



THE
house
OF
Symphonies

CHRISTOPHER LANTZ

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HOUSE OF SYMPHONIES PUBLICATIONS

First Edition

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In order to evoke the cadence and distinctive voices of the individuals whose “interviews” comprise this narrative, the author chose to write through a recorded voicescrpt, or oral “manuscript,” based on twenty-six years of notes concurrent with experiences cited in the narrative. This voicescrpt was subsequently transcribed to produce the published text. Audio editions of the narrative—the author’s original voicescrpt—as well as alternate text editions are available separately.

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Book One

Praeludium in C Major

My name is Bob. I'm of the theater. Been in Broadway. Not just *on* Broadway. *In* Broadway. Big time—Shakespeare, Beckett, the whole bunch. Even played the movies for a time. Done it all. And now, I'm crowning white. I'm playing out my greatest role. My supernova. My grandest opus. The one performance that could never be staged in the canyons of Manhattan. That—the role of the wilderness hermit.

Or at least it was. I know it's over now, but *imagine!* Close your eyes. See me as I spread my arms. Don't you see I'm at the cross, standing stage center in my own grand theater? This pastoral, colored, brittle, brutal, prune-dry, glorious wilderness sometimes referred to as the Southwest. It's from this spot that I cast my web.

Look! Imagine being in my piñon forest. Leaning against the tree trunks sets the painting. Dozens of them radiating out in a circle from my humble abode (a shack, yes, but it's the center). These paintings, sure, they're awful—primitive—in their renderings but beautiful in their intent.

Their intent is like honey to a bee, for these paintings are political satires superimposed with the most outland-

ish, obscene, perverse scenes ever crafted. Or at least I thought so. They are the politics of lust, the lurid unravelings of the dreams of man. Ha! See, even in your imagination you're trying to sneak a glimpse of this outlandish morbidity. So—you too are the bee to my honey.

Do you see I've created these as my enticements to draw in my audience? Busloads! Anyone! Everyone who drives up that damnable dirt road comes here! But see how they respond—their disgust, their horror, their longing, their lust they so suddenly reveal?

And so the play begins . . . with my . . . if I may say so . . . my cunning insight, my stage presence, my wit and (*don't forget!*) my paintings. With my invisible, surgical scalpel I then go about dismantling their precious illusions. Disembalming their self-identities, and I cast them offstage and wait until the next charter bus arrives.

Have I no remorse, you ask? Not in the least! I'm doing my discarded players a service. Don't you see? It's just at such times as these—their lives are disembalanced, disintegrated—that their souls are revealed even unto themselves. But lest I belabor the point, I do this performance for no altruistic reason. I do this theater to affirm my position as director of my own reality. To me, all that exists is . . . is this life. Beyond is simply the void. Allow me to expand the point.

You, I, everyone makes choices. Either you are of the theater or you are not. If you are not, notice this and act accordingly. You'll be unceremoniously cast out anchorless and adrift—the pitiful players of the true players of the stage called Life. Truly said, all the world's but a stage, but there's only one stage center for each of us, and we individually must find it and hold center and this . . . this ungodly, divinely beautiful, wild land (all of it!) is my stage. That's right. So I just—

I digress . . .

But allow me to add: I tell you all this as a preamble. Because the fellow you asked me about, to some degree, is responsible for the closure of my theater.

When did I meet him last? I'd been here a short time when I heard through gossip of a few locals in the region that someone had acquired a parcel of land not far from my shack and web. I could actually see it on the rise across the meadow. The news had no effect upon me until one morning I happened, during my usual constitutional walk, to cross over that direction.

When I reached his property, I came upon what I can only describe as an incomprehensibility. It was a rambling ditch. A ditch about three or four feet deep and maybe two feet wide. There was no machinery about. Just a shovel, a pickax, lying nearby. Nothing about this ditch made any rational sense. It curved around aimlessly this way and that. From a bird's-eye perspective, I think it would have looked like a lying dead snake. Not curled. More like road kill. Flung aimlessly to the side. It was, as we like to say in the trade, without rhyme or reason.

On my next visit, the ditch was filled in with concrete. Small lengths of rebar jutted up here and there on its flat surface. Was this the foundation for walls? At the time I honestly couldn't tell.

It was on my third crossing over that I finally met him. There he was beside his maze, bent over a wheelbarrow, mixing cement with a hoe. I must admit I was somewhat disappointed. I'd envisioned something like a fire-breathing ogre, perhaps. But there he was—an average, midsized man. Nothing more. Nothing less. We exchanged salutations, pleasant small words mostly about the weather as I recall. And that was that.

My visits became more frequent as the walls rose upon this rambling snake. I can't say I got to adequately know the fella. He never stopped building long enough for ei-

ther of us to develop a meaningful conversation. It was quite disconcerting, frankly. From time to time, the few neighbors here and about would also stop by for a quick look-see. They would all stand about gaping, mouths open, sometimes snickering (more often), scratching themselves—the usual—as the builder continued to labor incessantly. As the structure grew into tangible walls—of outside and inside—the neighbors ceased coming. The seasons passed, the strange building went up, and as it neared completion my frustrations grew as I realized I still didn't know anything about this guy.

It's hard to find out much about someone when they refuse to be distracted from their work. What little passed between us became, for me, like little gems which I would roll over, through the night, in my mind. My obsession about this guy grew into, for me, a major distraction. It's one thing when other individuals play out their roles on their own stage (just as long as they, I might add, keep their theater off my stage). It's quite another thing when my mind tells me I'm sliding off my own floor! Two stages in one theater—never!

The plot was written, and we had our roles. The question was: where was his fault? The fault that I might use to grapple him and hook him and tie him and fling him off into one of those infinite exits to oblivion. Where lay he in his weakness?

It happened to begin raining one morning, causing him to quit his work. I rushed over to his house and coaxed him to come over to my lair. I told him that I had a warm fire in my stove which would be of comfort on this damp day. He readily came with me across the meadow. I showed him paintings. He loved them. Especially the one I was still working on that was hanging across one of the walls inside my shack—the one depicting several bishops and popes sodomizing some rather treacherous political

figures as three hundred young, nude, redheaded women, swords in hand, were riding herds of cattle across the setting sun.

He loved it! Yes, I liked it too. But he *loved* it! He actually referred to it as the Humor's vengeance of the histories. I felt betrayed. Wounded. Defiled, even! These coarse renderings of mine were never intended to be either funny or significant. It was obvious my lures were not working. The question remained: where was his flaw? Eventually, I thought I perceived something. I observed as I was referring to my own philosophy as to the nature of man—especially the part where I describe in florid details that we're all but isolated specks of species, purposelessly and devoid of grace, floating in the colossal sea of accident, that the only order that exists lies, and that we each create and play out our own unique grief like comic tragedies.

It was, at that point, I observed a certain rigidity in his frame. Over time, when the opportunity presented itself, I further expanded on my thesis while at the same time noticing the now-familiar rigidity of stance that passed over his frame. With sudden clarity I knew I *had* him. I had him. *He was mine!* He couldn't take the millennium. The old boy would never dare to ride as a solitary cowboy across the soulless universe. I could have danced with glee.

Now, to set the trap. I decided to trap him with a question. The great question. The unanswerable question. I practiced this question over and over, reshaping it, smoothing it out, setting up the setup, tightening the rhythms of the finality until everything was set. Eventually, I was well rehearsed. The trap was in the net.

On a lovely autumn day, some time after he had completed his house, he came over for a visit and a view of my most recent work. He was standing in front of one of my sketches when I approached him from the backside.

“Can you tell me—” I asked. “Can you tell me of just one aspect of the total human condition, an experience that is common to each of us? *And don't give me that biological crap!* One occurrence that we all share and affects our decision of choice? Just one that unifies us. One bond, if you will.”

Without missing a beat he turned from the drawing, looked at me straight, and said, “Yes, I can, Bob. We all die.”

I left the wilderness mesa soon after. Some fifteen years later, as I was walking down Fourth Street in Santa Fe, cane in hand, rewriting an old drama in my mind, I heard my name being called out. And there he was running from the other side of the street, hopskipping through the traffic. When he reached me, he said, “Bob, do you remember our last conversation years ago?”

“Indeed I do,” I replied.

“What I want to tell you is: I might have been wrong. I'm no longer sure we all die.”

THE HOUSE OF SYMPHONIES

CHRISTOPHER LANTZ

AN . . . the
EPIC! twenty-
six-year
journey
into
worlds
upon
unknown
worlds . . .



After a celebrated thirty-year career as a composer and conductor of avant-garde music and as painter, Christopher Lantz retreated to the wilderness, literally.

With a new phase of work forming in his mind, he knew he could explore it only away from the "asphalt-path" world from which he came. Settling on a remote mesa with nothing but a vision of a strange house, he built by hand a structure of beautiful curved walls, high ceilings, and cryptic wall carvings whose purpose eluded him. Only upon completion did he realize that the house itself was his new music—its shapes, surfaces, volumes, and textures forming the scoring for hundreds of musical compositions—symphonies. With this realization, he began the adventure chronicled in *The House of Symphonies*.

The house, its music, and the remarkable, mystifying experiences shared by the author and his music-making companions are described through a series of interviews in the distinct voices of those present in the adventure.

christopherlantz.com

HOUSE OF SYMPHONIES PUBLICATIONS

308 pages

"I'm no longer sure we all die."
CHRISTOPHER

It began with the faintest of a whisper—so fragile was the sound that it could be heard only in the solitary recesses of the inner mind.

"I think the real pain may arise when one believes that they dwell in just one world."
JESSE

True story of a magical house and the discovery of a new music never heard before.

"I had walked into a group of people who were seriously grappling with the question of what is reality—all through the playing of music."
LIZBET

A series of interviews with individuals whose music making unearths worlds both devastating and sublime. With music as their travelling craft, shaman dreamers stretch imagination to its outer edges.

"Enthusiasm of the dream is conscious living, aware of the adventure of self."
MARY

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