JOACHIM RAFF, A HOMAGE

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Abstract
You do remember - it's in the older encyclopaedias - that the Pastoral Symphony, for most of the Nineteenth Century
of our weighted atmosphere like the kid
gripping six marbles in his pants’ pocket, knowing
they are his only security against the Big Boys
and the feather torture.
He who hesitates is not lost to a lot of fantasies
and one tiny boon of fate: he who hesitates
can have the power to look, look again, to review
and consider strategies for next time.
Daedalus hesitates before affixing wax to the wings,
Christ hesitates before the final commitment.
Ten times bitten and always shy
the doves of this world have outpopulated
those endangered eagles. An eagle’s feather
is the quill, and the doves’ soft down
fills the pillow on which I lie.

JOACHIM RAFF, A HOMAGE

You do remember – it’s in the older encyclopaedias –
that the Pastoral Symphony, for most of the Nineteenth
Century
meant Raff, not Beethoven? It’s not on CD
and was never on LP. The generation of 78s of course
were weighed down by sheer logistics of volume
and space on a record shelf: a 1930s Wagner opera
might take 26 discs, each heavier
than two entire RINGS on CD.
In this context, Joachim Raff should be
one of the new exploitables, a fine case for recycling.

After all, Vivaldi is a new product of the LP era
not the Eighteenth Century knitting-machine culture.

Just as Wagner, indeed, came to life, we acknowledge,
in late 1950s stereo when effects were news
and the right singers still available.
The result’s history, as well as Wagner’s ideal: profit
not loss.
Joachim Raff, what is wrong with you?
I've heard your available discography
it's not extensive but it's pretty good
and has more variety than Vivaldi

and perhaps as much massive skittishness as Mendelssohn
when he became official. Have we been sold

a pup? No, I'm not knocking Beethoven,
Walt Disney introduced him to me, I am a convert.

But somewhere, still, is the awkward doubt:
now I've learned to tap to Vivaldi must I

refuse to listen to the successful competitors of
Beethoven?
Why can't I make the choice? Why not the Pastoral
Symphony

by Raff? Close your eyes, wash out preconceptions,
then sit back as if there were any number of choices,
still.

Carla A. Schwartz

CHAOS

Janey wonders how the world
decided on orderliness;
she sleeps on an island,
in a sea of strewn
books/papers/clothing.
The other rooms in her flat
are filled with slowly decaying fruit
and clothes hanging to dry.
Her order is no one else's.
How can people keep such orderly homes?
How can they find anything if it's put away?