for Bill Sallak

Aisle Five

Dennis Báthory-Kitsz

The percussion may be set up in any convenient way. The visual idea is to leave the labels on all the commercial products, and to perform the music by setting up after a meal in which all the products have actually been used to prepare the meal. It’s a lot of tuna, Hershey’s syrup, coffee, milk, and juice—but if a full audience is being fed, there will be plenty of empty containers to choose from.

Most of the containers are standard, but for clarity on a few details: paper frozen juice cans are boxboard with metal ends, one of which has been pried off and discarded; printed metal coffee cans are the kind not wrapped in a thin plastic label; the metal tea or candy canister is the collector’s sort given at the holidays, with a fitted lid; and tuna cans are available in several sizes, arrayed by pitch, and can be substituted with metal cookie tins (such as Scandinavian cookies or ribbon candy) for the lowest two or three instruments.

The volumes should be balanced so that the dynamics of all instruments match.
heard on the radio we’re eating bad
so looked in the cabinets to see what I had.
worried by my habits before I go shopping,
driving round the city for some bargain hopping.
park the car, head inside, roll out the basket—
fluorescent, air-conditioned, no old tisket nor tasket;
here’s a modern shop of food encased in plastic.

Shop full of food encased in plastic. (oo)
so down aisle one, poking through the fruit—
can my random green thoughts get to the truth?
get to have the food you crave year round,
but never put your finger into the ground.
coming in by truck, gassed fruit don’t suffer,
but using what’s in season makes your life no rougher.
ever mind, i put it down into my cart;
brain don’t have control over stomach nor heart.

Shop full of food en-cased in plastic. (oo)
thoughts grow big passing through aisle four;
gotta take my dairy goods out through the door,
but rbgh cows’ milk threatens our health,
while poison chemicals don’t help the farmers’ wealth.
sterile seed engineered down to the genes—
packed with monsanto lawsuits if you ain’t got the means.
debate over science of global warming...
no matter true or false, you listening to the warning?
i grab a jug or two of milk and move right on,
preaching to myself elicits a major yawn.

Shop full of food en-cased in plastic. (oo)
another aisle of vegetables in shelves of cans; popeye ate the spinach made him the mán!
used to be tin cans sealed tight with lead, 'til they found the food make you crazy & dead.
still, putting plastic yogurt back in the ré-eye ain’t good as the economy of riding a bike.
can’t find nothing clean & fresh here to assuage me, distracted when my cell phone beeps to page me
in the aisle with food so far from its earth.
phone’s computer ringtone ain’t got no mirth.
moving right along i feel cold and clammy;
nothing ’round here would’ve pleased my grámmey.
using my grocery card gets me great bárgains; that’s how the store’s computers track how far I been—
clean-room shiny macs and gates’s pc’s, yá,
nothing with bacteria, nó, but end up in nigeria, yó.
heavy metal poison but ain’t this song about food?
sure, but shelves don’t replenish if you don’t compute.
everybody wins say economists live or dead,
but keynes & trickle-down end up on your head.
be a giant sucking sound said old perót—
wake yourself up from your free-trade dréam, yó!
out of your control they vote for WÍPO [whip-oh].

repeat percussion 11mm

three measures improvisation on above instruments, followed by fixed measure
Shop full of food en-cased in plas-tic. (oo)__________

turn back to áisle three, what’d i forget?
morning brew and cake, cookies all i can get.
so chocolate and coffee—go for the fair trade;
some ethical shopping and my day is made.
but it’s hard to pass the chips made for a pittance;
want to ease my conscience with some remittance.
craving that white sugar turns me aside,
so conscience be damned and i let it slide.
Shop full of food en-cased in plastic. (oo)
hit aisle five hunting tuna for a quick bite—
clean and sanitary, chunk brown or solid white...
but plastic nets break loose into the ocean
joining condoms, toothbrushes & bottles of lotion.
sub-tropical gyre or north pacific vortex,
full of plastic trash swirling size of texas;
little bags of resin beads, they call them nurdles—
big plastic rings are marine life death-girdles.

--- repeat vocal pattern through lyrics (8mm) ---

Sea full of fish encased in girdles. (oo)
appetite is gone as I leave aisle five,
heading to the checkout numb & half alive,
cart full of plastic with something dead inside,
look guilty out the window at my gas-powered ride.
my spirit is limping, my heart getting hard,
but yes I pull out my loyalty card.

Shop full of food encased in plastic.