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### THE NEW SOUND COOKBOOK BY DIETER KAUFMANN



Dieter Kaufmann

Dieter Kaufmann was born in Vienna in 1941. He grew up in Carinthia, and in Vienna and Paris studied music, German philology, art history, violoncello, composition (with Karl Schiske, Gottfried von Einem, Olivier Messiaen and Rene Leibowitz) and electroacoustic music (with Pierre Schaeffer and Francois Bayle at the Groupe de Recherches Musicales of the French Radio).

From 1970, Kaufmann has been teaching electroacoustic music at the University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Vienna. He is currently head of two master classes, one for composition (since 1990) and the other for electroacoustic composition (since 1997). He was head of the department for composition, conducting and sound engineering studies from 2000 to 2002. Kaufmann was president of the Austrian ISCM section from 1983-88, president of the Society for Electroacoustic Music in Austria (GEM) from 1988-90. From 2001-2003 he was president of the Austrian Composers Union and in 2001 he became president of “Austro Mechana”, the Austrian Copyright Society administering the mechanical rights of authors.

In 1975, together with his wife, actress Gunda König, he founded the K&K EXPERIMENTALSTUDIO. This Musical-Theatre-Ensemble has made numerous tours throughout Europe, North and Latin America, Egypt and Taiwan. Kaufmann wrote works in several fields of music: chamber, symphonic, and vocal-music, musical theatre (four operas and many multi-media works), electroacoustic and live electronic music, as well as works in applied art. He had been awarded numerous national and international prizes (e.g. Ernst Krenek Prize of the City of Vienna and the Prix Magisterium Bourges/France).

I met professor Kaufmann at the Summer Academy in Reichenau (Austria), in August 2001. He gave a two-day lecture on electroacoustic composition and presented his compositions at a concert. After a round table, I approached him, thanked him for his lecture and we talked about Belgrade, the people he knows there, and the Faculty Tone Studio. Upon his departure, Professor Kaufmann gave me a dozen CDs with his music and the music of his students. That summer I was re-acquainted with Western civilization after many terrible autistic years in Yugoslavia, and I was completely overwhelmed by the kindness and understanding I found among these people...

I saw Professor Kaufmann again in October 2004, when he came to Belgrade, with the lovely Elisabeth A.M. Sykora, to perform his electroacoustic composition for soprano and tape "Adagio 2003" at the Review of Composers. After the concert I accompanied Elisabeth and Dieter to their hotel and asked him for an online interview for the *New Sound* magazine. He accepted, and this is how our correspondence proceeded...

*Please tell us what it was like to work in the "Groupe de Recherches Musicales", which instruments did you use and what kind of music did you make?*

I worked at GRM from 1968 to 1970 – I call this the last pioneer time. It was a fantastic experience to get in touch with Pierre Schaeffer's school of concrete music. My teacher was Francois Bayle, later director of GRM, who became a good friend since this time. Above all it was a "school of hearing" in a new way. We had almost no technical means, some tape machines, filters, modulators and a mixing board. But most important was the sound ideology. For me as a composer it was a way to move back from being an architect (writing scores) to a more "proletariat" manner of laying my own bricks, doing my kitchen by producing sounds, changing them, and putting them together to new unities. My 3 compositions: ENERGIES INCLUDES, CHUTE and AH! LA NATURE were realized...

*When you compose in the electroacoustic medium, do you write acousmatic or “abstract” music?*

This is not the right question. First of all I do not “write”; I compose in that direct way of doing. There is no score in between; I am always working on the sound – result. I am just preparing a conference for a kind of Kaufmann-Festival from 8-10 February 2005 in Perpignan, near the Spanish border, on the subject "à la recherché d'une musique figurative". So, in short: acoustic music is figurative, electroacoustic music – even with concrete sounds – it is what I would say – abstract music. It is the projection of figurative (acoustic) or maybe, sometimes synthetic sounds on a virtual screen.

*Do you sometimes return to the specific sound material, redesign it, or change its context? Can we find and track some kind of “idée fixe” or “sound signature” in your compositions?*

I like citations, even out of my own works. Idée fixe may be the overtone raw in its well tempered tuning and, maybe, my relationship to Bach and Church-chorals. But I think my signature lies more in formal aspects, building pyramids or other sound architectures that may be reversed afterwards, symmetries, metrical variabilities, geometrical and arithmetical series, etc...

*This year is the thirtieth anniversary of K&K EXPERIMENTALSTUDIO. How did you choose (or find) co-workers for your projects?*

It was a principle of K&K's working ideology not to devise responsibility in a hierarchic way, like they usually do in big theater companies. Every co-worker is accepted in his kind of creativity. This corresponds more to alternative and empiric "performance" habitudes. So it is very important to choose the right persons. We normally found co-workers in our private and artistic surrounding, even starting from inside the family, sometimes among friends or students. In that way we discovered creative personalities, who went their autonomous ways afterwards without us (like Klaus Karlbauer or like our son Ulrich...) – sometimes there were also persons who found us and proposed their collaboration (for example, composer Anestis Logothetis, Luna Alcalay or Sergey Dreznin) – so there was no consequent strategy, often we got somebody by chance. The most important principle is to develop everything out of the music and not to use the classical theater principle of devised rolls. It's more performance than theater, it's connected to the actors and can never be done by others.

*Did you have any support from state institutions and how did you manage to travel all over the world?*

International contacts – as they came to my studies in Paris or from personal connections in Sweden or Poland or later on from my students, helped frequently to build up an international net of “organizing artists” or “artistic organizers” (especially in the seventies). So I practically did all the

organizing work by myself – sometimes with the help of temporary “secretaries” (paid with government welfare funds).

The seventies were a good time for government, regional and local community benefits for artistic activities. This climate changed in the eighties and has become more and more difficult since Austria became member of the European Union in 1995. Now every European country only helps its own artists. When we travel abroad now, we have to get the money mostly from the Austrian foreign ministry or from sponsors, who are very difficult to find today – everything looks highly commercialized – it is not a good time for experimental art...

*You performed your own music, also the music of Gottfried von Einem, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Anestis Logothetis, Herbert Eimert, Friedrich Cerha, and some titles are “Woman without Qualities” (Frau ohne Eigenschaften), “Prisons - Church Music against the Force” (Gefängnisse - Kirchenmusik gegen die Gewalt), “Quiet Land” (Still ist das Land), “Victory over the Sun” (Sieg über die Sonne), “Sisyphus” (Sisyphos), “Tell me about Paradise” (Erzähl mir vom Paradies), “Eat and Become” (Iss und Werde), “Da Capo Al Capone”. Is K&K still active?*

K&K still exists today, but has fewer activities. The reason is our own age on the one side (originally we did all the transport ourselves – mostly by our car across all of Europe, stage and technical material inside), and higher costs / less public help / growing national protection, on the other. Our model of an autonomous “traveling family circus” can no longer be the base of our activities. But even now in recent years I presented a program: "SALE" for a female dancer, me and my children, Clara (photo-projections) and Ulrich (film/videos), in Moscow, Vienna, Bourges, Sofia, Klagenfurt, Perpignan, and soon Lisbon...

*In “Adagio 2003” you use three European languages. Spatial borders are melting away; we are going “global”. Is it easier to be an artist in such a big network?*

To use three languages is not a way of being global; it’s simply to use texts in their original language. But I think, to be “European” means to know at least 5 languages (in my case it is German, English, French, Swedish and some Italian – sorry no Slavic language – I know that I should begin with Serbian, or maybe Russian...). It’s more a sound question than a problem of globalization...

*This piece is a “descendant” of your compositions “Autumn Pathetique” and “Adagio Autumn 01”. Do you think “Adagio 2003” is therefore finer and fully accomplished?*

“Adagio 2003” was composed on the basis of the complete “Adagio Autumn 01” composition. This is a process I often used to do – in other works too, in a way my version to do a “work in progress”. I

try to use an idea in different contexts and by that way also to get more possibilities for performances and communication with the public. But this does not mean that I find a later version better than the first!

*In your note for “Adagio Autumn 01” you wrote “It starts like a crime story, grows to take on the dimensions of a world situation with its airplanes... a suggestion of a catastrophe...” Do you intend to make a statement with your work, either political or cultural?*

I like to make political statements. In several works which I made in the seventies and eighties, I do it very directly, but in this case I only reflect the “iconographic” of a political event, I don’t take a position. They were very strong images, these airplanes – flying into the skyscrapers. I began the composition without thinking of September 11, but then I discovered in my material (the birds) this airplane, and it became a very important musical means in the first part. I think that the New York event was a turning point in world politics and I hope that this cruel attack, which has to be condemned, will bring – certainly after a long time – some positive effects in the way rich countries treat poor ones. For the moment I am very unhappy that Bush was reelected. So the direct effect was not very positive (I agree with Michael Moore!).

*Can you foresee the future of technology in music and music technologies?*

I think that composers will and should use any future technical means to express themselves and to express their time and living conditions – as it was in the past. (From mechanical instruments to digital ones – but that’s changing ideology too!)

*How do you see two scenes of electronic music: mass music, raves... versus “serious”, “artistic”?*

This question is too complicated for the moment – in any case I don’t see these new movements as a concurrence, but as some kind of popularization, in an applied way. So-called “serious” composition is often the development department for the later use of their inventions in mass music.

*You are currently working on a new opera. What is it like to write a modern opera in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

My text is NATURA MORTA by Josef Winkler. I try not to do a “normal” opera but to find a new relationship to text-sound-composition. In some way, it will be an experimental turning back to Greek theater methods, more related to a ritual than to traditional operas. There is a lot to say about it – but I am still too much involved.

*In your piece “Petra, Passacaglia & Coral (con Tango libido)” for viola and Big Band, there are sections where you ask for improvisation from Petra, percussionist and pianist, and in the end, the whole ensemble is playing a kind of tango-improvisation. How much improvisation is embedded in your process of composing and how much freedom and indetermination in score and sound is allowed by different media?*

Improvisations came into this kind of music in the 60s, when aleatoric and graphic music was developed. It is a pity that this way was not followed or realized further. For me, it's simply another way of performing: to give more responsibility to the musicians, but this means that you really know your musicians... In “Petra” it is not my typical use of improvisation, because it leaves the musicians alone, otherwise I like to give them more directives for construction, but in this case I knew that these musicians knew better than me how to do a good Tango...