

The Orchestra

The orchestra is almost as anachronistic as new music itself. Its structure is an intrinsically anti-constitutional scandal - its sexism, disenfranchisement, anti-democracy, and anti-collectivization. The authoritarian structures that it celebrates are an attack on human autonomy, on a free intellect, and on every conception of art beyond that of a totalitarian regime. But I am not the first one to notice this, and as such I don't need to go on about it.

Of course these are also only facets of that which constitutes the orchestra as a whole. I also bear in mind that it is only here in German-speaking countries (where there is the greatest concentration of orchestras) that the everyday sight of a teenager carrying a violin case is a joyful one. Or that in Tehran, an orchestral concert itself alone can be a politically risky protest toward opening and democratization. But also that in South Africa the orchestra remains, as before, a symbol of racism and apartheid.

The question is if and how I can still write an orchestra piece in the face of the findings I'm sketching here. But also here, there can be no exhaustive answer; instead, at most, a tangential relating to a field now understood as a site for the production of new questions, rather than per a user's manual. There is no more ambivalent artistic operation than to compose "for" orchestra (which, for me personally, is no longer possible - at best, "about" or "on" orchestra).

"De-contextualization" could be a tactic for posing such questions. The orchestra would no longer dictate a situation's framing and would instead itself be a part of an overriding montage. The elements of that montage would be relativized in equal proportion such that they would also mutually illuminate each other, thus keeping a step ahead of those well-rehearsed processes which are normally kept invisible. I see one direction toward such a "discrete attack" in the positioning of the symphony orchestra in a rural party tent with beer benches encroaching perpendicularly onto the stage in my *Landschaftsoper* (2009). Or, in the "abuse" that occurs in both my *Landschaftsoper* as well as the *Stadtoper* (2005) when the orchestra serves as a Trojan horse to provide the most quotidian of audio-recordings (in the one case, of the situation's urban surroundings, and in the other, of its rural surroundings) the largest and grandest possible platform. A montage of "high culture" and contingency . . .

P. A.

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