

Music and sculpture

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The piece of music that I chose to listen to from the CD was Gymnopedie No by the French composer Erik Satie. I was drawn to this piece by the seemingly delicate, atmospheric quality of the piano. On first listen, it sounded relaxing to me, but I soon realized that the piece was actually a strong composition that had many layers of tension. The seemingly fragility of the piano was countered by the plowing nature of the composition from beginning to end. While the piece never roars like a river, it does have a liquid quality that brings to the mind an image of a steady, determined stream that makes unexpected detours, but ends at an unmistakable destination or conclusion.

I coupled Gymnopedie No. 1 with the Burghers of Calais by Rodin. This might seem to be an odd match, given the dramatic circumstances of the story behind the sculpture. One might think that such a sculpture would call for tenses strings with an ever quickening pace as the burghers march towards their woeful executions. But looking at the facial expressions on the sculptures reveals something of the resolve and quiet direction present in Gymnopedie No. 1. The conclusion of the story of the burghers and the song are not quite what was expected at the beginning, so I think they are a good match. The similarities are not right there on the surface to see, but for the stated reasons, I can almost see Gymnopedie No. 1 being a sort of sound track for Rodins famous sculpture if the story were being told by a very sensitive, intelligent storyteller.