

Tender Beats

I told my drum teacher I did not want to use a metronome. That endless ticking... tic tic tic ... Keeping time. I thought to myself, drums are not really about time. I wanted a metaphysical experience. Something meaningful. Something about I and You. A kind of connection. I thought, this could be meaningful. A kind of connection. Even the little things. What occurs between the beats. In between the tic tic tic. So, we got rid of the metronome. In its place, instead, a I and a You. That began to feel like something. I could imagine something, in this between space. The beat. Raindrops. But then my drum teacher, well, he kind of gave up on me. Guess I just could not manage those drum rolls. I went ahead. Instead of the Tic, I went for the Thump.

This is a place to start. Everything else... well... I started not to care. I wanted the Thump, not the Tic – you see, the Tic is like, well, it's like the endless rhythm, the cycle, the defined. As a contrast, the Thump, well... that's the disruption. The thing that stands out. An odd rhythm. The Thump, well, it might be understood to pose a problem. I like problems. For instance: I am here... Right? And you, well, you are there, right? And then... well, something happens. Yes, that's right. A sudden explosion – ? well, maybe... No seriously. To get back to the Thump, to the Problem: this begins to open up something. A negotiation. A conversation. I and You. That might be a beginning. A dialogue. A friction. Or at least a noise. Which is something.

I felt this could be a beginning. Between. But to get back to that Thump. It could be a sudden noise. Or, someone yawning... I'm not sure. But, either way, it disrupts that sense of Time – the Tic. Jump. My drum teacher, he wanted me to learn that Van Halen song, Jump. Well, I thought... Ummmm..... It's not their best song, right? But still, it could be something. So I tried. It didn't go so well. You know, I couldn't find the edge. That brief instant of clarity. Followed by the sudden wash... Like a wave. It comes, first, as a clarity – a rush. Followed by a softness, a confusion, a dissipation. This is what it could be. So I searched. For a change. The break, the line. The one that goes from here to there, from I to You, I searched. Where is that line? Yes, in the beat, that maybe is not so much language – well, yes, of course language is important. At least, well, at least... But a kind of music. Maybe that could be it. A kind of music.

Thump Thump Thump. Not really aggressive, No, but still, just a little. That seems important. Negotiation. On a performative level. Does this make sense? To follow the sound... which is not really language, though it tries, it tries even knowing it won't make it. I might call this: beauty. A little. A background, that, begins, to, be, more. Something. A body. Here, of course, it has to... find a language. What? Where is that Thump? I'm searching. There. It. Is. A window. There, See. A man, well, No. You pick up the line, a thread, you think it makes sense, and you know, well, you have to follow it. You have to. It has already started. It will, in the end, lead somewhere. At least, to something. Shhhhh. Or. So. But to get back to the music. It might be said to put into a single form what should not be together. The different parts. Saturated. Not necessarily a riff, but a dream. Perhaps. A phantom. In the imagination. I went back to the drums. To the Thump. Like a flick of something. A spark. It had to be there. A morning. Or, a breath. I felt...

Empty. I couldn't find it. Van Halen? Maybe. I did try to Jump. My friend too – he told me, “Hey Man, you just have to stick it out, you know. It will come. A small sign.” I went to the beach instead. Those waves. All that water. Splashing. I stared for a long time. The Pacific. The Beach Boys. No party, but a meditation. I gave up. Then, I closed my eyes, and I listened..... There it was. A voice. Which felt so important. To recognize, a voice. Maybe it reminded me of something, someone. In any case, I flew. No, not really, but still, kind of. I figured out how to play Jump, and... then I improvised. To locate the Thump, which became a kind of voice, an imaginary voice, a wave of emotion, a sudden apparition, a journey to nowhere. I did nothing else, went for it, called my friend, told him to come over, and we went for it – you know, the heat of the night, the lost horizon, the sudden joy. My heart pounding, the drum sticks splintering, the crash cymbals singing, and well.... You and I. A breath.

Help, I need somebody. Yes, a body. A some. An exit. Help, just not anybody. No, but something specific. How to escape? To flee? If one wants to. That is the continual question. Which route to take? which direction might provide a certain... possibility. This is something between the Tic and the Thump. Yes, I think that's what I'm getting at – between the Tic and the Thump. Because, well, you can't have both, and once you take one, you have already decided, and then, well, you just want to escape. To flee. To scream really. To locate the soft possibility of having both. To speak and to laugh at the same moment. To follow the beat, the set rhythm, and to straddle that edge – where things are on the verge of falling apart, of becoming something unexpected, and then, also, to find the form, the recognizable language: to be understood, while, also, possibly, Not. To Improvise. Movement of sound.

That was the thing: to find an example. That's what I needed. Beach Boys. Van Halen. We look somewhere, and then, it disappears. But it does return. Rhythm. The cycle. Like the waves. They come in, they follow their path, their momentum. And then, the beauty of their return: it comes again. Such is the rhythm. At least, that is what I heard on the beach that day. Inspiration. Like a small voice. An arrow. Or, a melody. Between the Tic and the Thump. Release. Or, the beginning of music. This is what I like. A building as open form. Or something like that. As if two things start to speak, communicate, to find the thread, but then, at the same time, they remain apart, separate. You and I. On an empty street. Do you look up, or do you pretend to look the other way? The meeting. Two things side by side. Negotiation. Then one day, my drum teacher, he brings in some jazz. Tells me I should try this, it's important. I understood. New sounds.

[illegible]

outside and the breath in your ear and the light rustle of imaginary birds, well... I'm getting carried away. A geography of songs. That might be it. A geography. LA... Beach Boys. The wish for love.