

PETER MURPHY | *Past Time*

I must've nodded off before lifting from Heathrow,
when startled by Rachmaninoff, I realize that grief and relief
rhyme. I am listening to the Second Piano Concerto, featured
in more than forty films, each of which has made me cry.

I never liked Rachmaninoff. Too schmaltzy, I thought.
Too much with the strings. Now I love the schmaltz.
I love the strings. I dwell in a city called nostalgia
where no one I know is alive.

In the aisle attendants demonstrate how to buckle the belt
we've already buckled, then the vest. Should the unimaginable
happen, I imagine I'll strap it on backwards and bounce
down the inflatable slide to the bottom of the frigid Atlantic.

Last night at St. Martin-in-the-Fields I stepped over the graves
in the crypt, then sat under a translucent crucifix and listened
to the First String Quartet by Grieg. He wrote to a friend,
it strives towards breadth and soaring flight.

As the ensemble tricked the strings of their instruments
into their beautiful screaming, I thought of my father
who made enemies die during the war, and when it was over,
changed out of his blue collar each week, and put on a suit
to listen to the Philharmonic.

What my father wanted was rarely the same as what he got.
He wanted me to believe I was born on the only day in history
when nothing else happened. He wanted me to love his music
and thought he failed.

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