

Luca Lombardi
CONSTRUCTION OF FREEDOM

**COLLECTION D'ÉTUDES MUSICOLOGIQUES
SAMMLUNG MUSIKWISSENSCHAFTLICHER ABHANDLUNGEN**

Volume 97

LUCA LOMBARDI

CONSTRUCTION OF FREEDOM
and other writings

Translated by
THOMAS DONNAN and JÜRGEN THYM

Edited by
JÜRGEN THYM

With Lists of the Composer's
Writings and Works by
GABRIELE BECHERI

2006

VERLAG VALENTIN KOERNER • BADEN-BADEN

Luca Lombardi:

Construction of Freedom and other writings./

Translated by Thomas Donnan and Jürgen Thym.

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Luca Lombardi – Baden-Baden: Koerner 2006

(Sammlung musikwissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen 97)

ISBN 3-87320-597-1

ISSN 0085-588x

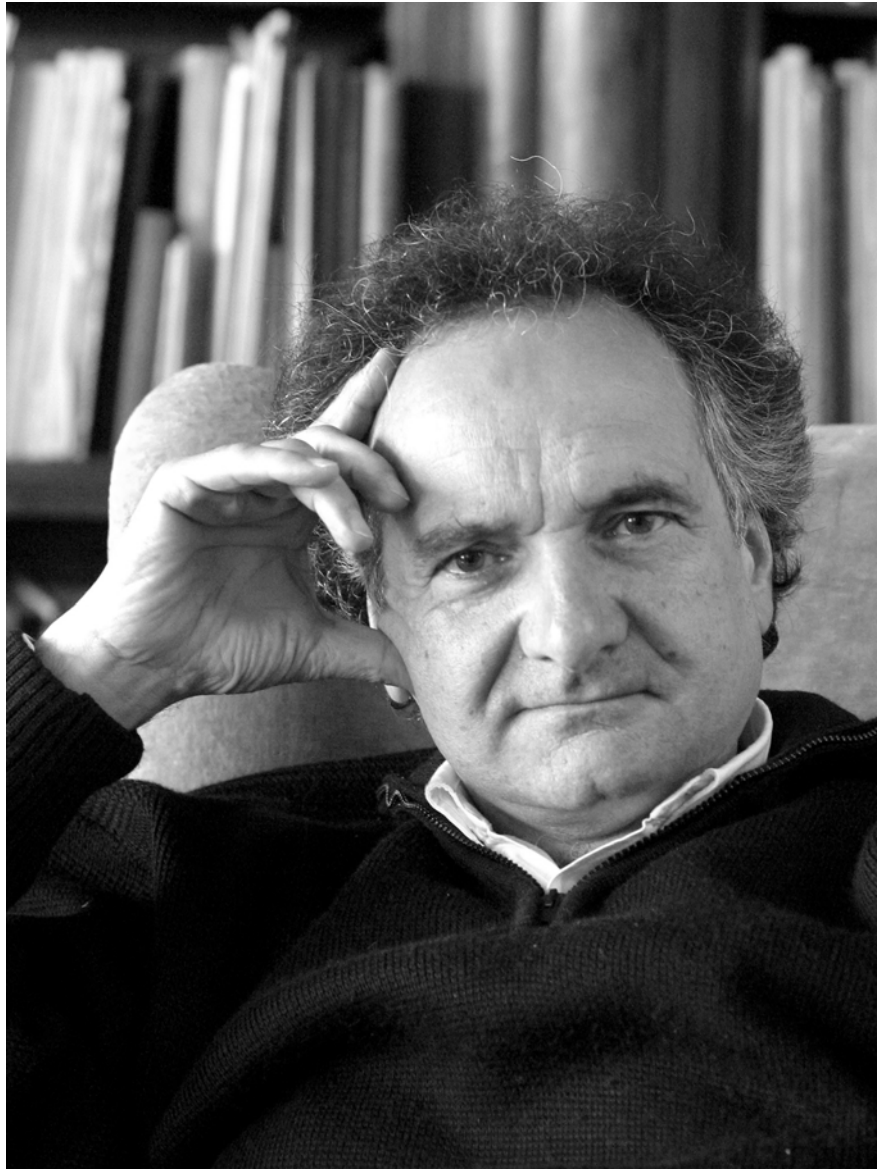
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Luca Lombardi is an important composer of our time and also an important thinker in matters musical, especially when it comes to issues involving the often tricky relations between music and society. For that reason I salute the publication at hand that makes Lombardi's widely-scattered writings available, at least in form of a selection, in one volume: not only in translations in English but, in the appendix, also in their Italian and German originals. What wealth (and also what clarity) of thoughts and insights during difficult and critical decades—years that witnessed developments and paradigm shifts of historical significance, both politically and musically.

I admire the intellectual honesty as much as the consistency of thought that manifests itself in the texts: Lombardi is an author who remains faithful to himself, even (or precisely) when he considers it necessary to revise earlier opinions. As in his music, he formulates his positions with precision, poignancy, and wit—in that respect he is the heir to the classical tradition of his native land with which he grew up. But what makes his music and also his essays so interesting is that they are deeply imbued by the philosophical ideals of German culture which he encountered early in his life. Lombardi is a wanderer between different cultures and worlds—perhaps comparable in this respect, as Wolfgang Rihm pointed out a decade ago, with Ferruccio Busoni who, one hundred years ago, found himself in a similar situation: a seeker equipped with sensory tools and a biography that predestined him to mediate between Italian and German culture.

Lombardi's writings shed light on an intellectual and artistic force which does not shy away from being confronted with contrasting cultures, who is open to all things new. (During the last decade-and-a-half Japanese and Jewish traditions have been added.) Lombardi is an artist who finds his energy and rationale to continue with his life and work precisely by confronting the unknown and the new. I hope that the volume at hand will give a wide circle of readers in different cultures and languages an image of a human being and artist of our time who is worthy of the highest respect and attention.

Samuel Adler

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Acknowledgments

“It takes a village to raise a child,” said Hillary Clinton a few years ago, giving her book on child-rearing a catchy title. And she was right: it takes more than one person to put a book together, and the volume at hand is no exception. First and foremost, I have to thank Luca Lombardi and his wife, Miriam Meghnagi, for opening their home to the inquisitive scholar for research in the composer’s library and archive (both are well-organized, I should add). Their house overlooking Lago Albano with a view toward the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo (mentioned in one of the essays) was a splendid setting to gather one’s thoughts, stay focused, and be inspired at the same time. Next in line of acknowledgments is my co-translator and colleague at the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music, Thomas Donnan, whose expertise of Italian language and culture complemented my knowledge of the German equivalents and, indeed, made this multi-lingual volume possible. My colleague and friend Ralph Locke deserves to be mentioned as well, since he became almost a contributing editor: reading Tom’s and my translations, suggesting rewordings and revisions, and, in general, alerting me to issues that only his experienced editorial eye would catch. Sloan Calvert, my research assistant in the fall of 2004, caught quite a number of inconsistencies by reading the first version of the complete typescript; Antonius Bittmann (Rutgers University) and Rob Haskins (University of New Hampshire) helped in answering specific questions that popped up. Gabriele Becheri (Florence, Italy) contributed two most valuable lists of the composer’s writings and works (published here in the Appendix); his bibliographic control convinced me to add “Becheri” numbers to the various items translated in this volume. In addition, he generously gave his time in the proofreading stage and caught many typographical errors that had escaped Tom and me. My publisher Tobias Koerner, of Valentin-Koerner-Verlag, successfully argued (in other words: convinced me) to give the book the shape it is in right now—I could not have asked for better professional support and guidance in putting this project together. Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Peggy Dettwiler (Mansfield University of Pennsylvania), a choral director of considerable renown, and our several cats (over the years) for putting up with me when I was distracted and pre-occupied by what we termed the “Luca Project.”

Several publishers granted me permission to incorporate in this volume Lombardi essays that were originally parts of books; I gratefully acknowledge them here: Bärenreiter in Kassel, Edition Hentrich in Berlin, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane in Rome and Naples, Schott in Mainz, Suhrkamp in Frankfurt/Main, Unicopli in Milano, and Zecchini in Varese.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the Italian composer Luca Lombardi (born 1945) emerged as one of the major figures on the European musical scene. No longer restrained by teaching obligations (during much of the 1970s and 1980s he had been a professor of composition at the Pesaro and Milan conservatories), his creativity burst forth in compositions for a wide array of different ensembles. His three operas have all reached performance on one or more European stages—*Faust: Un travestimento* after a libretto by Edoardo Sanguineti (Basel 1991, Weimar 1993); *Dmitri oder Der Künstler und die Macht* after a text by Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich (Leipzig 2000); and *Prospero* with a libretto by Friedrich Christian Delius after Shakespeare's *Tempest* (Nuremberg 2006). Other large-scale works include *Terza Sinfonia*—a symphony-cantata giving expression to fin-de-siècle skepticism and pessimism (1993); a deeply personal piano trio, *Addii* (Farewells) of 1995-96; *Vanitas?*—another symphonic cantata based primarily on texts from Ecclesiastes; and *Lukrezio: Un oratorio materialistico*, projected to be in three parts (Nature, Love, and Death), two of which have been completed and performed recently. (A list of Lombardi's works—by now amounting to nearly 150—is provided in the appendix.) Lombardi's position as one of the leading European composers is well-established, especially in Germany and Northern Europe, Italy, and, to a certain extent, also in Japan.

It is not easy to attach a label to the music of Lombardi. He is a wanderer between several worlds, two of them being his native Italy and Germany, a country with which he has substantial cultural associations. Clearly influenced by the European avant-garde (he studied with Karlheinz Stockhausen, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Mauricio Kagel, Henri Pousseur, and others), he commands a most divergent repertory of compositional strategies, ranging from serial procedures to refined handling of vocal and instrumental timbres (Lombardi is the co-author of a book on orchestration, 1985) to polystylistic techniques (paralleling certain "postmodern" phenomena in contemporary music). The virtuosity Lombardi exhibits in the compositional techniques available to him, however, is not an end in itself, but is employed for the purpose of expression, clarity, drama—in short: communication.

Lombardi is not a composer who has withdrawn to the ivory tower. On the contrary, concern for the listener has been of great importance to him at all stages of his artistic career. (Already in his early twenties he questioned the material fetishism of the avant-garde and called for reaching out to audiences.) Perhaps as an antidote to the Cologne avant-garde scene, he prescribed for himself, during his years of apprenticeship, a virtual encounter with Hanns Eisler (in the form of a dissertation completed at the University of Rome in

1974-75—Eisler had died in 1962) and a real one with Paul Dessau (whose master student in composition he was in 1973 in East Berlin). The conflict between politically engaged music and autonomous music, between avant-garde techniques and striving for communication has informed Lombardi's oeuvre in a most intriguing way—in fact, has given him a distinctive voice of his own.

The struggle to find his voice manifests itself also in the writings of Lombardi. Throughout his career, Lombardi has written about music, politics, and the relationship between them. He is a thinking musician who constantly felt (and still feels) the need to define his positions also in writing. He has formulated his standpoint(s) in nearly 200 articles, both in Italian and German; at times short and concise, at other times long and detailed, some of them unpublished, many of them published in often difficult-to-find journals or concert programs. From 1968, a defining year in European history, to the present (in other words, for nearly 40 years), Lombardi the writer has complemented Lombardi the composer. And it is amazing to witness the coherence of thought over a long stretch of time, which saw major political changes not only in Germany and Italy but in all of Europe and much of the rest of the world. In his music as well as in his writings Lombardi has tried to negotiate some major cultural and political tensions and “kept going” in the face of enormous difficulties. (“Keep going” is the motto in one of the movements of the 1968 *Sinfonia* by Lombardi's colleague Luciano Berio.) He thus is a major artistic voice of our times. The writings allow the reader to follow the intellectual and artistic development of Luca Lombardi over the course of nearly four decades, see what the coordinates were that shaped his development, witness how the composer adjusted to the changing times, but also assess what remained constant. The intellectual and artistic biography of the composer reverberates in the life stories of many individuals belonging to the generation of 1968; in that respect, Lombardi's vita is typical for an intellectual in postwar Europe.

The writings of Lombardi fall roughly into five categories: 1) Position Papers, often having the character of manifestos, in which the composer takes a stand on important issues of the time (by necessity, these essays deal with music's, and by implication, the composer's relation to society). “The Task of the Composer Today,” “Collective Composition,” “Popular Music and Art Music,” “Reflections on Music and Politics,” “On Peace,” “Construction of Freedom,” “Between Prehistory and Postmodernism,” “From the Ivory Tower and the Tower of Babel,” “The Artist and the Power,” “Of Ideological Glasses and Similar Ideological Walls” and “Religious Sentiments of a Non-Believer” may be considered representative of those writings through which Lombardi tried to define his standpoint and find orientation in constantly changing historical tides. 2) Composer Portraits: Here Lombardi comments on historical

figures who mean a lot to him (Bach, Busoni, Mozart, Schoenberg) or on contemporary composers who crossed his path posthumously (here Hanns Eisler needs to be mentioned—Lombardi calls him “an old flame” of his youth, but also Karl Amadeus Hartmann) or accompanied his path as teachers or friends (Paul Dessau, Hans Werner Henze, Luigi Nono, Goffredo Petrassi, Boris Porena, Wolfgang Rihm, and Bernd Alois Zimmermann come to mind). And a non-composer of utmost significance for Lombardi should be mentioned in this latter category as well: Bertolt Brecht. 3) Compositional Technique and Poetics: Composers are notoriously reticent in talking about their own music, and Lombardi is no exception. But he provides glimpses into his workshop in “An Example of Musical Cinema,” “Chance and Improvisation,” “The Radio Play *Von Gastgebern und Gästen*,” “My Music,” “Prima sinfonia,” “Chamber Music in Witten,” “An Italian Requiem,” “On Composing,” “The Beautiful Woman in the Fish Pond” and in several of the writings on his Faust opera. 4) Music and Music Education in Italy: Having had a front seat in observing the state of music in his native country for many years (but also having encountered different ways of organizing musical life in other European countries, especially in Germany), Lombardi is an astute witness to the strengths, foibles, and shortcomings of the organizational structures that determine a musician’s life in Italy. “Musica/Realtà for a New Public in Italy,” “Between the Anvil of the Conservatories and the Hammer of the Market Place,” “Critical Reflections on Music in Italy,” and the “Fiesole Statement” are particularly pertinent here. 5) Biographical Reflections: Lombardi’s writings never remain abstract but are always informed by observations on a very personal level. (Biography is an important ingredient in his music as well.) Among the essays with a particularly autobiographical bent may be mentioned: “A Roman in Wendland” and “Towards the East.” Lombardi is an engaged and engaging contemporary composer with wide-ranging interests, and he is sufficiently erudite to comment also upon non-musical subject matters with intelligence, urbanity, and wit.

In my selection of writings I have tried to make sure that the various facets of Lombardi’s inquiry are represented in the volume at hand and represented through writings in different decades of the composer’s life. Particularly important for me were the essays, especially those written in the 1980s, with which Lombardi liberated himself gradually from ideological constraints, both political and musical. For that reason, I chose “Construction of Freedom”—the title of one of these position papers—as the title for the book. Another criterion pertained to the issue of overlap and redundancy. Lombardi’s texts often originated as lectures for conferences or roundtable talks; with deadlines looming, sections from one essay were cut and pasted into another. I have not tried to avoid completely the appearance of redundancy. In fact, the attentive reader will notice some brief overlaps and close resemblances between and

among certain of the texts. Experiencing such overlap is like revisiting a point made earlier in a new context or viewing it from a different perspective, and it also shows the consistency of thought among different essays. But—full disclosure here!—I tried to avoid plain and extensive duplication. Thus, some important statements (such as “Vom Schnee, Nebel und der schlechten Witterung überhaupt” of 1972, “Stockhausen: Progressive Innerlichkeit” of 1973, “Materiali per un’indagine sul concetto di figura” of 1986, and “Von der Macht der Musik und der Ohnmacht des Komponisten” of 1999) fell victim—with the composer’s rueful approval—to my editorial scissors because their principal thoughts had been expressed elsewhere. Another editorial decision resulted from the composer’s working habits when putting his texts together. Quite frequently Lombardi revised and amplified his texts when preparing them for presentation in a new context, often taking into account the arguments that had ensued in the discussion earlier. In such cases, my preference has been to include the amplified rather than the original version. In order to provide the volume with a variety of literary styles (and also to call attention to a musical work of Lombardi’s that would otherwise have fallen by the wayside), I have occasionally—though sparingly—tapped sources other than Lombardi’s writings proper by including an interview and excerpts from the composer’s correspondence. Last but not the least: To make sure that Lombardi the composer is not completely overshadowed by Lombardi the writer, I have inserted between the essays (in their proper chronological spot) brief program notes that Lombardi wrote for selected compositions. This gives specific opportunity for musical practice and theoretical reflection to enhance and enlighten each other.

The essays (always identified with “Becheri” numbers that refer to the comprehensive list of Lombardi’s writings prepared by Gabriele Becheri for the appendix of this volume) are arranged chronologically and grouped into three parts: “Of Revolutionary and Musical Truths: 1968-1980,” “Between Sisyphus and Faust—Identification and *Travestimento*: 1981-1991,” and “Reflections and Perspectives around the Turn of the Century: 1992 and After.” Each part is preceded by a brief introduction providing the historical context for the texts that follow. I have tried to interfere with the essays as little as possible: brief editorial prefaces for each text are clearly identified by italics and small print; editorial explanatory notes and references provided by the editor are differentiated by square brackets. Tracing the many references was a time-consuming task. Lombardi often cites from memory—admittedly, always with considerable accuracy—and he does not always footnote his sources (some of the newspapers and magazines for which he wrote have a looser policy in that respect than scholarly publications). I succeeded in most cases in tracking citations, but, with the deadline of publication looming, I had to leave some of the problems for the next Lombardi scholar to solve.

And more Lombardi scholars there will surely be, as the wonderful and immensely varied and deeply provocative works of this splendid composer are increasingly heard in live performance and recordings. It is the editor's hope that this selection of his writings will not only stimulate reflection about issues relating to musical life and musical creativity in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries but also bring to wider public consciousness the artistic output of a brave and individual voice who has experienced much and is generously willing to share—in words and tones—what he has learned and thought.

Jürgen Thym
Mansfield, PA, and Rochester, NY
20 November 2005

PART I

**OF REVOLUTIONARY AND MUSICAL TRUTHS
1968-1980**

*Torn between the lure of political activism and the sounds of the European avant-garde, Luca Lombardi set out to become a composer in the late 1960s. Studies with Stockhausen, Kagel, and Zimmermann in Cologne, West Germany (even a visit to the electronic music studio in Utrecht, Holland) provided inspiration, technical know-how, and contacts that sustained the young musician for many years to come. And yet, the encounter with the musical avant-garde was also a collision that propelled Lombardi in a different direction. As early as 1968 (see "The Task of the Composer") he had warned of pursuing a formalist avant-garde as an end in itself and demanded that composers use their music and imagination to communicate with a broad public and, through their art, participate in the struggle for a better society. In this situation, the work of Hanns Eisler, who had renounced musical modernism in the 1920s and changed to a more accessible musical language to support political causes, became a guiding spirit for many young artists with a Marxist outlook, including Lombardi. In preparation for a dissertation on Eisler, later submitted to the University of Rome, Lombardi ventured out to East Berlin, then the capital of the German Democratic Republic; his research in the Eisler Archive was complemented with composition lessons with Paul Dessau, the undisputed senior figure of composition in that part of Germany. Two different musical spheres characterize Lombardi's work during the seventies: as a composer he remains close to the avant-garde, even with a piece like *Non Requiescat*, written in memory of Eisler, but more and more the political activist finds his voice in music by way of quotations with obvious allusions to the proletariat, incorporation of material from folk music, and—last but not least—through the texts being set to music. Not only the music but also the essays written during this period reflect the bipolarity of Lombardi's world, in which revolutionary and musical truths sometimes enhanced each other, sometimes competed with each other in a sort of creative tension. But sometimes these truths simply stood in each other's way.*

The Task of the Composer Today

The following thoughts were jotted down in an essay fragment in 1968—a year of utmost importance for the political and artistic development of the composer. (See the essay “My Music” later in this volume.) The incomplete essay is included because Lombardi sketches here, for the first time, convictions that he held and developed throughout his career as an artist. In its present form, the essay appears as shaped by the translator and editor.

Musicians must not stand outside the protest movement that has been growing in recent years; instead they must become engaged in the struggle for a new culture. The problems are manifold and assail musical culture at all levels, from music education in the schools (practically nonexistent) to conservatory curricula (utterly antiquated), to the organization of concert institutions reflecting the middle-class character of Italian culture. All of these are urgent problems waiting not necessarily to be solved immediately, but to be discussed in concrete terms. Musicians must not fail to seize any and all opportunities to sensitize public opinion to these problems; nor must they fail to play a part in bringing about change in this state of affairs. In the case of composers there are problems that impact upon their approach to composing music, and it is with these that I wish to deal here.

In the first sixty years of the twentieth century, music underwent a continuous process of innovation. Every new achievement was immediately subjected to discussion, either by the very composer who had achieved it, by his fellow musicians, or by his immediate successors. But while music was renewing itself—in terms of expression as well as structure and technique—it was progressively losing contact with its audiences, becoming music for the elite. The origins of this process go back at least to the second half of the eighteenth century. Before, say, 1750 it was customary for the composer to fashion a product based on a request (for example, Bach was obliged to compose a cantata every week). It is with Mozart that music begins to lose its functional role (composers up to and, in part, including Mozart, wrote for courts or for the church and acted as artisans) and becomes more and more the work of a particularly gifted individual (it was in this period that the notion of genius was born). From Mozart on, the composer strove to free himself from what seemed to him servitude. In the period in which the composer was thought of as an artisan who crafted products on request, he was also the composer of music that we today would call “light,” or “for mass consumption.” When a composer isolates himself from society, his music becomes more and more intellectual, and he no longer considers it worthy of himself to write music for popular consumption. Nonetheless, there still exists a demand for it (dance music, etc.), and in response to this demand there are composers who devote

themselves exclusively to that kind of music. If, however, the quality level of the aforementioned music for consumption was worthy of being called art at one time—because its composers were also composers of so-called serious music—there is no guarantee that the same can be said for the new “light” composers. Thus, we can observe two inverse and complementary processes: Serious music is becoming more and more intellectual and losing contact with the wide public (Mahler, Schoenberg, Webern, et al.), while light music becomes more and more banal and reaches an ever broader public (from Johann Strauss to the pop songs of today).

There are other factors playing a part in this process and creating the enormous gap that exists between serious music and music for mass consumption. Foremost we must mention the mass media (radio and television), which broadcast light music almost exclusively. If this fact can be explained by the very demands made by the vast public, we can also say that the public demands this type of music since it has been conditioned by years and years of mass-media “dumbing down.” This only aggravates the sorry state of music education in which the Italian public presently finds itself (I am speaking only of the situation in Italy), since music education in the schools is practically nonexistent. But the establishment knows what it is doing by promoting the flood of pop songs that it unleashes every day upon millions of listeners. Those in power know that this kind of music contributes toward keeping the public mind off the problems now assailing the world (Vietnam, race relations, the third world, etc.), keeping the masses in a perpetual state of moral somnolence lest they turn against a system already in crisis.

I must emphasize that in order to change this state of affairs—that is, to make music no longer the privilege of a few initiates, while the masses are intentionally kept at a lower level by means of a barrage of musical by-products—some action must be taken in order to bring about a revolution at all levels (education in the schools and conservatories, socialization of musical institutions, change in cultural politics on the part of radio and television).

But what should be, after all, the task of the composer? After more than fifty years of solipsistic reflection on his “tools of the trade,” the composer must earn a new contact with the public. This will be impossible if musicians remain mired in the ritual of the traditional concert. The composer must create—seeking the collaboration of writers, movie-makers, painters, etc.—performances that totally involve the audience, making the listeners/spectators more active participants, awakening in them a certain critical consciousness. He must see to it that his music not be an exclusive gratification for an elite, but that it reach the broadest strata of a population heretofore excluded, and that it can thus contribute to the people’s gaining of awareness and to cultural

revolution. Musically speaking, this means abandoning any formalistic avant-gardism as an end in itself (an avant-gardism perfectly integrated into the system of middle-class society). It means bringing forth the fruits of those musical experiments carried out in the first sixty years of this century and placing them at the service of a music that makes a point once more of communicating with the listener. It means that the composer must finally abandon his famous ivory tower and come down once more among the people, make himself aware of and deal with the great themes of our day, and fight with his own weapons in the battle for a new and more just society.

[Source: "Il compito del compositore oggi," unpublished typescript, dated 1968; Becheri 68-2.]

Albumblätter

It is not easy to write something about a composition that is already seven years old. I composed *Albumblätter* when I was twenty-three, in the last days of 1967 and the first days of 1968; it is "the oldest of my newer compositions," i.e., the first of those works I do not reject today. It is not easy to write about it, because meanwhile I have gained different experiences (which goes without saying) and because at the moment I pursue different interests (which also goes without saying), but also because by now I probably have forgotten, by and large, why and how I composed this piano piece. In retrospect, I see that, for the first time, I tackled here several problems of new music, for instance: 1) the contrast between improvisation and construction (*Albumblätter* has an improvisatory character, but individual sections correspond to a precise compositional plan); 2) the contrast and simultaneity of diatonic and chromatic structures as well as of "consonance" and "dissonance"; 3) the problem of quotation; 4) the use of heterogeneous modes of playing the instrument.

These are, of course, important and difficult problems that deserve to be tackled in considerably larger and weightier pieces. I only hinted at these problems in this short piece (*Albumblätter* has a duration of seven minutes). I picked up the problems, partly, in other compositions, and, partly, I am sure, they will occupy me in works still to be written.

[Composed 1967-68; the typewritten program notes in German are dated 29 November 1975.]

An Example of Musical Cinema

The first performance of (Vor)spiel(film), whose genesis is discussed here, took place along with other films created during the Kölner Kurse für neue Musik on December 12, 1969 at the WDR Köln. The film was later broadcast by various television stations.

The *Kölner Kurse für Neue Musik* 1969—the sixth in the series—was dedicated to the theme “music and image.” Around this theme revolved lectures, seminars, and the composition course given over for the first time to Mauricio Kagel. The opportunity was given to the participants to plan a short film to be created at the German Television studios of the West German radio station (WDR Köln). About ten work groups were formed, each made up of two to three individuals who divided the work amongst themselves: some took care of the visual part, others took care of the sound. I decided to do something on my own so as to avoid producing a film with “musical commentary” or, conversely, visual commentary on music. (Personally, I do not know of any film, even “experimental,” that does not figure in either of these categories.)

Instead, I was trying to conceive a composition in which the musical part could not be separated from the cinematographic part, in which each was a function of the other. Both should derive from the same matrix. So, this is how I came to write *(Vor)spiel(film)*.¹ It seemed to me that the simplest way to unify the two dimensions would be to take as the visual material the performance of the music that is being heard. The idea was, however, a non-synchronous relationship (or rather, not necessarily synchronous relationship in which might be seen various possibilities) between image and sound. I had confronted an analogous problem in my *Op. 10 for Two Players and Projected Film* (1967-68). In that instance, a film² was made according to my directions on the performance of a pre-existing composition. The composition was already in itself “scenic.” The two performers played the piano in its totality, the first mainly on the keyboard, the second on the strings. To the second was also given the duty of reciting a fragment from Samuel Beckett. The film did not have to be “realistic,” and its makers created it with great freedom and imagination. During editing it was further elaborated and modified without the action becoming unrecognizable. They established points of concurrence with the live performance and others in which the film would run alone, or become silent. The result is a counterpoint between live performance and filmed

¹ This untranslatable title plays upon the meaning of the three syllables of which it is made: *vor* = „pre,” *Spiel* = „play,” and *film*, taken individually or in various combinations: *Vorspiel* (prelude), *Vorfilm* (a short film shown before a feature film) and *Spielfilm* (movie, film).

² By Peter Del Monte and Beppe Mangano.

performance, and between the music one is hearing and the music that the film either recalls or anticipates.³

For *(Vor)spiel(film)*, written for television, the counterpoint could only be of this second type. There were various possibilities of combination: visually corresponding to the music that one hears there were 1) the image of performers playing the music; 2) the image of performers playing an obviously different piece of music; 3) the image of performers that are not playing at all (getting ready to play, or engaged in some other action); 4) another image (connected somehow with the musical performance and its surroundings); 5) no image corresponding to the music. Conversely, the film may be silent. I used the various possibilities with principles based in music (variation, repetition, etc.). The images do not follow any narrative logic. Any “story” that might be construed is that of the parameters of the composition. In addition, while thinking through and working out the other parameters I pursued a method hardly different from that I would follow in writing music. Thus, for the duration of the individual scenes varying between one and fifteen seconds, for the various ways of using the TV cameras, for the alternation of the three cameras (the number I decided to use), and so forth. I wrote a score that resulted in all this. To make the elements come together where they should, and for facility of reading, I used a few conventional signs and linked them to musical practice.

The kind of music to compose was a particular problem. From what I have said so far, it is obvious that I could not compose a piece of “absolute” music, having a life of its own independent from the rest of the composition. Instead, I needed a kind of music that would lend itself to the generally extremely short cuts of the individual scenes and that would be at the same time recognizable (in such a way as to permit that kind of contrapuntal relationship that I spoke of above), therefore strongly characteristic, and that would have, even when stated very quickly, a definite sense. I decided on a “static” music, based on notes or repeated figures, held notes, sound curtains, etc., and I wrote it for cello, trombone, piano, and Hammond organ used in various combinations.

[Source: “Un esempio di cinema musicale,” *Filmcritica* XX, 209 (Sept. 1970), 371-72 (a parenthetical note and an example with notational symbols have been omitted in the translation); Becheri 70-3.]

³ *Op. 10 for Two Players and Projected Film* premiered in Rome on April 23, 1968 by Giuliano Zosi and myself as part of a concert of the Gruppo Rinnovamento Musicale. [The piece, whose basic musical material had much in common with *Albumblätter*, was withdrawn by the composer as „unconvincing” because of its aleatoric relation between two different media.]

Collective Composition

Lombardi had gained experience with one type of collective composition mentioned here when he wrote Das ist kein Bach (1968)—a piece that allows a group of seven performers some freedom within a structural framework set by the composer. (It is discussed in the essay “Chance, Improvisation, and Freedom in Music” later in this volume.) He engaged in another form of collective composition, namely collaborating with different composers, for the cantata Streik bei Mannesmann in 1973.

While the reproduction of music requires, in general, the collaboration of several musicians, the participation of several musicians in the production of music is new. An example for the collaboration of musicians in the area of musical reproduction is the orchestra. Rather than being a collective form of labor, the orchestra constitutes a division of labor. True, each musician is responsible for the result, but each has to execute only a specific part of the whole, at a specific place in a specific manner and under the control of a conductor. He is not asked to enter into reflections about the meaning of the whole; under the given circumstances it would make little sense, because he cannot steer the whole, on the basis of his free and personal decision, into a direction different from the one fixed by the composer and controlled by the conductor. He is only asked to reproduce, not to produce. He is asked to be completely subordinate to the community and to give up his individuality. The labor in an orchestra is similar to that in a factory, i.e., characterized by alienation.

In contemporary music there are several attempts to move away from the hierarchical structure of the traditional orchestra and to give the individual musicians room for free decisions and artistic participation. True collective labor cannot be based on the subjugation of subjectivity, but only on the emancipation of the subjects. This results in the tendency to suspend the division between composer and interpreter, between producer and reproducer. Such a unity is realized in groups that perform together freely. The members of an improvisatory group have equal rights. Each musician assumes the same responsibility for the whole. Aesthetic criteria are worked out collectively. There are, however, composers who, even though they want to stimulate “spontaneous music-making,” do not want to abolish their authorship for the composition. That is the case with many graphic scores and those that consist of verbal instructions: whenever no specific result is intended, or when the instructions are formulated in such a way that the result cannot be anticipated. In this case, the composer must take a chance that the sound result may not do justice to his conception. Not only that, he must give up his function as a composer. Composers, who with their signature lay claim to the invention of

others, are in fact exploiting others and, at others' expense, accumulate surplus value, both material and ideal.

Collective composition is the only adequate form of labor for groups that perform without a notated score. The challenge now upon us is to try with a larger ensemble of musicians what has been realized already in small groups.

A different issue is posed by written-out compositions generated from the collaboration of several composers. The few examples that exist so far are generally certified as having *a priori* political relevance, as if the mere fact of collective labor would be a sign of a politically progressive consciousness. Collective labor that sees its justification *only* in communal activity, however, is not at all progressive—it rather exhibits reactionary features. It makes a fetish of collective labor, as if that kind of labor were an end in itself. Such an understanding is reminiscent of the fascist ideal of communalism, as it was practiced in the musical realm by the youth movement [*Jugendbewegung*].

Moreover, it is puzzling to see how the renunciation of individuality is postulated as criterion of collective labor and how this renunciation is not recognized as a negative element but declared as an indication of progressive consciousness. As a collective composition does not guarantee progressive consciousness, so does the renunciation of subjectivity not constitute a guarantee for collective composition. “Since the emancipation of the subject, the work of art can no longer dispense with the mediation the subject affords without regressing to the level of poor objectivity.”⁴ However, the quality of art is not defined by its subjectivity, but by what is non-subjective in the subject. Art is relevant for society in that moment, when something objective speaks through the subject. Collective composition should further the Subjective and demand the Objective. Objectivity, however, is not achieved simply by the fact that, instead of one individual, several are engaged in the work; the number of participants in the production of the artwork cannot be the yardstick for its truth. The decisive factor is to what extent problems of society are expressed in the work of art, to what extent art is concerned with problems that we are facing on a daily basis, and thereby contributes, within the limits assigned to it as a product of societal super-structure [*Überbau*], to the solution of these problems. We should not lose sight of the fact that only few take note (and can take note) of the music we are writing today. To change it, we have to change society. To change it, the composer must engage politically and fight, with all means available to him, against the old and for a better society. *L'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) today is not possible. In order to be able to speak one day, in good conscience, about trees—to allude

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 64.

to Brecht's verdict of a "Gespräch über Bäume" in his poem "An die Nachgeborenen" (To those born after us)—we must be today against such a conversation.

But then there are those who think that music as such, through immanently musical means, can be a critique of society. That is a wrong conclusion from correct premises. Correct is that music has to be understood as something conditioned by society, even something dependent on the economic structure of the era in which it originated. Such a relation, of course, exists not in a direct mechanical link, but it exists and it can be tracked down to the organization of the musical material. If we view this relation as a dialectical relation, we can state that by questioning a certain organization of the material we question also the societal structure in which this organization originates. We can even go one step further and maintain that by inventing a new and better organization of the musical material (or even a non-organization, in the case of Cage) we deliver at the same time the model for a new and better society. That is not wrong. But it is wrong when composers arm themselves with this insight, pretend to solve problems of society musically and are satisfied when the revolution takes place in music. The political establishment does not need to fear these composers, even though they come across as avant-garde. In fact, they contribute to stabilizing the system. By creating islands of freedom, they act in the interest of those who play off the formal freedom of our society against its transformation. By anticipating utopia, they make utopia impossible. Even though societal consciousness is reflected in music, it cannot be captured unequivocally in tones. To communicate clear contents one needs to express oneself clearly.

The composer needs to give up his claim to autonomy and connect with other areas of art that can represent certain contents more adequately. The connection of arts constitutes a meaningful area of collective production. The existing models of collective labor (as they exist for instance in the film industry) are of little help for orientation. Even though the film is one of the first examples of an artistic production based on collaboration, it still is a procedure based on the division of labor. We should strive toward collaboration on the basis of real equality in which each participant signs for the whole. Rather than delivering individual contributions (musical, literary, cinematographic, etc.) which are to be combined, we should think of a whole in which the contribution of the individual can no longer be isolated, because each decision occurred on the basis of collective elaboration.

[Source: "Über kollektive Komposition," *Melos: Zeitschrift für neue Musik* XXXVIII (1971), 292-93; Becheri 71-3.]

Wiederkehr

I wrote this piece in Cologne early in 1971 for the pianist Giancarlo Cardini, to whom it is dedicated.

Wiederkehr means “return.” The title refers to two different aspects of the composition. The first, of a specifically technical nature, concerns the formal arrangement of the piece. Fifteen chords, of different degrees of density and harmonic complexity, constitute the basic material which keeps reappearing within changing harmonic “fields.” The fifteen original chords are mixed with other chords—homogeneous with regard to both density and intervallic characteristics; they consist of only four notes, appearing successively as combinations of seconds, thirds, fourths, etc., so that they form successive harmonic “fields” consisting of these intervals. Within the framework of this first (technical) aspect of the piece, there are also other “returns.” The piece consists of an introduction and three larger sections, each of which has precise structural characteristics (glissandi, trills, sustained chords, repeated chords) that keep coming back, although never in identical fashion. These sections alternate according to a procedure of “returns,” but also of “anticipations” (especially with respect to the last section). In writing this piece I was most interested in the problem of the control of harmony—harmony being understood in the broadest sense, i.e., the simultaneous sounding of several notes. And this concern with harmony is connected with the second aspect to which the title refers. Together with the renewed concentration on the vertical dimension, there is also the “return” of chords that relate to tradition, even if they appear outside of the context of traditional harmonic logic. *Wiederkehr* is perhaps the first of my compositions in which I deliberately tried to arrive at a new comprehensibility and formal clarity.

The piece lasts fifteen minutes.

[Composed 1971; the typewritten program notes are in English; the composition is also discussed in “Construction of Freedom” in Part II of this volume.]

Chance, Improvisation, and Freedom in Music

Very early on Lombardi took issue, sometimes in rather scathing terms, with approaches to indeterminacy and chance music as represented by John Cage after 1950. Only later in life, did he arrive at a more inclusive position. The essay at hand, published here for the first time, foreshadows in some formulations one of the composer’s major essays of the 1980s, “Construction of Freedom.”

Since the late 1950s chance and improvisation have played an important role in music. What I connect here, in one sentence, are really different things, although sometimes they come together, for instance, in the graphical notation of music. Here the performer improvises according to a graphic that does not imply a definite sonorous result. The performer, of course, is inspired by the graphic to improvise, but there is no stringent relation between improvisation and the graphic notation. (An example would be the *Five Pieces for David Tudor* by Sylvano Bussotti.) The result is accidental from the perspective of a listener who follows the performance with a score in hand. Even if the prescriptions for the performance of the composition are broadly formulated so that any kind of realization is justified (take as an example the *Variations* by John Cage), improvisation and chance are the same.

In the context of this kind of music, there is lots of talk about the freedom of the interpreter. Indeed, the inventive moment is transferred to the player who advances from a merely reproductive musician to a productive musician. The emancipation of the interpreter, however, leads in consequence to a new role for the composer: He dictates to others to be free. Thus the composition represents the result—in a different sense as before—of the collaboration of different individuals of equal status. An adequate solution for this development is the foundation of groups “playing freely together.” Many such compositions, however, are characterized by the contradiction, on the one hand, of giving the interpreter the freedom to play “his” music and, on the other hand, of functioning as the product of a specific composer. But, even something more basic requires disagreement, namely the abstract idea of freedom on which this kind of music is based. A prime example of this idea is a piece by Cage in which the player is asked to perform any kind of action. He is completely free in his choice of action. It can be of a revolutionary or fascist nature. What masquerades here as freedom I would like to call “qualunquism” (whatever-ism), a term borrowed from the Italian language. If such approach is already sufficiently questionable in the realm of music, one can imagine the disastrous consequences they can have in the political arena. Cage’s aesthetics are based on the same ideology, namely to accept any acoustical event as a sound phenomenon of equal rights. Cage writes: “The music I am occupied with must not necessarily be called music. There is nothing in the music that should be remembered—no themes, only activities of tones and silences. Whoever can hear this as an informative event will admit that the ear can perceive the sounds of everyday life with joy and satisfaction. The unjustified selection of tones is finished, the division between spirit and matter, between art and life has been overcome.” There is no doubt that such an approach has contributed to bringing movement to fossilized habits of listening, to broadening musical consciousness, and—in general—to influencing the development of music during the last fifteen years. But it needs to be

recognized that, in the final analysis, it leads to the affirmation and justification of the world as is. It does not support freedom, but subjugation under the status quo.

I do not mean to imply here a critique of freedom in interpreting music in general. On the contrary! Especially in orchestral compositions there is often a clear discrepancy between the emancipated form of organizing musical materials and traditional ways of communication. The society that brought forth the tonal system also generated the orchestra—a hierarchically structured organism that assigns the individual a clearly defined part of labor. The increasing rationalization of the orchestra is the mirror reflection of the industrial process of rationalization, and labor in the orchestra is not different from the alienated form of labor in factories. Music whose linguistic organization is truly emancipated would have to generate similar forms of communication. Many of the compositions that incorporate the freedom of interpretive decisions in the compositional process are, no doubt, attempts to develop musical materials in an adequate form. As has been shown, graphic notation of music and total indeterminacy are no solutions.

Between the extremes of total determination and anarchy there are a series of compositional strategies that partly incorporate aleatoric elements and/or earmark, to a greater or lesser extent, sections to be improvised by the performer. I do not want to address those strategies here. However, I would like to mention, at least, structures that cover a complex of relations between different sound events, or relations between the musicians among themselves, but that do not define the musical material. These compositions are basically not different from those mentioned earlier. Here, as well, the sound result does not matter. An abstract model is designed that can fit any kind of content. The recognition, however, that a structure, albeit a different one, is needed for freedom to unfold distinguishes this type of composition from the others.

The composition that I would like to discuss originated two years ago before I began consciously to address the issue of guided chance. If there should be correspondences between the thoughts just presented and the mode of composition, it would mean that practice preceded theory in this case. The latter however should not be without influence on future experiments.

I wrote the composition *Das ist kein Bach, sagte Beethoven, das ist ein Meer* during the Cologne Courses for New Music in 1968. It is a piece for seven performers. The title alludes to a statement attributed to Beethoven about J. S. Bach's music: "This is not a brook, this is an ocean." The challenge was to invent a process that allowed performers to play freely. The prescriptions were

TABLE I, 1

≈	play something similar
⊙	move about in the neighborhood
↖ ↗	move away from and come back to the point of departure
↖ ↗	move away until the point of departure can no longer be recognized
€	play an echo
→	gradually move to the next segment (and play it)
→	gradually move to the next segment (without playing it)
↗	support another player, i.e., perform a few notes (as synchronized as possible) from the segment what he is just playing; the performer to be supported is indicated by an arrow
↔	play something else
+ + + +	increase or decrease by one, two, three, or four parameters.
, , , ,	
○	give a beginning cue to the player indicated by the circle
○	give a concluding cue to the player indicated by the circle
	The duration of individual brackets is indicated by means of different fermatas:
^	short
˘	long
⌋	very long

Table I, 1: Notational Symbols used in *Das ist kein Bach*

to be simple so that performers could focus on playing rather than on deciphering the score. The score was to constitute a framework that allowed space for one's own creativity. The introduction for the piece conveys the following:

The piece can be performed with different instruments, but the ensemble should consist of at least one wind and one string instrument, an instrument of indefinite pitch and piano (with two players).

Each player receives a copy of Prelude No.8 from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Part I, and a score. In addition, the two piano players receive an additional part that they have to play at an indicated place.

Several passages of the Prelude have been marked with frames and given letters from a to g. These segments constitute the material of the piece that is to be modified according to signs in the score.

A letter in the score determines which of the segments of the Prelude is to be played. Each player will perform what is possible on his instrument. In the case of a chord (segment a), the player of a monodic instrument will choose any pitch of the chord; in the case of an instrument with indefinite pitch, the player will choose the rhythm of the duration of the segment. But a keyboard instrument is to perform always the entire segment; if necessary, the segment or parts of it can be transposed an octave higher or lower.

A letter in brackets to the left of a sign indicates the segment to which the sign refers. In case there is no letter, the sign refers to what has been played last.

The following signs have been used [see Table I, 1].

The duration of a fermata is not determined exactly, but left to the instinct of the player. By not precisely determining the duration of the fermatas, and also because individual players have frequently different fermata signs, it is possible that some players finish their part earlier than others. However, when a player gives the sign for closing or beginning a section, the players should stop, even when they are not yet finished.

The individual sections are to be played with the dynamics to be used if one were to play the original prelude. In any case, the dynamics—as long as they are not determined by plus or minus signs—are *ad libitum*.

As the introduction indicates, the composition is defined by the tension between what is determined and what is not determined. What is determined articulates itself in a series of levels. Take, for instance, the basic material, in other words, the Bach fragments: They range from an individual trill and chord to short melodic figures to a longer quotation. It is clear that the degree of the individuality of the fragments has an impact on the kind of development on the players' part. This development, of course, is also influenced to a high degree by the signs in the score which include different degrees of determination from complete openness ("play something else") to relative determination ("play something similar" or "support another player"). There are passages where the combination of two relatively undetermined factors

Luca Lombardi, Das ist kein Bach, sagte Beethoven, das ist ein Meer!

Frammenti del Preludio Nr. 8 dal I volume del *Clavicembalo ben temperato di J. S. Bach*

Example I, 1a: Materials from Bach Prelude in E flat minor (*WTC I, vii*)

results in sounds that can be exactly predicted: for instance, when a short trill is followed by several plus signs, the results will be an increase in density or loudness or a rise in pitch. That way certain processes can be planned. Also determined are the succession of the individual Bach fragments and the instrumental density, which ranges from tutti to soloistic passages of a few players. Even though the piece is based on a structure that remains the same for each performance, it thrives from the creative collaboration of the performers. The composer is *one* of the collaborators contributing to the generation of the piece.

At the premiere on December 13, 1968, during the concluding concert of the Cologne Courses for New Music, the performers were: David Johnson (flute), Johannes G. Fritsch (viola with amplification), Harald Bojë (electronium), Vinko Globokar (trombone), Luca Lombardi (piano). Gheorghe Costinescu (piano), and Rolf Gehlhaar (tamtam).

[Source: "Vom Zufall, von der Improvisation und von der Freiheit in der Musik," unpublished typescript dated 1971; Becheri 71,4.]

Non Requiescat. Musica in Memoria di Hanns Eisler

Non Requiescat. Musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler originated in the spring of 1973. I lived at the time in East Berlin as a guest of the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic, doing research there in preparation of a dissertation on Hanns Eisler and also studying with Paul Dessau.

During one of my first encounters with Dessau I told him that I wanted to write a piece for chamber orchestra. He advised me to compose it in a gestic or "Brechtian" fashion, meaning: clear and comprehensible. I asked whether and how a "Brechtian" attitude could be transferred to music, especially to music without a text. Dessau said: "I believe it is possible, but it is difficult to explain. You will be on the right track by assuming a political stance, and avoid anything decorative and unnecessary. Schoenberg already stated that every note one composes needs to be heard and correspond to the character of the piece. A political stance does not tolerate secondary matters that blur the message; even a musical text can be blurred by decoration and redundancy."

I am not sure whether the piece has become "Brechtian." But I would say that the piece has a certain gestic quality. It presents different characters, situations, and attitudes—successively and simultaneously. One might call the piece an essay about contradiction. The contradiction, the way, was also Eisler's to the extent that he lived and worked within a society that was contradictory. But it is also our own

contradiction to the extent that the principal contradictions are the same today as in his times. Thus, one also might call the piece an essay about realism. And here I do not mean a passive reflection of reality but reflection as a critical and partisan engagement (in that reflecting the distorted features compels those being reflected to changes).

There are two quotations in the piece: *Solidaritätslied* by Brecht and Eisler and *Bandiera Rossa*, an Italian workers song.

[Composed in 1973; the typewritten program notes in German are dated March 1974; Becheri 73-7.]

Canzone per orchestra

Canzone per orchestra, composed in 1974, is the second part of a four-part cycle for orchestra, which bears the dedication “to the fighting people of Chile.” In this piece I use old songs from Sicily and Sardinia—songs of coachmen, salmon fishers, workers in the salt mines, and a children’s song (“Knee Rider”). These are documents of a suppressed, but ultimately unbendable and irrepressible, culture. By transferring them to a different context, I did not try to “integrate” them completely, which would have extinguished their characteristics and rendered them as neutral and purely musical material. On the contrary, the conflict between “highbrow” and “lowbrow”, between dominating culture and subculture was not camouflaged. It cannot be eliminated individually and voluntarily, anyway. Since the conflict is a reflection of society, it can only be overcome by rescinding the conditions it reflects. In using the songs I was also interested to re-introduce, by way of these old songs, certain modes of new music (repetitive procedures, static structures), which not infrequently imply elements of repression (by emphasizing meditative, mystical-irrational qualities) and juxtapose the songs with those modes: Meaning and function of comparable characteristics are essentially different.

[Composed in 1974-75; the notes are from the program booklet of the *Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik* 1975, 45-46. *Canzone* is an early version for chamber ensemble of the second movement of the *Prima sinfonia*. The four-part cycle for orchestra mentioned here did not materialize beyond the three movements that make up the first symphony; an additional movement, most likely a scherzo, may have been planned at one time.]

Revolution of Music and Music of Revolution: Hanns Eisler—An Alternative

Hanns Eisler no doubt was an important guidepost in the composer's development in the 1970s and beyond. Lombardi for a while was close to Eisler's musical poetics, even emulated Eisler's style in his contribution to the cantata Streik bei Mannesmann of 1971 (written jointly with other composers under the guidance of Hans Werner Henze) and, in a different, i.e., musico-dramatic context, it reverberates in some sections of his opera Dmitri (2000). In 1975 he earned a doctorate in Literature and Philosophy from the University of Rome with a dissertation on Eisler published as Musica della rivoluzione (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978). The following essay was one of the first introductions of Eisler and his music to Italian readers.

“Modern music bores me, it doesn't interest me, some things I even hate and despise. If possible I avoid listening to it or reading it (including my own works of recent years). I understand nothing of twelve-tone music and its technique, except for a few external details. But I am enthusiastic about your twelve-tone works and I have studied them in depth.”⁵

Thus wrote Hanns Eisler in 1926 to his teacher Arnold Schoenberg. In 1949 Schoenberg would say of Eisler that he was, together with Alban Berg and Anton Webern, one of his most gifted and well-equipped students.⁶ Eisler himself always considered Schoenberg one of the greatest composers, not just of the twentieth century.

How might one reconcile this apparent contradiction: respect and admiration for Schoenberg, on the one hand, and rejection of modern music, on the other?

The year 1926 is a decisive one for the development of Eisler's musical poetics. Just a few months earlier he had moved to Berlin from Vienna where—born in Leipzig in 1898—he had grown up and had studied privately with Schoenberg from 1919 to 1923.

Berlin was at that time not only one of the most culturally active centers in Europe, but also one of the cities in which the contradictions of middle-class society were most strongly making themselves felt. As the capital of the

⁵ [Cited in *Wer war Hanns Eisler*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Berlin: Das Europäische Buch, 1983), 34-35; also in Eberhardt Klemm, *Hanns Eisler 1898-1962* (Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1973), 13. The undated letter to Schoenberg, according to Klemm, was written between March 3 and March 10, 1926.]

⁶ [In a letter dated 22 January 1945 to Henry Allen Moe, the general secretary of the Guggenheim Foundation, Schoenberg specifically mentions Berg, Webern, and Eisler as some of the most talented young composers he has taught. And in a letter to Josef Rufer dated 18 December 1947, he expresses his esteem for Eisler's compositional talent—a talent unfortunately misguided by political activism. Arnold Schoenberg, *Ausgewählte Briefe* (Mainz: Schott, 1958), 243 and 264.]

Weimar Republic, Berlin was at the center of violent social tensions and harsh class conflicts. In certain respects—but any analogy should be taken *cum grano salis*—the situation recalls that of present-day Italy: The inability of centrist forces to resolve the problems and doubts inherent in capitalism, an inability joined to the stubborn will to maintain power at all costs; to this end, even turning to the support of reactionary or fascist forces; the polarization of the political struggle; the division of the working class provoked by those parties which, even risking pursuit of the dangers of fascism, are not willing to form a united front with the more advanced political forces.

Hanns Eisler made contact with the political and cultural organizations of the working class. He entered the KPD (German Communist Party), became a music critic of the *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag), the official organ of the party, and taught at the *Marxistische Arbeiterschule* (Marxist Workers' School). Eisler wanted to take part in the class struggle also as a musician and to contribute with his efforts to the political and cultural emancipation of the proletariat.

In the Germany of that time, there were a great number of workers' choruses which, brought together under the *Deutscher Arbeiter-Sängerbund* (German Federation of Worker-Singers), included around a half million members. It was an organization established toward the end of the last century by the social-democratic party and had paralleled the latter's gradual decline. The choruses, that is, had by then taken a reformist direction and their programs had little by little become depoliticized and tended toward the petty-bourgeois. In 1931 a series of revolutionary choruses broke off from the main organization which were to give birth to the *Kampfgemeinschaft der Arbeitersänger* (Militant Association of Worker-Singers) to which Eisler contributed significantly in terms of theory and practice.

In addition, there were very many "agitprop" groups. It is calculated that in 1928 no fewer than two hundred of them were active.

Eisler joined the agitprop group *Rotes Sprachrohr* (Red Megaphone) and then wrote revolutionary choruses. He wrote numerous songs for the proletarian singer Ernst Busch, whom he accompanied at the piano during political demonstrations, in cabaret shows, in bars and in theaters. He began his collaboration with Bertolt Brecht, a collaboration that would continue during the exile of 1933-1948 and then again in Berlin, which had in the meantime become capital of the first German socialist state, until Brecht's death in 1956.

It is interesting to note, however, that the works that made Eisler "the first composer of the working class"—as he was rightly called—came after his taking a position against "modern" music. Until 1926 Eisler had composed

chamber music which, while revealing a composer of stature, were stylistically close to the Second Viennese School. He had not yet even written the *Zeitungsausschnitte* (Newspaper Clippings), Op. 11, which dates from 1927, a composition anticipating his break with the forms of conventional concert music. It would be only two years later, in 1928, that the first convincing products of his new political and musical direction would come to light. Two of the most valid works, not only of this period, but of Eisler's entire career, originated in 1930 and 1932, respectively: *Die Maßnahme* (Taking the Measure) and *Die Mutter* (The Mother), two didactic pieces written in collaboration with Brecht. Schoenberg, in fact, admonished Eisler not to manifest in actual practice his new ideas, and considered Eisler's attitude "a way to make himself interesting."

The reason for the time lag between his forming a political conscience and the results of that choice on the musical plane are to be sought in the complexities of the problems Eisler faced. It was a matter of finding a language with which he could reach an audience scarcely eager to hear new music. Atonal and dodecaphonic music indeed were not suitable for the musical genres that Eisler was concerned with at that time, namely choral music and songs. Furthermore, these songs and choruses were not meant to be performed by specialists, but instead by the very proletarians to whom they were addressed. In this way, Eisler pointed the way of escape from the crisis of bourgeois concert life by abolishing the barrier between performers and audience, and by transforming the concert into a political meeting.

Eisler did succeed in finding a language befitting the new purpose of his music. The compositions of these years are in every sense "modern;" they are not, however, esoteric, nor do they descend to the level of music of mass consumption in the worst meaning of the phrase, while they are true music of consumption, that is to say pieces that not only quickly enter the repertoire of progressive cultural organizations, but that enrich the common musical heritage of the working class in the international sphere. Songs like *Solidaritätslied* (Song of Solidarity), *Einheitsfrontlied* (Song of the United Front), Song of the Comintern, and many more have attained a vast international popularity.

Eisler brought to fruition a musical "reduction," that is, he abandoned the complexities of the musical language of the bourgeois avant-garde, making use of tonal and modal elements. The use that he made of them, however, is anything but traditional. He used these elements like material to which he applied a compositional procedure commensurate with the level reached by the development of music of his time. Indeed, even in the apparently simpler songs it is possible to recognize a composer educated in the strict Schoen-

bergian school. Eisler's style is dry, devoid of adornment, hewn in stone. His musical discourse develops with a great sense of continuity, often from a melodic, primitive cell that he deconstructs, transposes, and permutes to procedures that recall those of twelve-tone technique.

At the same time Eisler is careful to differentiate—from the point of view of material and musical technique—among the various genres. The idiom of a song obviously cannot be the same as that of a string quartet—which does not deny the usefulness that, in a given socio-cultural situation, even a string quartet or concert music may have. Eisler would subsequently write chamber music and orchestral music, but he would do it during his exile, that is, during a period in which, not being in direct contact with the proletariat, he could follow a “strategic” course, rather than a “tactical” one; in other words, he could write compositions which, not needing to be readily understood and disseminated, could employ more complex material and techniques. Two examples from diverse periods might clarify what has been said.

The *Second Sonata*, Op. 6, for piano was composed in 1924. It is a twelve-tone composition, and therefore among the earliest of pieces written according to the “method of composing with twelve tones only related to one another.”

However, it is interesting to note, alongside its counterparts, its differences from contemporaneous compositions by Schoenberg, for example from the *Suite*, Op. 25, of the same year. Right from the very first measures there can be seen an affinity—both in its general flow and in its details—which, in part, recalls the analogous structure of the two twelve-tone series. Both works are made up of a series of individual pieces, in Schoenberg's case old dance forms. In his search for a new order, Schoenberg turns to forms—in this case pre-classical, in other cases classical (sonata form)—that not only were developed in a different socio-historical context, but which were also associated with a particular musical language and therefore contradict the emancipated musical idiom. Eisler soon became aware of this contradiction and wrote a sonata “in the form of variations,” using a compositional procedure more appropriate to the level arrived at by the new musical material. Subsequently Eisler generally avoided resorting, in dodecaphonic music, to traditional models. Only in two cases—*Kammersinfonie*, Op. 69, and a section of the *Quintet “Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben”* (“Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain”), two compositions of 1940—Eisler attempted to combine twelve-tone technique and sonata form. In comparison with the important Schoenberg *Suite*, which is difficult and somewhat spikey, the *Second Sonata* is more communicative. Even where he uses the most advanced musical means, Eisler is never esoteric.

Die Mutter originated as incidental music for Brecht's play (taken from the novel of the same name by Gorky), performed for the first time in Berlin at the beginning of 1932. During his exile in New York, Eisler made a concert version for speakers, soprano, baritone, chorus and two pianos. Avoiding stylistic purity as well as any kind of eclecticism, Eisler uses here different stylistic means according to the exigencies of the text. He brings to fruition his experiments with the revolutionary songs and choruses, but he also adopts stylistic elements peculiar to neoclassicism. His music, however, has nothing to do with the cold rigidity of many neoclassical compositions. The Bach-like motoric flow characteristic of musical neoclassicism takes on here, integrated with Brecht's text, an active and combative character. Throughout the cantata there are frequent assonances with Bach and there appear, as well, exact quotations to the extent that *Die Mutter* occasionally seems like secular passion music. Eisler's relationship with tradition is historic and dialectic; following a tendency present in contemporaneous music, he has never scattered quotations in his compositions without keeping in mind their meaning and historical "specific weight." If he quotes, he does it in a considered way. Thus, in the first piece of the cantata, "Wie der Rabe" (Like the Raven), is heard a quotation from the *Magnificat*, BWV 243. In Bach's composition the text reads, "Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles" (He has put down the powerful from their seat and exalted the humble and weak) and the aria that follows reads, "Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit" (He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away).

Awareness of the fact that different genres require different material and a different compositional technique is signally important in Eisler's poetics. Counter to the teleological idealistic conception, through which music develops according to immanent laws which therefore lead inevitably to specific results rather than to some other results, Eisler demonstrates the thesis, formulated by him in 1931, that "any new style is not born from a new aesthetic viewpoint; it does not therefore represent a revolution of the material, but instead the altering of the material is conditioned by a historically necessary alteration of the function of music in society."⁷ It is a process one can frequently observe in the history of music, for example in the transition from the polyphony of J. S. Bach to the homophony of his sons and of the Mannheim School, a transition that also carried with it the "reduction" of particular elements to allow the development of others. To what extent Eisler's musical experiment might be an example of a more general tendency toward a dialectical transformation of dodecaphonic complexity, serial as well

⁷ [Hanns Eisler, „Die Erbauer einer neuen Musikkultur,“ *Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. Wilfried Höntsch (Leipzig: Reclam, 1959), 46.]

as post-serial, into a “new simplicity,” is something to be shown by the musical praxis of future years.

We must interject here, however, that it is not the “simplicity” or the “reduction” *per se* that interests us. Even today, and in the field of the so-called avant-garde (to continue using a dubious term that needs clarification: who is *avant*—ahead of—whom?), we are witnessing a kind of reduction of material. Just think of the compositions, in many ways dissimilar and others similar, of the “American school” (Feldman, Reich, Riley, etc., and of John Cage who is, more or less, their spiritual father). It is obviously a kind of reduction ideologically antithetical to that effected by Eisler. While Eisler’s is the result of a socio-political commitment, whose purpose is to impact upon reality in order to influence change, the reduction of the North American composers is somewhat taken for granted and the result of a flight from reality toward artificial paradises (more artifice than paradise, to be honest).

Although fighting against the idealistic conception of the development of music, Eisler was far from establishing a mechanically deterministic relationship between new function and new style, as well as between socio-economic development and artistic-cultural development. “We should not become complacent,” he wrote in 1955 in an article on Schoenberg, “with practicing just sociology of music; it should also be integrated by the application of materialistic dialectics into the contradictory development of musical material. The becoming and the perishing, the eroding and the renewing, little by little, of musical material into diverse and socially conditioned styles and functions, should be studied in a ‘dialectic of music,’ if we don’t want to fall into a banal sociologism and a vulgar materialism.”⁸

This dialectically articulated conception of musical development explains how, even after the ideological break with Schoenberg, Eisler can still recognize his greatness.

Eisler was adept at distinguishing between Schoenberg’s *being* (*Sein*) and *consciousness* (*Bewusstsein*). Though being conscious of Schoenberg’s ideological limits—politically, it should be noted, he was a conservative—Eisler was well aware of his importance as a teacher and as a composer. “Decadence and dusk of the bourgeoisie, surely, but what a sunset!” wrote Eisler in the already cited article of 1955. He knew that one cannot mechanically deduce from composer’s political ideas the objective worth of his music. “It’s not what one says that is decisive, it’s what one does.” It is possible that in a composer’s works there *objectively* manifests itself a

⁸ [Hanns Eisler, „Arnold Schönberg,” *Reden und Aufsätze*, 112.]

conscience that transcends his subjective conscience. It is therefore possible that a politically reactionary composer might create some works that reflect the contradictions and the crises of a social order historically eclipsed almost against his own will and conscience. These works can be more truthful than those of a composer who is subjectively politically progressive. “No matter how many arguments can be brought against Schoenberg,” wrote Eisler, “one must admit he didn’t lie.”⁹ Besides, even a politically reactionary composer can contribute with his research to the development of musical material. The results attained can, to the extent that they become common heritage, be utilized by other composers in a different, politically progressive way.

In this context one must, however, say that it is also possible that a composer’s false social conscience enters into the music, insinuates itself to such an extent in the structure of a composition, that it indeed hinders and blocks musical development. The latter is in that case so ideologized as to render impossible its use in the progressive sense. This is tenable in a certain sense for the compositions of the aforementioned American school and for the recent proliferation of “meditative” compositions, like, for example, *Stimmung* by Karlheinz Stockhausen. This composition is based on a few harmonics of B flat that play on for seventy-five minutes, interspersed with the recitation of a few “magical names” and poetry of Stockhausen himself. The experience of the reality of the composer is here reduced to the enraptured hearing of a few pleasant sounds, a lazy and gratuitous reconciliation with the world as it is. *Stimmung* and many similar compositions sound like the negation of any development, like a true and fitting justification of stasis. The listener can—to use an expression of Eisler’s—leave at the cloakroom not just his hat, but also his brains and let himself be lulled by sweet, sonorous shadows in a state of obtuse ecstasy, in which he loses all contact with reality.

Ten years after his death, Eisler is, in Italy, unfortunately still almost unknown.

But it is not a matter now of tardily “rehabilitating” Eisler and giving him the place he deserves in the history of music. What really counts is to see in him a composer who can give us concrete guidelines for a present-day politico-musical praxis. But how?

It is obviously not possible to connect *tout court* with Eisler’s musical style without keeping in mind the musical experiments that have been going on in the meantime, and being aware of the new methods of production at the disposal of a composer.

⁹ [Hanns Eisler, „Gesellschaftliche Grundfragen der Musik,“ *Reden und Aufsätze*, 84.]

Nor is it possible to connect directly with the experiments Eisler was carrying out in the twenties and thirties during his association with working-class cultural organizations. In Italy especially, there is no mass musical movement comparable to that of the workers' choruses in pre-Fascist Germany, and the problems should therefore be approached and resolved in a different way.

It is possible instead, even imperative, to adopt the methods of Eisler's politico-musical activities. First of all, his close contacts with the working class and its organizations, that is, his conviction that a music that is useful for the proletariat's struggles can be created only in collaboration with the proletariat. It is not sufficient to perfect one's own creative output and present it ready-made for a proletarian audience. In a country like ours, in which musical illiteracy is widespread, this runs the risk of being nothing more than an excuse for a composer who, continuing in fact to inhabit a crooked and precarious ivory tower, assuages his "revolutionary" conscience, and meanwhile risks being politically irrelevant.

Instead, it is essential to create one's own works along with the groups one wishes to address, submit them for examination, discuss them, and, if it turns out to be necessary, modify them. In other words, it is necessary to make sure that the people for whom it is intended may take possession of it, that is to say, that they be made able to perform the works themselves in collaboration with specialists. Last but not least, it is necessary for the composer, as an intellectual and isolated individualist, to become an "organic" intellectual in Antonio Gramsci's meaning of the word, to transform himself—to paraphrase Eisler—from a parasite into a fighter.

[Source: "Rivoluzione della Musica e Musica della Rivoluzione: Hanns Eisler, o di un'alternativa," *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, 3-4 (1973), 430-442. The original essay contains a portrait of Hanns Eisler, two musical excerpts from Eisler's *Piano Sonata No.2* and *Die Mutter* as well as a chronology that have been omitted here; Becheri 73-10.]

The Radio Play *Von Gastgebern und Gästen* (Of Hosts and Guests)

(with Hans-Günther Dicks)

The radio play discussed here grew out of a workshop at the Kölner Kurse für Neue Musik with Frederic Rzewski. It marks an extreme position in Lombardi's development as an artist: in pursuit of the goal of writing something politically relevant and poignant, the composer refrains from composing music.

The present radio play originated in 1970-71. During this time we gathered—in ways that followed from our premise—tape recordings on the subject of immigrant workers in the Federal Republic of Germany. At the end we had about forty hours of material, from which we compiled about seventy minutes. The taped materials were discussed intensively with most of the interviewees. The discussions compelled us, several times, to make changes in our original conception, and they were decisive in the selection and ordering of the materials. We regard even the final version as a kind of raw material: for the listener who is not offered a solution but who has to decide on his own where to find it; for groups who are concerned about the problem at hand and who can use the material for documentary purposes. The radio play was performed at the Cologne Art Fair (*Kölner Kunstmarkt*) and in schools; in the latter case, high school students addressed, for the first time, in oral and written form, the issue of immigrant workers.

Why original materials? (In German: *O-Ton*.) It would have been possible to use also material taped in the studio or produce the radio play entirely in the studio. Certainly, we did not expect a higher degree of authenticity and objectivity by using original material. The objectivity of a piece about immigrant workers is decided neither by original or studio materials but only by the correct representation of the contexts and by whether it enables the listener to ascertain the right contexts from what they hear. Political analysis will have to demonstrate what is right or wrong.

Some critics claim that a radio play with original materials could overcome, without further ado, the separation between producer and recipient. We think, on the contrary, that a radio play does not acquire its emancipatory character simply because listeners appear in it as speakers. An army of listeners, all of them equipped with tape recorders and broadcasting their products, however, can only be a first step. The separation can only be overcome when recipients really have control over production and broadcast.¹⁰ But awareness for articulating true needs and interests can only develop in the concrete discussions about such control.

Again, why original materials? One reason certainly was that neither of us had experience in writing and that it seemed to be easier to record interviews and to develop these materials than to write a piece about immigrant labor.¹¹ Our

¹⁰ [In a way, the Internet fulfills the authors' ideal of assigning control over production and broadcasting to the recipients.]

¹¹ For a discussion about why Luca Lombardi, being a composer, resorted to a non-musical genre, see L. Lombardi, „Von Schnee, Nebel und der schlechten Witterung überhaupt“ („Of snow, fog, and bad weather in general“), in *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter*, Berlin 43/1972, 233-38. [The essay is not included in this volume.]

subject benefited from the possibilities of original material. In a radio play about foreign workers, the possibility of reproducing the special diction and linguistic gesture of those given a voice is not unimportant. Not only does the play achieve greater concreteness and color—in other words, a higher degree of immediacy—but we were also able to show something substantial through particular characteristics of language and diction. This not only applies to foreigners and their difficulties with language, but also to Germans, and in their case not only to special words, formulas, and linguistic patterns (“I have no problem with *foreign* workers”; “We, the landlords...”; “The foreigners are *almost* like Germans”; etc.) but also to the colors of the dialect. The Saxonian dialect of one German, for instance, who is particularly vociferous about what is alien to him—foreigners, communists, Jews, Blacks, and the devil himself—marks him as a refugee, as someone who escaped a new reality in which he did not feel at home. He communicates, already through the way he makes his statements, the reasons for his sentiments.

The acoustical characteristics of a radio play are, of course, not limited to language. What is happening can take place on different acoustical levels. We have taken advantage of these possibilities without turning them into the substance of the radio play. But we have tried to utilize the possibilities available through the development of the technical means of production for the purpose of presenting a particular subject matter, namely how the exploitation of foreign workers in the capitalist system is a special case of the exploitation of workers under capitalism in general.

[Source: Klaus Schöning, ed. *Neues Hörspiel O-Ton: Der Konsument als Produzent*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp (1974), 64-66; Becheri 74-4.]

Popular Music and Art Music

Through several statements in the mid-seventies, the composer contributed to a discussion about the relations between popular and art music. In these texts, the term “popolare” is contrasted with “colta” and occasionally assumes a meaning that in English would be rendered “folk” music. Having just completed his Prima sinfonia at the time helped Lombardi to formulate his position.

I would like to enter briefly into the debate launched in *L'Unità* on popular music, and offer my small contribution to removing some barriers that continue to divide the various fields of music. Such division is appropriate insofar as different kinds of music refer to different roles of music; it is not appropriate, however—and, anyhow, unproductive—for the various fields to

be like inert compartments, and for those cultivating the different types of music to have in common only a mutual disinterest for each other. This disinterest is understandable in view of the education of professional musicians in our country. In our conservatories popular music still has no rights of citizenship. (Only recently has a group of students and instructors at the Conservatory of Pesaro requested to create a course on popular music.) For conservatory curricula “music” means only a particular kind of art music developed in a given geographical, cultural, and social area. Whatever does not fit into this area—be it non-European music or music developed by the lower classes—officially does not exist. Let me be clear: I am not advocating some generic cultural relativism, nor am I suggesting that we try to put all music on the same plane simply because it exists. I am, instead, calling upon people (even musicians!) to open their ears to what originated outside their cultural area and to what is the product of other cultures and social classes.

Countering the parochialism of the conservatories and of the majority of traditional musicians there is, especially among the younger composers, a new interest in popular musical culture. A reason for this interest surely should be traced to the crisis experienced by a certain type of “avant-garde” musician. Many musicians find themselves faced with the decision whether to commit *hara-kiri* (that is, to stop composing—which is not at all infrequent), or to rethink the reasons for their own work, beginning with those that should be fundamental questions for any musician, namely: why and, above all, for whom. Reflecting on what should be the role of music in our society leads directly to confronting the problem of a musical culture growing out of, as Giaime Pintor correctly puts it, “the life and struggle of great masses of people.” Here, as well, we must clear the field of a possible misunderstanding. It is certainly not a matter of contrasting in a non-dialectical and unhistorical way, the techniques of art music—as they have developed up to the present—with popular music, which by itself (and because it is “uncontaminated,” “pure,” and so forth) would automatically solve the problems of composing today. Nor is it possible to take possession, in a “colonial” sense, of a more or less “exotic” musical heritage in order somehow to enrich a musical palette which is perceived as becoming more and more depleted. (There also exists, however, this kind of “interest” in popular music, and here, too, we agree with Pintor when he says—albeit in a different context—that it should be defended against, and rescued from, its admirers.) But one cannot speculate on what might be the outcome of composers’ renewed interest in the popular-music heritage. Obviously, there are no ready-made solutions, because the composers themselves, while conscious of the legitimacy—nay, the necessity—of their interest, often do not know how to confront the problem properly. On the one hand, they do not wish (for good reason) to give up those gains made in the musical growth of the last decades; on the other, they

expressly wish to avoid any form of “colonialism.” Besides, for the reasons cited earlier, there exists among art musicians a widespread ignorance of the real expressions of the heretofore “lower” classes. It will be crucial, in this matter, to expand and strengthen the contacts among specialists in the various fields.

Looking beyond whatever “contamination” may come about among the various musical cultures, we should emphasize, so it seems, how such “contamination” presupposes a not superficial relationship of the musicians with the classes of which that music is an expression. Let us remember, in this context, how the “popular” (in the best sense of the word) musical pieces written by the communist composer Hanns Eisler in pre-fascist Germany, grew out of an organic contact with the political and cultural organizations of the German working class. At this point it should also be emphasized that there is not only a popular musical culture *already existing* of which one can “take possession,” even in a critical and circumspect way, but there is also a popular culture *emerging*, that develops in the midst of the struggles experienced by the working class. And it is here that art musicians can step in to make available their knowledge and to learn, themselves, to endow their work with an ever greater social role.

As far as television is concerned, discussed in Leoncarlo Settimelli’s and Pintor’s lectures, I consider it a pseudo-problem. The problem, in my opinion, is not the fact that television *per se* “corrupts” popular music, turning it into simple escapism. Television in itself does not “corrupt”; what does corrupt are those who use television to keep the viewers in a state of cultural semi-illiteracy. The problem therefore resides in the management or social role of television, just as of the mass-media in general. Here, too, the questions apply: “why” and “for whom.”

[Source: “Musica popolare e musica colta,” typewritten letter for *L’Unità*, the newspaper of the Italian Communist Party (29 August 1975); Becheri 75-3.]

Hans Werner Henze on His Fiftieth

Henze had been one of the supporters of the young Lombardi in the early 1970s. Lombardi had participated in the composition of the Streik bei Mannesmann cantata, a collaborative project that Henze spearheaded and that gained much attention in 1973. Both composers shared common political and musico-political convictions that brought them together during the planning stages of the Cantiere, a music festival in Montepulciano, Italy, founded by Henze. Differences that emerged during another

collaborative project led to a fall-out between both artists that lasted for decades and that only recently has been healed. (See the notes to Aubade: Omaggio a Henze of 2001 on the occasion of the older composer's seventy-fifth birthday.) Lombardi's statement written shortly after the fall-out on the occasion of Henze's fiftieth birthday is conflicted and ambiguous.

Hans Werner Henze is one those rare composers who have had success from early on and who have been blessed with success for many years. He is a composer, who captures the attention of others; it is proof of his intelligence that he knows in which direction society evolves and that, subsequently, he has drawn conclusions for his work from his insight. By dint of living in Italy—a country with a strong democratic movement that is growing in strength—he has grasped that the future belongs to the political left and, in turn, he has become a leftist composer. But he is too intelligent to believe that, from one day to the next, he has become a composer organically connected to the working class whose interpreter and spokesperson he is. He is aware of the contradictions inherent in a composer, who has always been a darling of the bourgeoisie (and, despite everything, still is)—contradictions that may be more instructive than his “statements.”

The case Henze is far from being unique; in fact, it is representative of all those musicians who are dissatisfied with the traditional role of the artist, who have moved out of the ivory tower and search for new directions and new audiences. (In that respect, Henze is atypical, as he has maintained his tower as a secondary residence, as it were.) Such musicians are more numerous than one thinks; one only does not know about them as much as one knows about Henze, and this has something to do neither with the quality of their work nor the sincerity of their political engagement. But this we know from history: that quality and success do not always coincide. Schoenberg and Bartók, two of the greatest composers of all times, died in poverty in our century and in the wealthiest country on earth, the United States of America. The scores of Ives—one of the true geniuses of our century who had to publish his music at his own expense—are even today in part only available in poorly printed editions.

There are, however, composers who are able to market everything they produce, immediately and under the best conditions. Henze is one of them. Since he sees through the rules of capitalism (even in the arts), he knows what to make of being favored by the capitalist culture industry. At age fifty he is—in spite of the music paper he has filled with his writings—still a seeker. For that reason, we should keep track of his work, because if he finds something, it will benefit all of us.

[Source: Untitled typescript, published as "Erfahrungen mit dem Schaffen von Hans Werner Henze: Junge Musiker zum 50. Geburtstag des Komponisten" in *Deutsche Volkszeitung* 27 (1 July 1976); Becheri 76-3.]

Once Again: On Popular and Art Music

The pre-concert talk shows Lombardi at work in bridging different musical repertoires and traditions—a cause that has occupied him throughout his life. The term "musica popolare" denotes both popular and folk music.

The program that Giovanna Marini, Frederic Rzewski and I are presenting tonight is a bit disorganized. It is not the *result* of a collaboration, but the *beginning* of a collaboration—a collaboration that may lead to more organized programs in which we work together towards a unified discourse. In the present case, however, each of us is here with a work composed independently from each other. What is, then, the reason for this encounter? By getting acquainted with each other's music, we came to realize that, while coming from diverse experiences and having traveled different paths, we have our sights on analogous goals. Each of us pursues the objective of writing music that does not wither away in the autonomy of its structure but which, without giving up its specificity, derives its *raison d'être* from participation in the experiences of reality, contributing, insofar as it can, to the transformation of society in the democratic and socialist sense.

I mentioned diverse experiences and origins, and one might see, in this "communal program" of ours, an example of collaboration between "art" musicians and "popular" musicians. But this dichotomy that, with respect to the evolution of musical reality, appears more and more simplistic (I will return to this subject below), never, as in this case, has been more inaccurate and misleading: Giovanna Marini, in fact, is an art musician who is nonetheless popular. Rzewski and I do not know if we are "art" musicians (neither of us, I think, is fond of this attribute), but our music surely is not popular. And at this point it would be appropriate to insert a fuller discussion of what "popular" means. Something that in this venue is not possible (but the matter can be taken up in the debates planned during the festival). Suffice it to say, however, we do not mean here that kind of false and induced popularity of the by-products of the capitalist music industry. Nor is one obliged to think that popular has to mean "immediately comprehensible." Not everything can be immediately comprehensible, and, besides, even things that require preparation and attention on the part of the listener, and that are difficult at a first hearing, can become popular. Brecht says that popular is what "is

comprehensible to the masses, embraces their forms of expression while enriching them / assumes their viewpoint, confirming it and correcting it / represents the most advanced part of the people so that it can assume command, and thereby make itself comprehensible to other parts of the people / relates to traditions while developing them / transmits to the part of the people that aspires to hegemony the conquests of the part that at present has hegemony.”

The problem of an authentically popular music (in this Brechtian sense) is particularly complex in our country. The main reason that contemporary music (“art music”) has such difficulty in finding its way in the general population is to be found in our longstanding lack of serious basic musical education. But, once this is recognized as the main reason, it is then necessary to say that many musicians are still imprisoned by an outmoded way of thinking of music, which leads them—in a more or less conscious way—to consider their music as “reserved,” that means, as destined to be understood only by a small group of specialists. *Reductio ad absurdum*: such a conception (outmoded because its origins are linked to the condition of the composer in the bourgeois society, to which the audience for serious music was, for all practical purposes restricted) is characteristic of those composers that still like to consider themselves in the avant-garde (but an avant-garde out of contact with the main marching column, to keep to my military metaphor, makes no sense at all). It cannot be denied, however, that something has begun to change. Before the implementation of a serious curriculum of musical culture can contribute to a radical change in the situation, certain initiatives should be disseminated designed to establish new contact between musicians and the public. But even contact and collaboration among musicians coming from diverse experiences (as in this case of us three) is becoming more and more frequent. Also, the hundreds and thousands of events could contribute in a more direct, programmatic way, to stimulating a new contact between musicians and public, and hence, a *new musical production* on the level of the present-day political and cultural reality. (I am thinking about how much has been done, in this sense, in just a few years before and during the Popular Unity government in Chile.)

The musician coming from avant-garde or art music who wishes to get to know and to compare himself with the different musical realities (outside of the realm of Western art music) must beware of two dangers—excessive specialization and eclecticism. The former is the heritage of a certain kind of avant-garde music, whose “code” is a parody of the “style” that characterized the music of the great composers of the past. The “style”—and here I am aware of how problematic the term is for summing up both the technical-musical relationships and the ideal implications of a work or a body of

works—the style of Beethoven, shall we say, or of Mussorgsky, is quite a different thing from the veritable “trademark” that some modern composers resort to, or fashion (e.g., the repetitive structures of Steve Reich, the long, drawn-out sounds of Morton Feldman, etc.). Potentially every new “avant-gardist” aspires to build his own code, however slight it might be, that can make his music recognizable even to the ill-equipped and heedless listener. It hardly needs to be emphasized how necessary it is—typical for a mercantile society—to gain for oneself a little spot in the plethora of available products, among them music itself. The cohesiveness of attitude or of method (to avoid using the imprecise term “style” again) of the great composers was not in contradiction to the great variety of forms, that is to say, of genres, of the function of their music. One can say that the progress of music in the bourgeois period (that is, its emancipation from ecclesiastical and court service) has coincided with the gradual restriction of its social functions, its principal function finally becoming that of the concert. But the concert is a relatively recent institution, and nothing says it has to keep indefinitely the same privileged place that it still has today. By rediscovering, starting from different musical materials, the diverse social roles of music and by establishing a truthful relationship among function, genre and the musical material chosen, the composer will be able to avoid the danger of eclecticism. And, by rediscovering the many possibilities of musical articulation, its potential to intervene in diverse situations, the composer will be able to contribute to the development of a new music that can, one day, without conceding anything to uneducated or atrophied tastes, become truly popular, in the sense of being of the people. This music will obviate the dichotomy between art and non-art, between the avant-garde and the retro-garde, etc. But until then, and starting with the new developments that music is undergoing in Italy, and also through the collaboration among musicians of various backgrounds, it will be necessary to arrive at more precise definitions. Not for the sake of musicological purism, but because those concepts adapt themselves less and less to what they mean to describe, and also because they basically reveal, whether consciously or not, a class-conscious view of music. Take, for instance, the music of the Orgosolo shepherds in Sardinia and that of Nino Rota—which is truly artful? For this writer there is no doubt—that of the Orgosolo shepherds (but that does not make Nino Rota’s popular). The problem, as one sees, is not simple and the debate could go on for a long time. The debate, however, has just begun.

[Source: Untitled typescript dated August 1977 of pre-concert talk given at *Festival de l'Unità*, Modena, September 1977 (the title here is editorial); Becheri 77-1.]

Gespräch über Bäume

The piece was composed for the Ars Nova Ensemble Nürnberg which premiered it under the direction of Werner Heider in November 1976.

The title alludes to Brecht's lines from the poem "An die Nachgeborenen" (To Those Born After Us) and signals discomfort with writing a piece that, originally at least, wanted to be nothing but a musical piece. Discomfort and guilt feelings in view of the bad times may make it almost appear a crime to have a "conversation about trees" under such circumstances, and that also means: to listen to music, to pursue purely musical issues, and to compose music. After Auschwitz it was impossible to write poetry, declared Adorno, paraphrasing Brecht perhaps subconsciously. That is wrong—not only because it is possible to write poems about Auschwitz, but also because it is important, in view of the terror, to hold on to what makes life worth living, and that includes also poems and pieces of music. Continuing in the mode of quotation and paraphrase, we might think of Eisler's statement: "Once the most urgent social ills have been resolved, it is possible to pursue again *l'art pour l'art*." We are far removed from that state—that's the reason for the guilty conscience, as long as we understand music as something that is not disconnected from reality but that takes a position in the world, reflecting its contradictions and hopes to contribute to changing and improving it. In other words, trees, and conversations about trees, are part of life!

As it turned out, however, I was unable to succeed in a pure "conversation about trees". I kept the title because I liked it. I think some of the tensions of the late summer of 1976 (when the piece was written) reverberate in the music: for instance, the overwhelming victory of the left in Italy, which radicalized the political situation, and the death of Mao Tse-Tung (a Chinese song found its way into the piece). As far as the purely musical is concerned, I wanted to write a piece that is structurally clear and illuminating. It is an essay in achieving clarity and comprehensibility. I have written several such "essays" since then (the last one is even called *Essay 2*). Others are projected.

[Composed in 1976; the program notes in German are dated 2 August 1979; Becheri 76-4.]

Variazioni su Avanti popolo alla riscossa

The theme of the variations is the Italian workers' song *Bandiera rossa*. In addition to having as its subject the transformation of a musical theme, the piece is also a reflection about what this old and well-known song means as an expression of struggle, defeats, and hopes.

I have drastically reduced the material in this piece. Variations I through V are constructed on nothing but the first four notes of the song. In the first variation, inversions and transpositions of the four notes (always used as chords) generate different nuances in terms of harmony and tone color. The fourth variation is based on only a single pitch (b) that has particular significance in the song. In the fifth variation, the forward-driving rhythms are disturbed by chords of different durations that interfere at irregular intervals. The rhythmic structure of *Bandiera rossa* plays an important role in the seventh variation in that it is subjected to processes of diminution, augmentation, and layering. The original rhythm of the song determines the ninth and last variation; it is repeated on one single pitch—a procedure reminiscent of the fourth variation. But the character of the variation is quite different, because the constant repetition of the rhythm of struggle imbues the section with the gesture of an appeal. I determined the sequence of the variations by an immanent musical logic as well as on the basis of the piece's "program." Thus, there is no linearly conceived moving away from the theme, but a constant back and forth or, put differently, the original theme reappears at irregular intervals. In this respect, the first variation is perhaps the one furthest removed from the theme, and the ninth—because the rhythm is clearly recognizable—closest to the theme. The melody of the theme comes through in the eighth variation (whereby the original major third is turned into a minor third).

The piano variations are dedicated to my friend Frederic Rzewski.

[Composed in 1977; the program notes in German are dated November 1981. The piece is also discussed in "My Music" in Part I of this volume.]

Tui-Gesänge

The piece originated in the summer of 1977 and was premiered in the spring of 1978 in Paris in a concert introduced by Max Deutsch. I consciously used here different musical layers which, of course, have something to do with the variegated character of the individual poems (different despite the general unity ensured by the topic). Stylistic homogeneity, which today has frequently deteriorated to a mere trademark, does not interest me. It was a challenge for me to think in different stylistic dimensions. As Adorno and Eisler wrote in the 1940s: "If we are not mistaken, music today has reached a phase in which Material and compositional practice separate—in the sense that the material has become relatively indifferent as far as procedure is concerned... The compositional technique has become so stringent that it does not need any longer to be the result of the material, but, in a way, can utilize any kind of material."

Thus, style can be treated like a parameter among others. In principle, no material (whether old or new) assumes a preferential status, but its use must be justified by its

relation to the respective content or the compositional intention. Thus, in addition to stylistic patterns associated with new music (e.g., “Behauste und Unbehauste” and “Rückversicherung”), there exists also a landler (“Sonett von den hemmenden Begierden”) as well as a tango (“Lob, Lohn und Preis”) in this piece. The latter are quotations, not of existing music, but of stylistic, historical, and semantic layers.

The *Tui-Gesänge* are dedicated to Roswitha Trexler.

[Composed in 1977; the program notes in German are undated; Becheri 77-2.]

Hasta que caigan las puertas del odio

The text by Pablo Neruda, on which my composition is based, was written in 1937. It refers to the Spanish Civil War. Unfortunately, the poem is still very much up-to-date, because today, just as forty years ago, freedom is threatened by fascism. The piece is dedicated to the memory of Salvador Allende and the people of Chile.

The persona in Neruda’s text is not an individual but speaks with several different voices. That’s why I chose a vocal ensemble of sixteen soloists who, without giving up their individuality, grow together as an entity.

The music is generated directly from the text, from its logic, its images, and its discourse. The individual words are frequently divided into syllables and distributed to different voices. The reason for such a procedure is not an abstract treatment of the musical material but an attempt to underscore the collective quality of the message.

The piece has been informed by experiences I made when studying Italian folk music, more precisely that of Sardinia. I was not so much interested in the “folkloristic” aspect as in certain structural qualities in the relation between text and music. Contrary to some current trends that try to make the musical language regress to outmoded historical levels, I tried to aim for a new comprehensibility that is achieved not by circumventing but by including new musical experiences.

At the end I cite the famous song of the Chilean composer Sergio Ortega, *El pueblo unido*.

The piece was commissioned by IRCAM and premiered in Paris in March 1977 in one of the inaugural concerts of this institute founded by Pierre Boulez.

[1977; the program notes in German are undated; Becheri 77-3]

Reflections on Music and Politics

The essay (dedicated to Frederic Rzewski) was published in a book that gathers contributions of authors from both East and West Germany, commenting on, and hoping for, a transition from a bourgeois to a socialist musical culture. The book—and that was a rare event during years of the Cold War—was distributed in both German states at the same time; the publishing company may have been close to the regime in East Berlin.

The politicization of large circles of intellectuals, resulting from the worker and student uprisings of the late 1960s, has given a new relevance to questions about the relationship between music and politics, including questions about the political impact of music. Until the mid-1960s, composers who pursued political goals with their work were few,¹² but today their number has increased many times over. Meanwhile, there are composers with highly diverse styles who see their calling in contributing with their music to the critique and overthrow of the capitalist society and to the creation of a new culture no longer governed by classes.¹³ True, objective reasons for a transition to the positions of the revolutionary labor movement already existed, but musicians and intellectuals in general were persuaded to rethink their role in late-bourgeois society by the political and union struggles taking place, since 1967, in France, Italy, West Germany, the United States, and other capitalist countries. The political learning process manifested itself differently with individual composers and took on different forms (not only because of different musical experiences but also because of differences in the political conditions that each composer encountered). While Marxism provides a common basis for all composers, its interpretation and application reveals considerable differences among them. Depending on one's own identity, the work of other composers may be judged as musically too simple, politically wrong, etc. Analysis and discussion are necessary among composers, especially during a phase when the politically engaged musician has not accumulated enough experience.

Still, the emphasis on differences should not make composers lose sight of the common and unifying elements. Whenever a composer is politically engaged—and this needs to be stressed—he is dissatisfied with the traditional role of the composer in our society. The new type of composer cannot emerge from one day to the next; furthermore, it cannot be determined *a priori* how he can use his work in the best and most effective way. He can arrive at an ever

¹² The best known was Luigi Nono.

¹³ Among others should be mentioned: Louis Andriessen, Konrad Boehmer, Cornelius Cardew, Armando Gentilucci, Erhard Grosskopf, Hans Werner Henze, Niles Frédéric Hoffmann, Nicolaus A. Huber, Thomas Jahn, Giacomo Manzoni, Frederic Rzewski, Christian Wolff, and Wilhelm Zobl.

more precise definition of the function of his music, above all, by connecting and cooperating with the politically advanced groups of society.

The discussion with democratic composers can, of course, be useful in this context. At a time when anything opposing capitalism is defamed and denounced in many a country (as, for instance, in West Germany), sectarianism among progressive forces plays into the hands of conservative and reactionary powers. Despite all polemics in internal debates it should not be forgotten where the real enemy is and where real or potential allies are. Culture can only emerge through a productive discussion; sectarianism and dogmatism are deadly. This, of course, does not mean that every position is welcome; I am not in favor of uncritical pluralism. The debate over different positions should lead to the development and emergence of a better standpoint. Marxists, in particular, know that they do not own "the truth" but only a method to analyze (and transform) reality. But reality is constantly in flux, and constant theoretical efforts are required if we do not want to be left behind by reality.

The following considerations may appear, now and then, to be somewhat scattered and preliminary. They are the reflections of a composer who has not gained final clarity about the problems in the relations between music and politics and who strives to gain knowledge, increasingly so, about how to work as a composer, here and now.

First, I would like to define a few concepts. Often, one hears about political aesthetics, political art, and, by extension, also about political music. The terms are imprecise, because every activity, whatever it may be, and that includes activities of an aesthetic nature, has political implications. It is a platitude: whoever is non-partisan, is partisan in that he supports those in power. It is not different with art and music. To isolate oneself from reality in times of great social and political upheaval implies an unwillingness to contribute to the shaping and transformation of reality; indeed, it means approving the status quo. Furthermore, the concept of "political music" says nothing about the concrete political tendencies of the music. It could be reactionary as well as progressive. I would rather propose the term "democratically engaged music." A question asked over and over again probes the extent to which music can represent a political tendency. It is an inquiry related to the problem of "meaning" in music. What does music mean? There are different and contrasting opinions, which we may group schematically in three distinct general positions.

1) The so-called formalist position whose main representative at the end of the nineteenth century was Eduard Hanslick. In his perspective, music is

incapable of expressing any kind of extra-musical content. “The same tones, with which Florestan expresses his joy (‘O namenlose Freude!’), could be used for the rage of Pizarro (‘Er soll mir nicht entkommen!’)”¹⁴ Hanslick believes that musical structures by themselves are neutral and exchangeable. “The most expressive vocal passages, if disconnected from their text, will only allow us to guess the emotion they are expressing. They are like silhouettes whose original we recognize, most of the time, only after we have been told who it is.”¹⁵

2) Quite opposite to Hanslick is the position that asserts that music can express definitive contents. But opinions differ as to what music expresses. For some it expresses feelings, emotional conditions, and/or affects;¹⁶ for others, it expresses also ideas and concepts.¹⁷ Some emphasize that music is able to produce attitudes and outlooks,¹⁸ while still others see the real significance of music in the respective functions it can occupy in society.¹⁹

Theories about the heteronomy of music, going back to the speculations of Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, blossomed especially in the nineteenth century. Let’s see what two composers have to say about the expressiveness of music. According to Robert Schumann,

People with less refined forms of life tend to perceive in music without a text nothing but pain, happiness, or something in-between such as sweet melancholy. They are not capable to grasp the subtle nuances of human passions such as anger, remorse, intimacy, euphoria, etc., which makes it difficult for them to understand masters such as Beethoven or Schubert who express the entire gamut of human existence in the language of music.²⁰

And Mendelssohn writes about his *Lieder ohne Worte*:

People usually complain that music is so ambiguous, and what they are supposed to think when they hear is so unclear, while words are understood by everyone. But for me it is exactly the opposite—and not just with entire discourses, but also

¹⁴ Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Leipzig: 1854; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965), 22.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ See Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

¹⁷ See Sidney Finkelstein, *How Music Expresses Ideas* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).

¹⁸ „Sie wissen, die Theorie der gestischen Musik geht bei Brecht in seine Jugend zurück. ... Damit meint Brecht einfach, das Musik mitproduziert das Verhalten des Sängers und des Zuhörers.“ (You know that Brecht’s theory of gestic music goes back to his youth... With this, Brecht simply means that music can contribute to engendering attitudes in the singer and listener.) Hanns Eisler in Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1969), 26.

¹⁹ See George Dyson, *The Progress of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

²⁰ [Robert Schumann, „Das Komische in der Musik,” *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1974), 67.]

with individual words; these, too, seem to be so ambiguous, so indefinite, in comparison with good music which fills one's soul with a thousand better things than words. What the music I love expresses to them are thoughts not too indefinite for words, but rather too definite. Thus, I find in all attempts to put these thoughts into words something correct, but also always something insufficient... So if you ask me what I was thinking of, I will say: just as the songs as it stands here. And if I happen to have a specific word or specific words in mind for one or another of these songs, I can never divulge them to anyone, because the same word means one thing to one person and something else to another, because only the song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another—a feeling which is not, however, expressed by the same words.²¹

Marxist aesthetics are also based on the conviction that music can communicate extra-musical contents and therefore are part of the second category (some of the opinions cited earlier in fact correspond to Marxist positions). Music (indeed, art in general) represents a particular form of societal awareness, enabling people to gain clarity of problems and contradictions of societal structures and to come to terms with them. But there are different opinions among Marxists as to how music reflects social reality in concrete terms. The discussion about such matters is still in its infancy. In this context, we cannot pursue the issue any further. Aside from the various positions, Marxist music aesthetics are characterized by the fact that they take into account the different functions of music, in historical terms (sociological and cultural context) as well as from a synchronic perspective (differentiated by genre and here, again, by specific social and cultural context).

3) A third position tries to unify the formalistic with the contextual (or realistic) direction, especially in its Marxist variant. The most well-known representative here is Theodor W. Adorno. Music for him has to be understood in sociological terms, but without abandoning the specific qualities of music to be explained only by recourse to inherently musical features. This position is similar to that of the best Marxist theoreticians—Hanns Eisler, for instance, without losing sight of the social foundation of music, speaks of the “relative autonomy of the musical material”—but Adorno, in the final analysis, abandons the dialectic of heteronomy and autonomy by privileging an explanation of music through features that are inherently musical.

I maintain that these roughly sketched hypotheses (or some of them) are mutually exclusive as well as *not* mutually exclusive.

²¹ [Translation in Strunk's *Source Readings in Music History*, vol. 6, ed. Ruth A. Solie (New York: Norton, 1998), 159.]

They are not mutually exclusive if one attempts to account, as objectively as possible, for the different functions (and meanings) of different repertoires. For, it is a mistake to speak of *the* music, as if music in its entirety were something homogeneous. I will try to explain my point by discussing two examples: the storm scene in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and the first prelude from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier.

What does the storm scene "mean"? It signifies (or alludes to) a storm. What does the scene "express"? It is difficult to say that it expresses a storm scene, but perhaps it is more appropriate to say that it expresses an image, artistically transformed, which Beethoven had of a storm. The piece, of course, is not limited to the explanation expressed through the title of the program. There are musical and technical aspects which establish its special character. Furthermore, it is an expression of a particular world view. Knowing that Beethoven was a follower of Baruch Spinoza, a pantheist, adds another semantic dimension to the piece. We may object that this aspect needs to be known and that the musical structures themselves do not provide this information. Indeed, we need to know this aspect, but there is nothing wrong with it. The individual work of art does not exist in a vacuum outside of history (including biography); in order to grasp its different implications, it is absolutely necessary to position the art work in a precise system of historical coordinates.

What does the Bach prelude "mean"? It means what is implied in the title, namely that it is a prelude which, in this case, is to be performed before a fugue. What does it "express"? Answering this question is much tougher, especially since, two hundred years after the composition, we do not know any longer (as musical conventions have been subjected to a constant process of change) the expressive correlates of those musical structures. We know that in Bach's time keys were linked to particular expressive characters. It would appear that Bach, in view of the didactic purpose of a work featuring preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys, took into account the specific expressive characters associated with each key. This dimension, of course, is lost for those listeners no longer familiar with the conventions which associate particular keys (but also rhythms, melodic formulas, etc.) with particular expressive contents.

The piece's "musical value," however, is not affected by the loss of this semantic dimension. What, then, does it express today? We must admit that it does not express anything that could not be explained by recourse to inherently musical features, that it cannot express anything extramusical for us today. (I have chosen an example which presumably had originally a semantic sphere that it lost in the course of time. There are, of course, also examples—

we could cite a few from contemporary music—which, from the start, did not aspire to a semantic dimension; since we do not know the original “meaning” of the Bach prelude, we would arrive at the same conclusion.)

In discussing the two examples we notice that there are different types of music; that means that the same criteria cannot be applied to different types of music. There are even greater differences which pertain to the different functions of music, in other words: to individual musical genres (in terms of special functions within the same social class and in terms of similar functions across different classes). We need to stress that we cannot talk of *the* music; on the contrary, there are different types of music whose “meaning” is different from case to case. We can list, again schematically, the following types of music in our society:

- 1) so-called “serious” (or classical) music, which itself can be divided in different categories in terms of function and style;
- 2) entertainment music, which also can be divided into different categories;
- 3) popular music, which can be differentiated by country (or region) and [social] status of its audiences in the production process (e.g., agricultural or industrial labor);
- 4) democratically-engaged music (which, however, can be subsumed under the first and third categories depending on genre: concert music, song, etc.).

Even with pieces of the same category (in other words, the same function) we cannot presume generally recognized criteria. The genre of “songs of political struggle” (*Kampflieder*), for instance, is anything but homogeneous. Certainly there are typical recurring features in this category, but also differences as far as a semantic dimension of the musical structures is concerned. Thus, music can be relatively or completely neutral with regard to text, on the one hand. In this case, the text is exchangeable and music only a vehicle, a means of transport, to deliver a particular but exchangeable text (as is the case, by the way, with many songs generated through parody techniques). On the other hand, it is possible for musical structures to articulate semantic qualities by making them relate to the text as support, interpretation, or contradiction. This is frequently the case in the songs of Hanns Eisler.²² We see here that the question of whether music can express particular contents (including, for instance, political contents) is misguided because it is too general. Even in expressly “political” music this can happen in some cases, not in others.

²² See Luca Lombardi, „Musica per chi: L’attualità delle proposte di Hanns Eisler per una musica politicamente impegnata.” In *Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano* no.2 (1975).

If there are fundamental differences even with music of the same type, it becomes clear how much more the differences are pronounced in pieces of different types. It would be absurd to analyze a political song and a string quartet according to the same criteria to find out what music means or expresses.

We noticed that the above-cited positions on the problem of meaning in music, although they are different and even partly contradictory, are not mutually exclusive under certain conditions. The objective observer of music history bears witness to how music divides into a myriad of appearances; it is impossible to state categorically what music can express, negotiate, and accomplish without taking into account this multiplicity of manifestations. In other words, music can receive its purpose from the inner logic of its structures as well as communicate extramusical contents.

To what extent, however, are the hypotheses about the meaning of music mutually exclusive? This occurs when we move from aesthetics to poetics—that means: when we form judgments not as an “impartial” observer of music history, but as a composer who consciously decides in which direction he wants to work and who, therefore, needs to choose among the possibilities available to him. He must decide on the purpose and function of his music. On the basis of this decision he will select the genre and, by extension, the appropriate musical-technical means.

True, our point of departure is the conviction that in our time every artist should be partisan and contribute to the socialist transformation of society. But this does not relieve us from considering questions of art in a most differentiated way. We should not forget that we are fighting for that “realm of freedom” in which, according to Marx, “human striving becomes a goal in itself.” Thus, in principle, we are not against *l’art pour l’art*, even though we believe that today’s situation requires an art that is socially engaged. Nothing would be more mechanical than to think that all economic and social problems need to be resolved before art can find its real purpose. Social life is complex and contradictory. There is room for struggle, love, entertainment, even for a “beautiful” piece of music (let’s remove the taboo from this adjective!). Such a piece can implicitly be a protest against a world in which there is no beauty (or in which beauty exists only for those who can pay for it) or against a perverted form of “activist” music.²³

²³ „Wenn man beispielsweise das Postulat einer aktivisierenden Musik aufstelle, müsse man auch den Pferdefuß sehen. Hundertmal am Tage könne man aus dem amerikanischen Radio aktivisierende Musik hören... Da könne man allerdings nur noch verzweifelt nach *l’art pour l’art* rufen.“ (If, for instance, we suppose the postulate of an ‘activist’ music, we also need to be aware of its downside.

It is a characteristic feature of a progressive artist that he does not close his eyes before the complexity and contradictions of reality but that he reflects them in his work. Therefore, he will not exclude *a priori* any means or genre. The decision is not between political song and string quartet; both are meaningful and necessary if each is used with social responsibility and in consideration of their respective functions.

As is obvious from the history of different types of music in our society, our musical reality is divided into different spheres, more or less isolated from each other. The fractures, especially the one between “high” and “low,” between “serious” and “entertainment” music, are linked, as is well-known, to the division of society into classes. In a future society, these classes will disappear, as will the ideology that holds that individual classes represent separate and antagonistic worldviews. To the extent that we remove privileges of education, reduce working hours, and increase leisure time, we will eliminate the difference between “high-brow” music for the elite and “low-brow” music for the large majority of the population. Does it mean that serious music will replace entertainment music, or the other way around? The question is wrongly put because seriousness and entertainment need not be opposites by definition; they are opposites in a class society in which entertainment music functions mainly as a means by which people who are exploited at work manage to feel refreshed and restored.

In a liberated society, especially, there will no doubt be entertainment, but it will not occur at the expense of intelligence. Brecht has postulated a type of theatre (and realized it in large measure) that is at once didactic and entertaining. In this sense his plays are a piece of new society, a piece of “concrete utopia.” The barriers of the class society in the realm of art can, of course, not be removed only by individual artists. Being reflections of social limitations, these barriers can only be overcome by overcoming the class society. The musician of a new type, who emerges already in the old society fighting for a new order, will be conscious of the preliminary character of such barriers and will try to overcome them already in his work. In general, musicians tend to be occupied with the tradition of high-brow music, neglecting the orally-transmitted traditions of suppressed classes as well as the musical traditions of non-European cultures. The new musician will not pretend that something of musical value originated only within European culture, and here only from those belonging to the establishment. We do not mean to equate the song of the Sicilian fisherman and the “Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenden an die Gottheit in der lydischen Tonart” (Sacred Hymn of Thanks of a Convalescent to the Deity in the Lydian Mode)

‘Activist’ music can be heard over American radio stations hundreds of times a day... In this case, one is desperately tempted to call for *l’art pour l’art*.) Eisler in Bunge, *op. cit.*, 29.

from Beethoven's String Quartet, Op.132. These pieces are manifestations of different historical and cultural realities, and as such they are not compatible. But for this very fact—that they represent different historical and cultural realities—they deserve our attention. The new composer thus should take into account the different musical realities existing today, not by subscribing to a non-committal eclecticism (using different means only because they happen to exist), but by attempting to absorb those elements that he believes to be appropriate for a really new music, commensurate with a new society.

Beyond that he will try, in close contact with the progressive parts of society, to develop those forms which ever more convincingly correspond to the artistic and social purpose of his work. He will not only use means provided to him by tradition but also, if necessary, transform those means. During a period of transition we cannot be satisfied to go back to traditional forms of music; we need also to strive for new forms of organizing, producing, and performing music.

[Source: "Überlegungen zum Thema Musik und Politik," in *Musik im Übergang: Von der bürgerlichen zur sozialistischen Musikkultur*, Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich and Luca Lombardi, eds. (Munich: Damnitz, 1977), 11-20; Becheri 77-4. The essay was also published in French ("Réflexions sur le thème 'Musique et politique'") in *Schweizerische Musikzeitung. Revue musicale suisse*, CXVIII, 1 (1978), 15-20.]

My Music

The essay written for an anthology of autobiographical articles, to which several Italian composers contributed, is the first in a series of statements in which Lombardi reviews his accomplishments as a composer; it relates to others of a similar nature in this volume.

In the past year and a half I have written: *Gespräch über Bäume* for nine players; *Hasta que caigan las puertas del odio* for sixteen voices; *Variazioni su avanti popolo alla ricossa* for piano (I have also made for this a version for large orchestra); *Tui-Gesänge* for mezzosoprano and five instruments. In addition, I have written a short piece for twelve voices (*Alle fronde dei salici*) and four little pieces for flute, which, joined with three pieces written in 1965, will form a cycle of *Sette piccoli pezzi* for solo flute.

In these pieces I have elaborated on experiments that I had previously done, but I think that they, in addition to being the more or less logical continuation of my work of recent years, constitute for me a turning point. How so?

Was sind das für Zeiten, wo
ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist.
Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!
Bertolt Brecht

für Werner Heider und das ars nova ensemble nürnberg

Gespräch über Bäume

Luca Lombardi, 1976

* se troppo "fischianti" o comunque troppo difficile da suonare in modo omogeneo, ottava sotto.
Wenn die Pikkolo-Flöte zu unangenehm schrill klingt, bzw. wenn es nicht möglich ist, einen homogenen Klang zu erzeugen, Oktave tiefer spielen.

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EXAMPLE I, 2: *Gespräch über Bäume*, Beginning

At this point I think it useful to make mention of what have been my musical experiments for the past ten years.

In 1967 I heard the music of Stockhausen and I decided to go study in Cologne. I arrived there one rainy evening in late September of 1968 and I stayed there with a few interruptions (some of them long) until the end of 1972. There I began writing *Diagonal* for two transistor radios; *Das ist kein Bach* for seven players (variable ensemble—the piece deals with the problem of improvisation and transformation of given material). I got involved with electronic music (see *Stufen*). Later, I worked in Utrecht with computer music as well. I studied the techniques of musical “structuralism” (see *Proporzioni* for four trombones).

But 1968 was not passed in vain. Before leaving Rome, I organized a concert at the Pischietta, a factory in Rome occupied by workers at the time, together with Frederic Rzewski, Giuseppe Chiari, and others. Then there were the workers’ struggles of 1969, especially the “hot autumn”. (In 1960, freshly inspired by reading Brecht, I had met with the cudgels of the Tambroni police from the Macao barracks housing the *carabinieri*.)²⁴ After spending ten months in Italy, taking care of a case of gastritis and studying for my diploma in composition at the Conservatory of Pesaro, I returned to Cologne in October 1970, determined to use my music for political goals.

But how? It certainly is a problem with no easy solution. In 1970 I attended the Kölner Kurse für Neue Musik directed by Mauricio Kagel. Their topic: “Musik als Hörspiel” (Music as Radio Play). There were three work-groups, one directed by Frederic Rzewski. I pursued the idea of making a tape on the problem of worker emigration, *without music*, by using only recordings of interviews, demonstrations, etc. Because, as the wisdom of the times had it, “the aesthetic dimension neutralizes, dilutes, sugar-coats the political message.” This idea gave birth later to the radio play *Von Gastgebern und Gästen* (1971, later published in *Neues Hörspiel O-Ton* with Suhrkamp in 1973). So, it seemed to me then that political engagement and musical work were incompatible. At the same time—and this is a contradiction—I was attending the computer music course in Utrecht. And I was writing one of my most “abstract” pieces, *Wiederkehr*, devoted to the problem of harmonic control.

But here, right in the bacteriologically sterile environment of a computer studio, a friend gave me a little book, *Reden und Aufsätze* by Hanns Eisler (ed. Winfried Höntsch, Leipzig: Reclam, 1961). Who is this Eisler? I read and I discovered that this composer, forty years earlier, was tackling the problems that meant the most to me: those pertaining to the connection between music

²⁴ [The Tambroni government had been elected in 1960 with the support of neo-fascists political forces—a situation that led to widespread rioting in several Italian cities and, in turn, a crack-down by the government on people expressing their opposition through demonstrations.]

and political engagement. I read, for example, the essay of 1931, “Die Erbauer einer neuen musikalischen Kultur” (The Builders of a New Musical Culture). Of course, today a few things are open to discussion (in fact, Eisler himself has put them up for discussion), but a number of things are still valid and of current interest, including his critique of certain “advanced” music of his (which is similar to certain “advanced” music of today). Eisler always asked (and this is surely a fundamental consideration): advanced *for whom*? For the dozen or two avant-garde composers? For my next-door neighbor? For such and such a music critic? For a farmer from the Abruzzi mountains?

The same friend also told me that the Cologne Metalworkers’ Union was looking for a new conductor for the workers’ chorus. I was interested, and a few days later I was conducting thirty-odd people singing folk songs. Afterwards we drank beer. We discussed issues—political issues. We began to learn songs from the workers’ movement. We began to sing Eisler (difficult at the beginning for those who had never sung anything other than poor-quality, supposedly popular, music, or, at best, the chorus from Verdi’s *Nabucco*). The work continued for a year and a half. After a year I myself wrote a few songs that we sang on May Day at the Neumarkt. (On the work with chorus, see “Bericht über den Arbeiterchor der IG-Metall” in “Aesthetik und Kommunikation” N. 10 [1973]). The work with the chorus was interrupted when I went to East Berlin to prepare a dissertation on Eisler (there is an Eisler Archive in Berlin) and to work with Paul Dessau, the other great Brecht collaborator (beginning of 1973). In the meantime I had begun to look at the problems in a different way. After my political purism of 1970 and my newcomer’s zeal in working with the chorus (writing songs for the Cologne metalworkers’ chorus seemed the most worthwhile work that a composer could cultivate), I had begun to compose again. I had learned from Eisler to differentiate between various musical genres and to confront the problem of relationships among genres, what kind musical material to use and how to treat this material. But above all, I learned from him to confront the main problem (the one most difficult to solve), namely the relationship with the audience. Anyhow, the distinction among different genres made it possible again to consider writing “concert” music (even if not an end in itself, at least related to a precise ideal content).

In Berlin I wrote *Non requiescat: Musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler*, for chamber orchestra.

If I had to schematically divide my music into two groups, I would say that while some pieces are generated from and with a particular “gesture,” but without resorting to a pre-existing plan, other pieces are instead worked out, from the start, on the basis of a pre-existent plan. *Wiederkehr*, for example, or

Proporzioni are pieces planned *a priori*. *Non requiescat*, however, is a piece that develops as it goes along, following a procedure that one could define as, precisely, gestural.

When I began writing *Non requiescat*, I had in mind Eisler's assertion: "I am only the courier arriving out of breath, who has something to deliver. I wanted it no other way. Glory is another thing. In my position I cannot aspire to it. And what should I have done with it? Nonetheless, I can deliver something. The concept of delivering, the idea of a running messenger who has a message to bring has been, ever since my youth, the most important lesson that I learned from the workers' movement. The imperative to deliver something! To do something that might be of use, something I might pass on to others."²⁵ In this composition—in a very concentrated way (its duration is barely six or seven minutes)—there appear varied and contrasting situations, characteristics and attitudes. In this sense it is also a short essay on contradiction. A contradiction that was Eisler's, but which is, *mutatis mutandis*, ours as well, in so far as he who turns his back on his own class only partly succeeds—nowadays as then—in integrating himself into the new class. In this piece contradiction is expressed on various levels, including that of notation, which is sometimes rigorously precise and sometimes more or less free (and occasionally both at the same time). In an emblematic way it is seen in the quotation from the *Solidarity Song* by Brecht-Eisler. The break between the world it represents and the context into which it is inserted is, in its present state, impossible to reconcile: To deny or minimize it would be an act of will over intellect. [See Examples I, 3a and 3b.] And yet, it will be the task of a new culture to abolish the dichotomy between "high" and "low," a dichotomy that has a reason for existence only in a society in which whatever proclaims itself "high" is so only to the extent that it lives on the backs of those who are no longer the "lower class."

With the brief quotation from Eisler I was using popular music material for the first time in a piece of my own. The use of popular material is central to my First Symphony, begun, as is annotated in the score, "right after the fascist massacre at Brescia" (29 May, 1974). There are three movements: "Conduct," "Canzone," "Lamento per la partenza." In the first, I use rhythmic quotations and slogans of the international worker class. In the second, I turn to old Sicilian and Sardinian songs (of work, prison, and children). In the third, I

²⁵ [„Ich bin nur der Bote, der atemröchelnd ankommt und noch etwas abzuliefern hat. Mehr hatte ich nie im Sinn. Ruhm ist eine zweite Sache. Den kann ich gar nicht erringen in meiner Position. Was sollte ich denn machen damit? Aber ich kann doch irgend etwas abliefern. ... Der Begriff des Abliefern, des Boten, der läuft und noch eine Botschaft zu bringen hat, ist für mich seit meiner Jugend eigentlich die größte Idee, die ich von der Arbeiterbewegung gelernt habe. Abliefern müssen! Irgendetwas machen, das nützlich ist, das man abliefern kann.“ Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mir über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), 294.]

make use of the Chilean songs *Venceremos* and *El pueblo unido jamás será vencido* as well as a song from the Abruzzi region found by the folksinger Giovanna Marini, which gives the movement its name. The symphony forms to a remarkable extent a synthesis of my previous experiments. As far as “gestural” expression and “planning out” (activated by an “external” impulse without my having at all been concerned about writing a “symphony”), there are whole sections worked out on the basis of a precise formal design. Having at my disposition a full orchestra for the first time, I developed an interest in orchestral “sound” and special instrumental combinations—an interest that became increasingly more acute as things progressed. And as the piece developed, it also increased my desire to face the challenges of large-scale form and, by extension, of the great symphonic tradition. The title “Conduct” (funeral procession) for example was not adopted by chance, even though there is, musically, no outward reference to Mahler’s Fifth.

EXAMPLE I, 3a: *Non requiescat* (mm.1-21)

Musiknoten und der Universalfi gerecht zu werden bedeutet:
ankommen. Mit es verständig ist, Überwindung zu sein.
Berndt Buehl

NON REQUIESCAT
Musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler

Luca Lombardi, 1973

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E. M. Nr. 5154

4

FL *f, marc.*

OB *f, marc.*

CL *f, marc.*

FB *f, marc.*

CR *mf, and. cresc.*

TR *mf, and. cresc.*

TBN *mf, and. cresc.*

PER *2* *Frags*

VINO *f*

VINO2 *f*

VLA *f*

VC *f*

CB *f, impetuous marc. unorg(mar)*

ca. 6"

6

FL. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

OB. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CL. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

FS. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CK. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

TR. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

TROM. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA2. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VC. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CB. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

7

FL. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

OB. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CL. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

FS. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CK. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

TR. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

TROM. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA2. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VIA. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

VC. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CB. *f* *mezzo* *legato* *preludio e comparsa* *tr. 1.° tempo*

CL

FL

OB

FC

TR

TRBN

V1

V2

VLA

VC

15

FL

OB

FC

TR

TRBN

V1

V2

VLA

VC

19

Between composing the second and the third movements of the symphony in the spring of 1975, I wrote *Essay* for solo double bass. In this composition I quote a fragment from a song by Paul Dessau, *Die Thälmann-Kolonne*, written in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. The words of the short quotation, which the double bass player must sing, say, “We fight and die for you, Liberty.” That was enough to make my publisher demand that I drop the quotation. Not the musical quotation, mind you, but the text. Naturally I refused and gave the piece to another publisher. But that was not the end of the story. Some time later, the double bass player who originally had requested the piece—and who, when faced with the intervention of the publisher, had called such intervention inadmissible censorship—demanded, after some ideological regressions, the same thing of me. Here, too, music was not the bone of contention but the text. (Granted, it is not an innocent statement in that it refers, of course, to the antifascist war in Spain.)

What makes this episode noteworthy is that the “political message” of the composition is not at all relegated to that quotation, even though it is certainly its most explicit manifestation. The censorial inclinations of the publisher and the instrumentalist were not, however, concerned about the particular musical configurations (and what they might signify), but about the most elementary level (a textual quotation) to which one might assign a particular ideal and political message.

Is this due to the vagueness of musical configurations? Or is it due to the analytical superficiality of the censors? Many will see here a confirmation of the famous notion that music is not capable of expressing anything.

Certainly, musical structures cannot stand for precise concepts. But, aside from the fact that in this piece the music expresses certain “attitudes,” certain “tensions” that refer to a reality not only immanently musical, the quotation of Dessau’s antifascist song also functions to direct the comprehension of the music (that is, also, of those musical configurations to which one would not otherwise attribute a precise meaning) and imbue it with a particular orientation. Beginning with this quotation, that is, the piece takes on (also retroactively) a meaning otherwise merely latent. In other words, musical structures are not necessarily vague or neutral, their “meaning” can be made specific, made decipherable, by means of distinct signals. One of these signals can be, for example, a text (it will not necessarily, however, be the text alone that carries the meaning, but the music united with that particular text—text and music will contribute together or enhance each other in conveying a

Next page: Example I, 3b: *Non requiescat* (mm. 79-102)

79

TAMBURO MILITARE

PERC. *ppp*

2 (100. 100)

VC. *pp*

CB. *p*

83

TAMBURO MIL.

PERC. *ppp*

VNO 1 *p senza cresc.*

VNO 2 *p senza cresc.*

VLA *p senza cresc.*

VC. *p*

CB. *p*

FL. *ff*

OB. *ff*

CL. *ff*

Re. *ff*

CR. *ff*

TR. *ff*

TRUM. *ff*

con un poi di soffio (ma sempre p)

FL. *prende alt.*

OB.

CL.

FC.

CR.

TR.

TRBN.

87

TRBN.

PREC.

VC.

CB.

CL.

FC.

CR.

TRBN.

PREC.

VC.

CB.

specific meaning). Such a signal can be the title, as well. Titles (and dedications, too) can have an important semantic function. And it seems irrelevant to be shocked by it. If one proceeds from the assumption that music is not (contrary to the claims of lower Biblical criticism) a “universal” language, viewing it instead as being a code, necessarily determined by historical-cultural, geographic, societal factors—if one proceeds from this assumption, any additional information provided by titles and dedications can contribute to enriching the semantic density of a piece of music. Music does not speak all on its own. What it “signifies” to us from time to time is linked to our ability to situate music in a system of coordinates that become all the more complex and articulated, the richer our heritage of experience is (both in terms of music and culture). Any further information that we can acquire on a given piece of music is one more “point” in the system of coordinates to which we refer when we decipher a particular musical message.

The central theme that my thoughts and my work have revolved around, at least since 1970, can be synthesized thus: how to articulate, in my music, an awareness of reality (of its positive sides as well as its negative sides, of its contradictions, of its variety and richness) and how to express at the same time, as much as possible with the limited means of music, the desire to change that very reality.

For whoever takes on this task, the question of the intended purpose of the music presents itself as a stipulation. And whoever considers the changing of society as the fundamental objective will identify his own ideal referent in that class which is historically called upon to surpass the capitalistic-bourgeois structure of society. But here problems arise. What linguistic-musical means are best suited for communicating with a new audience? I do not think they can be exclusively those that have been developed during the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, even if—and it’s an old question—it is obvious that the new class will adopt the best results that bourgeois thought has achieved. Surely, but just what are these “best” results? Who judges about the validity of a particular aesthetic conception, and what are the criteria on which such judgments are based?

Nor can these linguistic-musical means be purely and simply those suitable to the class which until now has been excluded from the official culture, since the emerging class does not look upon history with an organic and coherent “world view” that it can set against that of the old class. Indeed, there also exists a mechanical and Manichean concept that sets bourgeois culture against the culture of the lower classes, perceiving in the former only decadence and in the latter only progress. Precisely since it is the culture of the lower classes, the people’s culture cannot help but bear also the negative mark of sub-

ordination. But equally wrong would be both an apologetic view of the people's culture and considering it as nothing more than the expression of a historical conscience which has been superseded. Conservative elements and progressive elements are neither only on this side nor only on that side. They cross over classes and individuals. On the other hand: in a historical period characterized by the emergence of the urban and rural proletariat as the ruling class, the order of the day is to contend with the cultural heritage of those classes, such as (which is the same thing) the need to challenge with new ideas, values and aspirations those aesthetic conceptions (and not only those) that have been dominant during the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

In adopting popular materials (as in my *Prima sinfonia*), it was not my aim to achieve through them a greater comprehensibility, because those materials have characteristics tightly linked to the cultural area in which they originated; a Sicilian working song transplanted [from a rural area] into a different context, including the urban, industrialized part of the island, becomes necessarily "exotic." (I will return to the problem of comprehensibility below.)

Using diverse materials, including those outside the "learned" tradition, means to me overcoming an attitude that today is simply anachronistic: I mean an attitude that considers aesthetically valid only what has developed during a period in history limited by a class that has by now concluded its life-cycle. In this sense, we need to overcome a Eurocentric attitude that is still so widespread.

Prospectively one is faced with the task, certainly a long-range one, of creating a new, modern and popular culture.

Regarding the problem of "comprehensibility"—central to those compositions I named at the beginning—I think that it arises in a different way. I do not think that the need for communication, fundamental for any ideally engaged composer, can be easily satisfied by choosing one language over another based upon a presumed popular nature, because a language authentically of the people—with interregional, not to say international, dispersion—does not exist. Of course there are particular musical codes which, more than others, have the potential ability to reach a vast public (as conversely it is relatively easy to exclude—based on a precise analysis of the content implicit in particular musical configurations—certain constitutionally "elitist" languages). Simply going back to using a supplanted musical language cannot be the solution, because nothing says that a tonal language possessing the true complexity of Beethoven's is any more comprehensible than a truly modern language. This in turn does not mean that is impossible to resort—in certain musical genres, proceeding from a precise function—to a language that often

is merely thought of as “consumed.” This is the case with political songs. Apart from their ideal and political validity, I think that the musical landscape would be much poorer if it were not for the creation in recent years of songs like *El pueblo unido*.

But, with the exception of certain genres such as that of the political song, I do not believe that the problem of comprehensibility can be resolved by turning to languages supplanted by musical evolution.

It is not a matter of turning to a language that is already popular (or that is assumed to be popular), but to organize one’s own discourse in such a way that it refers (not always directly), for one who knows its assumptions, to a clear and logical system of syntactical and morphological relationships.

This is a problem both old and contemporary. In recent times Webern and Schoenberg have referred to it, speaking respectively of *Fasslichkeit* and of *Zusammenhang*—music’s need to be comprehensible and the connectedness between different elements of the piece.

In my most recent compositions I have tried to achieve a new comprehensibility-clarity-simplicity not *against* the experiments of contemporary music—in other words, not dismissing important musical experiments of new music—but *through* them, having in mind their way of going beyond (their *Aufhebung* to use a Hegelian term, meaning both preservation and suspension) to something new. One reads about it as early as Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*:

We spoke of the union of the advanced with the popular, the closing of the gulf between art and accessibility, high and low. ... A most precarious undertaking. For how near did not lie the false primitive! ... To remain at the height of intellect; to resolve into the matter-of-course the most exclusive productions of European musical development, so that everybody could grasp the new; to make themselves its master, applying it unconcernedly as free building material and making tradition felt, re-shaped into the opposite of the epigonal; to make technique, however high it had climbed, entirely unimportant, and all the complexities of counterpoint and instrumentation to disappear and melt together to an effect of simplicity far removed from simple-mindedness, a simplicity mediated by the intellect—that seemed to be the object and the craving of art.²⁶

26 [„Wir sprachen von der Vereinigung des Avancierten mit dem Volkstümlichen, von der Aufhebung der Kluft zwischen Kunst und Zugänglichkeit, Hoch und Niedrig. ... Ein heikelstes Beginnen! Denn wie nahe lag nicht falsche Primitivität. ... Auf der Höhe des Geistes zu bleiben; die gesiebtsten Ergebnisse europäischer Musikentwicklung aufzulösen, dass jeder das Neue fasse; sich zu ihrem Herrn zu machen, indem man sie unbefangen als freies Baumaterial verwendete und Tradition spüren ließ,

A precarious undertaking indeed! Leverkühn had to turn to a pact with the devil!

In *Gespräch über Bäume* I proceeded in a free way, without any pre-established plan. The piece was born (following the course of *Albumblätter* and *Non requiescat*) to proliferate. The less the piece proceeded from a pre-established plan that guaranteed in some way its internal logic, the more loomed the problem—for me of great concern—of resolving this “logical” development in purely musical terms according to procedures that have nothing to do, except in a very indirect way, with traditional ones.

The same can be said of *Hasta que caigan las puertas del odio*, even though in this case inventiveness was called for by Neruda’s text. In this piece, constructed along lines dictated by madrigal conventions; there filtered in, as well, the experience of certain Sardinian vocal music—but not on the level of quotation. Rather, I extrapolated out of the Sardinian music that I know certain “behaviors” (for example a certain “steadiness”) that I used to objectify the baroquely luxuriant text of Neruda.

The *Variazioni su Avanti popolo alla riscossa* are a radical example of “reduction” of musical material. They are nine variations. Around twenty minutes long. With the exception of variations VI and VII, in which I applied different principles, every note is derived from the theme. In contrast, the first five variations use only the first five notes of the song. (But these notes, used vertically, give rise to a chord which it is possible to exploit for a remarkable number of “harmonic” features, including inversions, and tone-color (through key transpositions and register changes). I used a certain number of these possibilities in variations I and V. The third variation is based on a single note (B, which, because of its recurrence in the song—considered by me to be in G major—takes on a special importance), while the ninth articulates, on a single pitch, the rhythm of the song.

Next page: Example I, 4: *Variazioni su Avanti popolo alla riscossa*, Variations VI and VII

umgeprägt ins Gegenteil des Epigonalen; das Handwerk, hochgetrieben wie es war, durchaus unauffällig zu machen und alle Künste des Kontrapunkts und der Instrumentation verschwinden und verschmelzen zu lassen zu einer Einfachheitswirkung, sehr fern von Einfalt, einer intellektuell federnden Schlichtheit,—das schien die Aufgabe, das Begehren der Kunst.“ Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1960), 344-45. In the English translation given above, I have been inspired by H. T. Lowe-Porter’s: Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* (New York: Modern Library, 1948), 320-21.]

13

VII $\text{♩} \sim 60$ ($\text{♩} \sim 240$), *ma senza rigidità*

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

Ped. ad lib.

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

(fuori tempo)

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped. (ma non uscire)

Ped. ad lib.

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

Ped. ad lib.

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

13

(fuori tempo)

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

senza Ped.

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

Ped. ad lib.

ritacca sub.

VII $\text{♩} \sim 70$

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

Ped. a ogni accordo

3 mp, con bel suono; sempre

senza Ped.

The piece was requested by Frederic Rzewski, who wrote *Variations on El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*, an extremely virtuosic piece which encompasses, as in a melting pot, a great number of different musical traditions. It is an interesting piece that I enjoy, but I wanted to make a different kind of piece, in many respects contrasting with his. My variations assume that the theme is known by the listener; it never appears in its original form (only in one variation, VIII, is it clearly recognizable). Why use *Bandiera rossa* if it cannot be recognized? Precisely because, knowing the theme already, the listener can concentrate on the way in which this theme has been worked out. And what if the listener does not know the theme? In this case no doubt an essential dimension of the piece escapes him. On the other hand, it would make little sense to quote the theme at the beginning of the variations because the piece is not trying to be only, or primarily, a series of variations on a “musical theme” (although the material is rigorously derived from that theme) but a series of variations on what that theme stands for: on the struggles of the proletariat; on the hardships of those struggles; on its victories; on its defeats; on the hope that not even the defeats have been in vain. Surely, the piece has also an autonomous musical dimension. In this sense it is my opinion that it can and must succeed even if someone who hears it does not know its “program.” Knowledge of it adds, however, an important semantic dimension, gives direction to the act of listening (for instance, on the necessity of “directing the comprehension” noted above in these pages, and more generally on the problem of meaning in music, see my article “Reflections on Music and Politics.”²⁷

The radical process in the *Variazioni*, of reducing musical discourse to the bare bones, was an attempt at constructing a piece that would be simple, clear, and therefore comprehensible. This goal was favored by the variation form. Since each variation is based on a particular structure (quite precise rhythmic and/or intervallic and/or harmonic characteristics) and confined to only a few elements that are constantly varied, it facilitates the understanding of the piece. So, I think that it emerges as clear, without my resorting to the more usual linguistic conventions. If I have avoided in this piece the simplistic equation “tonal music equals comprehensibility,” there is also no reference to a “minimalist” type of aesthetics. The zealous use of a reduced material is not a way to limit the semantic-expressive density to a single possibility, but, at best, a stratagem to clarify the characteristics, or the “attitudes,” which the music can assume from time to time.

Finally, the *Tui-Gesänge*. The “Tui,” a Brechtian term, are intellectuals who prostitute themselves to power. And in these twelve texts by Albrecht Betz, it

²⁷ [See the preceding essay.]

is the Tui themselves that speak up to justify, rationalize and glorify their role as ideological officials of the established power. Without any claim to systematization, I have used here various forms in which the relationship between text and music can be articulated. From identification or illustration, to association or allusion (the music alludes to less immediate meanings in the text), to contradiction or opposition (the music says other than what the text seems to mean), to “neutrality” (the music as simple “means of transportation”).

Another problem: how to avoid eclecticism while at the same time having a remarkable variety of characteristics and musical language. This variety is justified for it comes out of the different contents of the text (or the need for emphasizing the different contents—implicit or explicit—of the texts). On the strictly musical level I attempted to solve the problem beginning with an extremely reduced fundamental material (three chords) that I submit to harmonic variations by linking these chords with other harmonically homogeneous chords (following a procedure that I used for the first time in *Wiederkehr*). More generally I believe that one can avoid eclecticism, while using even a wide variety of means, if one proceeds from a precise semantic function. Eclecticism is present, in other words, when it is not clear that there is a need for diverse means, while the focusing of particular contents and meanings necessarily requires the expedient of diversified stylistic means. In this piece I also use quotation, but not in the immediate sense as in the *Prima sinfonia*. I do not quote here single themes, but “stylistic-musical dimensions” (which are here taken out of their context, placed in a particular light—“estranged”—an appropriate function of a quotation). Not only the “Ländler” or the “Tango” should be seen in this sense, but also the use of “avant-garde” techniques with which I do not identify myself, but which I “use” according to the dictates of the text.

The validity of a piece of music nowadays cannot be judged (only) on the basis of the material which is being set up in the piece, but based upon the way (and that is, upon the intention, on the function, on the meaning) in which a particular musical material is used. And one should not cut out some nice secluded corner for oneself—in which to conduct one’s own refined experiments—from the *mare magnum (et burrascosum)*, the wide (and stormy) sea of reality (musical or otherwise). And here I could insert a long discourse on the reasons that compel certain composers to insist for the duration of their natural lives upon some formula (for reasons that are all too often commercial). The little secluded corner tends to be also a more or less ample niche in the market which, like any other activity, also conditions the music. One should not limit one’s own technical and expressive tools to only a few formulas to be permutated *ad infinitum*; I believe that a composer must be

able to have at his disposal a great number of procedures-techniques-languages in order to be able to choose from time to time those means that might seem to him best adapted to realize a particular musical idea.

In this sense, as far as it concerns me personally, I do not repudiate any of the musical explorations that I have been doing these last years (from experimental music to music of social struggle), I think on the contrary that I will be able to find them useful (of course, not just by quoting them, but by reinventing them for each use) in the future. Only in this way will I be able to try to bring to reality what, as I have said before, I would like music to be: a reflection of the complexity and richness of reality—a reality that changes with the contribution of one who refuses to be a passive spectator.

[Source: Untitled contribution to *Autobiografia della musica contemporanea*, ed. Michela Mollia (Cosenza: Lerici, 1979), 132-148 (the title was chosen by the editor); Becheri 79-4.]

Paul Dessau zum Gedenken

When Paul Dessau (1894-1979), with whom Lombardi had studied in East Berlin in 1973, died in April of 1979, the journal Sinn und Form asked friends of the deceased to contribute their reminiscences to an anthology of obituaries. The list of contributors included, besides Lombardi, composers such as Friedrich Goldmann, Hans Werner Henze, and Alfred Schnittke, the writer Heiner Müller, the musicologist Ernst Hermann Meyer, as well as other dignitaries.

I owe much to Paul Dessau—certainly more than he would give himself credit. When I saw him for the last time, he said with a smile: “You did not learn much from me...” He was right from a purely technical perspective. When I became his student, I had concluded my education more than two years earlier (as far as an education can be completed). Furthermore, I studied only six months with him, meeting him once every other week. First, we had coffee and cake, then we talked about all kinds of things, about the general political situation (Dessau was very interested in events in Italy), about books we had read or compositions we had heard. Of course, we talked also much about Brecht and Eisler. (I worked at the time in the Eisler Archive in East Berlin, preparing my dissertation on Eisler.) Finally, we moved to the composition lesson proper. I showed him the piece I was working on, and Dessau commented on it. Often I agreed with him, sometimes not. I remember, for instance, that he proposed to distribute a long and difficult trumpet passage between two trumpets so that it would be more easily

playable, but I wanted to produce exactly the strained gesture of “being out of breath.” The difficulty of the passage was thematic, so to speak; if it were to be performed without effort, it would have lost its meaning in the context. I explained this to Dessau, but I am not sure whether I convinced him.

When I say that I owe a lot to Dessau, I not only think of my student days with him but also of his music and of him as a wonderful human being. Dessau is one of the most important musicians of our time. In the West one is not always aware of his rank. (This is understandable: “Decadence” is also when up-and-coming musicians are not correctly recognized!) This, of course, does not hold true for those progressive composers who see him as a model. Dessau is a composer of a new type (of which there are still too few): He gave music a clear social function, because he did not exempt himself from the events of his time. His works will endure, precisely because he was not afraid of being a chronicler of his time. But I believe I am getting too emphatic! And this would not be in Dessau’s spirit. He was full of irony, even self-deprecating irony. True, he knew very well who he was, but he was always quite modest. His enormous admiration for Brecht (even when imitating him in appearance) was touching. And I always greatly admired how respectfully he talked about Eisler, who, in a certain sense, was his rival and who did not always talk about Dessau with similar respect. This precisely is Dessau’s greatness. Furthermore, as a socialist he was pleased that the new German socialist music culture was represented, from the start, by two great composers.

I was also impressed that Dessau, up to the end, composed regularly, that he observed the events of his time with undiminished interest and that he thought about them. When I visited him this year in February, he received us with the dramatic news that China had attacked Vietnam. At first we listened to the news on the radio and were speechless. But not for long. Then the discussion began, we analyzed the situation and made an attempt to grasp it rationally (which, admittedly, was not easy). Other colleagues and comrades were present: Sergio Ortega, Frederic Rzewski, Günter Mayer, Willi Zobl. Sergio played on the piano his song *El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido* (The people united will never be defeated), a song that picks up the subject of Dessau’s *Thälmannkolonne* (and of Eisler’s *Solidaritätslied*) composed forty years earlier. How much longer does one need to compose and perform such songs? When can we turn to different tunes? The world, it says in a poem by Ho Chi Minh, is “full of difficulties,” and the fight will be long and arduous. People like Paul Dessau have given us the courage not to resign but to continue our work with increased concentration and purpose.

[Source: “Paul Dessau zum Gedenken,” *Sinn und Form* XXXI/6 (1979), 1153-54; Becheri 79-1.]

Klavierduo

1. Gradus de Parnasso

2. Scherzino

3. Les Moutons de Panurge de Frederic Rzewski (con alcune licenze)

All three movements—despite their differences—address the same problem, namely how to develop a sequential and musically logical process, starting from a limited set of materials. Musical logic, as different from conceptual logic, implies associations, leaps, and even illogical turns.

The basic material of “Gradus de Parnasso” consists of a scale of six tones and a five-note chord. The movement does not follow a preconceived scheme, but develops by freely separating and combining (successively and simultaneously) these elements. That’s just what composition is about.

The “Scherzino” uses the A-B-A form as if in quotation marks and not without irony.

The third movement is based on an idea of Frederic Rzewski. A pseudo-tonal melodic structure expands from one to sixty-five notes and returns, in a shorter time span, to its starting point. I was intrigued by the contradiction inherent in a relatively static development (or a developmental stasis): the structure consists of a few repeated tones and the expansion proceeds rather slowly. In addition to the principal structure there are secondary events (segments of unequal length derived from the principal structure) that are played on different degrees and registers and in different tempos.

This, in short, is what needs to be known of the technical side of this composition. Other aspects are difficult (and perhaps not necessary) to verbalize. To paraphrase a well-known statement: What one cannot write about must be heard; or, what should not be expressed in words can be heard. But it needs to be said that the piece is dedicated to Mats Persson and Kristine Scholz without whom it would not have been composed. They premiered the piece at the ISCM Festival in Athens, Greece in 1979 and performed it frequently since.

[Composed in 1978-79; typewritten program notes in German are dated October 1980]

Essay 2

The piece (for bass clarinet) was written in 1979 for Harry Sparnaay, an excellent clarinetist. Even though the composition poses challenges of the most difficult kind for the instrumentalist, it is in no way a catalogue of technical possibilities. On the contrary, it is based on relatively limited material, from which I proceed with the most

rigorous freedom (i.e., developing the material in a free but logical way). Thus, the piece is linked to those compositions of mine characterized by a reduction of material—compositions which I have called “exclusive”, in contrast to “inclusive” works in which I operate, for reasons of content, with diverse musical materials.

[Composed in 1979; the program notes in German were written in 1989]

***E subito riprende il viaggio:
Frammenti di Ungaretti per cinque voci***

I wrote the composition between November 1979 and January 1980 on commission by the Witten Festival for the Collegium Vocale Köln, which premiered the piece in April. Today, on August 3, as I am writing these brief notes, I am under the impression of the inhuman carnage in Bologna. The texts by Ungaretti are, in large measure, a reflection on the fragility of human existence, on death, sudden and absurd—absurd but politically clear as part of an insane strategy of terror that manifests itself in this last fascist slaughter.

The texts by Ungaretti certainly have a “metaphysical” or “cosmic” dimension, but I see in them also the courage of someone who continues to live and to struggle, of someone who “picks up the voyage like a surviving sea wolf after a shipwreck.”

I used the following texts by Ungaretti:

From: *Ultimi cori per la terra promessa* (Final Choruses for the Promised Land)

...
Per anni e lungo secoli
Ogni attimo sorpresa
Nel sapere che ancora siamo in vita,
Che scorre sempre come sempre il vivere,
Dono e pena inattesi
Nel turbinio continuo
Dei vani mutamenti.
...

[Through years and long centuries at every moment a surprise in knowing we are still alive, that living flows on as it always flows on, gift and punishment, both unforeseen in the continuous whirlwind of useless changes.]

Allegria di naufragi (The Merriment of Shipwrecks)

E subito riprende
il viaggio
come
dopo il naufragio
un superstite
lupo di mare

[And at once, the voyage recommences like a sea wolf surviving the shipwreck.]

From: *Ultimi cori*

...
Profugo come gli altri
Che furono, che sono, che saranno
...

[...a refugee like the others who have been, who are, who will...]

From: *Cori descrittivi di stato d'animo di Didone* (Choruses Descriptive of Dido's State of Mind)

E senza darsi quiete
Poiché lo spazio loro fuga d'una
Nuvola offriva ai nostri intimi fuochi,
Cavandosi a vicenda
Le ingenua anime nostre
Gemelle si svegliarono, già in corsa

[And without rest, since their space offered the fleetness of a cloud to our intimate fires, our naïve twin souls, drawing each other out, awoke, already on their way.]

From: *Cori descrittivi*

Nella tenebra, muta
Cammini in campi vuoti d'ogni grano:
Altéro al lato tuo più niuno aspetti

[In the darkness, silently you walk in fields devoid of any seeds: you no longer await someone proud at your side.]

From: *Ultimi cori*

Da quella stella all'altra
Si carcera la notte
In turbinante vuota demisura
Da quella solitudine di stella
A quella solitudine di stella,

[From that star to the other night imprisons itself in whirling empty hyperbole from that star-like solitude and to that star-like solitude.]

From: *Ultimi cori*

All'infinito se durasse il viaggio,
Non durerebbe un attimo, e la morte
È già qui, poco prima
...

[... if the journey were to last into infinity, it would not last a moment, and death is already here, a little sooner...]

From: *Ultimi cori*

Rilucere in veduto d'abbagliati
Spazi ove immemorabile
Vita passano gli astri
Dal peso pazzi della solitudine.

[Unseen glittering of dazzling spaces where the stars spent an immemorial life driven mad by the weight of solitude.]

[Composed in 1979-80; the typewritten program notes in Italian are dated August 3, 1980. The translations here are by Thomas Donnan and Miriam Meghnagi; for an alternate translation of three of the poetic fragments by Andrew Frisardi see Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), 54—55, 212-13, 218-19. Ungaretti (1888-1970) lived in Marino for much of his life, the same mountain town southeast of Rome that now is the residence of Lombardi; he has been honored with a plaque in the city's center together with another son of the town, Giacomo Carissimi (1605-1674).]

Majakowski

Majakowski, a cantata for bass, mixed chorus, and seven instruments, originated as a commission of the Swiss democratic association "Kultur und Volk." The composition is a montage of several poems by Mayakovsky which are quite diverse in terms of themes and styles: programmatic, political, love poems, and also his "last letter." I juxtaposed these texts and, without trying to smooth the places where they joined, tried to sketch a portrait of Mayakovsky in which the contradictions are not suppressed. These are the contradictions of an artist living at a time of upheaval, contradictions which, in part, we still have to face today. Mayakovsky's ability to respond to different occasions and topics with different stylistic propositions is fascinating. Fascinating is also the interrelation of the private and the general in his life and work. Today there is a trend (again) to play off subjectivity (for instance, in the form of the new inwardness) against politically engaged art. I never understood (and Mayakovsky is a case in point) why both should be mutually exclusive. Every human being loves and fights, goes through anger and joy, dreams and is suddenly awakened by reality, suffers defeats and experiences success. As an artist he can and should reflect all these aspects in his work. In the final analysis, political interest and involvement does not originate with a calculating abstract intellect, but from the desire for a happier life, for himself and for all human beings.

[Composed in 1979-80; the discussion of the cantata here is an excerpt from a letter, dated September 20, 1981, to Reinhard Pabst, then a high school student in Germany, who had approached the composer for a statement on vocal music for a Festschrift celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his father as a choral conductor. Lombardi's contribution is published as "Brief aus Italien," *Festschrift für Anton-Josef Pabst: Aufsätze zur Vokalmusik*, ed. Reinhard Pabst (Camberg: Private Publication, 1981), 155-58; Becheri 81-1.]

Prima sinfonia

The remarks on the relationship between folk/popular music and art music were delivered during the congress Medievalismi e folklore nella musica italiana del '900' in Siena on July 26, 1980. The lecture should be read in relation to other texts from the mid-seventies in which the composer addresses similar or related issues.

I will talk about my *Prima sinfonia*, a composition I wrote in 1974-75. If I had had to talk about this piece five years ago, when I was writing it, I probably would have maintained that at that time it was necessary to react to a number of things, to an impasse in certain contemporary music, and that therefore it might be useful to turn to musical experiences, diverse and of long standing,

but, for some reasons, close to certain problems of contemporary music. Perhaps I would have laid out my discourse in this way. Today I will not do so: I do not believe that one can present the problem of the crisis in contemporary music as beginning with the choice of material, in the sense that, for example, the use of folkloric material by itself would be an indication of progressiveness. Never can any musical material be rejected *a priori*. This, of course, does not mean that one can indulge in a supermarket aesthetic, that one can use materials and idioms without being aware of their origins, motivations and functions. I believe that any material can be used if it responds to a precise compositional plan or, more generally, to an ideal plan. In the symphony I used folkloric material—but then we shall see that there is not only the matter of folk songs and folk music in the strict sense, but also other kinds of material—because it precisely formed part of the ideal project of the work. The symphony is, if you wish, a composition with a program, and carries the dedication “To the Chilean people in their struggle.” I began it a few months after the *coup d'état* in Chile because I wanted, in some way, to react to this event that was a trauma for me as it was for so many people throughout the world. It seemed only right to turn to material that, in a more or less indirect way, might refer to that situation and topic.

The symphony is made up of three movements. The first is entitled “Conduct” but has nothing to do with *conductus* (and therefore does not enter into the theme of “medievalism”, which is being discussed in this congress). The reference is, in reality, to Mahler—the first movement of his *Symphony No. 5*, is a Funeral March, has the indication “In gemessenem Schritt. Streng. Wie ein Kondukt” (in moderate step, strict like a procession)—and evokes an imaginary funeral cortège. In this first movement I use the rhythms of international slogans, for example, a rhythm of the May riots in Paris of 1968: “Ça n’est qu’un début, la lutte continue” (this is nothing but a beginning, the struggle continues), or another French slogan “Le fascisme ne passera,” (fascism will not be victorious) or a German one “Hoch die internationale Solidarität,” (cheers to international solidarity) and so forth. These rhythms are used both in their original configurations and by augmenting them or broadening them. Thus the rhythm of the slogan “Ça n’est qu’un début...,” vastly broadened, serves as a “frame” for an ample portion of the movement, whose individual sections are articulated by the slogan’s rhythmic elements—sections in which other things take place that are not necessarily linked to the rhythm of the slogan. Although I wanted it to be perceptible to the ear—once I had decided to use this kind of material—there is another more hidden treatment, of a structural sort, which influences the formal flow.

The second movement is called “Canzone” and uses instead old Sicilian work songs and a Sardinian song. I based this on transcriptions contained in a

collection of folk songs edited by Roberto Leydi. Yesterday the problem of transcription was discussed at the convention—indeed, an immense problem. When comparing the originals with their transcriptions, there can often be surprises. This happened to me with some pieces of Sardinian vocal music (which, however, I did not use here) that I found interesting especially for the kind of vocal emission, for a certain unique kind of sonority reminiscent of electronic sounds produced by a ring modulator. It is a sonority peculiar to certain Sardinian vocal music. When I consulted the transcriptions of this music, I was disappointed: I saw fourths, fifths—that is, the most superficial thing, less interesting than those pieces of music. Obviously it is very difficult to capture this aspect, or until now one has not paid enough attention to this decisive aspect of folk music—namely, vocal emission or timbre. Returning to my piece—which, notwithstanding its title, is entirely instrumental—what interested me more, from the strictly musical point of view, were some traits little related to tonal music (folk and not), that is, the use of very close intervals, micro-intervals, with asymmetric rhythm, very undulating, not squared off, and possessing a certain repetitive quality. These are all traits that can be found in some contemporary music, even if function and meaning are often not only different but quite opposed. However, the analogy of a few characteristics offered me the way to insert this music into a context suggested by typical characteristics of a present-day piece of music. I would like to say another thing. Yesterday, Diego Carpitella²⁸ spoke of the “severity” of Italian folklore, and I think that in this severity resides a great part of the fascination of some folklore, that is, in its being hard to render quaint and sweet for the postcard mentality. These are things that have often been attempted. Going back to what I was saying earlier about the supposed progressiveness of folklore, I would like to confirm that the distinction does not lie in using or not using folklore, but in the way one approaches it, whether from a technical-musical point of view or from an “ideological” one. One can use it in a decorative or a coloristic or “elegant” way, or one can use it as a substantial sweetening agent. This wasn’t what interested me. Instead, I wanted to accentuate, to heighten certain elements which are already quite strong and emphatic in the original.

Considering the “political program” of the symphony, the use of Italian folklore seemed a way to connect the problems of Chile to a reality closer to us which, however, resembles various aspects of present-day reality in some Latin American countries. I believe, however, that an appropriate approach to folklore depends not only on strictly respecting certain structural or syntactic characteristics, but also on grasping the deep significance of this music, on not distorting it, on not turning it into something other than what it is. So I believe

²⁸ [An ethnomusicologist who participated in the conference.]

it is important to underscore that what counts is not so much philological fidelity, but fidelity to the original meaning of these work songs.

Whereas in the first movement there were rhythms of slogans and in the second, songs, in the third, titled "Lament for the departure," I use another sort of popular musical material, songs by modern authors, Chilean songs, namely two songs by Sergio Ortega that have become well known everywhere: "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" (A people united will never be defeated) and "Venceremos" (We shall win).²⁹ Obviously the use of these songs directly responds to the symphony's program and this is why I thought of using them in a clear and open way, as will be seen. The title of the movement is derived, however, from another song, an old song from the Abruzzi³⁰ sung by mothers when their sons went off to the military, a song given to me by Giovanna Marini, which she herself gathered from an Abruzzese woman. This movement is the most "open and exposed," in the sense that this material is presented without mediation. Today I would confront the problem in a different way. The solution I adopted should be seen in the context of the political and cultural climate of those years when it truly seemed that popular culture and high culture could come together in harmony and give rise to something new. There was a substantial coming together of widely diverse backgrounds, for example Giovanna Marini and others; many of these encounters took place in Reggio Emilia in the setting of the "Musica/Realtà festivals," but also in other places, and I am still of the opinion that even if things have since taken another tack politically, it was a time when we were at a turning point but lost the chance to develop a new and common discourse. Nono, too, has shown great interest in all those experiments that lie outside the field of official contemporary music. And I think, in this sense, that Luigi Nono's work could be part of these days' discussions. Piero Santi said that after 1945 folklore has practically had no impact on contemporary music. I do not think so. The relationship between art music and folk music, which has always existed, has changed over time. In Nono's case I might think, for example, of compositions such as *La fabbrica illuminata* or *Non consumiamo Marx*. Of course, it is not the folklore that we have been talking about these days, but doubtlessly Nono makes use of material presumed to be from everyday, "lowly" reality, and of sound documents associated with the life of the people. This discussion is also valid for other composers, even for a composer who might seem to be remote from such a problem, such as Henri Pousseur. I am thinking of his composition *Couleurs Croisées*, based on a well known Afro-American song.

²⁹ [„El pueblo unido” is now best known to music lovers through the vast and virtuosic set of variations on it for piano solo by Frederic Rzewski.]

³⁰ [A mountainous area of Italy, also evoked by Berlioz in the second movement of his *Harold en Italie*.]

[Source: Untitled typewritten transcript of a taped lecture, revised and corrected; the text is related to Becheri 78-4 and 80-5 Musical examples from the various movements of the symphony were played during the presentation in July 1980.]

Return to Disorder?

Postscript to a Conversation with Wolfgang Rihm

In 1979, Luca Lombardi conducted interviews with Manfred Trojahn and Wolfgang Rihm that were subsequently published in Musica/Realtà (1 and 2, 1980). The conversation with Rihm also appeared in Wolfgang Rihm, Ausgesprochen: Schriften und Gespräche, vol.2, ed. Ulrich Mosch, Winterthur: Amadeus, 1997, 55-62. The postscript following the Rihm interview in Musica/Realtà is published here in translation.

The conversation with Rihm, which follows the one with Trojahn published in the last issue, helps to put into focus the questions that interest the latest generation of West German composers—a generation made up of at least six or seven composers, and of which Trojahn and Rihm (the latter perhaps the most prolific and most performed of the group) are surely two of the most significant exponents.

However interesting the positions they express verbally might be, however stimulating or provocative, plausible or contradictory the problems they pose, obviously no conversation can replace an acquaintance with their music. Thus we hope that in Italy, too, the music of composers whose names we hardly know will begin to be performed. And this, if I may be allowed to expand for a moment, applies to the most recent German composers, but even more so to those who were their teachers—I think of musicians of the first order such as Karl Amadeus Hartmann or Bernd Alois Zimmermann—and it applies, of course, also to composers of other countries. What Swedish composers, for instance, are known in Italy? Apart from Bo Nilsson (of whom, however, nothing is ever performed, and whose most interesting period goes back twenty years), there's nothing but a void. One cannot seriously think that Sweden has no composers worthy of being known. But a similar argument applies also to East Germany (upon which, in this and in the previous issue, we had more exhaustive information) and to still many more countries. Never so much as today has there been the need to be informed, to make comparisons, and to examine our positions with those of other musicians (and it is obvious that the information should extend beyond the confines of Europe and the West). Indeed we are in a situation where there's no longer a "main street," and various minor side streets that can go ignored. Nobody today can seriously claim—as the composers of the historic avant-garde used to do and

perhaps needed to do—that theirs is the *true* way and that all the rest should be condemned and pushed aside in the name of the truth of which they see themselves as bearers. The era of total serialism is over, and today everything is once again up for discussion. However much one talks about recent West German music, not always opportunely, about simplicity, it was the aesthetic-musical conception of the 1950s that was simple or simplistic, especially where the progressivism of Schoenberg was in a Manichean way set against the reactionary nature of Stravinsky.³¹ This conception was a throwback to a reassuring view of the world—the Good here, the Bad there—but nonetheless mystifying. Moreover, this Manichean simplification was not limited just to the field of art when we think that it was the era of the Cold War and of the inflexible opposition of the blocs. In the political field things may have changed, but not too much: The danger of returning to confrontation is now (i.e., in May 1980) dramatically at hand. And even in the harmless field of contemporary music, there are still those who think in terms of rigidly opposed categories, along lines that the history of music has already shown to be erroneous.

Personally, I think that an inherent danger in the mind-set of young German composers is that of considering the most recent past in a non-dialectical way, and that, in order to go beyond the shallows of the avant-garde, they are limiting themselves to putting it in parentheses, instead of reaching through it to a new expressive richness. Rihm seems to be quite aware of this danger when he seeks to make a link between Henze and Stockhausen, and to take into consideration—as he told me—Berg and Varèse, Ives and Shostakovich, in other words: to establish relationships in places where the old aesthetic had raised fences and to claim that no artificial barriers be imposed against the freedom of compositional expression. (We note, incidentally, how this movement characterized by a “return to disorder,” while keeping its eye on the classics, clearly differs from the neoclassicism of the 1920s; the former aspired to new certainties, in the guise of old ones; the latter calls into question every *a priori* certainty, betting everything on the ability of the work, rising almost out of linguistic chaos, to stand by virtue of its own intrinsic strength.) This “return to disorder” will not in itself guarantee the success of the work, just as the observance of a system or the use of a given musical material has never guaranteed it.

The choice of a musical material does not determine the validity (nor even the “progressiveness”) of a composition but, rather, the way in which the material is treated, the allusiveness and expressive richness of the work, the ability of

³¹ [Lombardi alludes here to Adorno’s *Philosophy of New Music*.]

the composer to achieve—through his most evocative articulation—results of potentially universal inter-subjective meaning.

Previously, we were taking issue with an avant-garde that has outlived itself (and which, therefore, moves in the opposite direction with respect to the ends of any avant-garde, which are combating academicism and philistinism, and exploring new avenues). A few statements made by an Italian composer that I ran across in the meantime clarify to which positions we were referring. For example, this composer writes that, “for several years now it has been my conviction that Music (and Art in general) should have as its humble task of the describing of its own end, or at least, its slow extinction.”³² It is our impression that this composer fully succeeds in his intent; his work is, in effect, a progressive *Gradus ad Parnassum*. Up till now there would have been nothing to say. Why wouldn’t one have been free to write a defense of powerlessness? If we agree with Rihm’s willingness to take into consideration the most diverse experiences, we know, on the other hand, which ones are devoid of vitality. Once again: no one is denied the right to act according to his convictions. We would only wish that the rigidity of a corpse, in the words of the same author, not be smuggled in as artistic rigor (“...that could have been achieved only by use of the densest counterpoint and by reducing the ‘parts’ to the shameful role of deathly and inaudible microorganisms”).

While we agree with Rihm on the necessity of being aware of a wide range of experimentation, we think there are some trends in modern music that are devoid of any vitality. Unlike those who theorize self-annihilation, we are convinced that it makes sense to strive for the realization of a music that is both: complex and clear, free and rigorous—not subject to other limits than those of invention.

[Source: “Ritorno al disordine: Conversazione con Wolfgang Rihm,” *Musica/Realtà*, 2 (August 1980), 91-101; the postscript (or *postilla*): 99-101; Becheri 80-4.]

³² [The author of the statement is not mentioned in the postscript, but it is clear from the context that Lombardi launches here a veiled attack on Aldo Clementi, whose namesake Muzio Clementi composed a *Gradus ad Parnassum*. (It should be noted that Lombardi himself named a movement in his *Klavierduo* „Gradus de parnasso.”—editor’s emphasis.) Nowadays, Lombardi would admit that Aldo Clementi’s approach, a kind of musical minimalism, has some validity as a philosophical statement on the futility of human existence.]

PART II

**BETWEEN SISYPHUS AND FAUST:
IDENTIFICATION AND *TRAVESTIMENTO***

1981-1991

The 1980s were a very prolific period for both Lombardi the composer and Lombardi the writer. But the decade was also a time of crisis for the artist and intellectual: The generation of 1968 came of age. The luster of the coordinates that provided guidance for Lombardi in earlier years began to fade. While he had questioned the solipsism of the European avant-garde very early in his career as a composer, the Marxist perspective, whose political manifestations on the other side of the Iron Curtain he had experienced first hand through visits to East Germany, gradually lost its attractiveness as a panacea to remedy the ills of the world. In several essays, especially "Construction of Freedom," "Prehistory and Postmodernism," and "From the Ivory Tower to the Tower of Babel" (essays that occasionally have been appropriated as manifestos of postmodern poetics), Lombardi formulated his position in contemporary music, taking issue with orthodoxy and sectarianism of any kind and proposing a pluralistic approach to composition—an approach commensurate with the richness of a multicultural world as well as able to communicate with a larger public through music. In these years of crisis, Lombardi found new coordinates for his activities in the mythological figure Sisyphus (who, in Albert Camus' interpretation, proudly and uncomplainingly accepts the absurdity of his undertakings) and the legendary figure Faust as seen through Goethe in Edoardo Sanguineti's reinterpretation (an intellectual whose studies and quest for knowledge render him helpless in giving meaning to life). Both figures became the subject of several compositions in those years—most significant among them is perhaps Lombardi's first opera Faust. Un travestimento, in which he puts his pluralistic approach to composition to the test.

Chamber Music in Witten

During the 1970s and 1980s Lombardi's music was frequently programmed at the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik, a festival of new music organized by Wilfried Brennecke and the West German Radio (WDR) in Cologne and held annually in a medium-size town in the Ruhr district of Germany.

That this concert takes place on 25 April is, of course, a coincidence. Quite apart from the fact that chance plays an important role in music (not only since Cage), there are coincidences which inevitably receive a special meaning. For today is a national holiday in Italy. We celebrate the liberation from fascism, which occurred on 25 April, 1945. It is therefore, for me, a particular honor that this concert takes place on this very day, and I am tempted to understand the interest accorded my music also as an interest in the new democratic culture of Italy. Unfortunately, the battle against old and new kinds of fascism, indeed against the enemies of freedom wherever they reside, continues in Italy as well as in the entire world, and I believe it to be the moral responsibility of every artist to take a position in this struggle, even though his weapon can do no physical harm. But it is a weapon whose effect is lasting and can even increase over time, following the wisdom of Brecht's Lao Tse that "soft water in motion overcomes finally the powerful stone, defeating the hardened substance."³³ A few days ago a friend told me a joke that I would like to pass on to you because it is very beautiful: Following a plane crash in the desert there is only one survivor: a violinist with his instrument. After he recovers from the shock, he begins to walk to find an oasis. Suddenly, a roaring lion appears. Not knowing how to help himself, he grabs his fiddle and plays some music. Immediately, the lion sits down and listens peacefully to the sounds. Suddenly, a second lion appears, as ferocious as the first. The musician again takes his instrument and plays (this time the chaconne by Bach). After only a few measures the lion sits down at the musician's feet. But soon a third lion turns up. By now the musician is already much less afraid, since he knows that the sounds of his instrument will suffice to tame the beast. Thus he begins to play another piece from his repertory. But the lion leaps at him and gobbles him up, including the instrument. What has happened? The other two lions are puzzled and ask the third lion why he devoured the violinist who played such beautiful music. Cupping his ears with his hands and turning his head toward the other animals, the third lion in turn asks: "I beg you pardon?" In short, music is only a weapon if we are not dealing with the deaf.

Also, from a purely musical perspective, I am pleased that this concert is marked by liberation and freedom. I believe that we live, today, in musically

³³ [Bertolt Brecht, „Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Wege des Laotse in die Emigration,“ *Gesammelte Werke*, IX—*Gedichte II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), 661.]

interesting times, since we have shed the many constraints that often restricted music of the post-war period, and I believe that we can work with a newly acquired freedom. It is not the choice of material or a certain technique that determines the quality of a work of art but whether certain materials and techniques that we have at our disposal are used appropriately, i.e., in accordance with the content and the function of the individual work. The decisive point appears to me: The new freedom does not mean an arbitrary playing around with the material but an ever greater degree of self-control. As long as one worked under the restrictions of an imposed system, one could imagine that the choice of this system already guaranteed the compositional logic. But an even greater error would be to compose without control under the assumption that everything is possible. When everything is permitted, when there is no resistance, when there is no effort to select the best possible solution from an abundance of possibilities—then composition is neither a labor nor an “attractive labor” in the sense that Marx used the term. Composition is a metaphor for life, since, in both instances, one needs to choose from several possibilities. The more numerous the possibilities, the more difficult and the more necessary is the decision. Many years ago, I read a statement by Stravinsky which claimed that one’s freedom will be so much the greater and meaningful the narrower one’s field of action and the more numerous the obstacles.³⁴ But it is important to impose such limits of one’s one accord, and voluntarily. When I begin a new piece, I often start by intentionally reducing the material to a minimum, and then I try to make ends meet with this minimal material by developing everything from it. Among the works in today’s concert, this procedure is the basis especially of *Essay 2* and of *Klavierduo*. It mostly applies to those works which lack an extramusical motivation and which, in turn, make me concentrate more on the musico-technical problems. These problems, of course, play a role in other works as well, including those that are explicitly political, but in such cases they are joined by an extramusical program which suggests that I utilize appropriate technical and stylistic means to do justice to that program. This is the case in today’s concert with *Tui-Gesänge* and *Mythenasche*, two pieces I wrote after texts of my friend Albrecht Betz. The text is very important in these compositions, not only because of its literary qualities but also because what is intended by the music can be correctly understood only from the knowledge of the text and of the contradictory relation (contradictory meant in a positive sense) into which the music enters with the text. I hope this will become clear even during the first hearing of *Mythenasche*, a piece which, because it is the most recent one I composed, is particularly dear to me.

³⁴ [Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music* (New York: Vintage, 1947), 68.]

Thus, both directions I mentioned earlier are represented in tonight's concert. It would be wrong to call them political and apolitical, because for me they are not opposites. I do not believe that only the text or the political content establish the political dimension of a work; by the same token, I do not believe that purely instrumental pieces are apolitical by necessity. As different as the individual pieces may turn out to be, the approach is really the same. Addressing the opponents of politically engaged art (a term that I cannot stand to hear any longer and which I would like to see replaced with "civil art"), I would like to cite a statement by Heinrich Heine who understood the issue: "Phidias and Michelangelo were men of one cloth like their sculptures... They did not separate their art from the politics of the day; they did not create their works out of meager private enthusiasm which could have been poured into any kind of subject matter. Aeschylus wrote *The Persians* with the same commitment with which he fought against them at Marathon. And Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy* not as a poet fulfilling a commission but as a Guelphic refugee; in exile and misery he did not lament the decline of his talent but the loss of freedom."³⁵

This does not mean that everything needs to be politicized immediately. For those who want to politicize everything, I would like to call attention to the example of the poet Pablo Neruda, who certainly was a political poet and patriot but who also wrote love poems, descriptions of nature, and narratives. There are no aspects of the overly rich and contradictory reality which should not be treated by the artist. It depends on where one places the emphasis. True, it would be peculiar, if, in view of all the events surrounding us, we would close our eyes (which is as bad as closing one's ears!) and recede into a small private world. But, if the overall approach is political in its best and widest meaning—that is, open toward the world and toward human beings—then there is no subject, no matter, how private or art-specific, which should be taboo. Especially—and this an aspect of the new freedom as well—we should not be afraid to strive for a correctly understood and contradictory beauty in music. I want to remind you of what Hanns Eisler said: "You may be surprised, but I read Brecht not because he is a Marxist but because he is beautiful."³⁶

[Source: Untitled typescript for a pre-concert talk at the *Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik* in Witten, Germany, 25 April 1981; Becheri 81-6.]

³⁵ [Heinrich Heine, „Gemäldeausstellung in Paris (1831),“ in *Zeitungsberichte über Musik und Malerei*, ed. Michael Mann (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1964), 72.]

³⁶ [Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970).]

Einklang for Oboe and 7 Instruments

I would prefer not to get into the technical details of this piece, because, as Schoenberg tells us (the reader may recall his letter of July 27, 1932 to Rudolf Kolisch), showing how a piece is *made* does not help us to know what the piece *is*. Yet, I do recall a few facts that accompanied the composition's birth, partly because (more or less indirectly) they worked their way into the piece, and partly because, *a posteriori*, they seem rather intriguing to me.

I began writing *Einklang* on the July 10, 1980 at Salto di Fondi and then I worked on it on a farm in the Black Forest, in Berlin, and in Leipzig, finishing it on October 11, in Milan. In Dresden, where I was located during that period, I carried the manuscript with me wherever I went, with some strange foreboding. And this foreboding kept me from finishing three other manuscripts I had with me, which vanished from my hotel room...

While I was working on *Einklang* (in July) I read the memoirs of Shostakovich, a composer I "rediscovered" for myself very late. For years I had considered him (I am ashamed to admit) a middling composer, if not a reactionary one; today I recognize him as one of the greatest composers of our century, and in his legacy there is still, I believe, much to be pondered, for example, that it is impossible to equate the language a composer uses with the value of his work. His Eighth Quartet made a great impression on me; I heard it in a version for string orchestra in Bologna, in August of 1980 while I was working on *Einklang*. And so, amongst the folds of this composition, there is, for those who want to go to the bother of looking for it, a little homage to Shostakovich. There are other references, some private (a quotation from my cantata *Majakowski*, that I had finished at the beginning of July and which I was still mulling over in my mind: "Lilja, liebe mich!"—Lilja, love me), and some suggested by the intended players, the oboist Burkhard Glaetzner and my friends in the "Gruppe Neue Musik Hanns Eisler," for whom, on the commission of the city of Leipzig, I wrote it. I do not wish to dwell upon these references, but I must mention the famous song of Eisler's "Vorwärts und nicht vergessen ... die Solidarität" (Forwards, and don't forget solidarity), especially its opening which announces a marching stomp (as if frozen stiff).

Having finished the composition, I went to see Pietro Borgonovo to ask for advice on some technical problems (multiphonics, etc.). Somehow we got talking about the Bohemian composer Zelenka, only recently rediscovered and reevaluated. Until then I had never even heard a note of Zelenka, but I was interested, having read a few articles on him. When Borgonovo heard the name he said, "Zelenka is a true genius!" and he put a record on. I was dumbfounded: The composition begins with a unison several measures long, exactly like *Einklang*! Mark my words, I do not believe in metem-

psychosis, and yet... it is true, Zelenka died on the day of my birth two centuries earlier!

What else can I say about *Einklang*, what else that is not there to be heard? "*Einklang*" means "unison, accord, syntony" and implies "tuning," "conciliating," "harmonizing," "conforming," "corresponding," "coinciding." In this composition, a soloist performs with seven other soloists; everyone acts autonomously and collectively, which is not always easy. Rather than a result, the title indicates an objective—beyond the piece itself.

[Composed in 1980; the program notes in Italian are dated September, 1981.]

Mythenasche

Mythenasche (ash of myths) consists of eight parts: Prologue, Reflection, Danaë's Heirs, Sisyphus, Psychedelic Calves, Phoenix, Change of Color, Epilog. The texts by Albrecht Betz are an assessment of the current political situation, following the great hopes expressed in the movements of the late 1960s worldwide and the state of sobriety reached especially during the last five to six years. *Mythenasche*, likewise, is a kind of assessment to which different experiences I made in the last few years contributed. Depending on the issues treated in the individual poems, I have used different stylistic materials and thereby tried to reflect musically the different situations addressed in the texts—upswing and failure, crisis and the will to overcome it. As a result, the work has a relatively wide expressive and emotional range, whereby the different characters of individual sections are juxtaposed without compromise (especially clear, for instance, in the transition from the stylized rock music of "Psychedelic Calves" to the "beautiful" string sonorities of "Phoenix"). Overall, the composition is dominated by a dark, grave, and aggressive tone in accordance with the subject of the cycle. Still, the work is not meant to indulge in pessimism. "Life is a challenging business," said Ho Chi Minh in a poem, "right now it is full of difficulties." To recognize the situation does not mean to accept the situation. Still, everybody will agree that this is not a reason for rejoicing.

[Composed in 1981; the program notes in German are dated May 1, 1981.]

Seconda Sinfonia

My second symphony was commissioned by the East German Radio Orchestra in Leipzig and completed in 1981. Even though it consists of only one movement, the

sharply contrasting sections constitute the diverse characters of a multi-movement work—in other words, fulfill what one expects from a symphonic composition. It is an expressive piece with several big contrasts. It does not have a fixed structure; rather, the form evolved gradually during the process of composition. The work is kind of a diary into which one jots down entries as one feels like it: events, moods, and sentiments. One might call it a symphonic poem with an unspecified extramusical program.

The first introductory section begins in the violins with a twelve-tone theme in which tritones play an important role. The angular quality of the theme informs the entire section, which increases in density and texture by way of gradually combining strings, brasses, and woodwinds. The sound of cow bells (faintly recalling timbral sonorities of Mahler symphonies) provides a transition to a section unified by the rigid rhythmic pattern of a sarabande—distorted by meter changes, to be sure, but clearly recognizable in its Mahlerian processional gait; it grows in intensity until it releases its energy in an *espressivo* section dominated by the strings. The angularity of the first section returns, but it is now animated, and thus intensified, by colorful additional timbral layers; the sarabande as well as the *espressivo* section return briefly, before the symphony concludes with poignant chords articulated mostly by the brass and the percussion section, crushing everything in its wake. Throughout the piece the oboe is treated as if it were a solo instrument.

[Composed in 1981; the program notes in English were written in March 2005.]

Mozart

Time and time again Lombardi used his talent as a writer to address general audiences, as in this Mozart portrait written for the East German Deutsche Volkszeitung.

Personalities like Mozart are, for composers (at least for me), both paralyzing and stimulating. They are paralyzing because, faced with the works of such a genius, one is easily tempted to give up—never, even with the most strenuous effort, can something similarly beautiful be achieved. Why compose in the wake of such beautiful music! But even the greatest of geniuses had to fight against the shadows of overwhelming figures (mostly the immediate predecessors), for instance, the young Schubert who lived in the same city as the great and venerated Beethoven; after Beethoven's Ninth, Brahms needed more than ten years to complete his first symphony. The only salvation, when facing music paper, is to try to forget that such great music exists. One has to pretend that it is absolutely necessary (for whom?—at least for oneself) to

write yet another new piece. Or, one justifies the effort by insisting that today we face different problems, that a different time needs a different art (does it really need it?). That is our hope; without it, it would be impossible to compose, or even to live. What is the purpose of living if one is not needed, if what one does best and what one likes most is no longer of any use. At a time when nuclear extinction threatens, art becomes a most powerful purpose of life. And this applies to Mozart's art in particular. This in fact is the second reaction a composer has (or at least I have) when listening to Mozart (but also to Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Stravinsky, Bartók and others)—the urge to continue composing because so many great works have been written. There is nothing more beautiful than to overcome a bout of depression by listening to a wonderful piece of music, especially one by Mozart who is so balanced and yet full of contrasts. Joy, sadness, seriousness, fun, elegance—all these characteristics and many more are contained in his music. Mozart the anti-depressant (*pace* Wolfgang Amadé)—he is so much better than modern pharmaceuticals, because the latter numb the depression but do not remove its cause; they only cover it up. But Mozart's music is the means and the goal of removing depression, for what better occupation can there be than to devote oneself to the music of such genius. Here I envy musicologists (whom I do not envy otherwise), since they can turn the in-depth study of great creations into their purpose of life.

Creating such wonderful works is not always so wonderful (in fact, I believe, it rarely is). Even with Mozart. The much-praised ease and naturalness are the result of hard work. I am impressed by the mutual dependency of genius and diligence. Someone—I do not remember who—said that genius is diligence. There are many similar statements. “I had to work hard. Anybody else working as hard as I did would have accomplished as much.” That's J. S. Bach with his incomparable modesty; in its pointed version, the statement is (unfortunately) not true. (Who would not like to become more diligent?) Mozart said: “It is generally erroneous to believe that my art has been easy for me. I assure you, dear friend, nobody has devoted more effort to the study of composition. There is no famous master of music whom I did not diligently study, often several times!”³⁷ No doubt the best genes are useless unless one has learned to apply them correctly. Mozart worked hard throughout his life—indeed there is reason to believe that the main cause for his early death was exhaustion from pushing himself too hard. If Mozart had not had a strict father who was a good musician, he would not have had music lessons at age 4, would not have jotted down his first compositions at age 5, and would not have appeared as a Wunderkind at age 6. In 1763 (Wolfgang was 7) the Mozart family started a tour of Europe that lasted forty-one months. The

³⁷ [Fritz Henneberg, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), 153.]

restless pursuits he began as a child continued for three decades; on his deathbed Mozart still worked on the Requiem (which remained incomplete). Mozart assimilated with an unbelievable speed what he had learned and he was able to transform it immediately into his own music. He never stopped learning, but continued his education by studying the music of other composers. Beginning in 1782 he belonged to the circle of Baron van Swieten, in whose mansion the music of J. S. Bach and Handel was played. “I am in the process of gathering a collection of Bach’s Fugues,”³⁸ he reported to his father, and he wrote many canons with progressive degrees of complexity from two-part to twelve-part compositions. He was a friend of Joseph Haydn, the most famous composer of his day. Haydn, Mozart’s senior by twenty-four years, was extremely impressed by his younger colleague. “Your son is the greatest composer I know in person and by name,” he wrote to Mozart’s father.³⁹ And Mozart is said to have admitted that he learned from Haydn how to write string quartets. He dedicated to Haydn six string quartets at which he labored for a long time and with difficulty.

Diligence plus genius equals productivity. In his short life (Mozart died before he turned 36) he composed an enormous amount of music (his cataloguer Köchel listed 626 completed compositions). Granted, high productivity was fashionable at the time—a legacy from the Baroque era. Here are a few reasons for the high productivity of composers. Composers at that time usually worked for court and church and faced constant deadline pressures, but for their idiom they could count on a generally acceptable musical language. Musical production was determined by the social function of individual genres (church, entertainment, concert, opera, etc.) and of individual pieces, not by the composer’s need of expression. This began to change in Mozart’s time, but the changes were not noticeable until after the French Revolution and with the ascendance of the bourgeois class, in short: with Beethoven. With Beethoven, each work is considered a unique and unalterable individuality, each reflecting definite ideas, emotional states, and attitudes of the author. Thus, Beethoven did not write more than 100 symphonies, like Haydn, or close to 50 symphonies, like Mozart, but only nine, each of them representing a special world. Composing became even more problematic with the decline of a generally valid musical language, with the decline of tonality at the end of the nineteenth century, since the compositional coordinates needed to be determined anew for each new work. Pointedly put, not just a piece of music needed to be generated on the basis of a musical language, but the musical language itself needed to be generated. Thus the number of compositions

³⁸ [*ibid.*, 166; Letter to Leopold Mozart, 2.IV.1782, in Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, III, ed. Wilhelm Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 201.]

³⁹ [*ibid.*, 175; as reported in a letter by Leopold Mozart to his daughter, 16.II.1785, in Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, III, 373.]

declined further—an extreme example is Alban Berg with only twelve opus numbers. Composers who worked on the foundations of musical language in the twentieth century have, by necessity, written less than those who more or less took over an existing musical language and used it for their own personal expression. (Schoenberg and Shostakovich can be cited as examples of the two types.)

Whatever the compositional decision, it does not reveal anything about the significance of the music, and quantity and value are not related as well. I admire composers who write quickly and a lot, but even more I admire those who write good pieces. Impressive is the fast pace and the apparent ease with which Mozart penned the greatest masterworks. But he was quite self-critical and not content with the first idea. “I could, of course, scribble down (“hinschmieren”, he writes) something for an entire day, but such a piece is going to be published, and I do not want to be ashamed when it has my name on it.”⁴⁰ Mozart knew what the audience liked and he wanted to please the audience, but he did not want to be ashamed of his compositions. His father admonished him: “I recommend that, when you compose, you not only think exclusively of the musically educated but also of those uneducated—there are 100 of the latter against 10 connoisseurs. Do not forget the so-called popular that tickles even longer ears.” And Mozart responded: “Do not be worried about the so-called popular; in my opera there is music for all kinds of people, except for those with long ears.” His publisher Hoffmeister threatened: “Write in a more popular vein, otherwise I cannot publish and pay for your pieces.”⁴¹ But Mozart’s music more and more sheds the limits of an art tied to the court society. Subjective and passionate tones emerge, storm and stress replaces the gallantries of the rococo. Today, we think of Mozart’s music as the essence of balance and euphonious moderation. His contemporaries had a different opinion; according to numerous judgments, it was considered difficult, complicated, and artificial. A critic wrote in 1789 that Mozart “has a decided leaning towards the difficult and the unusual,”⁴² and an anecdote has come down to us about an aristocrat who tore the music of a string quartet to shreds when he noticed that the dissonances he heard were not mistakes of the performers but prescribed by Mozart. Even musicians became critical. Dittersdorf wanted Mozart to be less wasteful with his ideas lest the listener catch his breath: “As soon as one wants to reflect on a beautiful idea, another beautiful idea replaces the former, and so forth. At the end none of these

⁴⁰ [*ibid.*, 152; Letter to Leopold Mozart, 14.II.1778, in Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, II (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962), 281.]

⁴¹ [*ibid.*, 7.]

⁴² [*ibid.*, 7; Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 349.]

beautiful moments can be remembered.”⁴³ Nägeli called Mozart’s practice of generating effects through contrast an “ingenious error.”⁴⁴ The decline of his popularity in the mid-1780s is certainly related to the increasing demands that his music made on the listeners. More and more he followed his own subjective laws of creation, not those of the general taste. *The Marriage of Figaro*, the libretto of which was put together by Lorenzo da Ponte after Beaumarchais (according to contemporaries, the stormy petrel of the Revolution) led to a rupture with society because an aristocrat was made to look ridiculous while his servant (a representative of the bourgeoisie) triumphs at the end. Mozart’s last years were characterized by isolation and financial ruin. Even as a pianist he was no longer in demand. When he failed with yet another attempt to organize his own concert series, he wrote to his friend Puchberg who had helped him financially: “Fate is, unfortunately, my adversary, but only in Vienna, so that I cannot earn anything even if I wanted to; I sent out a subscription list a fortnight ago, but only Swieten’s signature is on it.”⁴⁵ There are several rays of hope, especially the triumphal reception of *Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* in Prague. Mozart died in 1791 in poverty, and received a third-class burial in a mass grave. It is a tragedy that, just at the time of his death, there are signs that a turn-around was coming in form of commissions and invitations to England and Holland. (It is unbelievable that, in the middle of the twentieth century and in the midst of a affluent, capitalistic society, another great artist died in similarly dramatic circumstances—Bela Bartók in New York City in 1945.)

During his lifetime, Mozart was striving in vain for a position commensurate with his ability. He hated working as a court organist for the Archbishop of Salzburg and, because of conflicts with the archbishop, he resigned. Count Arco, the head of the kitchen department and also the person who was supervisor to (the servant) Mozart, did not want to accept Mozart’s resignation and threw him out with a kick. At that time, employment at the court was one of the best possibilities to carve out a living as a composer. Haydn, who survived Mozart by eighteen years, was a servant at the court of Count Esterházy. Beethoven was the first modern bourgeois composer to be able to make a living as a freelance artist. Mozart lived at a time of transition, he rebelled against being a servant at the court but he must have been glad when he was offered the position of court composer in Vienna, succeeding Gluck. But his salary was drastically curtailed: Gluck earned 2000 Gulden, Mozart only 800,⁴⁶ and he had to compose entertainment music: among other works in

⁴³ [*ibid.*, 156.]

⁴⁴ [*Ibid.*, 156.]

⁴⁵ [*ibid.*, 209; Letter to Michael Puchberg, 12.VII.1789, in Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, IV (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 92]

⁴⁶ [*ibid.*, 205.]

this category he wrote 125 dances. But what a contrast to today's entertainment music! There was not a big difference between entertainment and the learned at his time, and certainly not for a great composer like him. At first glance it seems to be an unexplainable contradiction that there is a principal unity of musical reality in the feudal society, while democratic societies are characterized by many different musical realities that are tied to special groups in society. (It is amazing, nevertheless, that contemporary classical music still has its listeners, albeit a relatively small group!) There are, of course, sociological and political explanations for this situation. Still, it is disheartening to admit that, in our society, classical music—and that includes Mozart's music—is not accessible to the large majority of people, that concerts and operas are attended by only a small part of the population.

Mozart's music gives voice to a new tone, to a "new subjective inwardness," as Hegel put it, a tone that captures the spirit of his time and anticipates characteristics of later Romantic music. Tremendous societal shifts took place during his lifetime that culminated in 1789 in the French Revolution. The 22-year old Mozart was deeply impressed by the American War of Independence. Still, it would not be possible to maintain that Mozart had revolutionary ideas as far as the society was concerned. He always remained a faithful servant of the Catholic Church, even though his *Don Giovanni* rebelled against God, and he is said to have called the enlightened philosopher Voltaire a dog (even though ideas of Enlightenment were incorporated in his *Magic Flute*). He was a peace-loving man ("What I find most ridiculous is the cruel military"),⁴⁷ but he wrote two war songs. Today we would say that he did not have a "political consciousness." But what else can we demand of Mozart in good conscience! The "little man with a broad head and fleshy hands",⁴⁸ this man with an "enormous nose",⁴⁹ who liked to have fun and even composed obscenities, was one of the greatest geniuses of humankind. 190 years after his death we are still amazed and experience his music with awe.

[Source: Typescript dated November 1981; published as "Heute wird Musik zum mächtigen Lebensgrund: Der Komponist Luca Lombardi über Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart," *Deutsche Volkszeitung* XXIX (10 December 1981); Becheri 81-2.]

⁴⁷ [*ibid.*, 53; Letter to Leopold Mozart, 18.XII.1778, in Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, II, 522.]

⁴⁸ [*ibid.*, 104; Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, 561.]

⁴⁹ [*ibid.*, 104.]

Karl Amadeus Hartmann

The guiding spirit for Lombardi during much of the 1970s no doubt was Hanns Eisler, but gradually other musicians emerged in his field of vision, who could provide inspiration and sustenance to the young composer in his quest for a music committed to the causes of the times. Lombardi, who in his mid-thirties had already written two symphonies, “discovered” around 1980—outside of the horizon prescribed by the European avant-garde—other symphonists, among them Shostakovich and Hartmann. The Munich composer Hartmann (1905-63) had withdrawn from musical life during the Nazi period and devoted much of his compositional energies to giving expression to the darkest period of German history in several symphonies and a Concerto funebre. Lombardi reacted to the publication of several books on Hartmann⁵⁰ and the issuing of Hartmann’s symphonies by Wergo in an unpublished text from the early 1980s.

It seems that Karl Amadeus Hartmann’s time is coming back. As founder of the *Musica Viva* concerts in Munich, he was the friend and supporter of many contemporary composers, but he was, and still is, largely unknown to younger composers—those born around the time of World War II. When I was studying in Germany, I never encountered his name, much less his music. I no longer remember on what occasion, now many years ago, I first heard of Hartmann and developed an interest in him. Not having any direct acquaintance with his works, I conjured up some kind of subjective idea of him, associating him in part with Sepp Trautwein, the protagonist of *Exil* (the beautiful novel by Lion Feuchtwanger who was likewise a native of Munich); Trautwein, even though he was originally apolitical, was led by the terrible events of the fascist period to the conviction that, in the last analysis, art and politics cannot be separated. In the years of rebellion against a particular kind of avant-garde that had by then become a mere shadow of what it had been and what it had signified, Hartmann (or the idea of him that I had conceived) seemed like a possible alternative—that is, like a composer who had cut his own distinctive path within contemporary music. When I was finally able to get my hands on the scores of his eight symphonies (by now they have all been issued on disc), that conception was largely confirmed.

Hartmann is a composer whose importance is on the same level as, or shall I say closely correlated to, his anomalous presence in the landscape of the music of our century. To borrow the words of Luigi Dallapiccola, “his work, his

⁵⁰ Andrew D. McCredie, *Karl Amadeus Hartmann: Sein Leben und Werk* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1980) and *Karl Amadeus Hartmann und die Musica Viva*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. Renate Wagner (Munich: Piper and Mainz: Schott, 1980).

great work remains: solid, without compromise, isolated, solitary.”⁵¹ The center of his work is comprised of a form quite out of step with recent musical trends, namely the symphony. But this form has been embraced by other great composers of our century, most notably Shostakovich. I do believe that the symphony is once again viable for our times—obviously not understood as some kind of scholastic abstraction, but as an open form, as a microcosm in which experiences and diverse materials flow together and where themes confront each other, rising beyond technical-linguistic exercises. It isn’t just by chance that many younger composers are going back to writing symphonies. It is no happenstance that they are rediscovering Shostakovich and Hartmann: besides the liner-notes with his boxed symphonies (released by Schott Wergo Music Media GmbH), his biography has been issued (by Andrew D. McCredie) and a book, *K.A. Hartmann und die Musica Viva*; the latter is very interesting in that it puts in print some unpublished documents, among them letters to Hartmann from Dallapiccola, Nono, and Henze as well as fragments of letters from Hermann Scherchen. In a letter that probably dates from around 1940, Scherchen wrote, “Try not to delegate anything extreme (*Exponiertes*) to the orchestra, but write in an extremely simple way: we must, above all, learn once again how to achieve the maximum artistic concentration with a minimum of means. Afterwards one can apply in a new way all the conquests of modern music and—after such a sacrifice—probably in a correct and legitimate way!”⁵² Is this the New Simplicity of today? No, it is advice of a great musician to a then-young composer, but it still rings with relevance for our own day.

To write what you hold to be necessary, in a simple and direct way, without concern for the esthetics of the moment, without worrying that it could isolate you. Karl Amadeus Hartmann teaches us this and much more.

[Source: Untitled and undated typescript, probably from the early 1980s. Unpublished; Becheri 82-5.]

⁵¹ [„Son oeuvre, sa grande oeuvre demeure: solide, sans compromis, isolée, solitaire.” Letter by Dallapiccola to Elisabeth Hartmann, 14 IX 1965, in Luigi Dallapiccola, „Une amitié de laquelle je suis très fier: Briefe 1938-1965,” in *Karl Amadeus Hartmann und die Musica Viva*, 183-85.]

⁵² *Karl Amadeus Hartmann und die Musica Viva*, 246. „Versuchen Sie NICHTS Exponiertes ins Orchester zu legen, sondern schreiben Sie äußerst einfach: wir müssen erst einmal wieder lernen, mit einem Minimum an materiellen Möglichkeiten das Höchste an künstlerischer Konzentration einfachst darzustellen. Danach kommen alle Errungenschaften der Moderne erst wieder neu zur Anwendung, und dann—nach einem solchen Opfer—wahrscheinlich richtig und mit Recht.“

***Musica/Realtà* for a New Public in Italy**

Lombardi quite frequently assessed musical life in Italy. In the following introduction written for East German readers he focuses especially on cultural politics in the aftermath of the victory of the political left in regional elections in 1976.

I would like to begin with a personal reminiscence: In October 1968—it was the time of the student movement—I organized with several musician friends a concert in a factory affected by a strike in Rome. It turned into a great experience, even though the music we performed was unusual; among the collaborators were the American pianist and composer Frederic Rzewski, the Italian neo-dadaist Giuseppe Chiari, and a group of musicians who played Baroque music. For the workers fighting for their places of employment it was a new experience to get to know our work; for many of us artists it was the first opportunity to talk with factory workers, to learn about their problems and interests. Since then, the musical audiences in our country, including those for new music, have changed decisively and grown, even though the percentage of workers participating in music events is certainly extremely small. There is still lots to be done in this area. Nevertheless, one can notice a quantitative and qualitative change among concert audiences, especially an increase in the number of young listeners.

To help the reader to better understand Italian musical life and its specific problem, I would like to say something about the political and social structure of the country. Italy, a country that stretches more than one thousand kilometers from the Alps to Sicily, is the sum of different and partly extremely divergent cultures that can be traced to the different influences to which the country was subjected. They range from the Greeks to numerous Latin people, from the Etruscans to the Normans, from the Celts to the Staufer dynasty, from the Arabs to Spaniards, and from the French to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Today Italy is divided into fourteen regions which, since 1970, have a certain autonomy in relation to the central government in Rome. As is well-known, Italy had a fascist dictatorship from 1922 to 1945. After World War II the Christian Democrats were constantly in power, partly, as is the case right now, in coalition with other parties of the center or the reform-minded left. Except for a short period after the war (1945-47), the Communist Party was never directly in power in Rome, but has been in charge of several regional and city administrations. For instance, the region Emilia-Romagna with Bologna as its capital has been administered since the end of the war by the left (communists and socialists). In the last year the influence of the communists has increased considerably so that today—after the big election victory in 1976—the left governs seven regions. If one keeps in mind that Italy's industrial base is concentrated largely in the North (especially in big

cities such as Milan, Turin, Genoa, and Bologna) and that the South is still dominated partly by an agrarian economy (in turn resulting in a sizable emigration of people to the North and to richer capitalist countries), one can understand easily that Italy represents a conglomerate of contradictory political, social, and cultural phenomena.

The musical situation is characterized by eleven so-called *Enti lirici* (opera and concert halls) in as many regions, of which eight are located in regions and cities governed by the left (Turin, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, and Naples). In addition, there is a group of smaller musical theatres (*Teatri di tradizione*), which, in contrast to the others, do not have a permanent ensemble, and quite a number of those are also located in regions and cities governed by the left (Reggio Emilia, Modena, Ferrara, Parma, Mantua, Pisa, and Alessandria). Furthermore, there are regional orchestras founded during the last years on the initiative of the Communist Party (Lombardy, Alto Adige, Emilia, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzi, Puglia, and Sicily) as well as four radio symphony orchestras in Turin, Milan, Rome, and Naples.

A clear watershed in the political and cultural development of Italy was the year 1976, when the Communist Party won its largest victory to date in regional elections with more than 34% of all votes. Until then, the musical policy of the communists had been focused not only on several reform projects (which were never passed in parliament) but also on several innovative initiatives to further a democratization of the musical culture. Internationally known, for instance, are the concerts and seminars that took place under the name *Musica/Realtà* in the early 1970s in the city of Reggio Emilia. Several musicians (composers, performers, musicologists, and music critics) joined the group that originally had been formed by Luigi Pestalozza, Luigi Nono, and Claudio Abbado, and they experimented systematically and continuously with new forms of musical communication for a new musical public (high school and university students as well as workers).⁵³ *Musica/Realtà* became the model for similar initiatives in the economically and culturally disadvantaged South, e.g., *Musica/Incontro* in Salerno and *Musica/Tempo* in Avellino.

Of course, more could have been done. In Reggio Emilia; one should not have been content with reifying an already existing culture, but striven to generate new modes of musical production in close contact with the population. Lately it has become somewhat quieter in Reggio Emilia—this may perhaps be

⁵³ See Luigi Pestalozza, „Die Erfahrungen von Musica/Realtà: Musica/Realtà als bezeichnendes Moment des demokratischen Kampfes für eine Erneuerung der musikalischen Strukturen in Italien,” in *Musik im Übergang*, ed. Hans Klaus Jungheinrich and Luca Lombardi (Munich: Damnitz, 1977).

connected with the fact that the ideas of *Musica/Realtà* are well known by now. And this applies not only to Reggio Emilia (a place with an active musical theater—opera, ballet, and concert—and a municipal music school directed by the composer Armando Gentilucci), but also for the rest of Italy. Another reason is that the tasks of the parties of the left, especially of the communists, changed decisively after the election victory of 1976 and the resultant take-over of many large theaters. Indeed, the year 1976 looks in retrospect like a decisive marker in Italian politics and cultural politics. It would be wrong to say that the development has regressed since, but it cannot be denied that many hopes—often based on a superficial analysis of national and international politics—proved to be illusory. Up to the middle of seventies, one might have gotten the impression that Italy was at the threshold of drastic structural changes and that the construction of a socialist society ranked high on the agenda. Viewed from this perspective, the relatively modest field of music seemed to be ripe for important changes of direction pertaining to, for instance, the separation of serious and entertainment music caused by the class society. (I understand by the latter not only the commercial industrially produced music, but also different forms of authentic folk music, including political song.) Musicians representing different musical categories performed in Reggio Emilia, got to know each other's work, exchanged experiences, and asked questions about their common profession. Getting to know Giovanna Marini, an excellent singer and composer (unfortunately not known in East Germany), for example, was quite important for me, and I joined her several times on stage. In general, not much has come out of the meeting of musicians from different branches of music (which, of course, has something to do with the different artistic conditions characteristic of the various fields). And another reason is that the willingness for collaboration was left to the private initiative of individuals; the parties on the left understandably focused their work on entirely different problems. Taking over the big theatres, of course, made the officials face difficult tasks, but they fell short of envisioning a real and radical innovation of the existing institutions. As far as new music is concerned, they overestimated the role of the traditional bourgeois avant-garde (and their imitators) and in turn failed to take sufficient account of the possibilities that, among other things, could have furthered encounters between different cultures. In order not to be misunderstood, I would like to stress that avant-garde music and interest in other musical cultures—those of one's own country (and Italy's musical traditions are very rich) as well as of other countries, including those outside of Europe—need not exclude each other. But what happened was a fixation on one aesthetic direction, as if it were the only important one and even the only correct one. My perspective, of course, is that of a composer. If one considers the development of Italian musical life from the viewpoint of the audience, it needs to be said that indeed there were important changes during the last years

in terms of lifting traditional barriers between different forms of music as well as between different groups of listeners. Today, it is not unusual to see the same listener, often young, attending a concert with new music, a rock concert, and a folklore event. Audiences have become aware of the many layers of musical reality and realize that *music* does not exist, only different possibilities to produce and to hear music. In this context I would like to mention the cooperative *L'Orchestra* from Milan that consists of several groups from different areas of music. The most well-known is *Stormy Six*, *Macchina Maccheronica*, a group also known in East Germany, which, by using different genres, wants to overcome the barriers separating these genres. Taking its cue from the systematic exploration of folk music as well as from the experiments of individual singers and groups, the *Istituto Ernesto De Martino* (also from Milan) has launched a magazine and a record series (*I dischi del sole*). Quite a number of popular progressive singers are associated with the institute, among them the above-mentioned Giovanna Marini as well as Paolo Pietrangeli, Ivan Della, Fausto Amodei, and many others.

The broadening interest in music has manifested itself in the last years not only in growing audiences but also in a growing desire to perform music. Civic music schools (*Scuole popolari di musica*) have sprung up all over Italy. These schools, founded by individual democratic artists, emphasize jazz, folk music and rock music. New “classical” music is hardly an issue of concern. This type of music is now more strongly represented in conservatories—institutions that, of course, are concerned with educating professionals, not amateurs. Whoever wants to become a musician (instrumentalist, conductor, and composer) usually attends such an institution. The number of conservatories has increased after the war—there are almost fifty (which in itself is not to be seen as a purely positive phenomenon); its numbers grew especially in the regions of the South governed by the Christian Democrats, in areas in which no demand existed but in which political interests needed to be satisfied. The general rejuvenation of the teaching personnel should be mentioned positively, because it led to a noticeable innovation of these institutions; the transformation, however, is partly stifled by an old-fashioned administrative system. (The conservatories do not have any regional autonomy; they are controlled by the central government and its department of education.)

The struggle between innovation and stagnation is characteristic of all aspects of Italian music life, including the festivals, of which there are many in Italy. Among the festivals, those with a democratic attitude are in the minority: A switch in government from communist to center-left was all that was needed to cause not only a redefinition of the contents of the *Recitarcantando* festival in Cremona but also calling into question its continued existence. *Cantiere*

internazionale d'arte in Montepulciano, founded and directed (until 1980) by Hans Werner Henze, is a festival that tries to establish closer contact with the area's population (not only with the traditional national and international clientele). *Settembre Musica* in Turin should be mentioned, also *Estate Romana*, a series of cultural events organized by a communist official to fill the otherwise "dead" summer months in the Italian capital. And there is the festival organized annually by the association *Nuova Consonanza* in Rome; it was founded by Franco Evangelisti (1926-80) and others as a venue for those with a special interest in new music, but only recently has it confronted the problem of contact with a new democratic audience. Even though it is not a festival, I should mention here *Musica del nostro tempo* in Milan, a concert series in which all active musical institutions of the city participate (*La Scala*, the Radio Orchestra, *Pomeriggi Musicali*, *Angelicum*, and the Conservatory) and which dates back to the initiative of the district governed by parties of the left. Other festivals are internationally known, but not particularly innovative, for instance the *Festival dei due mondi* in Spoleto or the *Biennale di musica* in Venice.

Very important is the press festival of *Unità*, the main newspaper of the Italian Communist Party. Between June and September approximately 8000 festivals are organized in larger and smaller communities in all of Italy. They conclude with a big national festival, organized each year in a different city. Since 1972, music, including classical music (both historical and contemporary), is given an important role within the festival. To name just a few from the last few years: Beethoven Symposium in Modena (1977), International Convention of Electronic Music Studios in Genoa (1978), Concerts and Seminars "30 Years of New Music in Europe" in Milan (1979), and the Concert Series for Peace in Bologna (1980) with premieres and first performances of representative European composers.

An increasing number of composers were educated in Italy as a result of the growing number of conservatories and composition classes; in turn, the younger generation is represented by numerous artists. In fact, the situation is extremely favorable for a composer who has just completed his examination or is still in the process of studying. There are numerous competitions and events geared directly to those young composers; there is no lack of possibilities for getting performed, and publishers (especially Ricordi and Suvini Zerboni) are interested in new pieces. But since there are hardly any commissions in Italy and the composer cannot make a living from his compositions, almost all are striving for a teaching post at a conservatory. This has a positive effect for the composition student, since, by and large, he is being taught by an active creative mind. A complete list of the many contemporary composers of our country would be long and tedious; for that

reason, only a few important names should be mentioned here. Between Goffredo Petrassi (born 1904), the senior composer of Italian music who is still an active participant of the musical scene, and those who today are in their early twenties, there are numerous interesting composers, some of whom have an international reputation: Luigi Nono (born 1924), Luciano Berio (1925), Aldo Clementi (1925), Franco Donatoni (1927), Sylvano Bussotti (1931), Giacomo Manzoni (1932), Niccolò Castiglioni (1932) Armando Gentilucci (1938), Giuseppe Sinopoli (1946), Salvatore Sciarrino (1947). Among the younger composers not known abroad should be mentioned Adriano Guarnieri (1947), Sandro Gorli (1948), Fabio Vacchi (1948), Alessandro Sbordoni (1948), and Lorenzo Ferrero (1952).

Several of these younger composers are engaged at the moment in a lively discussion about the perspectives of new music, especially since many of the assumptions of the historical avant-garde—now itself a historical phenomenon—have been questioned and since we now live in a “new state of freedom” that opens up, also in a critical assessment of tradition, new possibilities for the composer. Music critics participate in the discussion. Another sign for the increased interest in music, by the way, is the foundation of several music journals, the most important of which is perhaps *Musica/Realtà*, edited by Luigi Pestalozza, the commissioner of music in the central committee of the Italian Communist Party. Already in its title, the journal connects to the experiences of Reggio Emilia. It appears three times a year. No less important is *Laboratorio Musica*, a monthly magazine sponsored by Luigi Nono and the ARCI (the cultural organization of the political left). It is characteristic of both journals that they are concerned with all areas of music (classical music, jazz, folk music, rock music), albeit in different ways. *Musica/Realtà* tends to have a musicological bent, *Laboratorio Musica* has a more journalistic character. In the breadth of their interests both journals reflect the contemporary situation of Italian music—a situation that is far from being satisfactory. In addition to the usual structural problems, there are budgetary issues. Monies for culture have been reduced recently—which, in a way, can be interpreted as an attack on the efforts of left-wing civic and regional administrations to find new artistic avenues. The attempt to rescind many of the advances of the political left in recent years is objectively supported at the moment, not only in Italy, by a wave of nostalgia and regression. But there are sufficient forces in Italy that fight such “normalization.” The situation is open: There is reason to look with optimism into the future.

[Source: *Musik und Gesellschaft* XXXI (July 1981), 396-400; Becheri 81-3.]

On Peace

The unpublished text takes its point of departure from two peace conferences organized in Berlin and Bologna in the early 1980s and reflects on politics and music at a time when a certain fatigue began to sap the revolutionary enthusiasm of an earlier decade.

Recently, there took place in Berlin (East) a meeting of writers from the West and the East on the problems of war and peace. It was an important meeting because it showed that, when confronted by such a dramatic issue, writers living in different political systems, who think about politics in different ways, are willing to come together, to discuss, to form a common front with the goal of making some contribution to the present situation, and to the way of rising above it.

Musicians, or at least a large number of them, remain quiet, and seem indifferent to what is going on around them. In 1980 in Bologna there was, through the initiative of Luigi Pestalozza and the Italian Communist Party, a series of concerts dedicated to peace. It was a noteworthy initiative, especially for the international support that it had, but it unfortunately remained an isolated event. I am not suggesting, however, that we organize self-reassuring demonstrations in which we drive home that we all want peace. It is the general attitude of artists—in this case, of musicians, traditionally interested more in the world of sounds than in the real one—that must change if they don't want their work to become a futile and marginal exercise.

For a few years now we have heard, at every step, that people are tired of politics, and indeed there is, as they say in Spain, a widespread disenchantment. But there is something contradictory here: The big peace demonstrations that took place last fall show that the people, especially the young and the very young, are refusing—in the face of decisions being made above their heads—to assume a passive and resigned attitude. They show that it is hasty and inaccurate to claim that, after the political intoxication of the decade 1965-1975, a conservative trend is upon us, a return to the *status quo ante* in all matters: revival of middle-class conventions (for example, in the way one dresses), rediscovery of privacy (in the individualist-particularist meaning of the word), overestimation of the “ephemeral,” and, of course, disgust for the dirty and trivial affairs of politics, and in the field of the arts, more specifically music, the discovery of pleasantness (but let truly pleasant music be written!), the new interiorism (*Neue Innerlichkeit*), decorative and neo-galant tapestries that are now being sold in bulk, etc., etc.

There can be no doubt that today we are in another historical phase; the currents just mentioned reflect it with all its contradictions and inconsistencies. Still, not everything negative that has been going on in music is in conscious opposition to the stances of the post-Darmstadt avant-garde. On the contrary, I believe that within what has been hastily labeled as New Simplicity or Neo-Romanticism, there are happenings to be taken seriously which have not yet been analyzed for their deepest impulses and potentials. There can be no doubt, however, that there is a very strong—predominant, especially among us Italians, I would say—tendency toward disengagement and, therefore, a remarkable lack of interest in the problems that face us: today as well as yesterday. Certainly the situation has changed, but the problems are the same. Both on the national level and on the international level the basic problem remains that of the relationship between master and servant, the problem of the release of millions and millions of people from underdevelopment, from ignorance, from oppression, the problem of building a society of free men. The bugbear of the atomic bomb tends to favor the removal of the alternative between capitalism and socialism, only to replace it with that between total destruction and capitalism, making the latter seem the only practical way. We do not want nuclear war, but neither do we want a peace based on the exportation of conflict to the Third World, since European peace is a peace in the war being waged on at least three continents: yesterday as well as today. As the writer Heiner Müller pointed out in Berlin, fascism in Europe (and the resulting world war) was a geographical exception: genocide happening in Europe rather than, as it had been and is the norm, in America, Africa, and Asia.

In conclusion, what I want to say is that all the problems for which intellectuals and even musicians in 1968 went to the barricades (literally or metaphorically) are still there, unsolved. The big difference now is that no one is under the illusion that those problems are quickly solvable; on the contrary, at this time there is not in sight a way of getting out of a situation that appears in effect blocked. But does this mean that we can pull back into our own private sphere, to take no interest in what is happening in the world, to restrict ourselves to discussing whether or not to use consonant chords? Today more than ever, and apart from the rhetoric of the barricades of 1968, it is necessary not to renounce the civil engagement that should characterize any artist worthy of the name. And I believe that it is in this field that the destiny of contemporary music is being played out. The problem is not whether it is possible to use this or that material, this or that technique, but whether a musician succeeds in bearing witness to the great problems that have an impact on the people of his time.

[Source: "Sulla Pace", unpublished typescript dated 1981; Becheri 81-5.]

Busoni

The monograph by Sergio Sablich (1951-2005) on Busoni was path-breaking when it appeared in 1982. Lombardi's book review is of interest in that his own compositional career mirrors that of Busoni as a wanderer between two different cultures and languages; in addition, both Busoni and Lombardi are composers of Faust operas.

Finally, in Italy, a serious monograph on Busoni! (Sergio Sablich, *Busoni*, EDT/Musica, Turin 1982) There is no lack of essays and valuable articles, but as far as an exhaustive treatment of Busoni's work is concerned, one cannot say that this great musician has enjoyed much good fortune when one thinks of the writings on him by Arnolfo Santelli (1939), Guido Guerrini (1944), and Remo Giazotto (1947). Busoni has been more fortunate abroad, with the monographs, for example, of Edward Dent (1934, reprinted in 1974) and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt (1967). The book by Sergio Sablich, a musicologist born in 1951 in Bolzano, who teaches the history of aesthetics of music at the Conservatory of Rovigo and coordinates the scholarly studies at the *Centro Studi Musicali F. Busoni* of Empoli, therefore fills a real gap. One hopes that it will help to increase both the awareness of and the interest in a musician who is these days on the fringes of concert programming. As the author writes in his preface, "few musicians were as loved and detested as Busoni, few as forgotten as he was after his death. What are the reasons for such a fate?"

The reasons are certainly complex, and Sablich admits that it is difficult to answer this question in a convincing way. Busoni surely was a musician sitting on "two chairs," as the German saying goes (but is this not the unique, albeit uncomfortable, position for any artist?), arising from his moving about in two diverse cultures, Italian and German, of which he saw both the good qualities and the defects. And in both Italy and Germany Busoni knew fulfillment and disappointment: "A few initial contacts with Tito Ricordi (...) to discuss a contract with the Milanese publishing house ... came to nothing. Busoni began to think of Italy as scorched earth for him."⁵⁴ Again, concerning Italy, Busoni wrote in 1920, "If something like that (the offer of a chair of composition by the Prussian Academy of Arts and Sciences of Berlin-L.L.) had occurred in Rome, I would not have lost much time in making up my mind."⁵⁵ But Rome was wary enough not to call him. On the German side a certain diffidence regarding the "Latin" musician shines through in the article "Futuristengefahr" (Futurist Danger) with which Hans Pfitzner replies to the *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*: "Busoni is extraordinarily 'musical,' but 'il n'aime pas la musique,' at least not ours. One could refute the effective

⁵⁴ Sergio Sablich, *Busoni* (Turin: EDT, 1982), 61.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

content of his writing and yet at the same time feel a great deal of sympathy for it if the author, after having absorbed all the musical heritage of our time, enthusiastically, in a transport of happiness, wanted to absorb even more, were wasting away with yearning, and wanted to reach out for the stars to find among them a musical world without confines. But this enthusiastic *Sehnsucht* (a concept with which the Latin peoples are not acquainted, and for which they consequently have no word) is foreign to our lawgiver. He is a cold and fluctuating spirit. For him art is a thing more of the intellect than of the heart, while the music of the North is warmer than that of the South!”⁵⁶ (Here I find quite comical the reversal of the traditional commonplace about southern ‘passion’.)

Italy’s entry into the war against Germany, however, confronted Busoni with the dramatic choice between the two countries, an impossible choice which he sidestepped by settling in Switzerland. However, as Sablich reveals, “Italian or German ... are not opposite poles, but only the mirror of that same division latent in Busoni’s nature. That is born from his having been, according to the marvelous insight of Paul Bekker, a *Grenznatur*, someone with a border disposition suspended not only between two peoples, two languages and traditions, but also between two eras and two civilizations, two ways of experiencing music, one real (the pianist) and the other ideal (the theorist and the composer), which he moreover never felt as opposed or irreconcilable.”⁵⁷ I do not know, if one can define, as Sablich does, the activity of a pianist as real, and that of theorist and composer as ideal (being a composer is as real an activity as being an interpreter), but there is no doubt that *contradiction* (with its implications both productive and hampering) is the category that best fits Busoni’s music. This contradiction becomes evident if one looks at his musical production (beyond the judgment of merit) on the basis of his theoretical pronouncements in *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*. In this famous treatise he foretells new materials and new forms of musical organization, including the division of the octave into thirds and sixths of a tone and the possibility of generating sound electronically. But one looks in vain for traces of such audacious and “futuristic” ideas in the compositions of

⁵⁶ [Hans Pfitzner, „Futuristengefahr,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, I (Augsburg: Filser, 1926), 222. „Busoni ist zwar außerordentlich musikalisch, aber ‘il n’aime pas la musique’, wenigstens nicht unsere. Man könnte nämlich den eigentlichen Inhalt seiner Schrift ablehnen und doch könnte sie einem sehr sympathisch sein, wenn die Sache so wäre, dass der Autor derselben den ganzen Musikreichtum unserer Zeit in sich aufgenommen hätte und, ein Schwärmer, im Überschwang der Beglückung nach mehr verlangte, im Genuss nach Begierde verschmachtete und nun nach den Sternen griffe, um dort das Grenzenlose zu finden. Aber solch schwärmerische Sehnsucht (Sehnsucht–ein Begriff, den die romanischen Völker nicht kennen und für den ihrer Sprache demgemäß das Wort fehlt) ist unserem Gesetzgeber fremd. Er ist ein kühler, fluktuierender Geist. Kunst ist ihm mehr Sache des Intellekts als des Herzens, wie denn überhaupt die Musik des Nordens wärmer ist als die des Südens.“]

⁵⁷ [Sablich, 56. Paul Bekker coined the term *Grenznatur* in „Ferruccio Busoni,” *Neue Musik* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1913), 15ff.]

Busoni, who, on the contrary, saw in the classics (particularly in Bach and Mozart) the ideal point of reference for his work as composer. This indubitable “schizophrenia” allowed for these two activities to be seen as separate, and for the first one, the theoretic, often to be seen as superior to the compositional one.

More consistent with his musical compositions is another of Busoni’s pronouncements on poetics, the open letter to Paul Bekker (1920) in which the composer clarifies what he means by a phrase coined by him and which enjoyed a certain popularity in German musical circles: “By ‘new classicism’ I mean the mastery, the examination and the exploitation of all the conquests achieved by experimentation and casting them in solid and beautiful forms.”⁵⁸ Here we come across a position quite different from that seen in the *Sketch*. If in that treatise Busoni was looking into the future, toward a development whose contours he leaves fairly vague, here in this letter the musician seems to be consciously presenting himself as a point of coalescence and synthesis for an entire preceding development. And perhaps here, notwithstanding the considerable originality of Busoni, one can discover an affinity against the diffuse stance of “return to order” that after the First World War led to the most diverse manifestations, from Neoclassicism to the new dodecaphonic order that Schoenberg was working out. But if Busoni was aspiring to “classicism,” we think that his strength, his validity, lies precisely in his not having reached it, in not having settled into an “Olympic calm” which, in a period of crisis, would have been misunderstood as comforting and false. A supreme example of Busoni’s problematic nature, symbol of the impossibility of a conciliatory solution, is *Doktor Faust*. As Sablich writes, “it would have been this opera’s task to establish the opera of the future, turning it into a vessel with a symbolic and universal message entrusted to generations to come. The ambitious plan ... faltered at the moment when music, by ‘expressing the inexpressible,’ should have closed and reconstituted the circle. The final section, rather than being fulfillment, became an immeasurable abyss. How to render in musical terms the final message of the opera, how to give back to a shattered and ruined musical language that universal identity and value that it had lost?”⁵⁹ Busoni did not succeed in finding a solution, the work remains unfinished and appears, in its present form, like a document of some unresolved conflict that transcends its composer and emerges as the paradigm of an entire age.

With all its many merits, Sablich’s book has one serious fault: No musical examples are given. The author explains his reasoning in the Preface: “The

⁵⁸ [*Ibid.*, 121.]

⁵⁹ [*Ibid.*, 248.]

perpetually knotty problem of musical examples has been resolved in a perhaps drastic way. Personally, I do not think that a phrase or two of music—or perhaps even a whole page—removed from its context, can be of much use in understanding a work. They can however aid to understand a specific linguistic, formal, stylistic, or instrumental problem; and in this sense I could have made use of them.”⁶⁰ I agree completely, and precisely because of this I regret the lack of musical examples, which I do not think, as the author fears, would have encumbered the handling of the material; instead, they would have helped in clarifying specific musical problems. I am convinced that one cannot write a monograph on a composer without resorting to analyses accompanied by musical examples. The danger lies in—and I must say that Sablich is wise to sidestep it—replacing a discourse (I do not say “objective,” but “verifiable”) on music with a perhaps brilliant, but inconsistent, critical language. If this is a characteristic of certain journalistic criticism (which cannot make use of real musical analysis), I think that precise references to the musical text are indispensable.

The appendix containing three pieces of writing on Busoni is interesting: In addition to the article by Pfitzner, “Futurist Danger” (which, above and beyond its conservatism, recognizes a few unsolvable problems in Busoni’s thought), there is an essay by Alfredo Casella, *Busoni the Pianist*, and a memoir by the writer Jakob Wassermann, *F. B. in memoriam*. Mention should be made of the excellent translations of the German texts, by Laura Dallapiccola and Sergio Sablich for Pfitzner’s article, and by Sablich for Wassermann’s piece.

And finally, extremely useful are the catalogue of works and the bibliography.

[Source: Book Review in *Musica/Realtà* 9 (1982), 189-92; Becheri 82-4.]

Thamar y Amnón

Reinbert Evers and I met at a music festival in 1981, he heard some music of mine and asked me to write a piece for him. I said yes, but years passed until I was able to fulfill my promise. At the end of February 1982 I was in Berlin and heard an opera after Federico Garcia Lorca, *Die wundersame Schusterfrau*, by Udo Zimmermann at the Staatsoper. A melody consisting only of three pitches with a vaguely Hispanic flavor impressed itself on me. Next evening, while I leafing through a volume of poetry by

⁶⁰ [*Ibid.*, 2-3.]

2. WILDHARREND / IN DER FURCHTBAREN RÜSTUNG / JAHRTAUSENDE

$\text{♩} = 50$
Sehr deutlich

Voce

Hier spricht E-lek-tra

Im Herzen der Fin-ster-nis

Unter der Son-ne der Fol-ter

An die Metropolen der

Pf.

Ped. ad libitum

$\text{♩} = 76$
ff

Welt im Na-men der O-pfer

Ich stoß-se al-len

Ja-men aus den

ich em-pfan-gen ha-be

[=] (sempre)

Ich neh-me die

Welt zu-rück, die ich ge-bo-ren ha-be

Ich er-stir-be die

Welt, die ich ge-bo-ren ha-be

$\text{♩} = 44$
p subito

zwei-chen mei-nen Schwan-zen

Ich ver-wand-le die

Milch mei-ner Brüs-te in

ed-d-li-ches Gift

Ped. sempre abbando

134090

Example II, 1: Ophelia-Fragmente, "Wildharrend," Beginning

Garcia Lorca at some friends' place, I encountered a poem I liked in particular. It deals with the love relations between Thamar and Amnón, Jews, gypsies, Andalusians, and siblings. When I returned home a few days later, I interrupted my work on a large piece for two pianos and orchestra to write *Thamar and Amnón*. The Hispanic melody represents the material of the piece, which is meant as an homage to an instrument and the music and poetry it represents. And, of course, it is also an homage to the art of interpretation of Reinbert Evers.

[Composed in 1982; typewritten program notes in German are undated.]

Ophelia-Fragmente

1. Das Europa der Frauen

2. Wildharrend / In der furchtbaren Rüstung / Jahrtausende

"The realistic artist does not avoid ugliness... But he does not stop there either. He overcomes ugliness in two respects: First, through the beauty of his representation (which has nothing to do with glossing over or palliation), and, secondly, by showing ugliness as a social phenomenon."

These sentences by Bertolt Brecht seem to me well-suited to explain my reasons for setting two fragments from the *Hamletmaschine* by Heiner Müller (whom I consider one of the most important writers of our time). For I think that only by facing reality (which, at the moment, is hopeless) with open eyes, by not covering it with a well-meaning aesthetic patina—only then can we hold on to what is most important, namely hope.

[Composed in 1982; the typescript of the program notes in German are dated 1982.]

Construction of Freedom: An Essay on Musical Topography

Widely recognized as a major statement of Lombardi's musical poetics, the essay was published in several languages in the 1980s and has often been cited as a manifesto of postmodern aesthetics. The artist discusses here the two approaches to composition—"exclusive" and "inclusive"—that have been characteristic of his work in general.

The current situation is characterized, in comparison with other epochs (including the most recent one), by an awareness of the plurality of materials and techniques and, more generally, by an awareness of different musical cultures. This awareness has grown with the invasion, within modern society,

of “subaltern” classes, who have brought along their own traditions and conceptions, and also with the entry—on a global scale—of other cultures into our field of vision; these cultures, in part, are thousands of years old and very significant, but, because of the centrality we have assigned to Western culture, were pushed to the periphery of history. A composer cannot ignore the changes without risking that his work loses its essentiality. To continue as if Europe (more precisely, the Europe of bourgeois culture) were the center of the world and Vienna or Darmstadt (or any other citadel) were the center of Europe would be not only arrogant but also ahistorical. There is no longer a center and, within the broadly diversified field of music, there is also no longer a favorite route. I have often been reminded in this context of the beautiful painting by Paul Klee, *Hauptweg und Nebenwege*, in Cologne: What seemed to be a secondary road, even though—perhaps exactly because—it did not lead to Rome, has often proven to be richer in perspectives than what had been declared the main road. (Being a Roman, I am of the opinion: The further away from Rome, the better!) The ghost of Ptolemy still roams, and sometimes it appears as if in music we have not accepted the Copernican revolution.

How to react to this new poly-centric situation? In observing the current situation of composition, we can distinguish two main tendencies, two principal attitudes, which I would like to call “inclusive” and “exclusive.”

By inclusive attitude I understand attempts by composers to take into account different musical realities, both within and outside their own cultural milieu. The results originating from such an attitude, of course, are quite varied; they differ from each other in the direction from which composers approach the problem, in general, as well as in the individual solutions devised by them for each work. Examples range from Stockhausen’s *Telemusik* and *Donnerstag aus LICHT* to Rzewski’s Piano Variations on *El pueblo unido* and Berio’s *Coro*. It is clear that these are vastly different pieces. I do not want to investigate individual works here, but would like to point to what I think is a questionable way of handling the problem, namely the tendency toward a fusion of different musical realities and cultures in the hope of creating some kind of “world music.” This fusion, I believe, is the expression of a conciliatory and compromising attitude, because it neutralizes the revolutionary potential, the expressive and representational force that can be reached through the montage of different musical dimensions. I remember how fascinated I was by the poetic idea of *Michaels Reise um die Welt* (Michael’s Journey Around the World) from the second act of *Donnerstag aus LICHT*, namely the idea of a voyage through different musical landscape, and how disappointed I was when I heard the piece and recognized that the differences disappeared in what was essentially a homogeneous amalgam. I

will return to the concept of montage later and focus instead on the “exclusive” compositional attitude.

In view of the overabundance of materials and techniques available to today’s composers as well as the heterogeneity of musical languages, one reaction can be to limit one’s field of action drastically. I remember Stravinsky’s statement that one can be really free as a composer only by limiting one’s field of action. Striving spontaneously for compositional freedom, however, is an illusion due to the lack of a universally accepted currency. I will return to the problem of spontaneity in today’s music later.

As is the case with the inclusive compositional attitude, limiting one’s field of action can occur in a variety of ways which, at times, can be completely contradictory. They can affect the musical results as well as the cognitive significance of individual pieces (since music is able, consciously and subconsciously, to develop a variety of possible interpretations of the world). Limitation or reduction is a characteristic, of course, particularly of minimal music. An exclusive attitude, however, can also be noticed with composers who are not only far removed from minimal music but who also are quite different from each other: In a very explicit fashion, for instance, in Nono’s piano work, including . . . *sofferte onde serene* as well as later pieces, in Boulez’s *Rituel*, and in the entire work of Morton Feldman and Salvatore Sciarrino. The motivations, whether conscious or subconscious, can vary significantly. But it is symptomatic (and worth reflecting upon) that this drastic reduction of material takes place at a time when, in comparison to earlier epochs, composers have at their disposal the greatest number of materials and techniques. In parentheses I would like to remark here (and this is another point that could be developed further) that the reduction of materials often goes hand in hand with the renunciation of a linear or narrative development, even of teleological development in general (which could be interpreted as a general tendency to overcome dialectic). What is significant is how such overcoming is accomplished, whether through the mechanically repetitive structure of minimal music (that is, in a regressive way) or by working out other forms of development—complex, non-linear structures, which, in turn, are to be understood not simply as a rejection but as a reaffirmation (in a philosophical sense) of traditional dialectic. I am, again, not going to discuss individual works here, but I would like to point out what I believe is an unproductive way of narrowing one’s field of action (which, potentially, can be quite productive), namely considering composition as a mechanism, whose operation is determined *a priori* and which in turn runs its

Next page: Example II, 2: *Wiederkehr*, Beginning (pp.-5-7)

A Giacomo Carlini
Wiederkehr
Luca Lombardi, 1971

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* Gli accordi sono limitati a due legare uno all'altro. I Ped. dove non è espressamente indicato, ad libitum. (I numeri sugli accordi indicano la durata in secondi.)

course automatically and predictably. This characteristic, which one encounters generally in minimal music, is emphasized as a positive quality by Sol LeWitt (one of the theoreticians of minimal art which preceded and influenced minimal music),⁶¹ because, he argues, it eliminates the arbitrariness of subjective intervention. What is represented as an advantage is unconvincing in philosophical terms: Subjectivity is not eliminated at all (since these are compositions by Philip Glass, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and others). Drastically reduced, however, is the composer's freedom to decide and to intervene because of self-inflicted incapacitation. Furthermore, unconvincing for me is also the focus on one parameter (at the expense of neglecting other musical aspects) in minimal music, the predictability generated by mechanical repetition and the lack of structural development, i.e., the imaginative and continuous development of initial material. The obsessive concentration on one single aspect of musical reality suggests a limited experience of reality, because music—I have said it before—is also a means of cognition, and the composer, by necessity, a witness of his time. Günter Mayer has expressed this notion in the title of his book: *Weltbild—Notenbild* (World View—Notation).⁶² Of course, the composer has the right to delineate the range of his experience; he has the right to limit himself to the little things which are worth noting. *Auch kleine Dinge können uns entzücken* (Even Small Things Can Delight Us) is the title of a song in Hugo Wolf's *Italian Songbook*. But they should not lead us to close our eyes to beauty and ugliness, to the contradictory richness of reality as a whole. Concentration on minutiae, I should clarify, does not need to exclude tackling larger contexts. Here I am always reminded of a wonderful image with which a film by Jean Luc Godard begins. What at first appears to be the evolutions and circumvolutions of galaxies reveals itself—as the camera zooms from close-up to long shot—as movements caused by the stirring of a spoon in a cup of coffee. I do not know a more compelling artistic representation of the insignificance of our planet Earth, which is so important to us, but also, vice versa, of the incredible richness latent in the smallest phenomena.

Returning to the issue of reduction of material in pieces written by composers tending toward the exclusive attitude, especially its minimalist variety, I have to say that I am least convinced by the one-dimensional approach to the problem of form. The issue of a coherent formal discourse—intelligible but unpredictable—is, in my opinion, a problem that often remains unsolved in today's music.

⁶¹ [Christoph von Blumenröder, „Formelkomposition-Minimal Music-Neue Einfachheit: Musikalische Konzeptionen der siebziger Jahre,“ *Neuland: Ansätze zur Musik der Gegenwart* II, ed. Herbert Henck (1981-82), 183-205, esp. 198.]

⁶² [Günter Mayer, *Weltbild-Notenbild: Zur Dialektik des musicalischen Materials* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978).]

Yet, despite my critical attitude outlined above, I have been drawn, again and again, to the exclusive manner of composition, perhaps because the idea of concentrating on a few initial materials from which all succeeding events are derived represents a genuine compositional challenge, and only challenge makes composition interesting and pleasurable

In my work of the last few years I have been occupied with problems pertaining to both exclusive and inclusive approaches. An exclusive attitude is evident for the first time in *Wiederkehr* (1971). [See Example II, 1] In this piece I use only fifteen chords. I was especially interested in a novel way of controlling harmony which, without resorting to a syntactical system of the past, would classify various chords, both dissonant and consonant, in a harmonic scale. *Wiederkehr* is a totally “constructed” work, but I tried to give the piece, through its “construction,” the appearance of compositional freedom. *Wiederkehr* utilizes, as stated before, fifteen chords of varying density (from two to eight tones) and varying degrees of harmonic tension (degrees of consonance and dissonance). Furthermore, there are four groups of chords, which, in contrast to the fifteen original chords, have always the same density (namely four tones); each group has the same harmonic characteristics: the first group consists of seconds, the second of thirds, the thirds of fourths, and the fourths of fifths. By combining the original heterogeneous chords with a group of homogeneous chords, I establish harmonic fields which, depending on which group I am using, consist of harmonic fields that are either determined by seconds, thirds, fourths, or fifths. The composition utilizes these four harmonic fields, each of which defines one section of the piece, which, in addition to harmony, is also differentiated through certain structural qualities. Since there is an introductory section in which the fifteen original chords are presented, the piece consists of five sections. The piece develops structurally as a series of anticipations and reminiscences of the four sections with their respective harmonic fields. The title *Wiederkehr* (Return) is ambivalent; it refers to the varied repeats of the fifteen original chords, the return of the four harmonic fields, and the return, within the individual sections, of the structural elements characteristic of those sections. But, in a more general sense, the title also refers to the return of certain consonances and chords which had been put under taboo by New Music. This is accomplished, however, not, as has been stated earlier, by resorting to a syntactical organizational scheme of the past, but by integrating all chords, whether consonant or dissonant, in a newly worked-out scale. I tried in this composition to achieve a synthesis of intuition and construction, of discipline and freedom. *Wiederkehr* is a purely musical piece—an enclave, so to speak, in years during which I was intensely occupied with the problem of linking music and politics. I still remember how I wrote the piece, against my better knowledge—with a bad conscience, so to speak—by following an

irrepressible compositional impulse/urge. In retrospect, I recognize that the issue of harmonic control, of harmony in post-avant-garde music, is connected to the problem of a new comprehensibility, and this is an eminently political issue which I tried to solve at that time also through a different path, namely by studying the theoretical writings and compositions of Hanns Eisler.

Other “exclusive” pieces of mine are *Variazioni su Avanti popolo alla ricossa* (1977) for piano (a version for orchestra originated in the same year), *Klavierduo* (1978-79) for two pianos, and *Framework* (1982-83) for two pianos and orchestra.

The above-mentioned interest in the issue of linking music and politics led me, by necessity (but also relatively late), to an inclusive manner of composition, namely the use of different materials and stylistic levels. This is exemplified in works such as *Prima sinfonia* (1974-75) for orchestra, *Tui-Gesänge* (1977) for soprano and five instruments, *Majakowski* (1979-80) for bass, mixed choir, and seven instruments, and *Mythenasche* (1981) for soprano, baritone, mixed choir, and fifteen instruments.

Earlier I mentioned that today’s musical situation justifies the recourse to an inclusive attitude in composition, itself reminiscent of physics as described by Werner Heisenberg: “In modern physics the world is no longer subdivided into different groups of objects, but into different groups of relations . . . What can be observed is the type of connection which is the principal cause for a certain phenomenon. . . . The world thus appears as a complex network of events where connections of different types alternate, overlap and combine, thereby determining the fabric of the whole.”⁶³ Transferring this perspective to music means to stress the relations between objects and materials rather than the individual objects and materials themselves. Something similar had been expressed by Eisler and Adorno already in the 1940s, when they wrote that the musical situation had reached such a degree of evolution that the compositional method was more important than individual materials—a method they called “planende Verfahrensweise” (designing procedure), which, in principle, can utilize any kind of material, even that which appears to be used-up. This statement really contradicts other aesthetic-musical theories of Adorno. And it is perhaps no accident that it appears in a book he co-authored

⁶³ [Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), 96. „In der modernen Physik teilt man die Welt nicht mehr in verschiedene Gruppen von Objekten ein, sondern in verschiedene Gruppen von Relationen. ... Was beobachtet werden kann, ist die Art der Konnektion, die für ein bestimmtes Phänomen hauptverantwortlich ist. ... Die Welt erscheint somit als ein kompliziertes Gewebe von Ereignissen, in welchen Konnektionen verschiedener Art abwechseln oder sich überlagern oder kombinieren und dadurch die Textur des Ganzen determinieren.“ Cited in Reinhard Febel, „Eine neue Philosophie der Musik,“ *Neuland: Ansätze zur Musik der Gegenwart II*, ed. Herbert Henck (1981-82), 93.]

with Eisler, namely a book about film music, since the principle implied by the procedure, namely the montage technique, is closely linked to film production.⁶⁴

When we speak of heterogeneous materials, we think of quotation, collage, and pastiche. But I am not interested in these, even though such techniques can be subsumed under “inclusive composition.”

One of the difficulties in using heterogeneous materials consists of avoiding the compositional arbitrariness and capriciousness induced by the availability of materials. The use of heterogeneous materials is not legitimate solely because the materials exist. It rather should be justified on the basis of a precise compositional program. And here I mean both intrinsically musical and extra-musical reasons, i.e., philosophical and societal motivations. Collage seems to me nothing but a simple acknowledgment of what exists, but forging this plurality into a unified whole is an expression of systematic and totalitarian thinking. But this kind of systematic approach, to the extent that it wants to force the manifoldness of reality into a cage, should be considered philosophically obsolete. By using montage techniques, on the other hand, it is possible not only to avoid neutralizing heterogeneous materials but also to increase their potential and to represent them as artistic means in a complex and open confrontation with reality.

As far as my own work is concerned, I did not write individual pieces on the basis of a preconceived theoretical position. Many things dawned on me only after the composition was finished, whereby I tried, initially perhaps, to continue developing empirically found solutions in both theoretical and practical terms. In this sense, my confrontation with the issue of inclusive composition was a logical result of my desire to make the act of composition go beyond music, to imbue it with philosophical and political purposes. A logical result was also that my turn to inclusive composition found its outlet, almost throughout, in compositions with text, since political motivation can be more clearly articulated there. The only instrumental piece is my *Prima sinfonia* dedicated to the Chilean people: In accordance with its program, I use in the symphony materials of folkloric origin (Chilean and Italian songs). It is curious that literary rather than musical models inspired me as composer of inclusive music. I would like to mention, for example, the literary technique of

⁶⁴ [Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1969), 117. „Trägt jedoch nicht alles, dann hat die Musik heute eine Phase erreicht, in der Material und Verfahrensweise auseinandertreten, und zwar in dem Sinn, dass das Material gegenüber der Verfahrensweise relativ gleichgültig wird. ... Die Kompositionsweise ist so konsequent geworden, dass sie nicht länger mehr die Konsequenz aus ihrem Material sein muss, sondern dass sie gleichsam jedes Material sich unterwerfen kann.“]

John Dos Passos in the *American Trilogy*; we encounter there the montage of a multiplicity of expressive codes, which can be transferred productively also to music (albeit not in a mechanical way).

My cantata *Majakowski* [see Examples II, 3a and 3b] is of particular significance in this context: The recourse to different stylistic layers represents here an extension of the stylistic characteristics of Mayakovsky's poetry. He was a multistylistic writer; language and poetic technique change with him in accordance with content and function of a particular poem. The extremes are marked by political slogan, on the one hand, and love poetry, on the other. The different styles find expression in Mayakovsky's work not so much in single poems but in different texts motivated by different occasions. In my cantata I have achieved a highly concentrated polystylism by a montage of fragments from various poems. Because of this concentration and the absence of mediation between the different stylistic layers, which also represent different expressive and emotional layers, pluristylism is emphasized even further. There are neither quotations nor collage in the cantata, but only the juxtaposition of different stylistic and expressive levels. In other words, style is used as a parameter. I introduce the term from the era of serialism, i.e.,

EXAMPLE II, 3a: *Majakowski*, 3. "Wolkenkratzer im Längsschnitt"

f *clativo*

Soprano: *HAHM EIN ST- GAW-TI-SHES HANS*
 Alto: *IN MEU- YORK*
 Tenor: *HAHM EIN ST- GAW-TI-SHES HANS*
 Bass: *IN MEU- YORK*

CL. *mf*
 TR. *mf*
 TRBN *f* (*acc. 4, 5, 6, 7*)
 PF. *f*
 PERC. *f*
 CB. *f*

f

Soprano: *HAHM EIN ST- GAW-TI-SHES HANS*
 Alto: *IN MEU- YORK*
 Tenor: *HAHM EIN ST- GAW-TI-SHES HANS*
 Bass: *IN MEU- YORK*

CL. *mf*
 TR. *mf*
 TRBN *f* (*acc. 4, 5, 6, 7*)
 PF. *f*
 PERC. *f*
 CB. *f*

parameter, not without purpose here, because it opens up particularly interesting possibilities, namely using the multiplicity of materials and techniques in the light of, or through the filter of, serial thinking. The exclusive approach to composition is constructivist by necessity, but the inclusive mode must be even more so, lest the composer succumb to arbitrariness and blind eclecticism. If it is necessary to organize reduced material, then it is even more necessary with a multiplicity of materials which, by their nature, develop centrifugally. In this regard, even tonality becomes useful again—not for composing *according to* tonality but *with* tonality.

A statement by Stockhausen is applicable here:⁶⁵

Tonality in terms of functional harmony and melody will always have some validity as a special case, as is the case with classical mechanics ... But the new task consists in establishing relationships between these simple oscillating proportions and all the various degrees of non-periodic phenomena ... Order and chaos are no longer irreconcilable opposites; rather, there is a continuum from one to the other, and one needs the other in an all-encompassing conception of form.

Example II, 3b: Majakowski, 9. “Letzter Brief”

⁶⁵ [Quoted in Blumenröder, *op. cit.*, 205, from Stockhausen, *Texte IV* (Cologne: DuMont, 1977), 551.]

Handwritten musical score for "Der alte Mann und die drei Weiber" by Carl Engel. The score is written on five staves. The first staff is for Soprano (Sop. Solo), the second for Alto (Alto), the third for Tenor (Ten.), the fourth for Bass (B.), and the fifth for Piano (P.). The music is in 4/4 time and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The title "Der alte Mann und die drei Weiber" is written in the center of the score.

Handwritten musical score for "Der Mond ist aufgegangen" by Franz Schubert. The score is written on five staves. The first staff is for the voice (Soprano), and the other four are for piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The lyrics are written below the voice staff. The tempo is marked "a tempo". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "f" and "mf".

Lyrics:
 Der Mond ist aufgegangen
 Die Vögel haben sich
 In den Auen schon
 In die Nacht geschü-
 telt
 Der Mond ist aufgegangen
 Die Vögel haben sich
 In den Auen schon
 In die Nacht geschü-
 telt

	mf	a Trope	(piece)
2480 rit.	2 24 steer-be		
CL.B			
TROld			
cB.		fzps, diminuto gradatamente	
Rc.			

Handwritten musical score for "Basic" by John Cage. The score is written on multiple staves. The first staff is labeled "Basic" and "John Cage". The second staff is labeled "CL. B.". The third staff is labeled "TRUMPET". The fourth staff is labeled "C.B.". The fifth staff is labeled "K.B.". The score includes various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as "p" (piano) and "pp" (pianissimo). There are also handwritten annotations in German, including "wacht sie - wach" and "das für sie - wach - wach". The score is dated "1960" and "1961".

Perhaps it has become clear that both attitudes to composition, the exclusive and the inclusive, which initially seemed irreconcilable, can be viewed as having common ground in terms of methodology: Both are based on a planned compositional procedure that, rather than relying on the idea of illusory spontaneity and freedom, strives to achieve spontaneity through rigorous construction.

To be sure, the range of contemporary composition is not sufficiently described by the compositional attitudes just mentioned. I would contradict my earlier-expressed skepticism toward systematic thinking, if I were to set about measuring today's musical reality with such a coarse grid. However, it seems to me that much of the significant music composed today can be derived, in a more or less mediated way, from either one of the two general approaches.

A further direction is what I would like to call neo-spontaneity. (This is perhaps a more appropriate term than neo-romanticism or new simplicity.) Here, I mean a compositional approach that tries to limit constructive urges to a minimum and relies on the subjective impulse as foundation. I hesitate to throw the first stone here, especially since some of my own pieces might be counted as representative of this approach (most recently, for example, *Einklang* and *Seconda sinfonia*, of 1980 and 1981, respectively), but I have become very skeptical about the possibility to continue productively on this path. What appears to be the result of intuition is in reality mostly a reproduction of conventional gestures of a more or less distant past. As painful as it may be, we cannot behave as if we are living in the era of Schubert; his spontaneity was possible only within an extremely formalized linguistic system that, as intersubjective language and convention, had become quasi second nature. An intersubjective musical language does not exist today, and to behave as if it does can lead to quoting (perhaps without realizing it) shreds of past grammars. In our situation the composer has no choice but to construct spontaneity and freedom by himself, each time anew.

The freedom I have been talking about is a compositional freedom. But it may have become obvious also that, for me, the problems of music cannot be viewed apart from the problems of the world in which we live. *Weltbild* and *Notenbild*—world view and notation—to cite Günter Mayer's formulation again, are tightly intertwined (albeit not in a mechanical fashion). This means that, in a highly mediated way, our musical decisions as well as the terms we use have a relationship to extramusical reality and allow others to draw conclusions about our understanding of the world. The freedom that I pursue in music interests me even more in the social reality. In music I can proceed as creator and construct my own freedom. My abilities of intervention are

drastically reduced in everyday life. But this cannot function as an alibi for averting oneself from the contradictions of reality and turn music into a harmless, cozy, and selfcontained ersatz reality. Here is the reason: What is the point of making music, if we cannot contribute with music, however insignificantly, toward the larger goal of breaking through isolation and furthering greater solidarity among human beings?

Postscript: Shortly after completing the first version of this text in July 1982, I read the second volume of the yearbook *Neuland*, edited by Herbert Henck (published in May of 1982 by Neuland Musikverlag). Several of the articles in this volume deal with issues which are similar to my own reflections. I am indebted to the essays by Reinhard Febel, Christoph von Blumenröder, and Albrecht Riethmüller as well as the conversation between Karlheinz Stockhausen and Rudolf Frisius. LL, December 1983.

[Source: Luca Lombardi, “Konstruktion der Freiheit: Versuch einer musikalischen Topographie,” in *Europäische Gegenwartsmusik: Einflüsse und Wandlungen*, ed. Elisabeth Haselauer and Karl-Josef Müller (Mainz: Schott, 1984), 61-67; Becheri 83-1. An English version of the article translated from the Italian by Franco Betti (“Construction of Freedom”) appeared in *Perspectives of New Music*, Fall/Winter 1983; Spring/Summer 1984, 253-64; the version differs from the German text in some details. Betti’s translation has occasionally influenced the translation published here. The musical examples from *Wiederkehr* and *Majakowski*—the former is included in the *Perspectives* article but not in the German version—have been added here to illustrate points of the discussion.]

Sei bagatelle di fine estate

Sei bagatelle di fine estate (Six late summer bagatelles) originated in 1983. “Atropos”, the title of the first piece, is one of the Fates—the one who severs the thread of life. Goya devoted a painting to this image. As far as I remember, I wanted to compose a series of pieces after Goya’s paintings—a project which I ultimately did not pursue. But the word “disparate”, which in Spanish means something peculiar and which I used for pieces 3, 4, and 5, is also a title that can be linked to Goya.

In all these pieces I use a scale consisting of minor seconds and minor thirds; it is a scale I have often used since then, horizontally and vertically, in pieces of a very different nature.

Ten years later, I composed—just recently—again a series of bagatelles (for piano four hands). Freely paraphrasing Liszt, I called them *Bagatelles sans et avec tonalité*. In

late summer bagatelles, something tonal lurks now and then as well. But who is interested in what language a piece of music uses? Today, more than ever, this is a non-issue. At a time of a new Babel-like confusion of languages, no language is privileged. One can misunderstand one other in many languages.

[Composed in 1983; the program notes in German are dated 1993.]

La notte di San Silvestro (1983-84): Ouverture für Orchester

In the early 1980s I met Giuseppe Sinopoli several times. We saw each other in Venice (I remember an excellent pasta, prepared by him, with a sauce into which he had mixed a little bit of orange juice), in Berlin, and elsewhere.

For Berlin we had conceived the project of a composition which he was to have conducted with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Subsequently, I wrote at the turn of the year 1983-84 a piece which I dedicated to him: *La Notte di San Silvestro (1983-84). Ouverture für Orchester*. The dedication is contained in the music itself. The work begins with tones I derived from his name, GiuSEppE, to which I added pitches derived from my own name: luCA lomBArDi. It became the basic material I used for the entire composition.

But for several reasons—especially because Peter Girth, director of the Berlin Philharmonic at the time, left his position—the projected performance never materialized, and the piece ended up in a drawer, where, in turn, it was forgotten.

Many years passed and much happened, in our private lives and in politics. I still continued to follow the career of Giuseppe Sinopoli with interest and admiration, but our encounters became less frequent. I hoped, however, that some day we could have picked up our interrupted dialogue. I always thought that we had a firm basis for such continuation, since we were both anchored in the culture of German-speaking countries.

Unfortunately, like an oak tree felled by lightning, Giuseppe was cut down in the midst of his daily activities and taken away from his family and from all of us. It is an irretrievable loss over which I mourn profoundly.

In the days after his death I thought again of the forgotten and never-performed piece and retrieved it. I would like to give it, as an homage for an important colleague, to his wife Silvia and his sons Giovanni and Marco.

[Composed in 1983-84; the program notes in German were written in June 2001 for a performance by the Dresdener Staatskapelle conducted by Fabio Luisi, the orchestra whose principal conductor Sinopoli had been until his untimely death in 2001.]

Mirum

For a second time I have succumbed to the seductive lure of a trombone quartet. The first time was in 1969 when I was studying with Bernd Alois Zimmermann in Cologne. Zimmermann coaxed me into writing a trombone piece, I was glad to accept his advice and, in turn, wrote *Proporzioni* for four trombones which, a few months later, was performed by Vinko Globokar and his students.

Quite often I think of Bernd Alois Zimmermann and his early tragic death. Is it perhaps because of remembering him that my second trombone quartet is a reflection of death? I do not know—I am really making this connection only now while writing these lines. Granted, I have picked up the topic of life and death in my compositions several times during the last few years (for instance, in the Ungaretti fragments *E subito riprende il viaggio*, in the cantata *Majakovski*, and in the *Ophelia Fragments* after Heiner Müller); at the moment I am working on a secular (and Italian) *Requiem* that reflects personal and public experiences.

Let's briefly focus on *Mirum*. It consists of four different situations that, transformed, occur three times. In other words, there is no linear or teleological structure (and certainly no theological discourse taking place, even though I have been inspired by a few verses from the Christian Mass for the Deceased); rather, the form is like a spiral in which the same elements reappear on different levels. *Wiederkehr* (Return) is the title of an old piece of mine: Everything returns, but always transformed; nothing is repeated literally. Isn't this the principle of life and death?

I dedicate *Mirum* to Goffredo Petrassi on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

[Composed in 1984; the program notes in German are undated.]

Schattenspiel

Schattenspiel is a short piece for bass flute, which I wrote in 1984. The title refers to the dark, fleeting character of the composition achieved in two ways: through the dark timbre of the bass flute and through the sketch-like, laconic, non-corporeal diction of the musical language. Shadows refer to real objects whose contours they cast. They are

not real, but illusions. But isn't music, by and large, an illusion (imagination, chimera, vision, utopia)?

[Composed in 1984; the program notes in German are dated September 1993.]

An Italian Requiem: Two Letters

In 1984 Lombardi conceived the idea of writing an Italian Requiem and turned to Edoardo Sanguineti for advice. The correspondence between the renowned poet and Lombardi is evidence of the spiritual kinship of the two artists who were to collaborate on several projects in the next two decades. While the structural idea of the Requiem, as envisioned in Lombardi's letters to Sanguineti, underwent changes in the process of composing the work, the vision sketched here resonates with issues the composer addresses in several other compositions, most notably E subito riprende il viaggio (1979-80), Terza sinfonia (1994) and Vanitas? (1999). Nel tuo porto quiete: Un Requiem italiano, completed in 1985, has not been performed thus far.

16.V.1984

Dear Edoardo Sanguineti:

I would like to turn to you for some advice. The orchestra of RAI in Rome has asked me for a composition for soloists, chorus, and orchestra to be performed on April 20, 1985. I recently began working on a piece that I need to finish by the end of the year at the latest. My idea—still somewhat vague—involves a Requiem—a non-religious and secular Requiem, a reflection on life and death. I like to set several fragments of poets—few but dense verses that leave space for music—from Leopardi and Foscolo, via Gramsci and Pasolini, to our own days. I have not yet selected the poetry to be set, nor am I clear about the general dramaturgy. In addition, I ask myself whether it would not be possible to link the idea of an Italian Requiem (!) with another idea: I recently read several books about the origin of life and of the universe. It is always breathtaking to become aware of the infinite smallness of the earth and the precariousness of (human) life. The idea—and this one is very vague as well—involves a telescope which, from very far away, almost embraces the whole universe. From this perspective, obviously, not a hint of the earth can be seen. The telescope closes in gradually (and quickly) until it focuses on our galaxy, our solar system, the earth, a part of the earth, a city, a part of a city, a house, a room... At this moment the “story” begins that is the core of the piece and which, for that reason, appears to be the most important thing in the

world, until the telescope starts to reverse the voyage, making what had appeared so important—and, from the perspective, of the occupants of the planet really is—disappear in the depth and the silence of space.

I do not know whether it is possible, especially in a concert piece, to realize the combination of these two ideas in a satisfactory way. What I know is that I would not be able to do it. That's why I write to you and ask you whether you would assist me. I do not know anyone better than you to help out. In the hope to receive a response from you, I send you cordial greetings,

[Luca Lombardi]

Sanguineti responds with a short note on May 24, in which he expresses his delight in aiding the composer and proposes a few solutions for structuring the narrative of the Requiem-to-be.

5.VI.1984

Dear Edoardo Sanguineti:

I am glad that you are willing to help me! That gives me a boost of energy!

And I also like your proposal very much (you immediately grasped my idea and made it more precise): a materialistic mass, its narrative from Vico to Gramsci (and back).

I would be very grateful to you, if we could discuss this matter by letter so that I can have a general idea of the structure of the piece before working concretely working on it. (Otherwise, I fear, I might not be able to finish the piece on time.)

I would like to decide in particular how many and which instrumental contributions are needed. I have some ideas about them, but I do not want them to remain abstract or incompatible with the whole, considering that the general structure is not yet entirely clear to me.

As far as the general structure is concerned, I would like it to be articulated according to a mechanism of anticipation and return—like a spiral in its progression—so that individual elements come back, varied and on another level. In a piece in which Vico would be an important axis (if not the main axis), I think this kind of structure would make sense. It is not only a structure that interests me very much from a musical perspective; I have used such a

structure already in an old piano piece of mine which, not by accident, is called *Wiederkehr*.

As far as the “inserts” are concerned (brief quotations of Italian poets with similar philosophical dispositions), and Foscolo and Leopardi in particular, I would like to include, from the former, at least the first quatrain of the sonnet *In morte del fratello Giovanni* (On the death of my brother Giovanni). I do not want to dwell on private matters, but it is perhaps good for you to know—and also to explain to you better the different and varied reasons that make me attempt to write a Requiem—that I had a sister, Giovanna, who decided a year ago, at age thirty-five, that life was no longer worth living.

The passionate interest of Foscolo in the political events of his time and his disappointment in view of the defeat of the French Revolution—couldn’t it be viewed, on the other hand, from the perspective of an individual who experienced the hopes and disappointments of the most recent past? Disappointments which, if they did not bend us (some have), have certainly rendered us more disenchanted?

Individual history and world history (Vico, again!): Do you think that it would be possible to connect these two aspects in the Requiem?

At this time I am, in an unsystematic way, making notes in readings that I happen to be doing these days on those passages that might have some connection to the piece. Thus, I found recently a note (I don’t know where) about the polarity “Welt-Erde” in Bruckner (who, so it happens, is just being played on the radio—Rome is broadcasting his Eighth Symphony). Will that be useful for me? And speaking of Bruckner, I would like to assign one of the instrumental movements just to the brass section.

Thinking of Leopardi, on the other hand, I would like to say that some time ago I set a poem by him to music (indeed, *the* poem—nothing less than *L’Infinito*)—I know it is a foolhardy undertaking, but I had been asked to set it for a film about Leopardi, and I could not resist the temptation. The music (for six voices and six instruments) has never been played in a concert, perhaps also because the setting consists of a few fragments. I looked at it again, found them not useless, and thought that I would use a few minutes of it, if you think that it can be convincingly integrated into the piece.

There is a problem that could emerge, and I would like to bring it up with you: the problem of length. RAI wants the piece to be thirty minutes, but it is likely that the piece will be longer than that—unless the limited time I have available comes to my aid. On the other hand, the topic and the materials we are

considering would justify a longer duration of the piece, perhaps twice as long. At this point I do not know whether it is advisable to contemplate two versions from the start: a small one to be performed in April next year and a larger one to be reserved for another occasion. What do you think? Perhaps if one imagines a modular structure, formed by various blocks which follow each other according to a principle of montage of different things (but also, as I said, of “returns” that are varied), the plan is not impossible. I would be curious to learn of your opinion.

For the time being, thanks and cordial greetings

From your Luca Lombardi

[Source: Copies of typewritten letters in the library of the composer.]

Between the Anvil of the Conservatories and the Hammer of the Musical Marketplace: On a Few Further Difficulties in Making and Teaching Music Today

Musica/Realtà, the new music journal which Lombardi helped to get launched around 1980, was, from the outset, also a platform to discuss the state of music and music education in Italy.

Number 10 of *Musica/Realtà* has published some remarks of Giacomo Manzoni with the title “Su alcune difficoltà dell’insegnare composizione oggi” (On a Few Difficulties in Teaching Composition Today). With clarity Manzoni identifies what, to many teachers and to not just a few students, appears to be contradictions in the teaching of composition in our conservatories. Manzoni’s observations can be divided into four parts which I outline here:

- 1) the musical and cultural level of the teachers twenty years ago and today (today it has improved);
- 2) the great increase seen in the production of music, which is not, however, accompanied by a sufficient growth in the opportunities for performance of new compositions;
- 3) the motivations (often weak) driving many young (as well as many not so young) composers to write music, or being content with acquiring a “trade” that allows them to turn out well made goods, but actually devoid of real motivations;
- 4) the discomfort and the moral responsibility of the teacher confronted by this state of affairs.

Manzoni states that he has no solution to propose, nor do I believe that there exists a solution that should not involve a discussion, along with the teaching of composition, of the very structure of our conservatories and, in more general terms, the place of the musician in society. If in fact we ask ourselves why so much music is being produced in comparison with a few decades ago, we must also ask ourselves why it is so little performed. (Our concert venues, for a long time so few, not long ago seemed to be on the increase—but already there are signs of a regressive tendency.) Here come into play many diverse factors: the predominant taste, laziness, trends, and misinformation. All this contributes to a connotation of the “musical marketplace.” But is it correct to speak of the marketplace in the case of contemporary music? One of the knots in the problem seems to consist in people behaving as if there existed a true and proper market for products that do not have a market, or only have one in a very restricted way with respect to other products—including musical products—if one thinks of the billions that whirl around the popular songs of mass consumption or around rock music (Michael Jackson has sold—so they say—more than 25 million records, a record even for this kind of music; this news will probably induce another 100,000 people to buy his records). But here one must be straightforward and clear the terrain of an ambiguity: Whoever decides to become a composer, that is, one who *thinks* with music, has to be conscious of doing work that society considers a luxury. He must therefore bear in mind that he will be able to reach only those who want to be reached. This is hard in a society in which money is more and more the measure of everything. Of course this does not mean that a piece of music cannot be profitable (this is one additional thing that may or may not happen), but this consideration by no means should shape the work of the composer. Those aspiring to monetary gains have a vast array of trades they can enter. For, to choose to be a composer or poet or philosopher (professions that are anyhow not interchangeable) means to choose vocations, undertakings to which one is “called” and which one is “compelled”⁶⁶ to do, whether or not they bring success or economic gratification. We all know exceptions, but we also know that a few great composers of our century (not to go further back in time) show the inversely proportionate relationship between great music and popularity. It suffices to flip through the pages of concert programs or radio listings (not to speak of television) to get a picture of the rarity of composers like Schoenberg. How many of his fifty compositions are regularly performed? How many of Webern’s thirty? Of Varèse’s fifteen? And I am mentioning only three of the greatest composers of this century. Someone could mention the opposite example of Stravinsky in confirmation of the fact

⁶⁶ „Tell me, recruit, are you the famous composer they’re talking about so much?” Then Schoenberg answered, „Well, yes, colonel sir.” And then he explained: „The fact is, somebody had to be one, but since nobody wanted to, I thought I’d volunteer.” [Reported in Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), 175-76.]

that whoever is not beloved by the public (which is always right) is musically on the wrong track. Absurdities of this sort have been formulated by part of a few young composers (in the wake of so many old composers), who pointed out as a panacea a greater degree of “likeability” in music, which would automatically be followed by a greater popularity. I believe that from a distance of only a couple of years these colleagues must frankly admit that their diagnosis was wrong. Since even admitting that there is success in reaching a few thousand more listeners, it is not by these figures that one gauges the “popularity” of contemporary music, which instead—see above—is measured in hundreds of thousands and millions of people. If someone aspires to this kind of diffusion, he must turn to an alternative way of making music, attempting to manufacture goods useful for other and more facile tastes, and not confuse things that seem to have a commonality only because one usually defines with the same term things that are not actually comparable. It is as though somebody were to criticize this review because it does not have the same number of readers as *Playboy* and advised the insertion of some illustrations, perhaps pornographic, to make it appealing to a wider public. This does not mean that it is impossible to increase the readership of a musicological review, but it is obvious that if one wished to have the kind of popularity of *Playboy* magazine one should change camp. And this does not mean postulating an elite character of contemporary music or “serious” music in general. This attitude, insofar as it would like to equate the value of a given kind of music with its popularity, is wrong as well.⁶⁷

Many of the discussions regarding the production and reproduction of music are tied to the matter of the place of contemporary music within a society based on the market economy. And the same is true of the problem of the teaching of composition. But before addressing the discussion of the conservatories, which is the real reason for this article, it seems necessary to touch upon another point, forever linked to the problem of the marketplace. I refer to the role of publishing. It is a thing well known that the publishing of contemporary music, generally speaking, is operating at a loss. By schematizing to a great extent one can say that this loss is, by and large, compensated either by the proceeds from music of the past or from other productive branches of the publisher, such as musical instruments or light music (discs and cassettes). Incidentally, I would like to call attention to the paradox that the composer who, because of *forma mentis* and cultural choice is

⁶⁷ I recall that a radio composition of mine created in 1972 for the Westdeutscher Rundfunk of Cologne was called „New music: for whom, why, how.” In it I criticized an elitist conception of an avant-garde interested *only* in questions immanently musical and vice-versa, fundamentally disinterested in confronting problems less sectarian that could involve a different and wider audience. But just as there are different kinds of music, there are also different kinds of audiences. To propose the indiscriminate diffusion of contemporary music, without considering to whom it is really destined and what kind of reception it is likely to get, is senseless.

opposed to commercial music, in many cases depends on it. In fact, if a crisis befalls the “light” market, the repercussions are felt as well in the production of contemporary music, because the publisher will have fewer funds to invest in an activity that generally produces a loss. The “non-commercial” composer should therefore hope that the abhorred commercial music enjoys good health so he can take advantage of its dropped crumbs. A truly diabolical machinery! One needs to give credit to many publishers whose economic base is furnished by more remunerative branches and who, by also printing serious music, make a cultural choice. But in times of crisis the cultural imperative weakens and the commercial-capitalistic nature of the firm comes to the fore. Are we living, or are we not, in an economy of the market? And so, if music sells, it has the right to be published; if not, it does not have the right. It is naïve to think that it is the quality or the truth-content (to agree with Schoenberg) of a piece of music that confers this right upon it—what counts in the final analysis is not the sound, but its capacity to transform into resounding money. As always there are, of course, exceptions, and so there do exist enlightened publishers who support a particular composer because they are convinced of his objective value, and who perhaps are recompensed years or decades later.⁶⁸

Turning now to our situation today in Italy, we must recognize that we are in a period of crisis. The market of light music is misfiring (with the repercussions mentioned above) and the small market of contemporary music is shrinking; besides, the costs of production grow higher and higher. It is therefore easy to see that just when more and more new composers are knocking at the doors of the publishing houses, these doors remain closed or, after their opening in recent years, are closing once more. In recent years there had been a remarkable opening up for new composers. In a country like ours, which seems unfortunately given over to superficiality and a spirit of getting by with things as they are, after a period in which little or nothing has been done regarding contemporary music, we have seen recently a veritable hunt for young composers to perform and publish. But I am afraid it was just a flash in the pan, and now so many youthful composers are forced to deal with a reality which, if it has not (yet) returned to previous levels, is still far from rosy. Certainly, those who have misled young people regarding the prospects of the demanding profession of composition must share some of the responsibility. A

⁶⁸ A negative example of the subordination of musical culture to the exigencies of commercialism may be seen in the greatest capitalistic country in the world, whose positive and negative qualities—in general negative—are being more and more frequently taken as models by those who do not hesitate to sell out the best European cultural traditions in the name of pragmatism, of efficiency, but above all, precisely, of capitalism. I am referring to the situation of modern and contemporary music publishing in the USA. I do not speak of strictly contemporary music, but of the „classics” of American music. I happened to find in a library an unpublished work of Carl Ruggles, who in his life wrote no more than eight compositions; and the publication of the *Fourth Symphony* of Ives, to mention a twentieth-century masterpiece, shoddy as it is, is an absolute shame.

musical register recently published shows that there are fully 350 composers in Italy! What stance can one take in the face of such a figure? It is in itself undeniably positive because it is indicative of widespread creativity. It is not, however, a case of that hypothetical state of affairs imagined by Marx, in which “there exist no painters, but rather, individuals who, among other things, paint,”⁶⁹ either because the activity of composer is specified as a profession, or because the context in which this blossoming of composers occurs is essentially different from that prefigured by Marx.

If one compares the number of composers with that of published and performed scores, one cannot help but take note of a glaring disparity. One could object that probably the majority of what is written does not deserve to be disseminated. It is highly possible even though it would have to be demonstrated. But one could also just as legitimately, and by way of hypothesis, declare the opposite: that much of what is published and performed is not worth the effort, while a small or large part of “subterranean” activity might be worth bringing to light. On this point it would be necessary to open a discussion—which we are not about to do here—on the criteria for making such judgment, a discussion of the esthetic consensus that may or may not take shape around individual artists and/or poetics.

Insofar as regards the undeniably high number of composers that seem to exist in our country, a composer can only rejoice at having so many colleagues (and he should not behave like the country doctor of old who, greeted by the veterinarian come to help with the birthing of a calf, with a hearty “Dear colleague!,” gave him a shove down the stairs). He should be glad because it means he is not alone in being concerned with things that have a strange and esoteric aura for most people. (As everybody knows, the degree of strangeness is inversely proportional to the number of persons who share any given activities or beliefs. If there were only one person who believed that there exists a good god that provides for the governance—in truth, a little chaotic—of this world of ours, there is no doubt he would be taken for a madman.

⁶⁹ „The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression among the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labor. If, even in certain social conditions, everyone were an excellent painter, that would not at all exclude the possibility of each of them being also an original painter, so that here too the difference between ‘human’ and ‘unique’ labor amounts to sheer nonsense. In any case, with a communist organization of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which arises entirely from division of labor, and also the subordination of the artist to some definite art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his activity adequately expressing the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labor. In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting among other activities.” [Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, cited from Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 206.]

Since, instead, there are millions that share this belief, it is the others that are looked upon with suspicion...)

So, if the composer can rejoice, how should the publisher feel? It seems he is considerably less glad. Mercantile logic drives the publishers—all the more today, in a time of crisis—towards a downsizing of their publishing policy, not only in the direction of publishing even less than they did in the past, but also publishing “worse” than before. At a time when the mutual interests between artist and publisher are deteriorating, there emerges more patently a problem that is not at all new, that is, to put it in brutal terms, the excessive exploitation of the composers’ intellectual work on the part of publishers.

It is true very few scores get sold—this has always been the case—but today circumstances have gotten worse because it is cheaper to photocopy a score than one can borrow from the library. To prohibit photocopying (as well as prohibit the making of audio copies) accomplishes nothing. If the development of technology makes it possible to procure scores and audio copies at a lower price, the industry will have to adapt by finding a way to offer products at a yet lower price. Citing Marx again, one could speak of a contradiction between productive forces and ratios of production. In the meantime, while waiting for a solution, which for the music publishing field might come about with the use of the computer, a few publishers choose another path: They print fewer scores, they reproduce the composer’s manuscript, they substitute the press with heliography or even photocopy. In other words, they cut out the “services” to the artist. They do not, however, cut out their percentage of author’s royalties (*nota bene*: the author’s) that they retain on every piece performed, which can be from 50% to 75%! At this point one could wonder if there might be a discussion—not by us, but by the times—of the role of the traditional publisher. One could also wonder if we might feasibly have a composers’ publishing house (such as exist in Germany for playwrights).

In reality there already do exist composers’ publications, for example Stockhausen-Verlag. As often happens, Stockhausen is in the vanguard, even if the realization of certain good ideas is not always commensurate with what a sufficient consciousness of the times might oblige. In the knowledge of the advantages (exclusively economic), which, in his case, means continuing to be published by a house as important as Universal Edition and deciding to publish his own works by himself, Stockhausen has not abolished the role of publisher, but has assumed it for himself. In other words, he has not put up for discussion the role of publisher, but by becoming one himself, he has exalted it, realizing the dream of every publisher: to pocket maximum profits. So, Stockhausen has not contested the mercantile-capitalistic role of the publisher, but has managed himself to become the beneficiary of the gains promised in

our age to entrepreneurs. It is not by chance—and this is a counterproof—that Stockhausen publishes only his own works and not of course those of other composers, young or little known ones (as does for example, with limited means, a composer who lives in the Californian desert, Ken Gaburo). He does not even publish (as far as one knows) the prize-winning works of the competition named for him. Thus, if he is aware of a real contradiction in the relationship between producer and market, he deals with it not by proposing new solutions—or, in our present context “utopian”—but in the old way, accepting the mechanisms well rooted in our society.

Perhaps it is utopian to hypothesize here and now a different mechanism, but I believe that the problem should be brought up nonetheless. Undoubtedly it would be a great conquest, and not only from an economic point of view. By addressing the issue, composers could confront the restraining role that many (not all) publishers exert in seeking to favor products functional to the market. It would be interesting, in order to have a confirmation, to quantify the influence exercised by the German publishing industry upon the development of that tendency that has become known as “the new simplicity” (return to the traditional orchestra, use of a more accessible musical language, etc.). It is an influence that it seems must not be overlooked.

However, this problem too, like all the others I have alluded to, cannot be confronted without taking into account a more general reflection upon the meaning and role of making music today. And so, I go back to the remarks made by Manzoni and to the matter of the meaning and role of the teaching of composition in the conservatories.

The rise in the number of students of composition, many of whom are today so-called militant composers, has clearly been a consequence of the adoption of the course *Nuova didattica della composizione* (NDC or New Didactics of Composition). This course, which runs in tandem with the traditional one, has brought a breath of oxygen to the asphyxiant atmosphere of our conservatories. At a distance now of a few years one can, however, note how the inertia, laziness, and superficiality with which the problems plaguing our country are so often confronted (the example is set by our government, in our case specifically the ministry of public education) has seen to it that this course—which was supposed to be an experimental course, to be monitored in its evolution, to be corrected as it went along so as to give a final form in the context of music education reform, and in turn to launch it into a context of secondary education reform—has been allowed to go to rack and ruin, so much so that today it remains in only four or five out of sixty (!) Italian conservatories and is subjected to a creeping attack by those who adhere to the old ways and by their mouthpiece, the ministry. If it were not for the

mobilization of a few teachers, especially from Rome and Milan, there would probably already be set in motion the process to liquidate the NDC course, or its assimilation into the traditional course. On the other hand, the tendency toward restoration is present in all camps today; the divisions appearing in past weeks in the once-solid union cannot help but increase the pessimism of those who see crumbling away the advancements of a cultural movement which is now considered more and more a fleeting one. It is thus almost “logical” that its restoration is manifesting itself in an institution that has never shone for its progressiveness—the Italian conservatory! On the backs of a haggard platoon of composer-teachers convinced of the necessity of rejuvenating programs and of adopting new teaching methods, there falls the difficult task of carrying on a battle which is certainly not a corporative battle, but is linked to the necessity of making Italian musical culture more modern. To fight just for the preservation of the NDC course would be, however, oversimplifying matters, since what there is need for, and I must drive the point home, is an all-inclusive reflection upon the role and function of the composer and those who prepare him professionally. Such thought and reflection will have to lead also to a modification (certainly not an abolition) of the NDC course, since I believe that one can agree on the fact that if the traditional course is, objectively speaking, obsolete, the NDC is certainly not the best of courses.

So as not to restrict myself to the limits of pure affirmation of principle, I would like to list—albeit in a detached way and *pars pro toto*—at least a couple of things that in my opinion should be put forth for discussion, beginning with its duration: I find it excessive that the composition program takes nine years (the traditional one, ten), which, added to the three years of theory and solfège, make twelve years. What there is to learn (and which a teacher can transmit) can comfortably be learned in five years. Harmony and the rudiments of counterpoint should be part of a preparatory course that could be integrated into, or better, replace the theory and solfège course, which is for the most part useless. I would go further: Many of the absurdities of the composition program, such as its adherence to norms (and in this sense the NDC course is only slightly different from the traditional one) would fall away by removing importance—even from the legal standpoint—from the diploma. Only those who in the future want to teach music (at the various levels, in the “normal” schools or in the conservatories) will have to take a strict and precise scholastic program, with as many intermediate and final exams, in musical pedagogy as well, as necessary to show their knowledge of the material and their preparation to teach it. But whoever wishes to be a composer should be able to take a certain number of courses and personally “compose” his plan of study, without the obligation of concluding them with a diploma. What sense is there, after all, in granting a diploma to a composer?

The only certificate that can attest to the professional nature of a composer are his compositions. That he is capable of writing a fugue or of composing a piece in a given style may be important for his personal musical development, but is entirely irrelevant to the objectives of achieving the validity of what he composes. Among the materials of his plan of study, electronic music and computer music should not be missing. Not for nothing is the teaching of electronic music under attack by those who would like to make the conservatory once more a place detached from the living practice of music.

In the case of electronic music, the discussion of the NDC should also be considered. The primary objective is certainly its retention, without losing sight of the possibility of modification and improvement. Today this course is separated from the study of composition, which is illogical. It is indeed possible to obtain the electronic music diploma (another useless diploma) without an elementary knowledge of compositional principles. Conversely it is possible to get a diploma in composition without having an idea of the possibilities offered by the past thirty years of research in electro-acoustic music.

A modification of the composition program should also foresee, however, the establishment of a serious course in general musical culture which instrumentalists who feel the need for such a course can take—instrumentalists who now in its absence register in the NDC.

We cannot, nor do we wish to, put off the solution of our particular, sectarian problems to deep and revolutionary reforms of structure (we may have still had this illusion seven or eight years ago), but neither can we resign ourselves to living day by day, without trying to include the contingent problems of those who make music and teach the making of music in a wider cultural plan.

Recently I read an article on the conservatories written by Gianfrancesco Malipiero, more than sixty years ago, in which *mutatis mutandis* (things have not always changed that should have changed) he complains about things we are still complaining about today—which, we have to admit, is not very encouraging. Malipiero responds to an objection that could be made concerning these thoughts of mine, namely that, nevertheless, musicians of the first order have come out of the conservatories! “That is true,” answers Malipiero, “but their achievement is due to their strength of resistance to any form of musical infection, or to the development that their genius was able to make *after* their emancipation from school... Reform of the conservatories, rather than create great musicians, is necessary for refining the general taste, because the school could become a radiant center of diffusion, capable of

purifying our entire musical organism.”⁷⁰ What will our grandchildren be saying about our conservatories in sixty years? In large part, it depends on us!

[Source: “Tra l’incudine dei Conservatori e il Martello del mercato musicale: su alcune ulteriori difficoltà del fare e insegnare musica oggi,” *Musica/Realtà* V, 14 (August 1984), 189-97; Becheri 84-4.]

Zimmermann Remembered (by Looking Ahead)

At the end of the 1960s Lombardi crossed the Alps to take residence in Cologne, Germany. By accident rather than design he became a composition student of both Stockhausen and Zimmermann and thereby a witness of the rivalries and cliquishness that were characteristic of one of the centers of the European avant-garde.

I feel that Bernd Alois Zimmermann is more important for me now and that I could learn from him more today than when I was his student.

I met Zimmermann by accident, because at the time I studied with him I was especially interested in Stockhausen. After a performance of *Hymnen* in Rome, I contacted Stockhausen and decided to travel to Cologne, where, for three months, he held a composition workshop, the Cologne Courses for New Music, at the Rheinische Musikschule. I applied for a stipend of the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), which was awarded for an entire year; for that reason I had to enroll for a whole year at the Cologne Musikhochschule. But I did not know with whom I should study there. One evening during a party with German friends in Rome I talked with Franco Evangelisti about my plan to go to Cologne. “By all means,” he said, “you should study with Bernd Alois Zimmermann.” I had not heard the name then, but accepted the advice, and thus I became the student of Stockhausen at the Rheinische Musikschule and, at the same time, of Zimmermann at the Cologne Musikhochschule.

With my girl friend Irene (we got married later) I took the train from Rome to Cologne in mid-September 1968. We had eleven suitcases and a little cat, and our first year in Cologne became a real Bohemian adventure. The room we lived in initially was so small that when I sat at the table to compose, Irene had to lie in the bed.

⁷⁰ In *La Rassegna Musicale*, ed. Luigi Pestalozza (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1966).

On two successive days per week I went to Stockhausen in the Vogelsanger Street, on two other days I met Zimmermann in the Dagobert Street. When Zimmermann heard that I attended Stockhausen's courses he became angry: I should have consulted him before; and he added that, when he considered studying with Philipp Jarnach, he asked his teacher for permission. I was surprised. Granted, I had become Zimmermann's student by accident (he of course did not know this), but since I now happened to be in this situation I wanted to learn as much as possible, and I saw nothing wrong with having two teachers.

Through this episode, I became aware that relations between Stockhausen and Zimmermann were anything but cordial. There were other occasions to confirm this assessment. For instance: When a fellow-student of mine asked Stockhausen whether he could use the electronic studio of the WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk), he got the following response: "Yes, in principle that is possible, but you have to wait a long time, because I will have to work there first, then composer A, and then B, and then C and D (I have forgotten whom he was referring to), and then there is Bernd Alois Zimmermann—that's a German composer—after that, the studio will perhaps be available for a short time. I thought the characterization of Zimmermann ("that's a German composer") was arrogant and condescending. Objectively, Stockhausen had a point; many people did not know Zimmermann (a short time ago, I myself was ignorant of his name), even though he was the older and, perhaps, more important composer. (This observation just slipped into my pen, and I am not sure whether it can withstand the scrutiny of time.) I still believe that one should not phrase it that way, unless the differences are as obvious to the eye and ear as those between Mozart and Salieri, and one should not use measuring sticks that, at best, are more appropriate for athletes. Stockhausen and Zimmermann are different but complementary personalities, even though, for me, Zimmermann grows in his importance by leaps and bounds, whereas Stockhausen, already for quite a while, has turned into an astonishing but—alas—musically irrelevant figure. When I encountered Stockhausen in 1968, he already was no longer the composer whose music had made me seek him out (*Gruppen*, *Gesang der Jünglinge*, *Kontakte* come to mind), but a composer who conceived pieces such as "Do Not Think of Anything". In May of 1968—that fateful year, historically important for reasons other than musical—Stockhausen wrote *Aus den sieben Tagen*, (From the seven days), a cycle that Heinz-Klaus Metzger unmasked, with admirable acuity, as hollow. When people were manning barricades on one side of the Rhine River, the guru of Cologne on the other side of the river was admonishing people not to think...

Basically Stockhausen talked only about himself and his music in his courses; a few acolytes, who later jumped ship, analyzed his earlier works, e.g.,

Momente. Zimmermann, however, never spoke of himself. Even when one asked him explicitly, he only reluctantly talked about his works. Goethe once said that only good-for-nothings are modest. But this does not mean that good-for-nothings are never arrogant. Zimmermann was anything but arrogant; he seemed to me a likeable and sensitive human being. We got together for three different occasions: for individual lessons, for an analysis course, and for a seminar during which we saw and discussed movies.

During one of the individual lessons I brought him my last piece, *Rondel* after Mallarmé. (I showed the same piece also to Stockhausen, who immediately criticized a notational error.) Zimmermann looked at the composition attentively and with benevolent interest that, in retrospect, I find moving, because the piece no doubt had shortcomings. But that is not important. What counts here is the way one treats his fellow human beings, especially when they are students—in other words, young and still inexperienced composers. Tolerance and cooperativeness, or schoolmasterly distance? Even if I had not learned anything from him, Zimmermann's exemplary humane attitude was very much a model for me.

Zimmermann suggested that I write a piece for one or several trombones, since such a wonderful trombonist, Vinko Globokar, taught at the Hochschule. He familiarized me with a compositional method from his serial phase, namely how to derive time proportions from interval proportions. This method, which Stockhausen used in *Gruppen* and other pieces, became the foundation of Zimmermann's compositional oeuvre. But he attached great importance to the fact that Stockhausen and he used the method in very different ways. It is, of course, true that the goals and results of both composers are quite different in spite of similarities in method. I noticed again how Zimmermann felt the need to differentiate himself from the younger and more successful colleague who cast a big shadow over the Cologne music scene, and thereby also over him.

I picked up Zimmermann's suggestion and composed a trombone quartet, *Proporzioni*, which was performed a year later by Globokar's students under his direction. When the piece was published several years later, I dedicated it to the memory of Zimmermann.

During the analysis seminar we analyzed Bach's chorale preludes and Webern's cantatas.

We also watched films regularly, especially new, experimental films. At the time it was not clear to me why we did this, because the issue was not the relation between film and music (some of the films did not have any music at

all). Today I have a different idea about it: For Zimmermann, the phenomenon “Time” was central to his compositional interest and he was therefore fascinated by film as a medium. In any case, it was educational for me to watch films which I did not know and which we then discussed in the seminar. While I am writing these sentences, I learn from the newspaper that Heinrich Böll has died. A strange coincidence—because I had my first encounter with Böll’s work during one of these film seminars, when we watched *Nicht versöhnt* (Not Reconciled), a film by Jean Marie Straub after a play by Böll of the same name. Böll was born in the same year and in the same city as Zimmermann, and both were Catholics, but Catholics from whom even a Roman atheist like me could learn.

In the summer of 1969 I traveled to Italy, but returned to Cologne in October. Mauricio Kagel had taken over the Cologne Courses for New Music at the Rheinische Musikschule. My appetite for new experiences in the field of music was tremendous, and thus I enrolled. But I also wanted to continue with Zimmermann whom I was glad to have “discovered,” and thus I commuted again between Dagobert and Vogelsanger Street (where I also attended seminars of Dieter Schnebel and Heinz-Klaus Metzger, which gave me intensive exposure to theories of Adorno). I remember that Zimmermann during this time traveled to Rome quite often to work, without interruptions, in the Villa Massimo, the domicile of the German Academy. Later on, I understood that he was, then, in a state of crisis. I do not know what he was working on, but it might have been the piece *Ich wandte mich um und sah alles Unrecht, das geschah unter der Sonne* (I turned around and saw all the injustices occurring under the sun [Ecclesiastes])—an impressive composition that was premiered posthumously.

At the time, I heard very little of Zimmermann’s music, not even *Die Soldaten*, an opera that was discussed a lot and that received a new production at one of the German theatres (was it Kassel?); I got to know this work much later. One piece that I heard in Darmstadt in 1969 (the only time I attended that Festival for which I received a stipend on the recommendation of Zimmermann) left a strong impression with me: *Intercomunicazione* for cello and piano, an extremely transparent and very intense work. The dialectical relationship between richness and economy, between the usage of different stylistic dimensions and the extreme reduction of musical materials (approaches that I have called “inclusive” and “exclusive”⁷¹) is characteristic for Zimmermann’s work in general. The reduction of material can be observed especially in several compositions of his last years; in addition to *Intercomunicazione*, I think of the beautiful orchestral piece *Stille und Umkehr*

⁷¹ „Costruzione della libertà,” *Musica/Realtà* 10 (1983), repeatedly translated in the 1980s and published in this volume as „Construction of Freedom.”

from the last year of his life. Only much later did I realize how important this dialectical relationship became for my own work—without being aware of it at the moment I had subconsciously returned to Zimmermann's mode of thinking.

Here, I would like to insert a little anecdote. When a piano piece that I had composed before my Cologne years was performed in Cologne (it may have been 1970), a reviewer (a benevolent critic, by the way) mentioned that one could easily discern the Zimmermann student here. He probably thought that the Bach quotation I had used in the piece was the give-away. Unfortunately, he did not know that the piece had been written at a time when the existence of Zimmermann was completely unknown to me. But the critic, who had received his information from the program booklet that reported on my studies, was perhaps more clairvoyant than he thought in that he sensed an affinity, however incipient, that today gives me some sincere pride.

That party with German friends in Rome, the encounter with Franco Evangelisti, his recommendation to study with Zimmermann—it was one of those events that can become decisive in the life of a human being. (I should add that it had been the same acquaintances who, in 1965, introduced me to a woman who later became my wife and the mother of our son Filippo, born in Cologne in 1972.)

At the end of the century we are facing the task to create the foundations for the music of the next century. One of the main problems of the music of the next decades will be to come to grips with the new cultural and musical situation: the awareness of the simultaneity of different traditions, musical languages and musical materials. Several composers have—consciously or subconsciously—taken this new situation into account; one of the most consequential and most lucid composers, no doubt, was Zimmermann. Early on, he recognized the need to consider different musical layers. (I like to call it the need to imagine, or to think in, different kinds of music.) In an essay on music in the radio play he wrote: “There is no stylistic issue, when it comes to music in the radio play, only a dramaturgical issue. Stylistically, music for radio plays can range from Gregorian chant to serial music, from the music of ‘primitive’ people to electronic music...”⁷² He wrote this in 1958—in the heydays of serial purist thinking!—and his music of the same time proves (first and foremost, of course, *Die Soldaten*, which he just had begun composing in that year) that his statement was not limited to music for radio plays. It is important, however—and this speaks for Zimmermann's long-range perspective—that his openness encompassing different musical

⁷² Bernd Alois Zimmermann, „Beschränkung und Freiheit,” in *Intervall und Zeit*, ed. Christian Bitter (Mainz: Schott, 1974), 51-52.

dimensions did not lead to a rejection of serial music; on the contrary, he made it fruitful for his own compositional purposes and thereby overcame it.

In an essay of 1968 Zimmermann sketched his poetics with exemplary clarity. I would like to cite a long excerpt from it:

Past, present, and future are, as we know, linked only in their appearance as cosmic time to the process of succession. This succession does not exist in our spiritual reality, which presents a reality more real than our familiar clock (its arms, [constantly moving,] in a way, demonstrate that there is no present in the strict sense. Time bends into a spherical shape. From this conception of time as a sphere I developed ... my pluralist technique of composition, which takes into account the multi-layered quality of today's musical reality. This means, from a purely compositional standpoint, that a pitch constellation (mostly in the form of an all-interval row) that is obligatory for an entire work (or an entire work group) becomes the point of departure for a proportional grid of different temporal layers. These temporal layers are, on the one hand, strictly linked in their durations with the pitch constellation mentioned above, but, on the other hand, they can be shifted and displaced by spontaneously including earlier or future music, quotations and groups of quotations as well as collages in general and thereby generating different experiences of time. This procedure results in an exchangeability and interpenetration of temporal layers, which I would like to see as one of the characteristic features of my mode of composing. Quotation plays a major role in this strategy, but its function has often been misunderstood. With the exception of my *Ubu* music, in which parody-collage is the predominant compositional stratagem, quotation does not function in my works as parody. Kagel once said in an interview that one of the characteristic features of my creativity is that it is founded on a theoretical scaffold which combines "peculiarity and many-sided utopia" [Eigentümlichkeit und vielfältige Utopie"] He has a point in that I have striven, from early on, toward overcoming a one-dimensional conception of time and in that I see in the utopia of connecting temporal processes (conceived thus far as being separated) a certain spiritual affinity to the musical reality of our time. The concept of musical reality—in its appearance as the sum of all compositional and musical enterprises—has always ranked first in my work. Confronted with this situation, the traditional concept of style can no longer be maintained. We should have the courage to admit that style is an anachronism in view of musical reality, and it is no surprise that other composers—for instance, Kagel and Cage, albeit in completely different ways—take issue with the traditional concept of style for no other reason than to do justice to a new concept of musical reality, however differently this reality may be defined in words... The pluralist technique of composition is not, as has often been erroneously assumed, a style mixture... Personally, I would like to see the pluralist technique of composition as the result of extending serialism—if one wishes, as a global

enterprise that draws conclusions from the musical thinking of our time as well as that of the waning Middle Ages, in short: a comprehensive synthesis.⁷³

Zimmermann's explanation of the derivation of time proportions from interval proportions makes it clear how much his compositional method is different from Stockhausen—a difference he explicitly stressed in his teachings.

Zimmermann's compositional approach has nothing to do with the deplorable super market attitude, perhaps appropriate to our consumer society, picking a little bit here and there from all that's up for sale. On the contrary, he proceeds with utmost rigor and planning, whereby he succeeds in securing a greater richness and freedom not in spite of the limitations he imposes on himself, but because of them. In my essay mentioned earlier, I have called this "construction" of freedom to underscore that it is not spontaneity (which is usually a delusion) but constructive rigor that can guarantee real compositional freedom.

I am astonished and also glad to note how I have arrived, independently from Zimmermann, by way of errors and detours of various kinds (especially by pursuing the path of a politically engaged music), at similar positions. Zimmermann's music, of course, is not a recipe that can simply be copied. There are many issues—his philosophy as well as its application—that deserve discussion. Everybody needs to pursue his own route in the journey to the unknown (and composing is such a journey), but Zimmermann's work is an important point of reference.⁷⁴

Now the statement with which I began my reminiscences becomes clear, namely that today I can learn from Zimmermann more than seventeen years ago when I was his student for a short time (October 1968 to December 1969). During the Christmas vacation I traveled to Rome and remained there for nine months; I had to cure a stomach ailment probably caused by a cheap meal, and I had to prepare for the final examination in composition at an Italian conservatory (my parents insisted that their son, who showed interest in peculiar music, receive an official diploma). Having subjected myself to a written examination of 36 hours (prescribed by the curricular guidelines of our musical country), I returned to Cologne at the end of September. But Zimmermann was no longer alive; in August he had committed suicide. The work he left behind engenders respect because of its musical conclusiveness and moral depth; it is a document of his time, an era that renders understandable the suicide of its most sensitive witnesses. Whoever has the

⁷³ *Intervall und Zeit*, 35-36.

⁷⁴ Michael Gielen wrote that „Zimmermann's music incorporates the past and projects itself into the future." *Intervall und Zeit*, 9.

courage to continue to live in this terrible and wonderful world should not tire in believing that the world can be changed and in working towards change.

Vinko Globokar took over Zimmermann's composition class at the Musik-hochschule. I wrote *Wiederkehr* for piano, a piece that addresses the problem of harmony (or rather: of the simultaneous) and the problem of time (understood as a non-linear development); I consider it my first fully valid piece.

But soon I was seduced by sirens. (I should add that these sirens howled, because they were factory sirens.) The question of the connection between music and politics needed to be addressed (it had been on the backburner for quite a while) and led me to East Berlin, where I prepared a dissertation on Hanns Eisler and where I became *Meisterschüler* of Paul Dessau.

Three years later I returned to Rome—a city that in the meantime had become so strange to me. Because I did not like the city any more, I moved with my family to Milan. Zimmermann, who was not born in Rome, loved the city. In the preface to the important book with Zimmermann essays its editor Christof Bitter cites from a letter by Zimmermann:

It is no accident that the incredibly multi-layered Rome is *the* city in which I am most comfortable—surrounded by witnesses of the most different eras (Ezra Pound said that all eras are present), surrounded by the most divergent styles, surrounded by the greatest social differences, and surrounded by sites where paganism and Christianity are simultaneously present. But always with the possibility of withdrawing from the hurly-burly of the pasts, and presents, and futures just mentioned to the secluded and spartanly furnished studio of the Villa Massimo—its old park with 500 year-old cypresses and the traffic noises around it—an island of peace. Being inside and outside is part of my work, it is as legitimate as monastery cell and noise-filled piazza.⁷⁵

In reality, Zimmermann is right. No other city has this depth of time and space than the Eternal City, eternally lovable and eternally hateful. Perhaps I can also learn from Bernd Alois Zimmermann to again love the city in which I was born.

[Source: "Erinnerungen (vorausschauend) an Bernd Alois Zimmermann," unpublished typescript written July 15-19, 1985, in Santa Maria Navarrese (Sardinia) and dedicated to "my friend Klaus Huber, an admirable admirer of Zimmermann." Published in French as "Souvenirs (prospectifs) de Bernd Alois Zimmermann," *Contrechamps*, no.5 (1985), 78-85; Becheri 85-6.]

⁷⁵ *Intervall und Zeit*, 8.

On Composing: Three Texts

“Lust am Komponieren? (Joy of composing?),” asks Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, echoing the title in the first essay of the little book he edited. And he answers his question: “Of course, because otherwise—and that is the trivial conclusion—one would hardly compose. Laughter occurs preferably when there is nothing to laugh about. Joy, possibly, is evoked and experienced when the burden is so strong that one simply needs to get rid of it. ... On the other hand, as long as composers still labor on ‘last pieces’, funeral marches of permanence, there is a spark of hope. ... If composers today enjoy composing—and they do—they owe it, last but not the least, to the objectively greatest threat humankind has ever faced.” In a postscript Jungheinrich names Lombardi as the moving spirit in a publication that included also interviews with Niels Frédéric Hoffmann, Wolfgang Rihm, and Manfred Trojahn.

I. Sisyphus as Self-Portrait (or, the Burden of Composing)

For Luigi Nono

On a day in spring of last year I sat down to begin a piece commissioned by the Dutch group “Nieuw Ensemble.” I still had no idea of the piece and began, as I had done in other instances (as a kind of introductory ritual), to play with the letters of names, the commissioner’s and my own. Let’s assume the letter A corresponds to the tone C, and a series of pitches will result (see Example II, 3).



Example II, 4a: Series derived from the composer’s name

Luca Lombardi
1984

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Example II, 4b: *Sisyphos II*, Beginning

I found out that I had a twelve-tone name, albeit with repetitions of tones (but that is okay); furthermore, the series contained practically all intervals and concluded (and this amused me) with a leap of a fourth. I liked the series and decided to use it as a point of departure for the new composition. Eight instruments were available to me in a partly unusual combination: bass flute, bass clarinet, mandolin, guitar, harp, marimba, viola, and double bass. At some time it was decided that the series, melodically distributed among the instruments, would always start at the beginning but would be interrupted, each time at a different location (after having sounded so and so many notes) by a pair of instruments. The result was a series of aggregates consisting of only two tones. (I say “aggregates” rather than “chords” because some sounds were unisons.) Furthermore, other unforeseen interruptions consisted of parentheses of tutti sections, each time worked out in a different way.

This is the simple idea of the piece, which, by the way, also looks “simple” in its notation. I use half notes almost all the way through the piece, as well as rests—many of them.

The structural idea of starting over and over again led me to the title of the piece, *Sisyphos*—no ulterior motives here—because the twelve-tone (but not strictly dodecaphonic) melody is repeated always and again from the beginning.

I liked the idea of the piece, but was not content with the composition. (Later I withdrew the piece and promised the Dutch ensemble a revised version.) Furthermore, I also felt that the structural idea deserved to be expanded. Since I had to write another ensemble piece in the fall, this time for fourteen instruments (meanwhile I had composed *Mirum* for four trombones, a piece in which the repeat of cyclical material, each time differently shaped, plays a role as well), I decided to attempt a different version of the same idea. From the start, this piece got the title *Sisyphos II*; it was structured with greater complexities, with transposition of the basic series (the row or parts of it appear, each time, on a different level, so that the piece gradually and unnoticeably moves upward), with chords of different densities, but in a similarly radical fashion (“radical” understood as going back to the root, the elementary, the essential) with long notes and even longer rests than in the first piece.

While working on *Sisyphos II* I got ideas which I had not thought of before. I began to look into the piece (into the pieces) as if into a mirror. What does it mean to begin over and over again? And what about the rock which has to be rolled up the mountain again and again? Who is Sisyphus? Why did I chose as building material (perhaps I should say: building block) my own name? Did I

perhaps, without consciously wanting it, think of myself? And did I create a kind of self portrait, again without being consciously aware of it? Do I really have such absurdly tragic opinion of my life and work?

I turn to Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*. Having resisted the gods, like Prometheus, Sisyphus is the absurd hero. The adjective has no negative connotation for Camus. The absurd is the state in which the tension between man, world and its absurdity is heroically maintained. The subject rejects the escape into suicide and decides to become a witness to absurdity, to experience it first-hand and live with it.

Forty years after the publication of Camus's book (at the time the first nuclear bomb had not yet fallen), the absurdity of our life, is obvious. It is the suffering which humans inflict on themselves because of ignorance, hatred, meanness; it is the suffering caused by faulty, oppressive societal institutions.

Yesterday I saw a lobster, ignorant of being condemned to death, in the tank of a restaurant; the lobster had caught a mussel, opened its shell and was ready to suck it out. A little fish, fellow-inmate in the prison, circled the lobster in the hope of catching a bite from the prey.

At the edge of the abyss we fight for miserable spoils instead of finding a path which leads away from the chasm or building a bridge which traverses it.

We cannot, we are not allowed to, resign. In spite of everything, the rock must be rolled uphill again and again. Camus's absurd man is "sans espoir, mais pas désespéré" which I would like to translate as "without hope but not despairing," and I think of a statement by Kierkegaard: "desperately working in order not to despair."⁷⁶ But I also think of a line by Edoardo Sanguineti, "disperato e vivo" (desperate and alive)⁷⁷ desperate and alive; or, differently put, desperate but alive, alive because of being desperate, because only in our despair can we accept life, nurture our hopes without illusion, and, in turn, reach also happiness and serenity. Nietzsche is applicable here: "We are certain of death—why would we not want to be serene?"

But back to Camus:⁷⁸

⁷⁶ [„Verzweifelt zu arbeiten, um nicht verzweifelt zu sein.“ Cited from Franco Lombardi, *Kierkegaard* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1936), 39.]

⁷⁷ [Edoardo Sanguineti, *Postkarten: Poesie 1972-1977* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978), 34.]

⁷⁸ [Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and other essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1991), 122-23. The translation here is by the editor.]

Happiness and the absurd are children of the same earth and inseparable. It would be a mistake to say that happiness, by necessity, results from the discovery of the absurd; the feeling of the absurd can also emerge from happiness. "I decided that all is well," says Oedipus, and his words are holy; they resound in the wild and limited universe of humans ... and they drive out of this world a god who has come to them with dissatisfaction and a preference for needless suffering. His words turn fate into a human matter to be decided by humans.

All of Sisyphus's quiet joy is contained therein. He is the master of his fate, the rock is his métier. It is similar with the absurd man: When he considers his torment, he leaves behind all idols. Out of the universe, suddenly being returned to silence, emerge, in amazement, a myriad of little voices of the earth. ... When the absurd man accepts his status, his striving will know no end. If there is a personal fate, there exists no higher authority or only one which man ... considers despicable. He knows that he is the master of his days. In this very instance, when man turns again to his life—a Sisyphus going back to his rock—during the gradual and slow descent, he reviews the series of unrelated activities which have become his fate: Created by him, rendered coherent by his memory and soon to be sealed by his death. Convinced of the purely human origin of all that is human, he is always on the way—like a blind person, who desires to see but knows that the night has no end.

The journey—including everything that may occur on the way: flight, adventure, failure—is one of the oldest metaphors of human existence. "Profugo come gli altri / che furono, che sono, che saranno" (a refugee like the others who were, are, and will be); "All'infinito se durasse il viaggio, / non durerebbe un attimo, e la morte / è già qui, poco prima" (even if the journey would last infinitely, it would not last a second, and death is already there, just before); "E subito riprende / il viaggio / come / dopo il naufragio / un superstite / lupo di mare" (and promptly takes up the voyage again like a sea wolf who has survived the shipwreck). These are three of the fragments by Ungaretti, which I set to music several years ago; their translation into German, by the way, comes from the pen of refugees: Paul Celan wrote the first two, Ingeborg Bachmann the third.⁷⁹

But where does the journey take us?

It is peculiar that all metaphorical journeys which try to give meaning to the repetitive-cyclical character of life—whether in the monotonous path of Sisyphus or in the Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Homer's *Odyssey*—are always returns. One undertakes a journey in order to arrive where one started. From

⁷⁹ [The translations cited in the original German text are by Paul Celan (1920-1970) and Ingeborg Bachmann (1926-1973).]

the ancient Greeks and Romans to Vico and Nietzsche, life is represented as a cycle. Or, as Serenus Zeitblom (in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*) formulated it in discussing Adrian Leverkühn's *Apocalipsis con figuris*, it has to do with "the curvature of the world, which makes the last return unto the first."⁸⁰ Or, to cite another philosophical-musical example, time is shaped like a sphere, as Bernd Alois Zimmermann conceptualized it in his opera *Die Soldaten*. Always again, but always different and, in as much as the return is conceived as a spiral, on a different level each time. Or are these images remnants of a naïve belief in progress which cannot be justified by anything, least of all by our most recent history? (What did humans learn from their horrifying experiences?) History does not develop cyclically or linearly—these are only constructs by means of which we try to cope with the mystery or, to cite Camus, the absurdity of life. Rather, history is a labyrinth (another construct, to be sure). We err [*irren*]⁸¹—in the double meaning of the term [being wrong and being confused]—without knowing the goal. "So you know your goal?" he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. 'I have just told you. Away from here—that is my goal.'⁸¹ (Franz Kafka, "Der Aufbruch")

Pessimism, nihilism? Nothing of that sort. Only the knowledge of being uprooted and, in turn, of our connectedness to the whole (what Albert Einstein called the "cosmic religion") makes us open for what is nowhere and everywhere. A reconciled utopian reality neither exists in the remote future nor has it existed in the remote past. Fragments of it can be felt everywhere, even here and now, in the concrete reality, in dreams, in music. The latter is indeed a daydream, a foreshadowing of consciousness, a glimmer anticipating a happier state of being. It can even be felt in the rock of Sisyphus who, by opposing and despising authority, reaches out to the border crossers of all times.

Postscriptum: Earlier I mentioned that I was not pleased with the performance of the first Sisyphus piece and that I promised a revised version to the Dutch ensemble. But I have changed my mind. I am in the process of writing a new piece for the same group of instruments. The path it will traverse is free at the moment; it may go up or down the mountain, but there also will be sideroads. I am starting a journey of discovery and am curious where it will lead me. Free from the rock, and freeing the rock from being rolled uphill.

(20 May 1985, Vernazza; 22 May 1985, Milano, San Felice)

⁸⁰ Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Modern Library, 1948), 376.

⁸¹ [Franz Kafka, *The Departure (Der Aufbruch)* in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1983), 449.

II. (Hypo)theses about Avant-garde and Tradition

For Wolfgang Rihm

Let's disregard the term "avant-garde" (which is ugly and has a military provenance). Being an avant-garde artist means to break with automatic modes of behavior and conventions; it means to look beyond the status quo. An avant-garde artist is dissatisfied with the world as it is and with a mode of producing art as a reflection of the world. This productive dissatisfaction can/must manifest itself in a myriad of different ways. It follows that avant-garde cannot be identical with one definite aesthetic direction; the term only denotes an approach. Still, should this approach of probing and criticizing encrusted conventions not be an approach characteristic of every true artist?

The artist is never ahead of his time, he can only be in unison with it. This was the opinion of the avant-garde artist Edgar Varèse.

What characterizes the European tradition is its constant striving for change and annulment. Thus, that artist is closest to it who (seemingly) respects it the least.

Least useful is the style imitation, the "back to..." approach, the restoration of past forms and languages. Necessary, however, is to have the knowledge of being part of an age-old, all-encompassing tradition.

Re-interpreting the past and reading it differently is, by the way, an excellent method of composing, namely the method of developing variation.

The tradition is a mirage; it presents itself differently for each person. Everyone has his own tradition, as determined by cultural background, experiences, and preferences. Tradition as individual biography.

A statement attributed to Mahler is often invoked in conversations about tradition: "Tradition is sloppiness." What Mahler really said was: "What you men of the theatre call your tradition is nothing but your convenience and sloppiness."⁸² The essential difference between authentic statement and the traditionally cited version is clear: Still, it is perhaps true that tradition is sloppiness.

I am fascinated by Webern: The extreme concentration of his musical language and his way of relating sound and silence, but also his ability to

⁸² [Cited in Wolfgang Schreiber, *Gustav Mahler in Selbstzeugnissen und Bildern* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1971), 91. Also in *Gustav Mahler: Im eigenen Wort—im Wort der Freunde*, ed. Willi Reich (Zurich: Arche 1958), 47.]

synthesize the music history of many hundred years. But, as he shows, it is possible to connect with tradition only by re-thinking, re-reading, and re-inventing it in light of current historical experiences—in other words, by completely re-shaping it. From this follows the uselessness of different directions that have popped up over the years: neo-romantic, neo-galant (an Italian specialty), neo-impressionist. This does not mean that we cannot learn anything, say, from Bruckner. (Bruckner especially interests me because of his procedure of juxtaposing different blocks—almost resembling a montage technique and espousing a multi-polar, non-linear, non-teleological approach to musical structure.) But the relation to tradition needs a filter to eliminate contingent aspects and to make apparent the spirit and the essence of a particular time, author, or work, which manifest themselves each time in a different way. It is similar to the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls (if it were to exist): A philosopher is reborn as taxi driver (and vice versa) or as a bird or plant. Whoever wants to revive Mahler by sporting his glasses or his hat turns himself into a caricature. There is no doubt that such a relation to tradition exists, it is the most burdensome and most comprehensive of all traditions—an approach practiced by epigones.

The history of music shows: What appeared to protagonists and their contemporaries as irreconcilable alternatives has proven to be complementary experiences (Brahms/Wagner, Schoenberg/Stravinsky, but also Ives, Bartók, Varèse, and others). As there is a chromatic totality, there is also an aesthetic totality, within which different and distant composers fulfill a specific and necessary function.

Notwithstanding those who want to take the expressway, Beethoven-Brahms/Wagner-Schoenberg-Webern (and then move on from Stockhausen, Boulez, or Nono), it must be admitted that there are impressive rural roads (Janáček, Bartók), interesting mountain tours (to Hartmann's plateau), but also trips through an endless steppe-like landscape (Shostakovich) as well as adventurous meanders through metropolitan areas (Varèse, and, in a different way, also Eisler).

At a time when physicists teach us that there is more than one way to interpret reality, it is ridiculous that some musicians and music critics still believe in determining one preferable path within the contemporary music world.

Decisive is not the language as abstract entity, which exists before and after the work (such viewpoint, however "progressive" the language may be, would lead to a form of academicism), but only the work itself, whatever language it speaks.

In 1960, Stockhausen wrote *Kontakte* and Shostakovich his *String Quartet No.8*. The first piece is (was) experimental, and the other piece uses a well-known musical language. Both works are important. Why? At the time I was fascinated by Stockhausen's composition, but considered Shostakovich not worth discussing because of his traditional musical language. Today I think that *Kontakte* has lost much of its appeal; it is a little bit like an ultramodern automobile which twenty years later comes across as obsolete and a little pathetic. But I think now of Shostakovich's string quartet as a composition of great poetic and spiritual tension. Is this judgment perhaps caused by the program of the quartet (it is dedicated to the victims of the fascist war), whereas Stockhausen's composition is ultimately concerned only with technical-structural issues?

The lack of an intersubjective musical language (as it existed with tonality) is often bemoaned; in turn, composers are asked to contribute, with their work as individuals, toward the completion of a new uniform musical language. I do not consider this a pressing issue; yes, I even do not think such uniformity is desirable. The world is sufficiently standardized! Rather, composers should develop different, untamed languages which resist institutionalization. Speaking the same language is not important, understanding different languages is!

Werner Heisenberg: "In modern physics the world is no longer divided into different groups of objects but into different groups of relations... What can be observed is the kind of connection primarily responsible for a certain phenomenon... The world, thus, appears as a complex web of events in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine, thereby determining the texture of the whole."⁸³ To apply this mode of observation to music means to emphasize the relations *between* objects or materials rather than the individual objects and materials in themselves. Something similar had been formulated by Adorno and Eisler in the 1940s, when they wrote that the musical situation had developed to such an extent that the compositional method was more important than the individual materials. What they called "a planning mode of procedure" (planende Verfahrensweise) is a method which, in principle, can utilize any kind of material, including that which is considered obsolete.⁸⁴

To be open to all cultures and experiences without giving up one's own identity. To be citizen of one's own country and of the world. "The universal is the regional." This makes sense. But not by passing off the provincial as

⁸³ [Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), 96]

⁸⁴ [Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1969), 117.]

cosmopolitan culture, only by being rooted in our own culture can we develop an understanding for others.

At a time when everything is possible in terms of musical language and material the authenticity of music is not determined by issues of musical style but solely by music's ability to give voice to questions which stir humans (not only musicians). Music needs to concern itself again with the life of humans, as the historical avant-garde movements did (dadaists, surrealists, Russian futurists), but not (only) in the sense of Cage (for whom everything is music), rather in the sense that music can help us understand who we are and where we are going. (The Darmstadt avant-garde—Nono is the sole exception—was, characteristically enough, not interested in that issue, and this is perhaps a more or less conscious reason for the polemics of neo-Romantic composers against the formalist avant-garde after World War II.)

Compared with other epochs (and even with the most recent past), today's musical situation is characterized by an awareness of the plurality of techniques and materials and, even more generally, by an awareness of different musical cultures. This awareness has increased with the advent of underprivileged classes that have contributed their own traditions and perspectives within modern society. Our perspective has been similarly expanded by the recognition of other cultures across the globe, cultures which, in part, are thousands of years old and which had been pushed to the periphery through the centrality accorded in our society to European/Western culture. – The composer cannot ignore this change, if he does not want to surrender his work to dishonesty. For it would not only be arrogant, but also unhistorical to continue as if Europe (more precisely: the European bourgeois culture) were the center of the world and Vienna or Darmstadt or another citadel were the center of Europe. There is no longer a center, and, within a broadly diversified field of music, there is no longer a preferred route.

There are composers who, once they have found their individual poetic voice, will no longer leave their abode but reproduce it, virtually unchanged, with every new work. Others conceive of composition as a permanent quest and move, despite links with earlier experiences, into new territory with every new work. While it may suffice in the first case to listen to only one work to understand the poetics of a composer, to form a true image in the second case requires an assembly of the individual pieces represented by the compositions. Audiences and critics have a much harder task to comprehend the second type of composer, especially in a society subjected to the laws of advertising which presupposes the recognizability of any kind of product by means of immediate and obvious characteristics. This is the reason for the widespread need to

market musical reality through labels, but also for the difficulty in packaging, in a standardized category, a composer whose identity is more complex.

The work of a composer who deserves to be called “composer” is always characterized by quest and experiment, but not only in terms of language and material. Language and material may be experimental but, once recognized “officially” as experimental, cease to function that way.

There are no prescribed paths, everything must be discovered. This viewpoint presupposes a different concept of *recherche musicale* (musical research). This term exists in Italian and French, but not in German—this is peculiar when one considers that the phenomenon developed primarily in German-speaking countries. Discovering new ways of sound production is not the only goal of composing. An approach to composition that focuses primarily on the musical material needs to be demystified and freed from serving as fetish. Such work, of course, is important, but only as a function of the compositional project articulating musical thinking. More important is to establish new connections between objects (which, as such, can be familiar). An unexpected link between Eisler and Stockhausen emerges here: Eisler posited that the new approach to composition could also include used-up and obsolete material, while Stockhausen maintained that tonality would always retain its validity as a special case—just as classical physics did not lose its validity but was preserved by the physics of relativity. Thus, the *recherche* has nothing to do with the latest state of the musical language; decisive is the analysis of the mechanisms of musical thinking and, by extension, a self-inquiry pertaining to one’s existence and relation to the world. Such an understanding of avant-garde does not preclude error; on the contrary, it includes error by necessity. Only in retrospect can one know whether one’s action has been a step forward or backward. (What avant-garde is or has been can only be known *a posteriori*.) Many an error is preferable to the certainty provided by the lack of risk. Composition means taking risks. Granted, our society is not particularly inclined to accept risks, even those taken by its artists. (Which society would be?) What is accepted is the acceptable: tame or capable of being tamed, a calculated risk, if not outright confirmation of the status quo.

The last decade has seen steps forward and backward, and hopes have alternated with disappointments. It seems as if failures and disappointments prevail. The forces of conservatism (*arrière-garde*) have proven stronger than those of change (*avant-garde*). But the world is too large, the problems too great, and the dangers too serious to abandon the fight and the hope that things may change. For composers now in their twenties (but also for those composers who were in their twenties at the end of the 1960s), there is nothing less urgent and less attractive than pondering issues of the relations between

music and society. However, if there ever was a moment not to capitulate, then it is now. We are disappointed, but we know that times and forms of big historical changes are long and complex. Progress and reaction do not follow each other linearly, failures and victories have always alternated and overlapped with each other. The threat of nuclear extinction, of course, enforces the need, more than ever before, to call a halt to the culture of war, a culture that shows that we are still living in the pre-history of humankind. (If someone should accuse me of “exaggerated pessimism”, I would respond that my pessimism is not excessive; it only extends to the next one hundred or two hundred years—by that time, I believe, humans will have learned to solve their problems in a meaningful way. What are one hundred, one thousand, or ten thousand years in comparison with the history of the human species, of the earth, of the universe?)

(1982-84)

III. The Pleasure of Composing

For myself

After days of fatigue/crisis/unproductivity, you take a train and travel to a small village on the Ligurian coast. Meditation and solitude to straighten things out or clean things up (but how is that possible, asks the philosopher Ernst Bloch, when all relations between humans are tainted) and to be able to work again (“solitudo musis amica”—solitude, friend of the Muses).

On May 15, 1985, at 5:30 pm, you sit in a room in Vernazza and look through the open window to the sea (which performs music without any problems—day in, day out, always the same and always different). The day still breathes warmth. The noise of a fishing vessel comes closer and recedes again. Otherwise there is no sound, except for the rustling of the sea. On the left side of the table a cup of tea, in the right hand a cigar, alternating with a pencil. You look at the music paper: What you have written in the morning seems to be usable. You sense an urge to continue writing (sonorous but transparent sounds of mandolin, guitar, and harp) and feel the pleasure of composing. This divine/human moment makes up for the burdens/pains/ crises of weeks and gives courage for the next onslaught.

(15 May 1985)

Note: Texts 1 and 3 were written originally in German, text 2 has been translated from the Italian. L.L.

[Source: "Beim Komponieren: Drei Texte," in *Lust am Komponieren*, ed. Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985, 34-47; Becheri 85-1. The book appeared as No.16 of the series *Musikalische Zeitfragen*. The example from *Sisifo felice* has been added here.]

Sisifo felice

Originally this composition was supposed to be a new version of my piece *Sisyphos*, with which I had not been entirely satisfied. *Sisyphos* and *Sisyphos II*, both composed in 1984, are two radical and ascetic works (and, at the same time, of a Webern-like simplicity), in which I used, almost exclusively, long notes and rests. These compositions are not the realization of a preconceived extramusical program; rather—they resulted in a few reflections that I jotted down in an essay "Sisyphos as Self-Portrait" (the text was published in a volume *Lust am Komponieren* with Bärenreiter). I wrote the text during the same days, when I was working on a piece that was to become a new version of *Sisyphos*. But soon I abandoned the plan of writing a new version. It has always been difficult for me to revise a finished composition; I prefer to work on a new piece. In this case, there was also the realization that the compositional plan of *Sisyphos* in its radical insistence on asceticism and rigor appeared to me like a cage I did not want to inhabit any longer. At least not at the time. I felt the need to move to the outside and breathe freely. I decided to write a piece without a preconceived program, a piece that was based on simple material—a four-note scale consisting of an augmented, minor, and major second (encompassing the range of an augmented fourth) that would be repeated, spiral-like, each time a fifth higher. (I had used the same material for my last composition, *Nel tuo porto quiete. Un Requiem italiano*. In spite of this decision, my thoughts continue to circle around the Sisyphus myth, since, as I mentioned, I worked on the essay "Sisyphos as Self-Portrait?" *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a well-known essay by Albert Camus. According to Camus, Sisyphus, who like Prometheus resisted the gods, the absurd hero. The adjective does not have negative connotations. Absurdity is a state of being, in which the tension between man, world, and the absurd is maintained. Man rejects escaping into suicide and decides to bear witness to absurdity, experience it and accept it. Recognizing absurdity does not lead to desperation, but is the precondition to overcome it. Knowing the absurd makes it possible to observe things from a distance, and the distance does not exclude happiness—even if only for brief moments. During one of those moments I wrote this composition (rather quickly, as it turned out). It is far removed from the world of *Sisyphos* and *Sisyphos II*, and yet connected to it at the same time. It is its negative image, or, if your will, its positive side—in the same way as happiness is connected to desperation.

[Composed in 1985; the program notes in German are dated February 17, 1986.]

Example II, 5: *Sisifo felice* (mm.65-72.)

Ai piedi del faro

During the last few years, I repeatedly had the desire to undergo psychoanalysis. Why? Because I behave in ways I do not rationally understand well. I once consulted an old famous psychoanalyst, but he advised me against the method. It is likely, as you say, that, as we need the rain forests of the Amazon basin for the continued existence of our atmosphere, we also cannot dispense with the jungle of our subconscious without risking damage. Still, the wish to understand myself better remained. That, of course, does not mean that psychoanalysis is the best way to achieve the goal. One path to know myself better has been the music I compose, especially in the last years. Not every composition, because there are pieces in which technical and structural aspects seem to prevail, but I could at least name two instances. A few years ago I composed a piece I called *Sisyphos* because its formal structure (a succession of intervals repeated over and over again—to summarize it simply) reminded me of the fate of the mythological figure. It was the time when my belief system underwent crisis; I had growing doubts about the possibility of improving the human condition linearly. The title of my piece led me to the essay by Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and I was able to identify with much he had written. Thus, I noticed that, without wanting it or knowing it, my changed worldview was reflected in my composition.

To give another example: Last year I wrote a piece for double bass and eight instruments, which I gave the title *Ai piedi del faro* (At the foot of the lighthouse). I got the title from a statement by the philosopher Ernst Bloch, “There is no light at the foot of the lighthouse.” He means that we are unable to understand the present at the present time; we can only illuminate the past from the present, as the future will shed light on the present time. But what we do now must, by and large, remain dark for us. In this piece I use, as I had already at other times, a scale that leads to peculiarly oriental melodic figures. Why? What is my connection with the Orient? While working on the piece I heard old Jewish songs from Spain. I liked one in particular with the words “mamita mia salvadera de mi vida” (mother mine, saviour of my life) performed in a lamenting tone and with closely intertwined intervals. One day I saw how I entered fragments of the song into my score, and I noticed that the intervals of the song were very similar to the ones I had used thus far, not only the closely intertwined “oriental” intervals but also the interval of a fifth that played an important role in both piece and song. I decided to integrate the song into the piece; yes, the song even ends the piece: The musicians leave the stage, one after the other, playing their instruments and regroup at the end of the hall or in another room. Only the double bass player remains on stage. At their new location, the other instruments intone the Jewish song, the double bass player tries to join them, but he does not succeed, that is, the other players do not follow him or do not respond, he falls silent. I had no particular motivation for the scene of transformation, which has the character of a processional, of funeral cortège. I simply liked the fact that the piece breaks up in terms of sound. Only much later—while reading a book by Primo Levi, an author who committed

suicide that year—did I understand that the conclusion had something to do with the Jewish character of the piece. I should add that, through my mother, I have a Jewish strain and that my interest in this strain has grown in recent years, even though I have had little time to deal with the matter in detail. In the book by Levi, I read about a family which, on the journey to the concentration camp, organized a memorial service for its members; they played and sang songs of lament and gave expression to the pain at having to make an exodus, repeated over and over again. All of a sudden I realized: What I had composed was, without my planning it, a symbol for the exodus. All of this appears so logical to me that I am amazed and ask myself whether it is nothing but a construct grafted on my work. Is it perhaps only the desire, in retrospect, to find conclusiveness in what one does?

[Composed in 1986; the discussion is an excerpt of a letter the composer wrote in German to his friend Azzo Rezori on July 20, 1987.]

The Future of the Orchestra

In 1985—the “Year of Music” in Europe—a conference was organized in Stockholm, Sweden, on the future of the orchestra. Having just co-authored and published a book on instrumentation in twentieth-century music, Lombardi was invited for a lecture.

The orchestra is something that has developed historically and as such it is subject, like anything else that evolved in history, to slow but perpetual changes. I do not know what the future of the orchestra will look like. I do not know whether the orchestra will have a long future, or whether the future will still have orchestras. Today there are machines that can produce traditional and unusual timbres. The advances of these machines are tremendous, and it seems that they already have been employed to replace the orchestra, for instance in film music. If they can deceptively resemble the sound of the orchestra, then it would be impossible to distinguish whether a Beethoven symphony broadcast over the radio is performed by real musicians or by a machine. This situation will not be without consequences for the orchestra as we know it today; it will change the function and role of the orchestra, but not call into question its existence.

I am drawn to reflect on the relation between theater and film. Perhaps there was, in the first years of the film, a conference about the future of the theater and someone perhaps stated out of fear that the film would gradually replace the theater and that the projector would make living actors superfluous. As is the case with all comparisons, this one does not work either. Film still counts on real actors, but they do not need to appear on stage every evening but only

once in front of a camera. Music that is produced by machines can do away with musicians. Musicians do not need to practice their instruments, but can pursue other occupations, such as the production of music by means of machines. I believe, however, that musicians will practice their instruments and play in the orchestra for a long time. The comparison with the relation between film and theater shows that film has not made theater superfluous. Not only are old plays being performed, but also new plays are being written. Sometimes it is the same person who directs a theater play, a movie, or television show. Sometimes the theater, film, and television director is also an opera director. That means that we encounter not an evolution that replaces one medium with another one but a development that generates the possibility of working with several media. Each medium has its specific characteristics, but not necessarily specialists who exclusively work with only one medium. Rather, the evolution of different media allows a more diverse interpretation of reality, both artistic and real. This justifies the supposition that the most refined machine will not replace the orchestra, as the most refined movie has not made theater obsolete. Theater, film, and television, and also musical theater, are different forms of articulating artistic fantasies for the author or director; by the same token, orchestra music will remain one of several possibilities. As it is the case already today.

Composing for orchestra is not essentially different from composing for a solo instrument or for (or through) an electronic medium. I say this because music is always articulated thought. An instrument or several instruments or an entire orchestra are the medium in which thinking can be articulated. Many years ago a composer told me that it was possible to make music with a laurel leaf. This sentence sounds quite simple, but I still remember it today, perhaps because it is so simple—but perhaps also, because, in a paradoxical way, it addresses an important problem. By the way: It is interesting that the composer spoke of a laurel leaf and not of a cabbage leaf. Was this perhaps caused by musical consideration, because a laurel leaf sounds better than a cabbage leaf? I did not try it out. Perhaps he selected the image because the laurel leaf suggests something noble; perhaps subconsciously this modest composer, who did not want a monumental orchestra but only a laurel leaf, hoped to earn for himself a laurel wreath by way of a laurel leaf. Whatever the reason, the insightful and correct core of the statement is that, only to a limited degree, the medium has a bearing on the value and stringency of a musical thought. Or, differently put: significant musical thoughts can manifest themselves also through modest musical means. Nevertheless, I find it beautiful to articulate musical thinking through different means. And the orchestra remains a medium that stimulates creativity to a high degree. I am trying to find a rational explanation for it, but notice that it is impossible to spontaneously come up with a compelling motivation. One reason certainly is

that it is fascinating to work with different groups of sound and timbres. But this is also possible today through electronic and computer-generated production of sound. Another reason is that it is a lot of fun to invent a complex, multi-layered texture and then realize how the texture, initially only imagined, gradually is turned into reality. But even this could happen with the help of machines. Yet another reason, perhaps only a subconscious one, is that the composer of an orchestral work follows an old and venerable tradition; willy-nilly, the composer puts himself in a line with all the great composers of the past who have written for orchestra. But even this explanation does not suffice, since such a confrontation occurs also when composing a piano piece. It seems as if there is no rational explanation for the composition of orchestral pieces. I think this must be the reason: that there is no rationale—it is just fascination with the irrational. And this is true of the creation of music in general, not just for composing chamber and orchestral music. Making music is irrational, or rather: it cannot be explained rationally. That's what's rational about it.

Brecht who, as is known, was a very rational man, once expressed it like this: "Making music to do justice to the irrational means to recognize that it is rational to do something irrational!" I liked the statement and used it as a motto for my orchestral piece *Non requiescat: Musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler*. The Brechtian rationale is, of course, a very rational rationale. He wanted to employ art to fight for pushing through his ideals of society. Someone now could object that this is not at all rational, that it is even more irrational than pursuing artistic goals. If I continue on this train of thought, I will digress from the topic entirely. That's why I return to the orchestra. I was in the process of naming several reasons that move a composer, e.g., myself, to write orchestral music.

There is not just one reason but a whole array of several reasons. Mahler said that a symphony can encompass an entire world. Not only the symphony as a genre, but potentially any kind of symphonic work. Even the orchestra is a world, a small world, a microcosm. And whoever administers a cosmos, even though only a small one, feels like a demiurge, a kind of god with creative power. Unfortunately, many conductors believe they are! But I should not talk here about conductors; otherwise I would have to say something critical about those people who impede the dissemination of orchestral music. Conductors, for whom it is more convenient to conduct only old music, are, as has been noted, gravediggers, exploiters of dead composers, they are the Herods of newly created music.⁸⁵ Let's not talk about them, let's focus at the moment on

⁸⁵ Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Intervista sul genio musicale*, ed. Mya Tannenbaum (Bari: Laterza, 1985), 8-9. „Io li considero becchini, sfruttatori di compositori defunti. Li considero gli Eroi della musica nascente.”

the orchestra as a microcosm. The thing of the demiurge phenomenon really is only one aspect, and not the most important one. For it is childish to throw one's weight around pretending to be one. Moreover, the cosmos considered as being reflected in the orchestra is not the universe but society. More specifically, the organization of musicians in the orchestra reflects the organization of humans in society. The big difference is that there are several forms of organizing society, whereas, basically, only one exists for the orchestra. And that one is strictly hierarchical. Granted, there have been several attempts to introduce other organizational modes for the orchestra, but they have not prevailed. Someone might object (perhaps the same person who already earlier raised an objection) that even in real society these attempts have not prevailed. I fear that this critic is right. But there is a basic difference between orchestra and society: Injustice and suppression result from false social relations, but "false" relations in the orchestra (and the quotation marks are intentional) generate beautiful music. Not always, but at least sometimes. This, of course, would be a compelling reason to retain the "false" relations in the orchestra. Why did I use the adjective "false" in quotation marks? The hierarchy in the orchestra is not forced on humans, as is the case in society, but is voluntarily accepted. It corresponds to a *contrat social*, a social contract, to use a term from the field of sociology, a term which, however, usually does not constitute society. The orchestra might be viewed as "anticipation in the microcosm of that what has not been solved in the macrocosm."⁸⁶

Before I continue on this train of thought that is very important for me, I have to open up a parenthesis. The voluntary union and the voluntary acceptance of the hierarchy are, of course, in many cases a deception or self-deception. Many orchestra musicians wanted to become great soloists and only hard reality made them end up in an orchestra. Here lies a serious fault of many music schools: rather than educating students to become good orchestra musicians, they nurture the unrealistic dream of a great career as soloists. But since the situation is that way, the all-too-understandable frustration of many orchestra musicians could be alleviated by giving them the opportunity to make music in smaller ensembles (in which they are not just a little wheel in an overpowering organism). In a few orchestras this is already being done, but many more possibilities should be opened up; this, in turn, would also have a salutary effect on concert programming. That was the parenthesis.

And I return now to the orchestra as an anticipation of a social organization in the future. Already Berlioz talked about the orchestra as an ideal republic. An orchestral musician of the nineteenth century, a certain Mr. Gollmick, put it this way: "An orchestra never appears with greater independence than in the

⁸⁶ Hanns-Werner Heister, *Das Konzert: Theorie einer Kulturform I* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshafen, 1983), 112.

symphony... It represents a state of its own for the orchestra personnel, a state in which every member is a free citizen... It unifies all participants in one unit in which everything worldly is abandoned... Deadly enemies should play together in a symphony and, embraced by a secret sympathy, they would have to become brothers.”⁸⁷ Too bad that Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachov do not play an instrument; otherwise, they could have performed in the Geneva Philharmonic Orchestra!

Within the organization of an orchestra there is a dialectic between freedom and constraint. And there is also a give-and-take between anticipation and reflection (*Vorschein* and *Widerschein*). The orchestra not only anticipates a future state of reconciliation, but it also reflects the contradictions and tensions of our present society. The orchestra as a negative metaphor of society has been captured in a compellingly sarcastic manner by Federico Fellini in his film *The Orchestra Rehearsal*. In the movie the relations between musicians end up the way it often happens in real life. As the motto “homo homini lupus” (man is a wolf to his fellow man) applies to the latter, the movie shows “musicus musici lupus”—and all are howling like dogs.

I admit that this thought is fascinating, namely that the orchestra, and music in general, is anticipation and reflection of a real or hypothetical—or rather, a utopian—situation. Theodor W. Adorno once wrote that new music is like a message in a bottle. For a long time I have criticized this image. I considered a bottle thrown into the ocean too slow as a means of transportation, even slower than the Italian postal system (which allegedly is already very slow). I wanted music to be effective in the here and now. This is the reason of my sympathy for Hanns Eisler who seemed to command faster means of communication. Unfortunately, it was only an appearance: neither was it anticipation, nor was it reflection. Today I find Adorno’s metaphor quite apt, even though I do not share, in large measure, the context in which he used it, his *Philosophy of New Music*. I like the metaphor because it appropriately captures the dialectic between anticipation and reflection: the message in the bottle addresses people who live in the future and communicates news to them that, hopefully, will speak to them as relevant. In this sense, it is anticipation. On the other hand, the message in a bottle reports of a time past, or of a different place, perhaps forgotten or unknown. In that respect, it is reflection.

More and more I have the feeling that the music we are writing today (and which reaches only a very small minority of the music-listening public) is a kind of message in a bottle. That is the tragic thing about it, but herein also lies its opportunity. It goes without saying that I would prefer music to be

⁸⁷ Cited after Heister.

heard here and now by a much larger audience. In conclusion, I would like to list several possibilities.

First: New architectural spaces should be designed which are more appropriate for the real or imagined characteristics of new musical production, more appropriate than the old spaces built for different requirements. Architects and musicians should unite to develop new possibilities.

Second: Different kinds of music should be performed in these new spaces (one could begin by doing that already in the old rooms): old music, new music, even what may not be considered music by some such as rock music—in other words, repertoires generally heard by different types of audiences. Concerts of this kind enable one category of listener to hear the music of another, which perhaps may lead to the surprising result that one group may begin to like also the music of the other. If this proposal is too scandalous, there is a more moderate variant: each concert program should contain a piece of contemporary music. I am of the opinion that neither concerts containing only new music, nor those that perform only old music, do justice to the character of our time, which is marked by the simultaneity of the most different temporal layers. The audience should be confronted with the different ways in which musical thinking can be articulated; only then it will be able to gain gradually an understanding of the music corresponding to the language of our time.

Third: This can only happen when those responsible for programming and the conductors consider it their cultural duty to program new music next to standard repertory. Unfortunately, we can observe today—and I believe that it is an international phenomenon—that the interest of concert organizations in new music is strongly in the decline; the reason given is that audiences are not interested. But that is a vicious circle: the less the public is confronted with new music, the less interest it has to face new music. We must always keep in mind the anomaly/uniqueness of our historical situation: in contrast to other times, the music of the past is the music that is most performed and heard. Today any kind of music, even a music that is remote in terms of chronology and geography, is potentially available. We are really listening mostly to the music of a small, albeit very important segment of the past. Next to it exists an avalanche of consumer music, immense and, unfortunately, also loud and not to be missed. How will new and unusual music find a hearing, if a space is not created for it next to this enormous quantity of music of all times and styles? But in order to allocate more space for new music, the awareness of its social usefulness must increase. When I speak of social usefulness, I of course mean its uselessness. You remember what I said [earlier] about the rational and the irrational. That's how I want to be understood. When increasingly more

people recognize that it is useful to do something useless, when they sense an urge for the wonderful uselessness of music, then we do not need to be concerned about the future of the orchestra and of new orchestral music.

[Source: "Über die Zukunft des Orchesters," unpublished typescript, undated; Becheri 85-7.]

Critical (But Not Overly Critical) Thoughts on the Situation of New Music in Italy

This is another assessment of the state of music in Italy written for the Austrian music journal Nomos that, for some reason, never published the contribution. Lombardi focuses here in particular on the problems facing the young composer.

"Es hat erst angefangen, wir werden immer mehr" (It just has started; we are getting more and more numerous) is a line in a song from the late 1960s performed by "Floh de Cologne," a vocal ensemble from Köln. This line comes to mind, when I think of the growing number of music-writing people in our geographically extended but relatively small country.

The high productivity of Italian music certainly has to be viewed, first of all, as a positive phenomenon, and I here I have in mind not just the positive consequences resulting from the sale of music paper and pencils. That's what one needs to compose, right? True, but one also needs erasers whose sales, however, seem to lag behind. It is that simple: music paper, pencil, and eraser are needed for composing. Nothing else? Well, there are a few other requirements—something that cannot be bought, but, even when one does not have it, can be sold (think of the story of emperor's new clothes)—namely ideas.

Do I mean to say that a great deal of what legions of composers write today lacks ideas? Yes and no. Yes, because much of what I have heard sounds like a subjective, highly personal response to the *horror vacui* that a composer faces when staring at a blank page. (A blank page of music paper is beautiful, full of, potentially, the most beautiful music, whereas a score filled with scribbles is often suited to confront us with gloomy reality.) No, because the diversity of composers indeed reflects a variety that is contradictory in the best sense of the word. Italy—not only in the field of music—is a complex universum, or rather: a multiversum. As simple-minded as it would be to stereotype Italians, it is as nonsensical to attempt a unified definition of Italian music. That applies, in principle, to any nation, but to Italy in particular, since

the country is a conglomerate of different cultures and traditions. Whoever has traveled in Italy without preconceived notions will admit that Bolzano, Milan, Turin, Venice, Rome, Naples, Palermo, and Cagliari represent each a world on their own. I do not mean to preach musical regionalism, especially not at a time when the entire world is growing together as a global village; I only want to stress the richness of the musical situation in Italy and to warn against the temptation to pigeon-hole it with simplified stereotypes. My warning is timely, because just recently I read in a musical journal of French esprit, of (fiery!) Spanish élan, of Italian refinement (well!), of German geometrical rigor (I wonder how the new barbarians feel about that), and of Anglo-Saxon non-commentism (what's that?), of Dutch panlinguism, of Swiss precision (what else!), of Scandinavian coolness (true, it is cool in that part of the world). This is not a joke, but was written by a young Italian composer, whereby I would be very eager to know—in a short, compelling, and authoritative statement—how to define the new music of Japan, China, of the Soviet Union, and of the Fiji Islands. (As far as Austrian music is concerned, I turn that question over to the editors of the journal at hand.⁸⁸)

Let's return to the legions of new Italian composers. (I intentionally use a term—namely, “legions”—which, like the term *avant-garde* that has fallen into disgrace nowadays, originated with the military). As much as I take pleasure in the enormous productivity that characterizes the Italian musical scene, I cannot refrain from pointing out a few problems.

1. The technical standards of the music composed in Italy today are, in general, quite high, which explains the extremely large number of works honored with awards at international competitions (see Gaudeamus 1985⁸⁹). But how do those works sound? Often dry, contrived, one-dimensional—in short: academic. Commanding a technique does not guarantee a meaningful composition. In Italy there are many (too many) conservatories in which many (too many) composers teach. These conservatories produce only a few (not many) real composers, but lots of music-writers endowed by their teachers with a solid technique that helps them to write award-winning pieces; in turn, these music-writers become teachers who transmit to their students their knowledge of how to write award-winning pieces, and so on. The situation reminds me a little bit of those model students in French conservatories around 1900 who produced fugues and other still-born works, manufactured according to recipes of the academy, and in turn received the *Prix de Rome* and other Prizes; they are forgotten today. The danger of academicism (known also under the

⁸⁸ The essay was written for the Austrian journal *Nomos*.

⁸⁹ [Gaudeamus is an organization for promoting contemporary music in the Netherlands.]

neologism “acadonatism”⁹⁰—after the name of a respected composer and pedagogue) seems to me to be real.

2. The growing army of Italian composers needs institutional structures in which the music they produce can be heard, especially the good music that, of course, exists next to the academic music. But here the increase in compositions is in inverse proportion to the existing structures. There have always been too few good pieces, and they become increasingly fewer. This corresponds in part to a general tendency of the musical market (I have in mind here especially the big music institutions) to resist the New (after a few shy attempts to welcome it to a certain degree) as well as the classics of modern music. Exceptions confirm the rule.
3. How should one cope with the situation? I see basically three possibilities:
 - a) Leave everything as it is. Italian musical life remains in its anarchic state. Each composer is a wolf to his colleague and tries to further his interests according to the best of his knowledge (but without conscience). Competition and natural selection rule—which, of course, is not really natural, since only occasionally (the exception confirms the rule here as well) the better composer prevails over his cleverer colleagues. And it is of no help to a composer—unpublished, unperformed, and hence unknown today—when in one hundred years he (rather than today’s celebrated manufacturers of desired but questionable musical goods) appears the more important artist. It is already a stroke of luck when ingenious but completely unknown musicians like Conlon Nancarrow or Giacinto Scelsi live long enough to experience the interest the musical world has in their works. This solution is no solution.
 - b) Create new alternative avenues of performance. Just now there is a discussion about reconstituting the Italian branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) which had been completely inactive for years. In addition to funding a national branch, there also should be established regional and metropolitan chapters which could become venues for the performance and the discussion of the most recent music. That would be a practical solution, which however presupposes political will toward collaboration that is completely lacking among composers in Italy. But there are some signs that indicate a change in this respect.
 - c) The real reason for the difficulties of contemporary music is perhaps the lack of a true social function for composing new music

⁹⁰ [The neologism alludes to the Italian composer Franco Donatoni (1927-2000).]

at a time when much of music of all eras is available through free home delivery, e.g., by radio and recordings. Here we face, indeed, an epochal change in the function of music, which needs to be seen in connection with the end of feudalism, with the technical possibilities of reproducing music, and with the worldwide distribution of that “other” kind of new music (the music which composers of “serious” music consider perfunctory, but which nevertheless constitutes a mass music heard by myriads of listeners). These developments turn contemporary music more and more into a field for a relatively small group of listeners. Because true social function and social commission are lacking, composing is in danger of becoming a solipsistic occupation—a kind of navel gazing, which, because composers’ navel are not really attractive, turns new music into non-sense for composers as well as for the listeners cornered by the composers’ effusive need to communicate. If I think of those unending cascades of superfluous notes produced every day, I am longing for a Year of Music, celebrated across the planet, in which John Cage’s 4’33’’—which, as is known, consists of silence—is declared the only performable piece.

The situation resulting from the lack of social function can and must be analyzed. But to propose solutions would be indicative of a naïve voluntarism, because the problems of new music are linked to the radical changes our understanding of culture undergoes at the moment. A partial solution consists in requesting public protection for the minority—composers as well as listeners—interested in new music. There are precedents for such a move: As the German- and Ladino-speaking minorities are protected in the Alto Adige (South Tyrol) area or the Albanian minority in Puglia (too little, it seems, in the case of the latter), the state must provide protection for the minority producing and consuming new music. Because one thing is certain: Even though the most useful (understood as most beautiful and simply true) new music is something useless for a society that exhausts itself in consumption, this useless art is also one of the most valuable treasures we have. For its protection, we must fight.

[Source: “Kritisches (doch nicht Allzukritisches) zur Situation der neuen Musik in Italien,” handwritten pages, the last page with a parenthetical note (in German): “written on March 7, corrected and copied on March 10, 1986, Milano, San Felice.” Unpublished; Becheri 86-3.]

Introduction to a Conversation with Goffredo Petrassi

The introduction prefaces the publication of an excerpt from Lombardi's book Conversazioni con Petrassi (published in 1980) in German in Neue Zeitschrift für Musik in March 1986; it was published there in an abbreviated form and appears here in full.

The interview reprinted here is an excerpt from a book I published in 1980 under the title *Conversazioni con Petrassi* (Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, Milano). The book contains conversations I had with Goffredo Petrassi between November 1977 and the summer of 1978. Why record conversations with Petrassi? The first and obvious answer is that he is an important composer, especially in Italy, where, after the death of Dallapiccola in 1975, he is the undisputed senior composer of Italian music. Only recently, and by detour of his reception abroad, did Giacinto Scelsi (who is almost the same age) gain a similar resonance in Italian musical life. A second answer is rather personal. In my youth I was not particularly interested in Italian music. Instead of becoming a student of Petrassi or of another renowned composer I preferred to study abroad, in Vienna, in Cologne, and finally in Berlin. Only later when the years of my apprenticeship were officially over (unofficially, I hope, they will continue for a long time), I “discovered” Petrassi for myself. What I found fascinating in him was the compositional freedom that never deteriorates into haphazardness as well as the rigor that never turns into dogma. The conversations I had with him, in a way, were a substitute and consolation for the lessons I never had with him. In the roughly 200 pages of the book we tackle quite a variety of issues. For instance: Can composition be taught? (Petrassi was the teacher of musicians of great diversity: Cornelius Cardew, Peter Maxwell Davies, Zoltán Jeney, Aldo Clementi, Gerardo Gandini, Ken Gaburo—to name only a few.) Other topics included the problem of Euro-Centrism, of realism in music, music's relation to the visual arts (Petrassi is a connoisseur and collector of art), individual composers (Schoenberg, Cage, Carter, Dallapiccola), and many more. On many issues we had different opinions, which is not only legitimate but also makes conversations for me worthwhile in the first place, since I prefer the confrontation of ideas (as something dynamic) to the static boredom of consensus. In our conversations a kind of confrontational consensus prevailed. I trust that the conversation will stimulate and increase the interest in the music of Goffredo Petrassi.

[Source: “Einleitung zu Gespräch mit Petrassi für NZfM, März 1986,” typescript; the conversation, an excerpt from *Conversazioni con Petrassi* was published as “Spannung vertritt die Form: Ein Gespräch mit Goffredo Petrassi,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* CXLVII, 3 (March 1986), 21-25; Becheri 80-1.]

Between Prehistory and Postmodernism

Jointly sponsored by Nuova Consonanza and the Goethe-Institut in Rome, a conference was held in the Italian capital November 6-7, 1986 on poetic and linguistic multiplicity in contemporary music with numerous participants, including—in addition to Lombardi— Enrico Fubini, Sergio Miceli, Renzo Cresti, Karl Aage Rasmussen, and Daniela Tortora. The symposium proceedings were subsequently published. The ensuing debate that was stirred up through Lombardi's contribution led the author to defend and refine his position in various additional statements that were attached to the original lecture as prefaces or postscripts.

A Postscript as Preface

The following text was written in October 1986 in Italian (see note 9). I have changed a few things here and there for its publication in German, but without desperately eliminating contradictions. The text is only a way station. Tomorrow—hopefully—I will see things differently, i.e., discover aspects that have remained hidden to me. Whoever has a closed system at his disposal may throw the first stone (preferably on the system itself). Since contradiction is the engine of any progress, it is right with me if the text not only contains contradictions but also provokes them. Thus, we may be able to advance jointly one more step. The Italian version of the text (meanwhile it also appeared in Danish under the title “Mellem prae-historie og post-moderne” in *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* 6, 1986/87) has indeed resulted in some protests (see note 15). I was not surprised about the echo, but I was surprised about the surprise, especially among friends, that my new positions engendered. New? I am not sure. The positions reflect experiences I have had in recent years in musical, philosophical, and political areas. I do not consider them as a retraction of earlier positions but as their development. I may have been surprised about the surprise (perhaps unjustly), but I was disappointed (and I believe with some justification) that some people were unable to accept as valid any other positions but their own, especially those that shatter the consensus of a more or less homogenous group. I do not want to convince anybody who does not want to be convinced, but I also do not want to have to renounce my own convictions. Nobody has a monopoly on the truth (especially since there is no truth). I think we need to learn, especially at a time of paradigm changes, to listen to those who have different opinions. Sometimes different opinions are criticized and rejected not for objective reasons, but because they “aid the enemy.” This is a dangerous argument, and we should have the courage to abolish it. Thinking in terms of friends and enemies, thinking in polar opposites is unfortunately widespread and shows disastrous results in all fields, especially in the political realm. Accusing someone of objectively helping the counterrevolution was a favorite rationale

to liquidate Stalin's opponents. Traces of such Manichaeian thinking are evident also in the relatively innocent field of music (even though today nobody—really nobody?—would maintain that, in principle, Schoenberg is good because of his atonal idiom and Stravinsky bad because he composes tonally). The musical discourse of modernism has been informed for too long a time by ideology and preconceived notions. Let us approach music without ideological eye-wear. Theory must follow music, not the other way around. This yardstick also applies to me: What I do in music may contradict my theoretical thinking. Theory is an attempt to understand in retrospect what I have done. At any moment it can be verified or rendered as erroneous by the music itself.

(November 1987)

The crisis of contemporary music is a crisis of both technology and ideas. The situation is paradoxical—an enormous expansion of technical possibilities goes hand in hand with a degeneration of spiritual motivation of music and its social function in general. Contemporary music exists at the fringes. It becomes increasingly more difficult to give a reasonable answer to the question of why one writes music. The process of secularization that stands at the beginning of modern art has reached an extreme point. It does not seem possible any longer to continue in this direction. Indeed, there seems to be a paradigm change that will result in a rethinking of the fundamental motivation of music. Granted, the meaning of making music cannot be separated today from the meaning of the totality of our activities as human beings. But this activity appears increasingly void of meaning and the world comes across as a wonderful yet frightening absurdity.

A drop of water is a world, and our world a drop of water in the universe. We cannot grasp the proportions, the origin, and the purpose of this world. We cannot grasp the meaning of those living beings who have called themselves humans. Until recently they lived like other animals and now have grown into the most powerful species on earth; they have erected powerful systems of thought and now toy with the idea whether to blow up this little speck in the universe called earth or not; nobody in the universe would notice—everything would continue as it has continued from times immemorial.

Those who do not find support in the crutches provided by faith, whether religious or secular, must feel dizzy.

It is ridiculous to think that our life proceeds according to a divine plan. It may be ridiculous, but it helps one to live.

It is ridiculous to believe that humans could build a society that realizes freedom and justice and thereby represents an alternative to paradise. It may be ridiculous, but this kind of faith, too, helps one to live.

But what if one does not believe? What if one questions the “narratives” that characterize the modern era?

The project of modernism has been guided by grand theoretical systems or, as Jean-François Lyotard puts it, by grand narratives.⁹¹ Truth, justice, freedom, universal brotherhood—these are concepts on which the legitimacy or the critique of ideas and actions are founded. The lack of faith in the narratives and meta-narratives (philosophies of history), according to Lyotard, is what characterizes the postmodern era.

And yet, does not postmodernism itself become a meta-narrative precisely at the moment when it pretends to provide an interpretive key? In addition, even though it is developing in Western societies, postmodernism denies, implicitly and explicitly, the predominance of the cultures of Western Europe over other cultures, but it really reinforces Western culture by declaring a theory as universally valid that has its roots in post-industrial societies. What sense does it make to talk about postmodernism in Africa, India, or Latin America?

I mean Postmodernism in the sense that everything and nothing is okay, that everything and nothing is possible exceeds the critique of reason and becomes a confirmation of the cynical. There is no argument against cynicism, except an argument that appears stronger the weaker it seems to be. Weak in that it is not propped up by an external authority, strong in that it is supported by the only authority that counts for human beings—their history. Human history is the attempt to give meaning to what has no meaning. It is a forced and futile attempt, because the meaning of history seems to be that it has no meaning, certainly not a meaning in the metaphysical sense. The metaphysical meaning is replaced by the strenuous effort to construct historical rationality—a Promethean task indeed. But Sisyphus rather than Prometheus comes to mind in this context. Camus distinguished between metaphysical and historical absurdity. We cannot do anything against the former. The meaninglessness of the world, illness and death are inalienable constituents of human existence. But historical absurdity—injustice, lack of freedom, war—can and must be opposed by humans, if they want to overcome their prehistory. According to

⁹¹ See Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

Marx, human beings are still occupied by their prehistory.⁹² The history of the twentieth century can only confirm this verdict. In spite of 1917—and we can add 1949 and 1961—the cruelty of human beings has in no way lessened in comparison with earlier epochs, those epochs we consider the dark ages. Light—disregarding the light produced by bombs in the sky—was rare. Heiner Müller is justified in the way he puts it: The sun of torture, as seen by Antonin Artaud, is the only sun shedding light on all continents of our planet simultaneously.⁹³ A New Man has not been sighted anywhere, only transformations of the wolf that man has been to his fellow-man since time immemorial. The ideals of 1789 are still utopian. Blood is the true symbol of the twentieth century, whose progress can also be measured in the manufacture of increasingly more and increasingly faster killing tools. The finale of Beethoven's Ninth has proven to be a tragic mockery in the form of background music to drown out the screams of human beings murdered in the gas chambers.

In view of the failure of the project “modernism” its conditions are criticized. But the risk here is to fall from one extreme into another, if the renunciation of a linear and mechanical metaphysical idea of freedom also implies an abandonment of fighting historical absurdity. In reality, the critique of modernism is an inseparable aspect of the project “that we call “modernism”—certainly ever since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. More recently, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas have shown that it is possible, even necessary, to critique aspects of modernism without giving up an articulated idea of rationality. The crisis of reason cannot be overcome by opting for irrationality. On the contrary, it calls for a greater degree of rationality derived from a more diverse and differentiated concept of reason. As in Kant's time, philosophy today needs a critique of reason by way of reason, not through its renunciation.

Many of us have looked at an anthill and thought that our activities as humans—seen from a different perspective—indeed resemble the activities of ants. Unlike ants, we have the ability to conceptualize our situation and see ourselves from a different perspective. For short moments at least, we can become observers of ourselves and thereby become aware of the irrelevancy and triviality of many of our greatest problems. Thus, we see in perspective what appears to us as the most important issues of life and gain an awareness of the absurdity of life. In the long run, however, we have to return to our everyday perspective; if we do not want to become insane, if we reject

⁹² Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Preface (Berlin: Dietz, 1971), 16.

⁹³ Heiner Müller, „Vortragstext zu einer Diskussion über den Postmodernismus“ (New York: 1978).

suicide,⁹⁴ we must return to the anthill and tackle our problems, which immediately will appear to us again as big, important, difficult, and often insurmountable. But we should get accustomed to the mental exercise of seeing ourselves from a bird's-eye perspective. We would notice that the importance of our ideas and our actions become relative with the change of perspective. Just a small change of viewpoint, and things can be seen in a completely different light. This also applies to the field of music. A view from the top or simply from a different perspective reveals that the problems that occupy contemporary music are nothing but a storm in the teapot and that the world of contemporary music, in comparison to the real world, is absolutely marginal. It is important that we keep these considerations in mind, before we turn, with appropriate energy, to the problems of contemporary music and make them the focal point of our interest.

Our prehistorical and postmodern epoch is determined by the awareness of multi-culturalism, within a given society as well as on the global level.⁹⁵

A few years ago, I wanted to buy a present for my wife in San Francisco and asked a friend, also a composer, for advice: "I would like to give her something typically American." "Give her a kimono," was his response. "Really," I questioned him, "a kimono does not seem to be something typically American." "Why not? The Japanese culture is an integral part of our culture," he insisted, and he told me that the school he attended as a child had more Japanese than Americans and that Japanese culture was as familiar to him as the American, even though he never had been in Japan.

Kimono, cowboy hat, Neapolitan pizza, hot dog, *Dallas* and *The Name of the Rose*, rock music and minimalism: Everything is offered on the supermarket represented by the world. The attitude of my friend, who grew up in close touch with Japanese culture and works at IRCAM, is a postmodern attitude.

It is the same attitude which another composer and friend of mine—he was born as the son of Polish parents in the United States, lives in Rome, teaches in Liège, Belgium, and has a Japanese publisher⁹⁶—exhibited when he told me

⁹⁴ Baudelaire, a defender of modernism, called suicide the „passion particulière de la modern vie.” For Baudelaire suicide is the seal signifying a heroic will that, according to Benjamin, does not concede anything to hostile forces. „This kind of suicide is not renunciation but a heroic passion. It is the conquest of modernity in the realm of passions.” See Benjamin, „Die Moderne,” in *Das Argument*, X (no.46), 50. Today, in an era that does no longer believe in narratives, the meaning of suicide has changed.

⁹⁵ Luca Lombardi, „Konstruktion der Freiheit: Versuch einer musikalischen Topographie,” in *Europäische Gegenwartsmusik: Einflüsse und Wandlungen*, ed. Elisabeth Haselauer and Karl-Josef Müller (Mainz: Schott, 1984).

⁹⁶ [The unnamed friend is Frederic Rzewski.]

a few years ago that it seemed to him that he lived in one city, whose Western borders were in Los Angeles and Eastern borders in Berlin. More and more we are getting used to the simultaneity of manifoldness, to the overlapping of different temporal layers, to the polyphony of different cultures, in short: to the “multiversum” (as different from a compact “universum”), as Ernst Bloch called it borrowing this beautiful term from William James.⁹⁷

This situation, of course, applies also to music. Shortly before the end of the century we know that the music of the century, now fading away behind us, is not only characterized by a stream that picks up the heritage of the great German-Austrian tradition (Schoenberg and his school are the main representatives) and finds an extension in the serial music of the fifties, but also by the invasion into Western music of the most diverse musical cultures. The byways have gained in significance to such a degree that the distinction between main route and byways can no longer be maintained; instead, there are many routes to be discovered and found. Janáček, Bartók, Ives, Varèse, Weill, Shostakovitch, Eisler, Cage, Partch, Nancarrow, Scelsi—these are all musicians who have enriched the stream of modern music with the most diverse experiences. Some of them took from the rich store of folk music—a kind of tunnel below the vagaries of history, a storage place that has preserved much of what has been destroyed by war, revolutions, and a civilization turned reckless; others enriched modern music by observing the “natural” and material-like quality of sound; or picked up ideas of Eastern modes of thinking; and others decided not to abandon the structure-establishing qualities of tonality (despite the storm that had shaken it in the twentieth century). Now we are in a situation in which culture is described not in chronological but in spatial (geographical) terms, in which the history of culture is more and more replaced by the geography of culture. In comparison with the more or less linear evolution of Western culture, we face today the simultaneity of cultures that develop along different lines, including chronologically different lines. This situation, which has been experienced more or less consciously, has indeed been overwhelming in the last few years and thereby contributed to a progressive erosion of the concept of avant-garde. With the necessary adjustments, the theory of relativity formulated at the beginning of the century applies also to the musical situation.

The multiplicity of cultures, traditions, and projects can be confusing and lead to anarchy. Granted, anarchy is vital for art, but in an institutionalized form it turns into its own contradiction—it becomes disorderly and arbitrary.

⁹⁷ Remo Bodei, *Multiversum: Tempo e storie in Ernst Bloch* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1982).

In view of the changed cultural situation, many a composer feels justified in maintaining that everything is allowed. Nothing could be more wrong. Dilettantism is never justified. There is a German proverb: “Art derives from ability” (“Kunst kommt von Können”); revealing his completely idealistic position, Schoenberg modified the adage to “Art derives from necessity” (“Kunst kommt von Müssen”).⁹⁸ Today many think that art derives neither from ability nor necessity but from wanting. That’s a dilettante’s position. The postmodern dilettante differs from his modern counterpart: The latter wanted to do it but couldn’t; the former can’t do it but is satisfied wanting to.

That way art is what one wants art to be. The dilettantism I have in mind is not necessarily defined by a lack of craftsmanship; it manifests itself not in the way something is made but in its intellectual underpinnings. Dilettantism can come across as academic slickness. This is evident in the majority of today’s compositional production in Italy. As Armando Gentilucci put it recently, “to write a combinatorial composition today has the same meaning as jotting down a fugue according to the method of Théodore Dubois.”⁹⁹ Whether composed with the combinatorial method or not, the results frequently come across as if they are school assignments, the application of a recipe from a cookbook.

Unconnected to the specific Italian situation is a phenomenon that has been quite noticeable in the last fifteen or twenty years—I mean the renaissance of tonality in various forms. George Rochberg, a Schoenberg follower and friend of Dallapiccola returned already during the early 1960s to a most innocuous form of tonality. Bernd Alois Zimmermann integrated different historical styles, including tonality, in his grand project of musical pluralism, finding its most ambitious realization in the opera *Die Soldaten*, composed between 1958 and 1960. Shortly thereafter Pousseur—in his *Votre Faust*—tackled the problem of integrating [stylistic] elements of the past. Stockhausen’s *Hymnen* of 1967 and Berio’s *Sinfonia* of 1968 are other examples. The repetitive and minimalist music, a North American phenomenon, began to gain ground after 1970.

I remember how Ligeti introduced Riley’s *In C* in Darmstadt in 1969. Even composers in the Soviet Union, who had participated in the Western avant-garde, made a neo-tonal turn, e.g., Schnittke. In the mid-1970s there emerged a group of composers in West Germany that are summed up with the label

⁹⁸ [Arnold Schoenberg, *Schöpferische Konfessionen*, ed. Willi Reich (Zürich: Arche, 1964), 37. The complete wording is: „Ich glaube: Kunst kommt nicht von Können, sondern von Müssen.“ From: „Probleme des Kunstunterrichts“ (1911).]

⁹⁹ Armando Gentilucci, „La musica contemporanea a cavallo tra due decenni: 1970-1980,” *Musica/Realtà* 20, p.67.

“New Simplicity.” The term really was used for the first time in the context of a concert series by WDR (West German Radio) devoted to North American minimalists and their German counterparts. Indeed, the repetitive and minimalist music of La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steven Reich, and, in part, also of Rzewski is simple and new; but it was a mistake to use the same term for several German composers who wanted to re-introduce the structures and ensembles of late Romanticism by way of tonality (a language they often approximated without really commanding it). It was basically a restorative attitude, which some have already overcome by taking more productive paths. The position may have been sterile, but, like the other phenomena mentioned above, it was symptomatic for the time. To understand where we are and where we want to go we must interpret the most divergent symptoms, and certainly not just those we like. This applies also to that Italian trend known under the homemade label “neo-romanticism”—clearly an absurd term to the extent that the term “Romantic” refers to the complex historical and cultural movement [around 1800]. The term is used here in its vulgar form: a romantic walk, a romantic evening, a romantic dinner with candle light—very little is needed to achieve the “romantic” state of mind. Such a caricature of Romanticism is close to a style in music I labeled “neo-gallant” a few years ago—not in any eighteenth-century meaning, but “gallant” in a general sense: elegant, pleasant, salon-like, superficial.

Both trends, implicitly or explicitly, reject the Second Viennese School and the Darmstadt tradition and take their point of departure by returning to French experiences: impressionism in one case, the *Groupe des Six* in the other.

The neo-romanticists (I call them that way for a lack of a better term, even though they are really non-definable) also toy, in a coquettish way, with rock music and engage in a Puccini cult. But what really makes the production of these composers a nuisance is their technical inadequacy. Tonality is not a slogan but a musical language that developed over centuries; even in its simplest application it requires considerable skills of invention and construction, especially if one wants to use it again today. The Beatles knew how to use it, the non-definable composers do not. Here, art has nothing to do with necessity nor with intention, and even less with ability. Art is what one cannot do. Even though I take a dim view of this trend, I believe we need to take it into account; it is a symptom that can be analyzed. A new position can become manifest as intolerance toward old positions, and it can appear initially in an unpolished form.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Hanns Eisler intelligently addressed this problem in Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), 268-69.

All these symptoms signal with ever greater clarity the crisis and the niche-character of contemporary music, its inability to capture people's interest and its separation from life. They are indicative of the fact that tonality, switched off by high culture as a force of gravity, emerges again in the long run and that it emphatically insists on its rights. This is confirmed by the kind of music most popular among audiences and therefore able to penetrate the media of mass communication. Regardless of its real value, it is music that in one way or another takes into account tonal polarity. The feeling for tonality seems to be part of human nature (in an anthropological or archetypical sense) to such a degree that human beings sometimes prefer a modest tonal piece to a good atonal one. Otherwise, it cannot be explained that Hindemith, even though he has disappeared by and large from the critical discourse, continues to be one of the most frequently performed German composers. The same applies to Respighi who, outside of Italy, is the most frequently performed Italian composer. By no means do I want to engage in cheap polemics against these composers, who could make the latter-day non-definable composers blush, if these non-definable folks weren't already anemic. Otherwise it cannot be explained that Stravinsky (to speak of a much more full-blooded musician) is more frequently performed than Schoenberg, and Bartók more often than Varèse. Not to mention the world of entertainment music, which, even though it manifests itself in degenerate forms, is founded on a kind of communal feeling for tonality. One cannot blame everything on the perfidious machinations of the market or multinational corporations or the mass media. Granted, never before has so much music of the past been available as in our era—a fact that has made the reception of new music objectively more difficult. Granted, music education—at least in Italy—is practically non-existent. But this does not explain everything. It is also true that not everything can please everybody and that mass societies lead to a massive accumulation of bad taste. But even this cannot explain everything. I personally would gladly exchange several tons of neo-tonal music for Schoenberg's atonal *Fünf Orchesterstücke*. But I believe that the absence of tonality cannot constitute the normal condition of music. Now that we have almost reached the end of this century of accomplishments but also of fear and misery (which often are the flipside of accomplishments), it is necessary to reverse the trend. More and more I have come to the conclusion that the grandiose era of the emancipation of the dissonance and of atonality is itself a big dissonance that must be resolved. Resolved into a new consonance to use the wonderful term that constitutes the name of the association to which I have the honor of speaking.¹⁰¹ I do not need to point out that, when I speak of consonance and tonal elements, I do not refer to the musical system as it has evolved

¹⁰¹ The text is a slightly revised version of a lecture given in Rome on November 6, 1986 for a convention organized by the musical association „Nuova Consonanza” in the Goethe Institute. The convention's topic was „The multiplicity of poetics and languages in music today.”

historically since the Renaissance. I refer to polarities as they have existed in music of all times—polarities that, in the final analysis, are based on objective premises like the subdivision of a monochord or the overtone series.

At this point the question about the relationship between music and nature arises, which, in turn, is part of the larger problem of the relationship between nature and culture. Gianbattista Vico puts it this way: “The nature of things is nothing but their origin within a definite time and in a definite manner.”¹⁰² Culture is nature humanized. It can become second nature. But it also can direct itself against the “reason” of nature, as is evident from the conditions, hostile to life, of today’s metropolitan areas, such as pollution and nuclear energy. Humans live according to physiological mechanisms whose origin gets lost in the darkness of ages. The most recent history of humans, which is just a few thousand years old, does not know of anthropological mutations. Despite the natural ease with which we take advantage of the most complicated technologies of progress, our behavior still resembles that of our oldest ancestors. Below the patina of historical transformations, the structure that connects us to the larger (and not always beautiful) family of animals and plants remains practically unchanged. As much as it may be mediated, our relation to nature constitutes an umbilical chord that we cannot sever, unless we want to destroy ourselves. There is no shortage of evidence for a more or less conscious drive to self-destruction. But these indications call forth activities to counter that drive: the intolerance toward a life that more and more depends on the death of nature, the movement to protect the environment, the politics of ecology. In our century of horrors, the most authentic art has captured these horrors. It captured these horrors not only in a programmatic sense but by means of its own structure, through the “unnaturalness” of its means. Not everything natural is good, as not everything artificial is bad. To kill animals for eating them seems to be natural. The musical language of Webern—artificial, even though influenced by Goethe’s reflections about nature—is one of the remarkable achievements of human thought. But is not any kind of language artificial, especially music? Yes, but it is based on a foundation that is natural in the final analysis. Natural—not in the reactionary interpretation of Rameau, for whom harmonic tonality was based on natural phenomena, and also not in Hindemith’s mode of thinking. Rather, I am thinking of Busoni who hypothesized overcoming tonality by changing (not by opposing) the relations to the natural foundations of music. In his *Essay on a New Aesthetic of Music* he wrote: “We divided the octave into twelve equal spaces, because we somehow had to help ourselves... Keyboard instruments, especially, have impressed our ear to such a degree that all tones outside the twelve semitones appear to us as impure. But nature has

¹⁰² Gianbattista Vico, *Scienza Nuova* 147, in Vico, *Autobiografia, Poesie, Scienza Nuova*, (Milano: Garzanti, n.d.), 248.

created an indefinite—indeed, an indefinite—division.”¹⁰³ Busoni wrote this as early as 1906. During the eighty years that have passed since, music has fulfilled many of Busoni’s prognoses and thus shown, as music history has shown in general, that observing the natural foundations of music does not narrow the field of action, but—on the contrary—expands it to the most diverse musical systems. Only the system that loses its connection with those natural foundations proves itself sterile in the long run.

I cite another segment from Busoni’s *Essay*: “Every motive ... contains the kernel of its development like a seed. Different seeds generate different plants, which differ from each other in terms of form, foliage, blossoms, fruits, growth and colors. Even the same plant grows differently in each specimen in terms of evolution, appearance, and power. By the same token, each motive contains its perfect shape, given *a priori*; each individual theme must develop differently, but each follows the necessity of eternal harmony. This form remains indestructible and yet never stays the same.”¹⁰⁴ Here, too, Busoni refers to nature by picking up a thought from Goethe: He does not want to stifle human creativity according to rules that are independent of the conditions of time and place; on the contrary, he wants to free it from the constraints of a single, uniform cultural development. Busoni’s thoughts can contribute to a discussion of the problem of form—a problem that must be considered one of the least settled issues of contemporary music, which frequently moves back and forth between formlessness and schematic patterns. Language and form are inseparably connected with each other. Form, which manifests itself each time in a different way, cannot exist independently of the language being used. For both form and language, Busoni (who was a devotee of form) invokes the infinite diversity that unfolds in nature from a unified principle. Today, we know that the secret of life, from single-cell bacteria to human beings, is contained in a molecule that all living organisms have in their chromosomes, namely DNA.

I do not want to confuse art and nature, the principle of organic life and the construction of human thinking. But there is a difference between confusing both areas and denying, explicitly and factually, any kind of relation between both. Man—created to walk on two legs—has invented machines to move faster on land, through water, and in the air. He can even escape the forces of gravitation and leave the atmosphere of the earth. But sooner or later he must return to earth, put his feet on the ground and use his natural means of transportation. This also applies to music. The tonal forces of gravitation (understood in the widest sense) can be excluded for periods of varying

¹⁰³ Ferruccio Busoni, *Entwurf einer Neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1954), 35.

¹⁰⁴ Busoni, *Entwurf*, 46

lengths. The explorations conducted in a state of weightlessness can be particularly appealing. But sooner or later tonality will insist on its due, and force humans to take it into consideration.

In addition to solving the problem of the separation between life and art, and between art and nature, future generations will face the task of overcoming the rupture between man and nature. Marx called this solution communism. Naturalism, in its most complete sense, incorporates humanism, the study of man. In his economic and political writings Marx considered communism the true solution of the conflict between man and nature as well as the conflict between humans. Unfortunately, I no longer have the naivety to believe that this utopian goal can be realized on the basis of a metaphysical conception of historical dialectic, and I do not believe that it is allowed to turn ourselves over to the project of saving societies that practice tyranny in the name of freedom. And yet, this utopian goal—stripped of its teleological, messianic, and idealistic character—remains the driving force that allows us to overcome the deception of metaphysical absurdity by fighting against historical absurdity. For Marx the pre-communist society is synonymous with the prehistory of mankind. In this context I recall a statement attributed to Heinz Klaus Metzger: “Everybody speaks of the end of history; I am still waiting for history to finally begin.” Are we living in a pre-historical or postmodern period? Or rather in a postmodern prehistory?

The crisis or, as has been said, the opacity of the current situation has its origin, on the one hand, in the crisis of the European model of society that functioned as the foundation for the bourgeois and modern society, and, on the other hand, the arrival of other cultures with different norms on the world stage and in the consciousness of people. The West stands for growth, development, dynamism, dialectic, time, history; the East stands for repetition, inertia, space, nature, eternity. Granted, this is a schematic simplification, which however is not entirely without justification. A comparison of European music with the traditions of Arab, Indian and Chinese music is instructive.

East and West have never been strictly separated regions. Mutual influences can be observed in many areas from religion to philosophy to art.

Today, the Western model has become a dead end. The desolate character of our cities and our societies makes it necessary to rethink the foundation of our lives in all areas. But, even once we admit that our model is neither the only one nor the best, we cannot simply imitate models that have originated in different cultural contexts. Eastern cultures (or at least some of them) adopt aspects typical of the Western capitalist society without abandoning the heritage of their respective traditions. One of the characteristics of the post-

modern era is getting used to coexistence—kimono and cowboy hat, Islam and socialism, prehistory and utopia. The physicist Niels Bohr maintained that a fundamental truth is characterized by having its opposite also to be a fundamental truth. And when he was asked “What is the opposite of truth?”, he responded: “Not a lie, but clarity!”¹⁰⁵

Having observed the arrival of Napoleon in Jena, Hegel could maintain that he had seen the universal spirit (*Weltgeist*) on horseback. Today we cannot equate the universal spirit with Reagan (whether he is wearing a cowboy hat and sitting on a horse or not), but also not with Gorbachev, Deng Xiao Ping, Khomeini, or Gaddafi. It is impossible to exchange one absolute truth for another. On the contrary, we have to recognize the complex pluralism of truths, as fundamental as they may be. Recognition does not mean acceptance. We can and must make a choice. The choice will take place neither because of fear of the last judgment nor because of an illusory hope to establish a paradise on earth; the choice will, of necessity, have something to do with our history. In the maze of threads that make up the fragile and grandiose spider web that humans have woven over thousands of years of history, man will pick up those threads that can contribute to better define what it is worth to be called human.

The new situation for humans on earth will also lead in the realm of art to a different order. But this new state of order—a new identity of art—cannot evolve from a willfully constructed system. Also in the musical realm, the history of our century confirms the arbitrariness of systems such as dodecaphony and total serialism, which prematurely drew conclusions from the entropy of tonality by advocating a willful return to order. Tonality has developed on the basis of several “objective” criteria in a gradual process to what we understand by it today.

By the same token, the new rules of musical metabolism will evolve gradually on the basis of the theoretical reflection and compositional practice of those working in different cultural situations. I am convinced that theoretical reflection and compositional practice must take into account what I have called “inclusive” music in another essay.¹⁰⁶ By that I understand a music that is based on the awareness of the pluralism of traditions, languages, materials, and techniques. I think this is one of the big questions facing a composer in the next decades. And indeed: As the different manifestations for a return to tonal polarity are indicative of a change of paradigm, there are signs of a

¹⁰⁵ Cited after Eugenio Barba, „Leoni impazziti nel deserto,” in *Oxyrhymeus Evangeliet*, Holstebro (Denmark): 1986.

¹⁰⁶ „Construction of Freedom.” [Published in this volume.]

growing awareness of the necessity to take into account the different musical realities.

There are already numerous and many-faceted examples for the perviousness of cultural and linguistic codes: from Ives to Zimmermann, from Stockhausen and Berio to mutual influences between Western and Eastern traditions, between rock music and art music. They have to be understood as symptoms of a changing situation that will continue to undergo changes in the future.

The other big issue (already hinted at) concerns a new relation to nature. Nature is understood here not as an ideal, abstract and immovable reality but as the foundation of the totality of our behavior, which affects also musical behavior. It is the issue of the ecology of music. A distorted idea of development and progress has led to a world that is close to collective suicide. The distorted idea of development and progress has contaminated also the realm of art and music.

Thus far I have used the term “trend reversal” (*Tendenzwende*). Now I would like to replace it with the expression “change of direction” (*Kurswechsel*) in order to avoid the misunderstanding that I am advocating a turn around. Even if any kind of turn-around is impossible, it is clear that not everything remains during the course of history. There are green branches and dead ones; the dead branches may have been important when they were still green. We have to distinguish between what today is green and what is dead.

The concept of ecology could lead to another kind of misunderstanding. As the ecological movement does not renounce the instruments of technological progress by simplistically invoking a return to nature, guiding music back to its natural foundation can perfectly well involve the use of electronic instruments and the computer, not just “acoustic” ones such as the violin or clarinet.

The results of a kind of music that is supported by its natural foundation will be infinite, just as the possible forms in nature are infinite. Nature responds depending on how we ask the questions. I am not advocating as a solution—and I would like to stress this—a particular organization of the musical material, but point to an approach of a more general kind. If it is valid for the small realm of music, it would have even greater justification for other areas of human activity, namely the necessity to find a more harmonic relation to what constitutes in the final analysis the natural foundations of life.¹⁰⁷ The

¹⁰⁷ My presentation has led the music critic Dino Villatico to claim that I was advocating a „return to nature.“ In turn, Villatico and I have had a useful discussion by mail that currently continues (February 1987). In this context I wrote to him in a letter of January 5, 1987: „It seems to me that you have summarized my lecture well, namely that modern music has been derailed by an erroneous concept of

intention to bridge the gap between music and nature will have a positive effect on a third important issue, namely the function of music, or rather the lack of a social function and, therefore, the marginality of contemporary music. This is a problem that cannot be solved willfully, even less so than the others, but it is a problem that no doubt is one of the main reasons for the insanity of the current situation.

One of the images that have impressed me most in my life is the beginning of a film by Jean Luc Godard that I saw twenty years ago. Initially the eye believes it sees part of the universe with solar systems and galaxies spinning around, but, once the camera moves slowly from close-up to the full picture, one recognizes that these are movements caused by a spoon in a cup of coffee. In presenting the thoughts in the essay at hand, I also wanted to move back and forth between close-up and full picture. It seems useful to change layers and look at things from different perspectives. It is all right to discuss the problems of contemporary music and treat them, as if they are the most important thing in the world, with all necessary seriousness. And this is certainly the case for us who work in the field. But precisely because we want to tackle those problems with the proper seriousness and rigor, they should be looked at sometimes as if from a distance. Only awareness of the irrationality of the great world-game allows us to dedicate us without reservations to our

progress and that it is necessary to rethink the function of those points of reference that affected the musical cultures (or just our Western culture) in the course of history. The comparison with other areas of human activity in which progress-oriented thinking led to serious problems may have been forced. Granted air pollution is different from the uselessness and ugliness of some music written today (which however can also be harmful), but, aside from any polemical exaggeration, I really believe (I may err here, but I do not think so) that music, for better or worse, participates in the general orientation of thought in a given historical period; therefore, in music as well as other areas the question arises whether we are content with what we are doing or whether it is time to give our work (and our lives) a direction that not only takes into account what has shaped our culture thus far but also what is characteristic of our physical and psychological nature. It is clear that the progress of humankind (a progress that I do not want to deny) also meant an increasing liberation from the shackles of nature. (To give a trivial example: I am pleased that we know how to protect ourselves pretty well against earthquakes.) But, apart from the fact that the path described is still very long, there are conditions we cannot escape and cannot ignore—even though we ignore them in the sense that we know very little about how our brain functions—as we cannot jump over our own shadow. Perhaps all our lectures on rationality and emotionalism, and perhaps most of our aesthetic concepts, are amateurish in reality, because they do not take into account the neuro-physiological processes that determine our reactions of pleasure and displeasure beyond all our aesthetic constructs.

„Granted, I have dealt decisively in my text with problems that really would need to be approached with great caution. But I have the feeling, even though not everything is clear for me, that I have moved in the right direction. A certain confirmation for my position are the results of linguists such as Chomsky who was able to prove that the sentence structures of different languages (disregarding their specific properties) show common features that hint at universal laws; these laws probably are connected to the structure and working method of the human brain.

„True, this insight does not prevent the existence of immense diversity of languages, but it can help to explain why these different languages have common structural properties, or, expressed differently, why languages with a completely atypical structure did not gain acceptance (...).”

[The letter is cited in the postscript or *Efterskrift* of the Danish version of the essay.]

glass bead-games. The Hungarian composer György Kurtág prefaced his composition *Omaggio a Luigi Nono* with a statement by Mikhail Lermontov: “If you look around with disinterested attention, life is an empty and silly joke.” Nietzsche quotes Plato in aphorism 628 of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*: “Overall, all human activity is not worth the great seriousness; nevertheless...”¹⁰⁸ It is the word “nevertheless” that makes life worth living and music worth composing.

[Source: “Nachträgliche Vorbemerkung” (by Lombardi in German) and “Zwischen Prähistorie und Postmoderne” (trans. Wolfgang Korb), typescripts, undated. The essay (without the “Vorbemerkung” but with a postscript or *Efterskrift*) appeared in Danish as “Mellem prae-historie og post-moderne” (translation: Karl Aage Rasmussen), *Dansk Tidsskrift* 6 (1986-87), 314-19, and in Italian (with neither preface nor postscript) as “Tra preistoria e postmoderno,” *Molteplicità de poetiche e linguaggi nella musica d’oggi*, ed. Daniela Tortora (Milano, Unicopli, 1988), 27-42; Becheri 87-1. A German publication did not materialize.]

From the Ivory Tower to the Tower of Babel

The text is, like the earlier “Construction of Freedom,” a major manifestation of Lombardi’s rethinking of compositional issues. He pleads here to abandon the aesthetics of musica negativa and compositional orthodoxies and to adopt a communication-oriented polystylistic approach to composition.

Contemporary art music finds itself in a permanent social crisis. We all know that. We also know about the manifold and complex reasons that, since the secularization of music, have gradually led to this state of affairs. Thus, I will not bring these issues up. Looking at the matter from a purely statistical angle, I have to admit that it is simply not true that new music has no audience. On the contrary, in view of the role of the mass media, we probably can venture to state that contemporary music never had such broad dissemination. Of course, other kinds of music are disseminated to an incomparably larger degree. Other kinds of music, especially those that can be subsumed under the rubric “commercial,” play a stronger part in the consciousness of people—those we encounter every day. The world of new music, with its producers, performers, critics, and audiences, is, because of its specialization, a rather hermetically closed world. What depresses me most as a composer, when I think about the dissemination of new music, is that most of the people I meet on a daily basis have not the slightest idea of what I am doing, even if they are what we may

¹⁰⁸ [„Alles Menschliche insgesamt ist des großen Ernstes nicht wert; trotzdem...“ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke II*, ed. Nietzsche-Archiv (Leipzig: Kröner, n.d.), 346.]

call educated people or people who like classical music. New music is, for the majority, a completely unknown field that they are amazed to discover exists at all.

This state of affairs, which is characteristic of the twentieth century, cannot last forever. Simply waiting for things to change on their own accord, however, is not an option. I believe that everyone who does not want music to be just a glass bead game¹⁰⁹ needs to think about how to change the situation. Even if it is a lengthy process, the process needs to get under way.

It is clear that music education in school plays an eminently important role. In Italy it is, if not non-existent, then embarrassingly poor. But even where the quality of music education is better, it should develop, more than has been done thus far, an understanding of the variety of music and the diversity of its languages, both in terms of history and geography. A person who has no interest in other cultures cannot adequately grasp his own. Furthermore, understanding the diversity of languages will help in understanding the specificity of new music. (Here one could insert an excursion about the philosopher Ernst Bloch's concept of the multiversum, namely the simultaneous existence of different cultures developing at different speeds.)

As important as a serious music education might be, one cannot expect it to awaken the interest for something like contemporary music which, in general, is far removed from people's daily life and dream world. The problem begins with the secularization of music: By separating itself from its institutionalized social function, music became "modern," but, because it did no longer have to orient itself at the needs of patrons (or those who represent them), music has increasingly become an expression of subjectivity (in the nineteenth century) or an autonomous construction (in the twentieth century). True, this path resulted in the magnificent musical monuments of the Classical-Romantic tradition and of the modern epoch, but it does not lead anywhere today. A new function, though, cannot simply be invented. Still, it is the responsibility of today's musical institutions to reflect on how to support a kind of contemporary music which interests audiences: Not by more or less bureaucratically commissioning pieces nobody wants to hear, but by stimulating composers to search for subject matters and means of communication which not only interest the specialist but a heterogeneous public-at-large. Granted, that sounds rather vague and general, and I do not want to give the impression that there are easily applicable solutions. But it is important to point out a direction which, I think, should be pursued through our work. Part of the responsibility rests with those in leading positions at broadcasting and

¹⁰⁹ [The author alludes here to the novel *Das Glasperlenspiel* by Hermann Hesse.]

television stations, in concert halls and opera houses, and at music festivals: They should be concerned not only with keeping yesterday's music alive but also act as curators of what will become the "early music" of tomorrow and is still to be written.

Exceedingly important is the role of the interpreter. It is a shame how little contemporary music is played by great performers. Even those who play it limit themselves to a small number of pieces. Obviously, it is more rewarding in terms of recognition and money to perform the old repertory. Certainly new music shares some of the blame; it is just not as enticing as the music of the nineteenth century. (This is not true, however, for all music of our century: Stravinsky, Bartók, and Shostakovich—whether we like it or not—are performed much more frequently than Schoenberg, Varèse, and Xenakis.) Why? Because the first kind of music is tonal, and the other is not. (Here, again, a longer excursion about the problem of tonality could be inserted; some aspects will be brought up in the next paragraph.)

The overall attitude of composers should change. They should stop taking themselves and their material fetishism too seriously. They should turn their attention from their navel to the world (since they are not the center of the universe). At least they should recognize that there are different musical genres which can be performed at different occasions. And that they can have different degrees of difficulty. Not all music needs to be understood immediately, but not all music must count on specialists. The non-specialist listener is not interested in whether a piece is tonal or atonal, whether the score uses graphic or traditional notation: He wants to hear a piece which convinces him, grabs him, a piece which perhaps gives him enjoyment and evokes in him the desire to hear it again. Today we are in a historical situation when such a reception of new music is possible (again). Our post-tonal and post-serial era allows us to have at our disposal different languages and techniques, which developed in the course of history. The decision in favor of this or another language and technique is no longer a question of *Weltanschauung*. Tonal or atonal—that is not the issue. No means can be rejected *a priori*; decisive is whether it is employed with compositional sensibility.

The Festival of New Music should not be the default rostrum for performing new music. It still can continue to function as a platform for experimental pieces which, by necessity (and quite legitimately so), are of interest to specialist audiences. But, normally, new music should be performed together with traditional repertory. Especially when a new composition utilizes different stylistic materials, concerts could be planned as pluralistic showcases to juxtapose old and new music. Radio and television have taught us the simultaneity of the heterogeneous, and I do not see why the concert hall needs

to separate—for reasons of purity—what in any case belongs to the same culture. In short, we need mixed programs. Even adventurous juxtapositions are preferable to a purist program consisting, for instance, only of electronic music. In the last decades we have severely underestimated a state of affairs which needs to be seriously addressed and countered, namely boredom.

Thus far I have enumerated points which should be considered by all those for whom new music is important, especially by composers. They, after all, are in a position to try to improve conditions for new music. But who is concerned with early music, music written by those composers who are already dead for such a long time that they have been nearly or totally forgotten by regular audiences? I mean composers who lived before 1700. As we know, the concert repertory consists mainly of music written between 1700 and 1900. Earlier and later music is performed much less. In the case of early music our bad memory is to be blamed. We simply have forgotten that kind of music, or forgotten how to listen to it, as we are tuned in on a different frequency. In the case of new music our good memory is to be blamed (in addition to the reasons listed earlier). The music since Bach (in other words, tonal music in a specific sense) still belongs to our acoustical landscape. Furthermore, we cannot forget it because the media constantly refresh our memory about it. The problem in both cases is our memory, which is either good or bad. In addition, the aesthetics of *musica negativa* still have some currency in the field. According to this perspective, true music is like a message in a bottle which sometime and somewhere will arrive and give testimony of a society without contradictions. It derives its legitimacy from envisioning a future situation whose realization is uncertain. Thus, we are staring either at the past or the future and forget to live in the presence. A sentence by Adorno is typical for an ideology which extends beyond music and which, fortunately, has already been overcome to a large extent. In his *Philosophy of New Music* we read: “The inhumanity of art must surpass the inhumanity of the world for humanity’s sake.”¹¹⁰ The statement, by the way, reminds us of positions taken by Brecht. In *Die Maßnahme* we hear: “Which inferior act would you not commit to eradicate inferiority?”¹¹¹ We could also cite from Brecht’s *An die Nachgeborenen*: “Alas, we who wanted to prepare the way for friendliness were unable to be friendly ourselves.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ [Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Frankfurt/Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 126. „Die Unmenschlichkeit der Kunst muss die der Welt überbieten um des Menschlichen willen.“]

¹¹¹ [„Welche Niedrigkeit begingest du nicht, um / Die Niedrigkeit auszutilgen?“ Bertolt Brecht, *Lehrstücke* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1966), 37.]

¹¹² [„Ach, wir / Die wir den Boden bereiten wollten für Freundlichkeit / Konnten selber nicht freundlich sein.“ Bertolt Brecht, *An die Nachgeborenen*, in *Gesammelte Werke IX (Gedichte II)*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), 725.]

Peter Sloterdijk has coined a grotesque paraphrase of Adorno's statement: "Air pollution in the meeting places of ecologists must exceed that of the general atmosphere for the sake of clean air."¹¹³ By transferring this pattern of thinking to the political sphere, any kind of crime against humanity can be justified from Stalin to Pol Pot and others. Even though the results in music are somewhat more harmless, the disciples of negative music assume the same intellectual position which, for the sake of a presumably better future, destroys the possibilities of the present. Horace recommended: "Laetatus in presens animus quod ultra est / Oderit curare" (Enjoy the present moment and be not concerned with what lies ahead.)¹¹⁴ Even Goethe's Faust, the prototype of restlessness (Ernst Bloch calls him the "Meistergestalt der Unruhe"—the "ultimate figure of unease") strives for a utopia in the present (although he is unable to reach it). Neither should we gamble away the possibilities of the here-and-now through projections of an imaginary future, nor should we be paralyzed by what Nietzsche called the "historical disease." According to Nietzsche, everything depends on the ability to forget. We should save from the past only what is necessary for our life, and here I am aware that each of us may need something else for survival. Good, in that case let's abolish Tradition, understood as an officially obligatory structure that has become a mere decorative prop, and let's create our own personal traditions. Granted, this would lead to a Babylonian confusion in which no one can communicate with anyone else. But the situation would hardly become less confusing than it is right now. For, our state of affairs already is a Babylonian confusion. Whether or not it was caused by God's anger over the hubris of humans attempting to reach heaven through their tower, the diaspora in terms of language and intellect characteristic of music today is a problem we need to address (or we will be destroyed by it). A heap of rubble is all that remains of the unfinished project of building the tower (I almost would have said: the unfinished project of modernism). The time is not right to resume the building project—in any case, not the building of a tower that should reach heaven. At the moment it rather seems as if everybody wanders in confusion through the ruins, searching for stones to build his own house. Will the result be non-communicating monads or even atomic bunkers? Or will the result be a town, with gardens and fountains, where people can live who are able to communicate with each other, perhaps even in different languages?

¹¹³ [Peter Sloterdijk, *Kopernikanische Mobilmachung und ptolemäische Abrüstung* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 43. „Die Luftverschmutzung in den Versammlungslokalen der Ökologen muss die der allgemeinen Atmosphäre übertreffen um der Luftreinheit willen.“]

¹¹⁴ [*Carminum, Lib. II, XVI, 25-26* in *Die Gedichte des Q. Horatius Flaccus*, ed. Gustav Schimmelpfeng (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1909), 50. Also in English: *The Complete Works of Horace*, trans. Charles E. Passage (New York: Ungar, 1981), 201.]

[Source: Published simultaneously in Italian as “Dalle torre d’avorio alla torre di Babele,” *Annali di Sociologica—Soziologisches Jahrbuch*, I,5 (1989), 195-99, and in German as “Vom Elfenbeinturm zum Turm zu Babel,” *Annali di Sociologica—Soziologisches Jahrbuch*, I,5 (1989), 200-04 (both versions are by Lombardi); in English as “From the Ivory Tower to the Tower of Babel,” *Interface: Journal of New Music Research*, XVII (1988), 173-76; Becheri 88-1. The essay was published also as one of three texts, “Tre Testi” in *Eunomio: Parole di Musica* 9-10 (Spring/Summer, 1988), 23-24. The English translation here is based on the German version.]

Con Faust

Between November 1986 and January 1991, I composed, after a libretto by Edoardo Sanguineti, the opera *Faust. Un travestimento*, which was premiered December 21, 1991 at the Stadttheater Basel.

Several compositions I wrote during this time have something to do with the opera, starting with *Canzone di Greta* (1987) for soprano and string quartet, a piece that became a scene in the opera. In 1987-88 I composed *Due Ritratti*, two portraits of Faust, capturing him in two different situations of his story. The first piece became an interlude in the opera, while materials of the second piece were used in other parts of the opera. Later I received a commission from the Saarländischer Rundfunk to complement the two Faust portraits with a third. Thus, *Con Faust* came into being. Instead of writing a new piece, I decided to rework the second piece into a new one, which, in addition to using materials of the second portrait, develops music from two scenes of the opera, namely “Hexenküche” (Witches’ Kitchen) and “Walpurgisnacht” (Walpurgis Night). Thus, the result was a transformational process (perhaps analogous to Faust’s alchemical practice) leading from concert piece to opera and from opera to concert piece.

[Composed in 1991; the typewritten program notes in German are dated April 1992]

La canzone di Greta

I composed *La canzone di Greta* in 1987 both as an autonomous concert piece and a musico-dramatic scene (the last of Act II in my opera *Faust. Un travestimento* [*Faust: A Disguise*] on a text by Edoardo Sanguineti after Goethe). Greta (Gretchen) sits at the spinning wheel and “works” at, or ponders, also the new and complicated situation she is facing since she met a rejuvenated Faust. Here, as well as in the entire *Faust*

travestimento, Sanguineti leaps from one stylistic level to another, thereby cleverly mixing highbrow and lowbrow language.

Musically, I tried something similar. The point of departure is the accompaniment figure of the Schubert song *Gretchen am Spinnrad*, which functions like a red thread for the entire piece and, in a way, accompanies Gretchen on her journey through various landscapes. Another bit of Schubertian material, a chord, transforms itself into entirely different harmonic constellations—different in terms of significance as well as in terms of their associative possibilities. The piece represents itself as a series of *different stylistic fields*—different not only from each other but, in part, establishing complete contrasts. They proceed on different stylistic levels, or use different musical languages. Nevertheless, I believe, the piece has a general unity, a common denominator. It is interesting how one field moves to the next. On the one hand, I wanted to ensure the contrasts, even conflicts, between the individual fields; on the other hand, I wanted to preserve the unity, without which the piece might have appeared haphazard and arbitrary.

As in other compositions of mine (and especially in the *Faust* opera), style almost has the function of a parameter among others (pitch, rhythm, etc.).

[Composed in 1987; the typewritten program notes in German are dated 15 January 1997]

Truth Must Quietly Clear a Path for Itself: *In memoriam* Luigi Nono

After the death of Luigi Nono (1924-1990), the journal Musik und Gesellschaft devoted considerable space to commemorate the composer and his music in its July issue. Lombardi, who had been close to Nono, was asked to contribute his reminiscences.

Even if Nono had composed only *Canto sospeso*, a work he wrote when he was 32 years old, he would have to be considered one of the most significant composers of the century.

Luigi Nono was an enthusiast and a skeptic. When he was convinced of an idea, he was often unable to understand that other people had different opinions. Thus, the author of *Intolleranza* was not always the most tolerant man, but he was always sincere and prepared to stand up for his ideas. During the course of his life he revised his positions several times, but, I believe, he remained true to his principles. He was by nature a seeker, a wanderer, someone who roamed about. Gradually it dawned on him: No hay caminos,

hay que caminar (There are no roads, we must just walk). This is the title of one of his last compositions dedicated to Andrey Tarkovsky.¹¹⁵

Now that the political systems established in the name of an ideology have crumbled like a house of cards, it would be easy to say that he was mistaken when he placed music in the service of class warfare. Nono decisively took sides against suppression of humans, but he also pointed out contradictions in his own camp. At the end of the 1970s he apparently turned away from politics to begin a new “mystical” phase (as others have dubbed it). I do not think this is the right way of putting it. Granted, he may have not been entirely satisfied with his previously held views and may have noticed already quite early the changes that were on the way in the world. Still, he remained a member of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), to whose central committee he belonged. (It is necessary to interject here that for a long time the PCI occupied a special position within the Communist league and distanced itself already quite early from the politics of real socialism.) I would say that Nono, rather than changing directions, picked up aspects of his compositional work and his personality that had been partly covered up during the 1960s—the time of his most intense political engagement. By this I mean, for instance, the lyrical component of his music: It is possible to trace a clear lyric trajectory from *Canto sospeso* (1956) to vocal compositions such as *Sarà dolce tacere* (1960) or *Un volto, del mare* (the first part of the *Musica-Manifesto No.1* of 1969) to *Das atmende Klarsein* (1981) and *Prometeo* (1984). His most personal medium was the human voice, especially the female voice, for which he designed suspended, transparent, and gently carved sonorities. No wonder that he loved Bellini, whom he planned to honor by writing an essay about him. This unbelievably beautiful and fragile music, of course, was contrasted, again and again, with hard-edged, aggressive sounds. This trend can be traced from *Canto sospeso* and earlier works to the late compositions. We may see in the juxtaposition a utopian aspect, on the one hand, and a reflection of hard and contradictory reality, on the other. But that’s the way Nono was: gentle, courteous, generous, or else choleric, unfair, opinionated. Such dichotomy is expressed in an exemplary way in a little-known work of 1969, the *Musica-Manifesto No.1* mentioned earlier. It consists of two parts. The first, *Un volto, del mare*, for two sopranos and tape, is an extremely sensitive and poetic piece, the second is a kind of “sonorous wall” in which slogans of the May riots in Paris and original sounds of the demonstrations have been combined to form a most unusual manifesto of the 1968 uprisings.

In later years Nono preferred to speak in a subdued and soft voice, manifesting “that weak messianic power,” as it is called in a fragment by Walter Benjamin

¹¹⁵ [A well-known Russian motion-picture director (1932-1986) whose films won acclaim in Western Europe in the 1970s and who left the Soviet Union in 1984.]

which plays an important role in *Prometeo*. Reflecting on the possibilities of changing human conditions, Nono meanwhile trusted that “weak power” more than revolutionary force. An important truth must quietly clear a path for itself. Nono usually spoke softly in real life as well as in his music. I see a certain analogy between the tall man who spoke so quietly that people occasionally had trouble understanding him and the huge drum which in his piece *Con Luigi Dallapiccola* (1979) is played very softly.

In 1988-89 the two of us were guests of the Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Studies) in West Berlin and lived for several months in the same house. We frequently saw each other and had long conversations. He obviously went through a crisis then, but it was difficult to discern to what extent it was caused by personal matters (conditioned perhaps by his illness) or philosophical issues and ideological issues. Clearly his last pieces, which sound like farewells (in this respect similar to the last compositions of Bernd Alois Zimmermann), communicate a great fatigue, a desire for quietude and silence. But Luigi Nono again and again showed fits of enthusiasm: When he loved somebody or something, he did so completely. He could be enthusiastic about people, cities, books, movies, pictures. As long as he lived he wanted to live fully; even though he knew about the seriousness of his illness, he ate and drank like a young and healthy man.

I loved his curiosity and his openness toward different traditions and scientific fields. The audiences of his lectures were often confused by the flood of quotations and names from the most diverse historical periods, cultures, and geographic areas with which he overwhelmed them. But in his music he proceeded quite differently. I admire the strictness with which he filters the different cultural experiences. In *Prometeo*, for instance, Nono seems to reflect the vocal practices of the synagogue and Venetian polyphony. But these traditions are never explicitly quoted; they have been completely absorbed by him. In other words, the listener experiences those traditions as Nono’s own musical voice. He proceeded with the same strictness and caution in using the materials provided by live electronic media. How would other composers have used (and, indeed, they did) those materials to generate a powerful avalanche of sound! Not Nono, who utilized the most advanced technologies to create the most refined musical nuances.

In conclusion, I would like to express the wish that in the future his music be heard and loved more than it is today. Something similar applies to his great father-in-law Arnold Schoenberg: Both Schoenberg’s and Nono’s music is respected but not always sufficiently appreciated. I know few works of contemporary music which deserve more attention than the works, especially the vocal works, of Luigi Nono.

[Source: *Musik und Gesellschaft* XL (July 1990), 345-46; Becheri 90-5. Published also in Italian as "Ricordo di Luigi Nono," *Eunomio: Parole di Musica* 17 (Fall 1990), 34.]

FAUST. UN TRAVESTIMENTO

The composition of the Faust opera extended over five years, from 1986 to 1991, a time of tremendous political changes in Europe and the rest of the world. It allowed the composer to apply his idea of "inclusive music" to a musical genre traditionally inclined to absorb different stylistic languages and materials.

In April 1987 I wrote a letter to Claus H. Henneberg:

Since I grew up as an Italian with German culture (I attended the German School in Rome), an eminently German topic like Faust—reinterpreted by an Italian poet—is a subject matter that caters to the two souls, one Italian and the other German, I harbor in my heart.

Furthermore, at the moment I am in a phase of my life during which I question my earlier positions. My faith is doubt. I consider doubt not a paralyzing but a productive force, a force that propels me to search further. There can be no better companion on this part of the journey than Herr Professor Dr. Faust!

Sanguineti's text moves in virtuoso fashion on different linguistic levels. ... In past years, I have addressed several times, both in theory and in practice, the issue of an "inclusive" music, a kind of music that, without assuming the character of supermarket merchandise, reflects the multiplicity of standpoints—real, philosophical, and musical. This music also "includes" tonality, albeit not in a naïve or restorative manner. (According to Sanguineti, "tonality is a special form of atonality"—in the same sense as rhyme constitutes a special case of free verse.)

Since then four years have passed. The opera was finished in January of 1991. It is a peculiar feeling to have worked on a piece for such a long time. Life continued, I continued to experiment—in short: I changed. All this left traces on Faust, even though the opera is a travestimento, a reworking, a disguise. It certainly has not become an autobiographical work, although alienation and empathy merge—empathy in the individual, alienation in society, and vice versa. But Faust for me is a human being, an intellectual who has been disappointed by the theories and ideologies in which he believed. Still, he does

not despair or resign, but tries, albeit as an engaged skeptic without illusions, to gain clarity about himself and his relation to the world.

As is appropriate to the travestimento character of Sanguineti's text and my "inclusive" approach to composition, different musical experiences contribute to the opera: the serious and the burlesque, the refined and the trivial, the popular and the artful. In this context, the comic and the tragic are not opposites; indeed it is impossible to discern whether what appears to be comic is in reality not tragic, and vice versa. Without prejudice and fear of physical contact I have used, case by case, the materials and the stylistic ambience that were suggested to me by each dramatic situation. In spite of the multiplicity of stylistic layers the opera has a unified color, which is also achieved by the unified basic material (the Faust, Mephistopheles, and Gretchen chords). The personality split that is characteristic not only of Faust but of all protagonists (and the composer is no exception either) results, on a different level, in a contradictory unity.

After several years of learning and wandering, I wanted to write a kind of music—a station on a continuous journey—in which polarities like comedy and tragedy, spontaneity and calculated planning, complexity and simplicity generate and condition each other. I know that to attempt this today is almost presumptuous. I would not have tried to tackle the issue with a less devilish subject. The spirit that always negates helped me—by negating the negation—to achieve a hard-won new immediacy of musical gesture. To that spirit I owe thanks.

[Source: *Programmheft der Basler Uraufführung der Oper 1991*: "Über Faust. *Un travestimento*" (citing in the first three paragraphs a letter of the composer to Claus H. Henneberg, who provided the German version of the opera, of April 1987), 10-14 (the autograph reproduced in the program booklet as facsimile is dated "20 July 1991, Salto di Fondi"); Becheri 91-3.]

The Beautiful Woman in the Fish Pond: Difficulties in Communicating Musical Truth(s)

In 1988-89 Lombardi lived for a year in Berlin (West) as Fellow of the Advanced Studies Institute. (Another guest at the Institute was his friend and compatriot Luigi Nono.) The text here was his Fellow Lecture at the Institute.

When I recently visited a composer-friend of mine who manages a festival of new music in a city in Northern Italy and asked him how the festival was

going, he looked distressed: The interest of audiences had declined so much that he felt compelled to rethink the concept of the event; at first people had come in great numbers because they were curious to know about new music, but meanwhile they had gotten to know it, and for that reason they did not come any more.

Obviously, the relationship between new music and audiences is difficult, so difficult in fact that information can worsen rather than improve the situation. What makes matters appear even worse is that new music frequently encounters a lack of understanding with educated persons, even those with a musical education. Something is fishy in the realm of tones! But what? Is the music, the composer to be blamed? Is it the audience, its lethargy? Or should a third party be found guilty?

Unfortunately, it is not only the new music which is complicated, but the many and multifaceted causes which have contributed to today's situation are also complicated. Thus, it is not possible to name *the* reason which has disturbed the relation between producer and recipient, and it is even less appropriate to propose a solution to a situation which neither composer nor listener like and for which neither is responsible. For *the* music, including *the* new music, is a mirage. On the contrary, there are a multitude of languages, styles, and composers that cannot be subsumed under one rubric. This has been the case, in principle, in previous ages, but even more so today since we are aware of the plurality of cultures, and this awareness extends in several directions: vertically (pertaining to our own European/Western cultural orbit) as well as horizontally (encompassing the rest of the world).

New in this century, for instance, is the division between "serious" and "entertainment music" (whereby the latter is a catch-all for a multitude of very different musical practices). The same is true of the multifaceted universe of new, so-called serious music, which divides into different directions and projects. As long as we still could believe in the world spirit—arriving either on horseback or in the guise of a twelve-tone machine—it was possible to speak of a main path of new music. This path begins with Wagner's *Tristan* and continues with Mahler, Schoenberg, and Webern to integral serialism of the 1950s and, beyond, to those manifestations nourished by it even today. This is not completely wrong but only defines *one*, albeit important, strand. I consider such linear, teleological form of writing music history utterly problematic. But even if we assume that there is something like an expressway of new music, less traveled country roads are often not only more pleasant but also can lead us to more interesting discoveries.

If we look at new music from a bird's eye perspective, however, we can, in a rough outline, distinguish between two big camps: music which (still) functions as a language, and music which does not do so (any longer).

Language is an intersubjective abstract communication system (and here the adjective "intersubjective" needs to be stressed). What is not intersubjective does not function as language—whereby I do not want to exclude the possibility that it could become one.

Tonality and the major-minor harmonic system is a language. As does every language, it undergoes constant change: thus we can distinguish the tonal language of Haydn, Mozart, and the young Beethoven, of early Romanticism, of late Romanticism, and so on. A language consists of a reservoir of signs and meanings (*langue*) from which every composer can fashion his individual voice (*parole*). Even after tonality was renounced by the Second Viennese School (Schoenberg and his students), it did not cease to exist; in fact, it determines, to a large extent still, our musical experiences today—be it in the form of the often shriveled structures of entertainment music or in the music of the Classic-Romantic tradition which is almost exclusively heard in concert halls. Important composers of the twentieth century have continued to use tonality—among them Stravinsky, Hindemith, Weill, and Shostakovich. During the last two decades there has been in the whole world an increasing return to tonality or to some of its components; this suggests that the cultural tradition of tonality is so strong that it cannot be quickly replaced by another one. It looks as if this trend will continue to co-exist with others.

The suspension of functional harmony (in other words, of that hierarchical system that regulates chord successions in classical tonality) had led, already with Debussy, to a weakening of goal-directedness [in music]. The dissolution of the musical syntax produces the impression of stasis. Development is replaced by repetition or a quasi-centrifugal explosion of events into many different directions. Music, an art organized in time, tends to become an art that unfolds in space. This is obvious to a much greater degree with Webern than with Debussy. Webern appears, ambivalently positioned, at the beginning of a qualitatively new phase of modern music. On the one hand, he is the fulfillment of the Western tradition which is preserved (and completely assimilated) in virtually every measure of his music; on the other hand, he introduces the period of a radically new music which constitutes itself no longer as an intersubjective language. Such music is anything but arbitrary; on the contrary, it is based (as was the case also with music espousing total serialism in the 1950s that derived from Webern) on a complicated and strict system of what to do and what not to do. But it is a system of rules that cannot be presupposed to be known by the listener; indeed, often it cannot even be

fathomed by the listener. Serial composers may have nurtured the hope that the new system, over the long run, would be generally accepted. But that did not happen. The system has either been rejected, for instance, through the chance music of John Cage, which—surprisingly—arrived at the same musical results—not through the rigorous techniques of serialism but through aleatoric operations. (Perhaps not a surprise at all but a premise of information theory: When everything can be expected, nothing in particular is expected, which in turn lowers the informational content and, by extension, blindfolds the listener who cannot distinguish anything in the ensuing darkness: All cats look grey at night.) Or the system has split into a myriad of private techniques, resulting in music's *de facto* resignation from being a form of communication.

I think it is especially this type of music which causes the difficulties. Music which abandons its language character induces the layman to say: "I do not understand this any longer." And he is right and wrong at the same time. Right because he notices that, unlike traditional music, there is no linguistic code that would allow him to follow a logical musical discourse; wrong because he does not know that there is nothing to be understood—unless we mean by "understanding" the recreation of the constructive principles of the composer, something which is neither possible nor necessary in the act of listening, but which can be accomplished through analysis. This kind of music, of course, is music for specialists, clearly something legitimate, but we should not mistake the concert hall for a musical research laboratory. How did a music disconnected from language emerge? And why was new music unable to develop an intersubjective form of communication?

First, the crisis of music begins with its secularization. Music which emancipates itself from serving court and church becomes *modern*, but it loses at the same time its social function, a purpose which is only partly compensated by the development of concert life. The social function recedes into the background in favor of aesthetic reception. The practical function of music gives way to the composer's need for expression and confession. This process, which began with Beethoven (at the latest), still continues today.

Second, historicism (a mode of inquiry emerging in the nineteenth century) leads to the discovery of the music of the past. Not only contemporary music is being performed but also (and nowadays especially) the music of previous masters. This historical attitude has increased in our century through the means of technical reproduction to such an extent that now 90% of all music performed in the concert hall is music of the past. New music thus lacks the social function as well as the need to be heard, since audiences are satisfied with two hundred years of music. (The music performed today was, roughly

speaking, composed between 1700 and 1900.)¹¹⁶ Third, there is an ever-widening gap between serious and entertainment music. Unlike other eras, the “serious” composer is permitted to delegate the needs for entertainment to a caste of musicians, who are especially singled out for such tasks and who, in his eyes, are of a lower rank.

The fourth reason has to do with the application of the concept of progress in musical matters. This belief in progress developed at a time in which scientific and technical progress increasingly informed one’s world view. Sometimes art was confused with science in a rather naïve fashion, whereby musical progress was identified solely with the technical aspect of composition. This pathos of progress has contributed to the increasing acceleration with which the traditional linkage of music to language was altered and overcome, resulting in the emergence of a music divorced from language. Even though skepticism about the idea of progress, not only in music, has increased, there are still many composers today who adhere to this positivist tradition. Granted, it is legitimate to use means provided to music by new technology, but it is nonsense to make the aesthetic “justification” of a composition depend on this or that device. “You can make music also with a laurel leaf,” a friend once told me. Music is a type of thinking that articulates itself in tones—what kinds of tones are used to turn this thinking into a concrete manifestation is relatively unimportant. But it is significant that my friend, even though he reduced his instrumental aspirations drastically, selected a laurel leaf—in other words, an object associated with recognition and honor—rather than a more prosaic cabbage leaf. Let’s sum it up: The means of producing sounds are not completely irrelevant, but it does not make sense to link the aesthetic legitimacy of a composition to the nature of the material, to whether a violin or a computer are used. Music means manipulating relations between acoustical events. Whether these events consist of sixteenth notes or perfect octaves is completely irrelevant for the stringency of the compositional process.

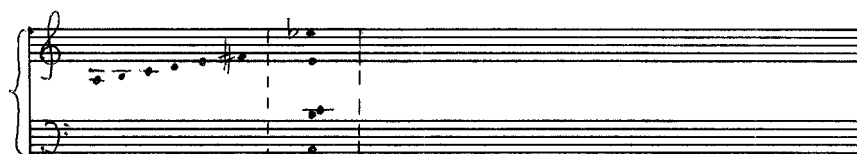
Finally, there is yet another factor that should not be underestimated. What we know and hear of the music of the past is the result of a process of historical filtering. What has come down to us is a fraction of what has been composed. We are not willing to listen to all pieces of even the greatest composers, not to mention those who appear to us today as insignificant or forgotten, even though they may have been famous during their time. For obvious reasons we cannot apply such a filter in the case of new musical productions. Whatever is

¹¹⁶ [The canon of orchestral music performed in the United States differs from that listed by Lombardi as typical for European orchestras. In fact, the symphony orchestras in North America feature very little Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, but frequently present works by Debussy, Ravel, Sibelius, Stravinsky, and Shostakovich.]

being composed today demands, initially at least, to be heard, even though most may be considered a *corpus delicti* in prosecuting the authors of such music for stealing irretrievable hours of life from their listeners.

In view of all these factors, it is really a miracle that a kind of music exists which does not fulfill a social function, does not satisfy the aesthetic needs of the audiences, and, furthermore, lacks an entertaining character. And yet, quite a lot of new music is composed and performed today. It seems that the need of humans to produce and to hear something new is stronger than the crisis in the relation between music and audience generated by social and historical processes. But it also must be said that in recent times composers have searched with greater awareness for ways to establish new contacts with the listener. One indication for this quest is the recall of various forms of tonality or, more generally speaking, of a music structured clearly along polarities, i.e., toward points of reference. Schoenberg justified the presence of audiences during performances of new music by saying that an empty hall does not sound well. Today's composers are more and more convinced that the presence of an audience does more than improve the acoustics.

The differentiation between music that is similar to language and music that is divorced from it is, of course, a simplification. There are many in-between areas in which both types are present. Thus, a piece which basically follows a linear structure (with a clear beginning, a development with or without climax, and a marked closure) can exhibit elements of stasis when time is suspended, as it were, and the listener's attention is focused, regardless of what comes before and after, on the sonorous moment—a moment which also can be quite lengthy. By the way, this is an experience which, to certain extent, only new music has made possible, namely the acceleration and retardation of time. The more we concentrate on individual sound events, the more we become aware of the stretching of time. Thus, a single tone can be a microcosm which wants to be explored as if under a microscope, comparable to a drop of water which



Example II, 6: Basic Material of *Klavierduo*

contains an entire world to be discovered. Vice versa, moments of a clearly developmental nature can occur in a piece which is non-linear, essentially static, and which basically lacks beginning and closure. I am interested in

both possibilities, the linguistic-linear as well as non-linguistic, centrifugal, fragmentary.

An example for a language-oriented linear kind of music is the first movement entitled “Gradus de Parnasso” from a three movement composition for two pianos.¹¹⁷ This movement represents an exclusive compositional attitude; it excludes, as far as the selection of the material is concerned, many other possibilities, because I fashioned it from only two elements: a six-note scale and a five-note chord (see Example II, 6)

Example II, 7: *Klavierduo* (p.9)

The scale can be replicated several times, whereby the figures generated in this way can vary in length (in my case from one to 144 notes); it can ascend or descend and be played at different speeds. From the five-note chord I generated, by means of inversion and selection of the resultant aggregates,

¹¹⁷ Luca Lombardi, *Klavierduo* (Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1983).

thirteen additional chords. Since the original chord does not consist of stacked thirds (a building principle of tonal music), its inversion reveal much greater differences than would be the case with traditional chords consisting of three, four, or five tones (see Example II, 7).

These chords are characterized by varying degrees of harmonic tension; they are, simply put, more or less dissonant.

The musical score is for a Klavierduo (piano duo) and consists of two systems of music. Each system has two staves, one for each piano. The notation is complex, featuring many chords and intervals. Some notes are marked with '8va' and '15va' to indicate octave transpositions. The score is divided into two systems, each with a 'ca. 5'' marking above the first staff of the second system.

* Vedi nota ** a pag. 9.

* See note ** on page 9.

** Non è necessario che i due pianoforti siano sincroni.

** The two pianos need not be together.

Example II, 8: *Klavierduo* (p.10)

This is something very important for me, namely how an object can be transformed into something else, not by changing its components but simply by reordering them. My five-tone chord and its derivatives are not used like the building blocks in traditional music; therefore, they are not combined with each other according to the syntactic principles of tonal music. Their

succession is determined, depending on the result I am striving for, either by statistical principles of permutation or on the basis of subjective selection. Here are two examples for the different usages of the chords. The first example shows a succession generated by aleatoric-statistical permutations (see Example II, 8). For the second example I select a chord which generates an entire section consisting of 15 measures (see Example II, 9).

Example II, 9: Klavierduo (p.20)

The piece, as I said earlier, is language-oriented. But what establishes the language-character of a composition which does not follow any conventional syntax, any kind of major-minor tonality? It is to be found, I think, in the compositional procedure which distributes musical energy, which regulates tension, release, and the succession of contrasting sections of different kinds in general, and which generates coherence between individual events. This piece follows a musical logic with all the surprises and associative leaps which differentiate this logic from other kinds. The music is not to be predictable, but plausible.

The scale, like the chord, changes its appearance as well, depending on how and in which context it is used. A scale is not merely a scale but a material from which different sonorous objects can be fashioned. When I play the beginning of the piece in slow tempo, it comes across like an insignificant etude. But when I accelerate the tempo, there is a switch from quantity to quality. The object is transformed: Individual notes are no longer important; important is the overall effect which may be likened to a sonorous carpet or curtain (see Example II, 10).

Velocissimo

Piano 1
pp e legatissimo sempre
senza Ped.
15b

Piano 2
pp e legatissimo sempre
senza Ped.
8b

N.B. Non si richiede qui sincronia tra il Pf. I e II. È importante però che non venga interrotta la continuità, che non si creino « buchi ».

N.B. Pianos I and II do not necessarily need to be in synchrony. It is important, however, that the continuity of the line not be interrupted and that no « holes » be created.

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S. 9079 Z.

Example II, 10: *Klavierduo* (p.1)

* A un cenno del I pianista, possibilmente invisibile al pubblico, Pf. I e Pf. II alzano di colpo il pedale e si interrompono dovunque siano arrivati (tranne la m.s. del Pf. I).

* At a sign from Pianist I, which should not be perceptible to the audience, Pf. I and II raise the pedal abruptly and stop where they are (except for the l.b. in Pf. I).

Example II, 11: *Klavierduo* (p.24)

The scale thus far has been heard in different registers (high, low, medium) and always softly. But when I perform it only in the low register, in slow

tempo and forte throughout, it gets a completely different meaning and, perhaps, can no longer be identified with the original scale (see Example II, 11).

By suddenly interrupting the thunderous texture and exposing the scale in its naked simplicity, the piece, which seemed to end dramatically, takes a turn to the humorous and ironic.

Changing perspectives are, for me, decisive as a composer. I look at an object from different angles and make a discovery. Even though it is the same object, it always reveals different aspects. I do not want to move from the relatively harmless realm of music to the minefield of philosophy, but I have to say that I can relate to the axiom (formulated, however, not by a philosopher, but by the physicist Niels Bohr) that the opposite of one truth is another truth.

The problem of a multitude of standpoints or truths is represented, in a quasi programmatic way, by another direction of contemporary music. Let me call it *inclusive* to differentiate it from the *exclusive* compositional position just described. By this I mean the inclusion of several codes (styles) in one and the same work. Such an inclusive piece is *La canzone di Greta*.¹¹⁸ It is based on Edoardo Sangineti's *Faust: Un travestimento*, a transformation of Goethe's *Faust I*—in this case, of the passage known through Schubert's song *Gretchen am Spinnrad*. I use different stylistic means in the piece. My point of departure is the piano figuration of Schubert's song (see Example II, 12a), and I change Schubert into a minimalist, bringing him close to American minimalist music (see Example II, 12b).

Nicht zu geschwind. ♩. = 72.

sempre legato Mei-ne Ruh' ist

pp
sempre staccato

Example II, 12a: Schubert, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*

Another component from Schubert, namely a chord, is transformed by means of inversion into several chords which are harmonically and semantically

¹¹⁸ Luca Lombardi, *La canzone di Greta* (Milano: Ricordi, 1987).

Example II, 12b: *La Canzone di Greta* from *Faust: Un travestimento* (mm.870-90)

246

6. 880

pa- ce l'ho per- du- ra,

889

885

6. 885

il cho- re sta gon- fa

completely different. Schubert's accompanimental figure accompanies Greta on a journey through different stylistic landscapes. There are several stylistic layers, tonal and atonal, including even some stylized rock music.

In inclusive music, style becomes a kind of parameter among others (pitch, duration, register, etc.). The different styles underscore in this piece the oscillating character of Greta, who is not treated by Schubert and me as a precise unified personality but as an agglomeration of several different characters, and the different historical perspectives and contexts from which Greta can be viewed would allow this kind of mirroring to continue at will.

The problem of inclusive music has occupied me during the last fifteen years again and again. The use of different styles and codes is nothing new. In literature there are some early, albeit isolated, examples: *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. In music the integration of heterogeneous elements begins to assume an important role with Mahler. In his music, the fringes of the officially sanctioned culture, including the trivial and the banal, claim their rights with insistence. In an even more emphatic way this is true of Charles Ives: Folk music, the European classical tradition, and avant-garde experiments become for him legitimate means of expression, which he uses as a composer in a compelling, albeit completely unreflected, way. It is no accident that both composers were contemporaries out of tune with their times; and it is also no accident that their time did not come until the experience of a culture supported by mass-media made listeners receptive to such works.

In inclusive music, as I envision it, the conventional unity of a piece, which [always] has a touch of false harmony and reconciliation, is given up in favor of a multiplicity of different perspectives. Being polycentric rather than concentric, labyrinthian rather than linear, it represents not one truth but several complementary truths. Similarities to the real world are neither accidental nor unintended, because the contradictions reflected and embedded in music (music understood here as a process of cognition) point toward precisely such reality. In this multiversum—a term of William James taken over by Ernst Bloch to grasp the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous—the different materials, techniques, and languages have the same rights. Even major-minor tonality has its justification, as classical physics was preserved, not replaced, by quantum physics. It is the task of the composer to establish a significant and musically compelling relation for the different means and styles.

I am unable to predict to what extent this compositional position may contribute to bridging the gulf between new music and audience. In any case,

the position has nothing to do with restoration; it is, on the contrary, a post-modern attitude, an attitude that retains the core of modernity (which one could describe as the deconstruction of an all-encompassing rationality) and raises it to a new level of historical consciousness. Such an inclusive approach to composition, of course, cannot prevent a listener from selecting just parts of the work, thereby losing sight of their relation to the whole, nor prevent the listener from being superficially satisfied with tonal and consonant passages, thereby completely missing the meaning of a compositional strategy which uses tonality, among other elements, quasi enclosed in quotation marks. What matters is indeed the relation between the individual layers that balance and qualify each other.

In the final analysis, of course, everybody will hear in a piece what he can hear and wants to hear. Not everything will please everybody. Not everything can and should please, as the following story from the Zen tradition exemplifies: A very beautiful woman lived in a village; she was so beautiful that all its inhabitants desired her. One day this beautiful woman jumped into a pond—and the fishes were frightened.

[Source: *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, XLIV,9 (September 1990), 754-64; Becheri 90-1.]

A Roman in *Wendland*

13 August 1990

During a time of tremendous historical changes leading, among other events, to the unification of the two German states, Wolfgang Storch conceived a project Ein deutscher Traum (A German Dream)—as a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk, featuring concerts by the Bochum Symphonic Orchestra throughout the 1990-91 season and the publication of a book with historical documents, reminiscences, photographs, and essays on the vagaries of modern German history. Lombardi contributed a text, in which he reflects, with considerable irony, on his multiple identities as an Italian in Germany and a German in Italy, as a composer of an Italian opera on a very German subject matter, and on working in the Wendland, a region close to the border, rapidly disappearing at the time, between both German states. The ironic subtext is underscored by the fact that Wendland is not only a geographical area, but, in 1990, meant “country of change”, or, less flattering, perhaps, “country of turn-coats.” The date of writing is the thirty-ninth anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall—a monument of East-West division that, by the summer of 1990, had virtually crumbled.

1. Lukullus

I write these sentences at Lake Albano, which I can see from the terrace on which I am sitting. Directly opposite from me is the silhouette of Castel Gandolfo with the papal summer residence. Here, as in Berlin, where I recently lived for a year, there is a continuous throng of Polish people. To Berlin they go on pilgrimage to offer their merchandise; here the business is more immaterial and more sacred.

In a few days I will return to the Wendland where I have already spent several months. The Wendland is a region (north of Hanover and south of Hamburg) which, like a nose, juts into the territory of the former German Democratic Republic, the GDR or East Germany (this was at one time a German state, even a very German state) and which always has been considered a dead-end area. I like it there quite a bit. I live in a so-called *Rundling*, a little village consisting of half-timbered houses arranged in a circle around the village green. There are no stores. For shopping I drive to Lüchow, a little town without any particular characteristics where I can get almost everything I need for my livelihood. I can buy Canetti in the bookstore; it is more difficult to find real parmesan cheese, impossible to get fresh basil.

The unassuming, plain, and quiet landscape is good for my soul. The relationship between man and nature seems to be intact. (However, a nuclear-waste facility has been planned in nearby Gorleben.) On my neighbor's house storks are nesting, the first such birds I have seen in my life. In fact, I have rarely seen so many birds flying and singing as in the Wendland and have trouble getting used to them, especially when they are gathering at the crack of dawn in the linden tree outside my window. Being a person who, as a composer, experiences reality through the ear, I regret, time and time again, despite my love of nature, that I cannot close my ears like my eyes, shutting out not only the noises of the city but also the sounds of the rural idyll. Often the regret also overcomes me in the concert hall. What did God have in mind when he made humans this way. I must approach the Polish pope across the lake and ask him to forward my inquiry.

In a nearby *Rundling* with the beautiful name Satemin, there is a restaurant with the promising name Lukullus owned by an Italian. The proprietor is an engineer with a doctorate who decided to retire early and exchange Apulia for the Wendland. When I had a meal in the Lukullus a few days ago, it was the time of the world championship in soccer. Italy had not yet been beaten by Argentina, but had just won, I believe, over England. "We have won!" I was greeted by the host. The word "we" signified the pride of the Italian who is pleased about the achievements of his country (even though he prefers to live

elsewhere), achievements which were generated merely by several skillfully applied kicks of the feet. I do not know anything about his relation to his native country, but I can understand very well that one can love Italy, in fact more easily and sooner, from the distance! Do Germans experience something similar with Germany?

The early retiree from Italy, who lives in a beautiful and solitary *Rundling*, travels to Italy once a year and returns with wine and oil from Apulia. Apparently he has not been converted to beer, and what he offers in his restaurant is Italian cuisine, even though he admits that he made adjustments to cater to the German taste. When an Italian shows up in Satemin (a rare event indeed), he dons the chef's apron himself and prepares something like *orecchiette col cavolfiore*, a specialty from Apulia which I only got to know in the Wendland. "The Italians eat," he pronounces with self-awareness, "while the Germans nourish themselves." Important for Germans, he maintains, is, above all, quantity. Indeed, recently I encountered the term *Sättigungsbeilage* (saturation supplement) in a menu in a restaurant in Salzwedel (in the territory of the GDR). What a difference to Japan where the feeling of saturation is almost a sin! Thus, everybody has an idiosyncratic relation to sin. "Che peccato!" (what a sin!) in Italian means as much as "too bad." "Too bad that it is raining today" is expressed as "what a sin that it rains," whereby Jupiter Pluvius himself is the sinner, prohibiting hapless human devils from making an excursion to the beach.

But back to Lukullus. What is the psychological mechanism which lets a man from Apulia end up in a *Rundling* in the Wendland? Or, similarly, what makes a native Roman like me exchange the sights of Lake Albano for the rapeseed fields and stork's nests and relaxing wilderness of the Wendland?

2. Without Roots

I attended the German Gymnasium (in Rome) long enough that I can no longer identify, in an unreflected way, with "typically Italian" modes of thinking and modes of conduct (if there are such stereotypes). Attending the German school, of course, did not turn me into a German. But it made me perceive many things in my own country as strange, even made me feel like a stranger sometimes. I do not want to attribute blame (or perhaps rather merit) for this to the German school as the sole reason. Perhaps it is the Jewish blood flowing through my veins that prevented me from developing roots. Somebody without roots can live everywhere (or nowhere?)—why not also in Germany, especially if one knows the language, and if one is, as I am, fairly familiar with German culture. Without much ado it is nowadays possible to

hop on a plane and enjoy some ice cream on the Piazza Navona a short time later.

Perhaps the idea of rootlessness not only sounds pathetic (perhaps too German?), it also does not make sense. Or rather, not having roots seems to be a characteristic feature, increasingly so, of our modern (or, rather, post-modern) times. In other words, more and more we are getting used to “changing countries more often than our shoes”¹¹⁹, but, in contrast to Brecht who was forced into exile, this occurs entirely of our own free will. Thus we become citizens of the world and are at home everywhere and nowhere.

Italy and Germany: The differences are, still, very noticeable—indeed and in general, the differences between individual countries of the small European continent. But how we view reality is a matter of perspective (or of the strength of the lens, as it were). If the lens is strong enough, we notice not only the differences between Italy and Germany, but also those between different regions of the respective countries. Italy in particular is a conglomeration of the most diverse cultures which can be traced to the many-faceted influences to which the country was subjected in the course of its history. These influences still can be felt today.

The growing economic and political integration of our continent will no doubt lead to a leveling of differences. It is important to preserve a sense of the different nuances and, in the process, to examine as to its practicability, if not simply accept, those qualities of each people whose merits have been tested and proven. Let's take the postal system as an example. Here I would opt decisively for the German way of handling mail, even though the Italian system is more interesting and suspenseful. In Germany the mail does not produce any surprises. A letter mailed in the evening will arrive in one or two days. In Italy the delivery of correspondence is guided by a much more complicated and haphazard system which, despite intensive studies, has remained unfathomable thus far. The layman only knows that the postal system is similar to the weather which, in spite of scientific erudition, cannot be predicted with ultimate certainty. Thus, a letter may take two, three, four and up to fourteen days or more—a *modus operandi* which, however, gives cause to a much greater and more elemental joy once a letter indeed has arrived.

Answering the question of why both postal systems function so differently would probably go beyond this special aspect and into a discussion of the

¹¹⁹ [„Gingen wir doch, öfter als die Schuhe die Länder wechselnd“—a quote from Brecht's *An die Nachgeborenen*, in *op. cit.*, 725.]

different social identities of Italians and Germans. I would say that in Germany today there is a greater respect for the rights of citizens. They have a guaranteed right for certain services; they can expect not only that the postal system is reliable, but also that there are enough public swimming pools as well as well-kept parks. In Italy, however, public and governmental institutions are often synonymous with poorly run. “Each for himself, God for all,”—an Italian saying which I doubt exists in German—is characteristic of the attitude of the average Italian who has been educated to be an individualist (or rather, an egoist) and an anarchist. Well, I have some sympathy for the venerable ideas of anarchism. But when I get stuck in Roman or, worse, in Neapolitan traffic, where everybody generates his own rules (and God has other concerns than to interfere and care “for all”), then I realize that anarchism does not work, at least not in Italy. Italy, by nature, is anarchist, that’s why a counter-measure is called for there. In Germany, on the other hand, an anarchist remedy might prove quite refreshing so that the citizens learn how to think on their feet and not do something just because that’s the way one does things, because that’s the way an overriding authority has decreed it. If I am allowed to simplify the difference between Germans and Italians, I probably would put it this way: The German trusts authority and considers its imperatives categorical; the Italian, however, mistrusts authority on principle and tries, as much as possible, to act on his own.

3. Faust

Upon my I return to the Wendland I plan to work toward completion of my opera *Faust, un travestimento*, which has occupied me during the last few years. Faust is a proverbial German figure. But Edoardo Sanguineti, whose text I am composing, has translated the character into Italian in more than one way. It has become a lighter Faust, full of irony and self-irony, a Mediterranean Faust. He is a *Grenzgänger*, a cross-border commuter, *par excellence* and moves, without difficulties, in German and Italian environments. That suits his composer quite well, who does not know whether he should consider himself a Germanized Italian or a German by choice or, perhaps, a European. In any case, every intellectual, who has gone through the political intoxication of 1968 as well as the hang-over and sobering-up that followed, can see in Faust a fellow-seeker who despairs over his current state of knowledge but still continues his inquiries. The devil, however, whom the honorable gentleman residing on the other side of the lake has just reinstated, is today much more ingenious and primitive; he has adjusted to the possibilities and needs of the mass society and has become a democratic entrepreneur who offers sex, money, and success for all directly to their homes, if necessary also in installments.

Faust, the passionate skeptic, whose two souls are, of course, German and Italian, does not believe any longer, as Einstein still did, that *one* formula can show what makes the world structurally cohere. Or in other words: There may be one unifying principle that is the basis of the most diverse forms of organic and inorganic matter. But this certainly does not apply to the world of human beings, which is governed by many, often contradictory, truths. Faust, the border-crosser who is at home everywhere and nowhere, is deeply aware that the meeting of the cultures and their interpenetration have led to another Copernican revolution which does not recognize an above and a below and in which no values are considered certain once and for all. Faust, it goes without saying, is a pluralist. I assume that, if he were a composer, he would distrust a closed unified system. Even musically he would be a border-crosser, someone who shuttles back and forth between different worlds, whereby he identifies with all and none.

The Gothic church tower, reaching out into heavenly heights, and the round copula, motherly and sensuous, are for me (I almost would have said: for Faust) not mutually exclusive but complementary contrasts. I have grown up with this cultural tension, and I can no longer renounce this tension. For me it seems to have a deeper meaning that, exactly during the composition of the Faust opera, I lived off and on in both Italy and Germany.

Here in Italy, I long for the quietude and predictability of the German mode of living; in Germany I will yearn for the conciliatory quality of the Italian way of life: Even when all ropes seem to sever (and Italian ropes may be particularly resilient), life seems to continue. It may be considered a miracle to see how the instability and obsolescence of Italian structures—on a variety of levels—prove to be stable, even more stable, in the final analysis, than those in countries which pride themselves for their stability. An American political scientist has gone so far as to represent the frequent governmental crises in Italy as something positive and exemplary: Since parties and in part also politicians forming the governments have been the same for 45 years, so goes his argument, the system ensured both change and continuity. I will refrain from recommending the Italian political system, but I must admit that despite its insufficient structures Italy seems to function. It is a country full of contradiction, and that's why I love it. Writing about German contradictions (for which I love this country as well) should be done by a German.

[Source: Eberhard Kloske and Wolfgang Storch, eds., *Ein deutscher Traum: Zyklus auf das Jahr 1990*, Bochum: Bochumer Symphoniker/Edition Hentrich, 1990, 53-62; Becheri 90-2.]

An Interview on *Faust*

In preparation of the premiere of Lombardi's Faust opera, Michelangelo Zurletti, the music critic of the Italian daily La Repubblica, conducted an interview with the composer for Ricordi Oggi, the journal of the Milanese music publishing company.

MZ: Luca Lombardi, too, is landing his ship at the theater. We know that you are writing a *Faust* on a text by Sanguineti. What is it, and how far have you gotten with it?

LL: The title is *Faust, un travestimento*. It is a rewriting, a translation and reinvention of Goethe by Sanguineti. It will be an opera in three acts and twelve scenes. It was commissioned by the Basel Opera. Just now two acts are ready; I am working on the third.

MZ: Why *Faust* and why Sanguineti?

LL: I am friends with and have been collaborating with Sanguineti for quite some time now. He wrote the text for *Nel tuo porto quiete, un Requiem italiano*. Some time ago I asked him if he might have a text to base an opera on, and he suggested this *Faust* that he had just published. I read it and fell in love with it. Also, *Faust* is a theme that I know well, not only because everybody knows it, but because I went to school in Germany, and there *Faust* is as important as our *Divina Commedia* or *I promessi sposi*. What's more, while rereading the edition that I used in school, I found some musical annotations (which I am taking care not to use). So, since childhood I've had a special interest in this theme. And then, I think the subject-matter, even in Sanguineti's interpretation, is very topical. Without venturing into an interpretation of what *Faust* is and what this *Faust* is, I can say that the theme of the disappointed intellectual, lacking any points of reference but who continues to seek, is much with us today. And there is yet another reason for my fascination: multilingualism. Sanguineti uses a variety of levels of discourse in a very original and non-judgmental way: the courtly or the humble, the cultivated or popular. The ability to glide readily from one level of discourse to another fascinates me...in music as well.

MZ: This is a constant practice with Sanguineti. In the sense that he has always loved linguistic intermingling: a letter, a poem, and an article by Sanguineti, are multilinguistic and the final, resultant language embraces them all.

LL: The interesting thing is precisely that act of gliding, not only from one scene to another but often from one word to another. It is a way of putting on

continually different masks and is therefore an eminently theatrical matter. At the same time it is a form of alienation, in the sense that each spoken word is also put into quotation marks. Familiar things are seen in a different way; but because they are seen differently, they seem new.

MZ: Is the mask a valid metaphor for today's composer?

LL: At the same time it is a linguistic operation. We live in a time filled with many different codes that relate to each other. I no longer believe in a single language that sums everything up. I believe instead in a variety of languages. I believe in different and parallel truths. This applies to music, as well. It is, if you wish, a metaphor for today's composer. We are exposed every day to different kinds of language, and we use them. And even if we don't use them, they are a part of the reality that surrounds us. When we turn on the TV we are assailed by all kinds of discourse and we can go from one to the other without difficulty. I think this is one of the most stimulating things today: seeing the world as a prism through which we can look at diverse and contrasting viewpoints.

MZ: You are making this observation today, but your music has always done so. You have not been totalizing or, shall we say, radical, not even in the seventies, in your most combative period. Political engagement, with the necessity of making yourself heard, drove you even to quoting very well-known materials that can immediately be identified.

LL: I must correct a little your statement concerning my non-radicalism. In reality this was a period in which I was strongly attracted by avant-garde music—it's not for nothing that I went to study with Stockhausen, who was then considered the leader of the avant-garde. A few of my compositions from those years (*Das ist kein Bach*, *Stufen*, *Diagonal*, as well as *Non requiescat* of 1973) can be considered radical in the sense that you mean. And this radical vein, in various forms, has continued till now. I am thinking, for example, of the compositions entitled *Sisyphos* (*I* from 1984, *II* from 1985, *III* from 1989), in which there is a reduction of discourse to its essential elements, exactly to the roots. Subsequently I sought a closer relationship with social and political reality, something that led me to engage in political song and popular music, and to work on Eisler and to study with Dessau. It was all founded on traditional studies, ending up with my diploma in composition. It's not just in the present that I have been benefiting from this heterogeneous approach which allows me to roam in a variety of areas and which is useful to me in the opera project, all the more so in this particular venture.

MZ: But at the same time it's understandable that for this project, with its mixed levels of discourse, that you did not have to seek out a special language; you simply used what you already had.

LL: Yes, even if, while in practice, the language alters. A few years ago I spoke of “inclusive” music, in the sense that it, precisely, included diverse linguistic levels, and I distinguished it from “exclusive” music, which I also have written (*Klavierduo*), which excluded many things and concentrated on just a few elements: a scale, a chord, and it developed them. An exclusive project follows a unitary strategy in which everything is developed from a fundamental element, whereas an inclusive project operates on the principle of montage, of contrast, of contradiction.

MZ: Speaking of languages, today we are seeing the death throes of a way writing radical music that was fundamental for the 1960's and 1970's, but which has been pushed to the agonal state by the advance of the postmodern. I think I see a real conditioning in the radical musicians. It isn't by chance that the *Doktor Faustus* of Manzoni shows us a Manzoni greatly different from the earlier one. As you see, this musical panorama, now devoid of sensational results—is, however, still abounding in results—which, if they are sensational, is it mainly because they are also facile in their communication?

LL: I have already said that I have always been attracted by the multiplicity of languages: that it is one of the characteristics of what, rightly or wrongly, is called postmodern (*Tui-Gesänge*, of 1977) or *Prima sinfonia*, of 1974-75). As far as postmodern is concerned, I do not like the term but it undoubtedly captures something that is in the air on the international level, that is, the awareness of the multiplicity of cultures, of the “truths”—and therefore, of languages. I think it is correct and legitimate that composers, too, should bear the consequences of this diverse cultural attitude. But, of course, it's always the result that counts. A great ambiguity of “radical” aesthetics is that it accepted or condemned a position, a priori, on the basis of the linguistic choice. But what matters is the result. And the same goes for “postmodern” composers. There is a risk, that I have put to the test myself: the multiplicity of languages does not necessarily mean a greater facility for the listener. It can seemingly lead to a better comprehension, but if we make the languages relative, this is not so simple. In a piece of mine (connected, among other things, to my opera), *La canzone di Greta*, I go from one language to another, including rock. And there is always somebody who says he likes it because there are tonal parts (or they are received as such). But then, there comes a passage that is not tonal and renders the preceding segment relative. That segment is perceived as parenthetical before a more listenable passage comes along. You always have to keep in mind the general plan. It is also like when

Sanguinetti uses rhyme. Of course, he uses rhyme: but with an all-inclusive plan in which the rhyme has the same rights as free verse, and erudite language the same legitimacy as slang.

MZ: Sanguinetti, too, went through similar experiences. In the 1960's he was not as readable as today.

LL: And this seems very important to me. Sanguinetti arrived at his present-day experiences not by disowning his previous ones, but by encompassing them in a more comprehensive plan.

MZ: A situation open to many possible approaches. Or escape.

LL: I would say a very courageous attitude that responds to the demands of today's cultural landscape. In music I think the same way. I do not disown any previous experiments, but I include them in a broader kind of discourse. As I already said, there was a period in which I was strongly attracted to radical music, and I sought out a relationship with a few of its exponents (besides Stockhausen—Schnebel, Kagel, and others). Today I am interested in—like cultural baggage that I would not like to give up, but which I store, so to speak, in the attic—individual works by individual composers of the 1950's and 1960's. Radicalism as a motto does not interest me at all. I think today one can be radical pursuing a project that is radically (albeit critically) pluralistic. What is more, I believe it is necessary to be radical in trying to realize one's own ideas to the fullest rather than hopping on this or that modern or postmodern train. A musician who, in my opinion, would be ideal in these present years is Bruno Maderna: What an approach (then, perhaps, we shall discuss the individual works)! He was a musician with a real curiosity about the most diverse aspects of musical reality. I think he is not appreciated enough in Italy, since he did not establish a school. Others, much more bloodless and one-dimensional, did. I cannot explain why.

MZ: There is Berio, however: and other than Berio you could say that there is no other musician of your generation who went through the Maderna experience unscathed. Everyone was in some way affected.

LL: I agree about Berio, whom I esteem highly. Not many young composers, though, accepted the invitation Maderna offered into the multiplicity of languages. There is often an exaggerated attention paid to one's own stylistic code, to one's own trademark. There is, I would say, a tendency to conform to widely accepted and predictable behaviors: a kind of musical propriety.

MZ: The fact that everyone devotes himself to cultivating his own garden is probably due to Darmstadt and does not apply only to Italians. Between 1950 and 1970 it was legitimate to cultivate one's own stylistic code.

LL: Maybe you are right. It is curious, among other things, that Maderna did live in Darmstadt, he who had called Darmstadt into question—perhaps, precisely, because he lived there. Anyhow, Maderna continues to be an extraordinary example of freedom.

MZ: Let us go back to *La canzone di Greta*. That song—which I remember personally from the performance in Witten—besides what you said a few moments ago, opened itself to rock music. I see now in the score of *Faust* that there is some more rock. Is it some special fondness you have, or are they simply two individual instances?

LL: I could make a wisecrack and say that it is the influence of my son. But earlier in *Mythenasche*, from 1980, I included a rock piece (stylized, naturally, so it would not give heart to anyone who frequents a discotheque). They are instances deliberately tied to certain texts. It's not by chance that in *Faust* it is linked to the tavern scene full of students.

MZ: Also, *Nixon in China* and *Marilyn* both have some rock music.¹²⁰ Do you think rock music is an experience so overwhelming that it needs to be alluded to in the opera and, anyhow, be used in a juxtaposition of popular music and art music?

LL: It is one of the languages we are in contact with on a daily basis. Just as it exists. I take care not to make a fetish of it, nor to choose it as a single language, but it is there; it is a part of our reality.

MZ: What other languages do you make use of in your opera?

LL: I have no list of various languages. I have a basic material that guarantees a certain cohesiveness—chords associated with the various characters, two for Faust, one for Margherita, one for Mefistofele. Then there is a discourse related to the Schubertian tradition. And there is a discourse related to tonality. The text leads me, in a rather spontaneous way, to make use of one element or another, and then there are also some triads. The first scene starts off with the two Faust-chords, which are two triads, but in the first intermezzo (which immediately follows this scene) the material is used in a way that has nothing

¹²⁰ [The composers of the two operas mentioned are John Adams and Lorenzo Ferrero, respectively.]

to do with a chordal language. One goes, then, from a chordal-harmonic procedure to a structural one.

MZ: A composer does not come to the theater by chance, and does not come to it because it is fashionable. What is your relationship with the theater?

LL: I love a few operas: *Boris Godunov*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Fidelio*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*. I have always tried to connect with Puccini, but I have not succeeded.

MZ: You're talking about opera bound to one century. What about earlier and later?

LL: Well, first of all I cannot forget Monteverdi. Later, obviously, there is *Wozzeck*, an opera that works theatrically but also on the level of the greatest "absolute" music. It can even be read as an autonomous entity .

MZ: You think so? I think *Wozzeck* can only be seen as theater.

LL: I think that the extreme chiseling of the instrumental parts, the enormous orchestral refinement, reach far beyond what the theater requires. I am also thinking of things like the invention on a rhythm or on a single note. One often speaks of Scelsi, but in that piece all of Scelsi is contained in a nutshell

MZ: But the vocal character that is supported on that note has other notes.

LL: Certainly. I mean, however, that there are musical intuitions that function theatrically but also function when removed from the theater. A contrasting example: Britten's *Peter Grimes* functions theatrically, but musically it is incomparably feebler.

MZ: Because there are composers who favor the theater and others who favor music over the theater.

LL: Exactly.

MZ: Let us talk a little about your interest in folk music. In what way could you synthesize this relationship? Is it an ideological interest that has been the driving force, or is it a real interest?

LL: There have been times when it was ideological—when working with folk song was a way to join ranks with the workers and peasants and with the political forces that represented them. I wrote variations on *Bandiera rossa*. And earlier, at the beginning of the 1960's, I had discovered Sicilian music

and Sardinian, too—music that fascinated me because it belongs to a culture completely different from that which tonal music expressed, and that, just because of this, curiously reveals some points of contact with contemporary music.

MZ: Can we be sure that your interest in folk music is born from the fact that it is music of the people, or is it, rather, because it sometimes flies in the face of tonal music?

LL: Maybe it has been a convergence of motivations. Today when I turn to folk music it is because I like it. I recently wrote a version of a Yiddish song because I liked it and not because there is Jewish blood in my veins.

MZ: The question was more a contentious one. In years past there has been a lot of talk about folk music. That it was necessary to take it back, to regain possession of it. But the appeal, in art music, went unheeded. What is your position today?

LL: I do not deny my past positions. There was an ideological motivation, and I do believe it was authentic. In the *Prima sinfonia* (1974-75)—never performed in Italy—I used, on the one hand, Sicilian and Sardinian workers' songs and, on the other, Chilean songs.

MZ: And also slogans transcribed for percussion.

LL: Transcribed and used in a structural sense. I did it for ideological reasons, but also for musical reasons. I was won over by linguistic pluralism, as I am today.

MZ: Where is music going? Let's place the question in reference to statements like "Music is dead, Art is dead." But nothing is dead. And so, where is music going?

LL: Today there are many opportunities and many risks. One risk lies in the fragmentation of interests: there are those who are interested only in Baroque music and those who are concerned only with computer music. The atomization of tastes is a risk. The other possibility is that music and composers embrace the various realities that there are, and from this multiplicity of codes might emerge a language that appeals to people. Today both possibilities exist. Nowadays barriers are crumbling, there is contact among diverse worlds; there is no more warfare between presumably irreconcilable concepts. It's not by chance that the Stravinsky-Schoenberg polarization came about during the Cold War period, when it was necessary to align oneself.

MZ: However, the Adorno dichotomy was superseded well before the conclusion of the Cold War.

LL: But if we remember the polemics unleashed upon the neo-romantics, or the composers of the “new simplicity,” we see that they were directed not at individual works but at the ideology: a conception of the world was being questioned. It happened just a few years ago. We were all guilty of ideology, but today we must try not to be ideological. No one has possession of the truth (because it does not exist).

MZ: About the mystique of languages. You had some electronic schooling, but you do not use electronics. What kind of impression does this music give you?

LL: I do not reject it *a priori*. It just does not interest me, at least for now. It is the orchestra that interests me more, because it produces a wealth of results. I would be interested in using the computer, but together with instruments.

MZ: Do you reject electro-acoustical instruments because of their timbre, because of the relationship with the audience?

LL: A piece for tape alone does not interest me. I question the medium for reasons of timbre, because it is elementary, then, for the relationship with the audience. It seems to me that the dialectic between the written page and the interpreter is important for the listener. Because of this, I prefer the orchestra. I love the involvement. And that is why I am writing an opera.

[Source: “Intervista a Luca Lombardi,” typescript of interview on *la Repubblica* page proof forms with handwritten corrections by Zurletti and Lombardi; signed by Zurletti. The interview was published in the newsletter of the Ricordi publishing house in Milano: *Ricordi Oggi* IV,2 (September 1990); Becheri 91-3.]

Doctor Faust, Pluralist: A Correspondence with the Composer

In a letter from Basel to Luca Lombardi of early July 1991, Martina Wohlthat, a Swiss music critic, proposes to conduct a long-planned interview with the composer about his Faust opera by letter rather than in person. Writing rather than talking, she suggests, may even be the better medium in finding the truth. She singles out several issues for discussion: the travestimento character of Sanguineti's reworking of Goethe's play and how it finds its correspondence in the music, the composer's relation to the Operatic and to opera as a genre, and the Faust character as perceived by two Italian artists.

Lombardi responds from Marino on August 8, 1991.

Dear Martina:

Thank you for your letter of July 9. I agree with your proposals. I envy, however, the writer from Basel, since she seems to believe in the truth. What I believe in is both more and less, namely several truths that do not exclude but complement each other. Thus, I could not answer without ambiguity what the *Faust* opera means to me. It means several different things for me at the same time. By the way, I am in good company here with Goethe himself, who, when asked what the meaning of his play was, responded that one should stop asking after the deeper meaning of his play; he had just been interested to tell a story. (I am quoting from memory here, but I could find the passage for you.) But that does not mean that I will not try to answer your questions as best as I can. Perhaps in the process I may be able to understand what I really accomplished and why.

Pluralism. When I studied in the late 1960s in Cologne with Bernd Alois Zimmermann, a representative of musical pluralism, the concept was very suspect in the political circles to which I was connected. It almost was an invective, comparable to social democracy. Since then lots of water has flowed down the Rhine River and the Tevere River as well. I think—see my introductory thoughts earlier in the letter—that it is not possible today to function in society and music without pluralism. Pluralism, of course, does not mean haphazard and without choice. You know earlier texts of mine, and you are familiar especially with my music. I hope that my music can reflect—subjectively refracted, of course—a multiplicity of standpoints (which, taken together, of course, result in only one standpoint, namely my own).

Opera, the Operatic, and Operatic Clichés. During the forty-five years of my life, I have had, as is only fair, different experiences, including musical experiences. Many of them were conscious; a few of them, I am sure, were subconscious. And the operatic tradition is part of those experiences. All

experiences and impressions are subconsciously present during the act of composing. They are the soil on which my music grows. But it is true that, as you correctly state, the principle of playfulness was important in the *travestimento* and that, subsequently, I quoted the Operatic quite consciously, even in the sense of cliché, e.g., the recitatives of Wagner, Faust's servant, in Part I, Scene 1, or, in the same scene, again in the scene with Wagner, the form of the Da-capo aria. There are quasi-quotations from the *Flying Dutchman* and from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. There is the Schubert material out of which I develop *La canzone di Greta* (Part II, Scene 4), and in the same scene there is a passage where I simultaneously evoke *Tristan* and *Wozzeck* (or Isolde and Marie, respectively), etc. As Heiner Müller put it to me when I composed his *Hamletmaschine*, "you cite tradition and parody it." But is *Faust* a parody? I do not believe so, because parody implies an element of ridicule that is alien to me. Irony in the sense of distance—yes, but not parody. I am in agreement with Sanguineti when he says his *travestimento* is not a parody, but a *Verfremdung*, a disguise.

I get to the last section of your letter. I cannot say whether I have developed my own repertory (perhaps you could figure it out), but I must say that I do not like the image of repertory that one calls up during the act of composing. Each new piece represents for me a new problem that I try to solve accordingly. I know, of course, that, whether I want it or not, I activate internal mechanisms that hardly can be fresh each time I activate them. Thus, the so-called personal style (which does not interest me at all) is perhaps nothing but the inability to renew oneself! But since *Faust* is my first opera, I had to behave, by necessity, differently than with my earlier compositions. In other words: I composed differently than for an orchestral piece (which is contained in the opera—as an interlude), a cantata, or an oratorio. I consciously wanted to write an opera.

As far as German and Italian skepticism is concerned, I am unable to say whether they are really different or, put differently, whether I, as a cultural hybrid, tend toward one or the other. In any case, my *Faust* is not only a pluralist but also a relativist. He certainly takes himself seriously, and also the world, but he can also laugh about himself and the world in certain situations. He would agree with Dürrenmatt (here we have a Swiss skeptic) who said that the language of freedom in our time is humor, even if it may be only gallows humor. The universal tragedy can only be avoided when the world is viewed as comedy, in other words: through the force of humor.

I trust that I answered your questions in some fashion and greet you cordially.

Yours, Luca

Martina Wohlthat responds from Basel on August 16, 1991. By now she has heard the entire opera in a rehearsal tape provided by the Basel Theatre. On the basis of her listening experience and study of the work she formulates a new set of questions. Lombardi answers on August 22 on a flight from Los Angeles to New Orleans while traveling in the United States.

Dear Martina:

For two weeks I have been traveling with my son in the United States. Since we were traveling by car and covering distances of 2000 miles in the last weeks, I was unable to write. Furthermore, I left your letter behind somewhere so that I have to answer it now from memory. If I remember correctly, there were three questions:

- 1) What is the relation between the different stylistic layers and the unified basic material?
- 2) Why did I write the opera, or what position does this genre occupy for me?
- 3) And then Greta: Which role does she occupy within the *travestimento*?

Stylistic multiplicity and basic unity can co-exist quite well. Let me explain it with an experience I had during my recent trip in the United States. We traveled from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. The latter is the most insane city I have ever seen. Las Vegas is not only completely artificial (this is true, more or less, of all cities), but also totally “wrong”. The hotel Caesar’s Palace with its Roman plastic sculptures and waitresses in “Roman” costumes is only one example. The falseness, however, is so all-comprehensive that it has an authentic effect. Indeed, it could only be Las Vegas. Then we traveled north through a wonderful completely untouched landscape. What a contrast to Las Vegas! In the evening of the same day we arrived in Mammoth, 2000 meters above sea-level: forests, lakes, waterfalls—an idyllic and completely different landscape. Despite all contrasts, which are enormous in the United States (not only as far as the landscape is concerned), I happen to be in a country that, in terms of language and tradition, has a strong identity. Transferring this observation (with the necessary grain of salt) to my *Faust* opera, I would say that multiplicity and unity need not exclude each other. As long as the common features are strong enough, they can bind together great heterogeneity. I hope I succeeded to generate the simultaneous impression of heterogeneity and homogeneity.

Why opera and how do I relate to the operatic tradition? All that we do as artists is based on the dialectic of integration and transformation. Too much integration leads to intellectual stasis; radical transformation makes communication impossible. Culture is generated by assimilating tradition and

by transforming the assimilated. My opera, quite consciously, is part of an honorable tradition that I respect, but from which I also distance myself. Furthermore, traditional genres—opera or string quartet (I am working on one right now)—challenge the composer to measure up to these genres. Another challenge is to discover new aspects in these genres. What constitutes new aspects can, of course, be very different: the dramaturgical structure, the text-music relationship, the choice of musical material or musical technique. I wrote an opera that frequently cites operatic features, especially those of the eighteenth century, but in quotation marks as it were. (Since the quotation is not a direct stylistic copy, the citations are sometimes only implied.) At the same time, the opera reflects a plurality of standpoints that today, aesthetically as well as philosophically, is a necessity for me.

Whether Greta has been shortchanged, as you write, I do not know. In any case, for me she is not a “positive” persona. She is a young girl from the masses. Despite her austere teenager language that, in Sanguineti’s play, is not free of sexual innuendos, she is an innocent little minx, who has not had much life experience. She means youth, innocence, but especially love for Faust—love that he has probably never experienced before. Even more than Faust, she is an archetype that can appear in ever new transformations. (This is expressed in the opera in the last scene of Part II, namely in the *Canzone di Greta*) In contrast to Faust I would soon get tired of her, because one does not live solely from sex and innocence. Her “simplicity”—as attractive as it may be for the “complicated” Faust—is perhaps mixed with stupidity, but it is, like her suffering, absolutely authentic. She is by far less ambiguous than the other characters in the play; in a way, she is not ambiguous at all. Her one-dimensionality is also her strength; it makes her come across as true and authentic. This explains why the *travestimento* character is less present in her, especially in the last scene, which, subsequently, results in a stronger identification with her.

That’s what I can think of in response to your questions. But I know that I may not be the best person to talk about the opera. I have written it. How can I be also its interpreter?!

With cordial greetings.

Yours, Luca.

Martina Wohlthat questions in her response of mid-September the composer’s reticence in becoming an interpreter of his opera. She reminds him that he has not quite answered an earlier question about opera as the social art par excellence. The Janus-faced role of Mefistofele and the compositional experiences Lombardi made in

writing the opera are also on her agenda. (Would he again enter into a pact with the devil in tackling a large-scale work? she asks teasingly.)

Lombardi responds from Marino on September 26, 1991.

Dear Martina:

As I may have written to you, your questions are not always easy to answer for me, because it is one thing to compose music and another to rationalize about it. But they give me an opportunity to account for the work after it has been composed—an opportunity that one does not always have in the midst of the compositional struggle. (Struggle? Who is fighting whom? The composer against, or with, himself. Who wins? If it turns out all right, the composer. And who loses? Also the composer. As you see, the composer is the split personality *par excellence*.)

Mefistofele should not be split into two voices from the start. Initially I thought of a female voice. Why? First, certainly because of the *travestimento* character of the opera—not because I would identify the devil with the feminine (the latter pulls us eternally upward, as is well known, not downward¹²¹), but why should the devil really have been a man?!

I remember that I asked Sanguineti what he thought of having Mefistofele be a woman, and he responded that the role had indeed been played by a woman at the premiere of the play. But when I got to work I was no longer satisfied with this decision. It would have been as limiting as having the role be sung by a man. I envisioned an extremely flexible voice with a big range in the lower and upper registers. I thought of a baritone with falsetto and initially composed for such a voice. As soon as I saw the face of Michael Boder (who is going to conduct the opera in Basel) looking through some of my sketches, I realized that it hardly would be possible to have a singer on stage as I invented him. What you call the Janus-faced and juggler nature of Mefistofele was exactly what I had in mind with this persona. Add to this the adjectives “dual-tongued” and “dual-throated”—and you arrive at the double casting of the role. I looked in my diary: It was on November 27, 1989, that I conceived of the scenic idea of having Mefistofele played by a dual-headed figure—half man, half woman: Mefistofele 1 and 2 (as they are called in the score) are not to be thought of as two persons (but as one), and they alternate in singing with this or that voice (sometimes they also sing simultaneously). As with the other personae (but in the case of Mefistofele in particular), the *travestimento* idea is manifest within the same voice: It constantly affects gesture and character.

¹²¹ [An allusion to the last line of Goethe’s *Faust*, Part II.]

I have often been asked whether I have become apolitical. Most definitely not. I continue to be interested in reality, and that includes (“unfortunately,” I am sometimes inclined to add) also politics. My *Faust* certainly is not a political piece. But why should it be apolitical? (Here I understand “politics” in a general sense, not as an everyday occurrence.) Faust is an intellectual who has been disappointed by the theories and ideologies he believed in. Still, he does not shoot himself, nor does he engage in cynical pragmatism (or pragmatic cynicism), but he continues to search, as an engaged skeptic without illusions, to gain clarity about himself and about the world. Whether this is an attractive question I do not know, but it is a question that certainly does not lack relevance! A philosopher friend told me that it was irrelevant today to search for what makes the world cohere in its innermost core (“was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält”).¹²² I do not share this position and believe that this is an “eternal” issue that forever is waiting to be solved. No less easy to answer, but concerning us directly, is the question of what forces restrain us in this world. For instance, the possibility of making new and unexpected experiences, and this also includes (your next question) new experiences in terms of a drama as well as compositional technique and material. I have used, perhaps as never before, with great freedom and without prejudices and taboos, entirely different materials, techniques and stylistic layers. I incorporated the trivial and the refined, I composed according to strictly constructive principles and also spontaneously at the piano. Since it is my first opera, the issue of drama was new to me. New? The Dramatic is always a question of temporal organization, and that is a problem that a composer faces with any kind of composition; with opera and music drama, the temporal organization will take into account the possibilities of the genre. What are these possibilities? This question I would like to leave unanswered, because it would mean to ignore the flexibility of the genre and its ability of transformation. I only can say that I was stimulated in *Faust*, more than in earlier compositions, to use different characters, gestures, situations, and materials. To compose drama, to compose the theatrical, of course, does not mean to be concerned with “action” all the time. Static elements can fulfill a dramaturgical function. As always in music, what matters is a compelling relation between the different sections. But few as the recipes are for it, so few also are the means for communicating it in words later on. Here the composer has to remain silent and let the music speak.

You ask whether I would sign the “pact” again. Rather than being a pact, it is a bet I concluded with myself: to write music that overcomes the isolation of the initiated (perhaps a desacralized music) without toadying to profanity. Not

¹²² [Another allusion to Goethe’s *Faust*.]

everything needs to be understood and liked all the time by all, but it is wonderful if something can be apprehended and liked—in different ways—by many listeners.

With cordial greetings.

Yours, Luca (1 and 2)

[Source: Martina Wohlthat, “Doktor Faust als Pluralist: Ein Briefwechsel mit dem Komponisten Luca Lombardi über seine Oper *Faust. Un travestimento*,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* CLII, 12 (December 1991), 15-22; the Wohlfahrt letters summarized here appear in full in the *NZfM* issue. The correspondence has also been published in Italian: Martina Wohlthat, “Doktor Faust Come Pluralista,” *Eunimo: Parole di Musica* 19 (Fall-Winter 1982), 35-38; Becheri 91-1.]

Of Ideological Glasses and Similarly Ideological Walls

The Künstlerhof in Schreyahn, a village close to the border that divided East and West Germany until 1990, had been a refuge for artists for many years before the fences and fortifications came down as a result of the fall of communism. In November 1991 a symposium was held there, in which composers from various European countries assessed the situation for artists and the arts in a Europe no longer divided.

Exactly thirty-one years ago—I just had turned fourteen—I traveled for three weeks to Hamburg to improve my German. (I had attended the German Gymnasium in Rome.) In a bookstore I bought a monograph on Brecht (published by Rowohlt) and became fascinated by his personality, beginning with his rebelliousness towards teachers that almost got him expelled from school. (Only empty heads, he remarked in an essay, could share the opinion that it was sweet and honorable to die for the fatherland.) I became so enthused with him that for a while I was wearing a peaked cap [*Schiebermütze*], as I had seen it in photographs of him; I was too young to also imitate him smoking Havana cigars. With my cap I appeared at a meeting of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI, chaired by Pietro Nenni) that I had joined after my return from Germany. In the same summer (1960) I also participated in an illicit demonstration against a government that had been elected with the votes of the neo-fascists; I was arrested, beaten up and imprisoned for a day and a night in a military barrack. We demonstrators must have appeared quite dangerous to the *carabinieri*, since we were guarded with cocked machine guns. That was my political entrance fee.

Soon I was drawn more to the Communists (PCI) than to the Socialists. While preparing for the theory entrance exam at the Conservatory Santa Cecilia, I read the Communist Manifesto. My interest in politics was not constant and suffered a few setbacks, perhaps attributable to the rather conservative influence of the German School in Rome. Thus, I composed in the summer of 1968, when student riots set the world aflame, an overly precious [*ästhetisierend*] love poem by Mallarmé—perhaps the least political activity I could engage in, but, a little later, the revolutionary winds caught up with me, and I organized a concert in a factory occupied by workers. In the fall of the same year I moved to Cologne where I wanted to work with Karlheinz Stockhausen. That I did not get along with Stockhausen was due to two political motivations: I did not care for his authoritarian personality (for the same reasons that I had taken on several teachers), and I was critical of what I perceived to be his reactionary irrationalism. (That I respect Stockhausen today as an ingenious composer, despite his strange convictions, is a different topic.) Musical and political interests ran alongside each other at that time without my knowing how I could have expressed my political convictions in music. There was a moment when I wanted, for political efficacy, to dispense with music entirely. Thus I wrote a radio play (with so-called original sounds) about migrant laborers (*Von Gastgebern und Gästen*). The drive to write music, however, was stronger, and I gave in to it, albeit with a guilty conscience. In Utrecht, where I was studying electronic music, I was given a booklet by Hanns Eisler. I must have known his as well as Dessau's name since 1960 when I had read the Brecht monograph, but at that time I was not at all interested in these composers. Now I was completely taken by Eisler's reflections on the relation between music and politics and tried—*mutatis mutandis*—to follow his example. I took over the directorship of a workers chorus in Cologne and wrote political songs. I also decided to conclude my sluggishly progressing university studies with a dissertation on Eisler. For this purpose I moved from Cologne to East Berlin to study the appropriate materials in the Eisler Archive of the Academy of Arts. A stipend of the Academy allowed me to become a master student of Paul Dessau. At this time I composed *Non Requiescat, musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler*, a piece that clearly expresses the conflict between avant-garde and popularity, between bourgeois legacy and proletarian claims. I lived in a student dormitory in Köpenick [in the outskirts of East Berlin] in which the televisions had been physically altered such that one would not be tempted to watch a program from West Berlin. But I tried to see all of this in as positive a light as possible; in other words, I had donned ideological glasses and was unable to distinguish between reality and wishful thinking. During my rare visits to the glittering (and in my opinion deceitful) Western half of the city I was overcome with disgust. My wife, who, probably because of her blue-collar background, was less ideologically oriented and more realistic than I, wondered during a visit at

Dessau's home that everything in his house came from the West, even the boiler was made by AEG. I was not entirely blind, however, and I remember many a tenacious and unproductive discussion with comrades who were one-hundred-percent Communist.

As an Italian Communist I was regarded with suspicion anyway, since the PCI represented unorthodox positions on many political issues; it had sharply opposed—to give only one example—the invasion of the Warsaw Pact states into Czechoslovakia in 1968. But in 1973 there seemed to be a certain trend toward renewal and opening in East Germany—a trend that soon was given the lie. Together with Hans Werner Henze and other colleagues I wrote a cantata (*Streik bei Mannesmann*) that Ruth Berghaus, Dessau's wife, staged at the Berliner Ensemble (the theater in East Berlin at which Brecht had worked until his death). Luigi Nono was present and only shook his head (at that time I called him Mr. No-No); he did not like the aesthetic direction of our piece, and he was right. Agitprop theatre with its roots in the 1920s could only appear out of place, especially in the unreal context of real socialism [*irrealer Sozialismus*]. Many intellectuals living in the West, I think, simply wanted to believe that this was the state worthy of support, because it would make a clean sweep of exploitation, alienation, nationalism and racism. Even culture was to be changed completely, eliminating the gap between high-brow and low-brow—a culture, as Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus had envisioned, intimately connected with the people.

In the long run the ideological glasses were of little use for me. Sometimes there were small incidents that gave me pause. For instance, when I tried to bring in a West German book about music in the Third Reich that a friend of mine in East Berlin had wanted it was confiscated at the border, probably because already the term "Third Reich" was taboo or because the book was not on the list of publications admitted by the Inquisition. It was intolerable for me that one was constantly under the care of a guardian, that in every respect one was treated as under age. And I remember how shocked the same friend, an engaged and critical communist, was when I told him that East Germany appeared to me as people's police state (*Volkspolizeistaat*). The ideological good will on my part could, in the long run, not make me disregard the existing double standards; in private people appeared liberal and critical, but in public they suddenly became faithful adherents of the party line. Like every dictatorship, the East German regime had supported cowardice and intellectual corruption; it certainly was characterized not by too much socialism but by usurping the term. Sooner or later I had to arrive at the conclusion that this state, which wanted to abolish the contradictions of capitalism, really abounded with contradictions. It was like a psychiatrist who wants to heal a neurotic patient but who really is full of neuroses himself. In

the early 1980s my world view began to change. The optimism of will gave way to the pessimism of insight. It was no coincidence that in these years I composed my first Sisyphus pieces—works whose pessimistic, even nihilist attitude in retrospect almost frightens me. In an essay of 1986 (“Between Prehistory and Postmodernism”) I finally said farewell—it had been a long and contradictory process—to a conception of history that, in the final analysis, is teleological, messianic, and idealistic. Others never shared this conception and may now gleefully rejoice. Still, I would not want to have missed the lengthy process of learning and certainly do not join the triumphant chorus of those celebrating the death of socialism, as if the task at hand, as much as ever, were not to solve the inhumane contradictions of a so-called free society. But the difficulties begin where humans want to help other humans in their striving for happiness. Soon they are ready to use violence to achieve this goal; very quickly there are executioners and victims, and it does not take long before the victims themselves turn into executioners. Today I am trying, more than before, to start from concrete reality; I have thrown away the ideological glasses.

This anti-ideological position also finds expression in my music, for instance in my Faust opera (*Faust, un travestimento*, 1986-90). My point of departure is concrete musical materials that I use without prejudice and without fear of contact. The Cold War has come to an end also in music; tonal materials are no longer the domain of capitalists and atonal materials are not progressive by nature (or the other way around). Musical materials are no longer occupied by ideological positions; what matters is how they are used by a composer in a specific work. As far as I am concerned, my overcoming an ideological position has nothing to do with pragmatism or cynicism. Rather, I believe that human beings can continue to be occupied with “eternal” questions, even though the content of their lives is nothing but a search for the content of their lives. This search can also take place through tones.

Postscript: After writing this text, I read again the title of the symposium “New Music after the Dissolution of Political Blocs” and think that I have missed the topic. But perhaps I did not. My political and intellectual biography brings into focus, perhaps more than abstract comments, what the political transformations of 1989 meant for me. The wall that has come down between East and West had been falling for a long time also in my head.

[Source: *Schreyahner Herbst 1991: Internationales Komponisten-Symposium 2.-3. November*, no page numbers given; Becheri 91-4.]

PART III

**REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES
AROUND THE TURN OF THE CENTURY**

1992 AND AFTER

Composition understood as search and discovery; life as a series of transformations; and composing, the ultimate study in transformation, as a metaphor of life. With the opera Faust. Un travestimento, premiered at the end of 1991, the composer had reached a temporary plateau in terms of compositional technique as well as musical materials and styles available to him that, he felt, needed to be explored further. In the following years, several major works originated in quick succession: a string quartet, a symphony (Lombardi's third), the piano trio Addii (perhaps his most personal statement to date), a viola concerto, and Infra—the latter a work that Lombardi considers a particularly significant artistic utterance. In the mid-nineties Lombardi the composer prevails over Lombardi the writer. It may be that speaking engagements and commissions—often the stimulus for the composer to pick up his pen—did not materialize. (For this reason Part III begins with a series of program notes rather than with essays as Parts I and II do.) It is not until the end of the century that Lombardi devoted again considerable time and energy to writing. Partly spurred on by the work on his opera Dimitri, the cantata Vanitas?, and the oratorio Lucrezio (two parts, "Natura" and "Amore" have been completed at the time I am writing), the composer turned in his essays to "cosmic" questions: the power of music, the powerlessness of the composer, religious sentiments of an agnostic, the meaning of music, and ethnic identity in a pluralistic world. In "Desire and Fear of Freedom," he sees Schoenberg's spiritual journey as a foil for the discovery of his own Jewish heritage, a process that has been going on for over a decade.

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Example III, 1: *Primo quartetto*, *Motto* (Section 0) and Beginning of Section 1

Primo quartetto per archi (Quartett vom 'Armen Mann')

My first string quartet originated during a relatively long span of time, between 11 May 1991 and 20 February 1992. I composed other works during that time, but not very many. It was a time of radical change, even though I have difficulties thinking of a time that has *not* been a time of change! Music can be a window or a mirror: a window from which to observe the world, or a mirror in which we recognize ourselves (or perhaps we don't). The string quartet is a mirror. The individual constituent sections (there are six interlocking sections of varying length) are almost like diary entries. During the "course of time" ("im Laufe der Zeit") I notated the "state of affairs" ("Stand der Dinge")—these terms are an homage to the filmmaker Wim Wenders whose movies, however, have nothing to do with my string quartet; "state of affairs" means situations, impressions, reflections. When I look at them from a distance, I ask myself: Is it me who looks at me from the mirror? There is no use in hiding or simulation; only by registering our emotions without protection and standing by them can we hope to write music which break through the conventions that threaten to suffocate our lives in a straightjacket of lies.

I mentioned that the string quartet consists of six sections of unequal length. It begins with a motto-like part of twenty measures (No. 0); the pitches have been derived from the letters of two names. The first part is 79 measures long, the second part 129 measures. In the latter there are two quotations: a waltz by Chopin and the German (or Austrian?) folksong of the poor man ("vom armen Mann"). They are quotations of quotations, because Mayako Kubo, to whom the quartet is dedicated, uses them in two of her compositions; in her wonderful radio play *Ich bin 99 Jahre* (I am 99 Years old) and *Klavierstück für zwei Hände* (Piano Piece for Two Hands). Parts 3, 4, and 5 of the string quartet are increasingly shorter (43, 24, and 3 measures). The last fragment is like a beckoning: farewell or new beginning?

[Composed 1991-92; the typewritten program notes in German are dated September 1, 1993.]

Cinque istantanee

Istantanee are images of the moment, fleeting impressions (or instances) I captured during a few summer days in Greece. In one or two instances there are even realistic or naturalistic musical depictions. (The listener no doubt will notice in which of the pieces I was inspired by the typically Mediterranean sounds of cicadas.) Other pieces capture emotional situations, thus, perhaps, when too much sun paradoxically darkens the view so that the landscape inundated by light is transformed in the record of one's mind into the deep-dark sounds of the double bass.

[Composed 1991; the typewritten program notes in German are dated November 1992]

Bagatelles avec et sans tonalité

The *Bagatelles* are pieces I composed in 1992 for domestic purposes—as *Hausmusik*, if you wish—while writing other works (for instance, my string quartet). The pieces, some of which are very short, have, in part, the character of fleeting diary notes. The first five pieces I composed in March (the fourth is an homage to Duke Ellington entitled “From Luke to Duke”, the fifth “Willkommen und Abschied” (Welcome and Farewell) takes its title from a poem by Goethe. The sixth piece I wrote in August after returning from a trip to Japan (it captures the impression of a Noh performance). The remaining three pieces were written in December: the seventh after a concert with music by Wolfgang Rihm; the eighth in memory of John Cage; the last piece, played by Mayako Kubo and me for the first time on New Year’s Eve 1992-93, is a humorous homage to a friend, the philosopher Carlo Sini, whose birthday was in December. A birthday song and a well-known Christmas carol are framed by a hammering motive consisting of the initials of his name: C and S (or E flat).

[Composed 1992; the program notes here combine those in German written on May 31, 1994 for performances in Bielefeld and Hagen, Germany and an undated version in Italian that complement each other.]

Terzia sinfonia

My *Third Symphony*, commissioned by Dieter Rexroth for the Frankfurt Festival Alte Oper 1994 to celebrate the 1200th anniversary of the city of Frankfurt, consists of a prologue, five parts, and an epilogue, whereby the first part has three pieces and the second two; in other words, there are eleven sections of differing lengths.

By using several poems or poetic fragments, I turned the symphony into a vehicle for addressing topics that are as old as human beings with the ability to think. These topics are loneliness and abandonment (*Geworfenheit*); skepticism, nihilism, and desperation; love; war and suffering; joie de vivre; the transitoriness of life.

As for the fourth part, there is no composed text, but only a motto of three lines by the Algerian poet Henri Krea: “My century bears disaster / my century mows heads / my murderous century.” At the end of our century, blood still is, and is again, its characteristic signature. The poet Krea, whom I did not know until recently, captured

the century very well, and I did not want to use another text for this part of the symphony, but write a purely orchestral piece (with a brief choral interjection—not based on a text) as a kind of study for an apocalypse.

The above named topics are those that we all face, consciously or unconsciously, again and again. The repertory of human issues is really rather limited, but limitless are the ways to experience them.

My *Third Symphony* is dedicated to my fellow humans—lonely, skeptical, desperate, loving and hating, but, nevertheless, full of hope and love of life.

[Composed in 1992-93; the program notes in German are undated, but were probably written for the first performance of the work in Frankfurt/Main in August 1994.]

Das ist kein Bach, sagte Beethoven, das ist ein Meer
(Version for five players)

I wrote this piece in the fall of 1968 when I was studying with Karlheinz Stockhausen. It was premiered in December of that year by the Stockhausen-Gruppe at the WDR in Cologne (West German Radio).

What interested me then (and still interests me today—and that's why I wrote the current version for the Virtuosi di Nuova Consonanza) is the relation between determinacy and indeterminacy—a kind of constructed freedom or, put another way, a flexible, changeable construction.

A prelude from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier functions as a point of departure or building block. By way of a few signs the players are asked to play with this material, to develop or blur it, and to invent counterproposals. But the skeleton of the composition is given in that the general structural curve, or form, as well as certain strategically planned situations are predetermined by me. Nevertheless, the piece will, and should, sound different each time it is performed. I am very curious to hear how it will sound this time!

[Composed in 1993; the typewritten notes in German are dated April 20, 1994 and were written for *Aspekte*, a festival of contemporary music in Salzburg. (The original composition for seven players goes back to 1968.)

Jahreswechsel

In Italian there is a saying “anno nuovo vita nuova”—but to begin a new life in the New Year is not so easy. However it is possible to write a new piece in which one tries to do something new (for oneself). Thus, I composed between November 1993 and February 1994, in expectation and in experience of the change of year, the piece *Jahreswechsel* for chamber ensemble. What I wanted to accomplish was to write a composition that 1) consists of few elements, but still captures different situations (how is it possible today to use themes and motives in a non-traditional, unconventional manner?); 2) is not fragmentary but establishes a large arch; 3) consists of different states and combinations of energy (since composition, above all, is the transformation of physical and psychological energy).

Jahreswechsel (change of year) = Change of paradigm?

Hardly—because the paradigm is given to us, by and large, when we are born.

All the rest—that which can be changed—is detail.

But, we know, that’s where the devil resides.

And it is probably the devil who, in his Goethean manifestation (not in his ecclesiastical guise), encourages us to “die and become” (“stirb und werde”).

At least we can succumb to the illusion that the constant flux of Heraclitus’s river (whose droplets we are—“las gotas del rio de Heraclito” says Borges) may also bring changes.

Jahreswechsel, commissioned by the Wiener Festwochen for the Klangforum Wien, is dedicated to Dr. Peter Oswald.

[Composed in 1993-94; the typewritten program notes in German are undated—they were most likely written for the premiere of the work in Vienna in May 1994.]

Addii

Addii, plural of “addio” (farewell), reflects a series of painful separations. I began the first movement on September 14, 1995—ten days after the sudden death of my mother. The second movement is a scherzo. Why I wrote a scherzo, I do not know—perhaps in reaction to the first movement. Just when I finished the movement (October 21), a beloved aunt of mine, a sister of my father, passed away. She was very old, but her death was as sudden as that of my mother. She was very popular in Naples where she lived. She was a wonderful person. The third movement (composed in November) is dedicated to her. The fourth movement—a waltz for Masago—is a reflection on the death of a love. I wrote it in January 1996, after I had written the last

movement—Farewell, dedicated to the American pianist Alan Marks—on December 31. I had seen Alan the last time in Berlin where he lived. I had played for him my Third Symphony, and he had given me a CD with a beautiful rendition of music by Schubert. He also died in that fateful year 1995.

When I received a commission from the Saarländischer Rundfunk and the Saarbrücker Musiktage to compose a piano trio, I could not know that it would become a Requiem for several beloved friends and relatives. More and more I react with my music to what happens to me, and to what moves me. It seems as if music is a means to cope with reality.

The piece is dedicated to my friend of many years, Wolfgang Korb.

[Composed in 1995-96; the handwritten program notes in German are dated September 15, 1996.]

Unterwegs

Unterwegs tells the story of a journey beginning even before the protagonist is born, since it includes the previous generation and continues today. It is a journey encompassing an entire people, which, dispersed over the world, pick up the traditions—in a mutual fruitful exchange—of those people it encounters and leaves behind.

The journey may be considered a metaphor of exile—the exile of God and the alienation of men from each other. The songs express the timeless feelings and emotions of human beings: love, happiness, concerns, sufferings, longing, and hope.

Beginning in Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of the first temple (in the first song in Hebrew), the journey continues via Morocco and Spain (with songs in Arabic and Ladino) to Tripoli, Libya (the birthplace of the protagonist, with songs in Arabic), and Italy (Songs in Italian). Here the protagonist also encounters the culture of Central Europe: literature, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. The songs (in Yiddish and Hebrew) capture images of the Yiddish “shtetl” in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Chassidic traditions.

Here memories of the anti-czarist battles in Russia, Zionism, and the birth of the Jewish Labor movement are invoked as well as of the pogroms and mass murder of the Nazis, resistance and hope for a new world (perhaps songs in Russian and American).

The red thread linking all these experiences, cultures, and songs is the attempt to suspend the tensions of existence, to turn to Jerusalem as a city tormented by history and as a topos of memory where religions and identities, West and East come together and live in harmony.

[Composed in 1997; the program notes are taken from *Biennale Neue Musik Hannover: Experiment Stimme*, 22.-25. Mai 1997, 44. *Unterwegs* is a work in progress in that additional movements are planned to capture the last stages of the narrative outlined here.]

Infra

Infra—that is what is deep, dark, profound, concealed. Processes in the interior of the material. In the interior of sound. Of the land (composed with the thought of the *solfatara*, the volcanic zone near Naples—there I have my roots). But then it is also the dark and concealed seething within ourselves: the *Unterbewusstsein*—literally, the subconscious or unconscious. Obviously, then, lower registers. The very high sounds are a reaction, or the other side of the coin.

This, more or less, was the point of departure. Then, walking the road, I happen to encounter different turns (for example, a long solo of the flute in C—in a way, a piece within the piece), turns I did not foresee and (even) have difficulty to put in words. As is right for a music that wishes to speak only through itself.

[Composed in 1997; the program notes in Italian are dated October 1997.]

On Hanns Eisler

Having written a dissertation on Eisler in the mid-1970s and single-handedly spearheaded the Eisler reception in Italy through his compositions and his writings, Lombardi could not avoid being called upon as a witness during the Eisler centennial year. The assessment here differs considerably from that voiced nearly twenty-five years earlier.

Twenty-five years ago I wrote a composition titled *Non requiescat: Musica in memoria di Hanns Eisler*. With that title I was expressing the hope that Eisler's ideas not remain at rest, but that they continue to ferment, fueling musicians' search for a music and a society consistent with the times. I had begun to be interested in Eisler in 1970 and I began to drift from him at the

beginning of the 1980s when it became more and more evident to me that the ideals to which he had devoted himself were not just utopian—in the true and, sadly, negative sense of the word, namely unrealizable—but that the path that should have led to their realization was fraught with horrendous crimes that were unlike, but nonetheless matching, those carried out in this century of vast conquests by dictatorships on the opposite side.

If, however, one leaves out the political content of Eisler's works, what remains to consider in his music?

One can divide the artistic arc of Eisler's career into four periods. The first period is situated within the Schoenberg school. Younger by a good fifteen years than the first generation of Schoenberg's great students (Webern and Berg), Eisler was very much esteemed by his master. Among the compositions of this period there is *Palmström*, Op.5 (1924), an obvious homage to the creator of *Pierrot Lunaire*. The *Zeitungsausschnitte* (Newspaper Clippings), Op.11 of 1925-26 is already a transitional composition; and, beginning with the end of the 1920s, when his music was beginning to gain circulation and success in avant-garde circles, Eisler turned his back on his otherwise venerated master and took a turn down the road toward a "music of political struggle" (*Kampfmusik*). This was the music that most interested me at one time and on which I based my dissertation, published subsequently as *Hanns Eisler, Musica della Rivoluzione* (Feltrinelli, 1978). Dating back to this period are a great number of songs, as well as the music for *The Mother* (by Brecht after Gorky) that Eisler recast later as a cantata of the same name for soloists, chorus, and two pianos—a composition that I still consider one of his best as it succeeds in convincingly melding so many diverse traditions that span from the Bach Passions to the new impetus of *Kampfmusik*. But Eisler had scarcely affirmed himself as a proletarian composer, when, with the advent of Nazism, he was forced to leave Germany (being a communist and a Jew), finally finding refuge in California. In these years of exile he returned to using the dodecaphonic technique, for example in *Fourteen Ways of Describing Rain*, written for Schoenberg's seventieth birthday. Also dating back to his years of exile is the *Deutsche Sinfonie*—it, too, fundamentally dodecaphonic—an expansive and ambitious, albeit somewhat ponderous work on texts by Bertolt Brecht, Ignazio Silone, and others.

Civil proceedings for "un-American activities," however, obliged Eisler to abandon the United States, where he was not doing badly for himself, all things considered (he had made a niche for himself in the film industry of Hollywood), and after stopping off in Prague and the city of his youth, Vienna, he settled once again in Berlin, by now capital of the first (and last) German socialist state, where he died in 1962.

This final period was paradoxically the saddest. On the one hand, an “official” composer (he composed, for example, the national anthem of the German Democratic Republic), and thus disliked by a great part of the public; on the other hand, a troublesome communist whom dictatorial bureaucrats, with their preconceived and obtuse criticism, prevented from composing an opera *Faust* for which he had written the text (praised by both Brecht and Thomas Mann). The compositions of this period oscillate from hackneyed emotionalism to gloominess. Among these are the *Ernste Gesänge* (Serious Songs), his last and perhaps most significant work, with texts titled “Sadness,” “Desperation,” “Hope,” and a section with the title “Twentieth Party Congress,” in which, after Khrushchev’s statement on Stalinism, people hoped for a “life without fear,” a wish that had to remain just that for almost three more decades. In this, as in other of Eisler’s scores, there is an almost “romantic” inspiration—quite distant from the anti-expressive espousal of *Sachlichkeit* (objectivity) or *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which linked him to Brecht and which was a categorical imperative of his generation.

Here also, it seems to me, resides a tragic aspect of Eisler’s artistic life, that of not having succeeded, in any of his stylistic periods, in really plumbing the depths. Even though he composed a few esteemed pieces, as a representative of the Second Viennese School, he cannot hold a candle to Schoenberg, Berg, or Webern. Justifiably disappointed by what the generation of 1968 might define as the “elitist” character of contemporary music, he abandoned the audience made up of insiders (whose offspring, alas, are still wandering from specialized festival to specialized festival) in order to band together with the proletarian masses. One cannot tell what would have happened if the Nazis had not come to power. The fact remains, however, that they came to power with the votes of those masses of the unemployed who, instead of following the socialist promises of the “Sun of the Future,” turned to the chauvinist and racist ideology of Hitler. In the more or less gilded exile in California, aside from his breadwinning work, Eisler tried to reconnect with a tradition that, through Schoenberg, looked to the great classics of German music, but the aforementioned *Fourteen Ways* or the *Chamber Symphony*, an unquestionably interesting composition of 1940, are not enough to make Eisler a great composer. And entirely tragic is the final period of Eisler’s life, which could have been the culmination of a whole life devoted to the cause of socialism. Instead of making the German Democratic Republic a laboratory of political and aesthetic experimentation, the German communist regime turned it into a barracks in which artists like Eisler—including Brecht, who died there in 1956—had to combat daily with obtuse functionaries conditioned by Soviet politics as well as by the rules of the Cold War, for which it was equally responsible. It makes a sad spectacle: this talent of the first order, who, out of a misconceived sense of political and social responsibility, abdicated his

artistic potential with no one today having any gratitude, neither the public to be found in the regular concert institutions, from which his music is absent, nor the proletarian masses (where are they?). There remains only the tattered band of Eislerites, from whom—for the love of Eisler—he should be saved. Instead of making of him a kind of saint (as is being attempted on the occasion of his hundredth birthday), it would be better to liberate Eisler, in so far as possible, from his ideological shell, in order to discover or rediscover some music that, with its distinguishing merits and limitations, helps to complete an image of this tormented century.

[Source: “Su Eisler,” undated typescript of an article published as “Liberatelo dall’ ideologia! Inceneriti I suoi ideali, resta la sua musica” in *Il Giornale della Musica*, XIV, 140, July-August 1998, 14 & 23; Becheri 98-1]

On Brecht

As part of the Brecht centenary celebrations a roundtable discussion took place in Berlin in 1998, to which Lombardi was invited together with Albrecht Betz, Gottfried Wagner, Klaus Walter, and Stefanie Wüst—Joachim Lucchesi moderating. The following is an excerpt of the discussion with Lombardi’s responses.

The moderator asks: “Mr. Lombardi, an article you published in the Frankfurter Rundschau on December 1973 carries the title: What does ‘dignity’ mean here? What workers can do for composers, composers for workers, and Brecht for both of them? You have written a symphony in which you use texts by Brecht. It would be interesting to hear from you how you relate to Brecht’s texts today. What has remained from your studies with Paul Dessau, from whom you probably heard a lot about the Brecht-Dessau collaboration?”

Brecht interested me when I was fourteen years old and visited the German school in Rome. At that time I had been very impressed by a book about Brecht which led me to his plays and poems. Brecht’s composers did not interest me then at all; I did not even take note of them, because I viewed them as subordinate collaborators. Later, following the events of 1968, I was interested in the issue of how to link music and politics, and this process led me to Eisler. When I think of it—that was the time I worked in an electronic music studio and was occupied with what was then the most advanced music. In turn, I noticed that Eisler had pondered these questions decades ago. Subsequently, I conducted a workers’ chorus, turned my back on avant-garde music, and ran into problems with my venerable teacher Stockhausen. I think the only thing that counts is personal experience, not just any theories that one represents without living them. I saw no meaning in continuing my

university studies because I wanted to become a composer. However, since I now was interested in Eisler, I decided to write a dissertation about him. For that reason I went to East Berlin. It was rare, then, that a student from the West could come to East Berlin. In turn, I was accepted in Dessau's master class.

Since today we are talking about Brecht, I do not want to say so much about the important experiences of my youth as they are related to Eisler. It is a phase in my life which shaped me, but it is also a phase I concluded long ago. Even though I was interested in Brecht at an early age, I never composed texts by Brecht until recently. Of course, I have moved around him quite often; I composed, for instance, a untexted instrumental piece *Gespräch über Bäume* which refers to his poem *Die Nachgeborenen*. That was in 1976. And a year later I wrote *Tui-Gesänge* (picking up a shorthand formula from Brecht) after poems by Albrecht Betz. Gradually, I moved away from Brecht and his aesthetics. Over the course of years, I hope, I changed. When I wrote my *Terza Sinfonia* in 1992-93, which was to become a vocal work for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, I searched for a long time for appropriate texts and finally was surprised that I chose Brecht. I distilled fragments from his texts. In this context I may recall a statement by Eisler: "I have been asked why I compose Brecht's poems. The answer is: Because I like them."¹²³ Brecht's texts interested and touched me as well, because they pose questions which go beyond chronicling events of the time to issues of a more general nature—for instance, the problem of loneliness and isolation or of existential anguish. There is a text by the early Brecht: "We are traveling at high speed toward a star in the milky way. There is a great calmness in the face of the earth. My heart beats too rapidly. Otherwise everything is in order."¹²⁴ Or another text, representing Brecht the nihilist, the skeptic: "When the errors have been used up, we will be facing nothingness as our last companion."¹²⁵ This is strong stuff coming from a man who believed that life had a goal. What Christians (and not only they) postpone to another life was to be realized by Marxists already here and now. Unfortunately, they failed in their efforts. When I was farthest away from Brecht and his world, I began to set his texts. This may be a case of "dialectic"—a worn-out term. The symphony begins with a prologue containing the lines by Brecht that, yes, there will be singing in dark times, namely singing *about* those dark times. That is also a justification for music's continuing existence. Then I turn to a love poem by Brecht which is very gentle. It says: "The person I love has told me that he needs me. That's why I take care of myself, watch where I am going, and

¹²³ Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970).

¹²⁴ [From „Erster Psalm,” Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke 8 (Gedichte 1)*, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 241.]

¹²⁵ [From „Der Nachgeborene,” *ibid.*, 99.]

worry about each raindrop that it might kill me.”¹²⁶ I have set this poem as a dialogue.

My third symphony was a commission of the Frankfurt Festivals at the Alte Oper, celebrating the millennium of the city of Frankfurt/Main. It was performed at the inaugural concert. The people commissioning it had done something clever by pairing my work with *Also sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss. At first I was puzzled by this juxtaposition. I knew that the work had been premiered one hundred years ago by the same orchestra. What I did not know was that it also contained a dedication: “To the new century with optimism.” My work, on the other hand, is a kind of reflection about this century coming to an end, and it is not so optimistic.

Later on the moderator asks the roundtable participants about Brecht’s relation to music: “The nineteenth century is hardly represented in Brecht’s theoretical writings and his music reception. One looks in vain for Schumann, Schubert, and Chopin. Mozart is the great highpoint, the representative of enlightenment whose operas Brecht, the man of the theatre, considers models of compositional precision. Initially there are some euphoric remarks about Wagner, but already in the Augsburg period the enthusiasm cools. Wagner becomes the only composer with whom Brecht takes issue politically throughout his life. Wagner provokes him so much that one is tempted to paraphrase Heiner Müller: What would Brecht be without Hitler—what would Brecht be without Wagner?”

My position regarding Brecht has changed. From my perspective today he said a lot of nonsense about music. I remember two things. There is the statement about the thermometer, when he says that the music he dislikes is the one which increases his body temperature while listening to it. He noticed that his body temperature remained steady when he listened to Bach. And in another “witty” remark he said that Beethoven restaged the battle against Napoleon and that for this reason he was not interested in this composer’s music. This, of course, is nonsense. But I can remember that I was influenced in my youth by such statements. I realize this only now. When I was fifteen I met a friend who asked me whether I still had this passion for music. I responded that I preferred to speak of “interest” rather than “passion” (the latter being too strong a term). This shows the shortcomings of an entire period, not just of an individual life: the fear to show emotions.

[Source: “Der Abend der Musikerinnen und Musiker: 8.2.1998.” *Brecht Dialog 1998*, ed. Therese Hörnigk (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 139-154; Becheri 99-2. For the article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* mentioned by Lucchesi, see Becheri 73-15.]

¹²⁶ [Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke 9 (Gedichte 2)* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 586.]

Vanitas?

More than in any other of my pieces, the choice of text here reflects my recent perspective on life. Originally, I did not foresee ending the title with a question mark, and I also did not plan to use any other texts besides the fragments from *Ecclesiastes*. But while I was already composing the piece, I became dissatisfied with the solely pessimistic message of that fragment, for it was not my goal to preach unrelenting pessimism, for pessimism in the Biblical book (albeit not in my own way of thinking) is compensated by religious transcendence.

Nothingness is a fact which, I believe, we should face without illusions. Nothingness and meaninglessness, however, can be imbued, at least perhaps in part, with meaning both in terms of our brief existence as individuals and in terms of our similarly brief history as human species. The moment (and human life and history are really only a moment) is not without meaning. Nothingness, suffering, futility (*vanitas*) of human endeavors, the inexorability and blind force of nature (of which we are a part)—all these conditions are an ethical challenge to human beings. If humans are able to face, fearlessly and with philosophical equanimity, the depth (the abyss, if one prefers) of life, then they can derive from it a justification for what makes life, in spite of everything, worth living. And music is one of these vital forces informing our life.

What can be said about *Vanitas*? I do not mean to be coquettish when I confess that it is difficult for me to speak about my own music. I am convinced that statements about music hardly go to the core of it; they only constitute a discourse of a secondary nature. A mere description of music should be avoided as tautological. When I say that I attempted to go a step beyond toward a kind of music which puts aside surface features and focuses on the essence, I am aware that this statement itself means little because of its generality. It is a statement which needs to be verified in the music itself (and that is the only thing that matters).

What I can say is that the *Ecclesiastes* text (mainly sung and spoken in Latin, but occasionally also in Hebrew, German, and Italian) makes up two thirds of the piece, perhaps a little more. With the statement of the rabbi and, subsequently, with the *Carpe diem* of Horace, the musical climate changes to a somewhat forced joyfulness captured in a kind of waltz. In my entire life, I notice, I composed a whole series of waltzes, beginning with my first composition, a waltz in C minor, which I invented (or found) on the piano on my tenth birthday. Thus, the three-four meter of the waltz became for me, in a certain sense, an archetype. The same is true of an interval succession (minor second, major second, minor second, minor third, and, again, minor second, major second, minor second, minor third) which I used as building blocks for the piece; it also is an archetype of sorts. Among the first melodies I tried out as a child on the piano from memory were several Neapolitan songs which use this orient-like mode typical of the Mediterranean region. My father, a philosopher from Naples,

had composed Neapolitan songs of which he was very proud. This probably was the point of departure for me as a child. Later, however, the more seriously and professionally I became involved with music, the more condescendingly I reacted to them. With the passage of time these early experiences have surfaced again. I like the notion that the Oriental character of the interval succession (which I have used over and over again, beginning at the latest in 1986 with *Ai piedi del faro*) alludes to my mother's ancestors, who came to Europe from today's Israel more than 2000 years ago. This, of course, fits nicely with the text I use here from the Old Testament.

[Composed in 1999; the program notes in German were written for first performance by the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra under Stefan Soltesz on June 12, 1999 in Essen, Germany]

Dmitri, or Der Künstler und die Macht

At the beginning of the opera, Dmitri recovers from a heart attack. He is haunted by the "music of anxiety." This music is developed out of the letters of the name Dmitri SCHostakovitsch [in its German transliteration] (d, es=e flat, c, h=b), which the composer himself liked to use as a musical symbol. It is a musical "snake," relatively fast and metrically irregular—the only musical material [in the opera] that can be traced directly to the musical world of Shostakovich. There are no quotations of Shostakovich's music, not even in situations in which the text expressly refers to it (e.g., scene 3 when the young composer performs a piano piece of his own in Glazunov's composition class, or in scene 6 when Shostakovich is working on his Seventh Symphony during the German siege of Leningrad, or scene 11 which deals with the premiere of Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony. In scene 9 in which Shostakovich addresses an apparition of J. S. Bach during a visit in Leipzig, the monogram of Shostakovich is combined with the four notes of Bach's name.

The "music of anxiety" that appears over and over in the course of the opera contributes to the opera's basic unity, even though the individual scenes capture widely divergent situations: from the death of Lenin and the subsequent "coronation" of Stalin; to the assassination of Trotsky; to the scenes showing Shostakovich in the conservatory (at first as a student, later as a composition teacher); to the Leningrad siege, Stalin's terror, the victory over Hitler, and so on, up to the death of Stalin (on the same day as Prokofiev) and the convalescence of Shostakovich, who, concerned and uncertain, faces the prospects of a future without the dictator. The interlacing of the composer's and the dictator's life is underscored through similar vocal parts (both characters are sung by baritones), whereby Stalin leaps more frequently into falsetto voice—a means of depicting his grotesque and hysterical features.

[Composed in 1994-99; the typewritten program notes in German are undated.]

PRAELUDIUM

Praeludium was written at the beginning of 2000 for a concert of *Klangforum Wien* in honor of Peter Oswald, to whom the work is dedicated. I have used, as I often do, the musical notes which can be traced in a person's name—in this case, pEtEr OSwAlD. As it also often happens, I let myself be guided by what the material suggests. The note E, repeated in the name Peter, persuaded me to take the note as a starting point, a pivot, or *Zielnote*, as it is called in German, with ascending and descending quarter tones.

While working on a new composition, generally the moment comes when the musical material begins to “speak”. The task of a composer is only to try to understand what the material is saying, what it requires and in what direction it wants to go. In this way, one thing leads to another and—of, course, always within a possibly coherent stylistic and dramaturgical development—various associations are formed (like what happens *mutatis mutandis* in psychoanalytic treatment, when, once the unconscious is set free, further associations are created which one would not have thought of otherwise). Thus, a certain intervallic structure may suggest some other music, a different composer, another period of time. In this composition, the insistence on the interval of a minor second, E-F transposed to E flat (i.e., S)-E, which are the pitches derived from the name of the dedicatee, has evoked a piece by Chopin, the fourth of his *Préludes*, Op.28, in E minor, a wonderful example of musical reduction and at the same time of perspective richness, achieved through different harmonizations of the two notes a semitone (or whole tone) apart. Thus, the great Polish composer discreetly enters and, after a while, with similar discretion, steps out of it. At this point, always “listening” to what the material suggested, I was able to draw conclusions from the preceding material and gradually bring the composition to a close.

Originally, I wanted to name the piece “Incipit” (meaning “it begins”, or the initial words of a text), perhaps also because it was the beginning of a year (and of a century, and even of a millennium), but, thanks to the Chopin quotation, it was more compelling to give it the title “Prelude”, or, in Latin, *Praeludium*—a title that is not that far from the one I had thought of in the first place.

[Composed in 2000; the program notes in Italian are dated February 24, 2003; Becheri 02-9.]

The Artist and the Power: Remarks on my Operas *Faust* and *Dmitri*

A symposium on the future of opera in Essen, Germany, gave Lombardi an opportunity to talk about the experiences he had gained in the past decade as composer for the musical theatre.¹²⁷

I would prefer to speak about my third opera, the one not yet written, the one in which everything is still possible as in a life still to be lived. An opera that offers new dramaturgical solutions and tells a story with simplicity and directness, as stories always have been told since the Old Testament and even earlier. An opera that is new and old at the same time, capable of capturing listeners regardless of whether they have studied new music in detail or not. (But this might be like squaring the circle!)

Stalin

242

f

Ich, der Be-hü-ter des Vol-kes, tref-fli-cher

245

Ge-nius, Schü-tzer der Kün-ste, Be-rei-ter der

mf

f

mf

Example III, 2: *Dmitri*, Scene 1 (mm.242-61)

¹²⁷ [The issue of the power of music (and the powerless of the composer) is also addressed in a related essay not included in the volume at hand: „Von der Macht der Musik und der Ohnmacht des Komponisten,” *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 612 (Stuttgart: Klett, 2000), 312-23.]

p
Zu- künft Glücks-brin-ger der Mensch-heit, der gros-se

247

p
mf
ob.
mf *loco*

ff
Sta- lin. Ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich,

249

f
il più poss (quasi) (urlo)

ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, ich, Ich _____

253

♩ ~ 104

257

My second opera, premiered in Leipzig three weeks ago, is called *Dmitri, or the Artist and the Power* (libretto: Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich). The character of the composer Dmitri is closed modeled after the biography of Dmitri Shostakovich; historical and fictional characters appear in the opera, for instance (and especially) Stalin. [See Example III,2]

To a certain extent, already my first opera was concerned with power. Stalin's power is no doubt diabolical, but the devil himself makes his appearance in *Faust. Un travestimento*. The text by Edoardo Sanguineti is a highly remarkable translation (he calls it a *travestimento*, a disguise) of Goethe's *Faust I*. Mephistopheles, split into a male and a female voice, appears in scene 3 at the words: "Hey, why all this commotion? Hasn't the gentleman called me? ... I am here to fulfill your whims—dressed up, to please you, as an international intellectual, and I suggest that you dress up in a similarly cheerful garb!" [See Example III,3]

Faust is a narrative opera throughout; it unfolds, as in Goethe, as a story that develops chronologically, if not always logically. (*Dmitri* is different because, the prologue is followed by fantasy scenes experienced by the protagonist on a sickbed, recovering from a heart attack, always in connection with hearing the "anxiety music".) In *Faust*, Sanguineti's text, constantly shifting from one linguistic layer to another (whereby elevated and vulgar speech are cleverly mixed), provided me with an opportunity for "inclusive" music.¹²⁸ The particular tone of the opera results from the multiplicity of disparate stylistic elements. For instance, right at the beginning when Faust sings:

"Alas, I have studied ardently developmental psychology as well as theories of mass communication, I wanted to grasp library sciences and what is known as semiotics and praised as semantics, I wanted to know where cybernetics err, how prossemics evolve, what information sciences contribute, what telematics sing, and also biology and, damn it, ecology as well! Besides, I needed to find out about macro- and microphysics, in addition to meta- and pataphysics, and all this I did with diligence and great ardor! But now you see me here as a wretched idiot, as stupid as I was before. Finally, I decided to pursue magic, I wanted to find out what life really is and I researched all the riddles of being and of existence, but I searched in vain for what holds the world together structurally. O sweet moonlight, look down with lovely beams and witness my pain." [See Example III,4]

¹²⁸ [See „Construction of Freedom” in this volume.]

Example III, 3: *Faust. Un travestimento*, Act 1, Scene 3 (mm.627-38)

Scena 1
Faust
Wagner
2♩ ~ 48
2♩ ~ 56

Primo tempo

Faust
mp
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
5
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
4
2

6 ~ 48
2
mp
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
5
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
4
2

4♩ ~ 56
2
mp
ho strin- to la pi-co- bi- gi-a dell'e- ta- e- vo- lu- ti- va, la so- cio- lo- gi-a del- le co- mu- ni- ca- zio- ni di mai- sa,
10
la bi- bio- gra- fia e bi- bli- o- te- ca- na,
4
2

6 ~ 56
2
mp
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
5
Ahi- mé, ahi- mé,
4
2

Example III, 4: *Faust. Un travestimento*, Beginning

I did not want to give up the possibility, in *Dmitri*, of inclusive music; in my opinion, inclusive music is particularly appropriate in opera, even though the text by Jungheinrich suggested greater musical uniformity. This unity I tried to accomplish through the “music of anxiety” which pervades the opera like a red thread or a snake (if you wish)—Trotsky addresses Stalin as a “Grusinian

SZENE I
DIE MUSIK DER ANGST
(D., Frau, Sohn, Stalin)

Sch., etwa 50jährig, nach einem Herzanfall (auf einem Krankenbett).

The musical score is written for piano and bass. The piano part (upper staff) features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. It includes dynamic markings such as *mf, non leg.* and *sf*. The bass part (lower staff) provides a steady, rhythmic accompaniment, primarily using eighth and sixteenth notes. The score is divided into three systems, each with a key signature change indicated by a sharp sign on the F line. The tempo is marked as 126.

Example III, 5: *Dmitri*, Beginning

Dmitrij

Es kommt wie - der. Ich

kann nicht at - men. Ein Zer-ren, Zer-

- ber - sten. Dann ei - ne En - ge, die

Brust ab - ge - schnürt, ein -

The musical score is written for a voice part (Dmitrij) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/16. The score is divided into systems, each containing a vocal line and a piano line. The lyrics are in German. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various dynamics such as *sf* (sforzando) and *sfz* (sforzando). The vocal part includes various rhythmic values and fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes.

3

- ge — mau — ert — das Herz. —

45

Ein fres-sen-des Tier zer- hackt, zer-

50

pflückt mich. Ich kann nicht

55

mehr. — Ich will, ich will nicht mehr.

61

Lento, $\text{♩} \sim 48$ $\text{♩} \sim 126$

178 *pp* *p cresc.*

183 *mp cresc.* *f*

188 *f*

193 *f*

198 *f*

8b.

Example III, 6: *Dmitri*, Epilogue (m.178 to end)

193

— 8b. —

195

197

199

cresc. il più possibile fino - alla - - - **FINE**

serpent". The anxiety music evolves out of the musical letters of Dmitri Shostakovich's name (D—E-flat [in German: Es]—C—B [in German: H]), a sequence of pitches which Shostakovich himself used as a musical symbol. At the beginning of the opera it sounds as in Example III, 5.

At the end the music is completely transformed. [See Example III,6]

As is customary in Western art (quite different, for instance from the Japanese Noh drama), the genre of opera needs, in spite of constant changes, to achieve a balance between tradition (without which communication would be endangered) and innovation (without which an aesthetic standstill would result). The development of new music in the second half of the twentieth century neither demanded nor furthered an occupation with the genre "opera". Still, beginning in the 1960s and, more strongly, in the 1980s, operas were again composed in increasing numbers. While some of them connect without a break to traditional opera, others have hardly anything to do with the concept. But I think there does exist a feature which is characteristic of opera, despite all historical transformations of the concept, and which makes opera essentially different from a concert piece, a cantata, an oratorio, or a multimedia composition. It is a feature that characterizes opera regardless of the changes it underwent from Peri and Monteverdi to Wagner and Verdi to Berg's *Wozzeck* and Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* to Ligeti's *Le Grand macabre* and Stockhausen's *Licht*. Purely musical sections, i.e., sections that need not necessarily be translated into action are conceivable in opera. Theatricality can occur here in solely musical terms. In *Faust*, there is an instrumental piece after scene 1, which, in terms of duration (9 minutes) and its dramaturgical significance (portrait of Faust at the beginning of his parable), goes beyond the traditional function of an interlude. It is built on musical material derived from the five notes of the two Faust chords, B—C—D-sharp or E-flat—F-sharp—G. [See Example III,7]

Also the scene of Walpurgis Night is introduced by a longer instrumental piece that does not necessarily require a visual translation. [See Example III,8]

In a future opera, one might conceive of transitions between purely theatrical section (including those that are merely spoken) and purely musical sections—a form, perhaps even a genre, in which musical theatre and absolute music are overcome (and preserved). I am thinking of a space—or rather, a combination of different spaces—in which several events related to each occur. It would be a type of musical theatre which would not only not exclude purely musical elements (orchestral or chamber music) but expressly require them and integrate them organically in its concept.

Intermezzo I

The musical score for Intermezzo I is written for piano and consists of four systems of music. The first system begins with a tempo marking of *Al tempo* and a dynamic marking of *mp*. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sextuplets. The second system continues the pattern with a *rall.* (rallentando) marking. The third system includes a *p* (piano) marking and a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The fourth system concludes the piece with a *p* marking and a *cresc.* marking. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4.

Example III, 7: *Faust. Un travestimento, Interlude*

38

60-60

nuovendo ancora ----- 60-60

400

415

420-425

430-435

440-445

450-455

460-465

470-475

480-485

490-495

500-505

510-515

520-525

530-535

540-545

550-555

560-565

570-575

580-585

590-595

600-605

610-615

620-625

630-635

640-645

650-655

660-665

670-675

680-685

690-695

700-705

710-715

720-725

730-735

740-745

750-755

760-765

770-775

780-785

790-795

800-805

810-815

820-825

830-835

840-845

850-855

860-865

870-875

880-885

890-895

900-905

910-915

920-925

930-935

940-945

950-955

960-965

970-975

980-985

990-995

1000-1005

1010-1015

1020-1025

1030-1035

1040-1045

1050-1055

1060-1065

1070-1075

1080-1085

1090-1095

1100-1105

1110-1115

1120-1125

1130-1135

1140-1145

1150-1155

1160-1165

1170-1175

1180-1185

1190-1195

1200-1205

1210-1215

1220-1225

1230-1235

1240-1245

1250-1255

1260-1265

1270-1275

1280-1285

1290-1295

1300-1305

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1790-1795

1800-1805

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1920-1925

1930-1935

1940-1945

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1970-1975

1980-1985

1990-1995

2000-2005

2010-2015

2020-2025

2030-2035

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2060-2065

2070-2075

2080-2085

2090-2095

2100-2105

2110-2115

2120-2125

2130-2135

2140-2145

2150-2155

2160-2165

2170-2175

2180-2185

2190-2195

2200-2205

2210-2215

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2240-2245

2250-2255

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2780-2785

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2800-2805

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3000-3005

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3140-3145

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3160-3165

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Handwritten musical score for a piano and percussion ensemble. The score is written on multiple staves, with the piano part on the left and the percussion part on the right. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, and *fz*. The percussion part includes a section labeled "Tambour (4)" and another labeled "clusters coramaria". The score is marked with measure numbers 307, 330, 335, 340, and 345. There are also some handwritten notes and markings, such as "12 8" and "12 8" at the bottom left, and "12 8" at the bottom right.

The question, of course, is not irrelevant whether such a project can be realized within existing institutions. Next to political power (as in *Dmitri*) and the powers of the underworld (as in *Faust*), next to all kinds of powers (of fate, of monopolies—which, according to the 1968 motto “Brecht die Macht

der Monopole” were meant to be abolished at one time), there is also a power which is perhaps the most difficult to conquer, the power of habit. But composers and music managers who take their profession seriously have always been called to counter the forces of habit. And they always have succeeded in their quest. Thus, we can look, with some hope, toward a further development of this old but still viable genre.

[Source: “Der Künstler und die Macht: Notate zu den Opern *Faust*, *Un travestimento* und *Dmitri*,” Typescript for a presentation by the composer at a symposium “Die Zukunft der Oper,” in Essen, Germany, May 2000; Becheri 00-1.]

Fiesole Statement

The following is a transcript of an address given at a conference on music education in Italy entitled Musica-Scuola-Società: Un triangolo infranto (Music, School, and Society: A Broken Triangle) at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole (Florence) on December 17, 2000. The School was founded by Piero Farulli, the renowned violist of the Quartetto Italiano.

I would like to bear witness as a composer, with the apology that it is a personal deposition. I believe everything we think, say and hope for has significance insofar as it is connected to our personal experience. I began teaching in conservatories at the age of twenty-eight, and even then there was talk that reform in the conservatories and secondary schools was just around the corner. When, twenty years later, I stopped teaching to devote myself to composition, they were still talking about reform, and now almost eight more years have gone by and I feel that a true and satisfactory reform is not yet in effect. But now I feel no connection with the conservatory, which seems like a completely obsolete institution. Italy has marvelous musicians not thanks to, but *in spite of*, music education. And the Scuola di Fiesole is the bright exception that confirms the rule. Moreover, this holds true, it seems to me, for all the fields of knowledge: Italy has excellent doctors, physicists, mathematicians, etc., but they are forced to operate within a framework not yet up to the standards of other European countries.

Why did I discontinue teaching composition in the conservatories? Mainly, because I was not learning enough. I am not just turning a phrase: I think teaching is a give-and-take, and the framework in which one works must stimulate this exchange, not hinder it with old curricula, bureaucratic regulations and inadequate means. The conservatory, insofar as I have experienced it—first as a student, then as a teacher—is not a place where one

lives in contact with current music (and that can be music of any time), but a place where, for the most part, old and abstract precepts are the rule. When I studied for a year at Vienna, my teacher, Karl Schiske, made me write fugues. How? Of course by analyzing and imitating Bach, who never wrote two fugues alike and who had no qualms, for example, about putting a *stretto* at the beginning of a fugue. In our conservatories, even those where “enlightened” educators taught, a free fugue of this type was (and probably still is) unthinkable. (I remember arguments with “enlightened” colleagues who claimed to be teaching the “Bachian” fugue, but always according to some scholastic pattern not found in actual musical literature, which is the only means of comparison possible.) This is just a minor example, but significant in that it concerns not only the fugue and traditional music in general, but also modern and contemporary music, which is allowed to filter through (thanks to youthful teachers) only to the extent that it is academically correct. This is, I think, the core of the problem, the fundamental reproach that I would make against the conservatory: it is a cloistered institution, not open to the new. And it is clear that the new, just because it is new, is not seen as academically correct and confirmed. The new often “reeks” precisely of newness, and one needs to have a skilled nose in order to discern, in what seems a stench, heretofore unknown odors. The conservatory does not educate the nose and, when all is said and done, does not promote the education of the ear, either.

But the problem is broader and derives from the fact that the triangle of music-school-society has become fragmented. Here we should pose some important questions, questions that exceed the space of time that I have for my remarks and probably even of our gathering. What is the role of music in society? For whom do we composers write? Who is the ideal—but also real—consumer of our music? Personally, I can call myself lucky—and I am—because I still do what I decided to do when I was ten years old and wrote my first little piece, a waltz in C minor, and decided that I would be a composer. It was with emotion this morning that I went back to visit the classroom where Amedeo Baldovino taught—Bubi, as we called him at home—who kept an eye on my first steps as a musician. That being a composer is both a pleasure and a cross to bear is another matter. But life itself is both a pleasure and a burden, and it’s those rare moments of happiness that make the game worth the effort. And when we have written a composition that we can say we are happy about, it pays us back for the struggle, oftentimes unrewarded, that is a part of our chosen vocation. I cannot refrain from noting with a little bitterness that my two operas—*Faust*. *Un travestimento* and *Dimitri*—have not yet been performed in Italy, and the same is true with many of my more than eighty compositions published and repeatedly performed in other countries. But I am not complaining. I continue to do, without compromising,

what I wanted to do since I was ten, going my own way—and I like doing what I do; indeed, I love it. I compose, since I cannot do otherwise, because, when all is said and done, one has to live, live and impart one's own experiences and moods, one's hopes and anguish—in sum, all of oneself through music. Still, it is right, even necessary, to stop occasionally and question oneself, as I am doing now, about the purpose of our work in and for society. What is today the purpose of contemporary music? Does it really have a purpose? Alas, I fear that the answer can only be mortifying—for society and its representatives.

I would like to quote a few lines from a letter I wrote a few months ago to a friend who holds one of the highest institutional posts in our government:¹²⁹

There is, beyond contingent issues, a general problem that concerns every new piece of contemporary music, and that is the fact that for this music—which wishes to be, and is, the expression of our time—there is no societal need, no societal 'clientele.' The demand for music is supplied by the music of the past, which, however great and irreplaceable it may be, speaks to us of other times, of other passions; or else supplied by the many kinds of popular music. The latter music, too, is legitimate, but certainly is something other than the music that, *mutatis mutandis*, has Bach, Beethoven and other giants of musical thought in its DNA. If the President of the Republic needs some music to commemorate a national event, he does not turn to a contemporary composer, but has some piece by Beethoven or Verdi performed. If the Pope presides at a great international assembly, he does not call upon a contemporary composer (not even his friend Penderecki), but asks some pop star to step in. Obviously, contemporary music—i.e., contemporary art music—has lost ground and does not have the same hold on the public as popular music, or even as classical music (which was contemporary in its own period), and this because of a historical process triggered in great part by so-called avant-garde composers who, over the past hundred years, have been favoring a kind of music that is more and more for specialists. The themes confronted by new music have seldom been themes of general interest, or that interest the general public, however educated and interested in music they might have. But is this an irreversible trend? I don't think so. Without wanting to give up the best achievements of a century which, in art music has been enormously fertile (I mention Schoenberg and Puccini, Ravel and Webern, Stravinsky and Bartok and Janáček and Varèse and Shostakovich and Stockhausen and Kurt Weill, and the list goes on), I think composers today must deal with the problem of new kinds of content, tied to the issues that interest humankind today, and of rethinking their relationship with the public. I myself am facing these issues, and I am not alone. But how does

¹²⁹ [Luciano Violante, president of the Italian Parliament until 2001]

society deal with it? What are we doing here in Italy? The answer is: little or nothing. I think that instead, not only composers and other artists, but our cultural leaders as well, should be sending strong signals to that effect.

But we can, of course, turn the question around and ask on behalf of the listening public: Why do we need new music? Certainly we are not all obliged to listen to everything that contemporary composers think they have to produce. How could we? Alas, our time is limited and we also need the freedom to choose what we like and don't like. And, of course, I am not talking about secret meetings of musicians, practically religious sects that perform in tiny, specialized festivals. They obviously have the means to do so: nowadays there is, after all, a public, small as it may be, or even just electronically virtual, for every possible and imaginable oddity. Rather, I am speaking of music that reshapes itself in the tradition of great music and which demands to be performed on that same level in opera houses and concert halls, by the best orchestras and the best conductors. This music may be liked or not liked—again, not everything can please everybody, and there are those who, still today, do not like Brahms or Wagner or Bruckner or a number of contemporary composers—but the directors of musical institutions have the moral duty to program it, and the great conductors and performers have the moral duty to study it and perform it, obviously if it measures up to the severe standards of quality established by great music of all time, from Bach to Berio and Nono, whose portrait hangs here in this hall, and who I like to think is here with us. It is then up to the public—and then, in time, up to history—to separate the wheat from the chaff. But here also it is necessary to have the courage to rethink hasty decisions of the past or to remedy unjust oversight. For example, since we are in Florence, I should mention that I find it deplorable that one of the greatest of Italian composers, and not just of the twentieth century—I am speaking of Luigi Dallapiccola, the twenty-fifth anniversary of whose death is this year—is virtually absent from the programs of our theaters and concert venues. Is this not also an aspect of the broken triangle established by music-school-society?

The schools—and here I don't mean only music schools—are at the root of the ills assailing our musical society. But it is here that the turnaround can and must begin. Italy still enjoys abroad its fame as a musical country—where in the streets everybody sings and, of course, always in tune—while God knows and we Italians, too, how much this fame has been debased and how miserable musical instruction in our schools has become. But how do we teach the children if first we do not teach the teachers? Instructors lack serious training—both musical and pedagogical—and even here everything is entrusted—as only the Italians know how to do—to the exceptions that prove the rule. One of my mentors, Paul Dessau, old and highly respected, used to

teach in a Kindergarten. And this happened in a country—Germany—where music education in the schools, beginning with Kindergarten, is considered a commitment of high priority.

If the schools are an absolutely necessary cornerstone, two more cornerstones (and I have mentioned them earlier) are musical institutions and performers. Regarding the latter, I am not speaking of performers specializing in contemporary music, who are laudable but often counterproductive insofar as they perpetuate a situation of a music for the few in contexts devoted, precisely, to the “happy few” (who often are only a few and unhappy). These performers, whether they wish to or not, paradoxically risk being punished for their laudable commitment in the sense that they become confined to the ghetto of contemporary music and no one would ever dream of entrusting them with conducting a symphony of Haydn or Beethoven—and perhaps rightly so since maybe one would not be doing a favor either to them or to the audience.

Rather, I am speaking of conductors who travel the world conducting for the umpteenth time that restricted number of scores from our Western musical heritage, that all conductors perform, and who never, or only sporadically, take up a contemporary score. But, supposing that this score is a fine piece of music—and this obviously is the *conditio sine qua non*—it should be a moral obligation, moreover, a point of honor for any conductor who wishes to be of his time, to conduct the music of his time. Another mentor of mine, Karlheinz Stockhausen, said many years ago that orchestral conductors are “the Herods of contemporary music”¹³⁰—a harsh verdict, but an efficacious one. But how can we reverse this trend if orchestral conductors are—to quote a highly placed German arts leader—“*moderne Götter*” or modern gods?! And this is another sign of the cultural erosion of our time—I am not speaking only of Italy but of the whole planet—and one worth reflecting upon.

Let’s turn to the musical organizers, those responsible for the programming in our opera houses and musical institutions of our nation. It is clear that they, too, have been conditioned by those who distribute the monies (and here should be cited the cultural politics of our governments, and now, in an epoch of foundations, also the role of private sponsors), but it should be said that they too should be more courageous, more inventive, more imaginative. The audience for new music exists, but it needs to be stimulated and attracted with suitable strategies. If to attract a large audience (I am not talking about the twenty thousand that attend a rock concert!), then it is necessary to have an event, and in order to create the event organizers need to have the courage to

¹³⁰ [Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Intervista sul genio musicale*, ed. Mya Tannenbaum (Bari: Laterza, 1985), 8-9.]

take a risk, to come up with unusual approaches—in short, to surprise and disorient—and, in so doing, win over the listener, who is less intellectually lazy than one might think.

And, finally, the composer. I spoke of him earlier. I would like to add simply that, besides any other consideration made here, the composer has a single task, that of writing beautiful music. What counts, in the end, is not what one says, but what one does. If the music is beautiful, today or tomorrow or the day after it will assert itself. The composer has, with respect to the other categories of musicians, the advantage and the disadvantage of writing, yes, for today, but also for tomorrow. If he is fortunate—and who would not like to be?—his music will be performed and heard today. Schubert did not have this good fortune, but we have the good fortune of having him with us today.

If then—and I turn to the contemporary Italian composer—between one composition and the next he has a little free time, he can take part, for example, in one of the conferences organized by our dear Maestro Farulli in Fiesole, to whom is due the gratitude of the whole Italian musical world, and he can join in the beautiful idea of creating, as the Maestro writes in his invitation letter, “an organized work-group that (...) can give a new beginning to the *Comitato di Musica e Cultura*.” In this group, as already is happening here today, the composer can sit elbow-to-elbow with the performer, with the pedagogue, with the music organizer, with the politician, the union leader, and work on the idea of a music that wishes to be present and count in the cultural development of our society.

[Source: Transcription of remarks, typewritten, untitled, and undated; Becheri 00-2. The text has been shortened slightly at the beginning.]

Aubade: Omaggio a Henze

When Enrique Mazzola asked me for a new composition for orchestra for the *Cantiere* of 2001, I immediately thought of writing a piece to be dedicated to Hans Werner Henze. For several reasons: I met Henze thirty years ago. We were engaged in the first conversations and discussions that preceded the foundation of the *Cantiere* (a music festival in Tuscany in which I participated in the 1980s). A long time intervened during which certain events and the different directions of our life moved us apart, but now (it may have been several years ago) we have found each other again in Marino near Rome, where we both live and where we see one another once in a while. Even during years of distance, I never lost track of the path of this important composer of our time—a path both full of hard work and rich with precious results.

The fact that he celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday just a few days before the performance of my piece is another welcome opportunity to dedicate it to him with affection as an homage.

Aubade comes from the French “aube” and may be translated as “matinée”. It is the morning counterpart to the serenade (“sera” in Italian means “evening”). I consciously wrote a sprightly and “light” piece, whose basic material consists of pitches derived from name of the dedicatee: H=B, a(n), s=e flat, (W)e, (rn)e(r), H=B, e, (nz)e.

[Composed in 2001; the program notes in Italian are dated June 2001.]

On Bach

In 1905-06, a few years after the hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach, the journal Die Musik published responses to a questionnaire entitled “What does Johann Sebastian Bach mean to me personally, and what meaning does he have for our time?” Respondents at the time included Felix Draeseke, Vincent d’Indy, Joseph Joachim, Max Reger, Albert Schweitzer, and Charles Widor. More than one hundred years later, a similar request was sent to composers active around the year 2000, another Bachjahr. Lombardi was one of the respondents.

Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the guideposts of my life—one of the very few. Much has changed in the course of time, much will change, but Bach remains. Among the wealth of masterworks, one piece in particular has accompanied me during my life: the Prelude and Fugue in E flat minor from the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. I quoted it for the first time in my piece *Albumblätter* for piano, written exactly thirty-four years ago at the turn of the year 1967-68. Two thirds of the way into the composition to which I assigned, after many previous attempts, the opus number One, I quoted fragments of the piece, which I transformed through an alienation effect by adding a glass bead onto the strings of the piano. Why I quoted exactly this piece I could not explain today—except that, at the time, I began to return to intensely practicing the piano and, in turn, occupied myself with the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Within a composition oriented at the sonorous image of new music, the appearance of the Bach quotation was like a reminiscence of the golden era of music irretrievably past, but, at the same time, also a gesture originating from the knowledge of music’s unity and from the awareness of a tradition to which my piece was linked.

What I did not know then, however, was that part of the contemporary music written then was characterized by the use of different historical musical layers—a phenomenon which later became known as musical pluralism. And I also did not know at the time that a little less than a year later I would become a student of Bernd Alois Zimmermann, who, as I learned in retrospect, was an eminent representative of that trend. Puzzled (and not without some irritation), I was informed a few years later by a clever critic, who knew from my biography that I had been a Zimmermann student and who heard a performance of the piece, that the *Albumblätter* immediately identified me as a Zimmermann disciple. I could not have been exposed to the alleged influence at the time for the simple reason that I did not know Zimmermann then. What I knew, however, was that some Stockhausen compositions, picked up on the radio, had inspired me to the piece. That's why I wanted to study with him and, after meeting the Meister personally in Rome, applied for a fellowship which would allow me to learn from him while in Cologne. I indeed got the stipend for two semesters. Since Stockhausen's course at the Rheinische Musikschule only lasted for three months, I also enrolled at the Musikhochschule in the Zimmermann class. In retrospect, it appears to me ironic and not without deeper meaning that my piano piece unified two important composers, who, as is known, did not care much for each other. But both meant a lot for me (or, rather, became important for me): one as the spiritual guide for the composition, the other because of a certain affinity manifested in the quotation technique I used in the piece.

My apprentice piece for the Stockhausen masterclass (October through December 1968) was *Das ist kein Bach, sagte Beethoven, das ist ein Meer* (This is not a brook, said Beethoven, this is an ocean)—a piece of controlled improvisation for seven performers, in which I again used the Bach prelude, this time as a kind of building material rather than a quotation; by way of several notational symbols explained in a legend, the performers improvise on individual segments from Bach's prelude—a chord, a trill, a melodic formula, etc. Even though much time has passed since, I consider this piece, like *Albumblätter*, as valid and authentic. I stand by it even today.

To finish the little story about my use of the Prelude in E flat minor (and the Fugue that follows) I would like to add that this year, now coming to an end, I was asked by the Accademia Filarmonica in Rome to add a piece from the past for an interview concert with my music. I chose the Bach pieces which I performed on the piano. *Pars pro toto*, these pieces give me a glimpse of Bach's inexhaustibly rich oeuvre. I do not know a better way to start a new day than to play from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. How much would I like to

master the entire work! But I am afraid that this is just wishful thinking, or, as the Germans put it, a *frommer Wunsch* (a pious wish).

Since the word “pious” has crept in somehow, I should add that, unfortunately, I am not pious, but for several years I have been drawn, also and especially in musical terms, to what could be called transcendence, to the ultimate questions about the meaning of history and human existence in general.¹³¹ I may lack religion and a God, but the missing transcendental dimension is compensated by what Bach’s music represents for me. Bach no doubt was a true deity of music, and what he accomplished has for me a supernatural dimension. There is hardly a composer for whom, since childhood, I feel as much respect—indeed, reverence—as for Bach. If I could imagine a god, I would like to give him the features and characteristics of Bach, a god who lives a full, normal—in other words, a human—life, who has a wife, if necessary two, with whom he has children, who knows the concerns of everyday life, and who—how could it be otherwise with a deity—composes divine music.

J. S. Bach appears in my music for a third time—in a scene of my opera *Dimitri, oder: Der Künstler und die Macht* (Dimitri, or Artist and Power), after a libretto by Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich and premiered in Leipzig in 2000. The scene shows the composer Dimitri in Leipzig, where he has travelled with a delegation from his country and where he encounters Bach incarnate. The two composers discuss the content and function of music. “You, too, are born to serve God,” says Bach. “No, I want to serve the people,” is Dimitri’s response, and so they talk at cross-purposes. Still, Dimitri receives words of encouragement from his great and revered colleague to stay the course he set for his music.

I cannot judge to what extent Bach is present in my music in structural terms. As far as music has departed from the foundations of tonality for now almost hundred years, it is not able or does not want to contradict its aesthetic premises by going back to forms such as, say, the fugue. Granted, Schoenberg used dance forms of the Bach era, but he never wrote a fugue. (An exception is perhaps the movement “Farben” [Colors] from the *Five Orchestra Pieces*, Op.16, which has the form of a fugue, albeit a highly stylized one.) Shostakovich, however—the Dimitri in my opera—who wrote in an idiom that expanded but never negated tonality, was able, without problems, to write preludes and fugues, especially after his visit to Leipzig. I would very much welcome it if it were possible again (as a kind of synthesis of different

¹³¹ A recent manifestation of my interest is *Vanitas?*, a work for soprano, alto, tenor, bass and orchestra, using texts from *Ecclesiastes*, among other sources.

stylistic tendencies of twentieth-century music) to write fugues which do not sound as if they are an escape into the past.¹³² Of course, with Bach looking over our shoulder, that is quite daring enterprise. But it could also be understood as an “appropriation rooted in love” and a continuing bond with the energy-generating sources of our musical culture. With this sentence, which is a bit heavy with pathos, I would like to close these brief remarks and “bow in reverence before the master of German music, before Johann Sebastian Bach.”¹³³

[Source: Typescript e-mailed by the composer, dated “Yokohama (Japan), Jahreswechsel 2001/02”; Becheri 02-12.]

Desire and Fear of Freedom: Arnold Schoenberg on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Death

The Schoenberg year 2001 gave Lombardi an occasion to articulate his position on one of the seminal figures of musical modernism. In his essay he focuses especially on Schoenberg's rediscovery of his Jewish roots—a issue that no doubt has an autobiographical dimension, as Lombardi, after the death of his mother in 1995, has been drawn to explore his own Jewish heritage.

My first encounter with Schoenberg's music goes back to my adolescent years and, if I remember correctly, happened after my exposure to the music of Webern. A miniature score of Webern's *Symphony*, Op. 21, is inscribed with the date February, 1960, when I was 14 years old. I remember a performance of this work at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia before a scornfully uproarious audience making great show of reading newspapers.

Studying this music was for me a clandestine activity and I certainly could not talk about it with my composition teacher at the conservatory. What I might learn about harmony was the “official” reason for my investigation, but for me less interesting than my feeling for the music. The most important part took place at home, where I tried to decipher a piece of music which interested me just for the fact of its having been banned by the conservatory, and where I undertook my first compositional experiments. Among these (I am still speaking of 1960-61) there are pieces using series of five, six, and twelve tones. But only five years later I wrote a true dodecaphonic composition, *Elegos* (1965) for violin and piano, in which I used the twelve-tone series quite freely, and still closer to Schoenberg than to Webern. I still

¹³² „Fuga” in Italian means both fugue and escape.

¹³³ Luca Lombardi, *Dimitri, oder der Künstler und die Macht*, scene 9.

remember my teacher's reaction, at that time Armando Renzi—to whom I owe much in terms of encouragement and support, and whom I remember with affection—praised my composition, but, although surely more enlightened than my previous teachers, took it as a cue to make a tirade against twelve-tone music. Renzi, although at that time in a conservative stance, had been the first to perform Schoenberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* in Italy. He especially liked in my composition a passage in which I repeated a certain melodic fragment like an echo, or rather, like a reprise and a continuation of the discourse. This is a procedure that is quite easy to find in Schoenberg, whose music is—regardless of the language he happens to use (tonal, atonal, dodecaphonic)—always a *sprechende* or speaking music.

As a youngster, the first thing that interested me in Schoenberg was therefore the dodecaphony, the aspect of his poetics that I then felt less close to, and still do. Only later did I discover his earlier compositions, those written around 1910 before his settling on the twelve-tone method, the atonal pieces (a term that Schoenberg did not like)—the ones that I like the best. I am thinking of the *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11, the *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19, especially the *Fünf Orchesterstücke*, Op. 16, and then *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*, but also of the song-cycle *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* on poetry of Stefan George, Op. 15, and of course, of *Pierrot lunaire*, Op. 21—all pieces written between 1909 and 1913 when the composer was his mid- to late thirties.

The catalog of Schoenberg's works (in all little more than 50 titles), of course, comprises a larger number of great works, works for which one feels respect and admiration (let me just mention *Moses und Aron*), but for me the heart of Schoenberg's production is made up of the works written around 1910. Schoenberg had weighed anchor and had left the no longer quiet waters of tonality, without yet having berthed in the new port of dodecaphony.

In Schoenberg there are features that attract me and others that repel me. Problematic, and yet impressive, i.e., capable of making an impact on the imagination, is his “prophetic” or “messianic” bearing, or, as he says himself, like John the Baptist, “I am only a precursor [...]. I am like John the Baptist (probably because I have a head one could easily imagine on a silver platter) and they cook with the water with which I baptize [...]”—thus he wrote in 1923 (the year of the first full application of the twelve-tone method).¹³⁴

Not that those claims of his were without foundation. To a question posed about his *String Quartet No.2* (in F-sharp minor), in whose final movement

¹³⁴ Eberhard Freitag, *Arnold Schoenberg*, (Reinbek-bei-Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1973), 7.

he abandons tonality, Schoenberg could legitimately answer: “The development pressed toward this outcome. Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler had a part in this. But also Debussy and Max Reger and even Pfitzner pressed in this direction. I took the last step, and I did it as a logical consequence.”¹³⁵ Consequence, or thinking things through to a logical conclusion: this is surely a trait of Schoenberg’s, perhaps one of his “German” traits. The sense of consequentiality, of systematic and deductive thinking, is deeply rooted in the German language through which, given certain premises, it is inevitable to arrive at certain conclusions or resolutions, be they good or bad. We will see, however, later, that Schoenberg’s poetics are not without contradictions—contradictions that are for me a sign of authenticity and, so to speak, of realism.

But Schoenberg was not only a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of German language and culture, but also a Jew and it is probable and plausible that the “messianic” component came to him from his Hebrew background, from his biblical interests, that it was after all an integrating element in his way of living Judaism.

I will come back to this point later. Let me return to what Schoenberg said about his *Quartet*: “I took the final step, and I did it as a logical consequence.” Here is a nexus of Schoenbergian poetics and even of the entire music history of the twentieth century: Is it accurate to say that the road taken by Schoenberg and his students, and then after the Second World War by the serial composers, was the only historically legitimate road, or were there not perhaps other possibilities, other pathways to take? And these other pathways were only secondary paths in respect to the Viennese School, or perhaps is it not instead true that they had existed—as even now they exist—different roads, all of them in some way main roads, or at least not secondary, to the extent that every real compositional achievement, every successful work has the right to exist as it is, regardless of considerations of the language, the technique, or the style that it uses. This is, for me, a rhetorical question which I can only answer with yes. Schoenberg’s music and the significance this composer has had in the history of music is an incontrovertible reality. This does not preclude that there have been other composers who have achieved important results by exploring different pathways. First of all Stravinsky, whose *Rite of Spring* is, in my view, the keystone composition of the 20th century; then, of course, there is Bartók, a composer I love like few others; then, for example, Janáček or Ives, not to mention other composers so diverse as Debussy, Puccini, Busoni, or Shostakovich. The twentieth century today appears to be one of the most contradictory—but artistically rich—of

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

centuries. A true kaleidoscope of languages and styles: to single out one figure would diminish the importance of this unique century, whose characteristic is precisely the all-inclusiveness and complementarity of so many diverse endeavors.

As is acknowledged, Schoenberg was politically a conservative and a supporter of the monarchy. He experienced the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a true catastrophe, as the “overturning of everything in which people had believed,” according to what he himself wrote to Kandinsky in 1922.¹³⁶ In that same letter he states that in recent years his only moral support had been religion, albeit outside of any organizing force, and that this faith of his had found expression in the text of the oratorio *Die Jakobsleiter*, inspired variously by Strindberg, Swedenborg, Balzac, as well as Rudolf Steiner, the theorist of anthroposophy. But there is also a direct link with the Bible, precisely with chapter 29 of the first book of the Pentateuch, containing Jacob's dream. As Enrico Fubini points out, “this strong ideal aspiration to the achievement of a religious faith was doubtlessly one of those decisive things that impelled him in his return to Judaism.”¹³⁷

And the moral stature of Schoenberg increases when we realize that his re-association with the religion of his forebears came about just when it was becoming (once more) uncomfortable to declare oneself Jewish, and when, in German-speaking countries, there was that recrudescence of anti-Semitism which would result in Nazi crimes. Schoenberg, a composer intimately tied like no others to the Germanic musical tradition, confronted by marginalization and persecution, rediscovers his Jewish roots and begins a process of re-association that will culminate in his re-conversion to Judaism in 1933 in a Paris synagogue. Being a Jew totally assimilated into German culture, Schoenberg now begins a tendency to turn his back on his beloved homeland. In a letter to the philosopher Jakob Klatzkin (probably written from Paris on May 26, 1933, two months after Hitler's rise to power) he writes, “We are oriental and nothing keeps us tied to the West. We have a different destiny [...] our essence is not Western, that is only our outward appearance. We must return to our origins.” It is interesting to note that this surprising remark, quoted by Fubini,¹³⁸ is missing in Erwin Stein's edition of Schoenberg's correspondence. One might speculate that Stein decided not to publish such a declaration that could give of Schoenberg an image so different from that already known, one that could seem counterproductive, or even compromising, and that for this reason he censored the letter. Schoenberg's statement surely is surprising also because he often emphasized his own

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁷ Enrico Fubini, *La musica nella tradizione ebraica* (Torino, Einaudi, 1994), 103.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

identity as a German composer, going so far as to say that his “discovery” would assure German music’s preeminence for the next hundred years.¹³⁹

This apodictic and seemingly arrogant statement has always had a strange effect on me. It could be read, on the one hand, as an expression of Schoenberg’s messianic posture, but, on the other, seen as a response to whoever wanted to expunge him, as a Jew, from German culture. A confirmation of this hypothesis comes from the fact that Schoenberg made this declaration to his student Josef Rufer at the end of July, 1921, right when the famous episode of Mattsee occurred. What had happened, then? Schoenberg and his family had made plans to spend their summer vacation in a village in the Salzkammergut, not far from Salzburg. Upon arriving there, at Mattsee in fact, he learned that the area had been closed off to Jews. Schoenberg could have shown his baptismal certificate, since, in 1910 on the occasion of his marriage to Mathilde von Zemlinsky, he had converted to Protestantism, but he chose to leave the district. “From that moment,” he writes in a letter of 1934 to the American Rabbi Stephan Wise, “all my steps went in the direction of renouncing assimilation as an undesirable act, and moving towards a healthy and vigorous Jewish nationalism based upon the national and religious faith of our choice. It was then that I decided to devote myself to the cause of propagating the Jewish faith.”¹⁴⁰ And in a 1935 letter to Webern, also not included in Stein’s selection, Schoenberg wrote: “For fourteen years [in other words, since that very year of 1921] I have been prepared for what happened to me today. In this long period I have been able to prepare myself thoroughly, and, even if with difficulty, I have definitively freed myself from that which tied me to the West. For a long time I have decided to be Jewish [...].”¹⁴¹ Shortly before his death, Schoenberg wrote on April 26, 1951 to Ödön Partos (or Partosh, as Schoenberg spells it): “To your friends who recently visited me in Los Angeles, as well as to you, Director Partosh, I have told how for more than four decades my most fervent wish has been to see the birth of an independent Israeli State—and even more so, to become a citizen of that State.”¹⁴² In speaking of more than four decades, Schoenberg may be making an error in his calculation of time, otherwise one would have to deduce that he had already taken a Zionist stance a decade before that crucial year of 1921.

¹³⁹ „I have found something that will assure the preeminence of German music for the next hundred years,” Schoenberg supposedly said to his student Josef Rufer at the end of July, 1921. See Matthias Henke, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001), 96.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 104. Nor is this letter contained in the edition by Erwin Stein. Could it be by chance?

¹⁴¹ E. Fubini, *La musica nella tradizione ebraica*, 106.

¹⁴² Arnold Schoenberg, *Briefe*, ed. Erwin Stein (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, 1958), 297. Ödön Partos (1907-1977), violinist and composer of Hungarian origin, had moved in 1938 to Palestine. At the time of Schoenberg’s letter he was Director of the Israel Academy of Music in Jerusalem. The academy had offered Schoenberg the post of Honorary President, a post that he accepted with great pleasure.

It is worth noting that at a certain point in his life—I am speaking of the early thirties, when Schoenberg was already about 60—he could feel uprooted with respect to the country and culture in which he lived, and that he was aware of belonging to an alien place and culture. It would seem that the painful road that Schoenberg pursued to his creation of dodecaphony and to his returning to Judaism was born from the same imperative to arrive at an order, to a *law* that might give sense to music as well as to life itself. It came about because of a need to react against the forces of disorder, chaos, arbitrariness, moral relativism—against the inevitable loss of the center. The *Umwertung aller Werte*, to borrow Nietzsche’s expression—the change of sign and meaning with respect to all values—is the emblem of these modern times, and with which we must come to terms whether we like it or not.

The first entirely 12-tone work of Schoenberg is the last of the *Fünf Klavierstücke*, Op. 23, composed between 1920 and 1923. Prefigurations of twelve-tone technique may be discerned in the *Jakobsleiter*, written between 1917 and 1922, in which one can see the interweaving of a philosophic-religious subject matter and musical technique. More than an expression of precisely biblical purpose, underscores Fubini, the composition is the expression of an as yet vague spiritualism.¹⁴³ Here indeed come together Schoenberg’s mystic-religious readings, from Balzac’s philosophical novel *Séraphita* (which contains the expression “Jacob’s mystical ladder,” hinting at the title of the oratorio), to the theosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg and the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, and of course the Bible (Old Testament), where it speaks of Jacob’s dream: “And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of the Lord were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.’”¹⁴⁴

From the musical standpoint it is very interesting that into the *Jakobsleiter* found its way a *Scherzo* (composed, it seems, 1914-15), which already contains a presentiment of a tone row, albeit of only six tones in this case. “In order to ensure unity, which has always been my main concern,” wrote Schoenberg around 1950, “I conceived the plan of constructing all the principal themes of the oratorio on the basis of a series of six notes.”¹⁴⁵ “In order to ensure unity, which has always been my main concern”—this is certainly a keystone phrase which throws light on Schoenberg’s thinking, not

¹⁴³ E. Fubini, *La musica nella tradizione ebraica*, 107-108.

¹⁴⁴ *The Holy Bible*, Moses I, 28, 12-13.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Giacomo Manzoni, *Arnold Schoenberg: L'uomo, l'opera, i testi musicali* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), 79.

just his musical thinking. As Giacomo Manzoni points out, "...it is probable that this kind of thematic unity finds its motivation in the words of Gabriel about halfway through the concluding monologue, in the part not set to music: "Lord, deliver us from our singularity! Make us anew to be a whole within that whole of which we are a part."¹⁴⁶

And I am in agreement with Manzoni when he affirms: "At the root of the presentiment of the dodecaphonic series and of the laws that govern it, there were doubtlessly philosophical and even metaphysical motivations...: the spiritual turning point induces the musician to resolve the crisis in the sense of recognizing a 'principle of authority' within the musical material, rather than impelling it in the direction of a radical deepening of the nascent material-consciousness of the compositions written in the period of the emancipation of dissonance—so that, for example, the contemporary avant-garde was able to more easily reshape itself in these, rather than in those of the later dodecaphonic period."¹⁴⁷

Schoenberg's navigation on the open sea had arrived in port. He had devised a law, not only for his music, but for his life. In some way it is as though, demiurge that he was, to the extent in the period of atonality (or, as Schoenberg preferred to say, of pantonality) established from time to time the code according to which he concretely articulated musical discourse—he became now, with dodecaphony, the executor of a design contained in a superior order. It is, however, a matter of an order devised and codified by him, even though he is careful to emphasize an obvious phylogenetic necessity in the road that led to it through the dissolution of tonality. As in all human affairs—and perhaps even divine—there are no methods devoid of contradictions. Schoenberg not only used the dodecaphonic method in a free and flexible way, but he also returned on several occasions to tonal composition, which he had never repudiated. In dodecaphony, on the other hand, he finds a new comprehensibility and clarity—the *Fasslichkeit* of which Webern also speaks—that this "new order" ensures him. The "mosaic law" in its turn permits him to find clarity in himself and in his relationship with the world.

It is interesting to read, in this connection, how in those years he affirmed another great Jewish thinker of the twentieth century. In a letter dated September 30, 1934, sent from Vienna to the writer Arnold Zweig, Sigmund Freud stated about his essays on the man Moses, "And my essay received the title *The Man Moses, a Historical Novel* [...]. The material is divided into

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

three parts; the first reads like an interesting novel; the second is laborious and lengthy, the third substantial and exacting. The enterprise foundered on this third section, for it contains a theory of religion which, although nothing new to me after *Totem and Taboo*, is nevertheless bound to be something fundamentally new and shattering to the uninitiated. Concern for these uninitiated compels me to keep the completed essay secret. For we live here in an atmosphere of Catholic orthodoxy.”¹⁴⁸ Surely there are various reasons why both the third essay of Freud and the third act of *Moses und Aron* remain unfinished. It is, however, worthy of note that both thinkers confronted the theme of the origins Judaism, and that for both it was not only possible, but supremely instructive to investigate the ties between the genesis of their achievements and the Hebrew tradition, or to succeed in understanding to what extent both the founder of psychoanalysis and the architect of dodecaphony attributed a specific role in the genesis of their discoveries to their professed Judaism.¹⁴⁹

In his essay *Composition with Twelve Notes*, Schoenberg writes, “The restrictions imposed upon a composer by requiring the use of a single series for every composition are so rigid that only an imagination tempered by a variety of experience can surmount them. This method gives nothing; on the contrary, it takes away much.”¹⁵⁰ And Fubini comments, “It is neither difficult nor risky to find in these quotations anything more than a vague Judaic reminiscence. By substituting just a few terms, in fact, certain cardinal principles of Judaism: the principle of Election, meant not as a privilege but as a harsh and imposed duty and which, if one wants it and can assume it, can lead to a higher level of consciousness; the sense of Law, of its severity and its necessity, its acceptance as a transcendent principle and as an instrument of a higher freedom; and, finally, the sense of Unity, from which every multiplicity descends that does not degenerate into chaos and abstraction.”¹⁵¹

And again: “It [the twelve-tone series] is imposed as the internal law that governs the composition, that from which everything is dependent; this law is founded upon a unitary principle. One cannot but see an analogy, obviously symbolic, with the very function of law in the framework of Hebrew ethics. Hebrew ethical law neither finds its basis in the nature of man, nor in some natural order, nor in an obvious practical teleology: it is self-justifying only as

¹⁴⁸ *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania and James Stern (New York: Basic Books, 1960), 421-22.

¹⁴⁹ For an investigation into the ties of Freud with the Hebrew tradition, see David Meghnagi, *Il padre e la legge: Freud e l'ebraismo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992).

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Enrico Fubini, *La musica nella tradizione ebraica*, p. 112. I have modified the translation of Schoenberg's passage, which Fubini took from the Italian edition of the essay (Arnold Schoenberg, *Stile e idea*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 113.

divine law, given by God to mankind in completely exceptional and unnatural circumstances. The problem arises at that moment when this law, in its purity and distance from nature, must come into contact with Man's world, with his inclinations, with his sensibilities, with his *nature*. Then there appears a seemingly unbridgeable gap. This is the dilemma of Schoenberg the man, the Jew, the musician."¹⁵²

And finally: "No doubt the dodecaphonic series is for Schoenberg a symbol or a metaphor for his way of conceiving of God, and this not only because—just as came about in *Moses und Aron*—the series is an entity and the entire opera is based upon it and draws its origins from it, but also because the series is an abstract and not perceptible thing; thus, in an analogous way, God is 'unrepresentable, invisible and ineffable'. The series, too, is not perceptible to the ear, at least in any direct way; it becomes so only through effects that it produces, that is, in the *multiplicity* that is extracted by it."¹⁵³

The twelve-tone series, therefore, is a symbol of the oneness and unrepresentability of God.

The road that leads Schoenberg to link ever more closely dodecaphony and Judaism ends in the opera—or, perhaps better said, oratorio—*Moses und Aron*, which I cannot permit myself to dwell upon here.¹⁵⁴ I cannot fail to point out what I consider a fruitful contradiction in Schoenberg—that is the fact that, in spite of his arriving at what may appear a self-contained conception of life and art, he continues to debate this conception returning, at opportune times, to tonal writing. This fact must not be seen only as a contradiction within the path that had led him to the logical convergence of philosophical-religious and musical issues, but it is part of a perspective on music which, despite its severity, was not as sectarian as it would seem to be for many disciples of dodecaphony. Proof of this is the respect Schoenberg had for composers with poetics unlike, if not contrary, to his; I think here of Schoenberg's contemporary Max Reger, whom he considered a genius, or Darius Milhaud, whom, in 1922, he looked up to as the principal representative of polytonality. "If I like him," he added, "he is secondary. But I think that he has a great deal of talent."¹⁵⁵ And I recall a letter to Milhaud, in which he praises him for his *Le Bœuf sur le toit*.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p. 120.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 115.

¹⁵⁴ I refer the reader to the enlightening essay by E. Fubini in *La musica nella tradizione ebraica*, 106-125.

¹⁵⁵ See the letter of October 26, 1922 to A. Zemlinsky, in A. Schoenberg, *Briefe*, 81.

¹⁵⁶ See *Arnold Schoenberg 1874-1951. Lebensgeschichte in Begegnungen* ed. Nuria Nono Schoenberg (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1952), 400. I also think of the esteem and admiration Schoenberg had for George Gershwin, about whom he wrote, „For me an artist is like an apple tree when its time comes, whether

In this apparent “non-coherence” there is, in my opinion, a close bond between Schoenberg and his time, which, in many aspects, *mutatis mutandis*, is still with us in our time. “Mama, what does ‘modern men’ mean?” thus ends the opera *Von heute auf morgen* (From Today to Tomorrow). What *does* it mean? I fear that our destiny as modern men, that we have lived the greater part of our life in one of the most agonizing periods in history, and that even at the dawn of this new century we must confront human bestiality and stupidity, I fear that our destiny lies in living with our loss of a center, with torment and anguish, and in the impossibility of aspiring—except at the cost of deluding ourselves by constructing a *heile Welt*, an intact and harmonious world—to a philosophical or religious system claiming to prove everything right and to which we can turn to resolve conflicts.¹⁵⁷

I like to think that Schoenberg, like a seismograph of his own time, registered musically the tormented, fragmented identity of modern man, and that his music, be it atonal, dodecaphonic or tonal, is the expression of this multiple identity.

Thus, *Kol Nidre*, Op. 39, a composition written in 1938, is tonal—in G minor. Personally, this or other presumed contradictions do not disturb or worry me at all; their absence would actually disturb me more. Earlier I observed that in the philosophical as well as musical views of Schoenberg there is room for contradictions that he was unable, or perhaps did not want, to resolve. *Kol nidre* is a traditional Hebrew prayer which is sung on the eve of the festival of forgiveness, or Day of Atonement, or, as it is expressed in German, reconciliation (*Versöhnung*), that is the Festival of Yom Kippur. Schoenberg reworked the original text of the prayer and derived, from various versions of

it likes it or not, it flowers and begins to produce apples; and just like an apple tree, which neither knows nor seeks to know the value that the market experts attach to its apples, a true composer does not ask the experts in the serious arts if his ‘produce’ will be liked: he simply feels that he has something to say, and he says it. There is no doubt in my mind that Gershwin was an innovator. What he realized with rhythm, harmony and melody is not a style, but it is profoundly different from the mannerism of many so-called serious composers.” And again, „I do not have to say if history will consider Gershwin a Johann Strauss or a Debussy, an Offenbach or a Brahms, a Lehár or a Puccini. But I know that he is an artist and composer who has expressed musical ideas that were new, new as the means with which he expressed them” (quoted in G. Manzoni, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 152). I could also mention the irritation Schoenberg felt for the treatment Theodor W. Adorno reserved for Stravinsky in *Philosophie der neuen Musik*: „I thought he was a musician,” it seems he exclaimed—this by way of saying that Schoenberg, with all his idiosyncrasies, was a musician and was capable of recognizing musical worth. [An excursion on Schoenberg’s characterization of „friends” has been omitted.]

¹⁵⁷ In a time long past (1986) I wrote, „Whoever does not grab the crutches that beliefs of any kind offer him—religious or lay—cannot help but experience a feeling of dizziness.” See Luca Lombardi, „Tra preistoria e postmoderno,” in *Molteplicità di poetiche e linguaggi musicali d’oggi: Atti del convegno di Nuova Consonanza* (Roma, 6-7 novembre 1986), ed. Daniela Tortora, (Milano: Unicopli, 1988), 27ff.

the melody, the theme that is the basis of his composition. The work—written written upon the suggestion of Dr. Jacob Sonderling, rabbi of Los Angeles—was begun on August 10, 1938 and completed September 22, 1938. The first performance was on October 4, 1938, the eve of Yom Kippur, in Los Angeles under the direction of Schoenberg himself.

The traditional melody is from the sixteenth century, and there exist many versions. Schoenberg turned to seven of them. “The melody suffers from monotony and sentimentality. This is partly caused by the circumstance that it is composed in a minor-like church mode.”¹⁵⁸ At that time, adds Schoenberg, there was not yet a clear difference between the emotional effects of major and minor. Bach, says Schoenberg, would have written it in a major key, because, for him, as for us, the minor mode expressed sad and poignant emotions. If in the 1500s the melody could express “dignity, gravity, solemnity and reverential fear” (“awe”), nowadays, notes Schoenberg, there is a discrepancy between the solemnity of the text and the sentimentality with which it is presented—sentimentality accentuated by embellishments and ornamentation added, over time, by various cantors. Schoenberg brings other criticism to bear on the traditional melody (on all its versions, evidently), saying that it is constructed in an unsatisfying manner—on the contrary, it is not really constructed at all—having no climax and ending without any apparent musical reason: it simply “ceases to go on”; the ending is neither prepared, nor constructed, nor emphasized.¹⁵⁹ Schoenberg was surprised by the traditional interpretation of the text of *Kol nidre*, according to which, on the Day of Atonement all commitments undertaken during the year may be considered annulled. Schoenberg was not the first not to understand why the Jews were authorized to make “oaths and vows and promises” that later could be considered null and void. “No sincere and honest man,” comments Schoenberg, “could understand such an attitude.”¹⁶⁰

And, in a letter to Paul Dessau, he writes, “I think that this interpretation, since it is really immoral, is wrong. It is in contradiction to the high ethics of all Hebrew law. From the first moment I was convinced (a thing later shown to be true when I read that the *Kol nidre* originated in Spain) that it meant that those who, either spontaneously or as a pretense, had embraced the Christian religion, could, on this Day of Atonement, reconcile with their God and that all the vows¹⁶¹ should be dissolved. Therefore, this does not refer to

¹⁵⁸ See „Dokument 1, Aufsatz Schoenbergs ohne Titel,“ in Arnold Schoenberg, *Chorwerke II*, ed. Christian Martin Schmidt (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne—Wien: Universal Edition AG, 1977)—Arnold Schoenberg, *Sämtliche Werke*. Abteilung V: Chorwerke, Reihe B. 19, xi.

¹⁵⁹ „Dokument 2, Aufsatzentwurf Schoenbergs,“ in A. Schoenberg, *Chorwerke II*, i.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁶¹ Schoenberg uses here two synonyms: Gelübde, which means „vow” and Gelöbnis, „solemn promise, vow.”

commercial entanglements.”¹⁶² And he continues, listing the difficulties encountered in using the traditional melody:

1. In reality there is no such melody, but a series of formulas [*Floskeln*] clearly resembling each other without being identical, but not always appearing in the same order. 2. This melody is monodic, it is not based on harmony in the sense we attribute to it, and perhaps not even on polyphony. From a selection of versions I extracted the phrases that there are in common and I arranged them in a logical order. One of my principal tasks was to cut Bruch’s cello sentimentality, etc., with some acidity, and to confer upon this DECREE the dignity of a law or an edict. I believe I succeeded. These measures 58-63 are not, at least, in a sentimental minor.¹⁶³

What happens at measure 58? It is here that the melody from *Kol nidre* appears for the first time.

The reader (the Rabbi) says:

All Vows and Oaths and Promises and Plights of Any Kind
wherewith we pledged ourselves
counter to our inherited Faith in God
Who is One, Everlasting, Unseen, Unfathomable—
We declare these null and void.
We repent that these obligations have estranged us
From the sacred task we were chosen for.¹⁶⁴

The melody (its first fragment) is given to the woodwinds (2 flutes, oboe, E-flat clarinet, clarinet in A, bass clarinet, and bassoon), all in unison and in the same octave; the brasses “wrench” the harmonies (in G, though with an unexpected harmonic development and with a few spurious chords with respect to tonality, G minor with its two flats, even though the tonic is harmonized, both at the beginning and the end of this fragment, in the major); the strings, with a figuration of slightly breathless triplets contrasting with the calm and serene flow of the melody—it, too, in unison, albeit in four different octaves—move around the various harmonic poles.

Then (in m.63) follows the second fragment of the melody; it is scored—still in unison, this time at three octaves—for oboe, bass clarinet and bassoon (the latter in its high register). Of the various versions (Schoenberg spoke of seven, but the critical apparatus accompanying the score in Schoenberg’s

¹⁶² „Dokument 3, Aus einem Brief Schoenbergs vom 22.11.1941 an Paul Dessau,“ in A. Schoenberg, *Chorwerke II*, xii.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

Complete Works lists of five), Schoenberg chose Schorr's, which, with respect to the others, is distinguished by an oriental flavor, or, as I feel, a "Russian" one.¹⁶⁵

Oriental inflections appear from the outset of the composition: already in the fourth measure there is a figure in the flute, taken up three measures later by the A clarinet an octave lower (b-flat, c-flat, a, b-flat, a-flat, g) with markedly oriental characteristics, rendered especially, but not only, by the Neapolitan second, a-flat to g. It is noteworthy that Schoenberg gives an oriental flavor to this Hebraic composition of his, not only because in this way he puts himself in tune with the Hebrew text, but also, in the light of what he declared in 1933 to Klatzkin ("We are Orientals and nothing keeps us tied to the West") and then reconfirmed several times.

The fragment with the Neapolitan second may be considered part of the scale (g, a-flat, b-flat, c-flat, d, e-flat, f-sharp, g), an eminently oriental scale, which was not present in the fragments of the original melody, but appears in descending fashion in Schoenberg's score in measures 44-45 (the text says, "A light is sown for the pious"); then, almost at the end of the piece, in measures 170-173 ("A light is sown for the sinner"): a, g-sharp, f, e, d, c-sharp.

Apart from the literal quotation of the individual fragments of the traditional melody (in the version worked out by him), Schoenberg uses these fragments like building blocks with which he skillfully orders the structure of the composition. Thus, in measure 15, after an interesting succession of chords (however with a V-I progression in the bass in the main key of G minor), there is a superposition of various and highly different motifs: the low register (tuba) states the inversion of the first phrase of the melody (the one that will be presented in measure 58) in half notes, while the same fragment in shorter note values (sixteenth notes and quarter notes) is presented by the trumpet; at the same time the E-flat clarinet and violins I and II take up an expressive motif—I might even say expressionistic—that can be retraced to the basic material, even though it has been transformed in such a way (mainly by inverting the interval of minor second to a major seventh) as to acquire in reality a completely different meaning (expressionistic, precisely); two figures in addition, presented respectively by the violas and the A clarinet, complete this dense passage, which suitably exemplifies the complexity, layering, and, I would like to add, the synthesis of diverse expressive spheres. But it is not appropriate here for me to enter further into an analysis of this

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15. Another "Russian" fragment (common to the versions of Schorr, Heller and Kornitzer, bottom of p. 18) is practically identical to a passage in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, introduced by the flute in G at measure 5 in number 93 („Cercles mystérieux des adolescents”).

marvelous score more worthy of an entire essay. Together with its beauty and expressive dynamism, what strike me in this composition are its freedom and severity (two qualities that go hand in hand in great music). Schoenberg does not hesitate to use tonality (the composition, as I have pointed out begins in G minor and ends in G major with a great deal of V-I progressions in the chorus and plagal chords in the brasses, cellos and basses), nor to use procedures from traditional musical rhetoric, such as progressions (which recur many times) or illustrative gestures: for example, when the Rabbi proclaims, “In the beginning God said, ‘LET THERE BE LIGHT,’ a thirty-second-note figure given to the three clarinets (E flat, A and bass) flies up in a zigzag into the highest register in m.32. At “lighting of the lamp” also come into play piccolo and flute (in the highest register), trumpet, flexaton, suspended cymbal and—an interesting choice—not the violins, but the violas, and only in their relatively high register. One could mention many other examples of these illustrative gestures. Vice-versa, a figure with dotted rhythm (derived, as well, from a fragment of the traditional melody) is used in a way that I would call Mahlerian—likewise appear other Mahlerian passages, and perhaps one could say that the common denominator, what links Schoenberg to Mahler, is that Hebrew (musical) substratum.

As is well known, Schoenberg’s return to tonality—*Kol nidre* is not a twelve-tone composition nor does it have anything dodecaphonic about it—cannot be seen as a *Zurücknahme*, or a retraction (to use a notion dear to the pseudo-Schoenberg in Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*). There is nothing ideological about the work; its motivations are both practical (the wish to write a composition capable of being used during the ceremony of Yom Kippur) and musical. From this free and “pluralist” stance there is much to be learned.

I should like to conclude these thoughts, as I began them, on a personal note. My relationship with music, with other composers of the past and present, does not come about, as much as it is possible, through ideological mediations—not to say intellectual or intellectualistic—but is ultimately some kind of physical, almost visceral reality. Music takes over the entire body, brain and viscera included. In this sense it is a long time that that I have not been “Brechtian”¹⁶⁶ and, as far as I am concerned, regarding physical involvement (“physical” also includes the brain), I feel very close (and the *Kol nidre* is here a glaring exception) to the Schoenberg who around 1910 was composing “without a net.” To Schoenberg the explorer of a new musical

¹⁶⁶ Brecht—as a child of his times *sachlich* or *neusachlich*—claimed to be suspicious of any *hitzig* („hotheaded”) music, music that, as he liked to say, would make the body temperature rise. This, in his opinion, would not happen with the music of Bach, which he particularly loved. But how can we reconcile that with his declared love of *Tristan*? Even Brecht—thank heaven—was not without contradictions!

reality, to Schoenberg who—with the words of Stefan George—in the *Second Quartet*, Op. 10 (1907-1908), says, “I have the presentiment of air from another planet [...] I dissolve into sounds [...] surrendering, free of desires, to the great breathing.”¹⁶⁷ And I feel close to the Schoenberg of *Erwartung*, Op. 17, and of the *Fünf Orchesterstücke*, Op. 16. The most famous of these pieces is the third, with the title *Akkordfärbungen*, in which Schoenberg gives an extraordinary example of *Klangfarbenmelodie*, from a rib of which was born—to give just one, but significant example—an important element of the post-second-world-war period: Ligeti. The notes of the chords used in this movement migrate from instrument to instrument while individual pitches are replaced relatively slowly by others, producing a marvelous balance between orchestration and formal articulation. The latter seems to be a function of the former. And yet—something unknown to most, and again a magnificent example of Schoenberg’s ability to craft an innovative bridge between past and present and, in this case, even the future—the piece is a fugue.¹⁶⁸

[Source: Typescript “Desiderio e paura della libertà: Arnold Schönberg a cinquant’anni dalla morte,” final version of 2002. Published under the same title in *Rivista Italiana di Musicologica* XXXVII (2002, N.1), 143-157; Becheri 02-3.]

Lucrezio. Un Oratorio Materialistico—Parte Seconda: Amore

The composition is the second part of a trilogy, setting fragments of *De Rerum Natura* (“On the Nature of Things” or perhaps “On the World”) of the ancient Roman poet Lucretius that were translated for me by the contemporary poet Edoardo Sanguineti. It is a beautiful poetic description of world and men without deities. Everything in the world developed out of matter itself, evolved from the interplay of atoms. Lucretius was a follower of Epicurus who looked back to the atomistic philosophy of Democritus. That’s why my trilogy is called “un oratorio materialistico”, a materialistic oratorio.

The individual parts are called “Natura” (Nature), “Amore” (Love), “Morte” (Death)—the latter being a description of the plague in Athens.

I composed the first part (for speaker, soprano, solo flute, and orchestra) in 1998 as a commission from RAI (Italian Radio). Later I arranged a radio play “Aus nichts wird

¹⁶⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, *Streichquartett II* (Wien–London: Universal Edition, n.d.), 4th movement.

¹⁶⁸ See Max Deutsch, „Das dritte der Fünf Orchesterstücke, opus 16 ist eine Fuge,“ in *Musikkonzepte Sonderband: Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1980), 20-28.

nichts” (Nothing comes from nothing), based on the first part of the oratorio for Saarländischer Rundfunk.

The second part, which is being premiered today and which in contrast to the first part has more the character of chamber music, originated in the first few months of 2002 during a residence in Yokohama, Japan.

The third and last part, which like the first will again be set for orchestra, will be finished—God willing—in 2005. (Alas, as Lucretius teaches us, there are no gods, but let’s hope that our own matter still has a few positive metamorphoses in store for us.)

[Composed in 2002; the program notes in German were written for the premiere of the work in May 2002 in Saarbrücken.]

Return and Progress: To Wolfgang Rihm on his Fiftieth Birthday

Nearly twenty-five years had passed since Lombardi conducted an interview with Rihm for the then new music journal Musica/Realtà. Subsequently, a friendship developed that resulted in many exchanges between two kindred musical spirits. The essay was written for a symposium in Frankfurt/Main, celebrating Rihm’s fiftieth birthday in 2002.

I listen to a composition by Wolfgang Rihm:

expressive, eruptive, excessive; tonic, chthonic, not catatonic; powerful, brachial; simmering, indulgent, swelling, volcanic, effusive, overflowing, exaggerating, exceeding, cocky, crossing over, overdrawn, overblown, overpowering... and in any case (to be continued).

When Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich asked me whether I wanted to participate in a symposium about Wolfgang Rihm, I immediately agreed—because I respect Wolfgang Rihm very much and also feel connected to him through bonds of friendship. Even more than that: for some reasons, I consider him, although he is younger, a kind of older brother.

Jungheinrich—forever “young” already by name—proposed “Return” (Wiederkehr) as a topic, and this was another reason for me to respond immediately in the affirmative, especially since it is the title of a composition of mine. Did he perhaps think of this composition written more than thirty years ago, and what could it have to do with Wolfgang Rihm and his music? While still pondering the riddle, I received the program announcing the event and

realized that the topic I was assigned had been slightly changed, making however a big difference: “Progress and Return”—I could not talk about that, I thought; that is a difficult philosophical issue. My father was a philosopher, and that may explain why I had, from very early on, a rather ambiguous relation to philosophy. In addition—to formulate it roughly and in an entirely non-philosophical manner—I do not believe in progress.

I will not deny that in the history of mankind—a history so brief and already so long—there have been steps toward progress on many fronts, positive ones as, for instance, in the fight against diseases, as well as negative ones as, for instance, in the fight against humans. Napoleon is supposed to have exclaimed in the presence of Talleyrand: “Why should I be concerned about a million deaths!” But he had to make strenuous efforts to achieve that goal. At the same time, Beethoven exclaimed to the violinist Schuppanzigh: “Why should I be concerned about your fiddle!” Here we can see the vast difference between politics and music, especially since Beethoven was concerned about the violin; I am less sure about Napoleon and his soldiers. To kill one million people today has become faster, easier, and—I am almost inclined to say—less painful. In these days we commemorate the anniversary of the attack on the twin towers in New York City, which, at the beginning of the new century, reminded us that human beings have not become different at all; on the contrary, they have become diligent students and have learned to use the most progressive technological means for pursuing their all-too-human, i.e., animal-like, urges, which have not changed during the last 3000 to 10,000 years and which are pervaded by creative and destructive atavisms. Unfortunately, there are innumerable examples—only one should be mentioned here: The concentration camp Buchenwald was intentionally constructed near the site where Goethe took his walks and where German literary Classicism was at home; it shows how fragile and endangered the miracle of culture is—endangered always by forces from outside and, especially, from within—and how easy it is for humans to be pushed below their level. (What is their level anyway?) “Furchtbar und wunderbar ist der Mensch” (terrible and wonderful is man), thousands of years ago and still today.¹⁶⁹

This year I visited the nuclear bomb museum in Hiroshima. There are museums devoted to the creativity of humans as well as those devoted to their destructive nature, and if history progresses the way it seems to progress (which hardly would be progress), we run the risk of having more museums of destruction than museums of creativity. I was not only shocked, or perhaps

¹⁶⁹ „Furchtbar und wunderbar ist der Mensch. Furchtbar und wunderbar das Leben. Wie furchtbar, wenn wir dies Wunderbare nicht schätzen und mehrten—so lange wir leben!” My own text in *Vanitas?* (1999) for 4 solo voices (SATB) and orchestra (Milano: Ricordi, 1999).

not so shocked, by the horrifying pictures; by now we know what humans can do to other humans, not only in Nazi concentration camps, but also today, as we are speaking, in some part of this earth—a planet, so small and yet so turbulent. I was rather moved by a statement in the guest book: After seeing those documents of horror, one visitor felt the urgent need to change his life from ground up. I can sympathize entirely with this position: Life does not belong to us, not only because we did not give birth to ourselves, but also because we are not monads (perhaps nomads, and soon just maggots).¹⁷⁰ This often unauthentic form of existence—when, if not in view of the violence and fragility of all life, should we make an attempt to change it?! And confirm our resolution to hear and write a kind of music that does not need to be ashamed of itself even in the presence of death! To come back to the issue of progress: It is a fact that, after the first nuclear bomb has fallen, nobody can escape the dilemma of progress. In comparison to what nuclear devices can accomplish today, the Hiroshima bomb is almost touchingly inefficient. Progress, unfortunately, continues—what Goethe called the *Velociferian* nature, an apt word combination mixing *velocitas* (speed) and *Lucifer* (devil), moves on. A bulletin board in the Hiroshima museum informs us about when the most recent nuclear test took place: just a few weeks ago. Real progress will only come about when humankind will agree that war is a crime, when they declare war illegal and punish violators (hopefully, without war). As long as this does not happen—such utopian vision can perhaps be realized only in the most distant future and with living organisms other than human beings—only blind hope remains.

“An uncanny coincidence of fatalism and will toward progress characterizes now any thinking about the continuation of history.”¹⁷¹ Does this apply also to the relatively harmless/innocuous field of music? What does the concept of progress have to do with music? True, there are regressions—whenever the standards established by the great music of all times are undercut. Does Beethoven represent progress in comparison with Bach? And Wagner in comparison with Beethoven? And Schoenberg in relation to Wagner? And the most refined electronic sound in comparison with the sound of a Stradivarius violin? And so forth up to Wolfgang Rihm and the composer born in 2002, who will perhaps be honored fifty years from now with a symposium. Unfortunately, I will not be able to participate: Granted, there may be no progress, but there exists the relentless progression of time, whose success and result and masterwork is death. And it is of no use to count on *Wiederkehr* (Return/Recurrence), be it eternal or not.

¹⁷⁰ [It is not possible to render the original play with words, „Monade, Nomade, Made“, in translation.]

¹⁷¹ Karl Löwith, „Das Verhängnis des Fortschritts,“ in *Der Mensch inmitten der Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990), 336.

Now, however, I have to say a few words about *Wiederkehr*,¹⁷² the piano piece I wrote in 1971, because it makes clear how I am connected, despite all the difference in our work, to Wolfgang Rihm already early on. The motto for the piano piece *Wiederkehr* is a statement by Adorno: “Unresolved, however, is the question of the dimension of the simultaneous as a whole, which had been degraded to being merely a result, something irrelevant, and virtually accidental.”¹⁷³ What Adorno formulates here, as always with precise acumen, is exactly the situation with which I felt uncomfortable, as did many composers of the time, and which also Wolfgang Rihm soon tackled in his work—every composer in his own way. My ambition was to address the issue not by taken recourse in functional harmony, but in a different, perhaps novel way. I took fifteen very different chords and connected them with a group of other chords, which however were quite homogeneous (since they consisted only of seconds, thirds, fourths, etc.) By connecting these different groups of chords, I generated clear, audible and comprehensible harmonic fields. And as far as form is concerned, I wanted to get away from linear developments and constructed a form, in which the four main sections of the piece alternate in an interplay of anticipation and reverberation. Already then I was interested in clarity and comprehensibility—certainly in a *neue Fasslichkeit* (new comprehensibility), which has nothing to do with the ominous *neue Einfachheit* (new simplicity) that could be called into being and flogged to death only by the old simple-mindedness of, well, administrators of new music. This old piece is still important to me today, perhaps because it is an erratic statement: I hardly picked up on this point of departure for a new approach to harmony and certainly did not continue it systematically. I say this not as an indirect critique of the system to which I would not have submitted (even though this critique exists), but simply as a statement. Sometimes I wish to have been more systematic in my life as well as in my music (whereby having no system can very well be a system, as Wolfgang Rihm knows well). I think a new general system of harmony is necessary, but it cannot originate like Minerva from the head of Zeus, even less so from the head of one of those composers. It must grow historically—like the miraculously simple, complex, flexible and ever-renewable system of tonality. Today there are a whole series of private systems, including those concerned with harmony, but their problem is that they remain private. It seems to me that by dint of rigorous freedom—I mean a musical freedom that has its roots in the compositional logic of sovereign musical fantasy—we have to select, seek, and find what is needed for the individual work from the diverse resources given to us by history, including our personal history. In this respect, I consider a statement by Adorno and Eisler, which pointed to the

¹⁷² Luca Lombardi, *Wiederkehr* (Celle: Moeck, 1975).

¹⁷³ [Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 62.]

future when it was made in the 1940s, still relevant today: “If we are not mistaken, music today has reached a phase in which material and compositional technique have separated, in such a way that the material has become relatively indifferent in relation to the technique... The compositional technique has become so resolute that it does not have to result any longer from the material; on the contrary, it can, so to speak, subjugate any kind of material.”¹⁷⁴

... *antinomic, fractal-like, fragmentary, dangerously seething, sweeping along, breaking off—black—, massive, laconic, pressing, urgent, pushy, imminent, penetrating, stimulating, exciting, speaking, stammering, haptic, peremptory, archetypical, typically Rihm, like a will-o’-the-wisp, iridescent, irritating, wandering about...*

Speaking of *Irren* (erring, wandering), I know—and this is another point that connects me to Wolfgang Rihm—that he is an *Irrender* in the three meanings of the word, including those that do not, yet, exist. By the way, *Irren* was a favorite term of Luigi Nono, which however has been abused extensively. What I find *irrsinning* (maddening) is that artists take *Irren* as a motto, in the sense of “wandering” (probably a meaning exhumed from the reservoir of Romanticism), but then make sure, in a nit-picking manner, not to digress from the approved *Irrweg* (path). To insert here in parentheses: I believe this was a dilemma of Nono, who, on the one hand, wanted to set out for the open sea, and, on the other hand, really looked for one path, even the only path—a *contradictio in adiecto* (a contradiction in the combination). But it is the contradiction which, according to Mao Tse-Tung (who, of course, was a Hegelian), moves the world forward, including music.

Do we drift ahead, or do we progress? To return to the issue of progress: Even if there is no progress, the “illusions of progress”¹⁷⁵ can produce a renewal of art—perhaps only an illusory renewal, as was the case with the serial music of the 1950s, which erroneously considered itself as beginning at the zero hour. (The idea of the *tabula rasa* (or clean slate), the *instauratio ab imis* (or beginning from the ground up), is basically an ahistorical illusion.) As much as I am pleased to have a piece like Boulez’s *Structures* (and, it goes without saying, Stockhausen’s *Gruppen*), the idea of serial music reflects a technocratic mode of thinking, which was characteristic of the time, but which I am unable to see as sensible or as progress. Not everything that marches on with the *Zeitgeist* is, for that reason, already progressive. Beethoven does not represent progress in comparison to Bach, but there is no

¹⁷⁴ Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Komposition für den Film* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1969), 117.

¹⁷⁵ *Les illusions de progrès*, title of a book by Georges Sorel, published shortly before World War I.

doubt that he shed light on entirely new aspects of the human soul (to put it somewhat loftily). Not progress, but a decisive change of perspective, a new mode of looking at things, a probing of unknown realms. And it is a miracle that this process is possible again and again, when composers emerge who are able to execute this change of perspective in their musical thinking—a kind of thinking which in music, as is known, involves the entire body, including the stomach. This is what is so great about music and art in general: That even in works that appear to be perfect or—if you wish—organic, or natural (in the sense of an inner natural necessity), there are always alternative solutions, either real or potential—quite different from nature, where the thread a spider has spun for millions of years need not be changed. If the same would apply to art and literature, we could stop with Phidias, Homer, Lucretius, and Ovid, and, as far as music is concerned, with Bach (which, admittedly, would not be a catastrophe). Art and music, however, are like a kaleidoscope, which harbors an endless array of possibilities, leading to despair over such immeasurable infinity: “ove per poco / Il cor non si spaura” (whereby the heart almost trembles in fear), as Giacomo Leopardi put it.¹⁷⁶

... worshipping noise, wild, organic, subdued, sometimes defenseless, radical and traditional, foreseeable, transparent, insistent, obsessive, manic, acidic, nerve-racking, courageous, fucking, not fidgety, but confessing color (and sound!), joining the fight, let-him-have it (but not me!), not crushing, with a long breath but not long-winded, gestic but not Brechtian, and not really like Heiner Müller, either Promethean but not like Nono, professing, moving, moving forward and returning, complex and simple, unrestrained, unruly, vehement, tempestuous, physical (whereby the stomach is a thinking organ and the brain part of the body), exclaiming, being a voice crying out in the desert of new music...

Wolfgang Rihm’s music is full of energy, and it gives energy. I am grateful for that, because the energy needed for composing—and the energy a composer would like to communicate with his music—is the same energy one needs to live. Without the energy of life there is no energy for composing. Silence, inversion, death. Wolfgang Rihm’s overwhelming productivity is a sign of great optimism for the future, and not only for the future of music. We are in need of such optimism today—an optimism that has gone through the disappointments of reason and yet stayed alive. We need this optimism not only to continue to make music but also to continue to live in a meaningful way. For we do not need to turn around to see all the injustice happening under the sun—it happens right in front of our eyes. Now I have invoked two

¹⁷⁶ Giacomo Leopardi, *L’infinito* in *Selected Poems*, trans. Eamon Grennan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 2-3.

titles of compositions by Bernd Alois Zimmermann.¹⁷⁷ I do not think that Wolfgang Rihm knew Zimmermann personally, he was too young (Zimmermann, by the way, was also too young when he died at age 52), and yet it seems that one of the many threads that connect Wolfgang Rihm with many different composers leads also to the world of musical pluralism espoused by Zimmermann. What a different time when I studied in Cologne with Stockhausen *and* Zimmermann and noticed, with puzzlement, the open rivalry of these two important composers! That was, also in terms of music, the time of the Cold War. The avant-garde fought against the arrière-garde, and within each group there was infighting, distrust, sectarianism, a prevailing attitude of know-it-all, hubris, and arrogance. It was a time of *Enge und Einfalt* (narrow-mindedness and simple-mindedness); it was a time when the language code was more important than the content articulated by it—as if, among all the languages spoken, only one could prevail. The history of twentieth-century music shows, on the contrary, that there have been many different practices and that, as far as they have led to authentic works, they all have been valid possibilities. Moreover, Wolfgang Rihm has proven—and I am on his side in that respect—that several codes can co-exist even in the oeuvre of a single composer. Sometimes I speak Italian, sometimes German. What prevents me to be bilingual, trilingual or tetra-lingual—musically? However many languages I speak, it is still the same individual who speaks, even though he divides himself in terms of languages. And divided we are anyway, not only since Goethe, but most certainly since Freud. True, times have changed since those Cologne days of thirty years ago (yes, there has been progress—albeit not enough of it), but it is the personal merit of Wolfgang Rihm that, from the start, he did not want to recognize barriers, linguistic or otherwise. I do not know any other composer—and certainly not one of such a high rank—who appreciates so many different compositional voices and somehow incorporated them in his own language. Wolfgang Rihm, interestingly, did not commit patricide, which is usually considered necessary. On the contrary, he has chosen for himself a whole series of musical father figures. For instance, Luigi Nono. Nono composed a piece dedicated to Dallapiccola (*Con Luigi Dallapiccola*) in which he used, as constituent element of the composition, the interval Dallapiccola assigned in *Il Prigioniero* to the word “fratello” (brother). (That’s why I am tempted, in accordance with my earlier statement that I somehow see in Wolfgang Rihm a brother, to write a piece, using the same interval as a point of departure and calling it *Con Dallapiccola, Nono e Rihm*.) I heard the premiere of Nono’s piece for six percussionists and was impressed how Nono used an extra-large drum to generate a pianissimo (I do not remember with how many p’s). When

¹⁷⁷ *Stille und Umkehr* (Mainz: B.Schott’s Söhne, 1971), and *Ich wandte mich um und sah alles Unrecht, das geschah unter der Sonne* (Mainz: B.Schott’s Söhne, 1972). [Both works were composed in the last year of Zimmermann’s life.]

one is big and strong, one can afford to move along lightly—“auf leichten Kähnen”¹⁷⁸ (on light boats), so to speak. The pianissimo generated on a monumental drum has also a completely different quality than the one produced on a normal big drum. Or is it perhaps to be understood as somewhat mannerist? As if shooting sparrows with cannons? The danger of mannerism is always there, and we should always be on guard to avoid it. The cult of the fractural (*Brüchigkeit*)—the flirting with the fragmentary and the incomplete—can easily deteriorate into a hollow mannerist gesture. What yesterday was authentic need not have the same quality today. “Master, you negate what you said yesterday. Yes, said Zarathustra, for today is not yesterday.”¹⁷⁹ What is the status of those works that, even though they originated in rugged times, nevertheless appear in a kind of Olympian Classicality? I think of Bartók in whose works the Golden Section does not seem to be grafted on (and also does not sound that way); his works, as is the case with all successful works, will triumph over any kind of smart-alecky theory. He succeeded in many a piece (I think of the string quartets, but not only of them) of squaring the circle: His music constitutes a new classical music, because it is absolutely essential, that is: necessary. What counts in composition is not theorizing or Theodorizing¹⁸⁰ but composition itself. And Wolfgang Rihm knows it and demonstrates it to us.

... hands-on the issue, direct, narrative, effective, questioning, affirmative, questioning again, hard, gentle, heated, nasty, harsh, brusque, never timid, collapsing, monumental, rugged, unspoiled, atavistic, autistic, strangling, moving and rebellious, not sentimental, what I have not said: beautiful, but also ugly, pleasant, now must follow: unpleasant, dialectical and undialectical... (To be continued)

Talking about the piece I was tempted to write: During the last few days I pondered what to say here and when I got stuck, I went to the piano and composed a piano piece called *Saluto a Wolfgang Rihm*. I would have liked to perform it here as a continuation of my talk with different means, but, even though it is brief, it has turned out somewhat too difficult. Without practicing it a lot, I am not able to play it. Thus, I would like to hand it over to Wolfgang Rihm with cordial wishes and—brotherly—greetings.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ [A reference to Webern’s choral work, *Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen*, Opus 2 (on a poem by Stefan George).]

¹⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in Nietzsche, *Werke* IV, Leipzig: Kröner, 1926 (quoted from memory).

¹⁸⁰ [An allusion to Theodor W. Adorno.]

¹⁸¹ Now published in *Saluti (2001-03)* (Rome: RaiTrade, 2003).

What I like about Wolfgang Rihm's music is that kind of freedom which has nothing to do with compositional arbitrariness, but with the lack of dogmatism that was characteristic, to cite a great example from the last century, also of Schoenberg. After he had crossed the desert for twelve years, discovering along the way not only the twelve-tone technique but also his Jewish roots (two processes that are closely linked), he composed several years later in 1938 a tonal piece for the Feast of Reconciliation (Yom Kippur), a magnificent *Kol Nidrei* in G minor. But what does it mean: tonal or non-tonal? What does it mean to be European or African? What does it mean—I almost am tempted to say—to be Israeli or Palestinian? Let's take a look at the individual human beings or compositions and what they represent, without prejudging them because of race or religion or language!

I continue to listen to music by Wolfgang Rihm:

Did I already say beautiful? Yes? I say it again: beautiful, very beautiful, really wonderful. To be continued.

[Source: "Wiederkehr und Fortschritt: Wolfgang Rihm zum 50. Geburtstag," typescript of address given at a symposium honoring Wolfgang Rihm at his fiftieth birthday in Frankfurt/Main, Germany, 14-15 September 2002. Published in *Ausdruck-Zugriff-Differenzen: Der Komponist Wolfgang Rihm*, ed. Wolfgang Hofer (Mainz: Schott, 2003), 125-133; Becheri 03-8.]

Thoughts on Petrassi

Lombardi's encounters with Petrassi (1904-2003), even though he never studied formally with the older maestro, were substantial and productive, resulting, among other things, in a book Conversazioni con Petrassi in 1980. The text here was requested by Petrassi's publisher Edizioni Suvini Zerboni to commemorate the death of one of the icons of twentieth-century music in Italy.

"If the voyage were to last an infinity, it would not last an instant, and death is already here just a little earlier"—these verses that I had set to music more than twenty years ago¹⁸² came to my mind upon learning of Petrassi's death. A little earlier than what? Perhaps a little earlier than reaching the age of 99 and then 100, and certainly before he set out, also physically speaking, toward that immortality that gladly we would bestow on him. Even if one seldom met him or heard from him, Petrassi was nonetheless "there"; he was, in the ups

¹⁸² Cf. L. Lombardi, *E subito riprende il viaggio. Frammenti di Ungaretti per cinque voci* (Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1980).

and downs of the musical world, a reassuring presence, a still and balanced point.

My first encounter with him was perhaps in 1967, on the occasion of a concert organized by me and other musicians of my generation. He had heard that these twenty-year-olds were doing some interesting things, and so he came to hear us. Quality number one: curiosity. A little later, when I might have aspired to become his pupil, I was attracted by other sirens: Stockhausen, electronic music and that citadel of new music, which was then Cologne.

Years went by. I returned to Italy, I began to teach in a conservatory, I felt the need to meet with Petrassi. My family had a house by the sea, near San Felice Circeo, where Petrassi was spending the summer. There we got together a few times. Once, I remember bringing him the first few pages of a composition I was working on (*Gespräch über Bäume*, 1976) and I was struck by a remark he made upon handing me back the score: “This runs the risk of becoming a beautiful piece of music.” The choice of the word “risk” was curious and that is why it has remained imprinted on my mind. Is it a risk to write a beautiful piece? Had he perhaps in mind Rilke’s verse, “Denn das Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang” (For the Beautiful is none other than the beginning of the Terrible)? Probably not; the term was, however, more to the point than Petrassi could have supposed: I was indeed in my “militant” political phase, and for me it would have been the wish farthest from my mind to write a “beautiful” piece; at best I aspired, in a Brechtian way, to write a “useful” piece—useful for whom? Goodness knows, a discourse at this point on music and political engagement would only bog us down and lead us off the subject. Another of Petrassi’s qualities: the choice of words, and therefore of sounds, not obvious—words and sounds that do not slip away like the cascades of verbal and musical chattering that invade our life, but which instead are remembered.

One day, still in the 1960s, we got together at his home near the Piazza del Popolo and began to talk about this and that, about music of course, but also about art and politics. For me at least, it was a conversation of great interest, and when the moment came to say good-bye, I had the feeling that the conversation had just begun, that it could have gone on much longer. Thus we decided that we should meet more or less regularly, and that the next few times I would bring along a tape recorder. I recorded, in fact, a considerable amount of material, which was partly broadcast on the radio and a selection of which found its way into the book *Conversazioni con Petrassi*.¹⁸³ During

¹⁸³ Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1980.

one of these encounters, Petrassi asked me how old I was, and when I, taking into account the burden of years weighing upon my shoulders, answered “thirty-one,” he exclaimed, “Ah, so you still have everything before you!” I didn’t see it at all that way, I already felt old and suspected that I had not used in the best way the “time that had been allotted to me to live on this earth.” Since then (it was 1977) twenty-six years have gone by and things have changed, in the sense that in spite of the many years I now have on my shoulders, I feel—all things considered—rather young, and I have the impression (alas, how erroneous!) that I have—if not everything—at least a great deal still before me.

The *Conversazioni* include a great many bits of wisdom from this major witness to our times. It has always impressed me, for example, the calmness of spirit with which Petrassi seemed to face and accept the blows of destiny, and I refer specifically to his progressive blindness. Naturally I am not able to say how he really lived through this misfortune, but in the *Conversazioni* he tells that, during the composition of the *Eighth Concerto* he was waiting for the report—positive or negative—on the matter of his eyesight, and that in this work there are signs both of his inner turmoil, as well as of accepting what was to be. Outside of the conflicts of which his music is not devoid (and how could it be otherwise in view this non-abstract, profoundly human music of his?), Petrassi seemed to have a stoic attitude, completely devoid of plaintiveness or self-pity, I would say almost Olympian. Another great quality of Petrassi: serenity, equilibrium, the ability to accept life in both its positive and negative aspects. I imagine that this came to him from his religious faith, which he moreover refrained from putting on show. This too is a quality.

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday I dedicated to him *Mirum*,¹⁸⁴ a composition for four trombones commissioned by a German foundation (unfortunately, like many pieces of mine, never performed in Italy).

In 2001, when asked to make my suggestion for awarding the prestigious Kyoto Prize, I nominated Goffredo Petrassi and, in my reasons for doing so, I wrote, among other things, that I recognized the value of his vast culture and his intellectual freedom. “I think [so I wrote] that this freedom is a fundamental characteristic of his music... From his earliest works (*Overture da concerto*, *Coro di morti*, *Noche oscura*, etc.) through his *Concerti per orchestra* No. 7 and No. 8, to his chamber music (*Serenata*, *Estri*, etc.), I love the independence of his musical idiom, which, while conscious of the ‘spirit of the times,’ speaks a language of its own...”

¹⁸⁴ Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1984.

I would have been so pleased had Petrassi won this recognition, as he is for us in Italy an undeniable point of reference, but who, unfortunately, in the international sphere is not so well known or recognized as his music deserves. Not as well as that other pillar of twentieth-century music, Luigi Dallapiccola—and I venture to say that all the best music of the last century has passed through the magnificent portal delimited by these two great pillars, who may now be called classics.

[Source: Typescript “Pensando a Petrassi,” dated March 30, 2003; published in *Testimonianze per Goffredo Petrassi*, a special issue of *ESZ News* (Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 2003), 28-30; Becheri 03-3. Other contributors to the special issue include Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Aldo Clementi, Henri Dutilleux, Giacomo Manzoni, Boris Porena, and Roman Vlad.]

Towards the East

Starting in the early 1990s—and furthered especially by the composer Mayako Kubo, with whom he lived together for several years—Lombardi developed substantial connections with Japanese culture and musical life.

As I write these lines I am not in the Far East, but in the Middle East. I am in Israel. My mother was Jewish and visited Israel many times, where she had friends and relatives and where, at a certain point in her life, had even planned to settle. I, though, am in this country for the first time. I could have come here much earlier, but I had always—I do not know why—postponed this trip.

Israel and Japan are two very dissimilar realities with no common denominator to link them. Except, precisely, the word East: it is this word that make me think that, between my having delayed my trip to Israel and having been instead in Japan several times, there might be, for some strange reason, a connection. It almost seems to me, now that I am finally here, that I have many times practiced by making that big leap to the other side of the world—to that faraway and, for me mysterious, Japan—so as to be able to make the small jump to the other side of the Mediterranean, to come to the land from which two thousand years ago my mother’s ancestors had moved to Rome.

I was in Japan for the first time in 1992 and I went back in 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2002. As one can see, there is an *accelerando* or *crescendo* (to use musical terms) in the frequency of my visits to Japan. The last time, that is, last year—thanks to an invitation from the Japan Foundation—I stayed there

for six months and had the chance to get to know the country much better than I had been able to in the four preceding visits. Actually, before going to Japan I lived, so to speak, with a bit of Japan, for I had at that time a Japanese girl friend. Certain foods, certain customs, certain gestures—for example slowly oscillating the head to the left and to the right, which I took for a graceful mannerism on the part of my companion until I learned it was common way of combating cervical stiffness!—were already familiar to me before encountering them in Japan. I made my first visit to that fascinating country with her. Did I have a Japanese girlfriend because I was interested in Japan, or did I go to Japan because I had a Japanese girlfriend? Surely, my Japanese companion—who was professionally very close to me insofar as she was, like myself, a composer—was in other respects a world apart—and not only geographically—from the Mediterranean culture of my mother.

In contrast I undertook the trip to Israel with Miriam, whom I have known for many years and who, for only a few days, has been my wife. Miriam is Jewish and, while not being Italian (she was born in Tripoli), is in many ways much like my mother, sharing with her the same Hebraic and Mediterranean heritage. Can I therefore say that the path I have taken has been first a movement away from the familiar world (in particular, from my mother) followed by a return to it? But this is neither the time nor place to launch a session of self-analysis. Here I must talk of my experiences in Japan, and I shall try to keep to that theme. The six months I spent in Yokohama, more precisely in Wakabadai, Asahi-ku, constituted a full immersion in Japanese life. At home, in our little Japanese apartment, we slept on a *futon* and breathed in the smell, so pleasantly like nature, of a recently installed *tatami*. I spent many an hour, seated on a cushion, at the low *tsukue*. On the radio I listened to all kinds of music. I probably never heard so much music from all around the world, since Japan is open to and curious about all cultures. But I was particularly happy when I could listen to traditional Japanese music, with its way of using the voice, so different from Italian *bel canto*, so physical, corporeal, and, I would say—in spite of the learned stylization of this vocal technique handed down through the centuries—profoundly natural, a little like the *tatami*. I think that in this country, in spite of the frenetic process of modernization, there endures a strong attachment to the natural fundamentals of life. Part of this is the care of one's own body and physical well-being. Near our home was an *onsen* (perhaps best translated as a “spa”), and we joyfully took advantage of this opportunity. Ancient Romans also loved their thermal baths, but in Rome, the city where I was born and where I live now, this tradition has, alas, gotten lost over time. In certain instances it seems to me that this attachment to nature has, for one who comes from an entirely different cultural setting, curious aspects. Thus, for example, the wonderful tradition of contemplating cherry blossoms, the *hamami*, during the few days

their blooming lasts: to see throngs of Japanese who, in an ultramodern city like Tokyo, go into ecstasy before cherry trees in bloom, and, with little cries of pleasure and wonderment take pictures with their digital cameras or film them with high-tech camcorders, gives a surreal impression to a foreign observer. Naturally, I like it and I, too, try to grasp, in this wondrous and ephemeral flowering—beautiful precisely because it is ephemeral—a meaning that goes beyond the aesthetic spectacle and which has something to do with the deep meaning of human existence, of its fragility and transience.

Contradiction—which I usually like—is however the order of the day in Japan. Not so much incongruity, perhaps, but the juxtaposition of heterogeneous realities. I am thinking, for example, of that ancient Tokyo garden which one must reach by crossing through an enormous and, frankly, ugly hotel of the American-international style. The friend—by the way an architect—who introduced me to it on the occasion of my first trip to Japan, was not shocked at all by this juxtaposition of two divergent, nay opposite realities. It is now normal and perhaps “natural” in the sense of second nature, that in Japan fragments of diverse cultural phases live side by side; of course this happens in other countries, too, and in Italy, especially in a city like Rome, we are accustomed to seeing different time levels at once: Roman constructions, buildings of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque, etc., including the new Renzo Piano auditorium with the remains of an ancient Roman villa incorporated into it. But maybe in Japan—in addition to structures of different periods—there coexist *behaviors* associated with diverse phases of Japanese history—thus for example, certain standardized social usages that should be observed if one wishes to be a “really Japanese,” even if they might be in contradiction to the rhythms and simplifications called for by modern living. Here one might cite examples taken from the various aspects of life: from the bows made when greeting others, which immediately communicate the opinion one has of oneself and of the person being greeted, to the use of New Year’s wishes which must absolutely be sent and received by a certain date, to the likelihood of encountering on the same subway car perhaps a girl dressed in hot pants or a lady enveloped (as probably were her mother and grandmother before her) in an elegant *kimono*.

In music I think matters are hardly different: here too one can come across fragments belonging to disparate musical realities. I am not talking about that postmodern approach so much in vogue. If it has to do with postmodernism, it is certainly an entirely Japanese variant which, more than with factors linked to style, has to do with the concrete reality, or the actualization, of divergent attitudes and behaviors. I remember when I was once very much struck, in a composition by a well known Japanese composer, by the unexpected and apparently unmotivated presence of a “French” chord, a ninth chord, which to

a European ear immediately recalls Debussy or Ravel. I inquired about the reason for this, and he, surprised by the question, candidly answered that he “just liked” the chord. In Europe we have the habit of requiring the historical, rather than the aesthetic legitimacy of whatever note we write, whereas, if I may generalize, in Japan one is concerned with discrete “fragments” wherever they may come from: if that cultural fragment is pleasing, a means will be found to work it into a suitable project and make it one's own. In this instance it is the European that is naïve in thinking that that chord in some way refers to French impressionistic music. It is simply a chord that is part of the musical universe available to the composer, and that it is rendered de-contextualized by inserting it into a new context.

Thus even the sense of musical time is profoundly different in the West and in the East, a complex matter, to which I can only allude to here. Western music—to greatly simplify the matter—has generally a beginning, a development, a climax and an end, while Japanese music is made up—and here I simplify again—of the juxtaposition of diverse sonic events. Perhaps the same difference can be found between the structure of an occidental dinner—with its antipasto, first course, second course, fruit, cheese, dessert and coffee—and a Japanese dinner, where the single parts adhere to no particular hierarchy and one can go with great freedom from one morsel (a fragment) to another in the same meal. *Sushi*, too, seems an apt defense of the fragment, where one fragment follows another, without, so to speak, a development or any particular formal organization: when one has had—eaten, as far as sushi are concerned, or heard, in the case of music—a sufficient number of “event-fragments,” the dinner or the composition can be considered at an end, without—as in the West—the end of a meal or a composition being structurally delineated.

Many years ago, in 1971, I wrote a composition for piano (entitled *Wiederkehr*, which means “return”), which, in certain aspects, can be considered bordering on an aesthetic not founded on linear and teleological development, and therefore approaching a Japanese-like aesthetic. At that time I really did not know anything about Japan, and I think I arrived at that kind of formal organization by way of certain North American music, namely from California; as has been said, in California one breathes air that the winds carry from across the Pacific. Only in the 1990s—after my first trip to Japan—did I compose anything consciously influenced by my experience with Japanese music and art, as, for example, a short piece entitled *Noh o omoide* (Memory of a Noh Performance),¹⁸⁵ and then, in 2002, the composition *Lucrezio. Un oratorio materialistico, Parte II, Amore* (on a text by Edoardo

¹⁸⁵ Part of my composition *Bagatelles sans et avec tonalité* (1992) for piano, four hands, Edizioni BMG Ricordi, Milan 1992.

Sanguinetti),¹⁸⁶ for speaker, soprano, baritone and ensemble of twelve instruments. At its first performance, in Germany, I had problems making the singers understand the kind of vocal production I desired and had indicated in the score such detailed terms as “guttural,” or “very (exaggeratedly) vibrato,” etc. While writing the piece I had in mind the way that the Noh musicians sing, but naturally a European singer learns at the academy something entirely different, and, as I was saying before, there is a chasm between the aesthetic ideal of *bel canto* and the “physical” manner I like so much in traditional Japanese music and which I had attempted, with all the adjustments (since I certainly did not want to make a simplistic stylistic imitation) I had to bring to bear in my composition. Obviously there is still much to be done to acquaint Europe with traditional Japanese music. And I see in this a task set before those of us who love Japan and try to peer into the deep meaning of its traditions.

My stays abroad have made me better understand where my cultural roots are: certainly not in Japan (how could it be otherwise?) but in the Mediterranean. This, of course, does not prevent me from continuing to love Japan, to deepen my knowledge of it and to consider some habits and customs that I picked up right from the first visit there as impossible to give up. Among these I am thinking of the custom, of great philosophical significance as well as hygienic, of removing ones shoes upon entering the home. Another is that of sipping *o cha*, green tea, which—especially when I drink it seated at my Japanese *tsukue*, the same one I used in Yokohama—brings back to life in my thoughts the colors and fragrances of that fascinating and fascinatingly contradictory country. But let him who lives in a non-contradictory country cast the first stone! It is better that the Italians throw no stones at all—unless they learn the art of making them fall in a meaningful way, as in those enchanting zen gardens.

[Source: “Verso Oriente,” typescript, undated, written in July 2003; Becheri 03-6. To be published in Yearbook of the Japan Institute in Rome]

¹⁸⁶ Edizioni Rai Trade, Roma 2002.

Nine Months and Their Fruits in Time: To and for Boris Porena

After being exposed to the heady atmosphere of the Cologne avant-garde in the late 1960s, Lombardi returned to Rome where, for a brief period, he encountered a most demanding taskmaster in the composer Boris Porena (born 1927). Lombardi was not an “easy” student.

It is now almost thirteen years that I have been living in this house on Lago Albano, which was my family's, although I never lived there in any continuous way except for a brief but intense period of which I have memories both sweet and bitter, from January to September 1970. Every day I took a walk in the woods with our tawny dog, whose name I think was Lunedì or Giovedì. Otherwise I was working hard because, under the guidance of Boris Porena, as I was preparing to get my high-school certificate in composition. In the end I gave up. Indeed, I had no intention of getting a high school diploma or a university degree. For me it was enough just to go on doing what I had been doing, studying and composing, and, managing to make a living in some way with scholarships and giving Italian lessons. I had been living for more than a year in Cologne where I had gone like a true believer to Mecca. The prophet's name was Karlheinz. Quite soon, however, I realized I was, alas, a heretic—and this vocation of heretic stayed with me for the rest of my life, regardless of whatever church or sect I joined. The three months spent studying in Stockhausen's course (I might even say in his course of initiation) went by without serious problems and concluded with the performance of one of my pieces, *Das ist kein Bach, sagte Beethoven, das ist ein Meer*, which I do not disown. I remained, nevertheless, in Cologne and continued to study with the great Zimmermann (Bernd Alois), a rival of Karlheinz's, who seemed to bear on his back the anguish, not only of his personal misfortunes, but of all those injustices suffered since time immemorial (“Ich wandte mich um und sah alles Unrecht, das geschah unter der Sonne” – I looked around and saw all the injustice there had been under the sun). From Italy came fiery letters from my father, who, although an enlightened man—thus he thought of himself, and surely at least in part he was—could not help but think that I was wasting my time with so-called avant-garde music in which he could perceive no sense or usefulness. And so he urged me to take up serious studies and to finish up my composition studies in Italy, and to consider university as a strategy for putting off, by taking an exam every once in a while, the detested military service. There came to his aid (and perhaps mine as well) a bad case of gastritis that I came down with by frequenting German cafeterias and by pipe smoking. I thought, therefore, of killing two birds with one stone by moving back with my family: taking care of my stomach and preparing for my composition degree. Who could prepare me better than Boris Porena? I knew of him (I remember some

of his compositions I heard as a boy on the radio: *Über aller dieser Trauer* on a text by Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs or *Der Gott und die Bajadere* on a text by Goethe). But I also knew him personally, having met him, I seem to recall, while I was attending the Goethe Institute and going to the house of its then director Michael Marschall von Bieberstein, where, because of his interest in entomology, he was known amongst the numerous offspring of the Marschalls as “Käfer-Boris” (or “Beetle-Boris”). My choice turned out to be excellent, but Boris made me—as they say in that horrendous expression—“spit blood.” Or was it perhaps due to that gastritis? Here my memories are muddled, and it is perhaps also for this reason that I recall that period as bitter-sweet. They were months of hard discipline, both alimentary and musical. Those who knew Boris in succeeding years and appreciated his mild and tolerant character, at peace with himself (so I hope) and the world (which I hope a little less), will have difficulty in believing that the Boris of that time was, at least insofar as it concerned me his pupil, quite another person. Fussy, stubborn and rather inflexible. “Why did you write this note?” Woe to you if you answered, “Because I liked it.” That would be the last straw if music had something to do with pleasure! And yet it takes a slightly more serious justification, less hedonistic, linked to the categorical imperative of a precise esthetic, within which one moves about with deliberation, fully aware of what is permissible and not permissible to do. In reality Boris was perfectly right to make the observations that he made (in a specific case, I recall, it was a matter of one of my compositions on a text of Mallarmé, *Rondel II*), and it was I, less expert than I am now (or shall I say more inexperienced than now) who asked the whys and wherefores for certain choices, I had an excessively elastic conception of compositional freedom and of stylistic coherence. Certainly I was not (yet?) at that point where, with a stockpile of well-assimilated diverse and multiform experiences, an artist can work with apparent freedom, because he is responsible for his own acts and capable of assuming his own compositional responsibilities.

But in those months I certainly did not have the time to do what interested me most, that is, to compose my own music. Instead, I had to write a quantity of “exercises of style”: everything that, whether rightly or wrongly, is required for a degree in composition. If it had been wrongly required, I thus had done a huge amount of useless work. Yet, it still would not have been useless, having taken place along with Boris, with a musician, a composer, a person of culture with vaster and deeper views than those of a pure and simple conservatory craftsman. Apart from the fact that that iron discipline—motivated by the fact that in a few months I had to make up for entire years of apathy concerning the conservatory—was a valuable experience and, as one says, formative. If I really had to submit to the galleys, I would have preferred that one a thousand times to military service, which I succeeded in side-

stepping by taking one university exam per year until, too old for the army, it forgot me. Once out from under the military's sword of Damocles, I dedicated myself with a new spirit to university studies until concluding them with my undergraduate degree. So, I had squared accounts, at least that one, with my father.

During those fateful nine months of dietary abstinence and musical gluttony (never have I listened to and analyzed so much music as then) I learned, if I had not already known it, that composing is not, as many think, all roses and flowers. If it is a matter of roses (something that one finds out only afterwards, if they happen to bloom) they have a lot of thorns. And anyhow composing is hard work: it involves plowing the soil, tilling it, sowing seed, and irrigating. Then, finally, if one is lucky, one eventually picks some fruit.

When—many years after graduation I saw Boris again—he seemed profoundly changed. What, or who, might have contributed to the change, I cannot say, even though I can imagine. I think that he reached this state also by absorbing the experiences of the political movement of 1968 and of what part it played in the discussion of the sclerotic educational structures, and not just musical ones. Boris no longer lived in the capital, but in Sabina (this choice of moving from the center of town to the periphery was in keeping with the way he could devote himself, even musically, to a peripheral activity—but of central importance—that of teaching music to all). He was no longer a Herr Professor precise and meticulous, but a tolerant man open to all kinds of possibilities and therefore inexorably marching toward wisdom. Unfortunately I did not follow, except from afar, the educational work that he began to work on and developed in Sabina and that I know produced notable results. I met and knew Boris before this turning point. He was already at that time a musician (and composer and man of culture) of the first order. Afterwards, in addition to the high qualities of earlier days, there was what I would call, simply, a new wisdom. It is a pity only that Boris, in order to realize his new educational ideas, stopped composing for such a long time. But here, fortunately, there came another development, when Boris, after an abstinence of twenty years, I think, went back to composing with new vigor and doing it with admirable intensity and determination. As far as I know, not a day goes by without Boris' devoting a few hours to composition. The wonderful thing is that he is not doing it to respond to external requests (in any case, it is unfortunate that the "external" has often so little interest in what composers are doing), but for his own internal requisites, or simply for his own pleasure. This is wonderful and the confirmation, if there were need for it, of a genuinely artistic nature.

Since I have moved once and for all into this house that I had inhabited during that period when Boris was preparing me for my degree, I have been in contact more often with Boris and Paola. Although we do not see each other as often as I would like, Boris has become a significant point of reference for me. I know that he is there and is always available to meet with me, to converse, to see and listen to each other's music. Thirty-three years having gone by since getting my degree, a whole life, this means not just a little; indeed it means a great deal: I have the great fortune to have as my friend a former *maestro*, who today is more a *maestro* than before. Back then I simply had to be able to pass an exam; now he is a person who, probably without even knowing it, by simply being there and being the man that he is, sustains me on my not always smooth path of composer and man.

I remember how, during one of our first encounters in this house, after having heard my opera *Faust. Un travestimento* (1986-1990), on a text by Edoardo Sanguineti, he exclaimed, "You're doing everything we railed against in our youth, but...it works!" I think that in this declaration there is contained all the "new Boris," that he has surmounted the "cultural" prejudices to reach a more pragmatic and more "musical" vision of music, a unified vision of the whole body, so to speak, not just of one part of it, be it even the head. A piece of music that works or does not work, and not to be concerned whether or not it might fall into some officially approved esthetic.

When I got married just three months ago, I asked Boris to be a witness at the wedding: to have, as witness at such an important passage of my life a mentor and friend like him, is of deep symbolic significance for me. Thus, in some way, a circle has closed...and another has opened. Boris, master of musical and existential transformations—after all, like me, Goethean, if not Faustian: "Und so lang du dies nicht hast, dieses stirb und werde, bist du nur ein trüber Gast auf der dunklen Erde" (And as long as you have not grasped this, namely 'Die and be transformed!', you are nothing but a dreary guest on this dark earth)¹⁸⁷—will understand me if I say I am eager to try, maybe along with him, new and surprising metamorphoses. Shall we talk about that the next time we get together?

[Source: "Nove mesi e suoi frutti nel tempo: A e per Boris Porena," *L'utopia possibile: Vita, musica e filosofia di Boris Porena*, ed. Giorgio de Martino (Varese: Zecchini, 2004), 75-78; Becheri 03-2. The text was written in September of 2003.]

¹⁸⁷ [A quotation from a poem by Goethe, *Selige Sehnsucht*.]

Eisler, One More Time

The Eisler Society in Berlin approached Lombardi with a request to comment on the following questions: "Has the reception of Eisler changed since 1994 and how? Was the Eisler Society able to contribute to that change? What is the most important task of the Society? Which aspects, in your opinion, need attention?"

It is difficult to say whether the general reception of Eisler has changed during the relatively short period of ten years. Hardly for me. Eisler is, so to speak, a youthful love of mine, and I remain faithful to it regardless of the fact that since the late 1960s, when I began to become interested in him, epochal changes have taken place. Indeed, we live in a different era so that for me the importance of Eisler, as was the case ten years ago, is entirely different from the one it had forty years ago—when a new world espousing justice and solidarity seemed to possible.

The political significance of Eisler's compositions has diminished, without a compensating increase of the absolute value of his music. Even the praiseworthy attempts of the Eisler Society, I think, cannot change that. Eisler, I believe, should not be treated, even by those who still share his world view despite all the changes, as an untouchable icon. Rather, one can study, using him as an example, the contradictions of a composer, who lived in contradictory times and who was not content simply to compose, but who wanted to participate actively in societal processes. As much as possible, Eisler's ideological position and the entanglements resulting from his approach should be dealt with in a non-ideological way. That means, one should, in sobriety but also in solidarity, evaluate the artistic content of his politically motivated music; he should not be forced into the mold of a "great" composer, which he was not. He did not want to be one, he wanted to be "useful". Could he, perhaps, have become one? Here, I think, lies the "tragic" in his compositional parable: turning his back on the Second Viennese School, he denied his promising beginnings and thus only remained a minor representative of that School, without really catching on with the masses whose politically advanced part he wanted to reach. In the final analysis, he was unable to satisfy any of the societal groups, only a small, albeit distinguished, number of intellectuals who, often in nostalgia, hold on to him. But, as I said before, Eisler's compositional approach has indeed the character of a parable, and I think there is much to be analyzed here—definitely an important task for the Eisler Society—to better understand the complex relations between composer and society. This can help us, even though we live in a different time, with our no less contradictory pursuits.

[Source: Untitled typescript dated August 25, 2004 in response to questions posed by the Eisler Society; published as “Die IHEG und Eisler: Antworten auf eine Umfrage,” *Eisler-Mitteilungen*, ed. Internationale Hanns Eisler Gesellschaft, 36 (October 2004), 17; Becheri 04-2.]

Dessau in the German Democratic Republic

An article written for Il Giornale della Musica provides a portrait of Lombardi's former teacher for Italian readers.

When I went to him for my first lesson in January 1973, Paul Dessau, who was at that time a gentleman of seventy-nine, came to pick me up at the station in a car driven by him. Dessau was like that, seemingly brusque and gruff, but in reality full of great kindness. I passed on to him the greetings of Henze and Nono, two dear friends of his. Dessau was then the most important composer of the German Democratic Republic. His return to Germany after his American exile had been slow, with intermediate stations in Paris, where he had good friends—among them the composer and theorist René Leibowitz—and Zurich and Stuttgart. The return of Brecht to his fatherland was not a had not been immediate either. Forced to leave the United States by the House Un-American Activities Committee, Brecht would have had a difficult life in West Germany as well. Even though Dessau had become a member of the Communist party in the United States, his name had not appeared on the list of the Committee. He was “small fry,” a composer who was practically unknown, who got by in the American exile by working as gardener and copyist, by teaching trumpet and piano, and by writing film music as an uncredited serf for established Hollywood composers. There are about one hundred films with his music, but his name does not show up with any of them. Theoretically, he could have remained in the United States, and, anyway, it was not obvious that Dessau, a Jew, whose mother and close family members had been killed in the concentration camps, should return to Germany. Certainly not to West Germany, where there was no work for him in any case. From East Berlin came the invitation by Wolfgang Langhoff, the director of the Deutsches Theater and a friend of his from the 1920s. In a room placed at his disposal by the theatre, Dessau composed the music for his opera *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* on a text of Brecht, which was harshly criticized by the cultural officials in the GDR. It was the period of struggle against “formalism” unleashed in the Soviet Union by Stalin and Zhdanov, whose repercussions were felt in the colonies of the empire. That was a hard blow for Dessau, similar to the one Eisler suffered through the attacks concerning the libretto for his *Faustus*. But despite all kinds of difficulties,

Brecht, Eisler, Dessau and many others remained steadfast in their convictions. West Germany was the natural heir to the Nazi state with undeniable aspects of continuity, while the GDR strove to break with that tradition. Sure, Brecht, responding to the accusation of the party against the people after the workers' protests were suppressed in 1953, had written: "Would it not be simpler if the government disbanded the people and elected another one?" But he had no time left to follow all the developments and regressions of the GDR, since he died in 1956. Eisler succumbed to alcohol and practically stopped composing (he would die in 1962). The situation for Dessau was different: even though he was already fifty-six years old, he was determined to start a new life. He divorced his second wife Elisabeth Hauptmann (a collaborator of Brecht's), married the actress Anja Ruge, then in her thirties, whom he divorced not long after to marry Ruth Berghaus, who was his junior by nearly thirty-three years and who later became a celebrated opera director. In 1954, when Dessau turned sixty, a son Maxim was born, who is now a film and theater director.

The premature death of Brecht, grievous as it was, gave Dessau the chance to free himself from that imposing personality, to emerge from its shadow and set out on the road that would bring him to international fame. In three decades (1949-1979), Dessau wrote a great number of compositions: Besides *Lucullus* (performed also in Perugia in 1964, and again in 1973 directed by Strehler at La Scala), the operas *Puntilla* (1956-59), *Lanzelot* (1967), *Einstein* (1969-73, performed, as well as *Puntilla* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino) and *Leonce und Lena*; there were also ballets, cantatas, incidental music, chamber music, orchestral music, a large number of songs, and politically motivated pieces written in the heat of the moment in the spirit of the early years of the Soviet Union (see Mayakovski), to comment and take action on contemporary events. Although completely integrated into the political and cultural life of the DDR and showered with honors and successes, Dessau never became an "official" composer. He was instead a solidarily critical voice, an "agitator," who did not hesitate to take a stand against the communist bureaucrats and make a way for himself, then turning it over to composers he believed in, especially young ones (like, to give just one example, Friedrich Goldmann), against whom were hurled the usual accusations of degeneracy, formalism, and pro-Westernism. His house in Zeuthen, some twenty kilometers from Berlin, was a meeting place for artists of various generations and nationalities, that I myself frequented beginning in 1973 when I spent six months in East Berlin to prepare my undergraduate thesis on Hanns Eisler and study with Dessau himself. Eisler and Dessau were poles apart, if one can say such a thing about two people who in reality were marching in the same direction. One anecdote among many speaks volumes about their relationship: Dessau enters a Berlin café and since Eisler has

already seen him cannot make a retreat, but goes to join him at his table. “How’s it going?” he asks his colleague. “Badly,” answers the latter, “my music doesn’t get performed.” Upon which Dessau gets up, walks over to the two musicians entertaining the clientele, picks up the violin, stands on top of the piano and plays the DDR national anthem (composed, as is well known, by Eisler).

There were also incongruous relationships between Nono and Henze, with whom Dessau was in close contact. Henze and he had met each other in 1948. During a difficult time that Henze spent in the hospital, Dessau made every day a long and complicated trip from Zeuthen to West Berlin in order to visit his old friend for at least 10 minutes. Henze, then scarcely more than twenty, was very grateful that Dessau, without taking into account the age difference, treated him in every way like a colleague. In an interview some ten years ago about Dessau, Henze sharply characterized his music as “not intellectual, but intelligent.” A music full of feeling but also of comical touches. Dessau dedicated to Henze his *Quattrodramma* (1966) as a response to a composition of Henze’s of which he was particularly fond (*Being Beauteous*). It is characteristic of Dessau, and quite beautiful—this kind of “productive friendship,” in which there is dialogue between the works of two friends.

Dessau held Nono in very high esteem and did his utmost to get the Italian’s music accepted by obtuse party functionaries. But he wasn’t always successful. I remember how one time he showed me the score of *Ein Gespenst geht um in der Welt*, which he had just received from Nono. “Gigi would like it to be performed here in the DDR, but it contains a quotation from the Chinese national anthem ‘The East is Red’—this, here in our country, is impossible!” China had broken with the Soviet Union and could not even be mentioned, except in vilifying it.

In 1960, welcoming the suggestion of an old Parisian friend (Jean Korngold) stepped forth to become promoter of a collective composition with the title *Jüdische Chronik* (Jewish Chronical), for which he asked composers from both East and West Germany to collaborate (Wagner-Regeny, Blacher, Hartmann, and the young Henze). It was to become, as he wrote to Nono, a stand against anti-Semitism—a project which for the West was too politicized and for the East completely unacceptable, either because it was inspired by the idea of German unity (which Dessau cared a great deal about), but which no longer was at its height, or because it expressed compassion also for the German soldiers, put to rout by the Nazis. Also, the Jewish subject matter was not particularly popular in the DDR. Not that you could speak of overt anti-Semitism; it’s just that the subject had become something one did not talk about, and many communist Jews, themselves, denied, in the spirit of some

misconceived internationalism, their Jewish identity. It is not by chance that Dessau, who until 1948 had composed much music inspired by Judaism, no longer composed any such works in the DDR. But woe to anyone speaking of anti-Semitism; the left usually spoke (and speaks) of “anti-Zionism.”

By 1972 there had been 1968, which had brought about a more resolute politicization on the part of many artists; Henze himself became promoter of a collective composition, and called upon a few young composers, myself included, to collaborate. The composition, *Streik bei Mannesmann*, about a strike in a German industrial firm, was performed by the Berliner Ensemble—then directed by Ruth Berghaus—in June 1973, on the occasion of the World Days of Youth. Also attending the concert was Nono, who had in his turn written a song entitled “We Are the Youth of Vietnam,” which Henze criticized as too complicated—not wrongly, I should say, as it was a song meant to be sung, if not by the masses, at least by nonprofessionals. But at this point came into play a different attitude between those who tried a middle ground with nonprofessional performers (and in this there is a German tradition, not just political, of *Gebrauchsmusik*, utility music), and those who thought that the masses should bring themselves up to the standards of art music. Clearly Dessau aligned himself with the first group, and yet, in a remark made in his diary he claims to be enthusiastic about Nono’s song. He himself had written a song in C-major for the occasion. One evening at Zeuthen—if I recall correctly, both Henze and Nono were there—with pride Dessau told how all over the Republic people were singing his song: children at school as well as students in the universities, and he himself had conducted a chorus of 5000 people. His son Maxim remarked, “Of course, they are obliged to do it.” In this off-handed, unaffected criticism of his father he pointed out with youthful frankness—and without any ideological enhancements to soften the blow—the reality of the matter. Dessau took great offense and abandoned the room, slamming the door.

[Source: “Dessau nel DDR,” undated typescript, published in *Il Giornale della Musica*, XX, 205 (June 2004), 22-23; Becheri 04-1.]

Religious Sentiments of a Non-Believer

The essay was written for a volume gathering articles about Christianity as a perennial source of inspiration for the arts.

I was born into a family of socialists and non-believers. My mother was Jewish. As for myself, from the time I acquired the faculty of reasoning, I

always considered myself as fundamentally a-religious. But at the German School, which I attended in Rome, I chose to take part in Catholic instruction (while my sister chose Protestant instruction) and I remember how I tried to prove to our Father Wolf that, despite my not having been baptized (and was thus a “pagan”), I was nonetheless “good.”

My name is Luca, my sister's name is Giovanna, another brother's name is Marco—and they are, by a curious coincidence, the names of three of the four Evangelists. A last child was born, who was however named Andrea, while the name Matteo went to one of our beloved dogs.

My a-religiosity was corroborated by early literary, ideological and political choices: I read the Communist Manifesto, I was smitten with Bertolt Brecht, and as a fourteen-year old I took part in the 1960 demonstrations against the Tambroni government. Later, as a student in Germany, I enrolled in the Cologne section of the German Communist Party, graduated with a thesis on the communist composer Hanns Eisler and I tried to write politically engaged music in the socialist sense.

In the meantime, however—and let's go back to the mid-1960s—I had followed a beloved teacher of mine, Armando Renzi, from the Saint Cecilia Conservatory to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, where, in order to be accepted I would have to produce a certificate of baptism. Pagans like me could not be admitted. Here my mother's Jewish background became useful: We were by now in the ecumenical period, and so, having declared myself Jewish, I was magnanimously welcomed into an assemblage made up of only Catholics, where furthermore most of the students were either priests or aspirants to the priesthood. I remember Ricardo Santos, a Portuguese priest, who, when an audience in the Auditorium of the Via della Conciliazione greeted with whistles and boos a composition of Luigi Nono and then provokingly burst into clamorous applause at the beginning of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* got up and left the hall in protest, urging me to do the same.

In the year I spent at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, I wrote two compositions, a *Madrigale* on a text of Tommaso Campanella and *Invocazione e ditirambo* for two pianos, eight hands. As regards the *Madrigale*, it certainly was not by chance that, probably influenced by the locality, I chose not simply the poetry of a holy man, but that of an *uneasy* holy man, as he had been the author of the *Apologia pro Galileo*. As regards the piece for four pianists, it too had—I can't say how consciously—something to do with the place in which and for which it was written: The title is “religious,” even if not connected to the Christian religion, since the dithyramb was originally a poetic form dedicated to the god Dionysus. This

orgiastic dance was performed with great success in the presence of a Cardinal, whose hand I shook vigorously instead of kissing it, probably causing a bit of a surprise.

Years went by, I lived through experiences and as much as possible “metabolized” them, and, while not a believer, I realized that I believed in another church, in some way an opposite one, a mirror image, which still promised Paradise, but, more recklessly, promised it here and almost now. And after all, the eschatological perspective is intrinsic to our Judeo-Christian civilization, with which even Marx not could help (whether or not he wanted it or was aware of it) being imbued. So in 1986, having become once more “a lay person” with respect to the same lay positions by which I had theretofore identified myself, I wrote that “he who does not have a grasp on the crutches that beliefs of all kinds provide him—be they religious or secular—cannot help but experience some dizziness.”¹⁸⁸

And yet, if, on the one hand, I tried to live with this feeling of dizziness while surrounded with universal absurdity, on the other hand, there were growing within me joy and gratitude—if not continuous, at least intermittent, like alternating current, so to speak—for the meaningless beauties of nature—of plants, of animals, and even humans, who are so terrible, but also wonderful; and there grew in me the consciousness that everything, on this earth and in the entire universe, is intimately connected. We are all—living or not, animate or inanimate—made from the same substance. What might be the dream-substance of that God whom men contemplate (alas, in their own image)?

This awareness of universal interconnection became very strong for me. I like to think that the term religion comes from “re-ligare,” to link together, and that this union has to do not only with the ties of mankind under the same laws and under the same creed, but indeed with the intrinsic connection among things originating from the same substance. Not only a few oriental philosophies and religions (like Buddhism, for example), or mystical experience (that is, the direct experience, not intellectual, of reality), but modern physics itself confirms the fundamental oneness of the universe. “It becomes obvious at the atomic level and manifests itself all the more clearly the more one penetrates into the depth of matter, into the world of subatomic particles.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ L. Lombardi, „Tra preistoria e postmoderno,” in *Molteplicità di poetiche e linguaggi nella musica d’oggi*, ed. Daniela Tortora (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 1988), 27.

¹⁸⁹ Fritjof Capra, *Il Tao della Fisica* (Milano: Adelphi, 1987), 149.

In 1998 I wrote a composition,¹⁹⁰ that sets to music a few fragments from Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (in a new Italian translation prepared for me by Edoardo Sanguinetti) expressing this, if I might say so, divine materialism.

But it is a composition written the year after that I wish to discuss: *Vanitas?*, for soprano, contralto, tenor, bass and orchestra. At first its title had no question mark and I didn't intend to use any text other than a fragment from Ecclesiastes.

1. (*Ecclesiastes I, 2-7, 9*)

Vanitas vanitatum, dixit Ecclesiastes;
Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas.

Quid habet amplius homo
De universo labore suo quo laborat sub sole?

Generatio praeterit, et generatio advenit;
Terra autem in aeternum stat.

Oritur sol et occidit,
et ad locum suum revertitur;
ibique renascens.

Gyrat per meridiem, et flectitur ad aquilonem.
Lustrans universa in circuitu pergit spiritus,
et in circulos suos revertitur.

Omnia flumina intrant in mare,
et mare non redundat;
ad locum unde exeunt flumina
revertuntur ut iterum fluant.

Quid est quod fuit? Ipsum quod futurum est.
Nihil sub sole novum.

(Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. – What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? – A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. – The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. – The wind blows to the south, and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind

¹⁹⁰ *Lucrezio. Un oratorio materialistico, per voce recitante, soprano, flauto e orchestra* (Milano: BMG Ricordi, 1998).

Luca Lombardi

VANITAS?

per soprano, contralto, tenore, basso e orchestra

Stefan Jüttgen zugeeignet

1-60

S
A
T
B

va-ni-tas, va-ni-tas, tu-m, di-xit Ec-cle-sia-stes; et om-nia va-ni-tas, va-ni-tas, tu-m

25

Example III, 9, *Vanitas?*, Beginning

returns. – All streams run into the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. – What has been is what will be, there is nothing new under the sun. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger [New York: Oxford University Press, 1977], 805.)

However, as I progressed with the composition, I became less and less convinced that I should trust in the radical pessimism of that text, which, in the Bible—but not for me—is redeemed by the hope in religious transcendence. Nothingness is a fact we must consider stripped of illusions. We can, however, counter—even if only partially—nothingness and absurdity with the substance and significance of our short individual lives and with the short history of the human species. The moment (and life and human history are nothing more than that) is not in itself devoid of meaning. Nothingness, suffering, the uselessness (“vanitas”) of human activity, the relentlessness and blind violence of nature (of which we are a part)—all of this constitutes an ethical challenge to Man: if he is capable of looking fearlessly and with philosophical calm into the depths of things (or into the abyss hidden behind things), he can from this bring about a new justification for that which—in spite of everything—makes life worthy of being lived. Thus, besides the question mark added to the title, I included with the fragment from Ecclesiastes (which is sung and spoken for the most part in Latin, but also in Hebrew, German and Italian), three more short texts: the little joke about a rabbi, two fragments from two different poems of Horace, and a brief text of my own.

2. (Anonymous)

Said a rabbi old and wise: We come from dust and to dust we return. But in the meantime we can drink a few good glasses of wine.

3. (Horace: *Carminum Lib. IV, VII, 16* and *Carminum Lib. XI, 8*)

Said the poet Horace, he too, intelligent and wise:

Pulvis sumus et umbra — carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

(We are dust and shadow—use the day and do not be concerned what might come.)

4. (Lombardi)

Terrible and wonderful is Mankind. Terrible and wonderful is Life. Terrible it is if we do not appreciate and increase this wonder—as long as we live.

Of course, with the little joke of the rabbi and then with Horace, the musical atmosphere changes—in a sort of earthly way—being given over to a sort of waltz, which since my tenth birthday when I devised my first composition (in fact a Waltz) has become a kind of archetype accompanying me through my entire life. Something similar transpires with a scale (minor second - major second – minor second – minor third, then again: minor second – major second – minor third) which constitutes the principal musical material of the whole composition. Likewise this scale is a kind of archetype for me: Among the very first tunes that I thrummed out by ear at the piano were some Neapolitan songs, which use this oriental-sounding intonation typical of this part of the Mediterranean. My parents both came from Naples, and my father, who was not a musician, but a philosopher, was very proud of a few of his Neapolitan songs that he had composed on verses of Salvatore Di Giacomo. For me it was evidently a point of departure that, even if I progressively moved away from it as I became more professionally involved with music, with the passage of time reemerged, as so often happens with one's earliest impressions, often the most long-lasting. I like to think that the Oriental flavor of this scale, which I have often used, at least since 1986¹⁹¹, recalls my mother's origins, whose ancestors moved, about two thousand years ago, from what is present-day Israel to Rome, something that is fitting for a composition in which I use texts from the Old Testament.

But a more interesting question—and its answer would be interesting, too, if I had one—might be: In what way does my undertaking of the fragment from Ecclesiastes (in a broad sense “religious,” and anyhow “spiritual”) influence the music that I composed for this text?

The only thing I can say is that I tried to carry out a step (read: some other step would perhaps be presumptuous) in the direction of a music that wishes to give up all that is exterior—superficial, vacuous, pure ornament or frippery—to be, insofar as possible, all the more “essential.” It is a music that I like to think of as new and ancient at the same time.

[Source: “Il sentimento religioso di un non credente,” *Il Cristianesimo fonte perenne di ispirazione per le arti*, ed. Franco Carlo Ricci (Naples/Rome: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2004), 73-79; Becheri 04,1.]

¹⁹¹ In *Ai piedi del faro* for double bass and 8 instruments (Milano: Ricordi, 1986), which is, for various reasons, my first „Jewish” composition). [See program notes in Part II of this volume.]

Handwritten musical score for Example III, 10: *Vanitas?* (mm. 292-315). The score is written on multiple staves for various instruments and voices. The top staves are for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Clarinet (Cl.). Below these are staves for Arpa (Arpa), Percussion (Perc.), and a section for voices (A, B). The bottom staves are for Violin I (V. I.), Violin II (V. II.), Viola (V. le), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *f*, *p*, *mf*, *div. a 3*, and *fz*. There are also handwritten annotations like "4 ~ 56" and "Percussion" at the top. The page number "43" is written in the top right corner.

Example III, 10: *Vanitas?* (mm. 292-315)

340

Poco più mosso

3 d ~ 50
4

Jos

Ob. 1
2

C.L. 1
2

Cor. 1
2
3
4

Tr. 1

Rec. 1

B.

Vcll. I

Vcll. II

Vc.

mf
dol. in der
ma bra - re

Zwi-
co - schen-
ge

Zeit
bal

tra

f
kän-nen wir
pos-sen mo

mf
metà nel pent., metà ordinario

mf

Handwritten musical score for page 46, measures 370-375. The score includes parts for Flute 1, Oboe, Clarinet 1, Percussion, Bassoon, Violins I & II, and Viola. The lyrics are in Italian, starting with "man- ba - re" and "glor-ia che bis - che - re di t'ra - ken- vi - no".

Measures 370-375. The score includes parts for Flute 1, Oboe, Clarinet 1, Percussion, Bassoon, Violins I & II, and Viola. The lyrics are in Italian, starting with "man- ba - re" and "glor-ia che bis - che - re di t'ra - ken- vi - no".

Fl. 1
2
Ob.
2
Cl. 1
2
Perc. 1
B
V. I
II
Vi.

370 375

man- ba - re glor-ia che bis - che - re di t'ra - ken- vi - no

arco

On the Meaning of Music

The essay is the first installment of what at one time may become a book entitled On the Meaning of Music, or Why Music?

In the Charlie Chaplin film *Limelight* there is a wonderful dialog between the old clown Calvero and the young dancer he saved from a suicide attempt:

Dancer: Why didn't you let me die?

Calvero (drunk): What's the hurry? Are you in pain?

(The dancer shakes her head.)

Calvero: That's all that matters, the rest is fantasy. Millions of years it's taken to evolve human consciousness, and you want to wipe it out. What about the miracle of all existence—more important than anything in the whole universe! What can the stars do?! Nothing! They can sit on their axis. And the sun? Shooting flames two hundred eighty thousand miles high! So what! Wasting all its natural resources. Can the sun think? Is it conscious? No! But you are. (The dancer has fallen asleep ...) Pardon me my mistake.¹⁹²

To prepare this lecture I have interrupted work on my opera, to be entitled *Prospero*, the text of which is based on Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Before I ask myself why I compose at all—in other words, what is the meaning of making music for me personally—I must ask myself why I am giving a lecture about the meaning of music—that is, what it means for me to write about the meaning of music. The question is easy to answer. For some time now I have been entertaining the idea of writing a little book, if possible, in a style comprehensible for non-specialists as well, which gives an account of what is important about music for a contemporary composer, for a composing contemporary—in this concrete case, for me personally. And not only about the music that I write, but also the music that I hear. This lecture is an occasion for me to formulate my first thoughts on the topic. Why I want to tackle the topic rather than any other, when there are so many other topics related to music, is another question that may not be so easy to answer. I could certainly restrict myself to writing about composing, which is difficult enough. Why don't I? Is composing perhaps not enough for me? Is it not so important for me that I want to dedicate my entire energy to it? Or is the very reason that composing is so important for me that I want to better understand why it is so important for me? Or: Is theorizing more important for me than practical activity? (To the extent that it can be claimed that composing is practical activity.) As regards this last question, I believe that theory cannot be separated from practice, although it is also clear that the composer is first

¹⁹² [Transcribed from *Limelight* (1952): The Chaplin Collection (Burbank: Warner Home Video, 2003).]

and foremost supposed to compose, or, as the case may be, what is composed should enjoy primacy over what is theoretically thought, at least for me.

The fact that I selected such a topic certainly also has to do with the time, namely with its passing, or, more precisely, with getting older. The time is coming in which one asks the fundamental questions of life: What do I actually want? What is the most important thing in life for me? Why am I the way I am? Or, even more generally: Why do I exist? What is it all about, or is something at all? My God, these are questions!—whereby this exclamation does not ring true, because, if I had a God I could call upon and upon whom I could rely, it would all be considerably easier. The problem begins with the fact that I am unfortunately not religious. I may not be religious, but I am also not a-religious. For *religio* actually means connection, or cohesion—and, indeed, I am of the opinion that all living beings and all non-living subjects are somehow connected. What I mean to say is that I feel that there are flowing boundaries between all living and—perhaps only apparently?—non-living things in our world, and that there is a fundamental unity.¹⁹³ Someone who does not belong to one of the many religions at our disposal—all of which are essentially related, of course—may perhaps feel an even greater urge to ponder the meaning of his activities and of human existence in general. Whether he finds a plausible answer to these questions is another issue. Yet the span of time we are given is short, and considering that death is approaching inevitably, it becomes more and more important to ask oneself what one would like to do with the time left. So you ask the essential questions, that is, the questions about the nature of existence. And this, of course, includes also the question about the meaning of what one's purpose in life is—in my case: music.

I would like to split the question implicitly contained in the title into two parts, namely one as to what it means for me to hear music; and the second, as to what it means for me to write music. I will start with the second part. Why do I write music? I could answer: because I cannot do anything else, or because composing is what I do best. Yet this answer would not get at the core of the question. First, I could imagine doing something else; and second, the decision about becoming a composer was already settled at a point in time (namely, on the day of my tenth birthday, when I made up my first composition, a waltz in C minor) before I could know whether there was anything else I could do as well or as badly, or in any case not better. For whatever reasons, the longing to make music was predominant already then. I gave in to this longing and over these many years have acquired a degree of artistic skill that allowed me to practice this profession my whole life long,

¹⁹³ Cf., for instance, W. Welsch, „Reflecting the Pacific”, in: *Contemporary Aesthetics*, www.contempaesthetics.org.

and even to live from it. What is this longing? What is this profession or “calling”? (in German “Beruf” means profession and derives from “rufen” or call). I don’t believe that it has anything to do with being “called upon” to do what one believes to do best (who does the calling?); rather, one does what one considers most important, something that bestows meaning to one’s life. The motivations involved in someone’s striking out on a certain path are extremely varied and generally cannot even be reconstructed after the fact. Not to exclude the possibility that they have to do with experiences that you already made in the womb. Especially as far as music is concerned, acoustic perception can be decisive at the earliest age, all the way back to the foetal stage.¹⁹⁴ Also important are feeling of success in childhood, which brings me to a personal recollection. All in all, I will keep this lecture as personal as possible, as I cannot answer for theoretical notions, but only for what I have experienced myself. When all is said and done, it doesn’t matter what one says, but rather what one does—and I think that’s the only subject to be discussed in a well-founded and authentic manner. Thus, as a child I had developed a certain skill in playing well-known songs on the harmonica—a skill that made me successful with the Boy Scout troop I was a member of at the age of eight or nine. I was also successful when I started playing a piano that stood around at home, mute and dusty, picking out familiar melodies and even inventing short pieces like the birthday waltz I mentioned above. These successes and rewards were probably so important to me because I wasn’t so successful in other areas like playing soccer with kids my age or in school, which became very difficult for me when my parents sent me to the German school in Rome at the age of ten when I didn’t speak a single word of German. Our teacher was a musician and became my first piano teacher. He supported me in my attempts to compose and encouraged me to play my pieces for the class. When he found out that I had been introduced to the great Paul Hindemith—the most famous German composer at the time—as the youngest Italian composer, I had made it, at least as far as my musical career at the German school was concerned.

In addition to the experience of success, however, what counted was my pride in being able to prove my seriousness and stamina. When I insisted to my parents that they should let me take piano lessons, my mother said it would end up just like it did with my stamp collection, namely that after three months I would have had enough of the piano, too. Well, the fact that I still remember my mother’s skepticism nearly fifty years later certainly means something. Is it conceivable that I became a composer to prove to my mother and to myself that I am capable of being steadfast and of sticking with a decision once I’ve made it? Why not. The paths of providence are infinite. In

¹⁹⁴ See A. Tomatis, *Der Klang des Lebens* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987).

this case composing also—and not least—was important to show my parents and myself (hence the superego and the ego) that I am a person to be taken seriously, someone who is reliable because he is able to keep his word.

If these considerations should, over time, lead to the little book I mentioned above, it would be about time to draw up a possible outline. It could look something like the following:

OUTLINE

0 Introduction

1. What is music?

1.1 Fluid boundaries

1.2 There is no one such thing as music: on the diversity of musical idioms and conventions

2. The eternal search for meaning

3. Immanent motivations for music

3.1 Music as a game (Johan Huizinga)

3.1.1 Curiosity and creativity

3.2 Music as “forms animated by sound” (tönend bewegte Formen) (Eduard Hanslick)

3.3 “Che farò senza / con Euridice” (this alludes to the fact that the famous passage in Gluck’s *Orpheus and Euridice*, “What shall I do without Euridice”, would function musically just as well even if Orpheus, unexpectedly back in possession of his Euridice, were to sing: “What on earth shall I do with Euridice!”)

3.4 The Glass Bead Game?

4. Extramusical motivations of music

4.1 Functional music

4.1.1 Tite

4.1.2 Magic

4.1.3 Religion

4.1.5 Sports

4.1.6 Therapy for the listener and for the composer

4.1.7 Dance

4.1.8 Entertainment

4.2 Music and/as philosophy

4.3 Music as knowledge and self-knowledge

- 4.3.1 “Luca’s scale” (this alludes to a scale I have been using for many years now and which for me has become a synthesis—a kind of integral—of several different tracks of experience)
- 4.4 Music and eternity
- 4.5 Music as a way to one’s own basic rhythm
- 4.6 Music and number
- 4.7 Music and text
- 4.8 Opera
- 5. The unity of music as a reflection of the unity of man and as a reflection of the unity of the universe

A number of these titles already hint at the direction in which my considerations will be developed. Others must of necessity initially seem laconic or even cryptic. As you see, cautiously formulated, the field is extremely broad. Therefore I must make due with selecting just a few of these thoughts in my talk today.

What is music? I ask myself right away in the first chapter. A question that might sound strange, since we all believe that we know what music is. However, the question is not necessary self-evident. You, too, have surely experienced, after hearing a piece of new music, someone calling out: That is not music! A response that, by the way, is nothing new, but presumably has always existed.¹⁹⁵ Music is a language and develops just as verbal languages develop. If a Roman from the age of Augustus were to suddenly appear in the Forum in Rome, he would be quite astonished, not only about the radical changes the city has undergone, but also about the fact that the language spoken there would be completely unintelligible to him. I said: language, but should say: languages, since many different languages are spoken there by tourists from all over the world. A number of them did actually develop from the language of the ancient Romans, Latin. Yet they developed further and are so far removed from the original that our time traveller could claim with good reason: “That is not the language I know, that is not Latin, but gibberish.” It is similar with music. In music, too, the vocabulary and syntax

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (New York-London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000). Here I would also like to offer an anecdote told by the composer György Ligeti: „I had a good and strict piano teacher, to whom I truly enjoyed going. I was quite intimate with the common literature of the time, with works by Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, because I had heard them on records and in the radio. Once, pretty much at the beginning of my instruction, I was fourteen years old, she played me a piece by Debussy. I said: That’s nonsense; that is not music! Even I could write something like that. Well, so far I haven’t managed to do it. It was „Golliwogg’s Cake Walk” from *Children’s Corner*. It was neither major nor minor. I was like any philistine: What was not major or minor was not music.” In: *Träumen Sie in Farbe? György Ligeti im Gespräch mit Eckard Roelcke* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2003), 31.

change continually, and what was valid for composing just yesterday may not necessarily be true today. Unless they are curious (in German one says “neugierig”, meaning eager for the new), people tend not to accept the existence of what they are not familiar with. In spite of all of this change, however, there must be a consensus about what can be called music and what cannot. Yet this very consensus is exposed to constant, explicit or tacit change—not unlike the rules that apply to every other sphere of life as well. It may be that in music—and in art in general—these rules become obsolete faster, at least in our Western cultural sphere. This is not true (or was not until recently) for other cultures such as the Japanese, for example, whose Noh music (and Noh or Kabuki theatre) is performed according to criteria that were fixed several centuries ago. Still, as soon as Western culture had prevailed in the East as well (which has long since happened), very important autochthonous cultural phenomena unfortunately start becoming more and more obsolete.

So what is music? I think that we can agree on a very simple, but convincing definition: *Music is that which a sufficiently large number of listeners regard as music.* If one single person in our cultural sphere were to say of an artefact: that is music, it is improbable that the artefact would actually be music. A consensus is required in order to define music as music. For this consensus it is not only important that there is a large enough number of people who share the same opinion, but also that this opinion holds out against time and rankling criticism. Here I am not speaking of the quality of the music designated as such, which is all the more subject to the test of time. The definition I propose may sound very simple, perhaps too simple. Yet it seems to me inadmissible—as happens over and over again in history—to aspire to lay down standards for determining what is to be accepted as music and what is not. We are certainly aware (or should be) that aesthetic criteria change over time. Thus if a sufficiently large number of people come to an agreement that a certain production of the human spirit is to be regarded as music, there is no reason to contest this just because it does not correspond to one’s own criteria. Of course everyone is entitled to his or her own personal taste and to prefer this or that music. But this has nothing to do with the essential right of existence of every kind of musical practice that enjoys a consensus.

Well, I already hear some of the possible objections to my definition of music:¹⁹⁶ this is a “social definition” of music, which, first of all, is too broadly conceived. It is not up to everyone to decide, as in a democratic election, but to a circle of specialists. In the modern age (the objection con-

¹⁹⁶ I recently spoke at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Jena, where I had been invited by my esteemed friend Wolfgang Welsch, who was then so kind as to summarize a number of objections against my theses and to share them with me in written form.

tinues), this circle is often extremely small and under certain circumstances may consist of just a few composers, music critics, and conductors).

Second, it is less a “social definition” that we need than an “essential definition”, which must drive at something like the essence of music.

As to the first objection, I know that the group of those who define a certain kind of music as music can be small. That is why I stated above that it must be merely “sufficiently large”, which means that as far as I’m concerned it can even be extremely small. The point is not that I would, so to speak, submit to the verdict of the masses. On the other hand, neither do I intend to defend the taste of the elite. To the extent that this is at all possible, I would like to understand the definition as value-free. Indeed, I do not say: this music is the only good and true music, but claim instead that there are very many and very different kinds of music and that it is not necessary to know and to appreciate all of them. Yet they are all varieties of this phenomenon that we (can) call music. As to the *essence* of this phenomenon—and here I respond to the second objection—that is another question, although not entirely different. But since there is no one such thing as *music*, but rather only very many and very different musical practices, it will certainly not be easy to make out a single essence of music. This is because a string quartet by Beethoven and a hit song are incommensurable phenomena—which, it is true, are both subsumed under the concept “music”. Or should it be possible—I’ll venture a bold comparison—just as we undertake the attempt to define what the essence of life is, despite the fact that there are entirely different life forms, to apprehend the essence of music even for entirely different musical organisms? If this is the case, it seems to me that the question, or more accurately, the answer, does not become any easier: I dare to doubt that there is an essence of music valid for each and every one of us, as the actual meaning of music is different for every individual. Once more, what I am concerned about with this—admittedly very broad—definition is not the tabulation of a normative aesthetics that might be expected. For history teaches us that the standards I am formulating today—provided that they can lay claim to any general validity at all today—will most assuredly already be obsolete tomorrow. The point is not whether I deem what can be defined as music to be good, not what music is for me personally, or what the “essence” of music represents for me personally, since I am of the opinion that for every individual to whom music means anything, the meaning of music is a different one. The boundaries between what we designate as music and what does not yet deserve this name (and now I am forming a transition to section 1.1) are fluid today anyway, and this is true to a much higher degree than it used to be. This has to do with the incursion of noise into music at the beginning of the twentieth century. Consider the increasingly important role

of percussion. A multifaceted and differentiated percussion section gradually became not only a permanent constituent part of the classical symphony orchestra, but even pure percussion compositions were written, such as *Ionisation* of 1931 by Edgard Varèse, in which thirteen percussionists employ forty-two percussion instruments and two sirens.

Consider as well “musique concrète” and electronic music, both of which sprang up in the 1950s, but theoretically were aspired to much earlier—for instance by Ferruccio Busoni in his “Sketch of a new Aesthetic of Music” (1906). In the “musique concrète” of the fifties, as the name suggests, sounds of the real, concrete world are recorded and worked into compositions. It is not difficult to imagine that, for many listeners of the time, such pieces were not music—and often are not even today.

When I was around twenty, I invented pieces for transistor radios or for aluminium sheets. Once I even used my mother’s Fiat 500 as an instrument and presented her with a birthday concert. A full—or only—thirteen years had passed since I’d had to convince my parents to let me take piano lessons. What must my mother have thought (remember the story with the stamp collection) about the unusual direction that my musical interest had taken? At the same time I continued to play piano, however, and also composed pieces for thoroughly traditional instruments like the piano, violin, etc. I also completed my composition exercises, which covered counterpoint theory and harmony theory and everything else that belongs to composition lessons. I was altogether aware that the universe of music is quite extensive and complex and that a wide variety of musical practices find their place within it. The boundaries are fluid not only between music and noise, but also between the individual kinds of music (and that brings me to section 1.2), for there is no one such thing as *music*; there are only many different kinds of music, even if I limit myself here to the Western European tradition, namely the classical music of various types and periods (orchestral music, chamber music, opera, as well as what is known as contemporary music, which itself breaks down into different areas); light music in its diverse forms (pop, rock etc.); the different styles of jazz, film music (another world of its own); the insipid music that supposedly helps us relax, the kind my physiotherapist has running in the background during my treatments, and which, at least for a composer, is anything but relaxing—indeed, it threatens to supplement the back pains with a headache just as intense—and even more other kinds of music.

Recently, in Berlin, I was listening to the news on the radio. The reports were interrupted by quite different pieces of music. After a short classical fragment the announcer said: that was No. 30 (sic!) by Mozart, next is a song by

another immortal, Elvis Presley. From this song, too, only a fragment was aired. Mozart and Elvis Presley, as interchangeable as apples and oranges—both are fruits to be sure, but what's important is the difference between them. This is not always the case for music, as one kind of music is apparently supposed to be the same as the next. In principle I have no objections to the idea that we differentiate not among genres, but between good and bad music, and that Mozart and Elvis Presley or Bach and Duke Ellington may be different, but they are qualitatively equal options in our cultural landscape, and this independent of personal taste. On the other hand, however, I think that there is no reason to be ashamed of exercising one's critical faculty, that is, the ability of discernment. Even people, who are in principle all equal, are not all equivalent, and this is true not only for their aesthetic essence but also for their ethical essence. Why should this not also be true for human artefacts, which are, after all, a reflection of the qualities of their creators? Just as – if I may spin this associative thread a bit further – people cannot be better than their creator or creators: As opposed to the exclusive God of the monotheistic religions, who is supposed to be devoid of all human faults (which is certainly, to put it conservatively, improbable), the gods of antiquity have characteristics that do not necessarily make them better beings than their mortal creatures. Shouldn't these structural defects, which no one can deny people have, put their designers in a bad light?

But back to music, or at least to a radio program that not only mixes apples and oranges, but also fobs off the listeners with mere fragments of these: a few measures of Mozart, a few measures of Presley, and so on. What is the point of this, if the sense of a musical discourse can only unfold in the formal articulation determined by the composer? I suppose its only sense (if we can call it that) is not to demand too much of the listener, who in the early hours of the morning is gradually trying to get used to being vertical again. You don't want to strain anyone, especially at that time of day. A couple of minutes of something spoken, a couple of minutes of music, everything in rapid succession and only hinted at. Going into depth might bore listeners, whereas rapidly switching topics is supposed to support the blood pressure at the level needed for the day's activities. Thus radio supports a culture of fragmentation, although we are plenty fragmented enough on our own.

What music do I mean, then, when I speak of the meaning of music? In order to answer this question—again, in a very personal way—I have to differentiate between the music I listen to and the music I write. I can listen to pretty much everything, depending on my mood and the occasion. I may not be much of an expert on non-classical music, but now and then I do like to hear songs, Brazilian music, and ethnic music and the like. There is no doubt that this music has its own functions and meaning. But here, too, it is

important to differentiate, as every kind of music has its own “specific gravity”. In general, however, I would say that everyone can find the music he or she holds to be important, for whatever reasons, to make sense. And be it one single kind, one single composer or one single piece of music.

This is different for the music that is composed, or, in my case, that I compose. While the occasion and mood are important here, too, it is generally a music oriented toward the standards set by the Western music from the “Ars nova” of the thirteenth century to the classics of the twentieth century. This is like a broad and incredibly long river that flows through different climatic zones, is home to different fish, whose bed exhibits different kinds of stone—and is thus at the same time both homogenous and extremely diverse.

Since my introduction, so far I have sketched the contents of the first chapter of what may someday become my book about the sense of music. Now several chapters will follow which I cannot summarize here. Therefore I will jump directly to Chapter 4, several parts of which I would like to discuss.

Section 4.1.4 is to concern the political motivations and implications of music. In my youth I dealt with this subject too, both theoretically and practically in my compositions. At that time I wrote my dissertation about the composer Hanns Eisler (1898-1962), entitled “Hanns Eisler’s Contribution to the Development of a Marxist Poetics and Aesthetics of Music”.¹⁹⁷ I wrote a series of compositions myself in which I resolved to make a contribution to the socialist development of society, small though it might have been. Is it possible to change the world with music? Today I would answer no. Can one change the world at all? It is certainly possible to make it worse, and quite quickly at that. Improving it, on the contrary, is a long, drawn-out process. As they say: “gutta lapidem cavat”, a droplet hollows out a rock. But the effect that art and music can have is just another drop in the bucket, namely negligible. In his *Ninth Symphony* (and in the opera *Fidelio*), Beethoven acts the role of a representative and advocate of mankind and humanity. The fact that not even the most magnificent work of art was able to influence the nature of man is another matter. Or is it the same matter? In general, music and culture do not have the power to improve the human race. Whether the human race is at all capable of improvement is yet another question that is difficult to answer. Political attempts to change the human race for the better have ended in tragedy. Pedagogical zeal can transform abruptly into brutal repression, as the example of the last century teaches us. And the brave new world keeps marching in the same formations. This could easily lead to the conclusion that the meaning of music is unfortunately nothing that can

¹⁹⁷ Later published as *H. Eisler, Musica della Rivoluzione*, edited and with an introduction by Luca Lombardi (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978).

encourage the “humanizing” of mankind. As far as this is concerned, nobody would rather be proven wrong than I. But if the history of humanity has not been able to accomplish this by now, it will certainly be difficult to experience it still within one short lifetime. I hail the efforts to put together an orchestra of Israelis and Palestinians in order to promote peace between these warring brothers or cousins; indeed, I would be more than willing to make my musical work available to such a project, but I fear that we are fooling ourselves if we place too much value on the music we believe to be so important. For music is important regardless of whether it has a measurable function, be it to increase cow’s production of milk or to promote the humanization of human beings.

So if music is not necessarily “humanizing”, it does not necessarily have to be “beautiful” either. Personally, I have nothing against beautiful music. But that is not its main task, least of all for the music of our age. Arnold Schoenberg said that music has to be true. I like that better, although it is certainly not easy to say wherein this truth lies. More on this in the chapter “Music as Knowledge and Self-knowledge.” As to the political function of music, let us say that if music can be implemented functionally in the political sense, it can also be appropriated for a different cause, as the abuse of German classical and romantic music by the Nazis showed. Even poor Eisler experienced how a number of his most popular political songs were co-opted.¹⁹⁸ For instance, his “Red Wedding” (named for Berlin’s working-class district of Wedding) became “Brown Wedding”. Nevertheless the National Socialists were not able to appropriate a number of his songs, such as the “Solidaritätslied” (“Song of Solidarity”) because its rhythm was fairly brusque and could not be marched to very well.¹⁹⁹ Poor comfort for a composer who was determined to turn his back on his venerated teacher Arnold Schönberg in order to become the composer of the working class—a class that couldn’t have been bothered with him while it still existed. Had Eisler, who was embittered enough when he died in 1962, lived to see later events, no less comprehensible—and perhaps less so—than in his age, from the bankruptcy of socialism on to the world of today, he might ask himself if it would have been better to write a few more “bourgeois” compositions like a couple of good string quartets, rather than chasing after the chimera of a socialist music that (he might now feel) was musically simplistic and ended up being socially irrelevant.

However, these skeptical remarks about the meaning of politically motivated music are not intended to suggest that composers should not concern themselves with the world in which they live. Testimonies of humanity—such as Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony—even if they are appropriated for other

¹⁹⁸ For more on this, see 3.3.

¹⁹⁹ See H. Eisler, *Musica della Rivoluzione*, p. 69.

causes or remain ineffectual, indicate that humans are working on an image of themselves of which they need not be ashamed. Indeed, *Homo sapiens sapiens* is still working on becoming human, and it looks like there is still a long way to go. What appears to me important is to remain reasonable and not to overestimate the effectiveness of such politically motivated works. Just as important, or perhaps more so, the artistic value of such works is primarily based on musical criteria. There have always been works of art indebted to contemporary political events. In the *Divine Comedy*, written while he was in exile, Dante Alighieri may have referred to the concrete political situation of his hometown of Florence and to the abuses of the church, but this is of mere anecdotal value for us today. What is of value are its simple and at the same time magnificent structure, and its linguistic beauty and power. What is true for Dante's *Comedy* is also true for other religiously inspired works of art: They are valued and enjoyed even by those who do not share the religious conviction of their creators.

If I may return from such heights to the lowlands of my own composition practice, for all my disillusionment about political developments and about the political function of music, I have not withdrawn to the ivory tower—and not only because such towers are rare and expensive to buy. For example, even in recent years I wrote the opera *Dmitri, or: the Artist and Power*, based on historical material, namely nearly thirty years of Soviet history from Lenin's death (1924) to Stalin's death (1953), and dealing with the (self-) contradictory relationship between the composer Dmitri Shostakovich and the dictator.

A piece of music can be listened to on many layers, and there is every reason to believe that one of these layers can impart extra-musical knowledge, be it of political or psychological or philosophical or any other kind (which, in turn, brings me to section 4.3, "Music as Knowledge and Self-Knowledge"). This is true not only for the listener, but also for the composer himself. Here I would like to relate a personal experience I made with two of my compositions.

While I was writing a piece for eight instruments in the mid-1980's, I began playing with the letters in my name by assigning a musical note to each letter. (See Example II, 3a) Because my first name and last name consist of four plus eight letters, the result was a twelve-tone structure, yet not a canonical twelve-tone series which contains no repetitions (the letters "l" and "a" occur twice in my first and last names). Experimenting with this material brought me to repeat this tone-row as a melodic structure, distributed among the instruments, starting from the beginning each time. The other structural features of the compositional plan that gradually developed are not important

in this context; what was characteristic first and foremost was the formal idea of repeatedly starting from the beginning, which brought me to the title “Sisyphus”. We all know the story of the demigod Sisyphus: For offending the gods of Olympus he was sentenced to the punishment of pushing a boulder up a mountain. But every time he is about to reach the top of the mountain, the boulder rolls back down and Sisyphus has to start from the beginning again. Over and over, for all eternity! Not until afterward (by then I was working on a second piece entitled *Sisyphos II*) did I become aware of certain relations, and I began to look at the piece (the pieces) as in a mirror. What does it mean: to start repeatedly from the beginning? What is meant by the boulder that repeatedly has to be heaved up the mountain? And who is Sisyphus? Am I supposed to have something in common with him? Why did I take my own name as the material (as building blocks)? Could it be that I, myself—without consciously intending to, and, again, without even being aware of it—have composed a sort of self-portrait? Do I really have such an absurd-tragic opinion of my life and my work?²⁰⁰ I could easily answer: yes. But the knowledge I could draw from this piece was even more perplexing and further reaching. How so? Well, from childhood I had always been a supporter of socialism and thought of myself as a Marxist. As such, I ultimately had a linear understanding of history. But as my own piece showed, I no longer appeared to have this understanding at all. My Sisyphus pieces—eventually I composed four—showed me that my view of the world had changed. My view of history became more contradictory, and I began to take my leave from Marxism. Whereby I would say today that Marxism is by now a sedimented material of which we all partake, whether or not we want to, and whether or not we know it.

I had another experience, existentially just as important, with a piece I wrote for double-bass and eight instruments in 1986, entitled “Ai piedi del faro” (“At the Foot of the Lighthouse”). I took the title from a sentence by the philosopher Ernst Bloch: “There is no light at the foot of the lighthouse.” What I understood the sentence to mean is that we cannot grasp the present *now*; we can illuminate the past from the present, but what we are doing now must for the most part remain incomprehensible to us. It is the “darkness of the instant just lived.” In this piece I used—as many times before and since—a scale with which musical forms of a peculiar oriental influence could be constructed. Why? What do I have to do with the Orient? More than I was aware, as would become apparent. While I was working on the piece I listened to a record with Sephardic singing, which a Jewish-American singer

²⁰⁰ These last sentences are taken from my essay „Sisyphos als Selbstportrait? (Oder: von der Last des Komponierens)“, from „Beim Komponieren. Drei Texte“, in *Lust am Komponieren*, H.-K. Jungheinrich (ed.), Bärenreiter, Kassel, Basel, London, 1985, 34-40. This essay includes more on the piece and the considerations it evoked.

had given me as a gift four years earlier, but which I had never played. I really liked the songs, especially one in which a bewailing tone, sung with tight intervals coiling around each other: “mama mia, salvadera de mi vida”. That is Ladino, the language of the Spanish Jews, and means “Mother mine, saviour of my life”. As I continued work on the piece, it went without saying that the song became integrated into the score. Why was I attracted to this particular song? And why had I used it in my piece. The there purely musical reasons for this, or did it have something to do with my Jewish mother? In any case it was not conscious, and I hadn’t at all—at least, as I said, not consciously—considered relating the piece to my mother. When I built the song into the piece I noticed that the intervals of the song were astonishingly similar to those I had been using up to that time, not only the tight “oriental” intervals, but also a fifth that plays an important role both in my piece and in the Sephardic song. Thus I could integrate the song into the piece with no difficulty, indeed, the piece even ends with a fragment of that somewhat melancholy song: One after the other, the instrumentalists exit the stage, each of them playing independently of each other, and assemble again at the other end of the hall or in an adjacent room. Only the double-bass player remains on the stage. The remainder of the musicians begin playing the Jewish song from the other location, and the double-bass player tries to join in. But the communication is unsuccessful: The other musicians do not respond. The double-bass player persists with one note, almost an unanswered call, until he finally resigns and falls silent. Not until months later, while reading a book by Primo Levi (*I sommersi e i salvati*), did it occur to me, as in an insight, how much this ending had to do with the overall Jewish character of the piece, which by that time had become clear to me as well. Levi tells of a Jewish family from Libya that holds obsequies every evening during its transport to the concentration camp: It sang lamentations and thus gave expression to the pain about the constantly repeating exodus. I couldn’t believe it: Apparently the subconscious does exist, and composing was a way for me to bring it to light. It became clear to me that the French horn which plays alone at the beginning of the piece and gradually summons the other to join—like a voice calling in the desert—is the shofar, the ancient Hebrew horn which calls the community together, the community that is scattered to the four winds at the end of the piece. Yet at that time I had never even heard the shofar, just as I had never entered a synagogue. I did not do so until eight years later, in Sao Paulo in Brazil, with my new girlfriend at the time who is now my wife, and who comes, strangely enough, from a Libyan Jewish family. The oriental-sounding scale—see Example III, 11—which I have used ever more often since then (it contains the intervals: minor second – major second – minor second – minor third, and once again: minor second – major second – minor second – minor third) suddenly made sense as well, a very private sense which bound the cultural strands of my father and my mother in a singular

way. My father, a philosopher from Naples and musical layman, had composed Neapolitan songs of which he was very proud. These songs often use an oriental-influenced mode typical for the Mediterranean region. This was certainly a point of departure for me as a child, one from which I had distanced myself further and further the more seriously and professionally I dealt with music. Over time, however, this early “imprinting” apparently returned to the surface. I like the idea that the oriental tinge of the sequence of notes I use refers to both the Neapolitan origins of my father and the Jewish heritage of my mother, whose ancestors came from what is today Israel to Italy 2000 years ago, and who, despite assimilation, never forgot her ties to her original country, just as I never forget them.



Example III, 11: “Oriental” Scale

Yet this raises the question: Do these personal experiences and reflections play any role at all when people listen to my music? I believe: yes and no. The listener does not need to have this information to get something out of my piece. However, they may be useful to understand it better. A piece of music always has several layers, and unless one deals with it intensively and professionally, one cannot access all of them. And this is not necessarily a must. Yet every additional piece of information, starting with the title, can help penetrate deeper and deeper into what a piece of music means, what it “actually” is.

In closing I return to Chaplin’s film *Limelight* and back to the dialog between the clown and the dancer, which continues as follows:

Calvero: Tell me, was it just ill health that made you do what you did?

Dancer: That and ... the utter futility of everything. I see it even in flowers, hear it in music: All life aimless without meaning.

Calvero: What do you want a meaning for – life is a desire, not a meaning! Desire is the theme of all life. It’s what makes the rose want to be a rose, want to grow like that. (Calvero imitates a rose growing ...) And a rock want to contain itself and remain like that. (He pretends to be a stone that wants to stand firm.) (The dancer smiles.)²⁰¹

²⁰¹ [Transcribed from *Limelight* (1952): The Chaplin Collection (Burbank: Warner Home Video, 2003).]

This dialogue, full of philosophical thought and poetic lightness, actually gives the answer to the question implied in the title of my lecture—and not only because one of the subjects here is music (which supposedly has no meaning for the dancer), but also because the question as to the meaning of music includes, or at least suggests, the question as to the meaning of life as a whole. .

My remarks may be mere comments on a topic that certainly can be dealt with in much more depth, but old and tipsy and wise Calvero (“in vino veritas”) has already said what counts.

[Source: “Vom Sinn der Musik,” typescript of lecture given at various places in 2003 and 2004; published in both German and English—in case of the latter under the title “On the Meaning of Music” (trans. Susan Richter)—in *Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg: Jahresbericht/Annual Report 2003* (Delmenhorst: Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, n.d. {2004}, 13-16 and 27-39; Becheri 03-7. The English translation published in the *Report* has been revised somewhat.]

Hier beginnt der Anhang.