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Sibelius's Sad Waltz Gerald Fleming

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Gerald Fleming

SIBELIUS'S SAD WALTZ

Tonight, alone in the dark house, listening to *Valse Triste* by Sibelius as for the first time-really *listening*-the power of it, romantic & optimistic & indignant, the music loud, possessing the house, and at this volume hearing Von Karajan gasping, taking in breath through his nose and holding it between each stanza of this tone poem, his lungs the bellows of music. How they exhale, I thought, these tremolos, this legato, and without willing it I began to sing and heard my singing and it was beautiful, and in hearing it, in thinking it beautiful, the old otherness came in again, the snare of self, the second violinist in love with his own playing until the music is tangential, the conductor's breath sub-audible, the wet streets waiting, and Time again is barking its sad waltz against the sky.