*…the impossible…*

Over the years, I have gradually developed an interest in the impossible, both within and outside the musical sphere. The following score excerpt is from *Produktionsmittel III*, the final piece of my means of production cycle, which should be completed soon (April 2016). This particular section is written for two e-flat clarinets:



Several aspects of this score are rather impractical; difficult, dense, and a priori inaccessible. Each clarinet explores up to three independent layers of materials. This procedure coerces these layers into interrupting each other; in addition, the 13/100, 37/100, and 12/25 irrational time signatures are not very helpful either when it comes to providing a means for the performers to remain together… let alone the overwhelming amount of nested tuplets…

**Not much is practical here.** Like most of my works, *Produktionsmittel III* employs a series of algorithmic processes that lead to results that otherwise I would have not been able to achieve

on my own. However, perhaps the most significant difference between this particular score and some of my earlier formalist works is that here I do not translate my praxis into a more practical notation for the performer. In the past, I would have modified (and simplified) the materials that my algorithms generated so that they could have been *easily* approachable by trained performers. Now, I am not particularly interested in pursuing this path…

This compositional approach, which may be related to a number of past and present comparable aesthetic projects, does not stem from any sadistic attitude towards performers or audiences. Not at all. This compositional approach, however, is unwilling to compromise the very means of production that I use at my desk. The score above is a more pertinent representation of *how* I think musically than what some of my most practical scores suggest. There is certainly a level of compositional skill and genuine musical understanding when a composer adjusts their ideas to more feasible formations; I do not deny this and I myself have practiced it for years. I am, nevertheless, drawn to *another* MO at the moment.

I want to claim the impossible. If you allow me a brief turn to the explicitly political, I am not willing to accept Alan Greenspan's words:

> We had an extraordinary standard of living; I won't deny that there are, **as there will always be**, significant parts of our population which are basically in difficulty in one form or another with respect to the economy.[1]

Many things that today we recognize as impossible could be largely accomplished if we collectively developed sophisticated strategic plans, aimed at such challenges. A century ago, many workers would have never believed that a substantial number of industrial countries would eventually operate under 40-hour working weeks. That LGBTQ individuals could now marry legally in the United States would have seemed to be an impossible goal a few decades ago. That, in spite of their many issues, Western European countries have not been in war against each other since WWII is an immense success. *There is evidence that suggests that what once appeared to be impossible is now possible.*

I want to embrace the impossible. Yes: I do not see why we should not consider the end of work as an important societal goal (i.e., ending the exchange of wages for socially necessary labor time). I do not see either how we could not collectively demand universal basic income as a right. I cannot find any reason to accept a world that tolerates men earning greater salaries than women; or a world where health care is just another type of for-profit business.

One of the most beautiful things about music is that it opens a seemingly infinite ocean of *proto-material projections*[2] of alternative worlds. There is already plenty of music out there that

---

[1] "Bernie Sanders, Alan Greenspan and Ron Paul - Monetary Policy 02-27-2002," accessed February 23, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgwZjM_OGZs. Emphasis added.

[2] I owe the word 'projections' to Franklin Cox—I just added proto-material before.

operates within highly standardized parameters: I do not have any problem with that per se. I have a simple question though: can we make more room for music that requires a different mindset?

I would like to think that there should be plenty of room for music that acts as a force of resistance; resistance to the creators themselves; resistance to the performers, whom are asked to find spaces for interpretive creativity within highly constrained structures; resistance to the public, so that music does not become an easily commodifiable form.

Much needs to be done in order to develop the general consensus and subsequent acceptance of artistic forms that wish to remain outside the domains of immediacy and conventional (mainstream) communication. I do not think that making music accessible is a matter of employing widely known structures, procedures, sounds, and the uncritical use of cliché. Perhaps making music accessible could translate into repurposing the material infrastructures that currently disseminate and legitimize complacent ideologies. *Free public transportation to concert venues is more accessible than major triads.*

Can we make the impossible accessible? This is a serious inquiry.
…if not here, in the aesthetic dimension, where else can the impossible be explored as of today?

<div align="right">

Joan Arnau Pàmies
23 February 2016

</div>