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Vaclav's Workshop, Kromeriz, Czech Republic

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April 13, 2010

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Prologue

Carry with me now in Asia
Places topics block out space
Inside the head – and mine is
Full except, some space inside
Has fallen through like boards
A rot the center of the floor-
So are my memories connected to my now-
Foundations I deepened, a vertebrae perhaps
That I must take a leap across to stand
And so the structure of what holds me- is the same-
And so, I jump about- and make my way, so
Not to fall
Into a hole---

Approach from Prague

Prague in June
Was hot in day but night
Falls, hard
And cold, and heavy rain
Like rain would never stop
And fog like I had heard of Prague
On that- first visit,
Lost among a hedge and living maze
Inside a cloister in a rain from heaven and from hell
But, that was Prague
And with its gilded towers, and its golden clock
And patina men across the great bridge and mass of buildings
All along its water ways
Its subway, too, buses, and the train- away descend
Dark underground, to find the way, to steady
Lasting, God made man and man made Czech train-
Solid, moving, arm of God, and steel, and, sustaining, like

A horse

Too long, slow hours steadily across into the
Heat and forest village rain again, and fall of night-
And last, I am

The single passenger who leaves the train
Will never stop in Kromeriz, decided long ago-
Indirect, and difficult a way, no train stops
In Kromeriz-

It is

A local assent-

A stop outside of Kromeriz-

It is, so late, I took a later train

And now, is dark and wet and late, and one more

Local, maybe I can catch- it is on one of those tracks-

In two hours-

At the train station, outside Kromeriz- I am alone- but for

There is an insane blind man- his beard is long, and white, and he is thin

He hears me, hears the coins I put into a coffee machine- and, with a blind confidence

He flies to me- and speaks, and when I utter English he can hear,

I do not understand, and so he talks and yelps and whispers- all the more

And becomes like a prophet, and focuses his cloudy white eyes on the top of my head

And I try to move, but he stays in step and moves, predicting when it is

That I will try to step away- his long thin hair is like a part of homeless wear, no time

To tend to self, but always watching (sensing) out, out of the self, a shirt

Maybe is it blue? With chest hairs poking through between the buttons-

An open button up sweater, old, tattered, checkered black and white

And thinnest line of food that follows in a flow, along a crease

From chin to corner of his mouth and even as he speaks some prayer or curse to me

I see a leer, as if he knows that I am looking at him too

And seeing maybe less than him-

I find a tunnel – underneath the ground, it passes

To the rails that send you different ways

-to spend the time of waiting, I will walk, from side to side-

and as I do, the blind man as a bat that knows his way, will follow me

and take no time accustoming himself to darkness there

so he is catching me, and punches my chest

with his boney, accusing finger- sucking up my pity

with my discomfort, and spitting it out, into my face-

yet, here I stand, and face him, and I find, no harm

comes- it is as if- it is only darkness, and, this

is just a ghost- and I have been by now-

out in the world, and darker places, and in my own world too

and Asia, and Europe, and North - I have been flying, so that it seems

the bat man seeks to stir my primate

fear of night

but, my brain waves have come flat to this

he should see

how blind I am to him-

and so I wait the time, and try to evade

for mere discomfort

this dramatic scene

like local drama

on a makeshift canvas stage

and as the last of night

and local train arrives

- I see it come for years

a pin of light and moving

and, through the fog-

the blind man fades

I see him, in a straight and narrow line

Walking backwards to the street and out a hill that eats him-

And the train is like an empty stomach

And, it moves slowly like digestion

Through the shortest spanse

To Kromeriz-

So, twice I went, so, I blend two visits now,

To fiction it to make more perfect

Two years apart, and choose best for this from the two-

Kromeriz

Arrive- spit out the train car
Is all gone underneath a stone arch people empty
Rain on stone and running water pouring into grates
And down this wall as has been done
Before my years and standing where
Many in their daily lives to work and to their home
Have waited in a silence of their own-
Another dark, another waiting-
And now, I can reflect, as even I remember
Mine is much as beautified as real, and I remember
As the traveler, while, a memory lives here
I will never know-, massed and deep and even
My blind man knows
But thinking now, I know how vain I was and am
To not embrace the things I know-
Could I walk, but I am lost, or tired, and
I wonder, which direction do I go from here-
Street to street, left right
A lone light, a headlight passing and I wave
It stops, a cab- from arch to car
And I am waterlogged, and "square"
I say, and soon, I see familiar streets- (this memory, I have been before)
And then
A waterfountain I think it was, a dark mass
Above the ground in white fog, backlight
From streetlights? I am in
Kromeriz- thank you car, and here, is money- gone, like boat on styx –
Sidewalk
There, I see a hanging sign adjacent to me, is it- Museum?
I look, I can, almost see the other side, of the square,
The rain is driving fog back into ground, I see
The border, all around, and at my feet, the stone
The squares, I know, town square, long lived, stone-
I carry bag in hand and back bag- I find a restaurant I recall,
And ask, a hotel – I am unsure, so this will do – I am tired –
And as I move across the square, a wind circles me, and increases rain but it is just a game
Because, I arrive.
A hotel and a shower and a change of clothes
That somehow are not wet
The hotel restaurant and bar, and I am sitting
With a mug of Czech beer- and my wet hair
Combed straight back and tied, and I arrived
And look across the room, and hear CZ and see
Some faces that I know- and as they rise
To leave, I call a name and wave to one
Who stops and says my name, as if a question-
Yes, I think, it is who I am, here-
It is late now, but, it has been as late for longer, as
The night comes early and is quiet here
Candles kerosene electric light no matter
Still, the wax and wane of time like from a storyteller's heart-
Prevails and
Buildings are the same
And the stone in streets, the castle and the grounds, the gardens
Cathedrals, rising is seems on every corner of a block-
Attest to strength and lasting things, and pattern and
The conservation of time-
Daytime, I will leave, and find my way, for why I came
Art and music spill from here to Olomouc
There is a festival, one full, resonant
With love of sound and art and time and place
And human life and statement in the grand
Caught up in some greatness-
From back to now, to forward, it is a spirit festival

Forrest like a forest in where all the elements be
 A forest, like the chateau grounds, and fields and pavilions it contains-
 Where some will come, from here, or far
 Perform, in forum, meet
 And, make this context and then
 Showing value, not a sterile thing
 But thought expressed shows art that bridges all
 And first of it, it is
 Of time
 And here, like something stopped
 To show
 How strong is place
 How strong is art.
 And each one brings the core
 Of who and what they are, and those who come
 And come again-
 Affix to something here, or find
 A spot within it, them
 To own and speak through
 Makes a living thing-
 ..and elders of the art and young
 confer on substance and topic
 in the chateau halls and at
 cathedrals
 new experiencing given in
 a setting of the continuity-
 and young gain from this socket in to arts veins-
 overseeing stately and lovingly and still with mystery
 Vaclav and Zdenka see, for years these gatherings
 Like ritual, a flow of vapor passing
 And showing in all these aspects-



Vaclav's Workshop
 And I, my place-
 What brings me-
 In my work, I wish to shed some light
 On what I see ignored
 Of matter, and of sound
 And what both wish to do and be
 For us to act, and live-
 And I will bring, or search out things
 With which to act, and to behave-
 And this is my art, and in Kromeriz,
 I would find, some streets and sticks,

And brick, and other matter waiting to be moved
I come early once, prepare, and live in Vaclav
And Zdenka's house-
A place so rich with flow of life and continuities
If I am open I would overwhelm –
Of Zdenka's music, and a violin, and pedagogy
And, her dumplings, CZ are different from Taiwan
And I think, Zdenka's all her own –
A painter, Vaclav's studio
Its where I slept, inside their home-
Painting dark and swirl
With powers and color speak
A long and deep sight-
Overcome by power, I would
Look, and feel the presence-
But not to meet it- only
See, and know and when great
Artists come, and speak, and compose-
Where would I adapt, I wondered-
Attaching to the house, a little shed, was Vaclav's
Workshop- seeing it, I lost breath-
Of some wood, and framing things,
But tools, for many things an artist
Uses, and he makes, of other ilk –
A master who will tinker too,
In many things, and Zdenka too, to garden,
Tools and pots-
Expression, coming into
Everything they do, and here, this
Workshop filled with tools and pieces- rich golden nuggets of pure matter-
I said, myself, this is my kernel
My kernel of Kromeriz, I would meet Kromeriz
Through these things-
The walls were covered by a thousand hooks
Each holding a working tool, so new,
Some old and rusted in their use, containers holding clips and screws and nails in boxes
Buckets, wire, hoes and spades and garden tools, and pieces from unfinished things
And left behinds from others done – that spilled out onto the floor, and boards and sheets of things,
And even there a cage, a hamster watched me as I watched- and piles of hay for him-the shed was singing
In a vibrant silence
Singing for a song-
Outside, flowers grew in abundance
Both loosely and in ordered rows
But here, was a heart, from where
Their plan was hatched-
And maybe also were
The things that held the canvas
I see in squares
And order of their chaos –
And abyss-
The heart itself, depicting time-
How strange, I thought, to look- and now, engage!
Approaching, I assumed, the
Mastery, and confidence, and, humility
To make a workshop speak, and sing-
Its life as second from its users-
Like a child that's born of application
And utility, but also, love of acting out
Of living, day to day, a workshop-
Approach, and make it sing!
I bought a ball of string, and had
My scissors
I placed a wooden chair in center
And began to tie a string to each
Thing I could see- and ran the string
To chair, and cut the length- for
Some hours-

I prepared-
I cut my strings, attached to bolts and nuts
And hammers and pieces
Of the wood, and tools I didn't even recognize
And flaps that hung, and sheets of matter, and to handles
I could move, and
Knobs and any thing-
And expectation
Theirs and mine, of to perform
To play the room, the workshop
As a drum, or flute, or trumpet- to tune and make an orchestra
A celebration of each single voice that we might add to tell symphonic
Stories of the purposes and age and time passed in pursuit of making
Making with the substances of active life- my sectioned order of themselves
Under my eye, of where to tie and lead with string, and how to introduce
Each thing- and see, how best its voice would fit
Into a whole
Together
In an order against the silence
And through the
Open door, like
Sound hole on the
Sound box of a music thing
And time came
Artists and composers came
And I sat in my chair
And artists crowded at the door
And I began to pull the hundreds strings
That met me at the chair
And from the first, each thing rose and fell
Or moved toward me, telling how it lived and worked in Kromeriz
And the care it took, to make what's made with each of these
One was stately, maybe, was a spade, - that rose and fell by its handle
And then sang and rung a metal tone as it fell down against the wall-
A hammer pulled made a thump as if a heavy Chinese drum-
A slow at first, to leave resounding space
But, they grew impatient, and began to
Voice before another's end, and took
To orchestrate themselves-
And so, I pulled and played my part-
But like conductor too, I tried to hold them back
And make a democratic thing
Where each was part in its own turn
In daily life, and sang it so-
And in the end, when all had sounded,
Some together, some alone and in an order,
It was done, and Kromeriz
Had been said
By Vaclav's workshop
And I had said it, too
From in its very center
And I felt that
Now I know Kromeriz
Now, I know, the place-

Epilogue

And now as I am flung, I find Kromeriz and, too,
Vaclav's workshop far afield
And in Taipei, I sounded it again,
And then I will, in many places again,
As each is rich with what
It has and holds
And I find
Vaclav's Workshop
Is in every space
I put myself into-
And if I stay for long

In every other thing and place
Kromeriz is.

In 2010, Festival Forfest goes into its 21st season as the premier festival of contemporary and new art and music in Eastern Europe. Drawing artists from around the world, each year, they converge on Kromeriz, in the Czech Republic, meet, (branching into Olomouc and Bratislava) present new work in music and art, and exchange from their collective knowledge in an uninhibited pursuit of the spirit of creation. Under the directorship of Vaclav and Zdenka Vaculovic from its birth, this festival grows each year in influence, depth, and purpose.



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