



INTERNATIONALES
MUSIKINSTITUT
DARMSTADT

Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik

Herausgegeben
von Michael Rebhahn und Thomas Schäfer

Band 25

 SCHOTT

Bestellnummer SDP 168

ISBN 978-3-79-572509-9

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Vorwort

Wie sehr der ästhetische Diskurs bei den Darmstädter Ferienkursen beheimatet ist, haben die vergangenen sieben Jahrzehnte mit maßgeblichen, von dort ausgehenden Debatten deutlich gemacht. Im Kursjahr 2018 wurde der gemeinsamen Reflexion besonders viel Raum gegeben. Einen prominenten Platz hatte dabei das Projekt «Defragmentation. Curating Contemporary Music», dessen Resultate bereits im vergangenen Jahr in einem Sonderband der Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik publiziert wurden. Im vorliegenden Band präsentieren wir nun weitere Diskurspositionen aus Konferenzen und Lectures der Ferienkurse des Jahres 2018.

Die von Christian Grüny und Georgina Born konzipierte Konferenz «Deconstructing the Avant-Garde» stellte eine ästhetische «Gretchenfrage»: Ist der Begriff der Avantgarde noch essenziell für das Selbstverständnis der Neuen Musik? Nicht zuletzt vor dem Hintergrund der historischen «Komplizenschaft» der Darmstädter Ferienkurse mit dem Entwurf einer musikalischen Avantgarde, erweist sich eine erneute Diskussion des Begriffs als instruktiv. So untersucht Esther Leslie Widersprüche im Denken von Theodor W. Adorno, während Martin Iddon den Zusammenhang von Avantgarde und Nostalgie erörtert.

Dem Konnex von politischen und ästhetischen Handlungen war die Konferenz «Finding Democracy in Music», konzipiert von Robert Adlington und Liza Lim, gewidmet. Die Konferenz ging dem Thema in vier Lectures mit ganz unterschiedlichen Fokussierungen nach: Robert Adlington unternimmt eine historische Betrachtung von demokratischen Konzepten in Komposition und Aufführungspraxis der letzten sechzig Jahre; Noriko Manabe wirft einen Blick auf die musikalischen Implikationen von Straßenprotesten; Cathy Milliken stellt verschiedene Ansätze kollaborativer Musikpraxis vor, und Georgina Born beschäftigt sich mit der partizipativen Rolle des Publikums.

Ein Nachdenken über Formen, Mittel und Gesten der Kritik, über ihre Bedingungen, Möglichkeiten, Ziele und Grenzen fand schließlich in der Konferenz «The Ethics of Critique» statt. Zwei Lectures aus dieser Veranstaltung haben Eingang in den vorliegenden Band gefunden: Michael Rebhahn erörtert die Folgen sowohl der Inflationierung als auch der narzisstischen Überhöhung der kritischen Praxis. Robert Barry wiederum beschreibt den Wandel der Grundbedingungen von Kritik im Zeitalter algorithmischer Meinungsbildung.

Hannes Seidl plädiert für eine Musik, die ihre gesellschaftliche Kraft aus ihrer Zweckfreiheit bezieht, und Kirsten Reese untersucht Möglichkeiten und Potenziale, die ein »Komponieren mit dem Archiv« bietet.

Die Herausgeber danken allen Autorinnen und Autoren für die Überlassung ihrer Texte zu diesem Band. Weiterhin gilt unser Dank John Patrick Thomas und Richard Rieves für das Korrektorat sowie Schott Music für die zuverlässige Zusammenarbeit. Auch danken wir dem University of Huddersfield Centre for Research in New Music

(CeReNeM) für die Unterstützung von «Finding Democracy in Music».

Wie unerlässlich das Hinterfragen der Bedingungen und Wirklichkeiten der Gegenwartsmusik ist, stellen die unterschiedlichen Positionen der vorliegenden Essays unter Beweis. In diesem Sinne folgen die Darmstädter Beiträge ihrer Verpflichtung: Anreger eines produktiven und konstruktiven musikalischen Diskurses zu sein.

Michael Rebhahn und Thomas Schäfer
Darmstadt, im Juni 2020

Foreword

For more than seventy years, the Darmstadt Summer Course have been a vibrant forum for substantive aesthetic discourse. The year 2018 saw a particular emphasis on collective reflection. One prominent project was 'Defragmentation. Curating Contemporary Music', the results of which were published last year in a special volume of the *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik*. The current volume contains further points of discussion from conferences and lectures during the Summer Course in 2018.

'Deconstructing the Avant-Garde', a conference organized by Christian Grüny and Georgina Born, questioned whether the concept of the avantgarde is still essential to the self-image of New Music. Given the historic 'complicity' of the Darmstadt Summer Course in the creation of a musical avant-garde, a renewed evaluation of the concept is highly instructive. In this connection, Esther Leslie explores contradictions in Theodor W. Adorno's thinking and Martin Iddon examines the relationship between nostalgia and the avant-garde.

'Finding Democracy in Music', conceived by Robert Adlington and Liza Lim, was concerned with issues at the confluence of political and aesthetic activity. During the conference, four lectures dealt with various aspects of this theme and are included here: Robert Adlington discusses

democratic concepts in the performance and compositional practices of the past 60 years; Noriko Manabe considers the musical implications of street protests; Cathy Milliken presents different approaches to collaborative musical practice; and Georgina Born investigates the participative role of the audience.

Finally 'The Ethics of Critique' reflected on the forms, techniques, and gestures of criticism, as well as its conditions, possibilities, goals, and limitations. Two lectures from this conference are included in the current volume: Michael Rebhahn reflects on the consequences of the inflation and narcissistic glorification of the critic's role, while Robert Barry describes the changing critical landscape in our age of algorithmic opinion formation.

Hannes Seidl calls for a music that draws its social relevance from a lack of social purpose, and Kirsten Reese examines the possibilities and potential of 'composing with the archive.'

The editors would like to thank all the authors for their permission to use the texts in this volume. We would also like to thank John Patrick Thomas and Richard Rieves for their assistance and Schott Music for providing an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. We also wish to thank the University of Huddersfield Centre for Research in New Music (CeReNeM) for generously supporting 'Finding Democracy in Music.'

The broad range of positions in the essays collected here underscores the importance of questioning the conditions and realities of contemporary music, and confirms the role of the *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* as a catalyst for productive and constructive musical discourse.

Michael Rebhahn and Thomas Schäfer
Darmstadt, June 2020

The Particulars of the Avant Garde: Between Aesthetic Experience and Insult, Experiment and Insularity

Esther Leslie

Particulars

There was an avant garde that was most fecund from the 1910s up until its crushing, or management, by the forces of Nazism, Stalinism and Capital. This avant garde was fragile and exposed, and it had pushed art away from academicism, from its role as a guarantor of value, and as a vehicle of proportion and measure. If the avant garde failed in the end, it was a failure intermeshed with a broader social and political failure to transform the world in the direction of liberation, which fell not to it alone. If it was a victim of a broader failure to extend revolution across the globe—witness instead to the spread of war and Fascism—it might claim that it succeeded at least in exposing the corruption of inherited forms of art. This avant garde evoked variously the unclouded eye, the childlike and infantile, in Expressionism; it insisted on the convolution and provocation of time, in Futurism; it hitched art to the new revolutionary subject, in Constructivism, and, in the name of dada's anti-art, abolished art itself, including that of those who went immediately before it, even if they claimed the mantle of radicalism too. Dada was a snub to

academic art and values: inspiration, genius, uniqueness, eternal beauty. It was also a rebuff to Expressionism. Anti-art was the corrective to art's transcendental callousness, and it attempted to reshape community. Unlike the Expressionist community of like-minded types, dada sought a community organised around negation. This was a negation not only of official establishment culture, but also sometimes of each other and of the self. It was also a negation of the state, the law, economic and social form. Dadaists asserted the contradictions inherent to the capitalist formation itself, which made art an affront or an impossibility. This was due to its enmeshment in capital's structures, whereby the artist was either a glorifier of the value form or excluded and humiliated as of negligible use for value's aggrandisement.

Adorno understood dada to be a concrete force, and not abstruse, because it was hostile to culture per se, as it is constituted. For Adorno, dada's hostility is manifest in a rejection of coherent meaning and in its auto-rebellion, or self-negation. He illuminates dada in 1949 in relation to Ernst Krenek's early work, which terminates the immanent unity of the work, and therewith its 'meaning', thereby transforming music into protest. As with dadaism, 'in the era of free atonality in the truly incommensurable early work of Krenek, especially in his Second Symphony', we hear 'the rebellion of music against its own meaning'.¹ Rebellion extends all the way up and down, into every particle, every particular: against the social world, against form, against meaning, against art, in the search for the particularity of authentic experience.

Experience

Music escapes. True music, for Adorno, is liberated from language, that is, 'The nexus of these works is the negation

of the nexus, and their triumph resides in the fact that music itself proves to be the opponent of the language of words in that it is able to speak meaninglessly, whereas all closed musical artworks stand together under the sign of pseudomorphosis, as the language of words. All organic music emerged from the stile recitativo. From the beginning it was modelled on speech. The emancipation of music today is synonymous with its emancipation from the language of words, and this is the lightning that flashes up in the destruction of “meaning”.²

The avant garde artwork escapes from the prison-house of language, that is flees from the pretence to coherence in a world that lies. Meaninglessness, the absence of meaning, the socially occasioned collapse of authentic meaning under the objectivity of the catastrophe is what becomes the meaningfulness, the expressiveness of the avant garde work, which is adequate to the contradictions of experience.

Something opposed to art, hostile to its conditions of existence, and manifesting this opposition within its form, its demeanour, cannot simply be labelled elitist. It works—effectively or not—for the abolition of the conditions that generate art as a niche activity for dilettantes, art appreciators, philistines, art-lovers, such names as are used scornfully by Adorno. Elitism in art, in contrast, arises when aesthetic action aims to produce and protect art, which is a production and protection of the prevailing socio-economic form. In 1956, Adorno refers again to Krenek, writing, in ‘Music, Language, and Composition’, of the quest to abandon the coherent, closed organic work, necessitated by consciousness of the persistent contradiction between the semblance of reconciliation presented by art, and the impossibility of fulfilling this promise of happiness through art in this environment. ‘In

the heroic periods of the new music, the vehemence of the escape attempts—comparable to the tendency of early radical painting to absorb materials that mock all attempts at subjective inspiration, the fundamental phenomenon of montage—presents itself as an anarchic rebellion against the sense of musical coherence in general; the young Krenek's eruptions around the time of his Second Symphony are a case in point.'³

Experiment

In the period following the Second World War, groups took on the name avant garde. Some avant gardists, in being blatantly revolutionary, were as equidistant from affirmation of the imperial-capitalist West as they were from the stipulations of Soviet cultural policy, which arose under the label of Marxist materialism. Some leant more in one direction than another. Adrian Rifkin, founder of the artless Portsmouth Symphonia with Gavin Bryars, member of the Scratch Orchestra, explores the contradictions that arose for those artists who confronted the political situation of the post-war era and tumbled through the levels of revolution in and outside of art. A short piece, titled *For an Artist*, appeared as a flyer, a piece of ephemera, given away in an exhibition that Rifkin and Grant Watson curated on Cornelius Cardew, in 2008, under the title 'It's Lonely at the Top'.⁴ The exhibition traced Cardew's career from mediator of experimental music to the Cardew of *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* from 1974. After a conversion to Marxist-Leninist Maoism, Cardew condemned avant garde music, including his own, turning instead to the music associated with 'people's liberation', that is to say, music associated with being, apparently,

directly at the service of the working class and the revolutionary movement.

Cardew, Rifkin notes, is an artist in a context in which being an artist is questionable. The identification is complex. Then, 'the simple and stark division between the avant garde and the revolutionary artist seemed like a habitable space, one well-furnished with historical disappointments and unfinished conflict'.⁵ The space of tension is liveable, indeed made capacious, if not exactly comfortable, by a long history of failure and lively disagreements. This made it a project worth pursuing. There is an excess that Cardew represents, something beyond being an artist. Cardew displaced that excess into the new forms that he developed or set loose or 'motivated' as an experimentalist: the graphic score, the free association of the collective. Cardew was an artist, but he put in place strategies to liberate others from the tyranny of his being an artist and to liberate listeners from the tyranny of the performance. There is a logically consequential move from here, from this array of liberations from tyranny to the decisions to become a Marxist revolutionary, or to adhere to the 'democratic centralism of the Communist Party'. This was, according to Rifkin, 'another model of an incommensurable freedom. Radically separate from the others, it was a fully voluntary decision of servitude or sacrifice, of deliverance from the fear of the delusion of freedom through acceding to the necessity of class struggle and its "inevitable" outcome in a dictatorship of the proletariat. "Freedom is the recognition of necessity" ..., as Engels put it in his *Anti-Dühring*.'⁶

An incommensurable freedom. A freedom that is nonesuch - because it is the commitment to all that is not chance, not contingent, not non-directed. A negation of

freedom, and yet its recognition in the necessary revolution to come, the iron laws of history, that now seem rusty.

But, states Rifkin, Cardew marked, beyond himself, as other to himself, the time of the postmodern, of the aporetic: the time of doubt, uncertainty and 'the exponential flourishing of identities of otherness that was just to come'.⁷ What mattered in the practice Cardew had developed, what was truly radical about it, was not the holding open of the gap between art and politics, avant garde and vanguard as a question, but rather the demanding of each that they know not what is to come. Important is the non-tyrannical performance, the leap into an unknown, the daily seizing of the day, the improvised gesture, slogan, move, countermove, musical gambit, political act. Cardew unravels. As the days get darker, as political reaction trundles in like an unstoppable lorry, Cardew withers into a narcissist who rejected the rhetoric of chance in order to become a chancer, who sets himself up as a leader, a political opportunist: self-negation as self-inflation. It is all about me, even when me, the old me, is the one that must be dissected and displaced. Cardew turned his back on chance — which necessitated selfnegation, denunciation — to take a chance as a political militant who reads the runes of history, identifies necessity in the flux of contingency. What he produces, against himself, and because of art's absorbency of the contradictions of the social world, is an oddness figured in a splintering of form, its negative capacities. His work exudes the melancholy tones of 'defeat's unending', which, Rifkin observes, echoes Hanns Eisler in exile or the 'enraged defeated Schubert of Das Wirtshaus'⁸, this last being a graveyard hotel whose expressive content is manipulated by Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*, as the untruth of an air-conditioned, automated nightmare of techno-