

bill dietz:
[the possibility of improvisation/the impossibility of music]

(pasolini saying "[t]he artist, the poet, is one who doesn't
commit suicide"—or for us: that the composer is one who
doesn't, can't, believe in music)

1.

The possibility of improvisation seems assumed—the possibility of a composerless, free music. & perhaps the *possibility* of it is ours: possibility being a condition affirming the state of things now—that is, if improvisation is the acceptance of one's mind's & body's limits (how they can move, how they can know [an instrument]) & the sociality that defines both: possibility is always of a given (no matter how far in semblance a sound is from norms). When an improviser wants to contest or test or expand, doesn't it then have to internalize the role of the composer—taking the state of division (critique), of thinking-doing-acting & acting-doing, of self-consciousness, into oneself—& then once again encountering the limit of the self (the other)? —& thus encountering the limits of (but not necessarily accepting) the possible, this always limitedness of improvisation? [so it's an issue of 'the composer's' location?]

Is the strength of what we call improvisation then a strength of metaphor? —its possible clarity of representing something we, composers & improvisers alike, are always facing, our "situation"?—of interaction w/ an other?

It may be—but insofar as this is recognized, it seems important to emphasize the confused, mystifiedness that seems to surround much of the talk about improvisation.

So then these comments serve to stand as something like a position of extremity (from which "jazz", what's possible for me to say about it, and "Tony Conrad," are fixed in liberalism)—& to remind us that music, the impossible audible, as we know it (no matter how it sounds or appears), only reaches us when there is an us—whether the us of a single player (& sound) or the us of a composer & a page—a something that's not just 2 (1 & an other, division)—a something, authorless (but not necessarily composerless), of neither, a 3rd—of interaction, togetherness, oscillation, audition—of always hearing some-thing (else), an else.

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2.

Peter Ablinger has spoken of his *Weiss/Weisslich* series in relation to the work of Agnes Martin, to a kind of essentialization of "the mark", "the act"—something like an absolute minimum gesture of making. Is there not, asks Ablinger, something fundamental in the simple drawing of graphite across paper? (in the "*fast-stille*" of noise/breath in *Weiss/Weisslich* 3?)

And yet much of Ablinger's music, *Weiss/Weisslich* to *Quadraturen* (perhaps even more strongly in the recent pieces), seems to answer resolutely, "no"—or at least, or rather, to problematize the question.

There are, of course, senses in which we could say yes—for Martin and perhaps most visual artists we certainly could: this simple temporal-spatial act of consciousness. And perhaps even for the composer alone, making marks (Ablinger alone making for the first time a *fast-*

silence) (and in a further sense, works of Ablinger's and a few others that actively ask this question). But there seems to be a fundamental difference between these 'fundamental' marks of Martin's, and say, a given score of Ablinger's: for—almost without exception in the history of composed music (and some of Ablinger's music is such an exception)—the marks of a composer are always secondary to the 'object' at hand. The marks of composition *refer*—are as instructions—to sounds, actions, ideas, processes. (Roland Barthes has said that to compose is, "to give to do") The marks of a composition must be performed: taken up by an other—& before even this in the sense of spectatorship: for there to be in music something 'to see' (Agnes Martin's line), to hear, what is required is not only this first act, production, but one secondary: reproduction.

We might then say that this intermediary art form, the score, the mark of the composer, is what distinguishes (at least in part) what we in 'the West...' call music (composed music...art music...or maybe better, maybe worse, self-conscious music), what distinguishes this art from others (even the theatre, which can, more often than not & certainly more often than music, be self-sufficient on the page—literature). Not that music is constituted by sound or time or even organization, but by this moment of delayed action, of deferral, of 'pre-mediation'. That all composed musics, from Ferneyhough at IRCAM to Peter Ablinger listening on a wintry field in Brandenburg, share this at least momentary lack of spontaneity: that before our silence, came thought: that, as Eddie Prevost puts it (but otherwise), "no sound is innocent."

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3.

This is perhaps why at the current moment Morton Feldman is so much closer to us than Cage. The Morton Feldman who said in 1972: "The closer I came, on my own terms, to a really autonomous situation, the more I felt the first warning that a new dichotomy was about to take place...Something is being made. And to make something is to constrain it"—the Morton Feldman who insisted that we not give ourselves over to the blind belief that we could hear, that we could assume sounds, that the metaphor of music was its reality.

Put this way, in music, in composition, the *metaphor* of music (of a free space, sound itself, the object, nothing—the "music" of poets & painters & philosophers & politicians) is always and necessarily deferred: is always performed: put off: produced: delayed—that even in music, the metaphor of music remains metaphor: something that musicians themselves must also use, something to keep pushing, always, so that the metaphor is not the thing, & only the thing insofar as the metaphor.

Which is not in any way meant to suggest we (try to) abandon this metaphoricity. Sounds. Music. On the contrary, it seems the only way left to us to more than ever search for this space of sounding, 'to pass over articulation without falling into the censorship of desire or the sublimation of the unspeakable" (says Barthes)—to more than ever affirm the power of the metaphor of music. But in its denial. In recognizing the effort of music. In realizing that the metaphor is this always-beyond, never something itself—by leaving no privileged ground mythologized—by realizing, saying, that this is not *it* and also always at the same time that *it is*: that, *it will be*.

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