

## **In the Interregnum. Control in the Absence of the Emperor**

The question “Where am I?” is one I can only ever evade. I do not like thinking of myself as locatable. Yaron Deutsch’s question, however, is timely, and it is asked when one senses a feeling of disorientation in facing the reality of a new challenge: the cultural appropriation of what one does, generating memories. “The meaning of the work does not belong to the author but is ‘public,’ precisely because an artwork becomes such only within a complex, institutionalized cultural negotiation.” (Basso Fossali)

For someone beginning the second half of their path with light luggage (without excessive academic compromises, menacing filiations, or overexposure from the frenzy for the new), it is important to reconcile one’s courage with effectiveness in the journey ahead.

The treasure of “relative freedom” becomes “solid capital” only when one thinks in terms of the long-term survival of one’s doing. Sciarrino speaks of temporality when he says that music is such only if it causes change (in who writes it, who performs it, or who discusses it...). This perpetual quality of contemporaneity leads Kubler to hypothesize an art history governed by the concept of desirability of things: what remain are traces of change born from the renewal of desires.

On the other hand, the time of creating is shortening, and in the current productive model the serial (or replicable) artist wins over the prototypical.

Reconciling incursions into the productive fabric with the effectiveness of these incursions in terms of cultural appropriation is part of composing one’s authorial role. In harmonizing the intimate dimension of discovery with the aspiration of accumulation (offering oneself to the cultural heritage), each of us equips ourselves with personal survival tools.

“L’invention [...] est toujours «indiscrète» par rapport au tissu des programmes qui ont déjà une histoire (traditions) et elle doit immédiatement préparer une tenue (ou adopter une posture) programmatique afin de résister à l’«irritation» constante provoquée da des inventions parallèles et en vue d’obtenir enfin une véritable implémentation dans les domaines sociaux.” (Basso Fossali)

The competitive dimension to which artistic creation is subjected, combined with a generalized decline in the resources that support it, often makes armouring the two phases — action and waiting — an anxiety-provoking task.

The toxicity of this anxiety, the feeling of short breath, is not a purely musical matter. I read the newspapers and discover that the time of liquid society (Bauman) has ended under the tatters of the hat called postmodernism. The philosopher Bordoni says that now we are suspended in what Gramsci called the Interregnum. Perhaps he is right; it is a time between times.

Navigating between adoption and rejection of linguistic approaches is difficult: on one hand, creators of pleasant games; on the other, neo-materialisms/primitivisms seeking a new virginity. Some propose a perceptive/performative naturalism that rarely adds anything to the repeated observation that experiential immersion is the pivot of semantic orientations. In the post-conceptual era there is still conceptual music, and the same applies to the medium and post-medium issue: 2.0 aesthetics with a clear aboutness attract productive and academic research resources.

Angela Vettese writes “Si fa con tutto” and she is right. Nevertheless, there are those who insinuate a doubt about the sustainability of “cultural explosions” due to the shortening of obsolescence cycles.

For example, the consequence of moving from electronic sound to video-performance via a shared platform like the laptop, questions those who cannot subordinate a musical value coherence to the mere material employed or worse still to the tool by which one treats it.

In 2013 Dufourt writes: “The naive exaltation of the technological universe seems to us now more a cult object than an artistic project. The same can be said of large experiments in language, which blend a poetics of detachment with estranged stylistic references. Formalism weakens, syncretism fades. Music today cannot avoid the urgency of a new confrontation with historical becoming, and first of all, with its own.”

From the shop windows of the remaining major festivals, rich prizes and academic ceremonies this urgency seems not to be read; yet entire fabrics of European artistic production are tearing, political references and audiences are being lost.

The hero is thus absent, there are no flags to wave, but many Generals, nothing is seized. Romitelli spoke of “Sundays on the periphery of the Empire”, the European empire is no more and the emperors are dead or weary. Some, the lazy *trouvères*, repeat that contemporary music is dead; others that it is in full health.

They are wrong—so where is it?

It is among those who maintain a corrosive and indiscreet tone towards the productive fabric (still incredulous in the omnipotence of the visible), among those who need consistency (one does not eat scent) and generate systems of knowledge, not of faith (no dramatization of one’s social role). Among those who accept the understanding of complexity (face the mastery of doing) and are conscious of the human axis (affectivity without sophistication of the emotional sphere). It is among those who seek analogies between experience and vision (precision and multiplicity) and write the interpretable (multiple reading against tautologies).

With all of them I attempt to be a composer, writing music with artistic ambitions: “you cannot say ‘first’ what art is and ‘then’ go looking for it in the world; art [...] is defined only afterward.” (Vettese)

I like to attend to sound which for me is always interpreted, I write what is buildable. The space I leave to the performer is narrow but has a high potential for meaning. Touch and intention are among the terrains of research that I offer to those who perform my music: the actantial valences and values of the contexts I write about solicit a redefinition through these means.

I avoid exposing compositional techniques or particular materials or instruments; I do not want to flatten the listening test into a game of lazy recognitions: sound in the foreground.

I try to respect it: I imagine it, I listen to it, I interpret it and wait for it to suggest what to do with it. To understand its actor-like capacities, its euphoric or dysphoric potential, its affordances (Gibson), I must empathize with it (Strasberg). Being in contact with sound means betraying myself: I am not interested in identity affirmation but in anonymity as a necessary resource to become other. I believe in the fingerprint as a discreet marker of authorship.

The limits of my prototypical nature and the search for the moment in which the “universe gives itself a measure of itself” place me in conflict with formalization; moreover my compositional core is primarily degenerative: corrosion, dematerialization, loss of memory, diet, abandonment (to leave or to persist). I am interested in overexposed sound (the voyeurism of intimacy as care for every sophistication) and hybridized (punctillism, augmentation and fleeting focus) between extreme profiling and emergence.

Sound is then risky: even while faithful to scientific representation it is clear that to search the paths of the inexpressible does not correspond to giving the inexpressible as presence; to those interested in that latter path there remains only to entrust themselves to the risk of encountering asymmetries of recognition.

It is not about satisfying personal or public desires (this is not the “desirable” that Kubler meant), but about affectivity, which does not exhaust itself in the moment of writing or of creating the work; its value is sufficiently independent from the time necessary for its cultural appropriation.

Recently I have begun to affirm the value of that asymmetry; perhaps this is what allows one to “feel the justice of a text long before having understood its meaning.” (Campo)

A professor of mine, on composing listening, cited the distinction between knowing and re-knowing, insisting on the moral imperative of induction toward knowledge: re-knowing is too easy. A certain perceptual continuity (musical listening increasingly often an extension of everyday listening) is undoubtedly the enemy of certain contemporary music, and the struggle against the concert-format does not favor identifying a moment dedicated to the delicate contact with the stranger.

However, reasoning about recognition and analogy is more effective than trying to cling to neuroscience to explain what is desirable, and perhaps this reflection (between knowing and re-knowing) also risks generating tautologies consumed among experts. The flourishing of devices (more or less healthy and aware) created by composers to ensure value endurance in their work risks overshadowing the central question: “why” it is important to know or recognize, and not “how.”

I am here, dear Yaron, inside that question. Why do children listen to the stories of their grandparents? Composing the recognition of value, unveiling the true treasure: the desired future is the conquest of adult memory.