Eivind Buene

Again and Again and Again

music as site, situation and repetition

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Introduction

Writing reflections

Writing is not so much an activity that is 'about' or pursed alongside music, as it is a way of critically thinking, reinventing and experimenting with music. This sentence is a paraphrase of a statement by Brett Steele, originally coined in writing about architecture.[1] It holds true for these texts, reflections on my artistic work while being a fellow in the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. The texts are not written after the fact, as some afterthought; they have been conceived as an integral part of the artistic process, reflecting not in hindsight, but in the real-time of creative work.

The essays are at the not-quite-scholarly core of my reflection, but represent only one mode of this process. Some ideas have been dealt with in literary forms, exploring how fiction can open up to quite different thought-formations. During the fellowship I have also published more popularized texts in literary and musical periodicals. Some of them address the issues I have dealt with extensively, some of them are more peripheral, but I have chosen to exclude most of this material from the publication at hand.

As can be seen from the references, I have looked for source material in a wide area. I have taken the liberty of choosing by sensibility and intuitive affinity, not always by theoretical savviness. Traditional musicology is scarcely present; my main interest has been to do excursions in the fields of critical theory and history of art. There are several reasons for this, the main is maybe the feeling that these theories tend to deal with a wide network of contact points with politics, philosophy and present-day-culture in general. My emphasis on contextual relations and discursive possibilities for music is the background for this interest, a desire to see music as a part of a bigger picture than what is provided by traditional musicology.

At one point Ina Blom, in her capacity of secondary supervisor, asked me '… but what are your desires, in the music?' This could be as good a place as any to try to give an answer, and I think it is about this: a music where you can *hear* something that is conveyed, a questioning of established truths, not beyond or beside or after the musical fact, but in the sounding music itself. A performance where you can *experi-*

ence, in the fabric of what is performed, an opening up of a given situation. This is my desire, and the starting point of my investigation. The result can be heard in the pieces *Standing Stones*, *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio* and *Schubert Lounge*. These texts are my conscious thinking, reinventing and experimenting with those desires.

A few words on the format of my reflections, which consist of three kinds of text: Essays, Brief Notes and excerpts from my novels *Enmannsorkester* and *Allsang* (translated by Ian Giles). Some of the essays, like 'Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy', and 'Body and Site' address underlying ideas and structures in my project. Others, like 'Delirious Brahms', discuss the musical works in a more direct manner. None of the essays deal with the works on levels of compositional technique or musical detail. The novels are a literary way of reflecting on my musical topic, written in parallel with and in response to the musical investigations. They were published by Cappelen Damm in 2010 (*Enmannsorkester*) and 2012 (*Allsang*). The Brief Notes are short texts clarifying my use of terms or deal with delineated topics.

The notes are split in footnotes (with Arabic reference numbers) and endnotes (with Roman reference numbers). To avoid confusion with the genre of the strictly academic essay I have tried to keep the use of footnotes to a minimum, and to use the device for certain structural or literary functions not always in line with proper scholarly form. The endnotes point exclusively to sources of citations and references – books, articles, scores and recordings – so there is no need to jump back and forth unless you need to know the source of information.

Before we go into the subject matter, let me take a little time to thank some people that have, in different ways, been important to me in this work. As I write each name I pause briefly (but thoughtfully) and send a mental flower to each and one of you: Ole Lützow-Holm, Ina Blom, Olav Anton Thommesen, Trond Reinholdtsen, Lars Petter Hagen, the musicians of asamisimasa, The Norwgian Academy of Music, The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, Ian Giles, Laura Macy, Harriet Karoliussen, Frederik Lønstad, Audun Vinger and last but in no way least the fabulous Charlotte Thiis-Evensen.

It has begun to rain. Something has let go in the heavy air that has lain across the city all day, perhaps it is the air itself that has disintegrated and is falling back to earth in myriads of tiny pieces. Tristan Szabo is still holding the telephone receiver in his hand; the water hasn't yet begun to gather in streaks on the windowpane in front of him. He has just asked his agent to quit his job as principal conductor of the provincial orchestra in Hungary. He doesn't want to go home. The reaction was predictable; she tried alternately to unearth the reason for his decision and to persuade him to reconsider. He had quite simply declared that he was going to see out the freelance contracts he had for the remainder of the year, that she didn't need to worry about the good name and reputation of the agency, but that he would be staying here in Oslo. Or Gothenburg. Or Helsinki. Anywhere, really. Then he had hung up.

The hotel room overlooks a busy shopping street that winds its way narrowly to the city centre. The trams waver as they pass poorly parked cars, blonde women run across pavement seeking shelter from the rain. Some drag enormous paper bags with flashy brand names on the side. Tristan Szabo looks at the time – it is a little too early to head to the wine bar on the first floor. On the bed are the scores that he is going to work with in the months to come, collections of note symbols, codes that he will decipher. Immense orchestral works, thick volumes full of small characters. The names are on the covers and intricate garlands twist between the letters. Dead men. Old, white men. Like himself. Old, dead, white men. He picks up one score after another, weighing them in his hands. This is his job. To given a voice to the dead. He lives in the ruins of other times, after lives have been lived, exhausted and left in these paper time capsules. He lives amongst monuments and stone people, and it is his task to give them life. To rub note against note, phrase against phrase, wave the wand at the orchestra in order to conjure up a golem, to create life from dead matter. Week after week, new places, new people, but always the same quivering desire for the same towering shadow to rise up out

of the orchestra. All the hard work, all the trial and error, all the memorised passages. And then, suddenly, under the crystal chandeliers, a spark of life, unmistakeable, which rises up above the orchestra, floating out into the hall to all who want to listen. Every single concert is a ceremony, a ritual, an exorcism with just one purpose: to raise the dead.

Tristan Szabo drops the score onto the bed. Perhaps it's the other way around. Perhaps it is he who is slowly turning to stone, as in the story of Lot's wife who looked back when she left the city God was going to destroy, even though God had forbidden her to do so, and was turned into a pillar of salt. He lives with his gaze directed at the past, and inexorably he is turning, cell-by-cell, to bitter, coarse salt. Maybe that was why he got so irritated at the young composer in Bergen. He had made him feel the taste of salt in his mouth. This youngster doesn't know it yet, but he too will one day turn to salt, if he allows himself to be caught by the sorcery of the orchestra. It isn't possible to create the future with an orchestra; one can only recreate the past. Even if the music has never sounded so new and unheard, provocative and wild, full of youthful brutality, it is just a beautiful dream, an illusion. The reality is that the symphony orchestra relentlessly devours its worshippers – not even the witch doctors, the high priests and ceremonial masters – the conductors and composers – can avoid becoming part of the same petrified matter.

Tristan Szabo shakes off his thoughts, grabs his coat and slips on his shoes. He takes the lift to street level, nods to the doorman and steps out into the heavy rain. He can feel the raindrops bouncing on the crown of his head and the circle of hair between his ears is wet almost immediately. He smiles to himself – in this weather he will be soaked in a few minutes. He moves slowly up the street, all the tumult around him distant and floating, as if he is surrounded by a membrane that doesn't let in sound or movement, only tiny droplets of water. After a few blocks the road divides and a small sign tells him that he is at Valkyrie Plass. A triangular patch of stone with a fast food

kiosk, a little fountain and a tree. Valkyrie Plass. The place of the wild Valkyries, Wagner's demonic Valkyries! He begins to laugh, something is bubbling and twitching, he can't hold back the laughter pouring out of him. He doubles up with laughter, slaps his thigh, no longer trying to contain himself – he is standing at this stupid spot named "Valkyrie Plass" and roaring with laughter.

Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy

The Symphony Orchestra as Site

For a contemporary composer, writing for the symphony orchestra is not unlike arriving very late at a party. Even though the host greets you heartily, the dance floor is emptying and people slump around, content to their hearts desire by what they've already consumed. Some have split into groups, engaged in discussions started earlier in the evening, impossible to comprehend at this point. If you're lucky you might be able to spark a light or two by a well-placed remark, but basically the best you can do is just try to blend in, to go with the flow. Maybe there will be a *nachspiel*, maybe not, the party peaked long before you entered and everything is in a tangible state of *After*.

This condition of being *After* is not exclusive to orchestral composers. It would be nice, for melancholy reasons, but present day culture is, for all its now-ness, in many ways acted out on the same terms. Hal Foster writes about the current condition of the *After* in art and theory and asks what comes after – or in lieu of – the alleged 'end of art'. He coins the term 'living-on' in his essay 'This Funeral is for the Wrong Corpse',[2] and I'd like to pair this with my own notion of 'coming-after'. Although Foster speculates whether the living-on might make do with the what-comes-after,[3] this after-ness is obviously a widespread notion. And it is difficult to imagine any art form where the feeling is so tangible as in the modern-day symphony orchestra. One can argue that the orchestra has been in a state of afterlife since the outbreak of World War I, just at a point where composers were challenging the then century-old tradition of romantic symphonic writing, working from within the tradition, expanding and radicalizing its own tendencies and currencies. (Contemporary energies from the outside, like the historical avant-garde's challenge to the institution and autonomy of art, had, with a few exceptions, very little impact on the orchestra.)

Needless to say, there have been substantial developments in the field of orchestral music throughout the twentieth century. But after, say, the innovations of Gerard Grisey and the spectral school in the seventies, very little has been going on in terms of actual renewal in a broader sense[4] – and this in a time where the world of art has expanded and changed in profound ways. Yes, there is orchestral music being written today, some of it good, even great, music. However, the opening up of the field of art

has had weak resonance in the concert halls. The inherited structures and practices prevail, basically unchanged in the last hundred years. What Hal Foster calls the labour of *dis*articulation, the redefinition of cultural terms and recapturing of political positions, has not had any obvious impact on the orchestral institution. And very few composers work with the orchestra as a *situated practice*. The structures and (im)possibilities are taken as given, and where much of the art world work in an expanded field of context and situation, the composers and conductors keep their gaze fixed firmly on the score.

It is also obvious that the orchestral institution by and large has steered clear of the curatorial turn in the arts the last 20 years and thus neglected the opportunity to open itself to new ideas and methods. The curator-as-artist has been criticized (not least by artists), but there is little question that this development has contributed to renewal in the institutions of art. And there is no question that the orchestral institution has failed to seize this moment. The artistic leadership of these institutions seems to have given away a lot of the power of programming to the superstar soloists and conductors. Instead of truly curated programmes, the symphonic concerts tend to display the music that these power-players have on their repertoire any given season.

It seems more difficult than ever to re-negotiate the terms of the orchestra, especially from the position of the composer. Ironically, this may bring the attention to new ways of looking at the situation. The petrified nature of the orchestral structure may well serve as an opportunity to examine it as a basically historical object. A petrified redwood-pine is a giant, but there is no organic growth in it. Or, to switch to my main metaphor for this essay: the orchestra has dug itself in so thoroughly over so many years that it ought to be a tempting site for the musico-archaeologist. In this text I will try to map out methods for excavating some of the energies and objects to be located in this place, and to see if this work can be helpful in an attempt to *situate* the orchestra within a historical and social context.

1

One might argue that style has been a somewhat under-communicated topos within the arts for the last couple of decades. Not much talked about, but nonetheless important, as art historian Ina Blom discusses in her book *On the Style Site.*[5] She writes

about style as a social site in which the relations between appearance and social identity are negotiated, and argues that it is insufficient to approach style just as an art historical tool or method of explanation. This view might be useful in dealing with the issue at hand: it is not musical style that constitutes differences between divergent strands of contemporary music; orchestral music is in itself a style. The Symphony Orchestra (embedded in the shrine of the Concert Hall) is first and foremost a place, a site; and the situated powers and constituting energies of this site are primordial to aesthetic or ideological distinctions at work. The orchestra is in a curious position with regard to the ephemeral temporal quality of 'classical' site-specific work like those of Robert Smithson. The orchestral work takes place in buildings that are among our culture's most enduring kind. At the same time, the orchestral performance is transient, and the new work, premiered, documented and often never heard again, is of a highly impermanent nature, in spite of its 'eternal' qualities as score. In the same way as the operatic voice tends to define opera for many listeners, the sound-place of the orchestra itself has such a strong iconic power that it tends to overrule the distinctions we normally define as musical style. If we twist the perspective a little, we can regard the orchestra as a *topos*. As the word is applied by Erkki Huhtamo in his essay on media archaeology as topos study, we see a vessel derived from the memory banks of tradition.[6] And it becomes evident that the cultural meaning of the object – the work and its interpretation – to a large degree is moulded by its topos – the orchestra.

So, in choosing to work on this site, the composer has to relate to an orchestral tradition more or less regardless of the aesthetic and ideological choices at work in the sounding music. Many composers will object to this, and even maintain that their music has nothing to do with either past or present musical 'styles'. They might go to considerable lengths to counter the centripetal force of the orchestra, in order to create something infinitely peculiar and different. But, ironically, the energies spent on these efforts tend to radiate back to the origins, to the friction of rubbing oneself against the orchestra. This tends to happen no matter how much one tries to cover the traces of the process. And indeed, like the surrealist *frottage*, a warped image of the original object is always traceable.

This could be said about many of the musical practices contemporary composers partake in. But I argue that the orchestra constitutes a certain agglomeration of power and historical significance that highlights its situatedness in a much larger degree than any other instrumental genre. One example of how the orchestral site transforms particular identities into its own image is Phillip Glass' orchestrations

of David Bowie songs.[7] In this transferral the orchestration tends to soften the angularities and normalize the singularity that is present in the original recordings.[8] The particularities of sound and phrasing in Bowie's studio-recordings are lost when the melodies and harmonies are re-situated in the orchestra. The *morphology* of the music, so important in signifying the musical *identity*, is replaced with the morphology of traditional orchestration. This approach might be regarded as an attempt to renew the orchestral site. But by failing to transfer any of the qualities of difference that sets Bowie's music apart from other musics, Glass only manages to confirm the orchestra as museal site, which radiates more or less the same values regardless of the music emanating from it.

In many respects, the orchestra is an aural museum, primarily engaged with exhibiting historical pieces of art. I do not contend the legitimacy of this; it might even be the main *raison d'être* of the modern orchestra. When an artist is invited to work within the framework of a museum, the task of working within this historical situatedness would normally have great impact on the working process. But with composers, this is rarely the case. Most of us tend to treat the orchestra as if it was a blank canvas for us to display our profound abstractions on. And the concert hall is treated like a neutral white cube, as if the whole apparatus of the concert spectacle were of no importance to the work of art.

But of course it is. The limitations imposed upon the contemporary composer in dealing with the orchestra are legion and undeniable. The regulations are strict, and I am not talking about regulations of aesthetical expression, but the rules of production. To borrow a military term, we might call them rules of engagement, with respect to the rigid structure in working schedules, rehearsal time, the power of the travelling menagerie of conductors and soloists, the increasing focus on the box office, the fears and desires of the international brotherhood of concert hall executives, impresarios etc. etc.

In this light, almost any new work of orchestral music could be considered 'site-specific', in that it is written for a particular place, a particular body of production and, often, for a specific occasion. Very few professional composers write 'ideal' scores for their drawers; they have to merge their artistic fantasies with the reality given by possibilities of performance and commissioning agreements. This is not necessarily all wrong; constraints have proven to be a driving force in musical creativity. But it underlines the specificity of situation, the framing of the creative process when involved with the orchestra.

Walter Benjamin identifies the uniqueness of the work of art in its 'Here and Now'.[9] The uniqueness of its *place* of existence. What is the 'Here and Now' of the orchestral work? Is the performance of a classical piece a reproduction, or a repetition? Is it reification or a reanimation? Different answers to these questions imply different consequences. If one reads the music history of the last hundred years as primarily a history of interpretation, the potential of reanimation becomes crucial in dealing with the work of music. From a critical point of view, however, the ever-prevailing narrow canon of 'classical' music points to a practice of reducing and reifying the outcome of complex forces (historical, economical and aesthetical) to a practical level of recognition and confirmation. And from the vantage point of the creator, it is not difficult to localize a great many repetitive features even in the first performance of a new piece for orchestra: there are repetitions of methods, of place, of the whole historical situation of the symphonic concert-event. In many cases it has a strong reproductive character, in the affirmations of traditions, structures and ideologies that are hidden behind the thin veil of *autonomous art*.

When it comes to the 'Now' of Benjamin's expression, art music has long since lost the privilege of being *contemporary*. For the time being, too many heads are hidden in the sand, leaving much of this music in a weird limbo; on one hand, there is the bliss of ignorance in the pretence that it is possible to return to the safe haven of the structures and even the sound of 'classical music'. On the other hand, there is the inherited rhetoric of 'new music', the idea of *nie erhörte klänge* and historical development still used as apologetics for clinging to the historical privilege of the composer.

The idea of treating the orchestra as site is a proposal for another way of dealing with this traumatic loss of the 'Now'. It is embracing the position of the coming-after. It is establishing a practice treating the orchestral medium and genre as somehow completed, but not resorting to post-historical manners of pastiche. On the contrary, this position demands a commitment to formal transformations and investigations, but within a wider contextual framework than the somewhat naïve idea of 'the new'.

2

When entering the site of the orchestra, the first question many composers ask themselves is: What is possible to do in this place? How can I make this place sound? Another, perhaps less explored question might be: What is to be *found* on this site?

This points to a distinction between *creating* musical space and *investigating* musical space. In my line of research, it follows that the latter is a viable approach to the modern-day orchestra. In other words, having identified the orchestra as a site of excavation, it is time to start digging. Before I continue with this terminology borrowed from archaeology and forensics, I should state that I am not implying a discourse-archaeology in strict Foucaultian terms, and no systematic descriptions of discourse-objects. This would be a much wider task, and a musicologist's task, not a composer's. My approach is rather in the everyday-sense of the word 'archaeology', digging into orchestral practices, not excavating whole 'discursive formations', but rather allowing for a phantasmagorical enthrallment with fragments of such objects found within orchestral culture, to see how they can reveal something of the structures from which they originate and to spur the imagination to further work with these structures. I use the term 'archaeology' as an approach to the orchestra, a mind-set, offering an alternative to unilinear history. And I take the liberty of pointing to two (admittedly Foucaultian) perspectives on archaeology: In a definition from the field of media archaeology, archaeology is 'speaking to the present and critiquing the present in examining historical objects'.[10] And, in the words of Hal Foster, '[t]he purpose of any "archaeology" is to ascertain what one can of the difference of the present and the potential of the past'.[11]

So, having said this, while spooning up the gravel from the social and historical strata of the orchestra, the composer tries to locate the timbral bodies to work with in the present. In the sedimentary layers of orchestral sound I might be able to find the one tiny bone that triggers something in me, emotionally, technically and intellectually, something that proliferates and becomes multiplied, setting off a whole process of speculation and creation. I like to think of this as an exhumation of the orchestral body. In reality, it is as much a question of exhuming the timbral ghosts from ones own memory, ones own body. It is about activating one's own mnemonic structures alongside the buried wishes and secret desires of the orchestral body itself.

To turn to the latter first, one might ask: What are the memories of a specific orchestra? If one imagines the orchestral body as a singular unity, with memories, traumatic as well as blissful, the composer has the opportunity to work within the mnemosonic archive of the orchestra. When suggesting the orchestra as archive, let me refer to Thomas Flynn's Foucaultian definition of archives: 'An Archive is the locus of the rules and prior practices forming the condition of inclusion or exclusion that enable certain practices and prevents others from being accepted as "scientific"

or "moral"', or whatever rubric may be in use at a particular epoch'.[12] In a sense, I would intimate that the orchestral culture as such could be regarded as an intersection of archives, the two most prominent representing two opposing regimes of storage: the *symbolic* (the scores of orchestral music), and the *real* (the recordings of orchestral performance). In my orchestral piece *Standing Stones* I stage a collision between these two regimes in the meeting between fragments of scores, treated with the devices of written music, and the same fragments from historical recordings, treated as sound-samples.[13] (The idea of the two regimes is defined by Friedrich Kittler in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, following up on Lacan's methodological distinction.[14]) On a more specific level, one can consider an institution like the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the world's oldest orchestral institutions, situated on the outskirts of Europe in a country that has followed a trajectory from utmost poverty to filthy rich over the last century. What might the memories of this 250-year old being be? Searching in archives, listening to recordings, interviewing musicians, all this could give the composer indications on the 'subconscious' life of the orchestra, to shift to a Freudian metaphor. And to follow up on the same terms: it could help understand the traumas of orchestral culture, its development through historical and present-day crises.

In its discursive complexity, I also like to consider the orchestral culture as an archive of emotion – an institution for documenting and preserving ways of portraying and expressing emotion through changing times. In orchestral music, many of the prevailing models of feeling (or 'feeling') relate to nineteenth century society and nineteenth century mentality. (Think, for instance of the moniker 'Pathetique' given to Beethoven's piano sonata: the word once signified a noble feeling, now a contemptible cliché.) Adjacent to the 'subconscious' and emotional levels, there is the history of the changing social status of the orchestra, and the role this plays in the orchestral situation. And these are just some of many strata one could excavate in addition to the layers of timbral memory – all sorts of different objects are buried in the orchestral excavation site: the social energies of 100 musicians working together on a daily basis; the tension between the reality of the orchestra as workplace – with all its mundane implications – and the expectations of artistic results of the highest quality; the practical and commercial apparatus of the production of dozens of concerts each year; the political implications of generous state sponsorship on the one hand or reliance on box-office and private donors on the other. One way of working with this vast material is to work site-specifically in an intimate relation with the orchestra in question. This can be done through techniques of mapping historical and social relations, unearthing structures that can show the

aesthetical (and ethical) values underlining the actual programming, and so forth. We have at our disposal a wide array of methods, from musico-anthropology to statistical data gathering and algorithmic procedures. The orchestra could also lend itself to practices where the composer engages with the complex social organism of the concert hall, with all its different groups of employees and audiences as well as the performing artists.

Another way of working, as I touched upon above, might be more directly linked with the memories and the bodily notions in the composer. I am talking about the archival phantom-sounds that we carry around with us, memories that originate from the orchestra, and that live on inside us in more or less phantasmagorical states. In the canonical music of the orchestra, archives of personal past are vectored by archives of public pasts. And one might propose mechanisms of re-tracing these mnemosonic structures back to the original object, to invest them with markers of time and personal history, and to give them back to the orchestra in the form of art-objects. These objects could be anything, really: textual instructions to performance; traditional score; electro-acoustic interventions in the orchestral sound. And the societal memory of public pasts can also be grafted onto the orchestra in this respect. One example from recent years is Lars Petter Hagens *Norwegian Archives*, where lost (or rather subdued) proto-fascist Norwegian music of the 1930's is written into an orchestral piece for performance at the German Donaueschingen Festival.[15]

Personally, I have a predilection for certain moments in certain recordings of certain canonical works. I picture the canon as a ruin to pick through – to borrow a phrase from Foster. So we do not have to worry about the obligation to storm the barricades of canon, it is already dismantled and withered, it is present, but without the unifying power that it was so imperative to attack in a not-so-distant past. Sifting through this rubble, all sorts of fragmented items trigger my imaginations. I want to build whole architectural structures out of one chord in Mahler's 5th symphony. I fantasize about never-ending ruptures of ascending sounds from one brass-phrase in Brahms' *Requiem*. I stage private dance-parties in my nocturnal mind with the heavy rhythms of a Bruckner-scherzo. Speaking of scherzos, we could use an example from the modern canon, for is not Berio's *Sinfonia* an example of archaeological mass-exhumation?[16] The obvious instance is the well-known Mahler-scherzo overwritten with debris from the orchestral canon as well as Berio's private fantasies. But the objects of this exhumation are also juxtaposed with contemporary objects of the time of composition (Lévi-Strauss' *The Raw and the Cooked*), and recent past (Samuel

Beckett's *The Unnameable)* as well as urgent political questions (the assassination of Martin Luther King). Another example is Mathias Spahlinger's *Passage/Peysage*, an immense orchestral fantasy springing from the opening chords of Beethoven's third symphony.[17]

Working on the idea of tradition within the orchestra, we realize that it is not something given, but something constructed. One aspect of Berio's *Sinfonia* is that it shows us this construction of tradition at work. In the process of exhumation we will find tradition in every square inch of gravel, but one thing to look out for is the multitude of constructive forces that shape and constitute this overwhelming sense of tradition. It might be liberating to admit the orchestra to the privilege of an outmoded genre, or a radicalized sense of the *completed*. This outmodedness resonates even in the artisanal restrictions and limitations connected with the orchestra: It is not accessible to the art-school student wanting to explore different media, because of the sheer skill needed to construct even one measure of orchestral music and to convey it to the orchestral institution. Its accessibility is regulated by strict rules of admission to the machinery of this very expensive art form. But these artisanal limitations might also be productive, if taken on in the sense that Foster proposes with regard to the living-on after the alleged End of Art. One of the possibilities he sees in this field is what he calls the *Non-synchronous forms of outmoded genres*.[18] As an example, he points to Stan Douglas' film installation *Overture* (1986), where silent movie footage from the Edison Company from around 1900 is juxtaposed with extracts from Proust. He suggests that this synchronization of nonsynchronous forms give the possibility to make 'a new medium out of the remnants of old forms, and to hold together the different temporal markers in a single visual space'.[19] If we shift the emphasis to the aural space, it is not difficult to see how the symphony orchestra can constitute an arena for such exchanges. (There are some discrepancies between Foster's theory of outmoded practices and the framing of my own practice regarding the orchestra. I deal with some of them in 'Brief note on repetition'. Let me state here that while Foster writes about critical *recovery* of past practice, I am trying to work out a critical *examination* of *continued* (past) practices. The orchestra is in a paradoxical state outmoded *and* continued; Residing at the Olympic heights of our cultural hierarchy, but at the same time becoming marginalized, seemingly oblivious of its own marginalization, anyway being unable to do anything with it, going down in a blaze of glory.) The challenge is to open up the (re)constituted medium to social content, following the continuation of Foster's argument. It is obvious that historical memory is more difficult to work with in the orchestra when challenged by the questions of societal memory and social life, but the com-

bination does undoubtedly hide some powerful possibilities. This may be where we find the opportunity to situate the orchestra in a social context, an opportunity that I shall leave unexamined in this particular essay.

3

Let me once again return to my initial metaphor: once the exhumation is done, there is the matter of working with the unearthed objects. The time has arrived for laboratory research, diagnostics, measurement – for qualifying the forensic evidence, for *autopsy*. The etymological root of this word comes from Greek (self + seen), and denotes something eye-witnessed. Let me use the word *ear-witness* in this context, because this is the point where the composer needs to listen in on the exhumed body and to witness for himself, by ear, the true conditions of his material. This can be done intuitively, by ear alone, but there is a host of state-of-the-art technologies to be found in the autopsy room: software for audio analysis, technologies for computer-aided-composition, for synthesis, for filtering and magnifying the most minute details of sound. And there is the wonderful, ancient technology of the score: A whole system of signs, the symbolic representation of sound, open to manipulations and analyses of a different kind, where musical representation is embedded in a cultural praxis as opposed to the cool, digital results on the steel-tray of numerological evidence. This opens up for engagement with taxonomy and systematic classifications, as well as for the erratic flight of the imagination. (All this is with regard to timbral bodies; similar processes could be carried out on other unearthed structures, for instance societal, economical and political, to name but a few possibilities.)

However, the autopsy is not the end result. It is only the last stage in the process of unearthing and preparing the aural objects found on the orchestral site. And it is tempting to follow the metaphor to its logical extreme, describing the ritual display of the excavated, classified and prepared object. Isn't the concert performance the death of musical imagination? Once the musical work is out there in the air, sounding from instruments and loudspeakers, shared with the listening audience, it is no longer an elusive spirit caught and nourished inside the composer's and performer's bodies. It is out there in the open, up for grabs, and in that moment, the phantasmagorical intensities and the grandeur of imagined sound collide with reality in a way that more often than not evoke a bittersweet air of disappointment in its creators.

But this would be to indulge too overtly in a musical death wish. Let me instead revisit the image of the museum. This is a place of worship, of sensuous ecstasies, but it is also, in Adorno's words, a place where the art of the past is put to death.[20] Hal Foster elaborates on this dialectic with the help of Valéry and Proust, who represent these two vantage points in his essay 'Archives of Modern Art'. The first point of view represents Proust as the viewer of art, the museum as a place for 'fantastic reanimation, indeed of spiritual idealization', whereas the second vantage point is from the artists' studio, where the museum represents a threat of chaos and reification.[21] If it is true that the orchestra doubles as shrine and burial site, one does only need a slight transposition of imagery to adjust to the museal scheme of Adorno/Foster. And for a composer, this obvious dichotomy can produce contradictory energies: I find myself torn between the urge to violently oppose the idea of the museum-as-mausoleum, but at the same time I cannot deny the symbolic power and pure mnemonic beauty contained in the orchestral shrine. In other words, the composer on the site of the orchestra has the freedom to superimpose these vantage points in one singular vista. And in the dialectics between these positions there are energies to develop in musical terms, for the composer who looks for possibilities of touching upon a situatedness and contextual placement without losing the sensuous qualities of investigations in sound.

But Foster does not stop here. He ups the ante by tracing the dialectics of reification and reanimation back to Lukács. In his essay 'Reification and Class Consciousness', Lukács develops the idea that spiritual animation is an idealistic compensation for the capitalist reification, and that that this dichotomy constitutes one of the 'antinomies of bourgeois thought'.[22] This notion might lead us on to a question of the modern orchestra as part of the Society of the Spectacle, to follow Guy Debord's term,[23] or as an integral part of the Culture Industry that Horkheimer and Adorno described in their classic text on the subject.[24] The question is if the criticism of *Kulturindustrie*, mainly aimed at the industry of popular culture, at this stage is equally befitting for the symphony orchestra. One might argue that the concert hall has become a marketplace for the spectacle economy. This is a discussion that will take us too far off the line of thought I wanted to develop here, and I will leave it lingering for now. Because we have arrived at the point where the situated, excavated and autopsied body can manifest itself as a piece of art for the symphonic orchestra. To stick with Foster's terminology: the excavation site becomes a construction site – or rather, construction sites, taking into account the vast possibilities for artistic undertakings. It could be music, it could be something else. It could be embedded in a score, or a text, in different electronic media, or in different performative

exchanges between composer, musicians and audience. This turn from excavation to construction also suggests a shift away from a melancholic view of history towards notions that are useful in the artistic acts of actually making something – maybe even something new.

Rushing bodies brush each other on the narrow pavement in front of the hotel. The entrance is anonymous, squeezed in between a café and a clothes shop. The reception is bright and characterless, the small rooms on the floors above quite ordinary. Along the carpeted corridors are rows of brown baize doors and behind one of them Tristan Szabo lies stretched out on the bed. He is motionless, fully dressed, in deep, vegetative sleep. His slow breathing is the only sound in the room. Heavy, even, rhythmic. Without warning, Tristan Szabo's body jerks violently. He calls out a few incoherent syllables and sits upright in bed gasping for breath. Then he slowly returns to the darkened hotel room. The clock radio on the bedside table shows it is afternoon, he can see through the chink in the curtains that the air outside is darkening. He sits with his head in his hands until his hammering pulse has calmed down. It is the same dream he has had every night for the last week, every day. He reaches out for his stationery in the bedside table drawer. The sound of the pen against the paper is arrhythmic, like Morse code. There is no door there, he writes. I go through a heavy red velvet curtain; on the other side there is a darkened hall and a dimly lit stage. I stride out onto the stage, there is an orchestra sitting there and waiting in the crepuscular darkness. Then I hear the sound of a person clapping, I try to focus my gaze on the dark hall and glimpse a man in the middle of the empty rows of seats. He is wearing a black hat or hood, I'm not really sure, impossible to tell. I bow and turn to the orchestra. The conductor's desk is empty. No scores, no music. I stand and look at them, recognising my own orchestra, but the concert hall is unknown – I can't remember having been here before. The leader of the orchestra quietly clears his throat and looks at me quizzically. I grasp the conducting baton, take a moment to collect myself and give the upbeat. The orchestra begins to play. It is a deep and dark sound. Trombones, bassoons, bass clarinets, cellos, double basses, floating like heavy matter at the bottom of the orchestra. I conduct with slow, large movements. After only a few bars I hear male voices, basso profundo. Then I see the choir, the mass of faces lined up behind the orchestra at the edge of the sparse lighting.

They are dressed in black, have no choral folders in their hands; their faces are serious, white. I continue conducting, providing direction to the tenors, the horns, the mass is contracting, I try to hear the words they are singing but it's impossible, no one is singing the same, they are all singing the same thing, but no one is singing the same as anyone else, they are all singing the same thing but in different ways. Everything flows, the slow surge begins to move upward, the first female voices, the altos, trumpets, still the dark matter underneath and I haven't heard this music before, but I know it, my body knows it, it is unfolding before me and in the same moment that I hear it, I know it. I give direction to the different musicians in the orchestra, make eye contact with the lead oboist, then the violas, the tuba player, the cello group, I look at the solo cellist, she is sitting stiffly, much more than usual, not swaying back and forth with her long torso in time with what she is playing, even the clarinettist is holding her instrument quite still in front of herself, thin fingers moving mechanically over the keys, the music continues rising, it becomes more powerful, brighter, the sounds twists, opens up, now the sopranos come in, I move my gaze back to the cellist, her hair has lost its lustre – or is it the light, no, it's the hair. She looks up at me, catches my eye, and her facial features have become so defined, the eye sockets sunken in, the eyes swimming in deep pits, skin taut over the cheekbones, her lips have turned black, now I see clearly the bones underneath the thin skin on her arms, as if it is about to crack, the skin, on the arms sticking out of the shiny, black, sleeveless dress. I conduct, I know the music, I haven't heard it before, but I know it by heart, my arms move in large, round movements, louder now, a little quicker, and I look at the strings sitting in a semicircle around my little podium, the same thing with all of them, their hair is coming out right before my eyes, drying out, losing its lustre, turning grey, white, some of them are already losing it in large tufts that sail silently to the floor. They play on while their skin cracks, melting their faces, skulls becoming visible, skulls everywhere now, it's happening to the choir as well, the gaping mouths full of rotting teeth, falling out on each consonant. Slowly, I build up to the climax

in the music, drawing phrases out, gathering force, all the strings move their bows in synchrony, bony arms in evening dresses, all the beautiful women, breasts reduced to fibres of skin at the neckline, open rib cages, lungs crumbling like paper, silent, cold meat hearts behind the ribs. I know that the climax is approaching, the bass drum whirls, timpani, what are they singing, they are singing as one voice now, a gigantic voice singing gigantic words, but I can't manage to understand them. The tam-tam and cymbals strike the final word, enveloping it, hiding it in a crackling spectrum of colour, a massive chord that lasts and lasts before slowly collapsing, dying out, returning to the depths. But I know that it is only for a short while, and there, on the wall behind the topmost choristers, almost up by the roof, I catch sight of the organist, and above the rolling, fading chord, simple harmonies rise, a soaring melody, a chorale. The choir is silent now, the toothless jaws closed, eyes staring straight ahead, barely kept in place in the oversized eye sockets, brain matter melting and streaming out through all orifices, the clothes on some of them beginning to fall away as the organ plays on. I recognise the melody but can't place it, a psalm, Bach, perhaps, and just when the orchestra has returned to the dark I begin to build again, faster this time, the mass accumulating energy, gathering into spontaneous flocks of movement, encircling the organ, then voices again, first the basses, tenors, then the women, the beautiful, dead women, they devour the organ and this time it doesn't take long before everyone is gathered in the same, enormous movement, but even more powerful now, even wilder. And then the brass section rises, they stand upright – the horns, trumpets and trombones – their trousers sliding off them as their iliac crests cannot hold the pieces of fabric up any longer, femurs with a few tendrils of flesh remaining, genitals that loosen and fall toward the ground like overripe pears. They rise and the air is drawn through the crumbling lungs and out through the instruments, the glowing brass, in long, insane blasts, the plump woman in the horn section is reduced to bones and wrinkled skin, her dress slips off her as she stands, falling like a sheer silk curtain, slowly into the dust around the bony feet. But she plays,

plays on, and I conduct, onward, building, the choir becomes one voice again, the orchestra becomes one instrument, the music rolls on with the unyielding will of the dead, a violent force drives us forward, we are one, now, one body, one flesh, one mind, and we battle onwards, are carried onwards, we push against one another in the vibrant orchestral air, we breathe together, and it isn't long until once again we are at the climax, but we aren't, because there is even more, still more, more pleasure, I can build a little bit more, strain the arch a little more, I groan loudly with every beat as the drummers sticks whirl in front of my eyes, the timpani thunders, giant clubs on the large drum and tam-tam, one last impulse, I spread out, become huge, enormous, my arms embrace a sea of air, lifting us all up in a second of silence before the final release, the chord, the colours sparkle before my eyes, glow in my ears, I hold out my arms in front of me, quivering, holding the sound, carrying the sound, not wanting to let it go, my face is turned towards the roof, towards the chandeliers, but there are no chandeliers, there is no roof, only black, endless night sky, and when I turn my gaze to the orchestra again I see that my arms are also nothing but bone, stretching out before me, just a few sinewy shreds hold the hand grasping the conductor's baton together, I fold my arms slowly against my chest, gather the sound – even now it moves, swaying more than rolling now – in a few eternal seconds it will be completely shrivelled up, I hold it in my hands like a little bird, a sparrow, lifeless but still warm, in just a few moments it will be cold, dead matter in my hands, I place them against my breast, feel how the bony fingers hammer against my ribs, I bow my head, only now can I feel the smell of my own body, the bodies of the others, merging and rising up above us like a mild, rotting steam, I bow my head and feel one of my eyes falling out; it bounces a couple of times before coming to a rest in the moist puddle that has gathered around my feet, I hold my hands together, against my breast, the sound has died out now, only reverberations left, and when that too is gone there is silence. And the silence lasts, for a short or long time, impossible to say, now that time has stopped, but it lasts, lasts until it is interrupted by the

applause of the only person in the hall, and I listen to the sound of two hands hitting each other before turning around and receiving the applause, bowing low twice before gesturing to the orchestra and they rise with a creaking, crackling sound, the living dead straighten up and receive the applause as their clothes fall off them; some limbs have also started to fall off, and I stare one-eyed out into the auditorium as the black-clad man stands up, he is wearing a hood, I can see that now, he is giving us a standing ovation, rhythmically, his face is serious and nodding slowly. Don't I know him? Yes, I do – but from where? I bow low again, the orchestra bows with me, a new, never before heard sound, and where have I seen him before, I know him, and when I look up again he is gone and only the sound of the clapping hands can be heard in the dark, empty hall.

Body and Site

Reading Kwon, thinking of Gould

It is a simple fact that the composer has to deal with the body of the musician. Lots of bodies, lots of people. Four people in a string quartet. Fifteen people in a sinfonietta. A hundred people in a symphony orchestra. Highly skilled professionals, well educated, carefully selected, often with many years of experience, week after week after week playing the great classics and the occasional new work. The institution of classical music is not only a frame for aesthetic conventions, it is the *embodiment* of convention, localized *in* the people playing the music.

As with bodies everywhere, there are certain relations between these bodies and their places of action: the body of the musician is where the production of music unfolds. The body is both an intermediary between composer and listener and a producer of meaning in its own right. It is a prosthetic extension of the listener's own body in the act of listening, and vice versa, the listening body is an externalization of the performer's own listening. The functioning logic and conventions of the performing forces of the musical institution is embodied in the musician. If you want to work with notated music in live performance, the body of the musician is indispensable, doubling as both interpretational artist in its own right and an interface to the instruments' abilities. Needless to say, the complexity of this process of communication has led many a composer to the end of her wits with frustration. In order to circumnavigate the strange combination of rigour and contingency of classical musical culture, many composers have abandoned the institution in order to work with very specific situations in terms of people and bodies. Some composers prefer to work with a limited and constant group of performers, scrutinizing the structures of people and ideas with sociological or even anthropological inclinations. Others have turned to the self-sufficiency of electronic means of performance and distribution.

But all of these bodily-situated practices can be taken as a starting point to address the idea of the *site* in relation to music. In 'Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy', I have already started to discuss the orchestral work as a situated practice, and a look at the genealogy of site-specific art can prove useful to clarify a couple of points.

1

When site-specific art emerged in the late sixties, it intensified the new relations between spectator and art object that was established by minimal art. In *One Place After the Other* Miwon Kwon describes a three-stage development of site-specific (or site-oriented) art:[25] Beginning with phenomenological investigations of physical space, artists like Daniel Buren or Michael Asher moved to sites constituted through social, economic and political processes of the art-institutions. In Kwon's words, to be 'specific' to such a site 'is to decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden operations – to reveal the way in which institutions mould art's meaning to modulate its cultural and economic value[.]' In further development in the nineties, the nomadic artist/artwork started to engage in public, institutional or virtual relationships with a fluid, discursive notion of site. Contemporary artistic projects tend to focus on this third and 'late' form of site-orientation, but I will argue that the earlier forms, the phenomenological and institutional, are of particular interest in the context of music. Primarily because they have worked through problems with which the musical institution has been confronted only to a limited degree, what may be regarded as tired and evacuated institutional critique in the arts might prove to have validity in the contemporary field of music. Here, the paradigm of autonomy and consequent self-referential withdrawal remains largely unchallenged. The way site-specific work in its earliest formation focused on establishing physical relationships between the work and its site could be a point of departure for such a confrontation, as could the subsequent expansion of the notion of site to something constituted through historical, political and social processes. In fact, the conditions of music institutions are not at all remote to these ways of thinking: The physicality of minimal art, already touched upon in its relation to the body, also deflected meaning from the object to the space of presentation and thus challenged the 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' of the institutional space itself. According to Kwon, Michael Asher, in his contribution to the 73rd American Exhibition, 'revealed the sites of exhibition or display to be culturally specific situations that generate particular expectations and narratives regarding art and art history'. This is exactly what I'm aiming for in *Standing Stones*, with respect to the concert hall as site of exhibition. The 'non-neutrality' of the gilded shrine of the concert hall is so obvious to modern eyes that it perhaps for that reason has been overlooked. But if one adapted Daniel Buren's dictum on the museum to the concert hall, it would challenge new works of music in profound ways, even though it was stated almost 40 years ago: 'Any work presented in that framework,

if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon itself, falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency – or idealism'.[26]

One might say that this is a motivating force behind pieces like Kagel's *Staatstheater*, for example.[27] But this de-idealization would also, recursively, 'bind' the listener to the here-and-now of the concert hall, to let the listener discover him- or herself as physical presence in this *place*. This is the opposite of idealized acousmatic listening, where the physical and phenomenological origin of sound is to be disregarded.[i] To experience the physical, real body of the performer is, in its way, to discover one's own body in listening. One could describe this as a process where the acute relationship between musicians' bodies and their instruments is repeated in the experience of listening in a shared *place* with the musician.

This also highlights the peculiar mode of the live musical work: its ability to address both physical space in the bodily experience of listening, and the culturally specific 'situation-site' of the event. The musical institution is both a physical space encompassing an encounter between bodies of musicians and listeners in actual sound, and a site of politics, history and production of meaning. Furthermore, the concert allows for the synchronicity of physical and discursive place, of space and time. The synchronicity of sound is the embodiment of an idea caught between its discursive and its physical aspects.

2

Miwon Kwon critiques the commodification of later site-specific practices that *represent* criticality rather than performing it. The nomadic artist, travelling from 'site' to 'site', is undoing the assumption of criticality associated with the immobility, permanence and unrepeatability of the early site-specific works. Kwon shows how the belief in places as reservoirs of unique identity and production of 'difference' have been utilized in quasi-promotional agendas of cities, urban developments, etc.[28] This coincides with the re-emergence of artist as progenitor of meaning, as 'narrator-protagonist' in a complex 'story' of place and difference. The myth of the artist

i *Acousmatic* music is a Schaefferian concept widely subscribed to in electro-acoustic music, named after the Greek term of listening to something behind a curtain, where you cannot identify the source of the sound.

and the belief in places as reservoir of unique identity converge to mask the collapse of either side of the equation.

Kwon describes the shift from artist as a labourer, a producer of objects to a service-provider/managerial function. From factory worker to travelling salesman. Travelling artists on call, delivering 'criticality-on-demand' seem not unlike the orchestral conductor or soloist, moving from orchestra to orchestra to erect temporal musical monuments. But there's a big difference: The latter do not pretend to deliver criticality: they deliver 'greatness', 'genius' and 'authenticity'. Not the (supposed) authenticity of place, but of the capital-W *Work* and its almost as capitalized *Interpreter*. The commodified performative aspect of the nomadic artist's mode of operation is the same that the travelling menagerie of orchestral superstars has provided since the days of Gustav Mahler.

It was precisely this menagerie that the pianist Glenn Gould dropped out of when he announced that he was giving up touring in 1964, at the age of 32. This was a scandalous shock to the musical world, practically unprecedented in the business of classical music. Gould's anti-spectacular withdrawal was in fact a spectacular gesture of defiance to the spectacle. Word-games aside, this decision that confounded so many at the time is easy to understand when we consider Gould's relationship with *place*. One thing is that his withdrawal, deciding to work exclusively in the confinement of his recording studio, was his way of circumnavigating the contingency of conductors, orchestras, audiences and instruments. But the relation to place is more profound. Emblematic of this is his relation to the low, sawed-off chair that his father had modified, which he had used since childhood. He dragged the chair around the world with him, insisting on never sitting on anything than that old, battered thing when he played.[ii] We can read this chair as a token of his ties to a physical place amid the nomadism of being a touring soloist. It also encompasses his relation to his instrument; he had been playing on the same piano since 1960 (albeit reconstructed after falling off a truck in 1973; his deep relationship with this instrument is highlighted by the fact that he started to play in slower tempi after it was rebuilt with heavier action of the mechanism.) He often toured with his own piano, but the chair is an even more potent symbol (or symptom) of how he tried to carry a bit of place with him when he travelled. I like to imagine that his withdrawal was prophesied by that chair. In Jonathan Cott's *Conversations with Glenn Gould,*

ii Fun-fact: The chair is now on display in a glass case in the National Library of Canada.

Gould tells a story that sheds some light on his relation to the places of music. It's worth quoting at some length:

> […] It involved a time in Tel Aviv – the fall of 1958, in fact – and I was giving a series of concerts on an absolutely rotten piano, the manufacturer of which shall be left unnamed […] So on the afternoon of the first of that series of concerts, I'd gone through a miserable rehearsal at which I played like a pig because this piano had finally gotten to me. I was playing on *its* terms. I had 'put it on', as Mr. McLuhan would say, and I was really very concerned because I simply couldn't play a C-major scale properly. I was incapable, apparently, of responding on any terms but those which were immediately presented to me through the medium of that piano.
>
> […] And I went out to a sand dune and decided that the only thing that could possibly save this concert was to re-create the most admirable tactile circumstance I knew of. […] So I sat in ye sand dune and decided to imagine myself back in my living room … and first of all to *imagine* the living room, which took some doing because I had been away from it for three months at this point. And I tried to imagine where everything was in the room, then visualize the piano, and – this sounds ridiculously *yogistic*, I'd never done it before in precisely these terms … but so help me it worked.
>
> Anyway, I was sitting in the car, looking at the sea, got the entire thing in my head and tried desperately to live with that tactile image throughout the balance of the day. I got to the auditorium in the evening, played the concert, and it was without question the first time that I'd been in a really exalted mood throughout my stay there – I was *absolutely* free of commitment to that unwieldy beast.[29]

This story opens up to all kinds of notions about music making and place. What's of particular interest to me is something Kwon would define as an experience of being in the 'wrong' place, a concept arising from a discussion on Don De Lillo's novel *Valparaiso.*[30] In Kwon's reading, the experience of the 'wrong' place may give the individual a possibility to confront certain existential issues that would otherwise be hidden from the self. I think Gould's example shows another mode: 'wrongness' as a catalyst for enhancing (or even discovering) mental capacities.

After Glenn Gould's grand gesture of giving up concert performances, he withdrew to the recording studio and a relatively immobile life-situation; first in New York, then in Toronto. Along with his eccentric persona and the rich roster of neuroses and subsequent chemical self-medication, this choice has proven fertile grounds for speculation and psychologization, to which I have hereby chipped in my two coins. But in the end, the withdrawal from the nomadism of concert-life was probably a means of survival for Gould – a way to be able to continue to develop his art without having to obey the laws of production and dissemination of the industry of classical music. (By the same token, Gould experimented with and developed the studio as an instrument in its own right, as one of the few classical musicians that explored the possibilities of multitrack recording parallel with the technological development in popular music throughout the seventies and eighties.) Miwon Kwon discusses, albeit in passing, the existential implications of the fact that in spite of discursive sites and fictional selves and whatnot, our adherence to actual places persist – and not necessarily for lack of theoretical refinement.[31]

According to Kwon, the hidden attractor behind the ubiquity of site-oriented art is the uniqueness of place, its production of difference. This difference, initially part of a critical discourse, may very well be commodified as 'difference'.[32] In the discourse of classical musical, difference is in the interpretation – the work is basically the same, drawn from a finite repertoire of canonical pieces. But the difference of interpretation may very well be a false difference, in that both orchestral and soloist playing have become so streamlined that there is very little room for individuality (let alone eccentricity) and curiousness in approaches to interpretation. This is commodification of performative practices in the guise of 'tradition' (which really amounts to 'a collection of bad habits', according to Arthur Schnabel.[33]) The layers of rigid tradition also serve to veil a crucial aspect in meeting with the site of music: site does not exist prior to cultural forms introduced to or emerging from it. To reanimate the site of music, to make it come alive, one needs a certain friction of opposing forces. And in my context of inquiries into the place of music, interpretations are of interest to the extent that they go against the grain of expectation and habit.

Much has been said about Glenn Gould in this respect, and his relation to place is not as commented as his relation to the musical score. Let it suffice to say on this occasion that he dared to follow unacceptable ideas, way beyond notions of 'good taste', in his interpretation of the musical canon. (His recordings of Mozart may serve as an example – and indeed his view of canon itself is one that displays much eccentricity.) He was also interested in other performers that had the same let us

call it *speculative* approach to the possibilities of interpretation. (The only two musicians in his radio documentaries were Pablo Casals and Leopold Stokowski.[34]) But we were talking about the re-animation of the musical site, and Glenn Gould's recording of Brahms' Piano Concerto no.1 with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic is exemplary, almost to the extent that you'd think it was some kind of staged antagonism going on.[35] What happened was that Bernstein went on stage and addressed the audience with a disclaimer, distancing himself from Gould's interpretation (which, among other choices, involved playing the Maestoso-movement at half the indicated tempo.) All was said in a gentle and friendly tone, but the very fact that he openly disagreed, and in passing also touched upon the complex power-relations between conductor and soloist, charges the situation with both antagonism and questions of hierarchy. This, in turn, opens the performance up to an acuteness in terms of listening, with a sensation that something is really at stake here, in the temporal unfolding of the music before our ears. And Brahms' *Concerto* is revealed as something much more than a battered old showpiece – it becomes a battle ground for a dialectic between different readings, even different *ontologies* of the work itself. This stroke of genius from Bernstein makes the orchestral site a place for surprise, for opposing forces, for sustained tension that may be left unresolved, both for the listeners and the performers. So the question is: Could Gould's interpretative praxis be labelled *critical*?

Bernstein's disclaimer is even on the commercial recording of the occasion, appearing on the track list as *pre-concert disclaimer*, as if it was an integral part of the interpretation. The recording has a very live ambience, created not only by Bernstein's pre-concert speech and Gould's customary humming, but also a richness of coughing from the audience that is not often heard in classical recordings. The fragile, delicate Adagio, for instance, is virtually penetrated by audience sounds, to such an extent that even in a present-day solipsistic listening-mode, individually connected via headphones to our iPods, which drip-feed us our music, we find ourselves immersed in a community of listeners. We become aware that we are only one among a host of listening bodies, most of which are long dead and gone. We are part of an audience of phantom bodies, a historical continuity of playing, listening (and coughing).

I find this listening so fascinating that it is one of the motivations of incorporating old recordings in the sampler-part of *Standing Stones*: I am to envelop the audience in the symphonic hall in a vertical historical space of sounds emitted and captured on the same site, but in other times and by other bodies. These sounds, in the loop-

ing-system I create, also become part of the musical texture, the body of musical sound. I'm not quite sure why I find these audience-sounds so interesting, but I think it has something to do with my own memory of the first time I heard the Gould recording and what I remember most vividly was not the interpretation but the intense audience-participation making the musical experience a truly social one.

3

So, rare as it may be, it is possible to locate a sense of friction or resistance in the interpretative business of music making. But the task of providing subversion is mainly ascribed to the composer. Kwon's pungent description of the artist-as-service-provider is no less accurate here than in the arts. But the role of new music has not become *spectacular* in the same way as new art in the institution – instances like the franchized Guggenheim, The Gehry-museum in Bilbao or site-specific work as regional branding and touristic development. The role of the composer has surely become more nomadic with the ever-increasing emphasis on premieres in orchestras, ensembles and festival. The abundance of co-commissions also increases the frequent flyer points of composers, as they are expected to take part in the first performance(s) of their work. Many composers also travel with their work because they have to: because they are inscribed in the work, explicitly, as performers, or implicitly, as instructor for new playing-techniques, electronic parts etc.

But there are no superstar-composers to match the likes of e.g. Damien Hirst or Anne Sophie Mutter. The spectacle of the musical institution is one of interpretation, not creation. The important selling point for the orchestras' marketing departments is always soloists and conductors. What composers do provide is *political* legitimacy, both as sought-after 'subversiveness' (art is supposed to 'challenge' and 'provoke' us) and a gloss of newness and experimentalism (art is the spearhead of 'creativity' and 'innovation'.) This is more often than not mere rhetoric, spun around works safely adapted to the institutional frame. Composers, taken hostage by the institution, seem to have developed a collective Stockholm syndrome and identify entirely with our capturers. So the question is *how* this adaptation of site-specific thinking could be done, even *if* it could be done in the place of music without dulling the edges of its critique as Kwon has described. I'll have to point to my musical works, the actual musical *making*, for further 'debate' on my own behalf. But before describing a couple of other contemporary practices that suggests possible relations of music,

body and space, I would like to point to an article by the composer John Croft. It is called 'Fields of Rubble: On the Poetics of Music after Postmodernism', the title itself evoking the image of after-ness that I have described in 'Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy'. Croft quotes Frederic Jameson's proposal of a 'cognitive mapping' in which art takes on a broadened quasi-pedagogical role of 'disalienating' the subject. It 'involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories'.[36] Croft takes this (Jameson originally discussing disorientation in the postmodern city) as a cue, and proposes a notion of mimesis that reconquers the relation between subject and environment, whether spatial, cultural or historical. (We are not talking about mimesis as immediate identification, but in the sense of Marcuse's 'representation through estrangement'.[37]) Croft regards subjectivity as a biological fact connected to the individual as the nexus for this reconquest, and uses the work of Salvatore Sciarrino to exemplify three mimetic strands. The first is an environmental mimesis, a device of nature-sound imagery we find in many of Sciarrino's pieces. The second is a bodily, visceral mimesis, the acute rendering we find in a piece like *Lo Spazio Inverso*,[38] of 'the rotating swish of bodily streams, the scarping wheeze where arteries bend'.[39] The last strand is appearances of musical pasts, the materiality of e.g. trills etc. from early baroque vocal style *without its original context*.[40] This is not a rendering of the past as empty signifiers, but an exposure of materiality that surpasses the semiotic.[iii] This last point is crucial, since it points to a notion of music transmitted as energy/material rather than referent/content, which is an important distinction in Crofts discussion. My question is whether it is not possible to think these perspectives together, to weave these mimetic strands into a music that is *both* energy and referent. I believe I accomplish something to this effect in my rendering of the repeated Mahler chord in the third movement of *Standing Stones*; after serving as a referent in an explicit mimetic/pedagogical game between historical performances (from loudspeakers) and the actual live orchestra on stage, the repeated chord, processed between original and distorted versions, becomes a material, physical reality in its own, re-contextualized right. This dual perspective might be a way to abolish the 'gap between the thing to be transmitted and the act of transmission' that Giorgio Agamben describes – and that Croft locates in the identity between the energetics of a past music and the demands of new music.[41]

iii The emphasis of de-contextualized, gestural corporeality in this 'mimetic strand' links it closely to Helmut Lachenmann's stagings of new relations between musician's bodies and their instruments.

4

There are many examples of historical works of music that are made in response to a specific location and/or situation. Giovanni Gabrieli's *Canzonas* for the galleries of the San Marco form one example. John Dowland's intimate lute-pieces for the bedside of the insomniac King of Denmark are another. Musicologists argue that Bach's large choral works and certain of Haydn's symphonies were tailored for the acoustic situations of Thomaskirche in Leipzig and the Great Hall at Ezterháza Castle, respectively.[42] Richard Wagner turned the tables with his opera house in Bayreuth: It is a place built for a specific music, not the other way around (*Parsifal* was his only work composed with the acoustics of Bayreuth in mind).

In recent times, the idea of the Work as an autonomous art-object has prevailed in most quarters of new music, autonomous to the degree that music effectively has uprooted itself from its bonds to its sites and situations. (Although even Adorno, the gatekeeper of autonomy, has identified the music of symphonic form as an amalgam of site, occasion and musical content where the auratic *prescence* of the full musical experience would include both socially contingent and bodily experienced features.[43]) Nevertheless, there are many practitioners working with different modalities of site-orientation. The first present-day composer that comes to mind in this context is Benedict Mason. With a background in filmmaking from London's Royal College of Art, Mason (b. 1954) has worked with the way music is expressed and experienced through architectural space or urban landscapes. He is working with questions of distance, proximity, movement and directionality in a spatio-musical context. A recent example is his *Music for Oslo City Hall*, where the audience traversed the monumental halls, staircases and chambers of Oslo City Hall while ensembles, choirs and soloists were performing in different locations. So the musical forms were dictated by the physical movements of the audience, and the acoustic sensations often aimed at experiences of distance (e.g. people passing open doors of chambers where musicians were playing, without being able to enter the rooms.) This way of establishing the artwork in the interstices between the audience and the 'object' is reminiscent of strategies in minimal art, and indeed Mason himself has made the connection with fine arts in comparing his work with installations, utilizing space and sound in a sculptural way.[44]

A composer with a related, but very different, project is James Saunders (b. 1972). From 2000 to 2009 he worked on a project entitled *#[unassigned]*. In this work, each

version is composed for a specific performance and normally is performed only once. On his website, Saunders calls this

> an ongoing modular composition which takes Lacan's notion of 'rings of a necklace that is a ring in another necklace made of rings' as a starting point. The piece is flexible in its construction, with modules being detachable, and appearing in different versions. For example, a version for violin, clarinet and cello may share common units with a version for cello and tuba. The generic title for the whole project is #[unassigned], however individual versions of the piece use the date in the form #ddmmyy to derive the specific title (for example, a version performed on 3 February 2004 is titled #030204). The title is therefore unique to the individual performance. […] Each version is a bespoke composition for the performers, and it allows me to embrace unusual and interesting situations as I work (for example, using non-standard or rare instruments, different performance spaces, or variable levels of performer ability). There is no definitive score or version of the piece as all display different possibilities within the boundaries of the project. I am essentially writing one piece which is always different. The whole #[unassigned] project aims to explore how a change of context or synchronization affects the way we perceive events, and how we derive meaning from this.[45]

Where Mason's work addresses a physical site in spectacular ways, Saunders' approach is low-key. As the naming-structure suggests, it is more about temporality and the open-endedness of the work-in-progress than about the physicality of place and movement. However, in recent work, Saunders also incorporates notions of the social and a possible combination of mobilization and specificity in his series of 'Distribution Studies'. He takes decentralized and self-organizing networks as model for compositions made for personal, distributed performance where audiences will receive scores with instructions for their own performances of it – thereby establishing physical relations between spectator and art object to the extent that the spectators are the actual practitioners/performers of the work.[iv] In *Distribution*

iv Interestingly, the pop icon Beck has recently done something of the same: his new 'album' *Song Reader* is released as sheet music only, 20 new and unrecorded songs published by Faber and Faber. The press statement says that 'if you want to hear [the songs], bringing them to life depends on you, the reader'. An example of a major player in the music industry elegantly turning the tables on music-as-consumer-culture, utilizing an obsolete technology and being in the 'wrong' place – at once. In the words of columnist Robin Turner: 'is releasing a song collection that fans actually have to make themselves one of the last truly original moves left for an artist?' (www.thequietus.com)

Study no.8, commissioned for the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich in 2011, Saunders aimed at catalysing an emergent score distribution network in the following fashion: 'Individually numbered copies of the score are made freely available to visitors, who may distribute them to willing recipients, who may in turn do the same. These exchanges are mapped via a website, showing the way in which interpersonal communication networks can shape the dissemination of information'.[46,]

This seems to me to be pretty much in line with Miwon Kwon's open-ended predicament of current site-oriented practices. She points to a terrain between mobilization and specificity – an effort to address the distances between places, to regard places as *next to* each other (as opposed to after one another) and the idea of being in the 'wrong' place with precision and attention.[v] All of this demands an ability to think contradictions, in particular our contradictory desires, together. If the places we traverse should not become serialized and unified, we need a relational specificity that can hold the tension, dialectically, between the poles of mobility and specificity (to paraphrase Kwon rather freely.)[47]

As Saunders' work shows, the spatio-temporal unity of musical performance can be an interesting context in which to address this situation. Let me propose the musical performance as one of the few places where you are required to be in the same space, physically immobile, exerting attention to *one* thing over a certain time span. It can give you that strange, surreal feeling of unmediated experience. Yes, I am aware that this is not an exclusive domain of music. The theatre, for instance, requires some of the same attention-skills.[vi] But when you think about it, there are not many social places left where this is possible. (This would be a good place for a rant about social media and the way it distorts our ability to be fully connected to the actual place we're in. I'll skip that part just now.) A novel is a private experience where time can be disrupted; you can read in your own tempo, put the book down and pick it up again at will. Film has the communal dimension, but the time structure is locked; it doesn't have the open-ended vulnerability of a live musical performance. Listening to radio, you can turn it off or tune in to another station. In most gallery-oriented performances the audience is free to come and go as they wish. The sit-down-shut-up-and-listen of music is not required.

v Another mode of self-organization and mapping of individual movements in physical locations can be found in Simon Steen-Andersen's project *SoundTAG* (www.soundtag.info).

vi Opera director Stefan Herheim puts it this way in an interview: 'Today, the art of opera is alive through its immediate and unique "here and now", through its vulnerability as an exclusive and fugitive art of the moment. [...] I believe that it is this aspect of *memento mori* that sanctifies the theatre'. (Vagant, 4/2012 p. 45, my translation)

This requirement/potentiality is one of music's great assets. It has to do with singularity in the time of hyper-connectivity and hyper-documentation,[vii] an experience of acuteness of time and the ways it is connected with physical space and your bodily presence in it. And it has to do with attention.[viii] The simple yet difficult concept of exerting attention and awareness somehow harmonizes with the concept of communal listening, not least the active stance of listening required by new music. Without becoming didactic, it must be possible to state that this mode of listening offers to create a *fermata* in the middle of a system of motion, a sense of being in a physical here-and-now of the listening body. We are listening bodies together with other listening bodies in an actual place in the same irreversible flow of time. This is the ecstasy of music.

vii Non-documentation is a powerful strategy of difference, for instance utilized in the strictly undocumented performances of Tino Seghal.

viii I am not talking about attention in its full philosophical scope here, merely applying the common usage of the term. For a full run-through of attention economy, attention as scientific area of study etc. we could turn to Jonathan Crary.

Tristan Szabo glides through the automatic glass doors as he leaves the lobby. He sniffs the air – the smell of a new city. Then he starts to wander down the street. It has just begun to darken and the city is full of people. Which day is it? It's Saturday. Something is gnawing at him. Perhaps it's the unknown surroundings, perhaps it's all the people in their 20s who fill the street. Maybe it's the night, soft as velvet, falling on them, maybe it's something else entirely. But Tristan Szabo suddenly feels old. Not old as in "done with youth" or "middle-aged" – he feels old as in "old man". The shop windows show the reflection of a tall, thin figure walking in long strides down Hegdehaugsveien. He reaches the end of the street at a crossroads and finally finds a pub he wouldn't mind going into. It reminds him a little of his home city – Budapest – of the warm taverns where they used to meet in the evenings to solve the mysteries of art, to impress the beautiful girls from the university, to find a partner for the night. He opens the door and enters the dark brown room. It's starting to fill up.

Tristan Szabo finds a free table, sits down and looks around. The walls are full of drawings and yellowing newspaper cuttings and various knick-knacks cover every available surface. The drawings primarily depict middle-aged men; probably notable figures from the local intelligentsia. His eyes wander down from the walls and towards the small groups of people around the bar. They're also mostly middle-aged men; some in suits and ties, others in worn velvet cord jackets and jeans, some groups of younger men too. A waitress is walking past the bar and he waves her over to the table. She's cute, slightly chubby and looks at him with an expression of mild surprise. She asks him in English what he would like. He gets a little flustered, but orders a beer. After the swaying hips have disappeared around the corner he examines his face in the dark windowpane. Is it that obvious that he is a foreigner? Tristan Szabo lets his fingers run over the back of the red leather sofa he is sitting in and discovers a small brass plaque attached to the top. Has he taken the table of a regular – perhaps a failed actor or an alcoholic composer? Was that what the facial

expression of the waitress was trying to convey? The beer comes to the table and he motions to the waitress to stay. He drains the glass in one go, sets it down in front of him with a small clatter and orders another. When the second beer comes he waits for a while before taking his first sip. He forces himself to drink it slowly, but it doesn't much help his restlessness. Maybe it was a mistake to stop in Oslo. He gets up with a little jerk, leaves some money on the table and walks with quick steps towards the exit.

Outside, the darkness has thickened but same strange current still lingers in the air. Tristan Szabo considers going back up to the hotel and sitting in the bar there. He has paid to stay at the hotel and of course he can sit in the hotel bar. But the restlessness is still there, so he decides to take an evening stroll. After wandering aimlessly around the confusing streets for half an hour he feels like another beer. The cityscape around him has changed character: he is walking along a street with low, dilapidated wooden buildings, newly built blocks of flats and old tenements – all jumbled together. Kebab shops and trendy bars are side by side with Pakistani grocery shops and American fast food chains. He considers a newly renovated Viennese café but opts for a somewhat tired little pub next door. There are six or seven tables inside, primarily occupied by well-matured persons of all shapes and sizes. Most look like regulars and conversation is loud under the low ceiling. Some youths are sitting at a couple of the tables and look like they're on a slum safari – their smooth faces and fashionable hairstyles make them stick out like sore thumbs.

He finds a free table at the back of the room, squeezed in between the wall and a loudspeaker. On the other side of the loudspeaker, a small man is sitting behind a large keyboard with a saxophone on a floor stand and a microphone in front of him. He has obviously just had a break because as Tristan Szabo sits down he starts to play. A drum machine ticks along with some kind of swing-rhythm while the melody sounds like some sort of indefinable low-brow dance music. And sure

enough, when the music has got going, a couple get up from their chairs and start moving on the small dance floor in front of the keyboard. They are soon followed by another couple – also clearly not blessed by the fountain of youth. Tristan Szabo orders a beer at the bar, sits down and gazes at the imperfect bodies swinging around in front of him, most of them already well and truly drunk. His restlessness drains away and is replaced by a warm sweetness.

A couple of beers later, the one-man orchestra announces something or other into the microphone, to loud protests from the small crowd of dancers. He is clearly going to take another break. Tristan Szabo gets up and gestures towards the keyboard. Speaking English, he asks if he can play a song. The musician looks sceptical but eventually waves his arm and shrugs his shoulders. Tristan Szabo repays the man by buying him a beer before settling down on the low stool. He strikes a few notes. Most of the dancers have sat down but one couple are still standing, waiting to see how things develop. The one-man orchestra is standing beside the loudspeaker ready to step in if this foreigner should prove to be a troublemaker. Then Tristan Szabo's fingers begin to move across the keyboard. First slowly and tentatively, as if he has to retrieve each chord from some distant part of his memory. However, when the music begins to get going and finds its rhythm, the hands become confident. A melody emerges over the minor chords, melancholic, a little waltz. The couple on the dance floor begin to move, at first hesitant and guarded but soon caught up in the seductive melody, counting on the fingers of Tristan Szabo to keep them gliding across the floor. It doesn't take long for the other couples to return to the dance floor and the one-man orchestra sits down at the table between the loudspeaker and the wall. When the song is almost at an end, another melody suddenly arise from Tristan Szabo's archive of memories and after a sweeping modulation he increases the tempo and changes to a type of a Hungarian folk dance. He begins to hum the melody into the microphone, parts of the text begin to materialise and before long he is singing in a dark, seductive

voice. It seems as if the dancers like it; when he finishes the number they clap enthusiastically and some smile at one other. He leans past the loudspeaker, places a 200kr note on the table in front of the one-man orchestra and nods towards the bar. The man shrugs his shoulders once again and buys another beer. Tristan Szabo plays another song, then another, and another – the dance floor is now full and some of those sitting at the nearest tables are clapping along in time. Two hours later, he is still sitting there playing, singing, his head warm, while people dance and the one-man orchestra sleeps against the wall with his mouth open.

Brief Note #1:

On Repetition

W.G. Sebald has described the inhabitants of the modern world as 'ghosts of repetition' – at once 'utterly liberated and deeply despondent'.[48] This is definitely true of the present-day composer of new music. (S)he is liberated in the sense of working in a field that has eked out an autonomy that has brought it to the brink of marginalization. The connections to the world, even the rest of the art-field are precarious, and the composer (working with live musicians, that is) is to a large degree dependent on the institutions of classical music, where (s)he is a guest that mainly has an ornamental function. These institutions are also in many ways themselves ghosts of repetition. For the most prominent ones, the symphonic orchestra or the chamber music concert, we can talk about repetitions in the sense of iterations – an ongoing, ever-repeating process of doing the same thing over and over. A compulsive repetition where the institution, and, by proxy, the composer, deals in repetition of canonical musical materials and situations, seemingly oblivious – or at any rate indifferent – to its own behavioural patterns.

I have referred to several essays of Hal Foster in trying to discuss repetition in terms of composing for these institutions. There is, however, one point I need to clarify, and that is that Foster mainly deals with repetition in the sense of *returns*, not iteration. In *The Return of the Real* he develops a theory about the Freudian concept of deferred action, of the working-through of a traumatic incident.[49] My take is rather the opposite: The trauma of the musical avant-garde (Schönberg, Stravinsky et al.) and their projection of a new course of musical history was simply overtaken and buried by the conservation and repetition of a canon that reified and engulfed these energies. Future avant-gardes were effectively foreclosed by the substitution of singularity to iterations of canon. This could be effectively done since the here-and-now of musical performance hides the fact that it most of the time proffers repetitions of a museal character. New music is, by and large, merely subscribing to this situation, giving a weak sort of political legitimacy in

exchange for some warmth from the fires of the past. The rhetoric of the new cannot cover up this fact, even when the work of new music is posing/being posed as a singular event, something unique and without pre-existing content or meaning. (I will discuss this in a little more depth later).

This difference extends to another point: In relations between the neo-avant-gardes and historical avant-garde Foster writes about the critical *recovery* of past practices, how artists tried 'to *re*connect with a lost strategy in order to *dis*connect from a present way of working felt to be outmoded, misguided or otherwise oppressive'.[50] For the orchestra, then, in this sense not a lost strategy as such, the challenge will be to question and examine this continued/past practice. What I am interested in is rather the opposite of how Foster describes deferred action in the relation between avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. I will try to utilize the situation where tradition is blithely repeated without ever imagining there could be something traumatic with this repetition. I want to try to *stage* a moment of self-consciousness in *Standing Stones*, as traumatic event, futile as it may sound, by using the device of repetition.

I am also interested in several other forms of repetition. In *Standing Stones*, and, to a lesser degree *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*, I use repetition as simple material form, as musical parameter.[ix] There is also the sense of repetition in how personal pasts cross trajectories with historical pasts, in the way canonical materials are also monuments of the subjective formation of the individual. This must be discussed later.

ix I see no need to discuss this here, since it is well within bona fide music theory and processed in a multitude of studies and artistic concepts from minimal music and onwards.

A large, sparsely furnished flat a few blocks from the palace in Oslo. The flat is light and is dominated by a polished grand piano in the middle reception room of three. Through the double folding doors one can see into the adjacent room, empty, with the exception of some cardboard boxes in a corner. From this room one enters a long hallway with a succession of doors on one side of it. The door out, the bathroom, the kitchen, the bedroom. The flat seems to be more or less uninhabited, which is the case most of the time. The few traces of life to be found are neutral, secretive, almost invisible, as if they were part of the styling in a real estate advertisement. A dark overcoat on a hook in the hallway. A large pot filled with dried twigs. The bathroom doesn't divulge who is using it. A green toilet bag stands by the washbasin. A unisex deodorant is on the glass shelf under the mirror along with a glass, a toothbrush and an unopened tube of toothpaste. A simple, white bar of soap lying in the soap dish. The kitchen is clean and tidy – only a steaming espresso percolator gives away that it has been in use at all. There are a few bottles towards the back of the kitchen counter – olive oil and balsamic vinegar, as well as a spice rack and salt and pepper mills. There is little to suggest, however, that food is ever prepared in this kitchen. A large American-style refrigerator emits a low growl and gives a dark materiality to the silence. A small suitcase is standing inside the bedroom door and a travel bag and ironed shirt are hanging on the wardrobe door handle. The rooms are white: walls; ceilings; doors; the high quality bed linen.

The only colours to be found in the flat are in the third reception room, which is furnished from floor to ceiling with well-filled bookcases. A Persian rug covers the yellowing floorboards and by the window there is a music stand. Otherwise there is only a worn wing chair covered in a floral fabric and a dark brown sideboard. An open violin case is lying on the sideboard and sitting in the wing chair is Johannes Hellweg.

He is sitting motionless with an open score in his hands. Occasionally he changes page. A low hum can be heard – at

times it can be perceived as a melody. Now and then he gets up and goes to the middle room to play a few notes on the grand piano. Fragments of a phrase, perhaps a chord. He remains there for a few moments before returning to the chair, while all the time the score remains in his hands. He is deeply concentrated and seems to have forgotten about the coffee cup standing on the sideboard by the violin case. After a couple of minutes silence, however, he stretches out his hand, grasps the handle between two fingers and brings the cup to his mouth without taking his eyes off the score. If someone had bent down and looked into the eyes of Johannes Hellweg, they would have seen time steadily flowing away. Time flowing from the score, in through the eyes to the furthest reaches of his body. He sits completely still – no one can see it yet – but when the work is finished, this time that is stored within him will flow out of his body, out of his hands, into his violin and out in the air as vibrations, oscillating time. Then the waves will roll into a listening ear and the breakers will wash through another body and the feelings that move him now will move this other someone.

The notes that flow through the eyes of Johannes Hellweg embody everything he has dreamed of expressing through his instrument: an Italian baroque violin that has inexplicably survived as it has passed from musician to musician, hand to hand, for over 250 years. The instrument is priceless and since money is the yardstick for everything in Johannes Hellweg's era, the value of the violin is reflected in the amount of money paid by a stinking rich Norwegian savings bank foundation to an equally stinking rich Japanese investor in order to acquire ownership of this low-tech instrument with four strings stretched between a thin wooden stick and a wooden box in order to place it in the hands of Johannes Hellweg and thereby tell the world that this is their valuation of his art.

But the instrument isn't in the hands of Johannes Hellweg just now. The violin is lying in its velvet-lined bag. Instead he is holding the score to Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*. On the title

page is the dedication: *To the memory of an angel*. He holds the manual, the recipe, the symbolic description of an acoustical chain of events, which for him is the greatest thing produced by Western musical culture. Of all the music that has passed through his head, body and hands, why is it this music he holds in highest esteem? If someone had broken the silence surrounding him right now and asked him this simple question, he would not have been able to answer. He would want to, but the only sound would be read in his eyes. After collecting himself and thinking about it a bit, he would probably have come up with some kind of motivation that would, above all, emphasise the impossibility of the question itself. He would have answered that there were no answers to such questions. Certainly, he was captivated by the piece the first time he heard it when his violin teacher took him to hear a famous violinist play with the Oslo Philharmonic. And he was moved to tears when he read about the circumstances surrounding the creation of the work, when as a 14 year old he had sat hunched over a music encyclopaedia at the Barratt Due Institute of Music. Later on, when he began to study the score, he was impressed by the fusion of intricate structure and expressive power in Berg's music. But none of this explains the love that Johannes Hellweg has borne in his breast for almost 20 years. During his time at Barratt Due he was already recognised as a prodigy, but his teacher couldn't understand his dream of playing Berg. So Johannes Hellweg had to put up with laboriously picking his way through the classics just like every other prodigy in music conservatories the world over. Vivaldi, Mozart, Mendelssohn, one work followed another, concert followed concert, and it is primarily these classics that became the basis for Johannes Hellweg's reputation and, eventually, substantial income.

But he never let go of his love of Alban Berg's Violin Concerto. Music that is a perfect balance between the modern and the retrospective. Between the brutal pain of existence and nostalgia, between Thanatos and hope. Music that embodies both the dream and the nightmare of a Europe on the road to

destruction for a second time in just over 20 years. The lamentation of the death of a young girl, the beautiful Manon Gropius, daughter of Alma Mahler and Walter Gropius. They were close friends of Alban Berg – he had become acquainted with Alma Mahler while Gustav Mahler was still alive. She had been at his very first public concert, had come with him all the way. When Manon died of polio before her 19th birthday, it was the first in a chain of events that would give music history one of the great masterpieces and which would lead to Alban Berg's own death. Johannes Hellweg is still moved when he thinks about it. Berg was buried in work on his second opera when he received an order for a violin concerto from the American violinist Louis Krasner. The year was 1935, the Nazis had branded Berg's music as degenerate and to survive he accepted the assignment and a fee of $1500. It was not long after Manon's passing and still shaken by young woman's death, Berg decided to compose the Violin Concerto in memory of her. That summer he travelled to Berghof, the family estate at Wörthersee, across the lake from where Johannes Brahms had sat, almost 60 years earlier, writing *his* Violin Concerto. Here Berg wrote Manon Gropius' memorial during the course of the summer months, and the day after the score was complete he suffered from an insect bite that would give him blood poisoning and eventually kill him during the small hours of Christmas Eve that same year. Berg never heard the violin concerto – his requiem – it premiered in Barcelona in April 1936 in a Spanish republic on the brink of civil war. That was the first time that the expressions of intensity and the dreaming melodies were heard. And for the first time, one could hear Bach's chorale "Es ist Genug", a song of pure longing for death, weaving in and out of Berg's harmonies, a singing prophecy of the composer's own death.

But all of this still doesn't explain Johannes Hellweg's love for this music. Nothing can explain it; it is just an example of how love arises, seemingly unprovoked, incomprehensible, sometimes fizzling out in the course of months and sometimes lasting a lifetime. The love of Berg's violin concerto will always

be part of Johannes Hellweg – the notes from that concerto will be in the ebb and flow of his body until the day he dies. Obviously, he doesn't know this as he sits with the score in his hands, but he does know that the day is approaching when he will, for the first time, play the work in concert, soaring like an angel above the rumbling surf of the orchestra. It has been almost two years since he received the request from his agent asking whether he wanted to play the violin concerto with the Konzerthausorchester in Berlin. The orchestra isn't quite world class, but he hadn't given it a second thought before responding. So here he is, sitting in the worn wing chair, with the score in his hands, only a few months left until the concert. And when he presents *his* Berg to the world, it will be a transparent, thoughtful, heartfelt and in all respects *personal* interpretation that the world hears. He folds up the score and grasps the slender violin neck, lifting the instrument to his chin. Then he takes a deep breath before setting the bow in motion against the strings.

Critical Music?

A spanner in the works

The difference between self-expression and the critical concerns the idea of skill versus discipline
Peter Eisenman

When I applied for the artistic research programme, my title for the project was *Critical Repetition*.[x] The title was inspired by Hal Foster, and I thought it was a good and snappy one. But the word *critical*, as applied both in the title and throughout my description for the project, has started to bug me in several ways. So after focusing on the implications of writing for the symphony orchestra, I have to try to tackle this not unproblematic word head on. Or, to put it less bluntly, after one year of work, it is time to reassess my theoretical starting point. One reason is the reflections that have surfaced during the process of finishing the first music in the project. But let me get back to that later, and start with the beginning. In my first text on the project, I stated the following:

> I have earlier written several works that in different ways deal with the subject matter of old music. In this project I want to investigate the critical potential inherent in the repetition of music history [...] this is about critical repetition, where new practices re-enacts old ones, while simultaneously making these practices the object of critique.

When I read these sentences again, I'm still intrigued by the images they arouse in me, and at the challenges they pose. But there is also a certain discomfort, especially regarding the last phrase, about making the practices the 'object of critique'. Not

x At this point it would be useful to say a few words about my use of the term 'critical'. If we regard a critical position as a position of self-reflexivity, a critical art may be seen as an art that examines its own ideological devices and its own conditions and means of production. In musical terms, 'meta-music' is a well-known label for music that examines itself, sharing certain qualities with what we can label 'critical music'. I will argue that the two areas also have important differences, not least in the fact that 'meta-music' often tends to underplay the examination of the conditions of production in its exuberant celebration of itself. This is a tendency towards affirmation of present-day residue of historical structures rather than a questioning of these structures. This justifies a delineation between 'critical' and 'meta' as prefixes to music in this respect. However, critical music does probably need the meta-aspect somewhere in its apparatus in order to get access to a self-reflexive modus.

that I don't see this as an important aspect of my music, but there is a risk that this and similar phrases may limit the scope of the project in a way I hadn't foreseen.

The first thing I did when this discomfort started to surface, was to sit myself down and write something to home in on this problematic word, *critique*. As it turns out, it's difficult to step outside the theoretical boundaries and connect to the actual music that I'm making, so the text tends to come out something like footnote XI,[xi] which is all swell, but it doesn't really take us closer to the music.

I'll try to explain the background for this slight turn. From the very first presentation, I've had people asking me what I really mean when I use the term *critical* in a musical context. The repetition-part of the *Critical Repetition* is fairly easy to explain, but when it comes to *Critical Music*, it's getting difficult. Within the music community, the term is quite loaded; it is closely affiliated with the work of Helmut Lachenmann, Mathias Spahlinger and other composers working in a more or less Adornoesque

xi My take on the term 'critical' does not primarily propose political engagement as in 'political art'. In the essay 'On Several Obsolete Notions', written in the heyday of high modernism, Alain Robbe-Grillet states that

> instead of being of a political nature, commitment is, for the writer, the full awareness of the present problems of his own language, the conviction of their extreme importance, the desire to solve them *from within*. Here, for him, is the only chance of remaining an artist and, doubtless too, by means of an obscure and remote consequence, of some day serving something – perhaps even the Revolution. (Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989 [1963]).

This romantic notion of *obscure and remote consequence* seems to be a straw clutched by many artists in a time where connection to real politics seems almost impossible. Peter Bürger, on the other hand, has defined critical science as differing from traditional science by reflecting on the societal meaning of its own devices. In an essay on Josef Beuys, Bürger states that art today has no place to express a societally relevant potential of meaning. (Peter Bürger, *Om avantgarden,* trans. Eivind Tjønneland (Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag, 1998) pp.174–190.) This situation, although changed in many ways in the arts since the time of Bürgers text, is still acute within music, which has rarely had real contact points with socio-political debates. It is difficult to find proper musical means when it comes to dealing with questions related to social and economic structures. In general, music can hope to be in a position to criticize these political structures in indirect or allegorical ways. These strategies can be powerful enough, not least as the classical apparatus of production, to which a lot of new music is confined, has to a high degree become an integrated part of the global marketplace. Following this, I find architectural critic Jeffrey Kipnis' definition of critique useful also in a musical context:

> A basic way for me to understand a critical practice is to think of the careful examination of the body of received practices to see which of them has become empty clichés. That's a general framework. This framework means I take a look at something that continues to operate and examine whether our relationship to its persistence is still vital, if it still does work. (see Brett Steele (ed), *Supercritical* (London: Architects Association, 2010) p. 58.)

paradigm.[xii] This is a problem in itself, to be able to work with the term without subscribing to the solutions and stylistic features of this 'school'.[xiii] But for people unacquainted with the delicate discourses of twentieth-century music, the term seems to be pretty mystical. How can music be critical? As a teacher at the Norwegian Film Academy (whose name I have forgotten, he had a moustache and a roundish face, plus/minus 50 and was, if I remember correctly, of eastern European origin) reacted when I presented the project at a fellowship-seminar in Oslo: 'Critical Music? Is that Possible?' Of course I maintained that it is, with reference to the aforementioned German tradition (for lack of better examples at the moment). And it is, indeed. But this reaction, quite typical, is a good indicator to the degree of alienation between

xii The 'examination of perceived practices' that Kipnis prescribes can be traced in a tradition of *Critical Composition*, since the end of the sixties most closely affiliated with certain German composers. People like Helmut Lachenmann responded to the loss of the Darmstadt-hegemony by seeking to radicalize aspects of instrumental performance. This radicalization had an obvious political implication, taking cue from the negative dialectics of Adorno, but was nevertheless very much a radicalization of the musical language by inverting relations between musicians and their instruments.

xiii
A number of idiosyncratic, individualist practices of critical composition have emerged alongside this German tradition. Since the sixties, the Italian Aldo Clementi has occupied himself with erecting 'monuments over music's disappearance'. These monuments take shape as works of music that act out a stasis of non-development, where motives and tone structures evolve around each other in static patterns. No dramaturgical development, no textural change, no timbral differentiation, no dynamic variation, only a mass of musical residue revolving slowly like the cinematic image of a spaceship sinking into deep space. David Osmond-Smith states that 'if one takes the piled-up, endlessly repeated tonal modules of Clementi's music from the 1970s on as emblematic of the way we live now, uncertain what to do with superabundance other than to keep consuming, then his work takes on a critical edge that it only rarely hinted at explicitly'. (see David Osmond-Smith, '*Temps Perdu:* Aldo Clementi and the Eclipse of Music as Praxis' in Björn Heile (Ed.): *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).) An example of criticality intrinsic to the sounding music itself. In 'A commentary on my own music', one of the few articles translated from Italian, Clementi states that 'Music (art) must simply assume the humble task of describing its own end, or at any rate its gradual extinction'. ('A Commentary on my own Music' trans. David Osmond-Smith, Contact no. 23, 1981 [1979].) The echo of Baudrillard is evident. But more interestingly, Clementi opposes the dialectic mode of thought that is so central to the German critical tradition: 'Exaltation and Depression have had their day: however, you disguise them, they are modest symbols of a dialectic that is already extinct'. Another example of critical practices could be the work of John Oswald, aka. Plunderphonic. He has been a pioneer in techniques of sampling and musical collage, probing the monuments of popular culture (with much legislative hassle as result, for instance being sued by Michael Jackson over 'Dab', an ingenious cut-up of Jacksons 'Bad'. (Plunderphonics alias Alien Chasm Jock, 'Dab' on 69/96. (Seeland, 1996 [1989]).) The court case has in its own way become part of the critical discourse of his work.) But Oswald has also done extensive work on icons of classical/romantic music like *Also sprach Zarathustra.* (Plunderphonics alias Sushi Dart Scar, 'z24' on 69–96 (Seeland, 1996 [1993]).) What intrigues me most about his work is how he manages to forge critical scrutiny, context and musical substance in something highly personal, original and above all *musical.* Oswald has defined his material, the 'plunderphone' as 'an unofficial but recognizable musical quote'. (see Chris Cutler, 'Plunderphonics' in *Sounding Off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution* (Ed.) R. Sakolsky and F. Wei-Han Ho. (New York: Autonomedia, 1995) pp. 67–89.) The plundered object has both aesthetic and/or monetary value, and, crucial to a distinction I will discuss a couple of footnotes ahead: the ability to both *refer* and *be*.

contemporary music and discussions within the arts in general. It is also part of the explanation of why music has difficulties in relating to larger socio-political structures.[xiv] During lunch, at the same seminar (or maybe it was another, all these seminars run together) Per Bjarne Boym, one of the fellowship mentors, asked me why I did not work with the idea of the *question* instead of the idea of *critique*. I don't recall what I answered, something offhanded, probably; but the question kind of stuck with me. Also, the suspicion of critique from theorists like Rancière and the emergence of a domain of post-critique has started to interest me, further complicating the matter.

So. After these experiences, I am sitting at my desk trying to work out for myself, in the form of a short essay, what my personal take on the notion of music-as-critical-art can be. Or should I perhaps rephrase some of my ground rules and talk about music-as-question instead? At this point, the onset of my second year in the project, the act of creation, making music, has posed several issues that start to conflict with a clear-cut theorization on the subject. When you get into the groove of actually *making* the stuff, you get your hands dirty with all sorts of inventions and phantasmagorical detours from what looked like a well-defined path. Needless to say, this is a good thing. For art. Maybe less so for theory. But since this is Artistic Research and not Science, I will use the opportunity to see what energies can be drawn from this collision. Take, for instance, repetition as musical parameter. I use it as a metaphor for the incessant and thoughtless iteration of the classical canon in the modern, semi-commercialized symphony orchestra. I try to show, in a rather unrefined way, the mime-game of playing the extremely limited repertoire, advocated by travelling soloists, conductors and their agents, thinly veiled as *interpretation.* At the same time repetition is the simplest way of evoking musical 'magic' and seducing an audience. This is something every composer knows, and if used as a trick of the trade, repetition solicits mere confirmation and provokes no questions. So although my intention was to write an essay on the theoretical foundation for a musical critical-

xiv New music has a tradition of directing its critical gaze inwards. Brian Ferneyhough has described his position as one of 'using the language in which you write to criticize the language in which you write'. (See Felipe Ribeiro, James Correa, Catarina Domenici, 'An interview with Brian Ferneyhough' in *Second Century of New Music: Search Yearbook vol. 1* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011). His music is an obvious case of re-thinking the nature of communication between composer and musician. But it limits itself to the score as arena for this re-thinking, it does not take broader contextual considerations into account. The obsession with musical language itself has made it difficult to unveil some of the most prominent and powerful structures governing the classical institutions of music. It has resulted in a certain kind of tunnel vision, closely linked to the idea of the high modernist notion of autonomy, that has made it difficult to include the context of music (e.g. what I referred to as 'conditions and means of production') in the big picture.

ity, this might be the time to take leave of theory and point to the actual piece of music, and to how these meeting points, or rather, collisions, might work.

Today is the 21st of august 2010, and in a little less than a month the first work in my research project will be premiered at the Ultima festival in Oslo. The work is a 25-minute piece for concert hall with orchestra and electronics. I have no problem pointing out the structural and timbral qualities that justify the word *critical* as a superscriptio above the piece. The title is *Standing Stones*, and the genre-title, *for concert hall with orchestra and electronics*, suggests an altering in the order of symphonic music: the piece is not for the symphony orchestra as such, but about the *place* of the orchestra, of the music *taking place*, so to speak, and of the context of the modern-day orchestra within the classical tradition. And I wonder if it might be more true, both to the piece and to the direction my investigations have taken, to find a better rhetorical framework for my ideas.[xv] I have written extensively about the ideas investigated in the piece in 'Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy', so I won't go into the details here. But a couple of frictions should be mentioned. I have already pointed to the opposition between repetition-as-metaphor and repetition-as-magic. Another friction is the use of samples. I use fragments of historical recordings and play them out against the orchestra, from loudspeakers surrounding the audience. The samples become the voice of the concert hall. The fragments are in themselves

xv The movement of critical composition has in many ways petrified into *style,* or even rhetorical motives emptied of its original meaning and impact. What once was placed as a bomb under the holy covenant of music has been transformed to fireworks celebrating the continuation of canon. In other words, a subversive strategy has been successfully assimilated into the mainstream of the continuation of 'classical' music. (In his essay 'The Misadventures of Critical Thought', Rancière describes 'the law of domination as a force seizing on anything that claims to challenge it. It makes any protest a spectacle and any spectacle a commodity'. (in *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009) p.33)) Helmut Lachenmann has long since acknowledged this problem, scourging the 'structural mannerists frivolously playing with alienation as professional *outsiders* pandering in a Negative arts Industry' (in 'Affekt und Aspekt', quoted in Lachenmann, 'Composing in the Shadow of Darmstadt' trans. Richard Toop, *Contemporary Music Review* vol. 23, 3/4, September/December 2004, p. 43–53. In the same text, Lachenmann describes the bourgeois reification of musical material: 'Pure pointilism itself could be used as picturesque acoustic decór trickling away in the reception rooms of Daimler-Benz or Philips'.) This makes it difficult to continue along the same line with pretence to use the expressive means for any critical purpose. Continuing with the sheer aesthetic joy of the sounds and noises that this music has developed – like in the work of Gérard Pesson – is a different question. As it is, I believe, Salvatore Sciarrino's poetic renderings in pieces like *Autoritratto delle Notte.* (Milan: Ricordi, 1982) However, in a newer text dealing with the philosophy of composition, Lachenmann criticizes the frivolous utilization of 'new sounds' in the 'sonically "interesting" – i.e. boring – no man's land of exotic defamiliarizatory acrobatics'. The composer and writer John Croft expound on this as sonic investigation that has become merely ludic: 'it becomes purely positive and loses its critical capacity. Lachenmann finds this purely positive extension of technical means ultimately empty, and is drawn back to a reinvestigation of historical materials'. (John Croft, 'Fields of Rubble. On the Poetics of Music after the Postmodern' in Björn Heile (ed.) *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) p. 29.)

familiar to the audience, and of readily identifiable classical beauty. But heaped up in an aggregating amassment of sound, I hope that the saturated space will create questions about the sustainability of such procedures. A third example: The decay of the sampled fragments toward the end of the piece creates sound structures that have a certain kind of electronic beauty. At the same time, this prolonged gesture does, perhaps too overtly, point metaphorically to the loss of classical music's cultural hegemony: it's slow but inevitable demise.

These examples are related to a notion that is basic to me; that I make the place for these energies within *sound*, in the sounding of the orchestral hall. I want to let the unresolved frictions of dualities linger, in order to leave the situation open to the imagining ear. To let the music insist on its status as sound, and to trust that the physical sound in the actual context of the performance can convey the critical potential of the work of music.[xvi] I have tried to aim for something that LaMonte Young stated in 1960,[51] when describing his sounds as separate worlds connected to us through our bodies: 'This is not so easily explained, but more easily experienced'. The opposite is true of so much music (what is easily explained is not so easily experienced), and my ambition is to create a context of experience where meaning is not parsed to some literal explanation.

I discovered through letting myself go in the act of investigating my ideas in purely musical ways, how important it has been to map out an area where idea and sound can meet on equal terms, fresh to my ear and without inhibitions. That is to say, also without the limitations of a pre-fabricated theory. After gorging myself on theory for a full six months, I plunged into the desires of music making with the certainty that the subject matter is totally ingested into the fibre of my musical imagination. I have already stated that the piece is a place, and the listener is invited to traverse the area in a variety of different ways. The same is true of the creative process. The making of the piece is one way of mapping out the area of the project. And I imagine that each different piece will offer an independent reading of the topography, making different maps that each reveal different meeting points between idea and sound.

xvi Criticality is a stance, an intention, more than a simple matter of technique or material. One of the reasons it needs to draw upon history, is that the critical space, the available area for self-reflection, is amorphous and changes with changes in the conglomerate of aesthetics, society and economics. When discussing theory of literature, Bürger claims that insight *only* can be successful through engagement with tradition – since spiritual objectivations do not have a position of fact. (Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 [1974].) p. 4.) This points to the same element of historical awareness that needs to be immanent in music as critical endeavour.

Different places than I had thought up beforehand. Isn't this the whole point of 'artistic research'?

When discussing the continuation of Helmut Lachenman's ideas with my secondary supervisor, Olav Anton Thommesen, he stated that 'Lachenmann belongs to the twentieth century. You belong to the twenty-first!' The comparison is of course totally unjustifiable. And I'm not sure we would agree on the implications of the statement. But the point is clear: when making new music, it is crucial to trace one's own trajectory, not only on musical, but also aesthetical terms. I am not talking about re-inventing the wheel here, but about the obligation to create a personal foundation for the work. Without it, all talk of criticality is futile. The effect of what I want to achieve might not differ so much from the critical tradition of the sixties and seventies: to shake the dust of the inherited apparatus of classical music – at least to rattle the cage a little.[xvii] But it is crucial that I find my own ways of describing the processes, and alternate routes of getting there.[xviii] This is the only way, I think, to open up the inherited formats and institutions. And this is something that has to be done over and over again, to make the inner workings of music transparent to the listening ear. This is the core of the question, the aim of critical discourse, in my book: To make the terms and machinations of the institution audible, both to

xvii The institutional critique latent in the early works of the German movement has been assimilated and now fits seamlessly into the very institutions, formats and organizations it sought to challenge (as many of its practitioners are warily aware, see previous footnote.) One example: it is difficult to go 'underground' with symphonic music. The composer is entirely dependent on the economic and artistic structure of the institution. This can be frustrating, but it gives the opportunity, to paraphrase Ferneyhough, to use the institution in which you work to criticize the institution in which you work.

xviii This *Critical Repetition* reflects a need to criticize not only the musical language itself, but also the discursive position of contemporary music. This can be done by examining different contexts of its existence, the classical institution being only one of these contexts. And the realm of critique should not be left to 'negation' and 'negative dialectics' alone. The power of what I would call 'positive expression'* should not be disqualified from the compound work of critical repetition. The friction between negation and affirmation can yield a rich complexity and ambiguity, calling upon both intellectual and emotional forces to unveil rigid and restraining structures, and to propose other possibilities than the ones readily at hand. (One of my pet examples is from literature: David Foster Wallace's writing, where hilarious storytelling combine with deeply disturbing critique of globalized consumer culture within sophisticated and complex narratives of fiction.) I believe John Croft is addressing some of the same ideas when, after discussing the negative position (and its emptying), he moves toward a vision by way of Sciarrino and Agamben – a vision where music may take on a utopian function by reinvestments of the past according to lived experience, and by new relations to our bodies, the environment and others. (See Croft, 'Fields of Rubble. On the Poetics of Music after the Postmodern', pp. 31–38.)

* a provisional term I use here to denote the utopian endeavour of actually trying to express something personal, something that speaks itself instead of being a commentary on something else. Yes, I know it's impossible, but to cite Ferneyhough again: 'The subject will not disappear just because its existence is an impossibility …' (Brian Ferneyhough, 'Parallel Universes', in J.Boros/R. Toop (ed.): *Brian Feneyhough Collected Writings*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995).)

the institution itself and to the listening audience.[xix] If this happens in the form of a question, why not? The important thing is that the constitutional energies of the orchestra are unveiled – in other words not taken for granted – scrutinized with a questioning gaze – criticized. And I maintain that the processes I describe must find place in *sound*, not in textual or visual aids.[xx] In that sense, this text should become superfluous the moment the work itself is played.

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xix It seems to be a widespread notion among composers that writing unpopular and annoying music is critical by default. This might be derived from the Adornoesque position that the function of art is to have no function in society. Simultaneously, one might argue that composers give legitimacy to conservative institutions long overdue for an overhaul. By feeding the institutions what the institution wants (pieces of contemporary music that conforms to the processes and formats of the institutions), both institution and composer seems to be in a win/win situation. But this system masks the conservatism slowly but steadily undermining the cultural legitimacy and sustainability of orchestral culture. It also masks the fact that the operating schemes of institutions like the orchestra make it impossible to write experimental music in the true sense of the word. For the orchestra, one problem is the rigid structures of rehearsals and insufficient time to actually experiment with the musical substance. Another problem is the power that conductors and soloists hold over the programming, resulting in an ever-narrowing scope of repertoire. These are obvious and often-discussed problems, and the list could be made longer. I do not pretend to have solutions, but I try to address the situation by proposing works that takes this situation as a central premise for reflection, and to open up rather than mask this praxis. This is about critique as production of insight, insights that might very well contain internally contradictory forces. Many composers have tried to circumnavigate such oppositions by abandoning the institutions of music. But how can one execute this without re-iterating the solutions to the institutional crisis already established by the historical avant-garde? The paradox of the situation is to be able to balance these two forces, the simultaneous movement inwards and outwards. Being inside the listening, the sensuous 'erfahrung' of music, and at the same time being able to establish a critical position vis-à-vis the institutions of music that produce this listening.

xx I am trying to facilitate this convergence by letting the historical element become explicit. Creating an emergent, sounding context, understandable to the ear, not (only) a staged or textual context. I think Bürger can be helpful in clarifying this point: In his essay on Beuys he points to the difference between allegorical *intention* and symbolically interpreted *perception.* Drawing on Walter Benjamin, he states that allegory is connected to the principle of rationality by maintaining *meaning* and the *sensuous* as independent terms with a fixed relation between them. The symbol is bound to the metaphysical in that the sensuous cannot be separated from its meaning.* What I am looking for in relation to music's critical potential is the relation of sensuous perception and meaning. Much of twentieth-century music is in its nature allegorical, in that perceptible and 'spiritual' meanings are separate entities. It is a challenge to depart from this line of thought, and to try to locate criticality within the musical object itself. There is absolutely an 'allegorical impulse' at work in my confiscation of sound-images of Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler – to cite from Craig Owens' post-modern ur-text on the allegory. ('The Allegorical Impulse' (*October* vol. 9) p. 81.) But after this impulse has been absorbed, and the appropriated matter digested by my own apparatus, I aim for some expression that is operating on the same plane as 'content/meaning'. The temporal aspect of music gives the advantage to envision a process where the atomizing disjunctive process of the collage is superseded by the re-establishment of an order of meaning *through time*. My aim is not to empty the original sound-image of its resonance, but to work with that resonance, to let it linger on through the new layers of sound. This does not mean that the artwork is reducible to an inner essence. Nor does it recourse to the transcendentalism that Benjamin deducts from the theological origins of the symbol. It is, to repeat myself, a wish to express meaning in sound and to let sound be the meaning.**

* According to Bürger, Benjamin's rehabilitation of the allegory is important for the aesthetics of modernity because it made it possible to criticize the metaphysical assumption underlying the idealistic aesthetic idea of the symbol. The division in the allegory, the non-unity of perception and

As I'm looking for a handle on all this, it occurs to me that maybe it's all about not trying too hard. Maybe it's about relaxing a little, having faith in the value of art and in the aspect of *emergence* in this question. Letting notions arise from the matter of the work instead of imposing meaning upon it. Trusting that my use of repetition and the way I employ historical samples in *Standing Stones* reveal something about the orchestral machine. That the conceptual use of play-along techniques and call-and-response between orchestra and canonical recordings says something about the role of history in the orchestral subconsciousness. At the same time, I have had the delight of getting lost in the aural sensuousness of both orchestral timbre (imagined, at this point, in my score and in my head) and the submerging into a sea of Brahms-samples or a torrent of Bruckner (heard, in my computer and in my headphones). I have set my intellectual and emotional faculties at work in the direction of questioning the relation between the orchestra and history, the orchestra and the present. And I hope some hidden relations will be revealed and some new insights will emerge when this orchestral rendering engages with the listener's fantasy.[52]

So, do I need to change the title of my project? Maybe. Not necessarily. I don't know yet. But I do need to adjust the project description to open up for a more questioning stance, without the hard-headed insisting on *critical* permeating the whole text. It might actually get in the way of what I am really trying to say. The funny thing is that the problem I am discussing here does not take place in my music. It is purely

spirit (object and subject), became a central principle for art. This is obvious in modernist music, where the structural meaning of serialist principles have an existence separate from its perception. The rhetoric of symbolic unity, which pervades serialist music, is in fact subordinate to the allegorical nature of its schism between idea and perception (as Ligeti demonstrated in his famous analysis of Boulez' *Structures*).

** Berio's *Sinfonia* is still a powerful example of a piece that creates tensions between historical presence and sensuous lavishness on one side and mechanisms of self-reflection on the other. Berio resorts to text, most notably Beckett and Levi-Strauss, but also quotes from his own essays (see David Osmond-Smith, *Playing on words: a guide to Luciano Berio's Sinfonia* (London: Royal Music Association, 1985) for more on the collage technique in this work). *Sinfonia* is Meta-music, insofar as it discusses itself and thematizes its own terms of production. This self-referentiality is so strong that it masks some of the critical focus that is also latent in the work by its amassment of historical residue collided with modernist material. A more recent case could be Gerard Pessons *Nebenstück*, a piano quintet based on a Brahms piece with the same title. (Paris: Lemoine, 1998). In this instance the use of historical material becomes nostalgic in quite an overt manner (One might argue that the piece is an example of an engagement with history as celebratory ornament instead of through dialectic opposition.) In Mathias Spahlinger's *Passage/Peysage* history is implicit (the use of the opening of Beethoven's *Eroica*) in a hidden and latent position. This renders the sensuous perception (almost) unrelated to its historical dialectic. For the listener who does not know the extra-musical programme, this does paradoxically invite to a symbolic reading, in spite of its allegorical intention. On the other hand, this might not be completely true, and since this is clearly not going anywhere, I think I'll stop here, for now.

a problem of reflection. I find that the issues I want to address shape their own logical solutions *in* the work, and I am confident in the emergence of 'meaning' from the music.

That leaves me where I started: With the problem of formulating these insights in text. My supervisor, Ole Lützow-Holm, has urged me to expand my field of writing, to encompass more personal, maybe even precarious views. This might be due to the fact that towards the end of my first year in the project I published a novel, where several of my topics are discussed in the form of fictional writing. So the gap between the fictional voice, on one hand, and the serious quasi-scientific voice on the other hand, needs to be filled by some sort of textual go-between. It could also have to do with a need to get away from the heroic stance of the composer (ironically, while working with the orchestra, music's most hierarchical structure, requiring almost dictator-like 'leadership'.)

An imminent solution, in the attempt to both be precise about my take on the subject of criticality and the need for a more personal voice, is to try to write a polyphonic text: a text where these two layers intertwine, where the main thread in the fabric is the personal voice, laying bare the actual friction at this stage in my process. A personal essay and a theoretical investigation. I could start with meditating on my original title in the project, and open a discussion on the term 'critical'. Yes. I think this could work.

A pile of papers is neatly stacked at Arvid Pettersen's feet. He is holding a sheet in his hands, his eyes moving slowly and with concentration across the unfamiliar words. It's as if they belonged to someone else. The exercise is going well, the plan is working, he is making progress. He can sit completely still for hours and feel how everything dissolves into him, that it doesn't hurt anymore. Arvid Pettersen takes a new piece of paper from the heap of manuscript and holds it up in front of himself. It's practically transparent against the light from the windows. He stands swaying in the middle of the floor, reads it once more, slowly, forming the words on his lips. He stays where he is, staring at the sheet for a few seconds before crumpling it up and throwing it onto the floor behind him. The paper ball rolls a short distance before stopping among all the other crumpled sheets of paper. They all have slightly different shapes, an unopened letter with a bright red logo lies scrunched up amongst the other white sheets of paper. Apart from the paper balls, the kitchen chair and some cardboard boxes, the floor is empty. The sofa and coffee table have been moved into the other room – there was just enough space between the bed and wardrobe. And he had to put the bookcases all over the place – one in the hall, one in the kitchen, two in the bedroom. It took him half a day to move all the books, but now that the job is done he notices how it affects the atmosphere in the room. The walls no longer murmur, there are no stacks of swarming thoughts trapped between stiff covers. He has put the hi-fi in the attic, along with the records. Brahms' Requiem, Mahler's Symphony number two, Berg's Violin Concerto. Lully, Couperin, the French baroque music as well as the English renaissance. The modern stuff, Stockhausen, Ligeti. Berio. And all the piano concertos. Miss Grøndahl really did believe in him – she took it badly when he chose science instead. He had tried to explain to her how mathematics and music fundamentally share the same beauty, how music basically *is* mathematics. He had explained to her how sound is a function of amplitudes and frequencies, how the music we hear in the room is sound waves, governed by the same laws of nature as everything else, an acoustic phenomenon that

can be analysed and measured. He had been convinced that when he dedicated himself to the laws of nature – to physics – that he had chosen the path of knowledge that had something to say about everything in the whole wide world and music too. He had tried to explain this to her, but Miss Grøndahl merely sighed and shook her head. He can still remember the scent of her heavy perfume in her living room with the Bechstein grand piano. And the nervous atmosphere at the student recitals, the parents seated on two rows of chairs, mother always in her pretty dress with her handbag on her lap. And he was the star of the small show – Miss Grøndahl's pride and joy. He really could play. Preludes by Chopin, fugues by Bach and sonatas by Beethoven. And the big dream, the holy grail: Brahms' second piano concerto. He had been given the score for Christmas and had worn it out completely before Easter. He had studied every single bar, learned every single phrase, and digested every single magical moment.

Because there are moments in the history of music that move you more strongly than others. There are some works that you love and some interpretations of these works that you hold in higher regard than others. There are parts, chords, phrasings that press into you, that become part of the body, that are illuminated by a special light. The attraction of these moments is what the element 'love' in 'music lover' is about, thinks Arvid Pettersen. Only now does he understand that many of *his* moments are to do with slowness. It is a moment where not just the work of music enters slow motion almost akin to a standstill, but where the music history itself pauses to take a breath, enjoy the view and perhaps look for new possibilities in the landscape it sees ahead. The Big Moment comes in the third movement, the andante, when the piano makes its entrance after the singing cello line has set the scene for a meditation in slowness and passion after the intensity of the first two movements. Arvid Pettersen has lost count of the number of evenings he has fallen asleep into a dream of himself at Oslo concert hall, with an enormous Steinway in front of him and the Oslo Philharmonic behind him, the con-

ductor holding his arms raised while the strings die out, and everyone is waiting for him to play the redeeming notes.

In the real world, in front of the record player at his mother's, he was entranced by Emil Gilels' recording with the Berlin Philharmonic led by Eugen Jochum. The recording was made in 1972 and released under the magic yellow logo that was Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft. This was Arvid's first recording of this concert, although later on he acquired many others. It is this version that he has grown with over the years. Of course, he thinks many of the other recordings are praiseworthy, perhaps objectively better – Glen Gould's live recording with Bernstein, for example. But it is this one that has become *his* Brahms' second piano concerto.

Perhaps he didn't understand it then, but by choosing physics instead of music, Arvid Pettersen had stepped out of time. He had turned away from the intensity of the moment, the rush of emotion he felt when he sat in front of that small audience at Miss Grøndahl's with his hands on the keyboard, every millisecond becoming reality at his fingertips, in his entire body. He had chosen a room where he could examine the structure of the world at a safe distance from the real, whirling flow of time. He had chosen calculations and computations, methodical experiments, had chosen to devote himself to timeless laws. But he can still feel the time of the music in his body, like phantom limb pain, in the silence that falls on the auditorium after the undergraduate students have calmed down and all attention is directed at him, in the short pause before he clears his throat and lifts his face to meet the gaze of the audience. A vague reminder of the time of music, the real time that charges every single moment with a uniquely special intensity. But he senses the presence of this time most of all in the giddines he feels just before the decisive moment in Brahms' second piano concerto. The critical event, the moment of the moment, when the music suddenly becomes aware of itself. When it twists out of its intended form, with the soloist as the active subject. The orchestra is well on the way to completing

a traditional and tasteful andante movement when something happens: the soloist enters the scene and alters the entire musical drama with two slow, rising figures in two endless bars. It all lasts 25 seconds. The pianist plays alone for the next minute, as if contemplating what just happened. The style is scattered, wandering, seemingly directionless ornaments amongst the remains of the beautiful melody introduced by the cellos. After a while the orchestra pull themselves together, intervene and straighten up the soloist into a heroic posture. It isn't long before the soloist's thoughts wander off again, in the same disorganised movements. Arvid Pettersen also likes to interpret it as something quite different from distraction: the soloists' wanderings might just as well be secret attempts to free himself from the gravity that has kept the music connected to reality since the moment it was written in the spring of 1881. Brahms' soloist is attempting to slip out through an incision in time and thereby achieve The Great Freedom. But it turns out that the tough umbilical cord of the harmony makes such an escape impossible. The power struggle between the orchestra and soloist continues over the following minutes. Towards the end of the sixth minute, it seems as if the orchestra realise that the battle cannot be won by constant insistent eruptions, adding instead an unassuming minor variant of the main theme. The soloist eagerly grabs the opportunity and casts us into yet another moment of standstill. And this time the music purrs on almost imperceptibly in thin strands, extremely slowly, it is only the inevitable harmonic progress that tips the music onward in short bursts and prevents the music from falling apart. A breakdown of this nature was still 30 years in the future when Brahms wrote this concerto, but this part is an accurate prophecy of what is to come. For two minutes and fifteen seconds, we float through a timeless cloud of notes, catching only a glimpse of ground below. We are flying in a balloon that we know will land on the earth. We just don't know where – and hope that it will be a long time from now.

But all this belongs in the past. Not even music can give Arvid Pettersen the peace that he seeks. It is within him, like the memory of a long and warm summer in a distant childhood, surviving somewhere or other in amongst a myriad of microscopic brain cells and nerve endings. That's how he lives with the music now. No sounds, only silence. Just the music from within. He can sit through an entire Mozart symphony, silently, in the chair, listening to the orchestra of his memory, all alone in the cranium's concert hall. And here he can experience Brahms' second piano concerto as often as he wishes. He guides an invisible stylus across the sound tracks eternally engraved into his brain matter and experiences time not just stopping but going around in circles and wandering aimlessly back and forth. Time is turned on its side and becomes vertical, perforated and frayed; it is only the framework of the classic harmony that tells him that the world has not stopped.

Brief Note #2:

On *Infinite Endings*

One of three planned works in this research project was a piece called *Infinite Endings.* It was supposed to be my investigation into chamber music, and as I am writing about this in past tense, it is obvious that something happened along the way.

My original impulse was a peculiar experience with my TV one day, it could have been in 2007 or 2008, I don't remember. Anyway, I turned on the telly that day and broke straight into the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo City Hall. I heard the reverberations of a powerful chord and saw a string quartet (the familiar faces of Oslo String Quartet, I think it was) with their bows in the air, with the solemn expressions of closure on their faces, bows slowly descending as the sound died away into the quiet seconds before the applause rolled through the hall. This image made a deep impression on me, the coincidental way I captured this gesture of ending, something dying away, and though it could not have lasted for more than three seconds, it was utterly captivating. The picture stayed with me; a whole musical culture embedded in the falling gesture of the bows.

Based on this image, I envisioned a 60-minute piece where a double string quartet elaborated on the ending gestures of Beethoven's 16 string quartets, the last chord only, from each and one of them, enhanced with live electronics in a minimalistic play of the incessant, never-ending process of endings. These infinite endings would provide a powerful symbolic sound imagery of the classical musical traditions' ever-repeating practices, a closed system that is caught in a never-ending gesture of closure. I even had a secondary image, that of myself, as sole listener, in a single chair in the hall of Gamle Logen in Oslo, listening to the piece, while the rest of the audience would be sitting in chairs along the walls under the mezzanines. This would stage both the act of listening (or the act of spectatorship, if you wish), and the image of a music that speaks to one and one, not to the undefined multitudes addressed by much of our current musical culture.

As I often do with these sudden ideas, bursts of inspirations, even, I made a quick note and left it there, hanging somewhere in my imagination, leaving it in the lofty back of my mind to mature. And when time came around it would address me, announce itself to my conscious and critical forces, intrude on me and settle into some kind of plan for musical and artistic development. This is how I work, and over the years I have become confident that this methodology suits me quite well. It may have been the odd occasion where I've had to pluck down one or two ideas and started working on them at premature stages, but most often this process works quite organically.

So I put the idea for this work in my application for the fellowship, and as my application came through and the actual work on the project began, I waited for this idea to manifest itself again. And my first phase of the project came and went, and still no sign of *Infinite Endings.* No urge to see how it could develop, no desire to hear what it would sound like. No waking up in the middle of the night with a sudden epiphany of the genius of the idea (an insight that could just as well be gone in the morning …) In short, no impetus for artistic work. And suddenly something else happened, I got the opportunity to work on the situation of Johannes Brahms *Klarinetten-Trio* with the asamisimasa ensemble, and this idea proliferated at once, taking over the time and space that I had thought *Infinite Endings* would occupy.

So at this point I find myself submerged in the *Klarinetten-Trio*, and I have realized that *Infinite Endings* will not take place within the frame of my project. I still think about it, from time to time, recalling with a tinge of melancholy the double image of the original TV-moment and the staged scene I imagined in Gamle Logen. But I've let it go, for now, leaving it to mature, waiting for the right moment. And there's no mystery about this, no metaphysics, I just believe that it has to do with timing and energy, that in order to focus fully on a new work I need to feel this sense of urgency of the idea. Maybe *Infinite Endings* will catch up with me later, I hope it does. And if it doesn't, maybe it wasn't such a great idea after all.

Delirious Brahms

Investigating the music chamber

Artists invent their predecessors
Harold Bloom

Yes, it's beautiful; Trio Boulanger has taken the stage and Brahms Clarinet Trio opus 114 is on the programme. I've been looking forward to this. I like Brahms, I like the musicians, we have worked together on a couple of my pieces earlier in this festival that's drawing to a close. But still. It's getting old. The smooth flow of perfect phrases, the well-shaped high notes, the shining harmonies. There's this itch somewhere inside me, I need friction, something to rub up against after a week of silken chamber music. Am I the only one feeling this way? I look around, discreetly, while the musicians start out on the second movement. The faces surrounding me glow of pure contentment and idle peace, and suddenly I have the heretic thought that few of them really get what's going on inside a Brahms-sonata; the dialectic of the formal structures, the abstract thinking that yield these poignant melodies and sweet harmonies. But that's not the point, I've said it myself many times, in articles and interviews, that it's not about *understanding* music, it's about *experiencing it*, but still, what I experience now is an overwhelming feeling that something's got to happen, something unforeseen, something other than this beautiful work unfolding along its preordained and beautiful trajectory where beautiful performers provide their beautiful interpretations, almost identical to other beautiful interpretations of this beautiful music. And I ponder my own role, as composer-in-residence in this beautiful festival in the beautiful woodlands of lower Saxony, and I have hardly provided any friction myself, with my beautiful pieces; some strange harmonies, some leftfield timbres, but come on, really, everything is well within the norm of what chamber music festivals will happily assimilate in exchange for a couple of new-music brownie-points, and I sense my body rising from the chair and I make my way through the audience with whispering apologies left and right, and then I'm out in the aisle, the ensemble have started the third movement by now, I've never liked that one, to be honest, it's just silly, and my steps are firm as I approach the scene, deaf to the hushed voices that spread among the audience, I mount the small flight of stairs and head for the Steinway, the musicians are still playing, but I can see the confusion in their eyes when I tuck my head under the piano lid, take in the

vibrating metal strings and dancing felt hammers for a while, the piano sound brushing my face is delicious, I suck the smell of metal, wood and chamber music deep down into my lungs before I swing myself up from the floor, roll myself together and crawl into the piano. The sound is immediately damped to short, percussive thumps before the pianist stops and the clarinet takes the instrument out of his mouth and the cellist's bow stops moving across the strings; but I stick my head out from under the lid and try to shout with a whisper, no, no, don't stop, please continue, this is going to work out fine! And they exchange a few glances and continue, hesitant at first, and I can feel the vibrations from the strings through my body, and by rocking back and forth I can open up for some strings, let them sound normally, and I hear how the playing of the two other players change, the altered piano enforces an altogether different approach to playing; damped, uneven, jumpy, and finally, I think, something's finally happening here, this is perfect, just like it should be, this music needs friction, surprise, something to slow the perpetual mumbling of the chamber music machine, a counterforce to the half-hearted romanticism of tradition, but that's not how it is, it won't work, I'm not lying on the piano strings, not crawling into the piano; I'm not mounting the stairs, not even walking up the aisle. I'm not getting up from my chair, I sit there through both third and fourth movements, and when it's time to applaud I clap my hands and smile and afterwards I do small talk with a concert house director from Hamburg. *Mögen Sie Brahms*? she asks me.

The Paranoid Critical Method

In the text quoted above, I portray a delirious impulse that occurred during a Brahms-performance at Sommerliche Musiktage Hitzacker in July 2009. It poses the question of what it takes to break the imperturbable calm of chamber music, to ruffle its smooth surface. This passage may serve as a starting point for what eventually emerged as a chamber music work (or rather a work on the chamber music situation). I was not quite sure how I could use this impulse until I read about Salvador Dalí's method of critical paranoia in Rem Koolhas', 'Dalí, the critical paranoid method and Le Corbusier'.[53] In consequence, the title for this text is adapted from Koolhaas' book *Delirious New York*[54] – though it is Dalí's ideas, rather than those of Koolhaas, that I will discuss in relation to underlying motivations and energies of my piece. I will try to do it in a way that relates to Dalí's method by first discussing the phantasmagorical impulse and then some cool facts of the piece.

Let me first state that paranoia in this context is not identical to persecution mania. It is rather applied in a wider interpretation described by the psychoanalyst Lacan in his dissertation *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports la personnalité* (1932). In this view, paranoia is the delirium of interpretative association involving a systematic structure. It is on these terms we should understand Dalí when he describes paranoid-critical activity as the 'spontaneous method of attaining knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations'. (Dalí was in contact with Lacan at this time, and his text is probably informed by Lacan's thesis.)[55] What we have here is the opposition between the delirious impulse and the critical and systematic objectification of its associations and impulses. It could also be described as the hard-core version of a process described by Dylan Thomas in one of his letters:

> I make one image, though 'make' is not the right word; I let, perhaps, an image be made emotionally in me & then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess; let it breed another; let that image contradict the first, make, of the third image bred out of the other two, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all, within my imposed formal limits, conflict.[56]

In the late nineties, I often used this quotation in programme notes and descriptions of my own poetics. In Dalí's version however, I find a more radical approach where, in Rem Koolhaas words, 'a sane person and a sane intellect insinuates itself into the aberrant processes of paranoid madness or psychosis'.[57] It is a matter of inner imaginations, evoking states of immanent delusions, which act as fuel in the critical-creative process. In this way, the method is not far from one of my initial impulses in music making (as described in the Dylan quote), but it requires a greater amount of imaginative energy to get beyond the 'normality' of the context of a musical work.

This has lead to an approach where I no longer regard the score as prime 'material' for manipulations and operations in working out a critical context for the pieces of music. (Which was the case with *Standing Stones* – see 'Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy'.) I take the whole situation of a chamber music performance and intervene in the situation itself, or to borrow a slogan from Michael Asher: I am author of the situation, not the elements. Or to give it a personal twist: I take authorship of the situation by intervention. Anyway, what happens is this: A chamber music ensemble is sitting on stage, performing what seems to be a classical piece, but my intervention gradually changes both the music and the interplay between the musicians, and it

alters the expectations of the audience during the course of listening.[xxi] The work being performed is Johannes Brahms' *Klarinetten-Trio* from 1891 (the work itself being of less importance), and by way of the paranoid critical method I try to change the *situation* of the performance, not only the material that is being performed.

The paranoiac state can also be traced in the unfolding of events on stage. Central dichotomies in the discourses of paranoia are set in motion:[xxii] Confusions between proximity and distance (the here and now of musical performance vs the historicity of 'classical' music), between inside and outside (what is the 'real' Brahms and what is external additions) etc.

Dogmas, limitations and historical time (apropos Lachenmann)

As a consequence of the deliberations sketched above, I have imposed several limitations to the composition of this piece. The intervention that will take place on stage will also happen in the written music, that is to say, in the *parts* of Johannes Brahms' clarinet trio.[58] I will work with the Brahms-notes as found, physical objects (more on which later), and in addition to my own musical imaginations, I will implement a specific material from a newer layer of music history: Helmut Lachenmann's 1987 clarinet trio *Allegro Sostenuto*.[59] This choice has two functions: First, to try to show the historical roots of material with which I (along with a majority of present-day composers) work: namely the use of noise sounds and 'new' playing techniques on classical instruments. Helmut Lachenmann was a pioneer in developing what he called 'musique concrète instrumentale'. Now that this has become part of the global lingua franca of new music (as I argue in 'Critical Music?') it is easy to forget that it has roots in a very specific context and a specific artistic and political environment.[xxiii] When I use these techniques and superimpose them on Brahms I want to

xxi Consider a remark writer David Foster Wallace gave in an interview where he defined an 'anasthesia of form' with regard to the security and 'tranquilizing flow' of 'Big-R' traditional realist fiction. (Interview with Larry McCaffery in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13.2, 1993, p. 138) It might be the same anasthetic tranquillity that I try to disrupt (or at least challenge) in this chamber music work.

xxii In 'Whatever Happened to Postmodernism', Hal Foster refers to paranoia as 'the last refuge of the subject threatened by alterity and technology', which has different implications than the more technical use of the paranoic energies deducted from Dalí by way of Koolhaas. (See *Return of the Real*, pp. 222–226)

xxiii Emerging in the sixties' and seventies' Germany, Lachenman belonged to the radical movement and was engaged in several heavy-handed polemics with conservative composers like Henze, who coined his work 'musica negativa'.

acknowledge that they are historical objects too, instead of pretending that these techniques are 'neutral' and without semantic implications. This leads to the second function, which is to point to the question: what is historical music? How does the difference in historicity between a piece from 1891 and one from 1987 manifest itself? Can a 25-year old piece be new music? Is Brahms more historical now, in 2012, than Lachenmann?

I am not trying to answer this question explicitly in the work, but rather show how a parallactic repositioning, an altered point of view in the present, can offer different constellations of historical objects. (As opposed to the *perspective*, which is based on a fixed distance between the eye and the object and is a precondition in most renderings of history.) In the following, I'll try to expound a little on the implications of bringing Lachenmann into the situation. What happens is something I like to think about as a *crisis* in the work. The Lachenmann-material, implicit in the techniques used to infiltrate the Brahms piece, is suddenly made explicit. Not as something posed from the outside, but as emergent from within the music itself. Although I extract bars 365–369 from *Allegro Sostenuto* and transplant them into the coda of *Klarinetten-Trio*'s first movement, I insist that this represents something emergent in those Brahms-bars, that Lachenmann's gestures are in fact an estranged version of Brahms floral gestures in the coda. In other words, I detect a similarity that it is probably not, however vague, a coincidence, and I make Lachenmann's hidden reference explicit by, as it were, 'uncovering' it. (I use a similar device, also activating the Lachen-Brahms axis, in *Standing Stones*. Here I speculate on a hidden connection between a certain portion of Lachenmann's piano concerto *Ausklang*[60] and the third movement of Brahms' second piano concerto.)[61] I theorize that Lachenmann's material, however novel, also represents a repetition or rather a *return*. That under his typologic/topologic grid of sounds and shapes the classical system of how sound moves in time and space is still active, sometimes even on the level of pitch and time. In terms of historicity, I'd like to see this in terms of Foster's comparison of the institution of art and a subjective entity;[62] with the psychic temporality of the subject being different from the biological temporality of body, it allows for temporal displacements like the ones of the 'material' shared by Lachenmann and Brahms.[xxiv] It also suggests the possibility to connect (or re-con-

xxiv If I should be mistaken in my identification of these Lachenmann and Brahms-passages, it could be interpreted as an instance of 'bad combinations', something that, in the words of artist Sam Durant offers spaces for associative interpretation (see Hal Foster: 'An Archival Impulse', *October* 110). In other words, not so far from my starting point in the paranoid critical method (maybe, in a Freudian sense, even a paranoic projection of meaning onto a world that is drained of it …)

nect) seemingly disparate temporalities as an act of resistance to the ubiquitous not-so-subversive-anymore postmodern strategies of allegorical fragmentation. The orders of this process are emergent, as orders of associative interpretation, and not formally or ideologically premeditated.

So I propose a dialectic between the two musical surfaces, between the fragmented topology and the smooth flow. In the first movement the relation is antithetic, by techniques of filtering and shifting, where the 'new' sound objects are inserted into and disrupting the Brahmsian flow. In the second movement, this relationship becomes one of superpositioning, when the sound objects actually mutate with the flow of time and *become* the musical time. This process is intensified in the third movement when electronic equipment is brought to the stage to modulate and distort the original musical 'text'. The two materials are annihilated in the brief fourth movement, when the opposing energies are (falsely) resolved in a topology where the historicity of both 'old' and 'new' material is evident when they are placed on the same surface as uprooted and de-contextualized samples.

I regard this process as parallactic, moving from a point of listening where historical distance is at the forefront to one where I can hear the sound objects as aligned in the (seemingly) same historical time-space. (By the same token, our perception of Lachenmann changes when we listen to him not from a point of revolutionary high modernism but listen with a view of displacement, dialogue and a sensualist preoccupation of sound.) With this in mind, paranoia, authorship, situation, parallax and all, it has been interesting to meditate on what title this piece should have. I advocate that it is not an act of *interpretation* or *interpretational composition* in Hans Zender's sense. (See for instance Håvard Enge on Zender's recompositions of Schubert and Schumann.)[63] If it is an interpretation, it is of the chamber music performance as such, not of Brahms' score. The score is of course not randomly chosen, but it is first and foremost a conduit to get in touch with the energies and expectations surrounding a classical chamber music performance. Rather than being my interpretation of a Brahms piece, it is a new piece staging the intervention of a Brahms-performance. Hence, my piece is entitled *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*.[64]

An architectural figure

I mentioned the difference between *Standing Stones* and *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*. I could also describe this difference in terms of a shift from a preoccupation with critique in the framework of form (interpreted as a set of materials and structures) towards critique *through* form that is not ideologically fixed. The architectural critic Jeffrey Kipnis points out this difference in a discussion on Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas in London in 2010:

> Rem's work I understand as having come out of discovering form as not being ideologically loaded. […] And so this insight, that the modernist vocabulary was not already irrevocably loaded with its own formal ideologies, and could in fact be employed, deployed and redeployed, meant that you could do a critical architecture without it having a formal preoccupation, without engaging it in the intricacies of formal discussion. By contrast Peter is entirely invested in the specificities of the canons of formal argumentation, and for him any critical practice will only operate at that level. So what we have is a situation where one architect is entirely devoted to the ideologies of form and the other is entirely devoted to the possibilities of discussing ideologies through form, but without any relationship with it whatsoever.[65]

In musical terms, this points to the possibility of a critical practice not necessarily associated with the formal preoccupations of the well-established practices of e.g. Helmut Lachenmann or Brian Ferneyhough. It points to a practice where ideological questions are discussed through musical structure and material without a priori formal demands. What comes to the foreground, then, is the need to engage with the contextual aspects of musical practices: its social situations, its places and its formal devices. Historical examples of this dichotomy applied to music are plenty. Consider, for instance, the aleatoric approach of John Cage as opposed to the formal preoccupations of Karlheinz Stockhausen. Or let us take a closer look at Helmut Lachenmann versus Mauricio Kagel. Lachenmann is explicitly devoted (and, one could say, limited) to the material considerations of a piece. In 'Affekt und Aspekt' he writes about 'composing as resistance to the prevailing concept of material means: Casting new light on this concept of material, illuminating it so as to reveal and create awareness of what is suppressed in it'.[66] His interest in the production apparatus of music is devoted to *what* it produces, in terms of listening, and considerations of *how* it produces are addressed by proxy. The formal consistency of his works

is remarkable, with a steady, almost didactic exploration of a well-defined universe. The social and political implications that is the strongly felt ethos of his work, emerges from the material manipulations within the framework of institutions like the orchestra, the string quartet and even the opera. For instance, a piece like *Gran Torso*, which in so many ways changed the notion of what a string quartet could sound like, does however take the institution of chamber music as an a priori fact[67] – a fact to challenge, yes, but still a functioning framework for the material considerations. One could say that his exploration of the origins of sound in the mechanics and physics of instruments and bodies constitutes a significant opening in the formal framework – a topos that since has been explored by Lachenmann's followers. (We have for instance seen the physical/material approach renewed in the work of Simon Steen-Andersen, with his insistence on the corporeal base of music.)[68] Lachenmann's materialist approach is evident in his assessment that his music 'had broken away from serialism's immobility, because the energies that were basic to instrumental sound, as the trace of its mechanical production, were consciously incorporated into the composition and played a crucial role in the work's sonic and formal structure'.[69] But the keywords *sonic and formal structure* point to the limits of his approach. This would correspond to what Kipnis identifies as devotion to ideologies of form and specificities of the canons of formal argumentation.

Kagel, on the other hand, investigates the ideologies of modernism through staging its formal devices in often satirical situations. Even in early Darmstadt works like *Sexteto*, written within a traditional idiom, he evokes subversive strategies that explore and almost satirize the lacunae of serialism.[70] In 'Imploding the System: Kagel and the Destruction of Modernism', Paul Attinello writes that this music 'represents a confounding of serial control, an eruption of elements which could not be completely ordered into a serial fabric'.[71] When he arrives at his techniques of instrumental theatre, we can regard works like *Sur Scene* as self-reflective discussions where modernism, by ways of humour and self-mockery, investigates itself.[72] This impulse is later extended well beyond basic deconstructive methods in pieces like *Staatstheater*, a 'signal that even the world of opera can be completely dismantled and recreated in a way that makes it unrecognizable'.[73] This may also be seen as an attack on autonomy, asking what the score really is, beyond a collection of possibilities to stage a performance, and, in extension, it poses questions about authorship of composing and the authority of the stage. In this respect, we see how Kagel creates a critical music without a formal ideology but rather by 'employing, deploying and redeploying', in Kipnis' words, formal strategies of modernism.

So on one hand we have the idea of critique inside given formal frames, and on the other, a critique that discusses ideology through form as contextual device. In this duality, I want to investigate the second position in the current chamber music work; I might phrase it as a wish to let practice submerge form. Another way to see it is to expand the notion of 'musical material' to encompass not only the pitches, the time structures, not only the instruments and bodies, but also the rituals and places of performance, the context of music. The following passage from Lachenmann's 'Composing in the shadow of Darmstadt' would grant for such an approach even within his strict dialectics:

> Dialectic structuralism means: constructing situations, organising, even improvising them, or stipulating them in the broadest sense, so as to break or even force open existing, ostensibly intact structures, so as to demonstrate or make perceptible, within a more or less known, trusted or even magically endowed object, something that is unknown and perhaps suppressed.[74]

This could lead, perhaps, towards a certain kind of synthesis of the duality Kipnis asserts. A synthesis that Hal Foster identifies as the difficult task of (re)claiming critical spaces: 'On the one hand, it is a labour of *dis*articulation: to redefine cultural terms and recapture political positions. […] On the other hand, it is a labour of articulation: to mediate content and form, specific signifiers and institutional frames'.[75]

The score as fetish and found object

This way of incorporating the whole apparatus into the notion of 'material' opens to a new approach to the score. It is not only an idealized recipe for sound production, nor an abstract system of signs; it is a real interface in its physical fact, the very *thing* that informs the physical action of the musicians. As an intensification of the notion of context and musical site, we could consider the score a found object. If we rewind a little, we see the fetishism of music-as-text, and the institution of the score is one of the main features of post-war modernism. Later composers like those of the new complexity have made this position their main topos, taking classical notation to its extremes and investigating the relation between musician and score to an almost conceptual extent. In *Johannes Brahms: Klarinetten-Trio* I try to work

literally with the idea of the fetishized score, by using strategies from fine arts.[xxv] My basic rule is that instead of taking Brahms-material and reapplying it in my own score, I will take a Brahms score and use it as it is, filtering, erasing, superposing and pasting 'foreign' material onto it. This goes for the parts in particular, which are the objects that the musicians handle and take as instructions for their performance. (The score is in fact rather a master plan, not suitable for performance, where the changes and alterations will be expressed in a system of colour-codes and collage.) The result is a unique, new set of 'score' and parts that will only exist in this one copy. The score and parts I work with is one that has been used in performance of Brahms' clarinet trio by the ensemble this piece is written for, the Oslo-based ensemble asamisimasa. In this way, the work can be said to have a specific contextual framework, which is that of this ensemble. The score will not be an item for proliferation.[xxvi] This is obviously the opposite idea of the traditional way of composing music, writing a score that can be realized by anyone with the corresponding set of instruments. On the contrary, this is not writing for instruments, but for the individuals playing it: it is not for cello, but for Tanja; not for percussion, but for Håkon.

A sideways glance at assemblage

The act of re-fetishizing the score has further implications that can be discussed in terms of *assemblage* and its historical categories like readymade, collage and appropriation.[76] The act of taking a mass manufactured object like a score and turning it into a singular art object has certain similarities with the *readymade*. There are, however, two significant differences. Firstly, the score is not a neutral everyday object (like the objects of Duchamp, for example). It is laden with connotation and 'value'. Secondly, the score is only part of the complex network of references, actions

xxv As opposed to fine art, the musical artwork has media of distribution – in this context, the score. Where the driving force of art have been that of singularization, music is still engaged in inherited ideas of distribution – the composer writes something for an abstract instrumentation (String quartet, Orchestra etc.), a work that can be distributed and reproduced in any number of instances. (We might of course turn this argument around, and state that music became *modernized* with its system of distribution, while the arts have stayed with the pre-modern concept of singularity.) We know, however, that musical innovation often takes place in very specific and singular contexts, involving specific bodies in specific places, and the rhetoric of distribution is often counterproductive to artistic innovation and, indeed, singularity. (That select innovations sometimes become part of the system of distribution, courtesy of publishers and agents, is a different story.)

xxvi Subsequently, new pieces can be made for other ensembles, taking their specific circumstances into account and making them an integral part of the work.

and material that constitutes the musical work – text, sound, performance, psychology of listening etc.[77] It might be more useful to understand the process of using the score as material basis for manipulations as related to *collage.* One of the properties of the collage is the ability to break illusions of continuity. In this case we have the illusion of the continuity of the nineteenth-century chamber music work; that it can *mean* the same to people living today as it meant to those who heard it for the first time. My position is that we hear it differently, of course we do, but this difference is unconscious when the listener is under the spell of the illusion of continuity. Both Adorno and Bürger describes collage as a shock, in Adorno's words a 'way to articulate discontinuity' – a device to break the spell.[78]

In *Johannes Brahms: Klarinettetrio* the collage is evident in the way the 'original' score is manipulated by cutting and pasting other materials into it – a collage in a literal sense. But it is also a collage in terms of discontinuing the smooth time-flow of Brahms chamber music, transferring the quality of collage from the spatial realm of paper to the temporal realm of musical performance.[xxvii] There is also a spatial discontinuity, taking place in the performance, when the chamber music stage is invaded in mid-performance by technical equipment and electronic gear. (See the next section for more on this.)

The matter that this discontinuity is exerted on is the clarinet trio – both a frame (an ensemble) and a work (Brahms' score), and in itself a repetition. And looking at my process from this angle, we arrive at the idea of appropriation. Art critic Daniela Salvioni states that the difference between readymade and appropriation is the distinction between the method of contextual transfer of the prefabricated object or image and the repetition of it.[79] The materiality of the prefabricated object secures continuity in the process of re-contextualization, while the appropriated object is a reiteration of representation, not of object/material. One can argue whether a transfer from 1891 to 2011 represents a re-contextualization in itself, without regard to the (false) continuity of the chamber music concert as institution. But if we regard the chamber music concert as the 'same' context, the quality of appropriation arises in that it emphasizes the reiteration of representation. Some theorists, like Craig Owens, state that appropriation is about emptying the appropriated object of its original meaning.[80] As a contrast to this, one has a widespread practice of video artists, for example, specifically feeding off the inherent meaning (and/or cult

xxvii *Montage*, with its historical roots in the temporal art of film, could serve as well as term for discussion. But for the sake of clarity and wealth of connotations in art history, I will mainly stick with *Collage.*

value) of the appropriated objects.[xxviii] This is also the case with the trio in question – the deep connotations of the original object are a crucial factor in establishing the meaning (and critical potential) of the new situation.

Theatricality

The last factor I want to bring into this equation is the idea of 'theatricality'. According to Douglas Crimp, the shift towards theatricality (and, in discussing minimal sculpture, temporal duration) is a key feature of appropriation.[81] This sense of theatricality and duration is already present in the performance of a musical work, but it can be heightened and intensified in the process of appropriation. I hope this will be evident in *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*, where I not only appropriate the performance of Brahms, but also usurp a significant role by posing as the interpreter of both the appropriated object and its situated context.

Dealing with this inherent theatricality has been one of the main challenges in the process of intervening into a chamber music situation. All musical performance has an element of theatre, to greater or lesser degree.[xxix] As composers and musicians we often close our eyes to this while the spectator, especially the untrained eye, will discover the theatricality at first glance. This asymmetry of perception is one of the conditions that make Kagel's instrumental theatre so effective.

In my first sketches for the piece, I wanted to make a three-step intervention: First, intervening in the score with manipulations, omissions and shifting, then intervening physically in the instrumental playing, moving on to a situation where ad-hoc players (the *de facto* executioners of intervention) would take control over the situation. However, I ran into problems with the ideas of physical intervention: a real-time preparation of the piano worked quite well, but imposing similar physical interventions on the clarinet and cello would be difficult given both the fragility of the instruments and the mode of playing. More important, it would give too much emphasis to the theatrical side of the piece. Imagining ad-hoc players physically

xxviii Plunderphonics – John Oswalds project with early hard disk editing of musical samples – serves as a good example here. In his appropriation of (and subsequent legal battles with) Michael Jackson, the super star aura of M.J. is an important part of the 'meaning' of the work.

xxix To me, a piece of contemporary chamber music is a live performance, and devices of sound-reproduction (CD, sound file etc.) are something different, objects creating their own contexts of listening. I have tried to write about this in literary form in 'Arvid Pettersen listens to Couperin', pp.000–000.

'assaulting' the cello and clarinet would turn the piece into instrumental theatre, which is quite a different ball game than the one I wanted to play. (See the work of Trond Reinholdtsen, for instance asamisimasa's performance of *Music as Emotion*, as an example of contemporary instrumental theatre.)[82] After discussing this with the ensemble, the idea of incorporating electronic interventions emerged. At first I was resistant to this thought, especially the thought of using computers on stage, with the implications, both technical and aesthetic, of such a move. In the context of this piece it was important to avoid the figure of the composer as some kind of Deus ex Machina, hovering over computers and mixers in the concert hall. However, unlike most chamber music ensembles, asamisimasa has quite a lot of experience in working with electronics, so we came to a solution where the electronic manipulations would all be done locally, onstage, by the musicians themselves. Of equal importance, the equipment would be taken onstage *during* the performance, allowing the piece to start out as a 'normal' piece of chamber music, which was of great importance for maintaining the element of surprise and of the unexpected. (As soon as people see microphones, mixing tables and loudspeakers the immediately start having certain expectations …) In fact, this added to the 'interventionist' quality that I was looking for.

So we arrived on a four-step intervention: Beginning with manipulations of the score, then intervening physically in the instrumental playing, moving on to electronic manipulation of the instrumental sound and ending up with having the whole situation taken over by the electronics. These four steps are carried out in succession, in correspondence with the four movements of the original Brahms trio.

A Kind of Funny Thing that Happened When I Presented this Paper at a Conference in Rome, Not Completely Beside the Point, but Perhaps a Little Awkward with Regard to Essayistic Consistency

The day after my presentation,[xxx] I was waiting in the marble lobby of Academia Belgica, a handsome and slightly fascistoid building on the outskirts of the Borghese Park. The presentation went well, I guess, it being my first time at a scholarly conference like this.[xxxi] I had kept the time limit, no technical disasters, and even had time for one or two questions afterwards. So I was idling around, waiting for the keynote presentation of the day, which was an opportunity to hear an old hero of

xxx At EPARM, the European Platform for Artistic Research in Music.
xxxi An event I could extemporise on at length, but I won't.

mine, Christopher Hogwood, lecture on his work with a new edition of Corelli's famous *Sonatas* op. 5. Among the multitude of academics presenting at this conference, this was one of the few chances to listen to an actual performing artist[xxxii] with heaps of recordings and critical editions behind him, recordings that I had spent many hours listening to in my time as a music student in Oslo. (I had also just finished reading his biography of Händel as research material for my novel *Allsang*.)[83] I was fidgeting with some leaflets presented by one of the academic publishers who had put up a small stall in the lobby, when an elderly gentleman approached me and thanked me for the presentation yesterday. In friendly and impeccable English he asked if I had been at the Brahms-collection in Hamburg and looked at Brahms' manuscript for the Clarinet Trio. I thanked him with much decorum (a kind of involuntary reflex in meeting with English gentlemen, I guess) and answered that no, I hadn't had the pleasure. 'Well, you should', he said, 'You would find that the manuscript is itself a collage. Brahms has pasted new pages of music on top of the older ones in a revision of the manuscript. I asked them if I could carefully lift the top layer off to see what he had originally written, but they wouldn't let me'. It did not occur to me as very strange, I thought, still fumbling with the leaflet, that they wouldn't let this kind but somewhat eager old guy tamper with their Brahms relics. 'But maybe they'd let you do it', he added with a complex smile as we headed for the stairs, two minutes to the hour. 'Well, it's time', he said as we entered the auditorium on the second floor, shook my hand again, and headed for the podium where he took the seat behind the cardboard sign printed with the name 'Christopher Hogwood'. I was mildly star struck and feeling a little sheepish as he picked up the microphone and started his talk, which was highly interesting as well as entertaining for an hour straight with no manuscript and only interrupted by carefully selected musical examples.

xxxii Hogwood considered himself to have actually started out as an academic, not a musician, which maybe gave him the slightly tilted angle necessary to come up with some of the insights of the early movements of the movement of early music.

Brief note #3:

On Hacktivism

A slim, self-published pamphlet on fashion research prompted me to reflect on my two last pieces in this project as forms of *hacktivism* – a fundamental term in Otto von Busch's FASHION-able, a PhD project in design. Not that I'm all that interested in or much impressed by latter day activists like say the *Anonymous* movement;[xxxiii] what von Busch is talking about is a 'soft' approach to hacking – not acts of violence and destruction but strategies of intervention, disruption and offerings of new possibilities. The pamphlet in question is the methodology appendix to his PhD thesis, and it is entitled *Post-script to Fashion-able, or a methodological appendix to activist design research*.[84]

Von Busch's methodological point of departure is a perceived lack of methods that emphasize action and engagement. The detached criticality and objectivity-through-disengagement of traditional academia is not sufficient in his view, and he suggests different approaches informed by artistic research, social science, pedagogy, philosophy etc. The methodological post-script does not explicitly discuss hacktivism – that is the subject of the thesis – and since I am more interested in the methods than in the ideology of hacktivism, I will let a short definition suffice: 'Hacking is a matter of dedicated and systematic curiosity, of understanding a system, reverse engineering it, finding a suitable place for intervention, plugging in *and keeping the power on*. Hacking is to modify and advance a system because you love it, not because you hate it'.[85]

Amid the pamphlet's wealth of Deleuze-and-Guattarrian talk of rhizomes and flight lines and nomads, a succinct point like this one is a valuable tool for reflection (or, in von Busch's Haraway-inspired term, *diffraction)* on my strategies for *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*. There is no need to connect the dots here; the parallels with the processes I describe in *Delirious Brahms* should be obvious. So I will rather use a couple of pages to refer and discuss aspects of von Busch's methodology that apply to my own project.

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xxxiii A loosely associated international network of activist and hacktivist entities.

While von Busch envisages the hacktivist approach as a central theme of his whole research methodology, I would maintain that it could be viewed as principles of actions embedded in a strategy that is less afraid to combine the creative bottom-up approach with the reflective top-down stance of traditional strategies. Personally, I prefer this double approach, believing that 'answers', 'art' or 'results' of my ongoing processes might be found somewhere in this continuum (or, to adopt another of von Busch's metaphors, where these *diverging lines intersect*.)

Von Busch maintains that the hacktivist approach provides a different perspective on the critic's role, and cites Bruno Latour on a new form of critique: 'The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather'.[86] Latour continues describing how critique can be a form of devotion to and care for fragile constructions, and it is safe to call it a non-revolutionary (if not outright conservative) approach. But the quality that von Busch lifts from this is the idea of *affirmation*, of creating alternatives, of change through participation. Of making new machines that render the old ones obsolete.

At some points, von Busch's post-critical approach can seem irresponsible and somewhat escapist: 'There is no strict question and no proven answer'.[87] 'We must avoid points or positions, and we must look for the lines'.[88] But his interventionist approach and emphasis on action nevertheless points to a certain degree of risk-taking. And I find this position of Getting Your Hands Dirty useful, even though I do not pursue the interest in social situations and immanent impact on society that permeates von Busch's project.

Modelled on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, Von Busch suggests a variety of independent, yet intersecting methods he calls *process lines for a nomadic practice*.[89] He describes this as an affirmative research method, where the aim is to ride upon the emerging forces of projects and to use the immanent energy and intensity (as opposed to a structured system of theory and examples). I imagine that this emphasis on affirmation can be utilized in different phases of research. Rather than subscribing to

an overarching 'non-systematic system', I believe that in the Doing, in certain areas and temporalities of artistic research, the need for an affirmative approach is fundamental. But I don't see why this should rule out other approaches in other parts of the project – even 'sequential reasoning' and 'logical deductive argumentation' and other species of thinking that von Busch looks upon with suspicion. These operations could very well inform *parts* of rhizomatic structures that 'connect[s] multiplicities of becoming, rather than structuring countable elements, strict cause and effect and ordered relations'.[90]

Of the process lines that von Busch suggests, the lines of action, intervention and interrogation seem closely linked. The first of these, originating with social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1946, aims at going into the system or situation researched, in collaboration with the members of the system – as opposed to the 'neutrality' of the observer. (This is different from Latour's approach in that it presupposes that we know how the system works.) Mapped onto musical rather than social situations, it is easy to see how this method may apply in working with chamber music, for instance. It requires an engagement of the musicians into collective and critical reflection, in a process where the participants become co-subjects and co-researchers. This method has grown out of situations of oppression and inequalities, not least in the pedagogic research of people like Freire, where action research is a central tool for liberation of the oppressed. What is interesting about that, and can be useful in a musical context, is the idea that the student is encouraged to talk back and act upon reality, not only to repeat the lessons of the teacher.

The hacking stance is more pronounced in the interventionist line of research. It has a more elaborate experimental attitude, with emphasis on direct action. One of these actions is the gesture of questioning, the 'pointing finger' of art. This is an artistic gesture of interrupting a discourse, directing the spotlight to an issue in a practical rather than theoretical way. Von Busch calls this the 'classic' way for art to engage in the world, while the new methods of intervention intensify the 'showing' or 'pointing' by active engagement by way of workshops, happenings, actions etc. An impor-

tant point is that intervention does not have to aim for upheaval or utopian change: 'Modest contributions' are viable possible outcomes of interventionism (and of course the most likely outcome for most projects). The Austrian artist group WochenKlausur touches upon something that I find important with regards to intervention: that the social circumstances can be as valid a subject matter for art as the traditional materials – it can be material in its own respect. And again, a social situation, to me, is not necessarily an out-there situation. It could just as well be a situation of the in-here of music that needs some kind of intervention. I could also add that borders between areas of sociality, between 'art' and 'reality' are blurred, and that every little gesture of art could be the 'molecular revolution' that Von Busch quotes from Gerald Raunig.[91]

The last *line* that I'll point to in this brief note is the interrogation line. The method of this line is to add a critical questioning to prevailing practices, and, in von Busch's design cases, to 'disrupt and reveal the underlying inequalities that design usually tries to hide'.[92] It is a way of working *in* the world, not *about* or *upon* it. Though I'm not sure whether or not this line can be re-mapped onto the specialized sites and situations of music without becoming void of its meaning (or converging with the action- and intervention lines already referred to), von Busch also discusses explicitly social design projects that in fact are presented in museums and not in the context of the homeless for whom the objects are designed. One of the artists, Krysztof Wodiczko, stresses that 'The appearance of interrogative design should "attract while scandalizing" – it must attract attention in order to scandalize the conditions of which it is born'.[93] With such an explicit aim for the scandalous, strategies of the spectacular are never far away, and this is but one of several dilemmas that arise from these practices. In von Busch's reading, the interrogative line aims to pose questions rather than provide answers, but at the same time he envisions it as 'not so much a way of resisting or opposing a situation as of building complementary systems or new functions'.[94] It seems to me a contradiction not wanting to provide answers and at the same time proposing new systems, but I choose to see it as one of the paradoxes one gets tangled up in while trying to sort out the contingencies of *affirmation-critique-as-practice.*

Posthumous Passions

A different perspective

After spending more than a year pondering the possibilities of confronting the symphony orchestra with the fetishism of its past, I had an interesting experience. Nothing thoroughly earth shaking, maybe, but still; a small revelation – suddenly seeing something familiar from a fresh point of view. The occasion was a concert in Oslo Concert Hall, given by the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, including the premiere of Lars Petter Hagen's orchestral work *Kunstnerens fortvilelse foran de antikke fragmenters storhet*.[95] The experience was that of seeing the questions I have been trying to sort out in my own work, both in music and words, phrased in radically different ways.

I was intrigued by the piece because it opened up a different perspective on some of the crucial questions in my project. Where my music tends to be loud, all encompassing, impure and complex, Hagen's music is quiet, poetic and with very simplified textures. But below the sheer and beautiful surfaces of sound, one finds a clear-cut challenge to the orchestra: Hagen deals with the concept of resignation. This is a word seldom used in the vocabulary of new music, with its rhetoric of 'the new'. It is an un-heroic and un-modernistic word, and it proposes another way of postulating critique. This challenge is not describable by the usual terms of cultural critique, like *subversion* or *negation*. Hagen's music is as much as anything a silent assault on the standardized and commodified vocabulary of 'new music' – or more precisely, an attempt to avoid that the substance of any critical expression is washed away by stale rhetorical figures, musically speaking. (At this point I should mention that I was no innocent bystander to the spectacle. My role for the evening was to introduce the concert in front of the audience in a so-called pre-concert talk. Normally this would have been in the form of a short speech saying something informative and witty about the programme. As the occasion was a premiere, it was more interesting to speak with the composer than about the music, so we turned the event into an onstage interview. In consequence, I cannot swear that some of Hagen's own readings and views have smuggled themselves into this text – on the contrary, I can guarantee that it has happened. But mainly, I will try to stick with my own reading of the piece and what it signifies.)

Tragedy in the Philharmonic Hall

Hagen's music is far from 'neo-romantic' or 'new simplicity'; it does not pose the simplifications these concepts pose in the abandonment of 'modern' language as an optimistic alternative or a viable way forward. Hagen's way is to reflect, to muse over things past, over something drifting away from us and into a hazy distance. But below this calm surface, there is a dangerous undertow in the expression of the tragic-heroic dimension of new music: this abstracted musing is a device of *estrangement*, indirectly pointing to the fact that the orchestral institutions are no longer open for true experimentation with musical form and context. At best, guarded experiments with language are possible, as long as they conform to the predetermined limitations of restricted rehearsal time and business-as-usual. Still, there is this will to confront the orchestra – to take it on – a refusal to leave it there as a thing of the past. And this contradiction between belief and resignation is at the core of Hagen's new work. In Beckett's words: *I can't go on. I must go on. I'll go on.*[96] Or, as the fundamentals of tragedy: the necessary coupled with the impossible. The only optimistic streak in this is that acknowledging the problem, eschewing the false rhetoric of the 'new', might inspire to *act* on the present impasse of orchestral music. But let's not go there just now; let's rather take a closer look at *Kunstnerens fortvilelse foran de antikke fragmenters storhet.*

A staged *Innerlichkeit*

The title is borrowed from a painting by Henry Fuseli, of 1778; it depicts a man sitting in despair with one hand on his head and one hand on a gigantic marble foot, an equally enormous hand looming in the background. The phrase translates to something like *The artist moved to despair at the grandeur of antique fragments.*

The music gave me some of the same feeling as the ending of Mahler's ninth symphony always gives me: of something that is inevitably over, something slipping away, something that disintegrates.[97] Resignation. Tristesse. Defeat. Nostalgia. (Except, of course, that the end of Mahler's ninth is embedded in the historical narrative where it actually points to a new beginning, with Webern.) The Mahler connection is not only a fiction in my head – onstage before the performance in Oslo, Hagen told how he regarded Mahler as the pinnacle of orchestral culture; the symphonic orchestra had expanded and developed along with the needs of the most

radical composers up to Mahler. From this point, around 1910, orchestral culture was fixed in a structure that no longer would adapt change in musical and artistic thought. Hagen uses quotations from Mahler's third symphony,[98] elevating them to the status of enigmatic ruins and impossible achievements. But there is something wrong with this picture. Some mechanisms at work showing us that the air of resignation is not the fresh pine-scented air of Mahler's beloved mountains, but rather the cloying odour of air freshener, a simulation that fools no one. If we try not to notice it, we might say that it smells 'good'. But if we really breathe it in, we realize the scent is there to cover up for something that stinks. In musical terms: if we lean back and let the music pass by us, it is full of sweet niceties. But if we listen into it, taking in the context of performance and the institutionalized expectations of 'new music', we start to perceive the underlying matters. Hagen's music is music of silent despair.

The Italian composer Aldo Clementi has categorically stated that 'music must simply assume the humble task of describing its own end, or at any rate its gradual extinction'.[99] This is an echo of Jean Baudrillard's dictum that the only possibility left to art is to objectify its own disappearance, to dramatize the indifference, in order at least to pretend there is something at stake.[100] This dramatization is exactly what I feel is going on in Hagen's work – albeit without Baudrillard's cool distance or Clementi's nihilist tendencies. There is something urgent and present in the hushed voice speaking to us through Hagen's music. Rather unashamed, he uses all the tricks in the book to seduce the listener: slow tempi, transparent orchestration, swelling strings, long phrases, detailed timbres; a lush atmosphere. But we soon understand that something is wrong – that what we are presented with is a form of staged *Innerlichkeit*, one that is self-conscious, always seeing its own *Innerlichkeit* in context. Maybe this *Innerlichkeit* is a case for Slavoj Žižek's understanding of 'overidentification' – an inverted protest in which we identify with a phenomenon to such a degree that its dark, hidden sides become apparent, often through a parodic gesture.[101] The term *Affirmative critique* might be as useful here – a critique confirming the opponent's position to such a degree that it is revealed as impossible.

Another possibility is to reach back to Adorno's reading of Mahler, where the immediacy of music, according to Adorno, is revealed as fictitious.[102] For Hagen always keeps us fully aware of the staging mechanisms: the structure doesn't fulfil the promise of the details. We hear sections that don't really lead anywhere. Gestures left hanging in thin air. The use of obviously simplified statements never allows us as audience to sink into dreaminess. Like an attempt to reinvest music with *passive*

resistance after Baudrillard's 'end of subversion'. The form soon reveals itself in its anti-epic attention to the moment; there is no Mahlerian wish to encompass the world here, just a rather futile groping to grab a handful of something, anything, and to gaze at it like some sort of long-lost gem. There are a couple of upshots: sudden displays of futile, half-hearted desire. But nothing is sustained, we float in an air of sexual melancholia, the feeling that the moment has passed, the possibilities of ecstasy have come and gone, unfulfilled. Clementi, again: 'Exaltation and Depression have had their day: however you disguise them, they are modest symbols of a dialectic that is already extinct'.[103]

One basic device of shaping these emotions is *reduction*. Reduction as key device to achieve the effect of estrangement. Reduction as the one constant feature of Hagen's work from his early years as a retro-modernist. Take the timpani-solo towards the end of *Kunstnerens fortvilelse …* – a very lonely fanfare: Mahler's 18 timpani reduced to one muffled off-stage timpanist. The snare drum soloist, very un-soloistic, but in soloist position on the conductors left side. The strange midi-version of a fragment from Mahler's third symphony played from a small ghetto blaster, something of a signature gadget for Hagen. The double bassoon solo. Tragically heroic in its futile attempt to revive the richness of a full Mahler chord with only the fundamental note left.

We can sense the Baudrillarian concept of the posthumous passion here, the obsession with the past as nothing more than twitches in an obsolete cultural cadaver. But the title, with its syntactic chain of subject – emotion – relation points to a subjective authorship beyond the disinterested postmodernist game of masks. The emotion is not abstract; it emerges in relation to an object. And it is not an ironically guarded emotion; there is something there that one feels like taking for *what it is*, if such hilarious naïveté is permitted for a second. This is no game of differences; the composer actually identifies with the artist in the title when confronted with the task of writing for the symphony orchestra in times like ours.[xxxiv] I have dealt with some subtleties of this task in other essays, so let's jump to the conclusion right here: What Hagen proposes in the new piece is the same impulse that lies behind my own *Standing Stones*: treating the orchestra as a ruin. And like English gentlemen of the late eighteenth century, we find immense beauty and quality in these ruins.

xxxiv Hagen confirms this in an interview: The journalist asks 'is it your own despair we are talking about here?' and the answer is unambiguous: 'Yes, I guess it is'. (http://www.ballade.no/sak/splitter-ny-ruin/ accessed 05 November 2015.)

Ruins

One fun-fact of ruinology is the late eighteenth century British Gothic craze among the gentry of building follies – new 'ruins', fake imitations – on their own land. Maybe on the ridge there, on the other side of the lake, something they could behold and contemplate on their afternoon walks on the grounds. In this tradition, one might say that Hagen is building his own ruin with *Kunstnerens fortvilelse foran de antikke fragmenters storhet*. Something to muse over, in remembrance of time passed and things long gone. In an interview with ballade.no Hagen expressed something like this under the heading 'Brand new Ruin'.[104]

I am no stranger to the aesthetics of the ruins myself. One of my 'popular' pieces (meaning that it has actually been performed by more than three ensembles …) is from the chamber music cycle *Possible Cities/Essential Landscapes.*[105] The piece is a piano trio called *Landscape with Ruins*, and the music is in effect a landscape of eroded and fragmented versions of materials presented earlier in the cycle.[106] My point is, however, that I found my research material in Christopher Woodward's book *In Ruins*, a book I had borrowed from Lars Petter some five years ago.[107] Again, I see how personal relations and Oslo's smallness threatens to topple this text; there is probably more to the ruin-link than just a borrowed book. And it strikes me that I have written at least two previous texts on Hagen's music. One reason is that we are friends, and that I like his music, so drastically different from mine, growing out of the same background at the Norwegian Academy of Music in the mid-nineties. But it goes further; I suddenly realized that his function is that of a brother, musically speaking. We grew up in the same musical 'family'. Writers, from Dostoyevsky to Franzen have shown us the importance of family. Musically, Hagen is family to me, together with a handful of other composers and musicians. And as 'siblings' it is maybe not so strange that we express aspects of the same ideas, yet in very different ways, having shared so many foundational experiences that we remember and interpret differently.

Memory and Archive

So yes, bringing ideas of the familiar into this text means evoking the concept of memory. And in continuation: the concept of the archive. The family is the incarnate archive of memories, both private and shared. In similar ways we keep with us the bodily memories of music, but this memory is always private: what is it we remem-

ber, when we say we remember a piece of music? Is it a structure? A timbre? A melody? An atmosphere? Or is maybe the music in question so closely linked with our biographies that what we remember is not the music at all, but ourselves? Like when I remember Berio's *Coro*, all I can see is the red dress my wife was wearing that night, on that first trip to Paris, sitting on the balcony of Cité de la Musique and not really hearing the music, not really aware of anything other than ourselves and the affinities between our bodies.

Well. In his two earlier orchestral works, *Norwegian Archives* and *Sørgemarsj over Edvard Grieg*, Hagen works quite explicitly with memory and memorabilia, both on a collective level (e.g. the nation) and on a personal level.[108] So why did Hagen choose a fragment from Mahler's third symphony for this new piece? I think I might have asked him, but as I recall the answer was very vague. Or maybe it is just memory failing me again. Anyway, it opens a room for speculation. There might be prosaic reasons, let's say that the fact that the third symphony is rated by many as the cheesiest of Mahler's symphonies. There might be very private reasons, unexplainable to the outsider. What we call *sentimental reasons* in a very imprecise term. For is it not true that sentiment often is the spark that ignites the fires of creation?

What is in effect here is something like what Georges Perec is doing in his book *Je me souviens*[109] – or in Joe Brainard's *I Remember*, the book from which Perec lifted the idea.[110] Certain elements are extracted from the dark layers of personal memory, of the archive we all carry around with us. One might even say that we *are* archives, walking and talking. So when this Mahler-fragment becomes central in *Kunstnerens fortvilelse …*, it might be the simple case of Hagen remembering it, or rather, stumbling upon his memory of it, picking the memory up and letting it integrate with his own personal sense of musical style and technique. Style and technique is something we can't remember ourselves away from; these personal qualities tend to exercise themselves on the most differentiated concepts and ideas that we put on our working table. In Hagen's case, the techniques (and, indeed, aesthetics) of reduction. Or his ways of establishing distance through awkward instrumentation (ghetto-blasters, Casio keyboards etc.) or off-stage devices. What we can't change is our ways of remembering, and the ways these memories are productive in merging with our imaginations in acts of artistic creation.

When we were preparing for the pre-concert talk, Hagen mentioned 'The dream of *the grandiose musical experience*'. The piece is this dream resurrected from some kind of inner sound archive, impossible to bring back to its full, original impact, only

the shadowy sound of the dream itself is recalled. The original impact that prompted the dream is buried, too embarrassing to acknowledge or even touch, like the hidden desires we turn from in disgust when awaking from heavy sleep.

I remember a trip to Germany some 15 years ago; we were travelling to Leipzig to see the premiere of Stockhausen's *Freitag aus Licht.* It didn't impress us as much as the then-new Liebeskind-museum in Berlin, the Jewish museum. It wasn't officially open yet, the collection was not installed, but we could wander around in the vacant structures, the empty archive soon to hold a painful part of European memory. When we got home, Hagen wrote a piece about the experience: the double emptiness, the empty museum awaiting the memorabilia of annihilation. And I remember his fascination for Boltanski's archive art, drawing on some of the same reservoir of experience as Liebeskind, probably, in works that deal with World War II, the *ur-memory* of the late twentieth century.

The comfort of giving up

Hagen's way of dealing with the past is not a celebration. It is mourning, a labour of loss, and a negation of the omni-access of postmodernity in its most blatant form. It does not confirm with a postmodernism of reaction that repudiates modernism in order to celebrate the status quo. But neither does it confirm its counterpart, the postmodernism of resistance which seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo.[111] So what is at stake here? The mechanisms are subtler than this dichotomy described by Hal Foster. It is the work of art trying to elude theory, trying to state a point on its own terms. We know this is an illusion. But still. There is the effort of trying. The effort of the complex uttering, forging YES and NO into a YESNO. Or a NOYES. It is the heroism of trying, knowing that you're trying the impossible: To revive the embers of the fires of the nineteenth century. Believing that it could be done would be pathetic. But trying, knowing that it's impossible, is tragic. And not without a certain beauty.

We can read this contradiction even in the title, in the juxtaposition of the words *fragment* and *greatness.* Or in Hagen's 'dream of the grandiose' – an expression that contains the friction between grandeur and dream, the dream that pulls a curtain between ourselves and the real experience of physicality that we need to experience grandeur. Again we are reminded of Mahler, in the *double entendres*, the irony, the

attempt of saying two things simultaneously and have them both ring true; the attempt to escaped fixed meaning, to unveil the illusion of music's immediacy. More contradictions: Hagen always starts out with a rather conceptual point, and ends with very sensuous music. At some point he lets go and indulges in the delights of the orchestral sound. I can identify with that. But does Hagen then expose the consumerist commodification of classical music or does he de facto celebrate it? In assessing the reception of Warhol's pop art, Hal Foster insists that the two perspectives must be thought together,[112] which makes it interesting, in a kind of disturbing way.

The play of contradiction is also manifest in something we could call the double-faced critique of the work: On one hand we have the modernist concept of the critique of tradition. On the other hand a critique of the institutionalized 'modernistic' language. But the critique is not from within the language itself, it is from the outside. Hagen has gone full circle in trying to achieve what the literary theorist Sjklovskij called 'estranging' – a pre-Brechtian concept of *verfremdung*, developed more or less at the same time as Schönberg developed the concept of 12-tone music.[113] The question is: Is this a giving up of the search for 'newness' in new music? I think Hagen denied this when I asked him in the pre-concert talk, but I don't know if I believe him. In a discussion on Baudrillard and Lyotard, musicologist Ståle Wikshåland refers to Lyotard's proposal for 'a working-through of modernism, a meta-narrative on the general condition of art production that deconstructs itself as sociological theory. […] This anamnesis cannot lead to a grief over lost unanimity or in pragmatic resignation or unmendable melancholia over something that is lost forever'.[114] This point leads us straight to an objection to Hagen's project: If he wants to propose a potent critique of the orchestra and current orchestral *praxis*, resorting to resignation and melancholia is not enough. It is just a way of avoiding the hard labour of working *through* the devices of modernism in order to address the conditions of production on the orchestral site. And this, if we follow Lyotard, is not the end; this a beginning that is constant in its disrupted relation to the past. In not taking these matters into account, Hagen ends up with an ending that is just … an ending. He is, melancholically and with a kind of brutal sentimentality, if one can imagine such an oxymoron, fixed on the gesture of ending. This gesture proposes no way forward, and in this it achieves less impact than it could have had. It is dangerous to criticize an artwork for what it is *not*, but I believe that Hagen could achieve a higher level of acuteness if he had expanded the scope beyond an insight that strictly speaking has been with us since the early eighties. (Although these insights rarely manifest themselves in orchestral works, very rarely on the Norwegian scene.)

But should we take Hagen's gestures of futility at face value? Or is this music an example of Gadamer's dictum that any allegation that the time of art has passed will necessarily result in new art? There is perhaps a paradoxical, desolate optimism in play, like the one described by Clementi when he states that 'the end germinates naturally from saturation and fatigue, but it is never definitive: through a desolate familiarity we suddenly fall into the infinite and eternal'.[115]

At this point we might return to Hal Foster, and postulate that what is interesting today is not the declaration of the end, but the present state of living-on.[116] Within Lyotard's dichotomy of the modern, between modalities of melancholia and novation, between sorrow and bravery, Hagen has found his position on the side of melancholia. It is a safe and reassuring place. But the method, the reliance on a (dis) play of sophisticated *difference* is a risky business.[xxxv] In a reductive manner it could end up as a way of safeguarding ones integrity, not risking anything by not really taking action. Rancière states that 'Melancholia feeds off its own impotence', and that it has reserved for itself 'the position of the lucid mind casting a disenchanted eye over a world in which critical interpretation of the system has become an element of the system itself'.[117] It makes it an expression of futility, but also a demonstration of culpability – and points toward a meta-critical position I sense Hagen would not oppose. Instead of expressing himself with these futile means, Hagen exposes the same futility. And I remember something Foster said about W.G. Sebald, that a melancholic fixation is the price he pays for his courageous refusal of redemptive illusion. This might also be said about Hagen; and it brings us back to the heroic stance, which we have tried to escape. So enough with the circular arguments. Maybe I read too much of a critical position into Hagen's piece; maybe the simple effort of posing a question, of trying to establish a dialogue, would be a more correct angle. In my friendly reading, the apparent beauty of the music is merely a thin veil covering a very real desperation. But maybe I'm just complicating matters, making it difficult, projecting my own ideas onto the piece. Maybe the truth is that Hagen just wants to write slow and beautiful music. But then again, I don't think so.

xxxv David Foster Wallace has made an eloquent point in the novella 'Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way': 'Difference is no lover; it lives and dies dancing on the skin of things, tracing bare outlines as it feels for avenues of entry into exactly what it's made seamless' (in David Foster Wallace, *Girl With Curious Hair* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989) pp. 231–373).

Brief Note #4:

On Transcription

transcription |tran'skrip sh ən|

noun
a written or printed representation of something.

- the action or process of transcribing something *: the funding covers transcription of nearly illegible photocopies.*
- an arrangement of a piece of music for a different instrument, voice, or number of these *: a transcription for voice and lute.*
- a form in which a speech sound or a foreign character is represented.
- Biochemistry the process by which genetic information represented by a sequence of DNA nucleotides is copied into newly synthesized molecules of RNA, with the DNA serving as a template.

transcribe |tran'skrīb|

verb [trans.]
put (thoughts, speech, or data) into written or printed form *: each interview was taped and transcribed.*

- transliterate (foreign characters) or write or type out (shorthand, notes, or other abbreviated forms) into ordinary characters or full sentences.
- arrange (a piece of music) for a different instrument, voice, or group of these: *his largest early work was* transcribed for *organ.*
- Biochemistry synthesize (a nucleic acid, typically RNA) using an existing nucleic acid, typically DNA, as a template, thus copying the genetic information in the latter.

I have developed different methods that I want to sum up briefly under the header of Transcription. The definitions above are from the American Oxford Dictionary. But as a compositional method, I use the word in a wider meaning, not exclusively linked to the written domain. I refer to the act of transferring something from one area to another; inscribing some quality from one object to another; from recording to score, from score to performance etc. But it also denotes a way of mapping thoughts from other areas onto music, theoretical transcriptions, like my use of Miwon Kwon's *One Place after Another*. In the following I outline how different modalities of transcription have influenced the project:

1) **Transcription from score**, verbatim or with modifications. An example of this can be found in the last movement of *Standing Stones*, pp. 38–43, where the gestural and rhythmical skeleton of the Scherzo from Bruckner's ninth symphony is rendered as a vague imprint. Some of the basic harmonic features are also intact, but it is mainly the transcription of the rhythmical figures that allows us to recognize the quote. This classical technique is also used in *Standing Stones* in the section where Lachenmann's piano concerto *Ausklang* is quoted in the piano, superposed on the Brahms-loop that is the main material of the movement, before the pitch-content of the piano chords are gradually transformed to the harmonic spectrum of the Brahms-quote (bar 23 and 24 from the Andante of Brahms Piano Concerto no. 2).

2) **Transcription from recording by ear**. In the second movement of *Standing Stones*, I have transcribed by ear the rhythmic structure of four different recordings of the two Brahms-bars. These rhythms are then mapped onto frequency modulations from the pitch-array of the same bars. Modulation of this basic material is also the foundation of sections like the one from pp. 6–8. An altogether different version of ear-transcription is found in *Schubert Lounge*, where the last of the four songs ('The Inn') is recreated from memory, after listening to the recording and without use of the score, with drastic cuts and changes in the second part of the song.[118]

3) **Transcription from recording by computer analysis**. I initially experimented with this method in the Ircam-software *Audiosculpt*, but ended up

using the shareware *Spear* in combination with Ircam's *Open Music* (with spdif-files as interface). This gave me the best rendering of the object of transcription: Bar 67 of the first movement of Mahler's fifth symphony. Given the timbral complexity of orchestral sound, the result of the analysis is a sound spectrum that only remotely resembles the original chords. The problems with accurate pitch tracking contribute to what I call 'creative misreadings'. It gave me the opportunity to make a gradual transition from the warped version of the Mahler-chord that the computer provided (bar 128 in *Standing Stones*) to the original Mahler chord (bar 137), and further into a quotation of one of my own 'favourite' chords orchestrated from another piece of mine.[119] Needless to say, repetition, both historically and musically, lies at the core of this whole game of reading, misreading and transition.

4) **Transcription from recording by performers in real time**. This method is comparable to the rather artless categories of karaoke and play-along, and the ethno-musical 'call-and-response'. In the first movement of *Standing Stones*, the musicians are given the following instruction:

> *Everybody wears a headset connected to an iPod. The iPod should contain your favourite recording of the first movement of Mahler's symphony no. 5. Press play on iPods on cue from concertmaster. Play along, try to emulate the recording, both in timing and phrasing. Do not adjust to the players around you, playing in different tempi. Stop in bar 34 and go to the next movement.*

This highlights the idea of mimesis, which, like it or not, is central to the education and formation of classical musicians and to the orchestral culture as such.[xxxvi]

A different real-time transcription is the call-and-response situation of the third movement of this piece, where select recordings of two short Mahler fragments are played from loudspeakers and pitted against the orchestra

xxxvi The first performance of *Standing Stones* was given by the orchestra of the Norwegian Academy of Music, a situation that highlighted this 'educational' aspect.

on stage, in a game where I try to show how the modern orchestra mimics the romantic orchestra in structure, and how modern interpretation is mimetic of the tradition of the great conductors of the twentieth century. (The piece ends with four different versions of a long excerpt of the Scherzo from Bruckner's 9th played simultaneously and extremely loud from loudspeakers, while the orchestra on stage tries to take up the struggle that it ultimately is bound to loose.)

5) Sampling. This may also be regarded as a kind of transcription, and represents the final stage of *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*. Here fragments of the piano trios of Johannes Brahms and Helmut Lachenmann are juxtaposed and wrought into the same musical fabric. (Which is a way of highlighting Lachenmann's *Allegro Sostenuto* from 1987 as historical object in no lesser degree than Brahms Trio form 1896. This parallactic positioning is described in 'Delirious Brahms'.)

My different methods of transcription highlight the take on music history as a sounding history, embedded in recordings, not only a written history. I work with the material not as abstract structures of signs on paper, but as complex structures of *sounds.* Why I have chosen the fragments I have for transcription is another matter, mostly based on intuition, memory and maybe even nostalgia (see 'Posthumous Passions'). For instance, when I 'discovered' Mahler, I listened a lot to Bernstein's recording of Mahler's fifth. I always liked the sound of the drum roll in the chord in bar 67. When I embarked on this project, this was the first 'object' I wanted to scrutinize.[xxxvii] I have a similar story with Brahms Piano Concerto no. 2, a piece I heard first time at 19, at one of my first composition lessons with my first teacher Asbjørn Schaathun. My choice of Lachenmann-material has a somewhat different background: When preparing for my work with Johannes Brahms clarinet trio, I listened to *Allegro Sostenuto*. And one section was in some way intensely similar in shape and texture to the semiquaver-place in the end of Brahms' first movement. So I decided to insert this quotation at the 'right' place in my Brahms rendering, as a kind of sounding acknowl-

xxxvii And it turned out that the drum roll wasn't a drum roll at all, but some very impressive horn-trills!

edgment that many of the techniques of instrumental estrangement I use in this piece has their historical origin in Lachenmann's work in the sixties and seventies. And I had an even more powerful experience when I went to Bergen to hear Ellen Ugelvik and the Bergen Philharmonic play *Ausklang*. It was at a point where I was totally submerged in the two bars from Brahms second piano concerto, I had just finished the electronic part, and the B-flat–G-flat pendulum that permeates it was tattooed into my inner ears. So when I sat there, listening, in the Grieg hall, I suddenly heard a succession of chords, it appears at approximately ten minutes into the piece, that I instantly connected with the same harmonic structure in Brahms. This may very well be a fantasy on my part, but a creatively lucky 'misreading'. In any case, I heard the B-flat–G-flat content very clearly (I do not have perfect pitch); and when I came home to Oslo I borrowed the score from conductor Christian Eggen to see for myself. Lo and behold, it does indeed undulate between B-flat and G-flat. These are top tones in rather complex and, as it turns out, unplayable chords. (Unplayable to pianists other than Lachenmann, who has enormous hands, Ugelvik told me when I asked her if she really did play all those notes.)

Anyway, both these experiences strengthened my suspicion of the subterranean links between Lachenmann's structures and Brahms, and gave me the confidence to include Lachenmann in my historical investigation. I don't know if it's a paradox that as I move away from Lachenmann's influence I get interested in his music as historical monument. But it is not a paradox that the increasing aesthetical distance opens up for an investigation without inhibition.[xxxviii]

xxxviii We had in fact met at several occasions earlier, but when I met Lachenmann backstage after the *Ausklang* performance, as part of the chaotic fan club of composers, conductors and other groupies, he didn't seem to connect me to the mail-exchange where I asked him, at the onset of my fellowship, if he could be my secondary supervisor. I didn't much believe he would have the time, and his reply was very warm and polite, as courteous a rejection as they get. At this point, I see that it gives me a freer position, less obliged to the aesthetics of critical composition. And I can regard Lachenmann as a part of history, up there with Beethoven, Mahler and, indeed, Brahms.

Arvid Pettersen looks out at the city below him from the sixth floor on Carl Berner's Plass. The darkness is snug and warm, as if it has given up trying to fill the streets and is content with casting a few vague shadows across faces and facades. It is on nights like these that Arvid Pettersen feels as if he is part of something. Part of the circle of life, a small bright dot in a network of shining dots. He looks out across the glittering terrain. A myriad of electric flames smoulder above the gentle slope down to the fjord. He can see that there are people shining down there, all around him, and that he need only wander out into the city in order to be surrounded by this human warmth. For every single light that shines down below is a person and right now one of them may be looking up at him, at the living room window that emits a glow into the empty Oslo air, at the shining dot called Arvid Pettersen. He stands by the window and warms himself on these thoughts, soothing the worry within him, the vague pain that has bothered him for some time. He looks out across the dark, unmoving fjord behind the rows of houses and tries to figure out where it actually hurts. It's as if the pain eludes him when he concentrates on it – he should catch it off guard by pretending to think about something else.

He's holding a piece of paper, a formal letter with a bright red letterhead and standardised formulations. It's from the health service, a reminder of a routine check up, a harmless request. One of hundreds of such letters that has been dropped into mailboxes across Oslo in the last few days. But Arvid Pettersen feels that there is something behind it. That the letter is a warning or perhaps a trap. Not all coincidences happen by chance, he thinks, before crumpling the letter and throwing it into the waste paper basket by the desk. On the way back to the chair he stops in front of the record collection, overcome by a desire to listen to music. He runs his fingers back and forth across the cardboard sleeves before pulling out an LP, brushing some specks of dust off the matte cardboard. It's a gem – probably hasn't been reissued on CD. A recording that time left behind, thinks Arvid Pettersen. A voice that no longer sings

for anyone. He turns on the record player and amplifier; the green LED blinks a couple of times before stabilising. He gently drops the stylus into the groove, the quartz crystal that will tap the voice in there, a captured voice rotating hypnotically on its own axis in a perpetual prayer of song. The crackling of the speakers opens up a room within the room, pushing another time field into the time that surrounds him as he sits by the window with his face turned towards the city of shining lights. Then comes the baroque sound of evening mass in Chapelle Royale, the chapel in the palace of Louis the fourteenth. The sound of the voice that sings the Lamentations of Jeremiah. The long streams of notes are musical illuminations of the magical letters and open up every phrase of the text. 'Aleph. How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!' For Arvid Pettersen, there is no incense, no church, and no liturgy. Just the voice, a timid positive organ and a viola da gamba. 'Beth. Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her.' There is a collision of time fields in a flat on Carl Berner's Plass: Jerusalem burns, the prophet writes with his tears of ink on rolls of goat skin, several hundred years before the birth of Christ. 'Ghimel. She findeth no rest.' François Couperin is sitting at the harpsichord in his study in Versailles scratching marks onto the thick paper with a quill. 'Daleth. All her gates are desolate.' The sound waves hit the membrane of a microphone somewhere in Utah in 1962, Alfred Deller singing with his touching, almost unbearable humanity, trying to recreate the sound of Couperin's era but forever caught in his own moment of vague ornamentation and baroque dreams. The electrical impulses become incomprehensible codes attached to brown rolls of tape flowing lightly and easily through the machinery. When the song ends the technician will press the stop button and the producer will say thank you, good work, take a break – and now it is night in Oslo and all these times are colliding, exploding in invisible pressure waves rolling through the space surrounding Arvid Pettersen. He can feel how the empty flat is filling up behind him as he sits by the window. It's a question of time, he thinks. Sooner or later, one of these lights will merge with his own burning flame.

‘Smart critiques. Stupid creates’

1

So yes, again, I return to the question of critique, this time at a point where I’m supposed to wrap up my project nice and neatly. But the itch I have tried to rid myself of is still there, manifest in an uneasiness about trying to be both inside and outside – inside the music while looking at it with an outsider’s gaze. The need is still there, to look for alternative ways to come to grips with the ambition to ‘use the language in which I write to critique the language with which I write’. And again, I’m looking for an alternative to the topos of *critique*; for words that are less harsh, with fewer, let’s call them *discursive*, connotations, but perhaps more true to something that is, after all, not an academic task but a reflection on the making of artworks. And in the process of *making*, the ubiquitous idea of critique might become limiting, narrowing the scope instead of opening it up.

One reason for this notion could be that I’m in the middle of the last piece in my project, a work I call *Schubert Lounge*. And it is a work that, at least for me, calls for opening up rather than narrowing in. Because, after investigations on the site of the symphony orchestra and the situation of the chamber music performance, it is necessary to investigate a locus even closer to home, namely the withdrawn, Godlike position of the capital-c Composer. And with it, the grail-like status of the score, which I have already questioned in *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio.* As Composer, armed with the score, I am in a privileged position to manipulate other people’s bodies, to dictate the working schedule of a hundred people at the time with Prussian rigour, to utilize hierarchies almost unaltered since the French revolution and to inflict my own emotional extravaganzas on musicians that have no option but to consent. This omnipotence is of course effectively restrained by the counter-forces of tradition and the inner operations of the machines of the musical institutions. Even so, the insulated and withdrawn position is one that is increasingly problematized, not only by musicians, who engage in improvisation and composing themselves, but also by composers. There may be many reasons for this movement that we have seen in recent years[xxxix] – on one hand you find a resurgence of compos-

xxxix I have discussed the resurrection of the composer/performer in a Norwegian context in the publication *Underskog*. (Oslo: Frekk Forlag, 2010)

ers writing scores for themselves to play; on the other hand you have the laptop-performer emerging from EA-, DJ- or improvisation cultures who take the stage as musicians. There are also the theatrical or conceptual arenas where composers take part in a wide array of activities related to stagings of musical performances, including being part of ensembles or writing roles for themselves alongside ensembles of classical music. There is probably a wide range of motivations behind this tendency, not least economical and practical ones. In a culture that is more about the visual and spectacular, performance has a supremacy over creation, especially in the new technological arenas of social media. To put it differently: If you want to create, and also communicate what you create, this communication needs to be *performative*. These are some of the motivators, I believe. More philosophically, I think people also are interested in questioning the ontological status of the composer, and many of the composers themselves really want to investigate the performative aspect of musical creation and communication. Not least is the desire to work in *real-time*, to sense the acute flow of time in musical performance, something that motivates one to leave the desk every once in a while – or in some cases, permanently.

So what I do in *Schubert Lounge* is sing and play Schubert songs. Being neither a pianist nor a singer, I am nevertheless looking for a way of articulating these songs that somehow resonates with musical practices of our time. And I don't mean practices of 'new' or 'experimental' music here, but practices emerging from and embedded in popular culture. The singing of songs.

The singer/songwriter is a posture belonging to the 1960s and 1970s, but the posture is ubiquitous also in post-millennial popular music. And what I want to do is to remould Schubert's songs into the posture of the singer/songwriter. It really shouldn't be that hard, since in reality, Franz himself was exactly that: a man who could play and sing his own songs, among an inner circle of friends in homely circumstances. The first context of these songs was not gilded concert halls and shining Steinways, but Schubert's get-togethers and the tinkling sound of his hammerklavier. What did Schubert's voice sound like? Was it strong, weak, balmy, harsh? We have no exact idea, of course. We can assume that it was pretty high-pitched, since many of his songs originally are written in a high register. It's an interesting question, but not crucial to my take on these songs. I am aiming for neither *werktreue* in the sense discussed by Lydia Goehr, nor a correct rendition of Schubert's voice.[120] The important aspect for me is the do-it-yourself quality of the first performances of the songs. In *Schubert Lounge* I will regard this element as one of the important parameters of composition; I will transpose the music 'back' from the spectacle of the concert hall

to an intimate performance in my own home in Oslo, thus utilizing the topos of the *Hauskonzert*. I am going to use my own voice, untrained in a classical sense; what little singing experience I have (outside the compulsory choir-singing through the academy) comes from early musical experiences basically in the style (or rather affectation and vocal posture) of Anglo- or Afro-American popular music.[xl]

Yes, it is a critique of the classical lied tradition, with its serious audiences listening to grave men singing Schubert's simple songs with near-operatic pathos. Or to borrow the words of composer Anders Hultqvist, who put it more elegantly in a text written in connection with Hultqvist's own recomposition of Beethoven's fifth Symphony for the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in November 2011:

> As for the social construction around the making of an artwork, in the 1960s Pierre Bourdieu asked "who creates the creator?" [...] Which leads me to ask: in whose interest is the present interpretational tradition upheld? Is it for the sake of the art object or just for upholding the business around virtuosity and genius? Is it that concert halls thrive on this elevated sense of 'going to church' to meet the icons of classical music and thereby fear the liberation of the musical artwork?[121]

The liberation of the musical artwork, no less. But *Schubert Lounge* is also a labour of love. Not of professional skill, but of the amateur, the *Liebhaber*, of stubborn desire, of will to devour these songs and make them my own. It's very human to want to own what you love. As is the urge to share it. So, in keeping with my idea of context, I will share these reshaped songs with my friends in house concerts in the loft of my own house. And in keeping with tradition, both that of Schubert and that of the singer/songwriter, I will accompany myself on a Rhodes electric piano – the standard keyboard-instrument of the 1970s, the decade in which the singer/songwriter arrived at the prominence of musical culture. And to add to this temporal ambiguity I will record the material and release it in the semi-obsolete format of Vinyl EP. The vinyl record was the dominant distribution medium of the singer/songwriter. But recording is also an important vessel of the classical music industry. The intimate situation of listening to a recorded voice not only reflects the intimacy of the house concert, but also surpasses it and creates the opportunity of a completely personal, private musical space. It's just you and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau then, in your own

xl I might add that popular music was all I knew about, in terms of music, up to the age of sixteen. Not much Brahms or Beethoven in my childhood. So in a way, this is also a repetition of (or regression to) important stages in my personal development.

dim-lit living room, a glass of wine, maybe, flickers from the fireplace, and Svjatoslav Richter at the piano.[122]

Of course, popularized versions of classical music may not be a very original idea. The composer/performer Chris Newman has since the early eighties been singing his own songs in almost brutally 'popular' renditions, songs written for and performed within the institutions of new music. Songs like 'Good day after good orgasm' have made a lasting impression on me after first hearing them some time in the nineties.[123] Within popular culture proper, singers like Josephine Foster have made their own renderings of Schubert songs.[124] And I do think that the process lends itself to a wide array of idiosyncratic expression. It is not merely a concept or an idea, the actual musical performance and 'personalization' of the songs are crucial elements, whichever musical domain you work inside. Again, the sensuous experience of music, the skin of time, is the vehicle for formulating the idea and proposing a different view on the songs and their performance-tradition.

This approach is closer to the composed interpretations of Hans Zender than the earlier works in my project. Zender's intention is not to remould the music; he doesn't want to tell a completely new story. It is more a case of telling the underlying story to today's audience by changing some of the musical architecture in comparison with the original material. But I think my transformation of the vocal expression, not only in stylistic terms, but also by transforming the shape of the songs, sets it apart in some crucial ways from Zender's approach. In his version of Schubert's *Winterreise*,[125] Zender reformulates and orchestrates the music in order to 'actualize' and renew our experience of the effective apparatus of the music. The vocal style is basically untouched, however, still lingering in the pathos of the 'classical' voice. I'm not saying that my *Schubert Lounge* is without pathos. But it is a different kind of pathos. As contemporary observers it is difficult to uncover the network of material practice in which our own endeavours are embedded. I am trying to unmask some of these practices in which classical singing is embedded, by filtering the material through the radical other (i.e. the untrained voice). So *Schubert Lounge* is not about the songs that are sung, it is about the singing of the songs.[xli] This is similar

xli A quick aside into literature: David Foster Wallace does something of the same in his collections of short stories (*Girl with Curious Hair*, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *Oblivion*): More often than not, what he stages are not the stories themselves, but the narration of the stories. (See for instance Clare Hayes-Brady in 'The Book, the Broom and the Ladder: Philosophical Groundings in the Work of David Foster Wallace. In David Hering (Ed.) *Consider David Foster Wallace: Critical Essays* (Austin/London: Sideshow Media Group Press, 2010).

to how *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio* is not about Johannes Brahms' Clarinet Trio but about the chamber music situation.

In my work, the crucial point is the voice, which, to many modern-day listeners is where the whole iconic identity of the lied lies. In popular lingo, the lied voice is 'opera', at least where I come from. You play a Wagner aria for someone not-at-all-interested-in-classical-music, they say, 'Oh, it's opera'. you play Brahms *Requiem*, they say 'Oh, it's opera'. You play a recording of Fischer-Dieskau singing Schubert, same thing. This is a bit far-fetched, I know, but it says something about how iconic the human voice is to us. We identify style, pathos and posture long before we identify what we would call musical content. And the voice, we all have one, is a primary tool of communication and identification. The sound of the voice is not reducible to its morphology of pitch, timbre and time; the way we perceive it is very much as an artefact of culture.

QUARTET

The Academy of Opera, Oslo. A seminar room. A handful of students and a professor, a mild man from Trøndelag with a grey mane of hair and dark eyes, sitting in a semicircle on simple plastic chairs. A large, black grand piano in the background, a few music stands spread around the room.

JONAS
Schubert's songs are like miniature operas, right? One dramatic event or emotion compressed into one song with piano accompaniment.

IVAN
Fair enough. But the key word is *miniature*. Schubert's songs are for intimate circumstances and small rooms. They aren't for grand musical gestures; you can save those for Verdi and Puccini.

THE PROFESSOR
About to say something, Ivan raises his voice.

IVAN
The same goes for the accompaniment – it's the light, delicate sound of a fortepiano that dictates how Schubert should be sung. It's impossible to achieve a stylistically accurate interpretation if the school doesn't acquire a fortepiano for the accompaniment!

Gesticulates at the grand piano

It simply isn't possible to strike a good dynamic balance with this monster.

THE PROFESSOR
Thank you, Ivan. You have already conveyed these views before – loud and clear.

MARIE
And what happens? Not a damn thing, as far as I can tell. What happened to the harpsichord we were meant to have had for the baroque interpretation? How are we meant to work seriously with Handel's recitatives without a proper harpsichord? There's nothing but Steinways and Yamahas and Bösendorfers throughout the entire building!

JONAS
Ok, but now we're talking about Schubert. He had a fortepiano – that much we do know. It was the coolest instrument that you could get hold of in his day. But don't you think he would have loved to get his Viennese mitts on a modern Steinway, if he'd had the chance?

MARIE
But that's exactly the point! He never had the chance. He wrote for the instrument that he did have, period. The way that he writes for the left hand, for example, the bass register on a modern piano just messes up his line. The same with Beethoven, look at the chords in the opening of the C minor sonata, they sound completely awful on a grand piano. And that's not Beethoven's fault.

JONAS
That's a very poor example, Marie. Beethoven was chronically dissatisfied with his instruments – he was always complaining. He pestered the piano makers and looked forward to the day when his music could be played on *better* instruments.

IVAN
So what? Beethoven hated his piano, but that was what he played on, that was what he composed on. It was the fortepiano that was his – what should we call it – sonorous reality, right?

JONAS
This is why you have to form the sound and phrasing in a way that actually works on the instruments that you have access to instead of dreaming that the world stopped in 1830!

Reaches out a hand and thumps it against the Steinway a couple of times.

Beethoven was a modernist! He would have *loved* this monster and it is our goddamn *duty* to adapt his music so that it works in our time.

IVAN
That's exactly the point, Jonas. Even so-called great artists modify the usual Schubert performance according to the weak romanticised attitude that has lain like a clammy hand across his music for more than a hundred years. Schubert is sung as if the definitive interpretation of his songs was made in 1910! It has nothing to do with *our time,* it's about laziness that is completely *ahistorical,* do you know what I mean?

JONAS
Does not answer. Holds Ivan's gaze.

THE PROFESSOR
Well, maybe some of the others have views on –

IVAN
Let me just finish my line of thought – what I mean is that it is impossible to bring out the full potential of these songs without a proper *frame,* and for that we have to look at the original context, right? Schubert sang his songs for a small circle, a handpicked audience more or less. I can't imagine that more than thirty people heard the world premiere of *An die Musik*.

JONAS

Come on Ivan. Put your hobbyhorse back into the stable for a moment and lower your shoulders. You always have to making things so bloody difficult, but it's really very simple: you take a score, you make it to your own and you present it to an audience in a way that feels right for you. End of story. That's the only way if you want to establish a connection with the audience. Don't interrupt me! The University provides plenty of courses for those who want to immerse themselves in music history and theoretical subjects, but the goal at the Academy of *Opera* is actually to become an *opera* singer.

IVAN

Isn't it possible to have two thoughts at once? Firstly, we're talking about German lied right now – not opera. And we're talking about stylistic interpretation, and it's completely amateurish to think that it is enough to create a beautiful pianissimo without vibrato in order to interpret Schubert in convincingly. You talk about building a connection, but it borders on fraud to persuade people that *etc. etc.*

2

Let me try to elaborate on the voice as cultural artefact by looking back at a performance that took place in Oslo in May 2010, during Grønland Kammermusikkfestival. The programme was a combination/collision of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*[126] written in 1840, and Peter Ablinger's *Voices and Piano*, a work-in-progress for recorded sound and piano.[127] So on one hand, romantic songs from the core of the German lied tradition; on the other, a work leaning heavily on the conceptual where the composer, via computer analyses of human voices, tries to make the piano *speak*. Ablinger relates to the human voice as historical documents – most of the voices in *Voices and Piano* belong to dead people. Schumann's song cycle is written on Heinrich Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, published as part of *Das Buch der Lieder* in 1827.[128] In our time Schumann's work has itself become a historical document, upheld by an unbroken tradition of 'interpretation'. And this tradition has created the lied-voice, which is my point in this departure, a mode of singing that has become the style of this interpretational work. Interpretation is also crucial in Ablinger's piece, but at a different level: in his works computer analyses of recordings from reality (or rather 'reality', understood as a roster of more or less well known historical persons talking in a given context) is interpreted through his techno-musical filters.

Ablinger's method is to transcribe these acts of speech – that is to transfer the rhythmical, melodic and harmonic structures to notes. These notes are played by a pianist while the original recording is simultaneously played from loudspeakers, creating a situation of negotiation between 'reality' and modes of perception. The negotiation between reality and utopia is also present in Heine, in many ways an early post-romantic and pioneer for literary realism. (I'm way out of line with my initial argument here, but bear with me – it is not completely beside the point if we consider Ablinger's work as a representation of the reality turn which also has set its mark on music the last ten or so years.)

Anyway, the core of both *Dichterliebe* and *Voices and Piano* is the human voice, and that is what interests me at this point. In a lied performance, the context is obvious for the listener (to such an extent that it becomes invisible, as I expand on in 'Delirious Brahms' with regards to the chamber music situation). It is the form and structure of the music that sets the perimeter for the vocal actions. Where the voice in Schumann is the idealized, refined lied voice, the voices in Ablinger represent speech-actions whose original contexts are hidden from the listener. It is the individual characteristics and actions of the different voices that give the music form,

the music has no other structure than what is already present in the recordings: Bertolt Brecht giving his personalia in English; the Greenlander Amaunalik telling an Inuit legend on the origin of the white man; Gjendine Slaalien talking about God knows what; Billie Holiday talking in a studio-session. The semantic content is not important.

Dictherliebe is a story about the young poet's stormy relation to love – performed (or rather *conveyed*) by the lied singer with accompaniment of a piano, maybe also some theatrical mimicry, but it is mainly the naked, acoustic voice that creates the images and the narrative of the songs. And the ideal of this performance is the *natural* voice. In classical music the idea of the natural voice is a crucial part of the illusion. But the paradigm for telling these stories is strictly controlled. The performance is reserved for those who through minute physiognomic and aesthetical training have developed mastery of the finely tuned apparatus that this vocal tradition demands. And I postulate that it is not the music that demands it, it is the performance-tradition. The lied-singer is not unlike a shaman, in the privileged position to keep us in contact with the spirits of the dead and to create connections between spirit (the music) and matter (our bodies).

This leads to a possibility of viewing the voice as something *verbal* (in the grammatical sense of the word): The voice is not something you have; it is something you do. Through training, the classical singer has shaped himself into an artefact, a tool for conveying the inheritance of classical music. Most vocal cultures share this quality, that the voice has been redefined, recreated or even alienated to be part of a very specific cultural context. The decoding, i.e. the listening and appreciation of different vocal expressions, depend on our affinity with and knowledge of the given rendition of the voice. The incessant growling of death metal does not make sense to an Anglican chorister. If you don't know the codes, the voices appear meaningless, except in very basic human terms (aggression, sweetness etc.) Often they come across with a vaguely formulated idea of some sort of exoticism.

The last instalment of Ablinger's ongoing *Voices and Piano* points directly to the voice as cultural artefact: Gjendine Slaalien was one of those Norwegian peasants who sang traditional songs for Edvard Grieg, songs that he transcribed and used as material for his piano pieces.[129] When Ablinger transcribes Gjendine it is evidently a *direct* analysis of the recorded voice, without Grieg's detour into the late romantic style he had studied in Leipzig. But this is an illusion: Ablinger's conceptual negotiation in the area between reality and construction is as stylized as anything. And

the style can be heard in the music as well as it can be read out of the basic idea, for instance in how textual and timbral variation between the different pieces is achieved by subtle choices of pianistic techniques, choices that cannot be attributed to 'reality' or 'transcription' but simply to Ablinger's *style*. So it would be safe to assume that the future will assess Ablinger's transcriptions as no less informed by the zeitgeist and musical culture within which he is embedded, than we now regard Grieg's transcriptions as utterly typical of a specific time and place.

Both Grieg and Ablinger try to capture an essence of the voice, and in the effort they reveal as much about the paradigms governing their efforts as they do about the object of their scrutiny. Of course, Ablinger's attempt to analyse reality through music – a stated objective of his[130] – is bound to fail, and in a beautiful way. The piano will never *become* the voice, and that is the basic tension that opens for both the energy and the poetry of this music. The piano also (literally) plays an important part in Schumann's *Dichterliebe.* It opens up another space for displacement and negotiation, the space between the singer and the accompanist. Ablinger is trying to fuse voice and accompaniment, or maybe to make music where the voice, forever frozen in a recording of a particular time-space, is the accompaniment to the living 'voice' of the piano. In the attempt to render these voices we hear the remarkably distinct qualities of difference, and the inherent musicality of the human voice – from Billie Holidays slurred rapping to Brecht's staccato and heavily accented speech. In this way *Voices and Piano* paradoxically shows us the individual and irreducible in our human voices. The *verfremdung* via the piano is only a diversion to show us the uniqueness of every single voice – and, by proxy, the voice's possibility to emerge in a vast array of situations and contexts.

I am using a whole lot of words here to highlight a very simple point: The voice is not nature, it is a cultural artefact. Within the context of art music, however, the classical voice is nevertheless treated as if it were nature, and the classical techniques have total hegemony in governing, for instance, the lied tradition. I rather like to see the voice as a topos that can be animated in a variety of ways, also within the revered tradition of the German lied. So in *Schubert Lounge* I use the topos of the voice to modulate from one musical culture (the early romantic music of Schubert) to another (the slightly retro singer/songwriter tradition). One reason is the above-mentioned love/ownership-desire. Another reason is the curiosity about how this might open up to a different perception of the lieds, in the attempt to steal them back from an inflated and petrified mode of interpretation. At this point I hope it has become clearer why I, as composer and non-singer, want to sing songs all of

a sudden. It is simply that it seems much more efficient to present the ideas I have discussed above in form of a performance than elaborated in a composition. Naturally all these considerations resonate in how I work with the Schubert songs. But I do not limit myself to transposing the vocal expression from one tradition to another, to only sing the songs 'as is'. I take the liberty of rephrasing Schubert's vocal lines, re-harmonizing, repeating or deleting sections and inserting new material where I see it fit. In short: I take off the sharp edges of 'classical' phrasing and harmony in order to transpose the songs in time and context by imposing the stylistic qualities of the singer songwriter-era as I described above. I think the recording will show quite clearly what has been going on.

But let's take time to consider a different motivation behind *Schubert Lounge*. What I want to show is also this: the skilled person in the midst of something he doesn't quite master, despite going all-out. I want to show the effort of putting heart and soul into something – that heart-breaking quality of imperfection combined with the ambition, however personal and un-pretentious, to present something beautiful to Other People, even an Audience, to the degree of pitiful humanity when this imperfect something is displayed on a stage, the person who, for some reason or other enjoys a certain respect, even dignity, for some kind of artistic product (or other), this person being way, way out of his depth but still wanting so badly to do whatever it is he is trying to do, wanting to even touch someone with this thing that he in no way masters like how he masters the games of communicating and touching with what is his true vocation. Like the singer wanting to be an actor. Like the actor wanting to be a composer. Like the composer wanting to be a singer. Like anyone who, like most of us, deep down wants to be someone else.

RECITATIVE

December darkness and icy pavements in Oslo. Fog glimmers in the neon light and car headlights down on Bogstadveien. It is just after closing time at the Valkyrie, Ivan squeezes up to Marie and Jonas on the narrow pavement, their faces warm from drink and loud discussion. Oda and the others have gone ahead and have already passed the crossroad at Valkyrie Plass.

IVAN
That's just mumbo-jumbo, Jonas. There's no such thing as the *natural* singing voice.

JONAS
No indeed?

IVAN
You know quite well what I mean. The human voice is culture, not nature. The idea of naturalness, the natural voice, is just part of an illusion – part of the fiction. Especially the *classical* singing voice.

JONAS
You always have to make things so difficult, Ivan! Can't you just agree that there are more and less natural ways of performing an aria? That human physiognomy imposes certain constraints on how we best produce a beautiful sound?

IVAN
But what is a "beautiful sound"? It's completely dependent on which *context* the voice is performing in. When you sing in an opera, the laws of opera apply – what you call naturalness is simply the most effective way of implementing these laws. Opera is just one of many ways to use the voice. And it sounds very unnatural to a lot people, to say the least! It's a use of the voice that comes to be in a certain time and place, with a very special purpose. We use the cavities in our heads to enhance the timbre of the voice – to be heard over the symphony

orchestra. The more empty space there is in the head, the greater the voice, right?

JONAS
The world's oldest singer joke. Don't laugh Marie! You've heard it a hundred times before.

IVAN
Other cultures have other ways of dealing with the voice. But all use of the voice is rooted in context, that's my point. If the context changes, the meaning of the voice changes. And the view on what is natural changes. The voice of classical music is grounded in the narratives of classical music – a song cycle is a story, isn't it? For example, take Schumann's *Dichterliebe:* The singing voice tells the story of Heinrich Heine's text, a story about harrowing love. It's a song cycle where the different songs together form a sequence of events, using the simplest means. Almost dogma-like, don't you think? A piano. A text. Possibly some facial expressions and gestures. So it should be performed in the most *natural* way possible.

JONAS
Nodding lethargically, pats himself on an emerging potbelly under his winter coat.

Yes, that was what I was thinking about. The natural voice comes from down here.

IVAN
But here's my point: the management of these stories, the great classic song narratives, is subject to the very strictest controls. Schubert, Schumann, Wolf – they are reserved voices that through physical and aesthetic training have learned to master the instrument that this music requires.

JONAS
Of course professor! You know what you're talking about...

IVAN
Continues as if he hasn't heard.

The singer is a shaman, right. He's in the privileged position of keeping alive the legacy of the past, creating links between matter in the present and spirit of the past. It's about giving life to the past. In this respect, song performance is shamanism, opera is shamanism – let's call it voice shamanism, a ritual where the voice becomes *an action*. Right, Jonas?

Jonas doesn't answer; he has joined the group in front. Ivan shakes his head and turns to Marie.

MARIE
It's all a little too cerebral for me. The voice isn't something you *do*; it's something you *are*.

IVAN
Pauses and looks at her.

That's a bit simplistic, isn't it Marie? A bit new age? A little non-committal? What does it mean – to *be* your own voice? You *are* a body – that's obvious. But the sound that the body produces isn't formed in a vacuum, is it? It's formed in very clearly defined contexts. Opera is just an example. But it goes without saying that these contexts I am talking about – the *external* forces – that they are involved in influencing the complex action that is singing.

MARIE
It's not something you can understand Ivan. Not something you can contemplate or study. We're talking about a purely bodily *experience*. You have to let your body teach you. Get it?

IVAN
Of course I get it! The phenomenology of the body and the Feldenkreis method and all that. But you can't deny that singing is an action – that the discipline of singing is a performing art?

Marie doesn't answer, looks towards the others further down Bogstadveien. Ivan grabs her hand.

Let me explain my reasoning. The classic singer has shaped their voice into a tool in order to manage the material – the matter, as it were – of the classical music legacy. And most song cultures share this trait, that the voice is *transformed*, or *disengaged* even, to be included in specific cultural contexts. The decoding, the experience of different vocal expressions, it is entirely dependent on you knowing the *codes* for the given representation of the voice...

Marie starts walking again. They cross Schultz Gate.

...and the framework for this decoding is the ritual of the concert, right, not exactly ancient, but anyway ... pretty old. And if you don't know the codes then the voices are meaningless, at best loosely rooted in some figure of thought. The idea of the "classic" or the "ancient" or something...

Jonas and the others have stopped at the corner of Industrigata and have begun to make plans for the rest of the evening.

...that's why for most Norwegians "opera" is synonymous with the soprano who's singing. And "joik" is synonymous with the voice of the joiker. There's no such thing as a *true* voice, all uses of the voice are in context. *That's* what I mean when I say that the "natural" voice is an illusion.

MARIE
Pulls him close. They have almost reached the group waiting by the taxi stand at the crossroads.

JONAS
Has put an arm around Oda.

So professor, are you coming with us?

Ivan meets his gaze.

3

The title of this essay is lifted from a Diesel-ad I found on the matted, creamy back-page of *Smug,* one of Norway's hipster lifestyle-magazines.[131] In green on black, large typeset at the top: 'SMART CRITIQUES. STUPID CREATES'. And at the bottom of the page, just next to the brand logo, the all-important punch line reads: 'BE STUPID'. I'm not sure if I get the meta-irony (or is it pure old irony? or no irony at all, is it actually earnest?) but as a matter of fact the imperative resonates strangely with my urge to re-render the Schubert-songs. To give in to that element of stupidity, or mindlessness, or stubborn blindness, of art. In Helmut Lachenmann's words, to succumb to the need *zu lassen sich kommen* at a point in the process. To act on the desire. To de-sublimate theory and discursivity to a very basic drive of creation. Or to cite Lachenmann on a more elegant phrase: 'Analysis or intellectual pondering do not always offer solutions to everything and everyone and, by the same token, cannot replace the act of leaping into insecure territories'.[132, xlii]

So there is leaping involved, to some degree a non-analytic leap of faith, even. But this does not necessarily mean recourse to naïveté. To me, the element of *laissez-faire* is a rupture, even rapture, rather than a turn – a letting-go of something, a giving-in to certain energies that may cause a temporary turbulence. What lies behind is the emphasis on and renewed interest in what I have discussed earlier: The need to formulate the critique/question *in* the sensuous apparatus of music as art form. And also an acknowledgement of the fact that critical potential – or the mind-bending question, or the crucial openings that suddenly show a different path – does not always emerge where you would expect, and maybe not at all in the commonplaces of a particular discourse.

Going all-in, performatively, into the real-time apparatus of music production, opens up 'insecure territories', new fields of possible energies. It also poses some interesting questions about the friction between working within the musically ubiquitous notion of skill and the artistic and discursive formation of discipline. The epigraph of one of my essays is Peter Eisenman's statement that 'the difference between self-expression and the critical concerns the idea of skill versus discipline'.[133] This delineation between skill and discipline might present to us that uneasy feeling that neo-amateurism in some respects seems to bite reality with sharper teeth than the

xlii This statement resonates strangely with Kierkegaard: "every moment leaping into the infinite and every moment falling surely back into the finite" – a confirmation of Lachenmanns firm foundation in the material world of sound:"

skilfully rounded expression of self. But isn't the amateur just that: pure expression of self, however unskilled? Not necessarily. I think we should consider a difference between amateurism and 'neo-amateurism', a label that has emerged at least in contemporary music in Oslo in recent years, though I am not confident about its origins.[xliii] This is amateurism without naïveté, without illusion. Let us call it a self-conscious amateurism, an amateurism that is acutely familiar with the professional standards of its field, but which nevertheless challenges these, or rather, the discursive powers for which they stand in a kind of 'attack from below'. Or let us, more eloquently formulated, call it an attempt of 'enlightened anti-scholastic correction'. (Lachenmann, again.[134])

When I look at the trajectory of my work over the last three years, I realize that it didn't quite end up where I imagined I would. I planned to end in the private chambers of Schubert, but not with a Rhodes in my own living room. I did imagine some performative action, but I didn't know it was going to involve me singing and playing Schubert songs myself. I have followed my original plan, however, working in concentric circles from the site of the symphony orchestra via the chamber music situation towards a personal and intimate staging of music. And in this movement I arrive at a point where the traditional role of the composer, and the division of labour between composer and musician, no longer suffice.[xliv]

This could be regarded as a problem, but it could also be something else: an example of a local solution to a local complex of questions that has emerged in a specific time and place within the field of arts. This idea of prying open cracks and crevices at the places they appear in the monolithic facades of classical musical culture might be liberating when pitched against the all-encompassing idea of 'critical thought'. If we take our cue from Rancière, then we might ask if a critique of the orchestra is only strengthening it, showing its capacity to absorb these dialectics into itself. Would the right response be to turn away, not to give it the credit of critical artistic scrutiny? Is a critical paradigm one that mocks the illusions but reproduces the logic of economic-cultural domination? And is it possible to make spectacular exhibitions critiquing the exhibitions and consumption of sound-images? Et cetera. So there is a need for alternatives to the collapsed dialectic where we live, as artists and as

xliii Some attribute the term to Lars Petter Hagen, coined as a feature of his festival *Happy Days* (2006–2009).

xliv And an inevitable but discomforting question arises: Where do I go from here, after having liquidated my own posture as 'composer'?

citizens, under 'the law of domination as a force seizing on anything that claims to challenge it. It makes any protest a spectacle and any spectacle a commodity'.[135]

I believe there are ways, however shaky and precarious, out of these impasses – describable (for me, at least) not in terms of theories or overarching principles, but as local acts of – how to say it – resistance. One alternative to the traditional topos of critique is to call for a destabilization of orders (composer/performer, work/situation, etc.) from within, in line with what I just said about cracks and crevices. This makes use of the advantage of working from inside the institutional framework, as opposed to from the outside. In an aside to a discussion of Kristeva and the abject, Hal Foster proposes a similar position with regard to attacks on the Lacanean 'image screen' between the gaze of the subject and the gaze of the world. In his view, the valence of abject art depends on the relation to the image screen: If it is deemed intact, abject art might retain transgressive value. If it is already torn, such transgression might be beside the point. This thinking is along the lines of a traditional view of avant-garde as a heroic attempt to break the symbolic order from the outside. Foster poses another possibility, which is transgression as a 'fracture traced by a strategic avant-garde within the order'.[136] In other words, destabilizing the order from within, as opposed to negatively confirming it by counter-posing avant-garde figures against it. The ambition here is to dispel the old dream of breaking the order, instead the challenge is to expose the crisis of the order, to register the points of breakthrough of this crisis, and the new possibilities the crisis opens up. It is along these lines I have tried to develop a criticality with regards to the symphony orchestra: It is not an order to break, but something to destabilize from within, tracing the fractures. The same might be said of *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio*: It is not an intervention from the outside, but from within the music, both in its written and staged form, within its own possible trajectories, tracing the possibility of the unexpected.

I have tried to seize a given material and use it for my own purposes – to confront the given historical and social situation as reflected in dominant cultural practices; I have tried to project a conceptual and aural reality that goes against the grain of the given situation in question – to find a place for *propositions* through musical form.[xlv] This might be in line with Rancière's concept of *dissensus*, which might be as good a term as anything. To Rancière, *dissensus* means

xlv In the words of architect Robert Somol: 'we would want to maintain some degree of differentiation between a "critical" project and a "projective" one'. (quoted in Steele (Ed.): *Supercritical* (London: Architects association, 2010) p. 52).

> that every situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification. To reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought is to alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities.[137]

Yes, it is beautiful – naïve in a powerful way, prompting intellectual and artistic endeavour without promising one-size-fits-all solutions. No wonder artists of every ilk flock to a thinker who proposes a 'sketch for a new topography of the possible'. Rancière also projects an image of the collective efforts invested in these scenes of *dissensus*. Music is almost always a collective effort, but the degree of brazen spectatorship that the music industry has imposed on most listening audiences, along with the romantic idea of the solitary performer-genius and not least the solitary, lofty mind of the composer, points to a very different perception. This perspective of political subjectivation presents a much wider possibility than a reconfiguration of the musical institution or musical topoi. This is the utopian perspective that, by altering our perception – our modes of seeing and listening – we can also alter the world. As Rancière concedes, these are unreasonable hypotheses. But it is a more empowering approach than the endless task of critical unmasking.

So this is one way to end, with the ideal of letting *dissensus* surface, going against the grain, in place of a petrified stance of 'critical' thinking that has become one with the object of its critique. Another way (equally fashionable, I'm afraid), would be to end with Agamben's notion of history: not as in Walter Benjamin, where the angel of history looks back at a path where 'he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet'.[138] No, Agamben's view of history is Kafkaesque, it is a state where 'the fundamental event of the human condition is perpetually taking place'.[139] The ideas of places of *dissensus*, of events taking place, points towards topography, towards social situations, instead of the often-limiting notion of *material*. Or put the other way around: the notion radically widens the scope of what we should regard material for musical composition. It aligns with my view of material not only as pitches and time structures and such, but also the materiality of the places and practices of production, the discourses of power, and the processes of commodification of the musical work. It would be bold, but tempting, to state that musical material in a traditional sense has been rendered incapable of *dissensus* in the entropy of the post-everything that follows the frenzy of musical procedures exhausted over the last 65 years. In other words, to say that in music, *dissensus* must be acted out on other levels than that of pitches, timbres and durations. But of course, this is a futile claim. What we know

is that artists and musicians will come along and offer yet another turn of the screw of auditive imagination, a sudden, new perspective, a whiff of fresh air or maybe just some comic relief by tilting our perspectives a little.

Brief Note #5:

Instead of a Conclusion

I wish I could offer some more reflections on *Schubert Lounge*. But I'm afraid that is difficult, at least at this point. Maybe the bodily experience of it, the unfamiliar mode of gestalting my work in my own body, demands more time to digest. What I can say, is that the piece has taken my project to an unexpected ending: not so much the renegotiation of interpretation vs recomposition that it signifies, nor the way it challenges the work-concept of classical music. Both these issues have been dealt with in sounding and staged form in *Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio.*

I believe that it has to do with putting my whole identity as a composer on the line, as I see that I have somewhat cheekily alluded to in one of the footnotes in the last essay. Letting go of the score is one thing; this is not new to me (I have, for instance, worked a lot with both improvisation and a series of text-pieces). Maybe it is the physical act of meeting an audience, unguarded, without the interpretational cover of the musician? A composer, like a writer, does work outside time. But the written word meets its audience *unmediated* in a way the written work of music does not. Also, the bodily experience of *reading* to an audience from my novels, which I have done on many occasions, sometimes in combination with performing *Schubert Lounge,* has made for a renewed experience of the way we convey and share meaning.

If this sounds a bit pretentious and half-baked, it probably is. But what I'm trying to say something about is the scary and fascinating sensation of stepping out from behind the shield of the performer, which these explorations of sites, situations and repetition have led me to. Not that I'm very fond of the instant gratification of audience attention – I truly am not. But having left the comfort zone of the composer's loft, I hesitate to climb back up. Maybe I was mistaken when I wrote that *Schubert Lounge* did not signify a turn; maybe the turbulence it caused was not so temporary; maybe that was something I said to console myself. Now, with all this in hindsight, I'm

not so sure. Maybe I'm just getting all melancholic as my project draws to an end and I feel the urge to make it a real end of something, not only a finished project in artistic research. So I'll have to leave this open-ended, un-concluded, having put in every effort making the best pieces of art that I could, having tried to say something worthwhile about the making. And for me, the question remains, as always, the one that interests me more than any: What comes next?

He has placed the notes for *Winterreise* in between the stacks of photo albums and loose sheets of paper. Franz Schubert's opus 89. Not that Sondre Sæter can read music, but he likes to sit and look at the mystical symbols while the music plays in his head. Graphic structures, esoteric, full of incomprehensible meaning. He has refreshed his schoolboy German in order to learn the text; a German-Norwegian dictionary lies beside the notes on the kitchen table. It says "Poems by Wilhelm Müller" at the top of the first sheet of music. Originally published in 1823 as "Gedichte aus den hiterlassenen Papieren eines reisenden Waldhornisten". But for Sondre Sæter, these poems are nothing but Schubert's *Winterreise*, the story of a man wandering aimlessly through snow and ice while stumbling over half forgotten memories and suppressed desires. Even the first verse in the first song sums it all up, he thinks. *Fremd bin ich eingezogen, fremd zieh' ich wieder aus*. Sondre Sæter stares at the notes and tries to put them into context using the music in his ears. Sometimes he fancies he can do it. He can hear the piano becoming the wind in the linden tree and the murmuring of the brook. He can hear the tears of ice, the post horn's signal and the mournful strumming of the barrel organ. But it isn't the words that touch him, nor the harmonic twists and turns or the flowing melodies. It's the voice. The round, warm, male voice that has followed him and will follow him every day, until he knows every breath, every nuance in diction, every single phrasing. It is Franz Schubert who is singing, thinks Sondre Sæter. Schubert has invited him to his home in Tuchlauben, on the outskirts of Vienna, the house he shares with his friend Franz von Schober. They are sitting in the music room – Sondre Sæter is sitting in a soft armchair with a glass of wine in his hand and Schubert is at the piano singing his most recent songs for him. He doesn't have more than a year left to live, but they don't care about that. The afternoon light slants through the latticed windows. Soon, Schober will be home and then they are all going to Zum Grünen Anker to celebrate that Schubert's election to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, aged just thirty years. But, right now, it is just the two of them, Schubert singing, now and then

looking across to Sondre, his eyes asking whether he likes it, if he thinks it's any good, and Sondre nods, giving him a thumbs up. Yes, he whispers. Sing for me, Franz.

APPENDIX

Works

Standing Stones
for concert hall with orchestra and electronics
first performance: The Orchestra of the Norwegian Academy of Music, cond. Rolf Gupta
Lindemansalen, Oslo, 18.9.2010.
https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/101729/101730/0/9509
Score available from nb noter.

Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio
for clarinet, cello, piano and two ad hoc players
first performance: asamisimasa
Ultima Festival, Oslo, 13.9.2011.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJneApRz4wk
Score available from nb noter.

Schubert Lounge
performance for singing composer
first performance at the composer's home, Oslo, 14.6.2012.
Recording available on 10" vinyl from MERE records (MERE012)
https://open.spotify.com/album/0FU0cl69ogvdQDrxRHGZHn

Notes

For the scores, I refer to the first printed edition. Where a score or recording is mentioned on several occasions, only the first instance is referenced.

Introduction

1 Brett Steele (Ed.), *Supercritical* (London: Architects Association, 2010) p. 104.

Excavation, Exhumation, Autopsy

2 Hal Foster, Design and Crime and other Diatribes (London: Verso, 2002) pp. 123–143.
3 Ibid. p. 129.
4 See for instance Gerard Grisey, Dérives (Milan: Casa Ricordi, 1974).
5 Ina Blom, On the Style Site (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007)
6 Erkki Huhtamo, 'Dismantling the Fairy Engine. Media Archaeology as Topos Study' in Huhtamo/ Parikka (Ed.), Media Archaeology (Berkeley: University of California, 2011) pp. 27–47.
7 Philip Glass, Low Symphony. From the music of David Bowie and Brian Eno (New York: Dunvagen Music Publishers, 1992).
8 See David Bowie, Low (RCA, 1977).
9 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken books, 2007 [1969]) pp. 217–252
10 Eric Kluitenberg, 'On the Archaeology of Imaginary Media' in Media Archaeology p. 51.
11 Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse' in October 110, 2004, p. 20.
12 Thomas Flynn, 'Foucault's mapping of history' in Gutting (Ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Foucault (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 31.
13 Eivind Buene, Standing Stones (Oslo: MIC, 2010).
14 Friedrich Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999 [1986]).
15 Lars-Petter Hagen, Norwegian Archives (Oslo: MIC, 2005).
16 Luciano Berio, Sinfonia (Vienna: Universal edition, 1968).
17 Mathias Spahlinger, Passage/Peysage (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1994).
18 Hal Foster, Design and Crime pp. 127–138.
19 Ibid., p. 137.
20 Theodor W. Adorno, Prisms, trans. S. and S. Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981) p. 177.
21 Hal Foster, 'Archives of Modern Art' in Design and Crime and other Diatribes p. 71.
22 Foster, Design and Crime p. 72.
23 Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle, trans. Ken Knabb (Wellington: Rebel Press, 2004 [1967]).
24 Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1969 [1949]).

Body and Site

25 The following quotations are from Miwon Kwon, One Place After the Other (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2002) pp. 13–19.
26 Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Museum', in Artforum (Sept. 1973). Quoted in Kwon, One Place After the Other p. 13.
27 Mauricio Kagel, Staatstheater (Vienna: Universal edition, 1971).
28 Kwon, One Place After the Other pp. 50–55.
29 Jonathan Cott, Conversations with Glenn Gould (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) pp. 33–34.
30 See Kwon, One Place After the Other pp. 160–164.
31 Kwon, One Place After the Other p. 165.
32 Kwon, One Place After the Other p. 157.
33 Quoted in Cott, Conversations with Glenn Gould.
34 See Cott, Conversations with Glenn Gould p. 155.
35 Gould/ Bernstein/New York Philharmonic, Brahms Piano Concerto no. 1 (Sony, 1998 [1962]).

36 See John Croft, 'Fields of Rubble: On the Poetics of Music after the Postmodern' in Björn Heile (Ed.), The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp. 25–38.
37 Croft, 'Fields of Rubble' p. 31.
38 Salvatore Sciarrino, Lo spazio inverso (Milan: Ricordi, 1985).
39 Croft, 'Fields of Rubble' p. 33.
40 See for instance Luci mie traditrici (Milan: Ricordi, 1998).
41 Croft, 'Fields of Rubble' pp. 37–38.
42 See Matt Malsky, 'Fantasy and the Concert Hall: musical performance in the electroacoustic age' in Reconstruction: A Journal of Cultural Studies (Winter 2004/4.1).
43 See Malsky, 'Fantasy and the Concert Hall' pp. 1–3 for a summary of Adornos writing on technological mediation vs the 'prescence' of the concert hall.
44 See Thomas Berg, 'I rådhushall og bøttekott', Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival (Festival newspaper, Oslo Sept. 2010).
45 http://178.18.116.10/~jamessau/?page_id=153 (accessed 8 March 2012).
46 www.escalierduchant.org/08/distribution-study-8/ (accessed 8 March 2012).
47 See Kwon, One Place After the Other Chapter six.

Brief note#1

48 W. G. Sebald, The Rings of Saturn, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998).
49 See Hal Foster, 'Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?' in The Return of the Real (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1996) pp. 1–33.
50 Hal Foster, 'Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?' p. 3.

Critical Music?

51 La Monte Young, cited in Ina Blom, The Cut Through Time. A Version of The Dada/Neo-Dada Repetition (Oslo: Acta Humaniora, 1999) p. 52.
52 See Malsky: 'Fantasy and the Concert Hall', p. 3 and p. 15 for a Lacanean take on rendering and how it engages our desires and fantasy lives.

Delirious Brahms

53 Rem Koolhaas, 'Dalí, the Critical Paranoid Method and Le Corbusier: Rem Koolhaas Introduced by Peter Cook, Art Net, London, 1976', in Steele (Ed.) Supercritical, pp. 88–93.
54 Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994 [1978]).
55 Salvador Dalí, The Conquest of the Irrational, 1935. See Hal Foster, Return of the Real (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996) p. 291.
56 Dylan Thomas in Paul Ferris, (Ed.) The Collected Letters (New York: Macmillan, 1985) p. 397.
57 In Steele (Ed.) Supercritical.
58 Johannes Brahms, Klarinetten-Trio (Berlin: Simrock, 1892).
59 Helmut Lachenmann, Allegro Sostenuto (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1987).
60 Helmut Lachenmann, Ausklang (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1986).
61 Johannes Brahms, Piano Concerto no. 2 (Berlin: Simrock, 1882).
62 See Hal Foster, 'Whatever happened to Postmodernism' in Return of the Real, pp. 205–226.
63 Håvard Enge, 'The unfinished past. Hans Zenders concept of productive listening' in Studia Musicologica Norvegica 36, 2010 pp. 144–159.
64 Eivind Buene, Johannes Brahms Klarinetten-Trio (Oslo: MIC, 2013).
65 Steele (Ed.) Supercritical pp. 42–43.
66 Helmut Lachenmann, 'Affekt und Aspekt', cited in Lachenmann 'Composing in the Shadow of Darmstadt' p. 49.
67 Hemut Lachenmann, Gran Torso (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1978 [1972]).
68 See for instance Simon Steen-Andersen, Chambered Music (Copenhagen: Edition S, 2007).
69 Lachenmann, 'Composing in the Shadow of Darmstadt' p. 46.
70 Mauricio Kagel, Sexteto (Vienna: Universal edition, 1953).
71 Paul Attinello, 'Imploding the System: Kagel and the Destruction of Modernism' in Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner (Ed.) Postmodern Music Postmodern Thought (New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 263.
72 Mauricio Kagel, Sur Scene (Frankfurt: H. Litoff's Verlag, 1962).

73 Attinello, 'Imploding the System' p. 281.
74 Lachenmann, 'Composing in the shadow of Darmstadt' p. 52.
75 In Foster, Return of the Real, p. xvii.
76 In this section I refer to Chapter two of Susanne Østby Sæther, The Aesthetics of Sampling: Engaging the Media in Recent Video Art. (Oslo: Acta Humaniora, 2009).
77 For a discussion of music as text, see Eivind Buene, 'Dobbeltliv' in Vinduet, 2/2012 (Oslo: Gyldendal) pp. 68–75.
78 See Østby Sæther, The Aesthetics of Sampling p. 46.
79 Quoted in Østby Sæther, The Aesthetics of Sampling p. 60.
80 Østby Sæther, The Aesthetics of Sampling p. 64.
81 Østby Sæther, The Aesthetics of Sampling p. 62.
82 Trond Reinholdtsen, Music as Emotion (unpublished manuscript).
83 Christopher Hogwood, Handel (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007 [1984]).

Brief Note #3

84 Presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Design at the School of Design and Crafts, University of Gothenburg, in 2008.
85 Otto von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able, p. 19.
86 Quoted from Bruno Latour, 'Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern' in Critical inquiry vol 30. no. 2 (2004) pp. 225–248.
87 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 13.
88 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 33.
89 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 27.
90 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 31.
91 Gerald Raunig, Art and Revolution (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2007).
92 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 44.
93 Wodiczko quoted in Post-script to Fashion-able, p. 45.
94 von Busch, Post-script to Fashion-able p. 45.

Posthumous Passions

95 Lars Petter Hagen, Kunstnerens fortvilelse foran de antikke fragmenters storhet (Oslo: MIC, 2011).
96 Samuel Beckett, The Unnameable (New York: Grove Press, 1958).
97 Gustav Mahler, Symfoni no. 9 (Vienna: Universal edition, 1910).
98 Gustav Mahler, Symfoni no. 3 (Vienna: Universal edition, 1896).
99 Aldo Clementi, 'A Commentary on my own Music'.
100 For the quotes and paraphrases of Baudrillard, I refer to Ståle Wikshåland, Fortolkningens århundre (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2009) pp. 302–310.
101 See for instance Slavoj Žižek, The Plague of Fantasies (London: Verso, 2009 [1997]).
102 See Eivind Buene, 'Gustav Mahler før og nå' in Vinduet 3/2012 (Oslo: Gyldendal) pp. 68–75.
103 Clementi, 'A Commentary on my own Music'.
104 www.ballade.no/nmi.nsf/doc/art201012080952268039871 8.
105 Eivind Buene/Cikada ensemble, Possible Cities/Essential Landscapes (2L, 2012).
106 Eivind Buene, Landscape with Ruins (Oslo: MIC, 2007).
107 Christopher Woodward, In Ruins (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001).
108 Lars Petter Hagen, Sørgemarsj over Edvard Grieg (Oslo: MIC, 2007).
109 Georges Perec, Jag minns, trans. Magnus Hedlund (Stockholm: Modernista, 2005).
110 Joe Brainard, I remember (New York: Angel Hair, 1970).
111 This dichotomy is borrowed from Hal Foster, 'Postmodernism: A Preface' in Foster (Ed.) The Anti aesthetic (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983) pp. xi–xii.
112 Hal Foster, 'The Return of the Real' in Foster, The Return of the Real. (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1996) p. 264.
113 See Sjklovskij, Art as Device, published as Iskusstvo kak priem, 1916. Excerpts published in Context #10 (www.dalkeyarchive.com, accessed 8 November 2015.)
114 Wikshåland, Fortolkningens århundre p. 307 (my translation).
115 Clementi, 'A Commentary on my own Music'.

116 See Hal Foster, 'This Funeral is for the Wrong Corpse'.
117 Jaques Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator (London: Verso, 2009) p. 37.

Brief Note #4

118 Eivind Buene, Schubert Lounge (Mere Records, 2012).
119 Eivind Buene, Into the Void (Oslo: MIC, 2008) bar 146.

'Smart critiques. Stupid creates'

120 See Lydia Goehr, Imaginary Museum of Musical Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
121 Anders Hultquist, 'Who creates the Creator' in Journal for Artistic Research no.1 (www.jar-online.net, accessed 8 November 2015).
122 Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Franz Schubert Lieder (Deutsche Grammophon, 1994).
123 Chris Newman, New songs of social conscience/Six sick songs/London (Review Records, 1998).
124 Josephine Foster, A Woolf in Sheep's Clothing (Locust media, 2006).
125 Hans Zender, Schubert's 'Winterreise': Eine Komponierte Interpretation (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1993).
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127 Peter Ablinger, Voices and Piano (manuscript, in progress since 1998).
128 Heinrich Heine, Buch der Lieder (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1827).
129 See http://snl.no/.nbl_biografi/Gjendine_Slålien/utdypning (accessed 16 August 2015).
130 See for instance Anny Ballardini, Interview with Peter Ablinger/Voices and Piano. http://ablinger.mur.at/engl.html (accessed 8 November 2015).
131 Smug no. 2/2010, p. 200.
132 Helmut Lachenmann: 'Four Questions Regarding New Music', trans. Oliver Schneller, in Contemporary Music Review vol. 23 3/4 (September/December 2004) pp. 55–57.
133 Peter Eisenman, Anywise, Ed. Cynthia Davidson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996) p. 52.
134 Lachenmann: 'Composing in the Shadow of Darmstadt' p. 44.
135 Jaques Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator (London: Verso, 2009) p. 33.
136 Foster, Return of the Real p. 152.
137 Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator p. 48–49.
138 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical p. 257.
139 Giorgio Agamben, The Man without Content, trans. G. Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) p. 114.

Again and Again and Again is about new musical works that in various ways integrate historical music as important components. The texts were written during Eivind Buene's fellowship in The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, where he investigated the critical potential in the repetition of music history, working with the historical residue in the apparatus of production and performance of new music.

Through the emergence of advanced technology of storage and reproduction in the twentieth century, the function of historical memory has changed, something that has been thoroughly dealt with in fine arts and in critical theory. 'Repetition' is a central term in works where new practices relive old ones and simultaneously make these strategies the object of critical scrutiny. In music, this harbours an approach to the artistic material where the institutions, places, formats and situations of music become *material* as much as pitch, duration and timbre.

According to these interests, Buene composed three works during the project period: a piece for orchestra and electronics made within the framework of the orchestral performance – the symphonic site; a work where the situation of chamber music performance was thematized; and a performance where the intimacy of the private musical space has been investigated.

These works are reflected in this body of text, where ideas in and around the works are discussed in three different formats: the essay, the brief note and excerpts from two of Buene's novels, written in conjunction with his artistic research.

Eivind Buene (born Oslo 1973) studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music from 1992 to 1998. He is currently associate professor of composition at the same institution, after working as freelance composer for fifteen years. He has written for leading ensembles and orchestras, including Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Intercontemporain and London Sinfonietta. Buene's music is performed at international festivals and orchestral institutions, and his work is available on numerous recordings. In addition to music, Buene has written three novels and a collection of essays.

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