

Ludw. Wittgenstein, "Tractatus logico-philosophicus": Die
Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner
Welt.

The limits of my language are the limits of my world



Milan Kundera, The book of laughter and Forgetting.
from Part Six, The Angels (Penguin)

Chapter 18.

If it is true that the history of music has come to an end, what is left of music? Silence?

Not in the least. There is more and more of it, many times more than in its most glorious days. It pours out of outdoor speakers, out of miserable sound systems in apartments and restaurants, out of the transistor radios people carry around the streets.

Schönberg is dead, Ellington is dead but the guitar is eternal. Stereotyped harmonies, hackneyed melodies, and a beat that gets stronger as it gets duller—that is what's left of music, the eternity of music. Everyone can come together on the basis of those simple combinations of notes...

... One day, about a year before my father's death, the two of us were taking a walk around the block, and that music seemed to be following us everywhere. The sadder people are, the louder the speakers blare. ... Father stopped and looked up at the device the noise was coming from, and I could tell he had something very important to tell me. Concentrating as hard as he could on putting what was on his mind into words, he finally came out with: "The idiocy of music."



What did he mean? Could he possibly have meant to insult music, the love of his life? No, what I think he wanted to tell me was that there is a certain 'primordial state' of music, a state prior to its history, the state before the issue was ever raised, the state before the play of motif and theme was ever conceived or even contemplated. This elementary state of music (music minus thought) reflects the inherent idiocy of human life. It took a monumental effort of heart and mind for music to rise up over this inherent idiocy, and it was this glorious vault arching over centuries of European history that died out at the peak of its flight like a rocket in a fireworks display.

The history of music is mortal, but the idiocy of the guitar is eternal. Music in our time has returned to its primordial state, the state after the last issue has been raised and the last theme contemplated - a state that follows history. . . . 4'20"

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I read to you this chapter as ^a point of departure for my talk.

Although the writer Kunderan is a music lover and his statements cannot be regarded as a scientific paper, nevertheless his thoughts are highly philosophical and as such are coming much nearer to the truth than any so called objectiv analysis. The writer Kunderan put his finger exactly at the sore point of contemporary music, that is ^{its} ~~his~~ primordial state.

It shouldnt be a sore point at all, on the contrary, it should be the starting point of high and most relevant expectations. Here I disagree with the musiclover Kunderans conclusion:

" Music in our time has returned to its primordial state, the state after the last issue has been raised and the last theme contemplated- a state that follows history ".

Truth to tell, music in our time has not returned to its "primordial state", but has advanced to another primordial state, because this is the nature ^{the} of creative process, of the cycle: procreation and decay. Therefore music in our time does not just follow history, but it heralds the future of music.

Any primordial state is ^a most fruitful ground. It is certainly not disconnected from the past, it regenerates a fatigued body of thoughts, tired and weary customs. ~~XXXXX~~ Therefore this renewal breaks with conventions but never with tradition.

One of the most fatal errors in musicological observations is the unhappy marriage between tradition and convention or ,better ^{said} ~~to say~~, the unhappy ^{ly} mixed use of those two notions. Even such a brilliant theoretician as Heinrich Schenker regards the formulated Ursatz as the beginning of the musical creation. But the Ursatz itself has a primordial state. It might be chaotic for the ^{trained} ~~untrained~~ individuum to grasp the quantity of events in this fruitful genetic ground. The genius ^{however} will gather from this primordial events his ^{unique} ~~one-time~~ - conclusion^{then}, which starts with the Ursatz. Schenkers "Ursatz"

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might today appear in different forms, figures, shapes and might produce a multitude of designs and features. If the "Ursatz" is limited to a certain system - ^{such as} ~~the~~ tonal music - and this ^{is} the case with Schenkers nevertheless ^{ingenious} ~~genial~~ discovery, then we have here the contrast between concept and system.

Since music became an ~~art~~ ^{of art} expression in the sense of western civilisation, his language has always been systematically organised. Today, this is the field of methods or music ~~theory~~ ^{wether} theory. I don't want to go now into the question, ~~is~~ music is a language. In the frame of this discussion it shall be enough to state, that there are certain similarities that music theory teaches, so to say, the grammar and syntax of musical language. Everybody musically educated, either methodically or empirically, according to the regulations of musical grammar, will at the same time learn his aesthetic determinations and will be able to distinguish, not only between right and wrong in grammar, but also between beauty and ugliness in aesthetics. Under the roof of tonal music ^{e.g.} counterpoint-textbook, harmony-textbook and theory of forms, ^{were} laid the fundamentals for - if I may say so - ~~for~~ a Common Market of common enjoyment of music, under the broad term ^{of} "classical music". Unavoidably, after a few hundred years, sure signs of tiredness are for instance the characteristic differentiations between "Light Classical Music" (for example: Mozarts "Kleine Nachtmusik") and Classical Music proper. But even Mozarts g minor-symphony ^{has} ~~become~~ ^{become} already stock-repertoire in Bar-music.

Concept and ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ systematization are intensely interwoven and in time of general decay deplorably falsified.

The moment any system reaches ^{its} ~~his~~ point of saturation, the process of degeneration starts ^{by} ~~in~~ degrees of decay, according to the power of resistance of the still creatively functioning body. In such a time the concept undergoes important transformations, whereas the traditional system does not respond sufficiently to the new constellation.

Since about the first world war numerous new music-theoretical textbooks were published, trying to adapt themselves to the loss of balance between concept and system. Harmony found a way out through manipulating with so called "extended" harmony, which, of course, paved the way to atonal music. Forms, which once grew in cooperation with concept and system, started to ~~stiffen~~ ^{freeze} into models, only giving shelter to basic traditional values, such as external relationship between small and large groups. Therefore we have many compositions by Hindemith in Sonata-form, although in atonal harmony. We have inter alia the fugues of the "Ludus Tonalis", where the interval of the fifth undergoes a metamorphosis from the classical dominant-function to an idealized degree of tension.

In Schoenberg's early works, as for instance in his 6 Piano pieces op.19, we have the primordial formations of fragmentary patterns, whereas later, in his fourth String-Quartet, a ~~XXXX~~ twelve-tone-composition, we have the classical Sonataform in grosso modo, for the broad development outlook, of what kept the traditional Sonataform alive, in spite of the fact, that tonal ^{read} harmony for a long time was dead? We often find in textbooks, that the concept of the Sonataform is glued to the tonal-system, to the circle of fifths and their modulatory relationships. Admitting, that those elements play an important role for the half and full cadenzas of smaller or larger groups, all of them together drawing the typical outline of the Sonata-shape, there is much more in this architecture, which has nothing to do with a certain harmonic system.

I shall mention only one remarkable phenomenon, the repetition in musical composition. It is a basic process in popular as well as highly sophisticated music. In the twentieth of this century repetition in composition became taboo. Schoenberg wanted repetition only with changes and alterations. Nevertheless, the first theme of the just mentioned fourth String Quartet is full of licenses with regard to repetition of single tones and patterns.

This sounds very "traditional" (in quotation mark). But repetition in music is not part of grammar or syntax. It is a ^{kinetic} process. It can be stunning, can be deafening, narcotic, intensifying, animating, even led to ecstasy. As music moves in time- and time can never be repeated -, there must automatically arise a difference in so-called repeated parts, being small or large. What may be exactly repeated is only the notation, whereas composer, interpreter and listener connect the reminiscence with ^{since} ~~nowhere~~ passed events of other nature. This makes the active listening and this also enables the Sonata-form to survive many radical changes in system-development.

Today we often hear hostile remarks about the conservative Schoenberg, because ^{his} ~~of using~~ ^{the} Sonata-form in serial music. Repetition is the main argument ^{of} ~~of~~ those critics. Repetition, which is then recognized only in ^{its} ~~the~~ external outlines, without perceiving the inner musical notion. Neither the term Sonata nor the term Symphony does express any tendency towards a frozen architecture in music. They are in fact the most suitable terms for the time after the post-serial music, because they relate ~~themselves~~ to the power of sound per se.

After the total serial music, this power of sound will arise from the ashes of the aleatoric music like ^a ~~the~~ Phoenix. Aleatoric Music is neither a concept nor a system, but the ^{superficial} manipulation of chance. It produced ^{its} ~~as~~-by-product the graphic music. The deceptive and delusory ideology behind the aleatoric manipulation is the desired total freedom. This musical hard cash of our time is coined on ^{the} ~~one~~ ^{hand} by total serial law and order and on the ^{other} ~~opposite~~ ^{hand} by total ^{un} ~~in~~hibited freedom. Both sides of the coin cancel each other out. The coin lost its value. For a not involved observer it looks like a historical curiozum. But it is more than that. It is not the end of an epocha. It is the primordial struggle ^{between} ~~among~~ opposite energies, plus and minus.

In this context we have to perceive the development of Electronic Music in



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the second half of our century. During its short history those electronic instruments ^{were} developed towards the high technological level of Computer Music, a much better term than Electronic Music, because a computer is the instrument, which enables the composer to be in full command of all compositional decisions.

At this point we have to start with a new concept, without losing contact ^{with} ~~as~~ ^{agreed} those values of the past which lay under the skin of ~~casted~~ conventions.

And when I say "a new concept", I do not mean a new theory or ~~an~~ a new system, although any creative concept must be controlled and organised, otherwise it will never pass the border of dream^{ing} and never will grow into an art object.

It certainly cannot be my intention to demonstrate right now a complete realisation of this new concept, I have in mind. But ^{show} ~~bring~~ ^{show} you on the way and together we shall try to grasp possibilities in new areas of discovery.

Let's say - I want to write a composition, based on one sound complex. Consequently, the compositoric process starts with the composing of one sound. The sound shall not be a chance - conglomeration of any quantity of random noises, but the result of a subjectively selected disposition of waveforms, which ^{together} ~~cooperation~~ build the entity of the complex. The complex must be able to function in density and transparency. This short description of my aim ^{yes} ~~proves~~, that a composer doesn't create out of nothing. ^{At} ~~to~~ his disposal exists the world of sounds, a world, he is obliged to discover and to make fruitful, step by step. Composing is not inventing out of the blue. ~~It~~ It is discovering and taking decisions how to use the discovered material. Let me demonstrate this on a basic example for Computer Music.

I shaped three different waveforms. They are ~~designed~~ ^{will} designed to amalgamate into a complex. All three waveforms ^{will} have the same Amplitude-Envelope, the same frequency and volume. I disciplined myself on purpose ^{to} ~~in~~ changing only the waveforms. The other parameters are of ~~static~~ ^{unchanged} quality.



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You will listen now to the three sounds, one after another.

B. 2

Those three sounds will now amalgamate ⁱⁿ into a dense complex.

B. 3

The three parts of the sound-complex will now be transposed to different frequencies, each of them way apart from the other. This will give the sound or, you may say, the chord, a diaphane attribute.

B. 4 ^{are}

The position of the three parts, a-b-c, ^{are} now be exchanged. The musical statement of the sound will vary considerably each time, according to the dominance of overtones among the waveforms.

B.5 a - b - c ^{now}

I repeat the diaphane chord, but each part will get a different attack - and decay time ^{of} in the frame of common duration.

B. 6

These few, quite simple examples may be enough to demonstrate to what extent the composed single sound realizes its intellectual and mental and even spiritual properties. The basic sound ^{it} ~~himself~~ has already been structuralized and any full composition, growing out of this material, cannot ignore the nature of this grain ~~sound~~.

In principle ^{these} ~~we~~ those processes also from traditional orchestra-music. Here, ^{the} ~~the~~ primordial state of sound-creation advanced to manufactured music-instruments and the production ^{from} ~~of~~ of instrumental sounds, ^{dependent on the} ~~based on~~ physiological conditions of the human player. The physiological limits of playing an instrument are ~~eliminated~~ ^{eliminated} by the computer, because computer-music is ~~not~~ played. Against that the composers position is here and there the same. The computer provides the composer with innumerable new possibilities. They too demand an answer to similar questions put to the composer by any kind of music in our days. The mutual influence between computer and orchestra is a quite natural phenomenon.



~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

This influence is not limited to the sound-development^{of}. It also covers, ~~the~~ the consequences in architectural shape and design. I would like to give you an example from my own writing, my fourth symphony.

It starts with a sharp attack and some ~~XXXXXX~~ ^{by step} steps ~~the~~ search for continuation.

B. 7

Then follows a chaotic but highly organized storm, orchestrated for strings, successively amplified by woodwinds, sparkling percussion - and brass utterances, so to say: the primordial state before a consolidated musical expression.

B. 8

The situation settles down to a statement, comparable^a to ^Vtraditional melodic line, growing in linear motivic development. After the string-unisono, the contribution to ~~the~~ the motivic discussion goes on by different combinations of smaller orchestral groups.

B. 9

You may have noticed that none~~XX~~ of the traditional form-patterns has been used. Everything is reacting to the ^{preceding} event, ~~before~~. In this context I use also repetition. When all has been said and I am approaching the final closing phrases, I do remind the listener of the so called "chaos" ^{at} ~~the~~ the very beginning. But even this primordial state has now a predecessor in the first mentioned melodic line, this time given to woodwinds, therefore of different character. This part opens the final section of the Symphony.

B. 10

^{sketchy} This short, no more than ~~indicating~~ analysis of parts of the work, still may have been able to convince you, that the composer based his statements ^{conclusion} on a concept of his own. The concept is an outcome of the discoveries of musical material. Therefore it is of ^a singular nature and no technical term can be offered for it. Certainly, at no point a system is at work. Still, it is thoroughly organized, nothing left to chance. Finally, it symbolizes happy freedom in self-chosen discipline.