

Leon Stefanija

Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani
Philosophical Faculty, University of Ljubljana

Convolutions of musical meaning – a sociopsychological note on listening to music

Zapletenost glasbenega pomena – sociopsihološki zapis k poslušanju glasbe

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IZVLEČEK

ABSTRACT

Namen prispevka je začrtati povezave med skladateljevim in poslušalčevim razumevanjem pomenskega potenciala glasbe. Natančneje: ali obe gledišči povezuje enak mehanizem? Odgovor na to vprašanje je podano po prerezu 1) raziskovalnih perspektiv, ki se ukvarjajo z ravnmi, ki razkrivajo pomenskost glasbe, 2) muzikoloških opredelitev glasbenega pomena in 3) analize treh primerov slovenske sodobne glasbe. Prispevek je predvsem poziv k upoštevanju naravoslovnih in družboslovnih gledišč kot dveh plateg raziskovalnega procesa istega pojava.

The main aim of this paper is to indicate the relations between the composer's and the listener's level of understanding music. More specifically: do both levels have a common mechanism? An answer to this question is offered after surveying 1) scholarly perspectives dealing with the levels through which music affords meanings, 2) musicological elaborations of musical meaning, and 3) the analysis of three cases from contemporary Slovenian music. The text is directed toward a plea for considering a mutually »compatible« vocabulary of music research.

The Aim

Ludwig Haesler, in a brief text on music and psychoanalysis, pointed out that psychoanalysis seems fruitful in regard to music on four levels (Haesler 2002: 395-7): 1)

the composer and his personality, 2) 'the musical text' as a context of 'latent or explicit account' [Strukturbedeutung] in which a listener gains meaning out of music, 3) specific 'psychic conditions of the performer' and 3a) performer's 'deep understanding of the elemental structure' [Tiefenstruktur] and the 'psychic dynamics' of a musical piece as well as 4) the 'musical experience' [Musikerleben] of the listener. Haesler's 'Schichtenlehre' presupposes interrelated issues within which music 'affords' meaning to different subjects – of course, with specific differences and extent, since each of the four indicated levels deserves to be seen as a relatively autonomous focus of research.

The main aim of this paper is to indicate the relations between the composer's and the listener's level of understanding music. More specifically: do both levels have a common mechanism? An answer to this question is offered after surveying 1) scholarly perspectives dealing with the levels through which music affords meanings, 2) musicological elaborations of musical meaning, and 3) the analysis of three cases from contemporary Slovenian music. The levers of defining musical meaning point to certain psychoanalytical issues that seem worthy of interest in this volume on music and psychoanalysis.

Perspectives on musical meaning: functions of music

Music research has gained a stimulating study of the ways in which music's meaning is constructed with Eric F. Clarke's book *Ways of Listening – An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*. The author begins his survey of the ties between different modes of understanding musical meaning with a rather realistic imagined example of a person tidying up his desk and trying to 'decipher' an unlabeled CD he finds among the papers. And his whole concept of an *ecological approach* to the levelling of musical semanticity 'should be no more than a part of a larger project on the *enactment* of musical meaning' (Clarke 2005: 205). Recognizing that there are no doubts about 'a truism that different people perceive notionally the same event in different ways,' but there are difficulties in grounding more specifically the fact that 'these individual differences are the specific manifestations of the same general principles of perception' (Clarke 2005: 194), I tried to collate the epistemological differences in the recent research of music's functions, much as, for instance, Radocy and Boyle have done (2003:10-19, 32-3):

The variety of categories with which music's functions have been studied clearly could be enriched even further according to specific genres of music (as, for instance, film music), to certain habitual variables (as in North, Hargreaves, Hargreaves 2004), to some conceptual issues (for instance DeNora 2000), to geographical or societal contexts (as it is usually the case in ethno/musicology) etc. Nevertheless, further differentiation would not change the strategies of generating a rather basic set of concepts that point to further domains of contextual variables (as indicated, for instance, in Bersch-Burauel 2004: 36 ff, esp. 197-221, or Behne 1986). However, a short comparison of Merriam's and Hargreaves and North's functions could serve as an illustration of these strategies. Merriam's functions of music indicate a holistic view lacking epistemological unity:

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Neril 2001: 468	use in rituals and addressing supernatural	transforming experiences (David McAllester), changes individual's consciousness or ambience of a gathering.	marking importance of events	Association with dance						
Hargreaves & North 1999	management of self-identity	interpersonal relations	mood							
Lehman 1996	ease / relax	associate / dream	escapist stimulus	identity determining stimulus	sentimentality arousing stimulus	emotion / mood stimulation	arousing senses	background stimulus	consoling/ compensating stimulus	
Middleton 1990: 253	Communicative values	Ritual values	Technical values	Erotic values	Political values					
Kaplan 1990: 18 ff	a form of knowledge	collective possession	personal experience	therapy	moral and symbolic force	incidental commodity	symbolic indicator of change	link among past, present, and scenarios of the future		
Frith 1987: 140-44	helps to create a type of self- definition, a particular place in society	provides a way of managing the relationships between one's private and public emotional lives	helps to shape memory, organize one's sense of time, and intensify experiences	provides a sense of musical ownership						
Karbusický 1986 (borrowing from Paul F. Lazarsfeld's and Robert K. Merton's Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action [1948/60] * Alfons Auer's Ethos der Freizeit [1972])	regenerate	emancipate	compensate	4* status conferral function	5* narcotizing dysfunction	6* reinforcement function				
Behne 1986	motorical listening	compensational listening	vegetative listening	diffusive listening	emotional listening	sentimental listening	associative listening	distanced listening		
Gaston 1968: 21ff	a need for aesthetic expression and experience	determinants of the cultural matrix on the mode of expression	integrational relationship between music and religion	music as communication	music as structured reality	music's relationship to the tender emotions	a source of gratification	potency of music (in a group)		
Merriam 1964:2227	emotional expression	aesthetic enjoyment	entertainment	communication	symbolic representation	physical response	enforcement of conformity to social norms	validation of social institutions and religious rituals	contributes to the continuity and stability of culture	contributes to the integration of society

functions number 1, 2 and 6 are psycho- and physiological in nature, pertaining to different personal human faculties; functions 4, 5 and 7-10 address societal issues, whereas function 3, as Merriam also notes, can be understood either as 'pure' entertainment or as entertainment 'combined with other functions' (Merriam 1980: 223.). Functions indicated by Hargreaves and North offer a much subtler view if compared to Merriam's: they indicate quite clearly a division of music's effect as 'either psychological, physiological, or behavioral' arousal (McMullen 1996, quoted from Radocy and Boyle 2003: 41). They offer a frame for numerous intra- as well as interpersonal (communicative, social, cultural) functions emerging out of the two most commonly accepted psychological effects music can achieve: it can have either 'stimulating, invigouring' or 'soothing, sedating' effect (Radocy and Boyle 2003: 41). And considering Merriam's division of functions through Hargreaves and North's psychosociological eyes, the universalistic slant of his set of functions becomes the more elusive the harder one tries to exemplify them: are Merriam's functions 7-10 (enforcing, validating, stabilizing, integrating) not simply different points of view of elementary social relations emerging from 'interpersonal relations' (Hargreaves & North's function No. 2)? If so, then all functions of music, as indicated by Merriam in his last itemized function ('the function of the contribution to the continuity and stability of culture'), are anchored in a rather basic process of *forming, creating, establishing, etc., hierarchies of socialization through music*. And they do include personal (psychological, biological, physiological) as well as interpersonal (social, political, but also economical as well as a plethora of pragmatical) determinants. However, if one tries to find cohesive bonds between them and the other more explicitly personal functions of music (as Merriam's functions 1 and 2, or 1, 5 and 6 in Gaston's set, the first three functions of Karbusicky, etc.), the process of forming hierarchies of socialization through music becomes primarily an epistemological issue, not so much a phenomenological one as the piled up sets of functions above might suggest.

And as a concept of knowledge, not only as a field of scientification of one's own personal set of preferences for – and biases towards – certain musical styles and genres (or any other forms of musical activity), functions of music are a trajectory, or a cross-section, of phenomena consisting of two mutually connected *sets of complexities*: of 'musical complexity' (Parry 2004) as a bio-physiological stimulus and hermeneutically understood 'complexity in music' (R. Toop) that stimulates different epistemological framings. Both views can be traced not only in the current debates involving postmodernity or popular culture, they also have a long history of epistemological oppositions, mediating between facts of *nature* and variables of *nurture* that have been granting musicology a rather complex tradition of connections, leveling different functions of music with regard to a series of basic oppositions, such as 'outer' and 'inner' levels of musical structure (18th century treatises, as summed up in H. Ch. Koch *Anleitung zur Komposition*, 1787-1793); *form* and *expression* (as in the 19th-century aesthetics); *absolute (formalist)* and *referential (expressionist)* approaches to explaining music (Meyer 1956); *aesthetic* and epistemological understanding of music [ästhetisches / erkennendes Verstehen] (Eggebrecht 1995); musical and musicological listening (Cook 1992: 152ff); *musical* and *everyday listening* (Gaver 1993); cognitive and connotative

understanding (Hübner 1994: 26-38); listening as a fantasy thing and listening as fantasy space (Schwarz 1997: 3 ff); *body-mind* opposition (as, for instance, in Lidov 2005: 145-164); even between *ethic* and *emic* issues, where 'the ethic point of view is that of the researcher who is outside of the culture; [while] the emic point of view corresponds to the cognitive categories [...] of the local inhabitants' (Nattiez 2004: 13 [after Kenneth Pike]). All the mentioned oppositions, however, are but the opposite poles of 'our continuing wavering between two modes of listening' (Bujčić 1997: 22) to music – to 'two levels of musical understanding': of listening to music as to a physical structure on the one hand and, on the other, of listening to 'telling details' and 'assigning value' to them (Bujčić 1997: 19).

The research into music's functions, as may be seen from the above list indicating the single disciplinary perspectives, seems to be a kind of 'march of names' – a process of transgressing cognitive, social and axiological levels through different identification categories. They seem to indicate relations between 'negotiation of meaning' about music and the 'levels of signification', between 'primary' and 'secondary signification' (Shepherd and Wicke 1997: 14, 203, 103 ff), between *syntactic* and *semantic* pregnancy of the musical flow (Middleton 1990: 176 ff), stirring up different *functions* that music may have as a stimulus for either 'visceral responses' (Cook 2000: 79) or/and 'cultural deeds'. Namely, refined questions regarding music's functions, such as, for instance, posed by Simon Frith – "how folk [music] 'consolation' differs from pop 'escapism'" (Frith 2006: 161) – are interesting at the same time as issues that provoke reflections about 'a more mutable, pliable construction of [music's] autonomy, adapted to our relativized, post-modern frame, oblivious neither to other determinants of musical experience [...] nor to the social medium in which it operates' (Clarke 2003: 170) as well as for neuroscience and psychology (not only) of music (cf., for instance, Levitin 2006 and Huron 2006). On the face of it, the question of music's function seems to address a set of empirical particularities as a counterpart of certain universals impinged on music by the human faculties – contingencies of 'flesh' attached to a much more evasive, yet crucial 'skeleton' within which the very notion of music's myriad functions makes certain sense as 'cultural material' (DeNora 2000: 151) as well as an issue regarding its biological function that unfolds beneath the rituals of life (Levitin 2006: 241-61). In short: musical practices have more pragmatic cultural as well as elemental biological relevance for human beings as a 'tool for arousing feelings and emotions' (Levitin 2006: 261).

Specific or universal meaning: on musical universals

In spite of worthy holistic scientific ideals, mediating between the particularities and addressing music's functions as 'hard' as well as 'soft' science phenomena seems to be too extensive a task for the time being. Although there is a large amount of evidence for certain aspects of music's function, only several outlines of *integrative thinking* (Engel 2006: 226) in music research have been winning wider acknowledgement in claiming consistency for connecting the nature/nurture opposition: David Huron's *The 1999*

Ernest Bloch Lectures *Music and Mind: Foundations of Cognitive Musicology*, Daniel J. Levitin's *This is your brain in music* (2006), or Ian Cross's views (Cross 1998 et passim) should be set among them in first place.

If empirically gathered data, *particularities*, pointing to differences in music's functions, are to be integrated into inclusive theory, one should consider *universals* to be the one of the key categories that need be defined (the authors in Marieanu 1999 offered a valuable basis for this). Although music universals have long since belonged to musicological topoi centered in the common saying that 'music is universal language' (Brandl and Rösing 2002: 58) and have been repeatedly attracting scholarly interest (Bruhn 2002: 447-8), the debate over music universals seems to be 'abgelöst durch Erforschung von kulturspezifischen autonomen Musikgeschichten' (Brandl and Rösing 2002: 58). Nevertheless, interest in music as universal human competence (Cross 2001) seems to be, again, a rather alluring issue in current music research, offering itself not only as a counterpart to studying music's cultural and phenomenal diversities, but as inevitable scholarly positions that in the first place enable comparative views of the fragmented, particularized, specialized views to be compared at all.

To address the thorny question of universals, the following, deliberately hasty claim could be offered: to define the scope of the topic theory, one should define the points of traversing – the common features as well as differences – between the formalistic and hermeneutic categories – between the concepts, for instance, of 'auditory stream' (Albert Bregman) or 'auditory object' (James Wright), 'segment' (mainly in set theory analysis), 'formal' or 'structural' unit (classical theory of musical forms), 'topic,' 'gesture,' 'salient,' or 'marked structure/entity/feature,' 'trope' (semiotics of music), 'term' (D. Cook), 'figure' (universal notion used in different contexts from baroque theory of affection onward) etc.

The wonderful work done by semioticians (as Robert S. Hatten, Reymond Monelle, Eero Tarasti, among others), psychologists (such as by David Huron, Klaus-Ernst Behne, Daniel Levitin), and other scholars of wide perspective (as, for instance, Christian Kaden or Bruno Nettle) have brought about epistemological alertness to similar claims. One need only think of Tarasti's idea of two epistemic groups of semiotic interpretations to find various semantic levels – he distinguishes between a 'philosophical 'style' rather than a systematic classification' and a systematic classification founded on the belief 'that all signs exist only on the basis of an order which is there before the scholar starts his/her work'¹.

¹ Tarasti 1997: 188-189. 'I have classified all the musical semiotic theories – in the epistemic sense – into two groups, the first of which starts with rules and grammars belonging to all music, emphasizing music's surface, which supposes that before the rules set by a theoretician there is just nothing – and consequently when the rules stop their functioning there remains nothing. This type of semiotics, as a philosophical 'style' rather than a systematic classification, I would call as 'classical' semiotics. [...] The other trend is to think that all signs exist only on the basis of an order which is there before the scholar starts his/her work and which remains there when he/she has finished. This semiotic philosophy approaches the meaning (1) as a process, i.e. supposing that signs cannot be defined without taking into account the time, place and subject (actor), (2) as something immanent, i.e. believing like Mead and Merleau-Ponty primarily that meaning is produced within a given system, body, organism, in the first place without any meaning coming from outside as a *deus ex machina* (like in the 'redemption' at the end of Chausson's piece, the reconciling themes do not stem from outside but are generated from the materials within the piece); (3) by giving emphasis to the content, the signified, which however, can be something non-verbal, 'ineffable', expressible only in terms of a quasi-corporeal experience.'

It is this distinction between epistemologically systematic versus more contingent description – thin vs. thick description, to use Clifford Geertz's terms – that alerts one to compare different categorical theories. For instance, it seems that not only musicology, but also interdisciplinary music research would benefit from a comparison between the concept of *gesture*, as it has been discussed by different semioticians of music (cf., for instance, Hatten 2004, Hatten 2005 and Middleton 1993 or 2003), with the theoretical notion of *Formgehalt* ('formal content') proposed by Albrecht von Massow (Massow 1998) and, further on with the concept of *universals* in music, as it has been (apart from the ethnomusicological and sociological field) recently nourished primarily by cognitive psychology and, to some extent, also in music theory. To offer briefly a rationale of this suggestion, one might recall that the responses to Massow's Greimasian neologism, *Formgehalt* (Floros 1999, Jiraneck 1999, H. de la Motte 1999, Schwab-Felisch 1999) give an idea of how difficult it is to resolve the age-old antinomy between form (structure) and content (expression, 'meaning') in music by equalizing the two while being unable to accept the dichotomy without many reservations, whereas the concept of universals reveals a similarly telling controversial status among scholars. To indicate this, I shall mention only the work done by four scholars (although numerous other valuable studies referring to universals are at hand; cf., for instance: Grabócz 1999, Imberty 2001, Jiránek 1999a, Kon 1999, Mâche 2001, Nattiez 2004, Nettle 1977, Nettle 2001, Trehub 2001). If Bruno Nettle cautiously proposes a concentric view of universals centered in musical structures and extending over to cultural issues (Nettle 1977 and 2001), Vladimir Karbusicky finds persuasive arguments to demonstrate the universal principles of musical form along with their correlating anthropological foundations (Karbusicky 1990, 1991, 1999). Further, Leonard B. Meyer – clearly defining 'syntactic' ('perceptually discrete') and 'statistical' ('relational') 'cognitive universals' of the musical flow – has offered persuasive arguments to regard the concept of universals as having theoretical value in one of the most insightful essays on universals and music where, at the same time, he asserts: '*There are none*. There are only the acoustical universals of the physical world and the bio-psychological universals of the human world.' (Meyer 1998: 6). The fourth scholar I would like to mention is Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Nattiez 2004). He has inspiringly illustrated the importance of Jean Molino's 'universals of strategy' and 'universals of substance' – as categories complementary to those of Meyer.

As different as these concepts of universals and music are, they all share a common epistemological stance. The notion of a musical universal – as Nattiez emphasizes in his account, to a certain degree acceptable for the notion of musical universals in general – implies a plea 'in favor of a well thought-out reconciliation of the universal and the relative, of the innate and the acquired, of nature and culture' (Nattiez 2004: 19). In music theory, this shift toward integration of nature and culture entities in music research is perhaps most concisely formulated in the music topic theory as developed by Hatten. Robert Hatten elegantly encompassed the epistemological range of a musical topic, the key theory in semiotic music analysis since it appeared in Leonard Ratner's *Classical Music. Expression, Form, and Style* (1980). Writing about four levels of interpreting musical meaning, Hatten defines the following semantic fields: 1) *markedness*

as an elemental phenomenon revealing a 'meaningful syntax' in music; 2) *topics* as 'larger style types with stable correlations and flexible interpretative ranges'; 3) *troping* as a process of combining two (or more) topics forming a second-order topic or an 'inherently musical metaphor'; 4) *musical gesture* as an interdisciplinary concept of a 'comprehensive theory' that would allow one 'to capture the more synthetic character of music.' (Hatten 2005: 14-15) Is, then, the concept of music's *universals* a broader parallel to the music-analytical category of *gesture*? Although either a positive or a negative answer would be problematic, it is a fact that they both have a common goal: to grasp the 'self-emancipating sign' in music as well those kinds of meanings that can be derived from it due to its *pregnancy*, without which music would hardly have earned such wide popularity among the public and scholars at the same time.

Yet, the epistemological inconsistencies in music research from different perspectives seem annoying. It seems rather acceptable to deal with the 'affordance of music and the enatment of musical meaning' (E. Clarke) as with Umberto Eco's *The Search for the Perfect Language*: there is no perfect language, but it is nonetheless well worth pursuing. Enactments of meaning to music resemble a historiographic quandary: 'Die Musik - gegen die Musiken' (Kaden 2004: 19). Christian Kaden, whose preferences remain with the 'Konzept der Ganzheit aus Verschiedenen' acknowledging at the same time the pragmatically inevitable stance 'den Plural der Musiken gegen ihre Vereinzahlung in Schutz zu nehmen' (Kaden 2004: 39), voices the concept of etiology over axiology. Of course, one can easily object to such claims by stating that each of both approaches has its individual domain of inquiry and any hierarchy between the two epistemologies is senseless. Moreover, the objection could proceed by claiming: connections between different research paradigms have 'amoebic' disciplinary forms, and disciplines are expanding themselves gradually due to complementary heuristic processes, usually labelled with the prefix *inter*(disciplinarity); thus hierarchies among them are arbitrary, if not absurd. Although I agree with both objections, it seems that it is precisely a lack of hierarchies between different approaches, entailing epistemological complexities that stimulate - in Kaden's and similar appeals for transgressing historical (cultural, social) confines while searching for epistemological unity - the connections between the 'soft' and the 'hard' sciences. (To avoid misunderstanding: it is not the claim for *universal*, but *holistic* knowledge.) The result seems to be *integrative* idea(l)s of knowledge of music (comparable to the one mentioned by Kaden) - an epistemological trajectory consisting of notions, on the one hand, regarding music as a physically tangible phenomenon, conceived of as an aesthetic *thing* or bio- and physiological function, and on the other hand, of music as a social agent, as a vehicle of spiritual and ritual order on the other.

Between pleasure and enjoyment: three answers

In music research, the always surmised and indicated yet never thoroughly elaborated Kantian difference between evaluation of art and judgement of taste (as, for instance, the fifth essay in Dahlhaus 1967) - the first aiming at more objective, consensually

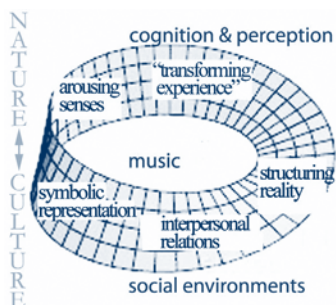
elaborated, somehow ‘historicized’ arguments from within a certain context, whereas the former gives credence to subjective truths, individual, particular stances claiming no wider validity – allows a parallel with the psychoanalytic difference between enjoyment, or better: *jouissance*, and *pleasure*. As Middleton puts it, ‘*Plaisir* results, then, from the operation of the structures of signification through which the subject knows himself or herself; *jouissance* fractures these structures.’ (Middleton 1990: 261) What seems to be a complementary Cartesian split between mind and body fits easily into a *field of relations*, of ‘Bedeutungszusammenhänge zwischen Rezeptionsstrategien und soziokulturellem Kontext’ (Rösing 1994: 76) and flows over a notion of *The Plural Pleasures of Music* (Huron 2005), over the functions of music as agent stimulating different processes in human body and/or mind.

For instance, Rentfrow and Gosling’s four factor-analytically-derived dimensions (‘reflective and complex’, ‘intense and rebellious,’ ‘upbeat and conventional’ and ‘energetic and rhythmic’; Rentfrow and Gosling 2003: 1421) offer a fine model regarding cognitive universals and personality features indicating cultural issues, worth pursuing further along the line of Huron’s view: ‘Like most other music scholars, I believe that culture is the principal factor influencing music. However, our belief in the preeminence of culture does not give us license to dismiss possible biological foundations.’ Since: ‘The point is that there is no pleasure apart from brains, and since brains are the product of natural selection, there is no pleasure outside of the mechanisms provided by natural selection’ (Huron 2005: 5 and 3).

The biological, neurological, cognitive – in short: the ‘physicalistic’ – indices of responses to music seem to offer a detailed account regarding the fact that “music’s ‘powers’ vacillate” (DeNora 2000: 151). If ‘[t]here is little evidence in favour of behaviourist conception of music’s powers in respect to agency’ (DeNora 2000: 160), it seems actually that one should consider two questions regarding music’s function: instead of ‘How and to what purposes people use music?’, one should ask ‘What does music do to people?’ The question has been, of course, already in use in the questionnaires on music preferences, not to mention its historical omnipresence. But even the elementary reflection on empirical data retrieval from respondents (be it psychological, sociological, or ethnographical) points to a caveat of *conditioned*, in a certain way *confined validity* due to the complexity in which utterances on music’s functions are imbedded (cf., for instance, Karbusicky 1975: 77-84; North & Hargreaves and Hargreaves 2004: 43-46; Müller 1995 et passim). This is far from claiming that neuroscientific methods (as developed by David E. Levitin, Isabelle Peretz, Robert J. Zatorre, Norman M. Weinberger, among others) could be a substitute for the common ethnographic, historiographic etc. approaches specific to the humanities. However, it seems that the question of ‘affordances of music and the enactment of musical meaning’ would have first to define relations between the elementary categories addressing functions of music – between, for instance: *musicality* (in the sense of Karbusicky 1975: 154ff or Phillips 1976), *tastes* (Behne 1986, Droe 2004), *habits* (Lehmann 1993), *behavior* (Walsh, Mitchell, Frenzel and Wiedmann 2003), and *uses* of music (Behne 1996, North, Hargreaves and Hargreaves 2004).

Nonetheless, it is difficult to resist a more concrete reflection on the relations between the main levers through which music’s semanticity is wavering between the ‘natural’

and 'cultural' universals, as the following Möbius strip of music's 'capacities' (derived from the table of musical functions above) indicates:



The Adornian messages in the bottle, specific to each musical culture and its products, are communicated by different means and different intensities: one may well find best in music regardless of the musical style, whereas to some the musical style is the main transmitter of the music's 'affordances.' I will focus on the stylistic differences, taking three contemporary Slovenian composers and the semantic values they ascribe to their music as pointers 'conjuring up' music's effect on a listener.

The first composer is probably the most influential Slovenian musician today, Lojze Lebič (1934). The second answer to music's affordances is offered by Uroš Rojko (1954), a composer with a firm belief in modernism close to the ideals of the new complexity, comprehensively trained in the avant-garde master classes as given by Klaus Huber in Freiburg (1983-1986) and György Ligeti (1986-1989). The third answer is given by Marko Mihevc (1957), a composer whose voice was among the first and the strongest to extol postmodernity as a chance to compose, in his words, 'more digestible' music that cannot be compared with 'conservative neo/classicism' or any other 'plagiaristic stance.'

Although one could never emphasize enough the differences among those composers, they see the context of their work from the 1980s onward as belonging to a (differently understood) modernity, for which Lebič saw as a central phenomenon an 'ecological' shift toward more telling musical narrativity' (Lebič 47/3-4, 1994: 61). Yet, apart from the general awareness of the necessity to create communicative music, their compositional means and respective aesthetics burst the common features asunder. Their respective views on semanticity could be summarized briefly while commenting on their explicit musical poetics.

Lojze Lebič has several times emphasized that his strongest lesson from his avant-garde phase is the *rigorousness of thought*. However, he is far from underestimating the 'common listener.' Although he would hardly assent to any pragmatic concession, he has a kind of 'second listener' before his eyes when composing: 'If [my music] is to attract the listener to seek deeper layers and hints, the surface of the work has to be understandable and covered with a sufficient number of recognizable sounds' (Dekleva 1994). However, in Lebič's music these layers evade the trap of a name. They feature prominently in his music emerging throughout tissues of complex sonoristic textures as 'hints', 'allusions,' 'evocations,' 'indications,' or 'reminiscences' of certain phenomena. Whether it be an

'evocation' of an archetypal feature, such as the elementary diastematic fragments in *Queensland Music*, an allusion to the creation of the world in *Glaska za orkester – Cantico I*, or its more or less apparently associatively 'permeable' sound features, such as the bucolic quality of melodic, emphasized repetitions of triads in a highly complex texture, a Mahlerian 'moment of narration' (Abbate), or a compliment to Bach's famous cadenza from the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto: these telling details are interwoven carefully in a complex musical narrative rooted in the formal universals of music.

Lebič himself defined the process of composing as a process of 'framing something from one world which is found in another' (Dekleva 1994). This is actually the most far-reaching change in his current poetics if compared to his avant-garde ideals of an abstract, arithmetical *order* of the musical logic: he composes by searching for 'the grammatical feeling to return to the music some of its lost ability of speech' (Dekleva 1994). Yet, he adds: 'I remain within the limits of my field. This, however, teaches me that all significant musical works - from Bach's Art of Fugue to Bartok's masterpieces with a *sectio aurea* - are crafted with a great architectonic consideration, that they are a junction of necessity, that the laws of these junctions may be analytically discovered just as they were consciously built; but that the impulses dictating them will be forever hidden' (Dekleva 1994).

Uroš Rojko, on the other hand, two decades junior to Lebič, has a more negative experience with the 'tradition of the German and European avant-garde': he 'did not accept it' (Meh 1995), moreover, he reckoned it as 'a dead end' (Rojko 1993). Especially Ligeti, 'leading [him] with his guru-like poise into uncertainty and horrible split' (Meh 1995), has awakened Rojko to distance himself not only from the avant-garde but also from any other musical tradition. Rojko is inclined to think about (his) music in terms of an ahistorical soundscape, secluded from any semantic homologies - except from the most elemental ones appealing to the 'physicalistic' efficacy of music. 'What I've been doing now, in the last five years,' Rojko emphasized in the mid 1990's, 'is above all liberation of myself. I try to understand everything as translating, canalizing of primary energies into a palpable substance' (Meh 1995) of sound.

Basically, I am striving to achieve beauty that has something profound, that has a base. This base does not belong to our world. It is something that our world cannot offer, although it is founded thereof. I would certainly not like to bring my music to the point of a New Age or similar [cultural phenomena], where the only goal is to reach a therapeutic condition [...]. I have no therapeutic intentions with my music. My music borders more on a natural experience, it tries to reach a sense of well-being.²

However *modernist* a stance might be reflecting through these artistic intentions, contrary to the intellectual pretentiousness, or the semantic provocativeness, of the musical avant-garde, Rojko expects almost nothing from his listener. Persuaded of the

² Originally the quotes read: 'Ein System sagt noch gar nichts aus, was du daraus machst ist wichtig.' "Die Idee, etwas Neues zu machen, war damals, als ich mit Serialismus und Neuer Musik beschäftigte, sehr wichtig [...] Es geht mir in der Tat um Schönheit, aber diese Schönheit hat eine Tiefe, hat einen Grund. Dieser Grund liegt nicht in unserer Welt, ist etwas, was unsere Welt nicht bieten kann und was ihr dennoch zugrundeliegt. Natürlich möchte ich meine Musik nicht zu einem Punkt von New Age oder ähnlichem bringen, wo es nur darum geht, therapeutisch einen Zustand zu bekommen [...]. Meine Musik hat keine therapeutische Absicht, sie grenzt schon eher an ein natürliches Erlebnis, so daß man sich als Mensch wohlfühlt. [...] Mein Leben ist so gekommen, daß ich für mich eine andere Welt suche. Die Musik drückt das aus und ist ein Teil von mir.' (*Lauschen auf die innere Musik. Wolfgang Rüdiger im Gespräch mit Uroš Rojko*, CD ARS MUSICI [AM] 1122-2, Freiburger Musik Forum 1995, 15, 18-19.)

‘untranslatability’ of the musical narrative, he believes that it is necessary for both – for the composer as well as for the listener – to ‘let the events happen by themselves, and let music and musical material unfold by itself’ (Rojko 1993). For this reason he is drawing attention to the ‘innermost’ of the sound, unimpeded by mimetic analogies:

The most important truths are by no means explicable, the least with words, and they cannot be analysed by the intellect. They can be reached only by experience, or perceived. (Rojko 1993)

The quoted thought should be seen as the central philosophical persuasion and aesthetic demand posed by Rojko: he wants his music to achieve the efficacy of *a sublime physiological stimulus* – with *no semantic potential ‘from without,’* preferably not even from the musical past, of course. In contrast to Lebič’s *grammatical* logic, Rojko’s composition is based on some kind of ‘logic of pulverization’ of the sound spectrum, as his music from the last two decades indicates – a homage, as it were, to *musique spectrale* and Giacinto Scelsi at the same time.

As a counterpart to both the above discussed musical minds, Marko Mihevc’s musical poetics demands ‘the integration of the beauty, the emotions, [...] of healthy eclecticism not intended to imitate the past but to help find new, not to say palatable styles.’ His favorite musical form, the symphonic poem, seemed most appropriate to develop semantically vivid, almost picturesque sequences. Attracted by classical Afro-Cuban dance music, as in the symphonic poem *In signo tauri*, developing a kind of ‘urban folklorism’ with sympathies for ‘oriental sound,’ as in the cantata *In mentem venit mihi*, his musical structures are anchored in the opulence of Straussian harmonic texture from the *fin de siècle*, transparent modal turns, and effective melodic linearity. A number of other stylistic parallels could be brought to attention here, yet they all reveal an poetics of alienation, an aesthetics of epicurean usufructuary of semantically loaded segments indicating a process that Mihevc described as a ‘postmodernist way’: a musical style of combining ‘modern elements with the elements of the previous periods’ (Senčur 1999) and, one might add, different cultural milieus.

Obviously enough, Lebič’s, Rojko’s and Mihevc’s compositional apparatuses stem from different modernist traditions: Lebič’s especially from the Polish avant-garde classics, Rojko’s from *musique spectrale*, New complexity and different authorial features (comparable to those, for instance, in Giacinto Scelsi and Geörgy Ligeti), Mihevc’s from a typically *postmodern* combinatorial perspectivism of layering *fin de siècle* modernism, ‘Orientalistic figments,’ and several sonoristic details from different avant-garde techniques.

Although firmly embedded in the twentieth century imageries of modernism, the semantic potential of their music reveals a fairly perplexed picture of modernist ideals. As their respective historical bases are evident, differences in semanticity of their music can also be demarcated rather clearly. Lebič’s idiosyncratic musical flow founded on ‘grammatical’ logic is trying to communicate intellectual, cultural, often national – one may well say: sensuous – *anthropological* imagery. Rojko’s musical logic of ‘sonoristic pulverization’ aims at universal *physicalistic* immersion in sound, leaving traces of multicultural semantics aside on behalf of refined, as it were, ‘culturological vibrations.’ To the contrary, Mihevc with his compositional logic of alienation strives to combine heterogeneous, easily perceptible ‘musical commonalities’.

Facit

Although one should argue about the achievements and degrees of the communicative qualities of their music, a feature they share can be recognized in their aspirations to encompass wide segments of musical experience: Lebič has in mind a kind of trans-historical intellectual experience, Rojko's 'translating, canalizing of primary energies into a palpable substance' aims at a thorough sublimation of the senses, while Mihevc strives to gather what he believes are the most efficient musical features around. In short, they are trying to sidestep the relations between the old (the traditional as 'made after an example') and the new (the modernistic, avant-garde): they are trying to focus their musical narratives on different yet basic, elemental segments of what one may describe as an experience with music as 'a whole and belonging to all humanity' ('ein Ganzes und Gesamt-menschliches') (Blume 1974: 238).

The quoted description of classical music, borrowed from Friedrich Blume, is far from alluding to canonical stature, even less to canonization of the three composers discussed above. Yet their respective musical poetics are not to be set within the premise of the *avant-garde art – modernism – traditionalism*, but into a thorny question about the classical, about the 'timeless,' 'best,' 'most appreciated' values of musical structure. In contrast to the ideas of advancement, modernization, improvement and similar, more 'material,' 'factual,' 'historicistic' categories, their main artistic concern shifts the horizon toward value-conditioned, axiological ontology of music as common human experience.

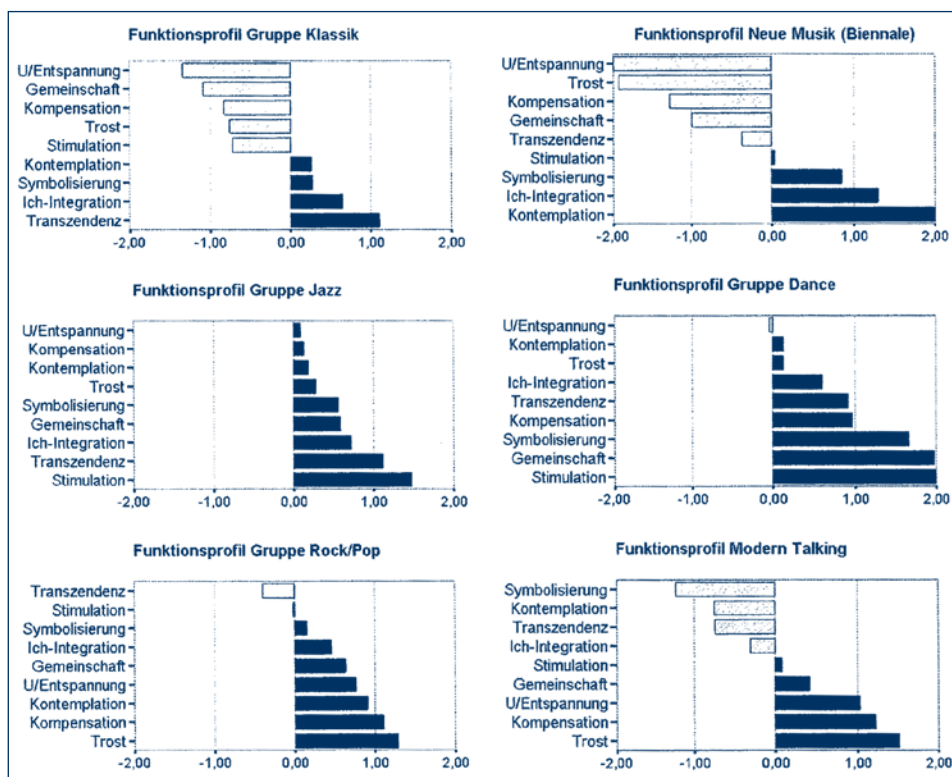
Their 'messages in the bottles' do not *contain* or *transmit* metaphysical truths; instead, they thematize distinct cultural, mental and physiological commonsensical experiences, for which the main values lay in what Rudolf Bockholdt sees as three main categories of the classical: the 'ripeness' (Reife) of individual style, its 'common intelligibility' (Allgemeinverständlichkeit), and its 'claim to excellence' (Anspruch) (Bockholdt 1987).

It is necessary to view similar postulates of cognitive universals with suspicion – just as it is important to question their relevance for the concept of modernism. However, it would be difficult to diminish, let alone deny, its importance for a modernist practice of *musique informelle* from the 1960s, centered, pace Gianmario Borio, in the idea of an 'appeal to the recipient's world' ('Appellcharakter [...] an die Lebenswelt des Rezipienten'; Borio 1993: 173). The postmodern reflection of modernism in the musical ideals of Lebič, Rojko and Mihevc seems to struggle with the same problem as *musique informelle*: with aspirations to surpass the fast aging of the new that formed the core of Adorno's critique of new music during its 'heroic period' in his broadcast *Das Altern der neuen Musik* in 1954.

Although one of the central features of their musical poetics – the 'appeal to the recipient's world' – is infallibly postmodern, the main focus of their work should be set in a line with the 'emphatically New,' not only as a concept of twentieth-century music history, but as part of a much longer tendency, a process of searching for a 'better music.' In this sense, they are but dwarfs on the shoulders of a giant standing in the period of the enlightenment. Although it is irrelevant to argue about the modernity of their

respective musical idea(l)s and compositional practices – their views and music bring hardly anything ‘emphatically new’ in the technical or aesthetic sense –, they should be positioned within the concept of modernism in the most elemental, basic sense, as defined, for instance, by Boris Groys: ‘Das Neue ist nicht bloß das Andere, sondern es ist das wertvolle Andere.’ (Groys 1992: 43). Their positions within this notion of *modern* as a search for the *valuable*, not only *different* with regard to the old, could be, of course, questioned further. But notwithstanding that, their musical poetics are irrefutably an autonomous contribution to the concept of twentieth-century musical modernisms as a perplexed set of streams in their search of the new between different levels of expressive *symbolism* (Lebič), aesthetic *immediacy* (Mihevc) and acoustic *sensualism* (Rojko). Although the line of musical ideals, comparable to those by Lebič, Rojko and Mihevc should be prolonged, it seems that these three composers offer a handy set of differences for reflecting on musical modernity as a search for values that resist aging. For whom and to what extent they resist aging, of course, is a different, yet not less important question.

If, however, one tries to translate the main messages of their music into a listener’s nomenclature, in which *social universals of expectation* are indicated with a z-Transformation of 9 categories (the 0 stands for the standard deviation, thus the importance rests on the range outside of +/- 1; Neuhoff 2007: 494):



A telling relation emerges between the anthropologically conceived expressive *symbolism* of Lojze Lebič, toward multicultural popularity oriented aesthetic *immediacy* of Marko Mihevc and utterly 'visceral' acoustic *sensualism* of Uroš Rojko. If Lebič's semanticity demands more intimacy with anthropological universals, idiosyncratic for any local culture (thus tending to the ideal of *transcendental values*) and Rojko's 'physicalism' wavers between stimulation and contemplation, Mihevc's music seems to fit in between Lebič's philosophical imagery and Rojko's acoustic sensualism. Mihevc's concepts of music as an 'art of digestible sound forms' emerges as a compensation for a world without extremes of a 'natural musicality,' as one may wish to understand the affordances of Rojko's music, and 'cultural artfulness,' so specific to Lebič's works.

It should be fairly easy to draw parallels with a concept of music as an integrative symbol with Lebič's views, of music as certain indexical tapestry referring to a pragmatically understood 'top of the pops' within the Western musical heritage, as Mihevc sees it, whereas Rojko's views stimulate a view of music as an auditive iconic semblance of our mental and physiological processes. Yet, do the works of the mentioned composers – *pars pro toto* for the contemporary musical world – ring the same bell with listeners as they do for their authors? Of course not, yet it would be difficult to deny that the variables in grasping music may not be as different if compared to those given above as the plethora of possible other semantic correlates to music might suggest.

Of course, far from being able to draw universal conclusions about the narrativity of music from the three composers discussed (even less to claim universal qualities of music – besides, none of those composers enjoys wide popularity even in Slovenia), it would be hardly an exaggeration to claim that their artistic volition indicates a range within which human musical capacities function. The supposedly incommensurable differences in functions of music confine them temporally, geographically, or socially, but the indicated range nevertheless emphasizes an equally rooted persuasion that 'function [the semantic potential] of music presents itself precisely as a break with any conventional notion of the 'function,' the notion that is tacitly based on utility and the economics of survival' (Dolar 2006: 11). If only the *differences* should be considered when discussing functions of music *along with* the 'commonalities' that enable music to function, one might be tempted to ask whether contemporary music, as personified here by Lebič, Mihevc and Rojko, leads the 'enactment of musical meaning' or to the many different *uses* of music.

Even if an answer to this question may be imagined, at the moment one thing holds true: the fact that the music researcher's agenda with its hardly surveyable list of music's formal appearances and effects – music is, after all 'irrefutably grounded in human behaviors' (Cross 2003: 5) – still has not found a fertile ground to reflect the relation between common listening capacities³ and the imagery, phantasms and ideas that guide them. Yet it may well find more invariants in the future.

³ For instance Caroline Drake and Daisy Bertrand proposed a list of five potential cognitive universals: segmentation and grouping ('We tend to group into perceptual units events that have similar physical characteristics or that occur close in time'); predisposition towards regularity ('Processing is better for regular than irregular sequences. We tend to hear as regular sequences that are not regular'); active search for regularity ('We spontaneously search for temporal regularities and organize events around this perceived regularity'); temporal zone of optimal processing ('We process information best if it arrives at an intermediate rate'); and predisposition towards simple duration ratios ('We tend to hear a time interval as twice as long as previous intervals')

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(Drake & Bertrand 2005: 24-29). If the differences among listeners' expectations of music, according to David Huron, 'may be attributable to four possible sources' only - to different 1. 'underlying representational codes,' 2. degree of acquired schemas of music developed with individual exposure to music, 3. level of distinguishing 'expectational sets that may be appropriate for different genres of music' and 4. 'accuracy of predictive heuristics' (Huron 2006: 364) - then the universals regarding meanings of music seem to be of equal importance for music research as are the individual cases. (Although some culturally oriented scholars advocate a stance that current foci in ethno/musicology are 'contrary to the essentialist definitions and questions for musical 'universals' of 1960s [...] or text-oriented techniques of musicological analysis,' as for instance Stokes 1994: 5, the recent endeavours in the field of ethno/musicology research does not seem to corroborate any claims regarding 'surpassing' any of the 'old' research topoi.)

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POVZETEK

Prispevek prinaša pregled raziskovanja funkcij glasbe. Skozi zgodovino pogosto, zlasti v zadnjih približno treh desetletjih vedno bolj dodelano začrtana tematika o funkcijah glasbe postavlja v ospredje spoznavoslovno različnost pristopov k pomenskosti glasbe. Prispevek tematizira vprašanje vsebinskega in metodološkega obsega raziskav o funkcijah glasbe. Sopostavlja in vzporeja raziskave o funkcijah glasbe, kot jih ponujajo avtorji od Merriamovega znamenitega seznama desetih funkcij

glasbe (Antropologija glasbe, 1964) naprej skozi optiko različnih disciplin, do študij, ki se osredotočajo na glasbene preferenc (kot je Rentfrow-Gosling: *The Do Re Mi's of Everyday Life: The Structure and Personality Correlates of Music Preferences from 2003*). Ker se raziskave funkcij glasbe odvijajo po eni strani v bolj naravoslovno in po drugi v družboslovno naravnanih okvirih brez posebnega, a potrebnega povezovanja obeh pristopov, je glavna misel prispevka predvsem poziv k upoštevanju naravoslovnih in družboslovnih gledišč kot dveh plateg raziskovalnega procesa istega pojava.