

What the \$#@! Was That???

by Ben Grosser

12/2009

for performance sometime after one piece of new music and sometime before another one.

A: What the fuck was that?

B: Dude, that's new music.

A: New--- I call it ugly music.

B: Yeah, I know.

A: Music is supposed to be beautiful.

B: That piece was beautiful.

A: According to who?

B: Me.

A: But you said it was ugly!

B: Yep.

A: But it can't be beautiful and ugly at the same time!

B: Depends on your definition of beauty I suppose. For me, the uglier it is, the more beautiful it is.

A: Hmm. Okay, but I don't understand what it's about.

B: That's cool.

A: No, it's not. Why should I sit and listen to this 'new' music when I don't get it?

B: Do you need to understand everything before you encounter it?

A: No--you're missing the point. You haven't given me any reason to *\*want\** to understand this thing.

B: Great works shouldn't have to explain themselves.

A: Uhh, yeah, but not all works are great. And even those that are could do a better job of providing the listener with some frame of reference.

B: I'm just not interested in making things simple. I want them to be hard to understand---

A: Obviously, but---

B: ---and I don't see anything wrong with that.

A: You can do that. But then I might ignore it. Look, I'm \*here\*, at \*your\* concert. I'm interested already. Give me a little help!

B: You want me to dumb it down?

A: No. But couldn't you provide multiple layers of meaning? Some would be easier to understand while others would be more challenging?

B: I suppose that \*would\* reward less experienced listeners for engaging with the work in the first place---

A: (smiles)

B: ---I'll think about it.