

I made this online version of the lecture I held  
during the Cairo Contemporary Music Days 2017  
at Cairo Goethe-Institut on April 28th ,  
because a young lady wanted to know, which music I played.

I promised to write to her, but I lost her address.

### **Why isn't it just nice?**

**The birth of "New music" out of the ruins of Post-World-War-II-Germany,  
in a city called Darmstadt.**

"Contemporary classical music sounds nothing but awful".

At the beginning of my Cairo lecture I tried to refute this common prejudice by playing a section from

1

Toshio Hosokawa: In die Tiefe der Zeit (Into the depth of time) in a version for violoncello and  
accordion (1994). played by Julius Berger, Violoncello and Stefan Hussong, Accordeon from the  
WERGO-CD WER 6617-2 Track 1<sup>1</sup>.

I asked the listeners to note that it

- is no "easy-listening"
- needs full attention
- sharpens the ears

and promised to make clear in my lecture, why it is like this and what that is good for.

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<sup>1</sup> I asked at Schott Music for the right to insert an mp3 here. They said there would be some copyright difficulties I could avoid by giving you the link to another interpretation on youtube. Here it is:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6NaL89NUjY>.

## What the \*\*\* is Darmstadt?

Is anybody here who has been to Darmstadt yet?

There is hardly any reason to go there. Except you are an engineer, a space scientist - or concerned with New Music.

Every second year in Darmstadt the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik - International Summer Courses for New Music - take place.

They were started in 1946, one year after the end of World War II and I am always impressed anew by the circumstances.

Before the war Darmstadt was a tiny city with a flourishing cultural life<sup>2</sup>.

Some of you might have heard of the “Jugendstil”, also called “art nouveau”. In Darmstadt a settlement of Jugendstil-artists was founded by grand duke Ernst Ludwig in 1901<sup>3</sup>. The artists were allowed to design the whole settlement according to their own ideas. This is the famous “Hochzeitsturm” (Wedding Tower), landmark of this colony. It was commissioned by the city of Darmstadt to architect Joseph Maria Olbrich to remember grand duke Ernst Ludwig’s wedding.

2



<sup>2</sup> Darmstadt had been the residence of a grand duke and the capitol of a German county of Hassia. (Germany consists of several counties comparable to the governorates in Egypt).

<sup>3</sup> Elke Gerberding: Darmstädter Kulturpolitik der Nachkriegszeit In: Von Kranichstein ... S. 29-35; p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.darmstadt.de/darmstadt-erleben/sehenswuerdigkeiten/index.htm>.

Here are some more pictures:  
The White Tower, a relic from  
the Middle Ages and below two  
pictures of the Market Place.



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<sup>5</sup> Pictures included with kind allowance of "Stadtarchiv Darmstadt".

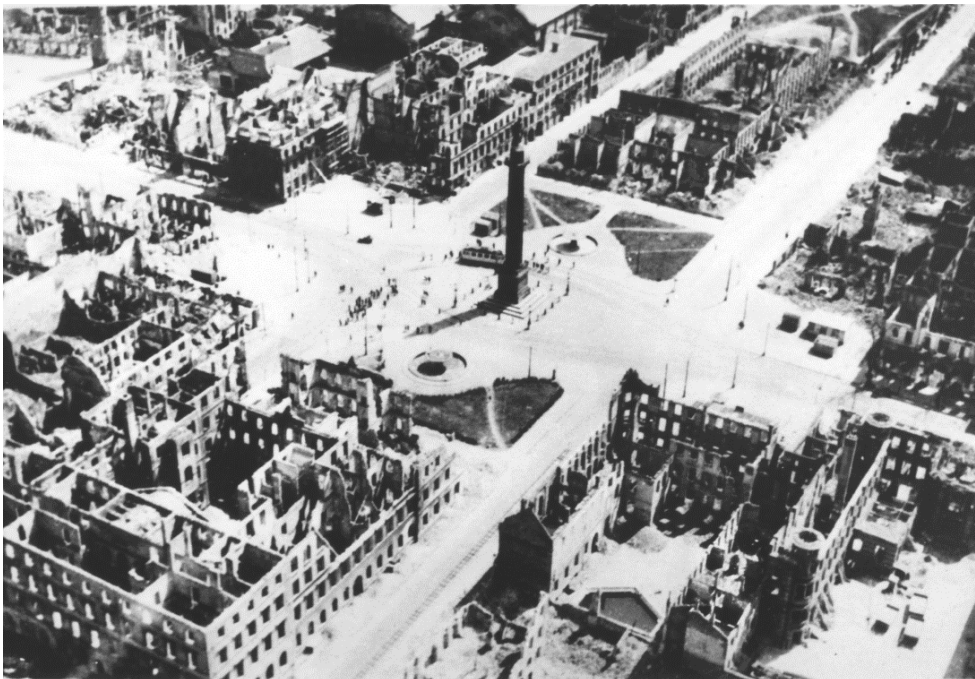
This is the most representative place in Darmstadt, please note the title down in the left corner – “Adolf-Hitler-Platz”.



When Hitler started the war, Darmstadt had a little more than hundred thousand inhabitants, a long-established pharmaceutical plant, a technical university, where they did some research in atomic weapons and not many, but some armament factories.

It may astonish, that these last two factors were not the reason for an air attack of the Royal Force in the night from 11th to 12th of September 1944. The attack was called a “moral bombing”, targeting no industry, but human dwellings. It was an experiment to prove a new idea in bombing: more than 200 Lancaster-Bombers flew over the city, throwing their bombs systematically. After that, Darmstadt looked like this.

4



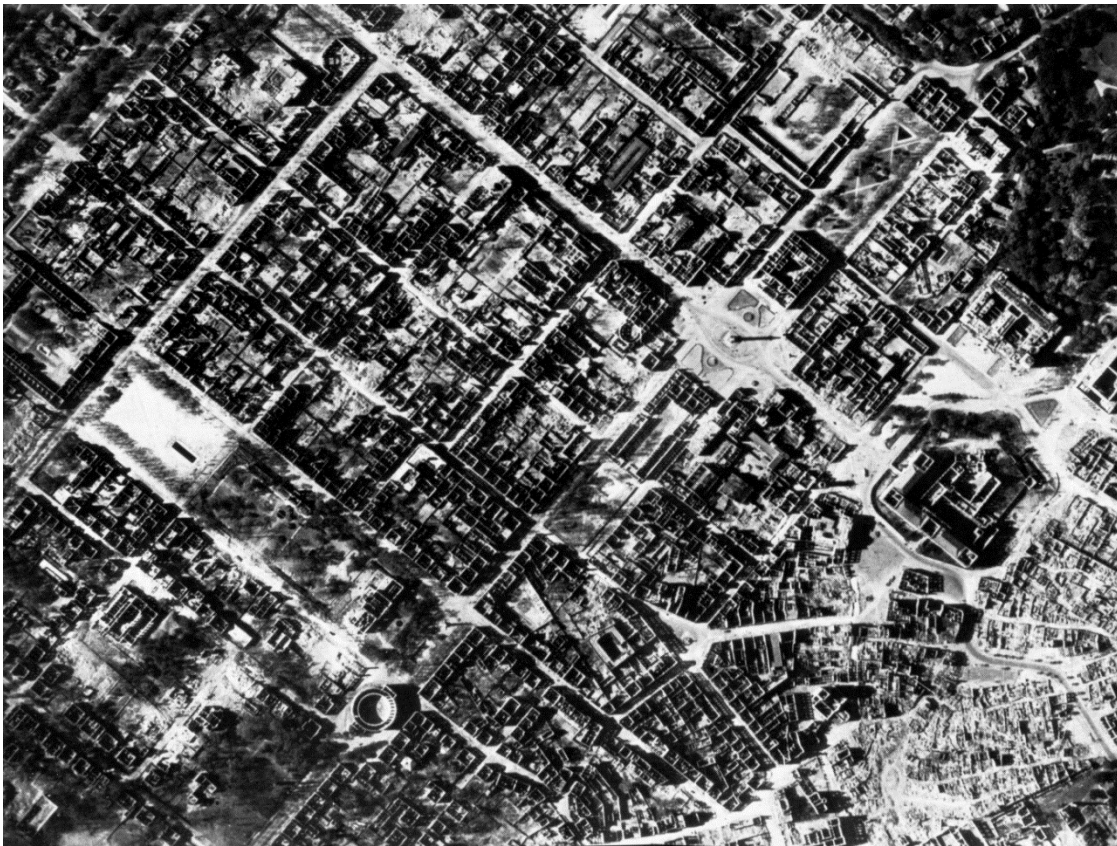
<sup>6</sup> Picture included with kind allowance of “Stadtarchiv Darmstadt”.

<sup>7</sup> Picture included with kind allowance of “Stadtarchiv Darmstadt”.





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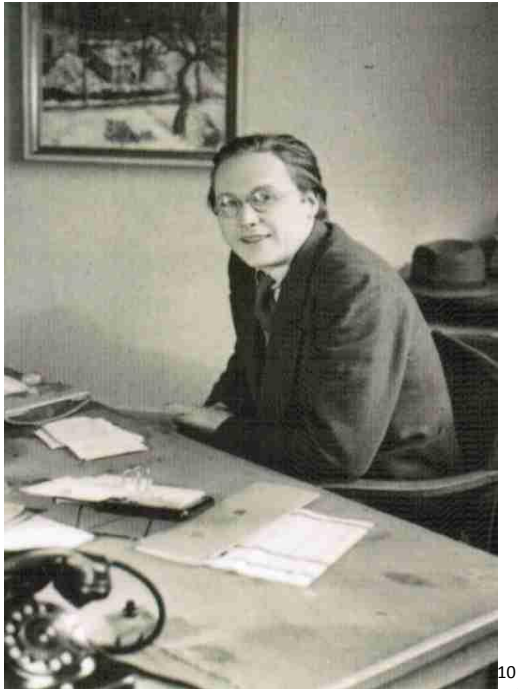
<sup>8</sup> Picture included with kind allowance of "Stadtarchiv Darmstadt".

<sup>9</sup> Picture included with kind allowance of "Stadtarchiv Darmstadt".

Darmstadt's people - literally spoken - had no roofs over their heads. The surviving inhabitants were penned up in emergency accommodations or with friends and relatives in the suburbs.

The 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 was the official end of World War II. Already in June 1945 that quite young musicologist Wolfgang Steinecke (1910-1961) came knocking on the mayor's door and offered his help in regenerating Darmstadt's cultural life: Steinecke became Darmstadt's cultural advisor.

On his initiative music, literature, theatre and arts were integrated into the concept of rebuilding the city. Due to Darmstadt's traditional affinity to the arts he was able to establish openness to what was new and to overcome the attitude to arts conditioned by Hitler.



6

### Music in Hitler's Germany

Hitler abused music for political propaganda.

Traditional music, both folk and artificial, should create a collective self-confidence of being German among the desperate people. The official news in the radio was decorated with music by Beethoven. Hitler himself loved to attend the "heroic" operas of Richard Wagner at Bayreuth.

Composers had to write a non-complicated music that should easily enter the ears of "simple people". Any kind of art, that seemed to be able to make people think, was forbidden. Critical artists were forced into labour camps to do something Hitler considered to be useful. Some were as lucky as to be able to leave the country.

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<sup>10</sup> "Wolfgang Steinecke in seiner Funktion als Kulturreferent" (1946) from "Bildarchiv des Internationalen Musikinstituts Darmstadt (IMD)". Unknown Photographer. Copied from Judith Achenbach's front cover for "Traditionen ...". Included with kind allowance from the IMD.

Children and young people were organized in groups that prepared them to their roles in Hitler's empire. Boys and young men were formed to become brave soldiers; girls and young women were shaped to be modest, strenuous and fertile. All had to sing a lot of folksongs to keep the group together. Most of them liked that because of the good mood it created<sup>11</sup>. And so they were grasped by Hitler's system.

### Steinecke's view on Culture's Task

Steinecke was convinced that people needed both a roof over their head and in their head a lot of ideas how to create a free future<sup>12</sup>.

I am always impressed anew by this:

There was a lot to do to build them new housings. But people preferred to work on their inner ruins first. Here is a text Steinecke wrote<sup>13</sup>:

„Die Not läßt nur das Notwendige gelten. Zum Notwendigen (Notwendenden) gehört Kultur. Sie kann, sie muss Schrittmacherin des Wiederaufbaus sein. Ohne ihre anspornende, zielweisende Kraft könnte das Chaos nicht überwunden werden. Im Geistigen muß sie das Bild einer neuen Ordnung vorformen, das sich in der vom Mangel aller Art bedrohten Wirklichkeit nur langsam und mit naturgegebenen Hemmungen nachformen läßt.“

So ist es zu verstehen, wenn eine Stadt, deren  
äußeres Gesicht durch den Krieg bis zur  
Unkenntlichkeit zerstört ist, mit Leidenschaft  
ihr inneres Gesicht im Bereich des Kulturellen  
auszuprägen sucht“.

A situation of need, distress, and hardship only permits, what is really necessary. Culture is really necessary. Culture can and must be the pacemaker of reconstruction. It formulates the goals to overcome chaos. The draft on how reality should be formed has first to be formulated in the minds, to give the direction in which new orders should be established. ¶

That is, how it must be understood, if a town, whose outer face is distorted by war, with passion tries to form its cultural inner face.

<sup>11</sup> Derived from talks to people that experienced that.

<sup>12</sup> „Ein Dach über dem Kopf und eine frei zu gestaltende Zukunft im Kopf – damit begann der Wiederaufbau.“ Peter Benz als Darmstadts derzeitiger Oberbürgermeister, in: Von Kranichstein zur Gegenwart. 1946-96 - 50 Jahre Darmstädter Ferienkurse. [Stuttgart 1996], p. 9.

13 Wolfgang Steinecke, *Ein Jahr kulturellen Wiederaufbaus im Darmstädter Kunst- und Musikleben*, In *Kunststadt Darmstadt. Kultureller Wiederaufbau 1946. Darmstadt 1947*. Quoted from: Elke Gerberding: *Darmstädter Kulturpolitik der Nachkriegszeit* In: *Von Kranichstein ...* S. 29-35; p. 30.

After twelve years of dictatorship people were thirsty to new art.

They wanted to know, what had been going on beyond Germany's borders and wanted a new art, opposite to the oversimplification of Nazi times. That is why Steinecke succeeded.

## Summer Courses

As early as in summer 1946 Wolfgang Steinecke organized the first "Ferienkurse für Internationale Neue Musik", summer courses for International New Music, in a nearby hunting lodge, Schloss Kranichstein.

The special thing about them was that they offered not only the opportunity of listening to concerts<sup>14</sup>: As a musicologist Steinecke knew very well, that just by listening many phenomena of music stay unbinding: You understand it or you don't and shut your mind.

If you really want to experience it, you have to make music yourself. If you want to understand contemporary music, you actively should get involved in it.

On the other hand this broadened the gap between specialists in New Music on the one hand and amateurs on the other that until today were never sparing polemics.

Despite of the difficult transport situation – the railways were bombed and hardly anybody had a car then – people came from all over Germany. Already in the following year participants came also from other European countries<sup>15</sup>. Among them was Maurits Frank (1892-1959) from the Netherlands. As a student of Pao Casals he was a very influential cellist and teacher. Before Hitler, he had worked in Heidelberg. During the Nazi-Times he, for racist reasons, had to leave Germany. His coming was of great value, because he helped to knit the threads to the music before Hitler and to what happened, while Germany's arts were dumped under misuse or over-simplification<sup>16</sup>.

In the following years, internationality increased.

In 1948 Schoenberg was invited, but he already was already too ill to come from California. Therefore came his intercessor René Leibowitz from Paris and established the serial technique of composition. "The Darmstadt school" is commonly associated with a way of composing that widens the principles Schoenberg formulated concerning the twelve-tone-row to all parameters of music, including duration (creating rhythms), dynamics and overtone-structure (creating the colours of sounds).

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<sup>14</sup> C.f. Wolfgang Steinecke im Programmheft zu den Ersten „Ferienkursen für internationale neue Musik“, cited by Rudolf Stephan in: Von Kranichstein ... p. 21f.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Stephan, Kranichstein. Vom Anfang und über einige Voraussetzungen. In: Von Kranichstein... p. 21-26;

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Steinecke, Ein Gedenkwort zum Geleit. In: Q: Darmstädter Beiträge zur neuen Musik. Hg. von Wolfgang Steinecke. Mainz 1959, S. 5f.

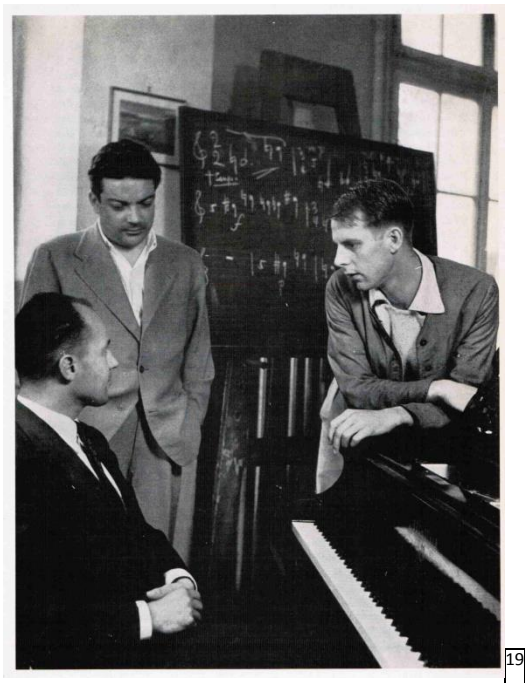


In my opinion this method encouraged too many unmusical people starting to compose at their desk, forgetting, what Schoenberg said about his method: it adds restrictions to the way of composing. Thus it makes composing more difficult. You need to be an even better composer to cope with these difficulties<sup>17</sup>.

Serial composing needs a very cunning composer. But it also needs interpreters that are able to create something worth hearing. As an example for a convincing interpretation of a profound composition please shortly listen to a short excerpt from *kontra-punkte* by Karlheinz Stockhausen (1952-53):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnr9GWVlhX8><sup>18</sup>.

Stockhausen is the right one in this picture, together with Pierre Boulez (sitting) and Bruno Maderna.



I think<sup>20</sup> that serialism in composition was widely welcomed as an antithesis to romantic idolising of emotions: All over the world German classical and romantic music is adored because of the emotions it provokes. But in Germany there was the experience that emotions could be misused for political reasons – and others as well, as I want to show later on.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Arnold Schönberg, *Komposition mit zwölf Tönen*. Abgedruckt in: Arnold Schönberg, *Stil und Gedanke, Nördlingen usw.* 1976, p. 72-96; p. 79: „Die Einführung meiner Methode, mit zwölf Tönen zu komponieren, erleichtert das Komponieren nicht; im Gegenteil: sie erschwert es. ... Die Einschränkungen, die der Zwang, nur eine Reihe in einer Komposition zu verwenden, dem Komponisten auferlegt, sind so streng, daß sie nur von einer Phantasie, die eine Vielzahl von Abenteuern bestanden hat, überwunden werden können“.

<sup>18</sup> During the lecture the version of ensemble recherche was played from CD WER 6717 2, Track 1, but there were Copyright problems.

<sup>19</sup> Photo 1956 by Hans Kenner. Copyright by Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt.

<sup>20</sup> That is not my private opinion, but a view I deduced from many thoughts I have heard and read about over centuries. I could find some quotations to satisfy scientific form, but only, if you are really interested in that.

## The founding of IMD Archive and Library

1946 was the beginning of an international gathering of contacts and knowledge about New Music from many countries in the whole world.

I noticed that Pro Helvetia Foundation is present in Cairo as well and does a lot of good things.

Pro Helvetia also gave the first impulse for founding the archive of Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (IMD) by a donation of scores. That was the beginning of a promising library in all concerns of New Music<sup>21</sup>.

I am often calling the International Music Institute in Darmstadt (IMD) if I want to have a look into a score of a piece of music I have to write about.

From Ligeti or Penderecki or Nono – the IMD has nearly everything. When I started to prepare this lecture they sent me a parcel with books. This is its residence:



22

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Trudu, Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Internationalen Musikinstituts Darmstadt. In: Von Kranichstein... S. 11-15; S. 11f.

<sup>22</sup> Photo 1984 by Roland Koch. Copyright by Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt.

Some of the early Darmstadt composers just wanted to make music. But some others could not forget how they suffered in Nazi times. They asked themselves, what went wrong, and what could be done to prevent such a phenomenon of incitement of the people in the future.

Among them we Luigi Nono with “Il canto sospeso” (1955–56) or Hans Werner Henze with „In memoriam: Die Weiße Rose” (1965), that was performed here in Cairo by Sherif El Razzaz and his fellows during the reign of the Muslim-Brothers.

In the late 1960s there was a broad student’s movement with a focus in nearby Frankfurt (Main): Students angrily pointed out, how much of Nazi-thought still ruled universities and public life, many Darmstadt composers aimed to make their music a part of critical conscience.

In collaboration with some hard-core-philosophers around Theodor W. Adorno, they spoke of “critical composing” as of a custom of composing, that reflects its own political relevance.

One of the greatest composers with this attitude is Helmut Lachenmann.

But even he, after long discussions came to the conclusion that music alone was not able to create better people. All what music could do for its listeners is to make them more sensible and thus more critical and more alert to manipulation<sup>23</sup>.

For this purpose, please listen to “Foxfire Eins, Natriumpentotal” (1993) a piece by Helmut Oehring and Iris ter Schiphorst, criticising lethal injections:

<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bX_r02tGwsg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bX_r02tGwsg</a> <sup>24</sup> .
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## Shortly back to Toshio Hosokawa

I started this talk with a section from “In die Tiefe der Zeit” by Toshio Hosokawa.

Hosokawa, born in 1955 participated for the first time in the Darmstädter Ferienkurse in 1980, where some of his compositions were performed. From 1990, he was a regular guest of the festival as a tutor<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Gespräch mit Peter Ruzicka, ca. 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Originally I used the CD version of Ictus Ensemble, CYP5602. 10’33” to end - Total 13’07”.

Whenever Hosokawa starts composing he asks himself: “You, are you really singing from your own roots?” Composing, he says, for him is hearing the sound from a deep level of which even he himself is unconscious. He is on a path to discover himself<sup>26</sup>.

But Hosokawa's music is not just navel-gazing. It is also criticism to what is going on.

He was born in Hiroshima, where the first atom bomb came down.

But he once he told, that, when he was a child, there had been many beautiful places around his home town, where nowadays he finds a desert of concrete and steel.

So, in his perception, much more destruction was done by industrialisation than by the atom bomb. Here you can find an excerpt from his “Voiceless Voice in Hiroshima”:

<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7H4V2ReFYM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7H4V2ReFYM</a>
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In Egypt you may think progress and industrialisation to be good things. In the industrial countries many critical people, like Hosokawa, are more concerned on industrially caused environmental destruction<sup>27</sup>, striving for limiting consumption to a really necessary amount.

12

## Music and Progress

When I was preparing this lecture I read in the program,

That “Music Talks” should promote “the general and essential knowledge of music development which comes from a strong belief in the importance of understanding the progress in the field which has led the technologies to be part of it and of the creations of most of the sound artists and electronic music composers”<sup>28</sup>.

In my opinion, technical progress is often over-estimated<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://en.schott-music.com/shop/autoren/toshio-hosokawa>, 25.4.2017.

<sup>26</sup> Rolf W. Stoll, Booklet text WER 6617-2.

<sup>27</sup> A book working as a signal was “The Limits to Growth” by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers and William W. Behrens III, commissioned by the Club of Rome in 1972.

<sup>28</sup> Program Cairo Contemporary Music Days, Carte Blanche

<sup>29</sup> Using electronical devices like Computers or Mobiles I think we should be aware of the harm their production does to our home planet, from the mines in Congo, where even children are forced to dig for Coltan to the immense waste of energy. Keeping this in mind I think we should ask ourselves, whether we really need electronics in serious music.

What I think to be the most important thing for getting on with each other in this Global Village called Earth is a critical open-mindedness.

Listening to New Music helps to train it:

When we listen to a piece of New Music, we maybe first can't make sense from what we hear. But, if we really listen, keeping our minds open, more and more we feel that it makes sense, even if we cannot say which one.

For me it often is important to look at its interpreters.

They are highly qualified. They had been studying for a long time with excellent teachers. They are working very hard for the tones they make. They have to keep their body in shape to be able to do so. They are dedicating their lives to make that.

For me such kind of musicians is religious in a very radical sense of dedication to a higher goal than drawing personal advantage.

This kind of religiosity would not differ between Muslims, Christians or Jews, or anything else.

According to 19-century German philosophers music could give deeper insight into truth than any concepts of thinking<sup>30</sup>.

To experience this, I would like you to listen to a piece by Olivier Messiaen for clarinet solo, to the third movement, *Abîme des oiseaux*<sup>31</sup>, Abyss of the birds, of his *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, written, when Messiaen was a prisoner-of-war in Görlitz, Germany. I mean this also as a reverence to Sherif, who invited me here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNcp2vI2MbQ>

13

### A task for New Music

The big "N" in New Music, indicating the recurrence to Schoenberg and his pupils Anton von Webern and Alban Berg, is not so much a technical one.

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<sup>30</sup> When I studied philosophy I often thought the same as when I studied music: I found being taught just unessential, marginal things, compared to what music was able to "say".

<sup>31</sup> During the lecture I played the interpretation of Eduard Brunner (TELDEC 9031-73239-2, Track 3).





32

Schoenberg was a very moralistic person. If you want to read something on what ran (and still runs) right or wrong in the world and what arts can do for people's benefit, you should read the preface to his *Harmonielehre* and consider his thoughts about seeking and finding, or his critical view on modern conveniences.

In Germany it is commonly differed between two categories, music for entertainment and serious music.

I suggest differing between music that wants to weaken my conscience (also some quality music does) and music that wants to sharpen it, to make me more aware for everything that is going on.

14

Feel invited to listen to "Aus der Ferne" III, From the distant, by György Kurtág (1991), played by Keller Quartett. ECM 1598 - with kind allowance by ECM Records: <http://www.sokratia.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/5-György-Kurtág-Aus-der-Ferne-III-Streichquartett.mp4>

## Music as a drug

Music should be regarded as a drug.

Most "normal" people use it to get awake in the morning, to keep alert when driving a car over long distances, to calm down in the evening, to get into a better mood when they have to do something they don't really like to do.

<sup>32</sup> Picture taken from <http://www.staatstheater-wiesbaden.de/programm/spielplan/2015-05/pierrot-imf-2017/3232/>. For famous photo of Arnold Schönberg 1927 by Man Ray (1890–1976) see <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/50164>

When your life gets difficult, music can help to bear it.

Consuming music makes people forget about their doubts. It keeps people away from thinking, whether they spend their lifetime at the right place, with the right people, in a responsible manner.

In the worst case music wants to bemuse me in order to push me into a direction I would not have chosen voluntarily by choice, for instance in advertisement or in a shop, where music leads me to by something I don't need. Or during an election, where it wants me to elect a candidate decorated with the aura of a special music.

Of course New Music is a mirror of our time. Thus many composers don't write the music they have to write from an urgent inner need<sup>33</sup>, but rather a music that sells, or that is liked by jurors deciding on scholarships<sup>34</sup>.

But I am convinced that making or listening to New Music can help to make people more sensitive and more critical and more alert to any kind of manipulation.

For that purpose music may not be simple. And it cannot be just nice.

Thank you for listening!

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<sup>33</sup> Cf.: „Ich glaube: Kunst kommt nicht von können, sondern vom Müssen“. Arnold Schönberg: Probleme des Kunstunterrichts (1910). Abgedruckt in Ders., Stil und Gedanke, Nördlingen 1976, S. 165-168; S. 165. – Schoenberg is converting a German proverb, „Kunst kommt von Können“, art comes from cunning, to „Art comes from must“.

<sup>34</sup> Thank you to Bahaa El Ansary, honestly telling me his impressions from his visit to Darmstädter Ferienkurse in 2012.

## Literature

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