

THOSE WHO DIG

Sirius Quartet: Spidey Falls

Dave DeDionisio | January 29, 2013

Recently, friend of the Dig as well as badass free thinking cellist for **The Ballroom Thieves** Rachel Gawell sent me a video she shot of the **Sirius Quartet** performing a composition entitled **Spidey Falls**. The piece was written by **Fung Chern Hwei** who is also the first violinist in the quartet. The additional members of the ensemble are **Jeremy Harman**, **Gregor Huebner**, and **Ronald Lawrence**.



In his astounding biography, Fung Chern Hwei writes that although he is a traditionally classically trained violinist, he grew up deeply influenced by Chinese pop, Indian Bollywood tunes, Malay dance music, and in his younger years even took to imitating the sounds of the electric guitar and saxophone on his violin. With this in mind, I have always believed that one of the major components necessary for success in the field of classical music in the 21st century is a breadth of language. Truly successful musicians are the ones who are not limited by their language or technique, only their creativity. Nevertheless, it is sometimes the case that trained musicians will sacrifice language on behalf of technique and become compartmentalized in their thinking and ability to compose or improvise. This is not Fung Chern Hwei. This is not Spidey Falls, and this is absolutely not the Sirius Quartet.

This exciting composition is electrified in the acrobatic hands of the Sirius Quartet. Furthermore, behind the initial layer of wood, rosin, horse hair, and string, you can clearly hear Fung Chern Hwei considering a multitude of harmonic and melodic languages. For example, the itchy and bombastic dissonance at the composition's beginning is reminiscent of George Crumb's compositional language. However, after a melodic refuge it is followed by a rock inspired section driven by the cellist's thumping interjections. At five minutes into the work we take another musical turn with a melody that sounds like it could come from Chris Thile and the Punch Brothers before the violin gestures at 6:30 turn his instrument into a veritable Fender Stratocaster.

With all of this language tightly packed into a tidy nine and a half minute piece you might think that you would feel unsatisfied or disjunct. Nevertheless, I do not feel that this is the case. Spidey Falls is a lesson in contemporary music history and a tour de force of Fung Chern Hwei's highly contemporary language. Spidey Falls is a composition that could only exist right now, in this moment of music history, and I am very excited to be privy to it. Dig in and enjoy.