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Helmut Lachenmann

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Composing in the Shadow of Darmstadt[1]

Helmut Lachenmann (translated by Richard Toop)

This text from MaeE *is Lachenmann's narrative about Darmstadt in the 1950s and thereafter and the powerful effects, both positive and negative, that it held for composers of his generation.*

Keywords: Criticism; Darmstadt; Evolution; Musical Politics; Serialism

Like it or not: we all bear the imprint—one way or another—of the Darmstadt experience and of discussions about what happened then (naturally, we are talking about the 1950s). All of us are—more or less consciously—parricidal children of Darmstadt.

Darmstadt in the 1950s: it meant rising up and breaking out, rejecting the inherited tonal, philharmonic-orientated concept of material, along with all of the technical and aesthetic implications that had been cultivated and worn out in bourgeois musical life up to then (and still today)—rejecting it in favour of conceptions that redefined the basic systematic categories for each work, taking as their point of departure unmediated perception and the possibilities of guiding its acoustic components.

A key concept was parameters and its dissemination depended on serial, quantified procedural methods. The serial process had a compulsory aspect, in as much as it seized upon and automated those decisions in which, from a traditional point of view, the spontaneously reacting, expressively nuanced imagination of the composer had played a dominant role; it had a liberating aspect where such imagination identified itself as unfree, as socially controlled, and as such, a hindrance to the structuralist adventure.

Darmstadt in the 1950s: basic to these conceptions arising from a period of reconstruction after the Second World War was the hope that one could effect a *tabula rasa* with the past; there was distrust of the a priori emphases that had defined the previous bourgeois concept of music. There was also a technicist fascination and a technological optimism; perhaps there was also a sort of Robinson Crusoe attitude, a

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spirit of pioneering in unknown territory, and behind all that, the—repressively delayed—discovery of Anton Webern's output.

Darmstadt in the 1950s: it meant the negation of familiar listening practice in favour of utopian social expectations: the drafting of a music which tested out its own structure, thereby celebrating its own syntax. So this meant that expressive effect was subordinated to the aspect of the structural idea. The communicative function of the sonic moment was constantly redefined by the particular material context and not just positively, but negatively too, because, a priori, the rigorous organisation process liquidated the accustomed expressive effects: for the first time, they were serialised away, so to speak.

The Darmstadt of the 1950s introduced not only a new terminology for compositional technique and the expansion, complication and alienation of instrumental practice, but also the turn towards more versatile equipment that seemed to make the bourgeois musician superfluous, equipment whose lack of baggage was promising purer structures—dross-free music with radically new forms of internal organisation.

In short: Darmstadt meant a communal uprising of young composers from many countries, an uprising with—as was to become clear—various ultimate aims.

The central, exemplary, defining, yet also dynamically forward-thrusting driving force in opening up new paths was Karlheinz Stockhausen and the Cologne School (Herbert Eimert, Gottfried Michael Koenig and Karel Goeyvaerts).

Yet when I came to Darmstadt for the first time, in 1957, I adhered to Luigi Nono, because whereas—so it seemed to me—the other composers were all standing there more or less detached from tradition, turning their backs on it, Nono was the only one whose path consciously involved tradition, as redefined by him.

The dialectical supplement to this classic Darmstadt phase—of thinking in terms of serial organisation—was the experience of John Cage (who, following a brief Donaueschingen visit in 1954, came to Darmstadt for the first time in 1958), that is, the experience of the *dis*-organisation of material and emancipation of its acoustic perception through aleatory procedures.

The perception that the controlled negation of both serial and aleatory techniques amounted to much the same thing was an experience that had a radicalising effect (such as 'open form' and 'work in progress'), but also a relaxing one in relation to emerging taboos and fears of contamination; it not only let structuralist thinking look forward into the unknown, but also let it turn back, making one newly aware of what was already known and able to perceive it a fresh way.

The 1960s brought the first schism: Boulez, Stockhausen and Nono went off in opposing directions. The music of the newly emerging composers in Darmstadt—Ligeti, Kagel, Schnebel (and paradoxically even Penderecki)—brought innovative musical thinking, in the sense of dialectical expansion, and at the same time an enlightened anti-scholastic correction of what was really becoming a mannerist radicalisation (and even totalisation) of parametric thinking. But it also meant the liberalisation of serial purity, as well as playing more or less unconsciously with all the

involuntary expressionist, surrealist, exotic, humorous or shocking aspects that an insecure bourgeois society was using from outside to designate 'Darmstadt music'. Already, the fascination with Cage's radicalism (which objectively was no such thing) was constantly mobilising regressive reflexes.

Characteristic works of that period such as Ligeti's *Atmosphères* and *Aventures*, Kagel's *Sonant* and *Sur Scène* and Schnebel's *glossolalie* and *réactions*, struck me, despite my great admiration for them, as also being products of a narcissistically coquettish pseudo-radicalism, as ways of shocking or enthralling the bourgeoisie. Basically, they were a recurrence of what Adorno had already critically described in his *Philosophy of New Music* as the New German School, in relation to Berg's violin concerto: namely dissonance (i.e. noise, not sound, alienation, caricature, explicit fragmentation) as a metaphor for harm (recognised as such and therefore positively deployed); consonance (i.e. intact music, tonal gestures) as a metaphor of (now questionable) salvation, and at the same time, surrealist humour as a source of instant fascination. The revealing factor here was that some people thought that one could not only mention Schnebel and Kagel, or Kagel and Ligeti in one breath, but even Ligeti and Penderecki (implying that the circle would close, fatally, by coupling Penderecki and Schnebel!): composers who recognised the involuntary role of the avant-garde within a restorative society and—however subtly and critically—knew how to make expressive use of it.

It seemed to me that, because of his emphatically traditionalist attitude from the very start, Luigi Nono was the only one not to have fallen into this bourgeois trap.

As for myself, in 1960, I came back from my studies in Venice, 'grimly resolved' to preserve and further develop a conceptually purist heritage of non-figurative material rigour, modelled on my teacher Nono. In 1959, I had formulated the text of Nono's Darmstadt speech, where he launched a polemical attack on the ahistorical, quietist concept of freedom espoused by Cage's European epigones, who conveniently put the question of responsibility in brackets, while pursuing revealingly regressive aesthetics. Further texts of my own from 1961 typically had titles like *The Concept of Material in New Music*; *Revolution and Restoration in New Music*; *Organisation, Chance, Improvisation, and Freedom in New Music*; and *Communication, Speculation and Corruption in New Music*. Finally, after getting all that off my chest, in 1966, I drafted a sort of typology of sounds, in which sound and form are dialectically merged, and in doing so I referred to structural models from Darmstadt. This was also the time when I turned to Gottfried Michael Koenig, whose electronic composition *Essay*, which I found in a second-hand book store (!), seemed to me to be a concrete example of integrated sound-form thinking, in the midst of so much theatrical-philharmonic, indecisive music slyly contrived by clever cluster-arrangers.

Today, I see the tendencies that I criticised so sharply back then—feeling them to be restorative, to be reducing the avant-garde to a domesticated family ghost in a comfortable bourgeois household—not so much in a moral, critical way, but more in terms of realistic differentiation. The purely structuralist concept of material of the 1950s would have become frozen in total sterility if composers had gone on insisting

on it even after noticing that pure pointillism itself could be used as a picturesque acoustic décor trickling away in the reception rooms of Daimler-Benz or Philips, and thus incorporated into all the other bourgeois cultural trash. Right up to the present day, public opinion has not let itself be thrown by all these new initiatives. Its defence strategy was and is the (fatal) embrace: Darmstadt has been consistently tolerated as the officially subsidised madhouse of musical culture. That is what one had to react against.

In 1969, Stockhausen was making gramophone recordings of *Aus den sieben Tagen* in Darmstadt. The composer as stipulator was becoming—transitorily, and as a consistent mobilisation of human creativity—a 'regulator',[2] perhaps even a manipulator. In the same year, I myself presented a work in Darmstadt with the title *Air. Musik für grosses Orchester mit Schlagzeug-Solo*—for which I made the claim that, without any concessions, it 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. This was my own way of breaking away from what I felt to be a falsely abstract and increasingly sterile structuralism; here, this kind of sonic realism not only led to structures that could be experienced quasi-corporeally, but also exposed pre-existing structures, right down to those of daily life—our urban environment (structural formations which philharmonically impregnated ears still would not acknowledge in works by Boulez or Stockhausen—nor were they meant to); they were made accessible to aesthetic perception, yet such experience was distanced from any kind of 'new German' (i.e. bourgeois) fascination-fetish by virtue of the strict structuralist control.

Moreover, the title *Air*, which—while certainly admitting many interpretations—is associated with a familiar formal type, was also meant to distance my music from all the pumped-up 'épatez-le bourgeois' stuff—both in my environment and further away—with its 'clear thinking' and pseudo-radicalism, which puts the concept of the musical work in question in a mannerist, iconoclastic manner, using such misleading manoeuvres to cover up the unquestioning and insufficiently considered modernist and academic stance of what was really being composed. This charlatanism, in its most dilettantish form, entered into an embarrassing alliance with the cultural-critical demands of our student protesters at the time, who, as part of the struggle against what was very correctly judged to be ideological restoration, against US imperialism, against the war in Vietnam, and Third World exploitation, among other issues, were demanding a politically engaged music, fielding Hanns Eisler and Mao's Talks at the Yenan Forum as evidence, but forgetting to study Lukács, or to bring Luigi Nono's music into the discussion. At the time, I identified with the student protest, while simultaneously suffering from the inquisitorial self-mutilation with which this protest constantly crippled itself. Then as now, I was of the opinion that art can only contribute to raising awareness in so far as, as art, it evokes the bourgeois (meaning: revolutionary) tradition and pursues immanent innovation through aesthetic categories, confronting the given historical, social situation, as reflected in

the dominant cultural practice. Wherever what was at stake was no more or less than the mobilising of structural perception, the music conceived in these terms came into automatic conflict with the prevailing taboos and philharmonic rules of play of a society that does not want to be deprived of its beloved cultural toy—in which it is used to seeing itself emphatically transfigured, as if in a (distorting) mirror, this being a major abuse of tradition; of a society, schooled in insecurity, that sometimes does not even mind being shocked by crazy things, but gets nervous if it notes that what is unfamiliar is not a shock or a joke, but something serious, that simultaneously lays claim to tradition.

Perhaps I may be forgiven for the provisional schematics involved in summarising time in decades: I would call the 1960s the period of innovative and enlightened restoration and the 1970s the period of stagnation. The things that seemed to me to be characteristic of this stagnation included all the revamped variants of happenings, performances, improvisations and environments—hastily cobbled and pretentiously self-serving mini-Gesamtkunstwerke—but also the would-be glittering symphonic style of academic structuralism, which took the Polish School as its model. Typical in this respect was Darmstadt 1972, where I participated as coordinator. The chasm between the familiar prophets and the community (of would-be prophets) was really bad. The great masters (Stockhausen, Ligeti, Kagel, and Xenakis—the wonderful exception was Christian Wolff) propounded their distilled doctrines; or put more modestly, they presented their works, without communicating seriously with one another, or with the course participants. In a Composers' Studio consisting of 30-minute phrases—a ghastly arrangement that I myself put in place out of sheer helplessness in the face of so much desire to gain attention—these participants presented their aesthetic concepts (or what they claimed as such): concepts that slithered around between meditation ceremonies, live-electronic performance, folk music, *Study with D minor*, and conceptions of imaginary music aping Schnebel.[3] My impression was that these were all hopeless caricatures of innovations that were already familiar.

But in the same year, finally, back came John Cage—albeit to Bremen—along with Nam June Paik and, for the first time, Steve Reich. So looking at the whole picture, on the one hand, one had a rather nostalgically tinged anarchism; on the other, the large-scale time dimensions that we had learned about from Cage and Stockhausen, not least since the 1970 World Expo in Ōsaka, were being cheerfully usurped and appropriated by minimalist music.

Because of its own stagnation, the European avant-garde was susceptible to anything that, in whatever way, functioned within society. And minds shaken around and exhausted by aesthetic exercise—pulled halfway up, half sinking down[4]—could finally take a nap for a few hours with a good conscience, on the dependable sonic cushions of hours-long *ostinati*.

So the period of stagnation became a period of seeking and rediscovering lost magic. And what ultimately came from that was seeking and rediscovering a sense of security: the heroic breakthrough to open regression, to musical thinking that

unrestrainedly—and with unrestrained self-exhibition—succumbed once more to the old, familiar, manfully resisted, weakly suppressed philharmonic-symphonic indulgences. But for all the broad exposure it got, the protagonists of this aesthetic change did not feel good about it. It seemed to me—and this impression was strengthened by my collaboration (at Darmstadt 1982) with Wolfgang Rihm, the composer who most consciously reflected this lack of questioning—that these young composers were never too happy about this phase of neo-symphonic and neo-expressionist tendencies, which they could not go on glorifying forever as breaking out from their alleged Darmstadt trauma. After all, they found it embarrassing to have the old reactionaries clasping them to their breasts, and the lack that they felt, and were distressed by, was the lack of 'air from other planets' that Schoenberg, above all, had invoked at the time he was still thinking in Romantic terms.

As components of the tendencies to search for lost magic, as well as a lost home, and simultaneously as critical reaction to the regressive abuse of this—legitimate—search, one can name three kinds of music that have been variously described as political, critical and alternative. In connection with the first I would name Erhard Grosskopf and Cornelius Cardew, both coming out of structuralist thinking but making an about-face; for the second Nicolaus A. Huber, the composer closest to me, for whom the combination of magical and critical experience was always a matter of course, and also Mathias Spahlinger. In the third category, I would like to mention Walter Zimmermann, whose music I got to know in the 1970s; aiming to rediscover magic, his programmatic topoi of niche and local music seemed to me to promise a counter-model to the affect music that was complacently regressing into a symphonic vocabulary. It uncovered that lost sense of security in the exoticism of what is locality-tinged, and in doing so, so it seems to me, has long retained the kind of serial-organisation practice (perhaps he has since abandoned it) for which, ultimately, the concept 'Darmstadt' still stands.

(It was also inevitable that with so much indulgent, exploratory and also exploitative dealing with tradition—and having capitalised so much on other exotic cultures, the *exoticum* of its own tradition was bound to have a turn too—that a critically sensitised counterforce of aesthetic moralists emerged, which opposed this false religion of hedonistic experience of the familiar with a no less false religion of ugliness, to be enjoyed as masochism. The keyword, first enunciated by Herbert Marcuse, and rather rashly appropriated by me, was 'refusal'.[5] My own career as involuntary guru of the refusers and protagonist of a 'music on the verge of falling silent' was now unstoppable.)

To elucidate my own position and to shed further light on the tension—partly exacerbated artificially by external forces—with other composers who seemed to be turning the wheel back, I insert here an excerpt from a text that I wrote in 1982, as the manuscript of a lecture entitled *Affekt und Aspekt* (see *MaeE*: Lachenmann, 1996, pp. 63–72).[6] At that time, as now, it was meant to help clarify these various fronts.

The ego, in acknowledging its broken state, its loss of speech, confronting its old ties and its inability to shake them off—the ego, fumbling for its id, for its superego, and for its structure, in the hope of that redeeming factor which, as Hölderlin puts it, grows where danger is—the ego, not communicating affectively, through gestures that speak emotionally, but through the act of seeking, via the aspect that imposes itself through reformatory dealings with the prevailing aesthetic apparatus, and the concept of material that it communicates. This is how composers of my generation have understood their situation, accepting it as a challenge. 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. Hearing means: to change, and to rediscover oneself through this capacity to change. It is in the changing approach to material that composer expresses himself, discovering himself as part of a bourgeois reality which has far more layers than the immediate one.

However, what attracted my generation creatively has more recently been felt by many composers to be an unworthy crippling and suppression of their need for affective expression. A younger generation, which has grown up in a society in which the repression of internal contradictions has become second nature, regards this aesthetic of resistance as a sheer frustration. It is not so much the fracture of the ego that hurts it; rather, it feels crippled by the insight itself. So it struggles not to become frozen in its limitations, like the rabbit in front of the snake, and in this situation—despite it and yet perhaps because of it—it takes the risk of saying ME, more than ever, and of mediating affectively, in the belief that, through all the masks, the communicative capacity of the individual, however troubled, still remains.

That, at least, is how I understand the spirit that guides those composers who are determined to reach back to affect. As such I accept and respect it and as such they are closer to me than many of the structural mannerists who, frivolously playing with alienation as professional *outsiders*, pander to a kind of Negative Art Industry.

The recourse to affect as a breakaway from perceived coercion thus carries the force of an aspect, reacting to reality. And so a new *art of affect* would need to give proof of its plausibility as aspect. The criteria for this are difficult to precisely define in words. Thinking back to *Wozzeck*, it is the moment where the subject (almost clinically fascinated by his own structure), is *forced by nature*, and admits to it.[7]

As a rebellion against perceived pressures, this escape of the crippled subject into a new world of explicit affect has something really genuine and truthful about it; but once the composer settles back, ravenous and cosy, though structurally a bit scarred—and all the more self-pitying because of it—in the old domestic junk-room of instant affects, it all degenerates into phoney self-deception.

The temptation seems great and many have already succumbed to it. And it is hard to avoid the impression that, in the wake of all that much-lamented stagnation, this new flood of powerfully affective music might be the fruit of putrefaction, where worms writhe voraciously in the guts of tonality's corpse. Anyone who imagines that expressive spontaneity, and naïve groping around in a tried and tested reservoir of affects, makes engagement with the concept of material superfluous, is only incapacitating himself.

These attitudes have been revealed not least by the low standard of their polemic against the old avant-garde, a polemic that consists of diverting attention to straw men and then thrashing away at them for the gratification of Mr Peter Jona Korn,[8] whose phrase *musical environmental pollution*, as one knows, was not aimed at disco dumbness or debased classics, but at the musical avant-garde.

An example of this is the (now international) swear-word *Darmstadt*, which implies that indignant stares should be cast on the kind of patronising stylistic tutelage felt to be emanating from there. The people who feel patronised are the ones who were incapable of absorbing experiences such as serialism and working through them. But serial thinking in particular can really only be disparaged, as compulsory shackling of the imagination, or even as comfortable relief from it, by those who have shied away from close engagement with the *aspect* of such thinking, and recognition of the necessity of reassessing the concept of material from work to work, in terms that very soon went far beyond the good old *basic parameters*. Before long, the only people concerned with *note duration* and *dynamic* were the editors of school music books.

Part of this, of course, is the popular phantom image of the typical *Darmstadt composer* who, having put all emotional communication under lock and key, gazes arrogantly into a future which he has monopolised, not really wanting to be understood by the present day: a hyper-romantic, apostle of progress and morose intellectual all in one, taming musical material with abstract algebraic formulae. This, by the way, is exactly what people used to say 25 years ago about the composer of *Varianti* and the *Diario polacco '58*: Luigi Nono.

In this context, what also seems revealing to me is the advocacy (which always goes down well with the public) of a *human* music—in contrast to the previous inhuman kind...—and the demand to *go back to writing for the audience*. So precisely for whom were Nono's *Il canto sospeso* and *La terra e la compagna*, Stockhausen's *Gruppen* and *Kontakte*, Boulez' *Le marteau sans maître*, Berio's *Epifanie* and Cage's *Concert for Piano* composed?

The accusation of a hermetically sealed-off art, for insiders only, simply repeats a popular form of evasion within public opinion, which always headed for cover when faced by works such as those named above, because it knew that it was far more cut to the quick by the *aspect* encountered therein than it was entertained by all the *affects* of the New Symphonists.[9]

And then, of course, we cannot overlook the polemic game with the term *refusal*, which seeks to mark me out personally as an ascetic, sulky preacher with a moralisingly raised index finger, in a desert of stifled, scratchy sounds: a straw man, an easy target to have a go at, because what I have always described merely as a technical compositional process—namely clearing away what was obviously lying around in order to uncover what lay behind it, making the latter more clearly perceptible—was deliberately misrepresented as a rejection of the audience. My auxiliary definition of beauty was *refusal of habit*: in the distorting mirror of dumbing-down, this was turned into *refusal of enjoyment*. Habit and enjoyment as one and the same: here the philistines exposed themselves.

> Hanns Eisler always wanted to write a book on *Stupidity in Music*. There is another title I would find more important: *On Playing Dumb in Music*.
>
> It was understandable that provincial newspaper reviewers would latch onto fake arguments such as *hating the audience* and *sick* or *arrogant intellectualism*; it was less comprehensible that even composers, themselves not immune to misrepresentation, would make naïve polemic use of such straw men, so as to avoid asking themselves the real question.
>
> This is: how can one get beyond the loss of speech, a loss of speech that, in the wake of social alienation and a growing bourgeois need for illusion, is becoming ever more encrusted and complicated because of the fluent speech of the dominant aesthetic apparatus?
>
> Speaking for myself, my only answer is to create an awareness of this questioning through composing. This seems to me to be the fundamental aspect of composing today. In the light of this aspect, what matters—as ever—is not to make rhetorical proclamations, but to act creatively.

That ends the quotation from *Affekt und Aspekt*.

In the year 1980, both Walter Zimmermann's *Ländler-Topographien* and my *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* were premièred, and it seems remarkable to me that two composers who at that time were working in completely different ways, would each, in their 'search for a lost sense of security' (albeit with different aims) have sought to gain insight into different niches of the same landscape-orientated collective sensibility. However, what I sense in Walter Zimmermann, but also in composers like Nicolaus A. Huber, Rolf Riehm and Mathias Spahlinger as insight or advance, strikes me in other composers' work as a dull orgy of mindless regression, which presumably will soon lead itself *ad absurdum*. Once again, the catchword is 'tonality'; but here, one can scarcely talk about a 'search for lost magic'—only about the unrestrained exploitation of cheaply drummed-up clichés. A wave of lazy eclecticism, whether Euro- or American-tinged, is splashing over the ears of an astonished and perplexed bourgeoisie, duped by what it imagines to be its openness (Alfred Schnittke: 'One must take the risk of being eclectic'), and even our New Symphonists recoil a little, since, after all, they have always regarded their music as a dialectical answer to recognised contradictions with Darmstadt tendencies. Their best ally (and ours too) against the kind of corruption of hearing that threatens to engulf the public media, the buzzword 'audience figures', has to be musical tradition itself, since the latter's high standards are always superior to such all-too-unadulterated pleasures, and push the demands on present-day art into true dimensions.

What will be left when—as seems inevitable to me—this tonal wave swirls back again is, I believe, an even more conscious hunger for structural perception. So it could be that, in the course of almost half a century, Darmstadt has been slowly turning round on itself. My expectation is that this motion will be a spiral one. I would bet on a dialectical structuralism, that is, a kind of structural thinking which—

in whatever form—reacts to the given conditions defining means, a structural thinking that is concerned neither with new affects nor the old affects, but with permanent innovations in the concept of musical material itself and therefore with a constantly new, altered hearing. Perhaps this is a rather intellectual, even academically formulated variant of something that is being described in other countries as 'open structure', and underlies the fascination that many European musicians have with Morton Feldman's music. And for many years, Luigi Nono's new works, as art that relates its meaning to human structure, have endorsed such expectations.

In this sense too, composers today could learn from the blind alleys of the old Darmstadt. I believe that, one way or another, they should actively take possession of tradition and be far more decisive in invoking this factor that has so often been played off against them. Stockhausen and Schnebel have already provided examples here; one should also remember Nono's lecture *Text—Music—Song* from 1960, Moreover, what has happened in the *Musik-Konzepte* series edited by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, where not only Xenakis, Ligeti and Evangelisti, but also Bach, Josquin, Bellini, and Schumann are discovered, should become a matter of course, defining the attitude of everyone who talks about New Music.

Any kind of dialectical structuralism—whether consciously or unconsciously practised—is of course distanced from the fiction of a virginal pitch material that can be arbitrarily manipulated serially (something the old Darmstadt actually believed in for a while), as if there were any kind of sonic material that could ignore its historicity. Similarly, it has nothing to do with composers playing deaf and blind in relation to the contexts (i.e. the previously existing, effective structures) from which these means arose, the most likely end result being a final gush of dumb, expressively tasteless or vacuously virtuosic ketchup, to make the whole thing more palatable for sensation-seeking contemporaries to gawk at. Dialectical structuralism is equally remote from the kind of cleverness that first prepares the ketchup and then—using whatever bureaucratic measures may be available—shamefacedly structures it. Dialectical 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. It is from this standpoint that I criticise and/or love, that I hate, that I study the music of my contemporaries, and relate myself to the tradition of historical music, as well as the spirit of classical Darmstadt. For all its inevitable positivist and partly scholastic approaches, the Darmstadt of the 1950s was the historically necessary, inevitable propellant for a rocket, to be borne up on which was perhaps restricting, but also liberating. Yet maybe it made sense to let go of it once the gravitational force of socially determined aesthetic inertia had been overcome, or seemed to have been. In looking at the present situation and the future, it can only be a great help to think of Darmstadt both critically and affectionately.

Notes

All endnotes are the translator's. Warmest thanks are expressed to Elke Hockings for many helpful suggestions.

[1] This article, written in 1987, appears in German in *MaeE* (Lachenmann, 1996).
[2] There is an untranslatable pun here; the German word 'Regler' also refers to the potentiometers that Stockhausen operated during his ensemble's live-electronic performances.
[3] The reference here is presumably to Dieter Schnebel's *MO – NO* (*Musik zum Lesen*).
[4] From the end of Goethe's poem *Der Fischer*: 'halb zog man ihn, halb sank er hin'.
[5] 'Whether ritualised or not, art contains the rationality of negation. In its advanced positions, it is the Great Refusal—the protest against that which is' (see Marcuse, 1968, p. 63).
[6] The quotation here comes from the later part of the article, with some cuts and minor modifications. It may be useful to clarify what is meant here by the terms 'affect' and 'aspect' (Lachenmann does this in an earlier part of his essay). 'Affect' is not meant in the sense familiar to baroque scholars, but more in terms of psychological (and indeed everyday) usage: as something potentially creating an immediate change of mood in the listener. 'Aspect' refers primarily to the relatively detached, considered (and also socio-historically determined) way in which composers regard and manipulate their musical material.
[7] In Scene 4 of Berg's opera, the Doctor reproaches Wozzeck for coughing in the street (in Büchner's original, for urinating). Wozzeck claims this is 'forced by nature'—i.e. involuntary behaviour. The young composers, Lachenmann suggests, seem to be claiming the same for their work.
[8] B. 1922, d. 1998; director of the Richard-Strauss-Konservatorium in Munich from 1967 – 87.
[9] Lachenmann is referring here to composers such as Wolfgang Rihm, Manfred Trojahn, Hans-Jürgen von Bose, and Wolfgang von Schweinitz, all of whom enjoyed considerable promotion and success in the early 1980s. Only Rihm has maintained a significant international reputation. The movement was also known as the New Simplicity and its composers called Young Romantics.

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