

Ruins for Violoncello Quartet

For me, anarchism is not an ideology, or comprehensive vision, it is variable and dependent upon very specific needs. Specific, that is, to a locality. Therefore one anarchist situation can be drastically different from the next. It's the same with music.

— WOLF EDWARDS

Wolf Edwards is a contemporary sound composer based in Canada whose work is performed frequently in Canada and internationally. Edwards is interested in situating “freedom” anarchically by creating visceral sound experiences for the listener, and giving agency to performers within a compositional framework that is organic, with its own complexities, constraints, and demands. He likens composing to exercising his freedom to organize, working with sounds that are individuated and developed through interrelations that highlight the composition’s architectural interdependency. The act of writing music, for Edwards, is performative — each composition unfolds as a process, developing an identity that is integral and specific. In this way he rejects methodologies that impose grand, preconceived, systems: he characterizes such composing as being under the influence of traditional methods that favor control rather than free thought. Dependency upon pre-made artistic forms is, for Edwards, the same as dependency upon social systems, and laws that are “dangerous” and “out-moded.” If we are to move beyond our present state, we must work to undermine limiting conventions in politics, art, and the everyday.

Ruins for Violoncello Quartet was composed in 2009 and is performed by Mark Molnar.¹ In his compositional notes, Edwards writes:

Play all sounds and events with conviction, focus, ferocity, brutality, and intensity. Do not shy away from brutal noise. The work is about ruins: things that have fallen apart. There is,

¹ <http://anarchist-developments.org/index.php/adcs/article/view/59/61>

perhaps, beauty, and certainly an aesthetic quality, that can be found within decaying forms. Although rough, they contain the seeds of possibility.

Certainly the composition communicates these values visually: it is as densely energized, unyielding and uncompromising as the music itself.

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