

The Angel of History

*My wing is ready for flight,
I would like to turn back.
If I stayed timeless time,
I would have little luck.*

Gerhard Scholem
'Gruss vom Angelus'

His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, waken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the great pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Walter Benjamin, 1892-1940
'Illuminations'

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Munich: New Year 1991/92: discussion with Phil Sealey [author], Al Saralis [painter] about Laurie Anderson's song **Hansel & Gretel** [from the album **Strange Angel**], with reference to Walter Benjamin and Gerhard Scholem.

Allen Gallery, Alton, Hampshire: December 1996: at the private view for Al Saralis' **Skin Deep** exhibition, I am confronted by his **Angel of History** - three large canvases, and eight smaller monoprints

Al Saralis' **Angel of History** paintings made a great impression. Perhaps it was a recollection of conversations in 1991/92 - my "face...turned towards the past"; perhaps it was the juxtaposition of paintings, Gerhard Scholem's **Gruss vom Angelus** & Walter Benjamin's **Illuminations**. Was it remembering Laurie Anderson's **Hansel & Gretel**? Or - more probably, was it linking all these elements?: "a storm blowing from Paradise", that irresistibly propelled me into the future - the forthcoming Millennium, with my back turned.

The Angel of History was commissioned by Camarada - with funds provided by the National Lottery via the Arts Council of England. Scored for oboe d'amore, violin, viola and 'cello, it is a distillation of my thoughts and ideas on all of the above, but has also been greatly influenced by Al Saralis' current work and my discussions with him about our methods of working.

The Angel of History - violin paraphrase is the essential elements of the ensemble work, condensed into one short work for solo violin - a further distillation if you like !

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[- violin paraphrase]

Martin Read

Prestissimo
- like the wind
♩. = 180

sul pont. & very light

Violin

pp p pp

5

p mp p pp

8

p pp p mp pp mp

12

p pp p mf f mf

16 pizz. arco

pp p pp p pp p pp

19

p pp p mp pp mp

22

p pp

Slow, still, lyrical
and very ethereal
♩. = ♩ = 90

24

mf pizz. arco pizz. arco

