

ON COMPOSING by Hans Werner Henze

(translation by H.J.Nagel)

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THE WAY OF COMPOSING can be explained as an effort, which tries to mobilize an originally imovable matter in native state (and presented by physical signs) in order to get something out of it, which is directed basically against its own specific nature. But it appears and develops inspite of this situation and is victorious over its original stature. The result after this kind of "battle" is artistic, it is a piece of Art. In order to promote its understanding, communiqués are published, which try to explain details with a lot of efforts to those who are listening in admiration. The work itself is stronger and survives most of those explanations and communiqués. They will be forgotten, while the composition lives over decades with its vibrations, influences, provocations, misunderstandings and irritations.

Or: The intensity of the victorious win, which was mentioned, results sometimes in ways of interpretation, which become necessary and which will be materialized by terms, as for instance: message of love, the longing for death, the hymns to the nights, the message of freedom. This happens without a contribution of the original signs, they remain as they are, with their precision and unchangeable identity. Thus the forms of interpretation become a quite powerful presence, similar to waves and resulting to a necessity of domestication, and of finding an order of systems.

What finally leads to the arising of new common terms, style, common good, does not concern any more the author, and not the nature and motifs of his

doings as well.. He might have had a life, which was shaped by a permanent refusal of his new reality and followed by his funeral already.

After his signs had been accepted and been put into the order of systems, others had to follow, because the original tensions have already weaken and his signs enjoy already an academic acceptance. A kind of new episode in music history seems to happen and in this historically moment, numerous writers, essayists, diligent scholars are intruding the public places, repeating the emotions from the past and announcing the new rules for tomorrow.

What had been a daring signal for a far away and “high station “ changes now into forms and the functionalism of dry and calculable “etudes.” The idea of an artistic truth ends in a state of siege of a so called revolution. Lessing said ”I think that scientists like to search for the truth, but they do not like the truth.”

But the excitement and tensions, which happens between intervals can only be achieved by excitement and tensions and not with the means of science. The mystery of those tensions is located beyond the order, which we are able to recognize and it wants, that those orders are questioned permanently; it does not want a security without risks. It wants that something develops from of the tensions and not, that they are resulting into a process of manufacturing. Great art has always grew into being, it was not “made”. She speaks from a position of beauty, which is marked by searching and insecurity, and which confuses and provokes those, who belong to that genre of so called “makers”.

Music and everything which is connected to music, is as less abstract as a language, as death or love. Especially the fact, that she is always new invented, that she takes away something from the superficial outer world, that during the process of her origin a longing is expressed and fulfilled, does not permit to call her “abstract”.

The one who has his doubts in this, better believes in the construction of a more narrow world, which is nourished well and made more endurable by theories.

The others will choose the more difficult way, of which the end cannot yet be recognized. It is a way into the dark and full of gins, errors and presentiments.

One should have going them and wait for their return. (1976)

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Source:

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[publications and recordings]