

English Summaries

Albrecht Wellmer

Über Musik und Sprache. Variationen und Ergänzungen
[On Music and Language. Variations and Additions]

In the first part of this essay, the relationship between music and language is discussed from two different points of view that simultaneously reveal two different dimensions of *understanding* music. Referring to Nelson Goodman, particularly to his term »metaphorical exemplification«, the possible meaning of a »language of music« is outlined. The »understanding« of this language is analogous to the (nonverbal) understanding of gestures, expressions, moods, atmospheres etc., and therefore akin to an understanding of meaning that does not require words. The understanding of musical art works, however, is not the understanding of a context of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*), since the means of creating musical coherence – such as repetition and variation, the game of identity and difference – are different from the means that create a context of meaning in verbal languages. Music's affinity to language is at once music's distance from language. The idea of understanding music must therefore be different from, or more than, the wordless understanding of gestural or expressive figures. Musical listening can rather be grasped as the re-enactment of an enigmatic interpenetration of sound, structure, and meaning, the understanding of which, among others, requires verbal explication. These forms of explication do not stand for a resolution of the enigma but, due to their interminability, sustain it.

The second part of the essay demonstrates that the semiotic model of the understanding of music not only falls short due to its failure to accommodate musical coherence, but also because it blocks out areas of musical meaning that are only comprehensible structurally, and not necessarily amenable to wordless re-enactment. These areas include the crisis of the subject in new music (dating back to the late Beethoven), demonstrating a peculiar proximity between music and philosophy. This context connects music to a question of truth that not only refers to individual works, but also to the question of what art and music as an art form can mean today. *One* answer to this question, which has troubled modern art since the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, is suggested at the end of this essay in reference to Jacques Rancière: the tension between the autonomy of art and its dissolution of boundaries has become art's condition of existence.

Nikolaus Urbanek

Misslingendes Gelingen oder gelingendes Misslingen? Randglossen zum Werkbegriff
Albrecht Wellmers [Failing Success or Successful Failure? Marginal Notes on Albrecht
Wellmer's Work-Concept]

By stating that »only the successful work can be called an art work«, Albrecht Wellmer constructs a very strong hypothesis. Such an integration of the idea of aesthetic success into an ontological discussion of the musical work-concept, however, cannot be successful without taking into account the historical context. Considering not only the demarcation between art and non-art but also the concept of the art work in general, this hypothesis therefore touches upon a pivotal aesthetic, philosophical, and musico-logical problem that becomes highly virulent once criteria of »failure« are concerned. Examining reflections by Carl Dahlhaus and Theodor W. Adorno, the present essay attempts to analyze how aesthetic success and failure as specific historical configurations can be integrated into a philosophical debate in the conceptual tension field between the musical art work, aesthetic discourse and aesthetic experience.

Christian Utz

Entwürfe zu einer Theorie musikalischer Syntax. Morphosyntaktische Beziehungen
zwischen Alltagswahrnehmung und dem Hören tonaler und posttonaler Musik
[Sketches for a Theory of Musical Syntax. Morphosyntactic Relationships between
Everyday Perception and Listening to Tonal and Post-Tonal Music]

Theories of musical syntax have rarely relied on simple music-language analogies but were rather conceived music-specifically. As in Hugo Riemann's *Musikalische Syntaxis*, they often tried to systematize all feasible combinations of elementary musical components, e.g. triads or four-part chords. In contrast to these poietic accounts, the cognitive turn in music theory placed the conceptualization of a listener at the core of an understanding of musical syntax. Theories emerging from this background such as Lerdahl's and Jackendoff's »Generative Theory of Tonal Music«, however, are often limited by their simplistic separation of syntax and semantics and their nativist underpinnings, sometimes linked to misleading aesthetic judgements of post-tonal music.

The present essay aims to develop a perception-based, anti-essentialist theory of musical syntax, reacting to Albrecht Wellmer's discussion of the syntax concept in music. Three aspects challenge the idea of a generalized syntax of music, in particular of post-tonal music: (1) The innovations of twentieth-century music have sensitised us to the contingency of musical progressions to the point where any two subsequent sound events can be perceived as syntactically meaningful. (2) Serial music and John Cage's aesthetics have placed a dissolution of any preconceived kind of coherence at the centre of their attention, resulting in an emancipation of sound and musical presence from syntactic process. (3) The high degree of diversification of musical styles seems to undermine the idea of generalisable syntactic principles.

In response to this bold challenge of the syntax concept, the morphosyntactic model of musical syntax discussed here elaborates ideas from Albert Bergman's »auditory scene analysis« and traces music-syntactic experience back to elementary perception modes in everyday life, namely causal or categorical contiguity, equivalence, and similarity between sound events. These modes constantly switch between metaphorical and sensual-sonorous fields of auditory experience, a tension that is also traced in a number of musical examples. Although the three excerpts from works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Arnold Schönberg share a common contrapuntal-harmonic model or schema (the »secunda syncopata«), interactions between relationships of contiguity and similarity, and a medium-scale tonic-dominant relationship, their enactment as represented by salient »surface« events is highly idiosyncratic and essential to the experience of syntax. In turn, three examples from post-tonal music (Schönberg: Piano Piece op. 11,3, Pierre Boulez: *Structures Ia*, Brian Ferneyhough: *Funérailles*) demonstrate an increasing emancipation from tonal phrase structure and harmonic centrism, but nonetheless retain or even gain morphological profile through their reinventions of musical structure. Contour- and *gestalt*-based analyses make it clear that a morphosyntactically oriented perception of such works does manifoldly connect to elementary modes of everyday and tonal listening, suggesting a new model of post-tonal listening that ultimately frees itself from an author- and analysis-centred structuralist approach.

Susanne Kogler

Begriffsloses Verstehen, Autonomie und Kritik. Zum qualitativen Moment künstlerischer Sprachlichkeit [Nonverbal Understanding, Autonomy, and Critique. On the Qualitative Element of Artistic Linguisticity]

Responding to criticism of his *Versuch über Musik und Sprache*, Albrecht Wellmer has discussed critically semiotic and symbolic approaches to music. Following Theodor W. Adorno, Wellmer emphasised art's materiality alongside critical reflections concerning the subject and the idea of autonomy as found in new music. Taking up these views, this essay aims at completing Wellmer's notion of understanding, which is strongly oriented towards verbal explication, by autonomous and nonverbal aspects. As far as Wellmer's discussion of the subject's crisis in new music is concerned, the nonverbal dimensions of artistic language are crucial: art that is conceived as a critique of verbal language comprises critical reflections of a specific form of subjectivity. Interest in the socio-critical dimensions inherent in art's critique of verbal language not only unites critical theory and poststructuralist philosophy, but can also be found in the work of contemporary composers such as Helmut Lachenmann and Clemens Gadenstätter. By taking their music as an example, the essay demonstrates that the critical nonverbal aspect of musical language brings its specific aesthetic quality to the fore.

Clemens Gadenstätter

Zum Komponieren mit Sprache. Positionen von 1997 bis 2012

[On Composing with Language: Positions from 1997 to 2012]

This collection of four essays written between 1997 and 2012 focusses on problems in the field of music and language. Two of the essays are co-authored by Lisa Spalt, who also wrote the lyrics for the musical works to which the essays refer. The collaboration between composer and author in these works is grounded on poetological questioning and artistic research. The four essays document an ongoing interest in the common field of musical and verbal articulation and signification, while the work-specific artistic approaches have continuously changed over time. These approaches are therefore best regarded as intermediate stages, as parts of a work in progress.

Podiumsdiskussion mit Clemens Gadenstätter, Susanne Kogler,

Albrecht Wellmer, Diskussionsleitung: Jörn Peter Hiekel

Sprechen durch Musik im Komponieren der Gegenwart

[Round Table Discussion: Speaking Through Music in Contemporary Composition]

Commenting on a performance of two musical works that were played as the starting point for this discussion – Anton Webern’s *Drei kleine Stücke* (1914) for violoncello and piano op. 11 and Helmut Lachenmann’s *Ein Kinderspiel* (1980) for piano – Jörn Peter Hiekel observes that speaking *about* music and speaking *through* music particularly condition one another in new music. Both Webern and Lachenmann, by different compositional means, condense familiar musical gestures until they turn into a »language of their own«. In Lachenmann’s work, which refers to well-known children songs, this process is closely connected to what Albrecht Wellmer has called »wordliness« (*Welthaltigkeit*). More generally, the serialist »rebellion against music’s resemblance to language« (Adorno) shows a paradoxical twist towards sedimentation in the form of a new emerging language, as Clemens Gadenstätter explains with reference to Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* (1955–56). In new music musical idioms have been thoroughly destabilized yet always re-contextualized within established formulae.

The panellists agree on a notion of both language and music that is not conceived as a closed system, but rather a network of relations transformed in time. Hence no distinct boundary can be drawn between syntax and semantics in music, nor is there any musical language that communicates a universal meaning (despite Joseph Haydn’s claim to the contrary). In addition – as anecdotes from Luigi Nono and Helmut Lachenmann document – the ambiguity of musical meaning is also relevant for composers who might be (favourably) surprised by unorthodox performances of their works that seemingly contradict the composers’ intentions, but in fact contribute to unfolding the multiplicity of meanings in a work.