

Aufbruch moments before

The story of Aufbruch (Awakening):

The Jugendstil 90s of this century finally overcame the post-post musical styles. People mistakenly speak of a melange, a mixture between, for example, jazz and pop music. This often has a negative connotation. No, the 90s have their own musical language, common intersections (blur) between musical forms of expression are sought, selected according to functional, effective criteria and interwoven.

The idea of 'blur' has characterised the music programming of the Goethe Institute in Sydney since 1994. In addition, the colour symbolism should enable a further determination of the intersections and this on the way to the Olympic Games 2000 in Sydney. The colours of the 5 Olympic rings (blue, yellow, black, green, red) and, in addition, white and the 'free colours' were to define the music programmes associatively.

1995 stood for the colour yellow, Blur-Yellow. In his Theory of Colours, Goethe spoke of yellow as the colour of new beginnings. Understanding, knowledge, wisdom, the curious, often naive search, finding, recognising, and thus research accompany the mood of departure into the next dew of the year. On this intellectual basis, the audio-visual installation 'Aufbruch' was created together with the German video director Henning Kasten. The camera accompanied 9 classical performers during their preparations before the concert. The central questions were: what do the musicians do with their instruments before the concert, how do they practice, which compositions do they play to relax or prepare themselves.

About the composition:

Ideas, conceptions often drift in our heads, they are fleeting, very clear in dreams and therefore usually not comprehensible in reality.

For Jürgen Drews (Goethe Institute), the moments in which great soloists are rehearsing during recordings or before concerts were a recurring fascinating experience. Fascinating to the extent that they finally consumed so much attention in order to be able to merge into a self-contained experience (oh yes, and now the recording is just beginning,.....the concert). The matrix to yellow as a source of intuition for artistic performances within the 'Blur' series had called up this idea of an art event in moving images and music in him.

Ideas of what music, what scales or phrases could be played reminded me of many a day of lessons at the conservatory in Amsterdam. Clouds of sounds and patterns whirred through the building, transforming the house into a single resonance box that carried out a music that could not be reproduced with notes, improvisation or other methods. Here, a music emerged that reminded me of that very dream.

Then it was my turn. The 5 video films of nine performers were in front of me. Music, the universal language, as they say, was supposed to connect me with these

musicians, was supposed to provide me with the means to form an 'awakening' semantics from the nine individual worlds. The language of 'before' was to emerge. And I must say that the musicians made it easy for me. Often I listened spellbound to the beautiful sounds and melodies and forgot that I was not only the one who was marvelling, but also the composer who had to make these islands of sound flow. But flowing alone was not enough. Nine musicians were to make music together, not forgetting the quality that distinguishes the individual artist as personality and soloist, and this with a feeling and recognition as if the interpreters had known for a long time how the common music of the 'awakening' should sound, as if they had met for a special concert that everyone had been waiting for. The listener was I myself, the inner ear the baton.

I watched the video film. The tension, the loosening up before the concert, the immersion in one's own musical four walls, withdrawal and individual allowance of explosive musical canons. Discipline, the perpetual repetition of certain phrases and letting oneself fall into memories. Hadn't one already played the same scale 20 years ago, trained the fingers certain distances? Conditioning meant creating one's own musical sound library. Setting out was the key to hearing the mental agents, even better to being able to play them again. In the restlessness of the 'before' there was thus a tense expectation that had to be captured compositionally.

I don't want to go into the tiresome subject of how far melody fragments of a Gershwin or sound 'towers' of Chopin are torn away from originality, since they are used in a different context and thus function within my composition like acoustic commodities. Recognizable vectors, I mean, that hint at structural and sensual content, catalysts that enable compositional arcs of tension and, of course, also point to the musically mundane, the work thus that must be played anew every evening. As an addition, here's another thought: to what extent the content of the work has already been taken from the composer anyway through interpretation and further market blurring, to what extent electronic sound exploitation and internet wiring mean that there are no limits to the purpose of a work. And that is a good thing in the Blur era.

Rather, the compositional work on *Aufbruch* was for me a perpetual attempt to remain naïve, i.e. not only not to allow any of my own experiential values - a yes, I don't like this melody, or the listening pattern is familiar after all - as far as possible, but this process also allowed me to perceive other qualities that the performers formulated to fullness precisely in the moments in which they moved unobserved, casually, often also unconsciously. They were listening to a melody that came from within, from themselves, that one did not easily carry to the outside, because it was so intimate and so precious and fragile. Naively, I said, because I too was listening to myself and wanted to set off for new musical shores.

Awakening of the media.

At the beginning of the seventies, I can remember lectures by Professor Denker, who could only formulate his philosophical thoughts on synaesthesia on the basis of a

consistent smashing of auditory and visual perceptual analyses. This means that the actual medial inter-facultative thought could unfortunately only take place by focusing on e.g. music, sound. In the last 20 years, due to rapid technological development and commercialisation, a media product plague has taken place that has not yet been satisfactorily processed either by the consumer or by the media instances, e.g. television or radio. This does not mean that there have been or are no exemplary audio-visual products; I am thinking here of the onomatopoeias and the digitised imagery of toys by the Disney factories, of the excellent sound treatment of various Godart films, of the pop video clips of the mid-1980s by Godley and Creme, of e.g. internet activities by Laurie Anderson or the video works with classical music by the Dutch graphic artist Jaap Drupsteen. In all these mentioned works of art, too, one component, e.g. the image, is always in the foreground and it is of course due to the creativity of the individual artists that such great results were achieved at all, which at least questioned the dialectical handling of the most diverse media. The media brain that links image and sound or other senses and produces other media qualities has not yet been born. And it will also take some time for the user to get out of the manual labour scene.

Secondly, our visual senses are overstrained by television, monitors and game projections, brain waves are strained one-sidedly, red-rimmed eyes of tired gazers form the everyday image and so the pleasure of each generated film sequence is only understandable. The result: the culture of listening has not evolved in recent years, and virtual reality can't help either. As a musician, I plead for a cultural revolution of listening that destroys the visual premise, as already announced by Wim Wenders.

Michael (1995)