

Brian Skutle- “Passionate Illusions”

A Cycle of Sensual Soundscapes

“Passionate Illusions I” (7:05)- 96 bars, 5/4, quarter=69, E-flat Major

“Passionate Illusions II” (3:05)- 69 bars, 6/8, eighth=69, F minor

“Passionate Illusions III” (2:51)- 96 bars, 2/4, quarter=69, D-flat Major

“Passionate Illusions IV” (1:33)- 69 bars, 3/8, eighth=69, C minor

“Passionate Illusions V” (5:40)- 96 bars, 4/4, quarter=69, A-flat Major

As a composer, the five pieces of “Passionate Illusions” represent a sort of return to the stylistic and formic mindset of my “Five Stages” Suite. I’ve given myself limitations in orchestration (only 6 voices, all electronic) and length (a set amount of measures per piece). Also constant throughout the pieces are the keys, meters and tempos, which change from one piece to another, but remain static in the individual pieces themselves.

As an artist, “Passionate Illusions” also holds the same mindset of “Five Stages” in that it is an exploration of moods and emotions through music. But these aren’t the moods and emotions of grief, as I explored in “Five Stages.” For me, the five pieces of “Illusions” represent musical illustrations of sensuality, and not in the way that may be best known. These are more abstractions inspired by dreams, fantasies, and feelings. Artists throughout the ages have been exploring these very ideas in music, film, books, and theater. It is their work- and my own feelings on the subject (which have been influenced by these works many times over the year)- that has inspired this cycle.

In particular, Stanley Kubrick’s “Eyes Wide Shut”- and the brief but indelible score Jocelyn Pook created for it- was most influential in its’ strikingly direct and intelligent exploration of erotic fantasies, sexual taboos, and overall obsession with the subject- a rarity in any modern art form. Dismissed by audiences expecting a porn film, Kubrick’s dreamlike odyssey of eroticism grows deeper and more rewarding with each viewing, as the journey takes on greater overall meaning, and scenes not only reveal more than one meaning, but engrain themselves into your memory.

I don’t know if the pieces of “Passionate Illusions”- also inspired (in sound at least) by Cliff Martinez’s lush minimalistic work on the metaphysical romance “Solaris”- dig as deep, have meanings as profound, or arouse feelings as intense as Kubrick’s work of art, but I do consider them works as artful, personal, and sensual as “Eyes Wide Shut” was to the late master. Of course, as Roger Ebert said in discussing a film he found erotic, “At least I found it so, and in matters of eroticism, one is always the only judge who matters.” Of any work of art (where the most important opinion is the subjective one), no greater description is needed.