of inspired energy—among students and among almost all teachers—seems to be a firmly rooted zero. Attendance is an obligation; classroom connections are fleeting; personalities are façades jaded students erect against the negative energy that pulses from within them and from the otherwise-deadened white walls. People rush away at 2:30 like repelled magnets, and when school is not in session, most internal communities are abandoned—not only is the building empty; school in the metaphysical definition is deserted as well.

I want to be a part of an academic community that has momentum, a community whose personality exists separate from itself, eternal, intangible, infectious, engulfing. Instead of an environment in which every pursuit must be hauled and heaved up from scratch just to possess a spark, an inertial environment has a continuously rumbling energy under it, like smoldering embers ready to be enflamed at a moment's notice. In contrast, we commonly find ourselves collecting timber time and time again.

Quite suddenly, though, I have found myself initiated into the Third Millennium, which is quite possibly the most momentous—derived here from "momentum"—community I have ever witnessed: altogether without physical boundaries, the Third Millennium is connected by a common philosophy and purpose; it is sustained by pure momentum without any forced connection. It has a language all its own (I am still unsure about the definition of some of the markings in "Stormworks"), a history all its own (our fledging membership is preceded by decades of experiences before us), and a philosophy that is in stark contrast to the normal, tepid maxims fed to schoolchildren. And the originality and driving force behind this language, history, and philosophy create a legacy of energy so sweeping that those dedicated to membership are swept along—in effect, "Stormworks" is exceptionally literal: those who take part in this body of work are swept into a cerebral, philosophical, and communal storm.

In "Stormworks 1988-2013," momentum is all. The "relentless" rhythm brings momentum to the literal realm, but there's also an intangible realm of momentum driving through this piece: echoes of movies, of emotions, of performances reverberate off the page and add depth and wind to the storm-like inertia. And playing along with the percussion track brings a conceptual momentum as well as a physical boundary of forward motion: practicing at home, I am forced to constantly conform and live up to the standards of the professional musicians whom I have never met yet are who are miraculously accompanying me. The track is a glimpse of the end product—it will never change; we are the ones who must match its established force and inflection. Clearly, the base level for this piece is far above zero. It's incredible that compared to my time spent in school—in the proximity of thousands, there appears to be little intellectual spark or vigor—practicing "Stormworks 1988-2013" by myself, at home, feels almost claustrophobically inhabited by sheer human will.

I am enthralled by this experience because it reasserts everything I love about MUSIC. I love the community, the communication that will eventually occur across the stage, but for now is replaced by a different connection—one of experiences across time and space. Lofty goals are hardly set for students anymore, yet here we are pinned up against professional quality and must, in a matter of months, leap to the occasion, and contrary to popular belief, people love to leap. A community so individual and so idealistic is a pleasure to get swept into, and I love the storm that is engulfing us all. A storm without sides, without limits; a storm that has lasted for over two decades, silently smoldering in the background of society, ready to jump to flame anywhere around the globe—a universal storm that shocks everyone in its range with lightning that reaches into the Romantic depths of passion, commitment, and idealism...

This is shaping up to be the perfect storm, 2013.