

CROSSing OVER – Musicological and socio-psychological aspects of blending classical and popular music

– Appendix: Composer Interviews

This document includes the transcription of interviews with genre-mixing composers, realized as part of the research project and PhD dissertation *Crossing Over – Musicological and socio-psychological aspects of blending classical and popular music* by Balázs Alpár. (For the full pdf version of the dissertation, [click here](#). To order a hard cover print version, [click here](#).)

Most interviews have been conducted in English language. Those conducted in German or Hungarian have been translated by the author and will be presented here both in English and in original language versions.

Levente Gyöngyösi

Interview with Levente Gyöngyösi – Budapest, March 20, 2013.

B. A.: How would you describe your musical style?

Levente Gyöngyösi: I try to avoid this question, it is difficult. I do not want to call myself a disgusting neo-tonalist, but well, I still am one. I am a neo-baroque-ish composer. Everyone is effected the most by that type of music, that he or she listens to the most often, and the one that he or she is involved in deeply. I used to listen to a lot of Bartók so, I suppose my music has many Bartók-influences in it, and (as a harpsichordist) I play baroque very often, so these mechanisms, these rules how a little form or a larger form is built up, deeply effect the way I compose. Of course, how up-to-date this is, is another question, I would not go deeper into this, but this surely works this way. The most fundamental functions of my music are these neo-baroque elements.

Does it regard mainly the forms and structures?

Yes, it is manly forming, but also harmonizing, at times. I regularly use substitutional chords, which is also common in jazz. I do it often as well. When you can feel that a baroque composer wants to highlight the climax of a musical phrase, usually an important part in the lyrics, so there are these highlightings or emphasizing in dynamics or harmonics. At the most interesting part of the text, there usually is a forte or an interesting harmony or a suspension. Developing it a little further I can use this method wonderfully myself. These musical moments are meant to be underlined. At these moments there is space for many modern, complex, dissonant chords that a baroque composer surely would not use. It is of course very much simplified. But really at many times I can be more dissonant at these highlightings within a tonal surrounding... How nice, I have never put that in words before. What a good side effect this interview has. (laughs)

How often and in what occasions do you enjoy full artistic freedom in composing (that is, when you can compose according only to your own taste, free from any external feedback or instructions).

I always try to arrange things - and I am in a really lucky situation with that - so that I do not have to make bloody big compromises. But certainly it is common to receive a commission to write a piece for example for an orchestra, or a piece for this and that. But that is not such a big compromise. It depends, what one calls a compromise. There is a given instrumentarium and everybody tries to arrange things according to their own taste within the music for that particular apparatus. These usually come to life. For example, in the case of my 1st symphony, it was like this: Hollerung (conductor) commissioned a piece for large orchestra. I asked: what kind? He said: any kind. I just raised a few ideas for him about some parts that I would gladly put in, and he liked them. Usually my commissioners are pretty flexible, and open for many things, so there is enough freedom for me to write my own kind of music.

So, are you more inspired if you are given totally free hand?

Of course. One always has old ideas waiting to be realized. Now I am going to write a musical. It is already in a quite practical phase, there is already a contract signed. I will begin in June. The Master and Margarita. Luckily, it is my choice. The clever commissioner – even if it sounds unashamed – does not intermeddle in such decisions. I do not think somebody would say The Master and Margarita is a bad piece.

Also in this case are you given total freedom regarding the genres and styles?

Well, certainly this is a high-cost production, so there surely has to be a strong concept about what is allowed to be in it and what is not. The number of characters in the play has to be decreased. We will for example give some singers more than one character to play, because there are too many figures in it. And of course even if it is not so explicit, there are many parallelisms / relations between different figures in different scenes or stories, you know there are more stories going on in the piece. It seems logical that Pilate is Berlioz, and the Master is naturally Jesus, undoubtedly. And so on. The topic itself is extremely grandiose, one can not shirk from this challenge. There will be choir in it, and even if not so many, there will be quite a few singers. And I would like to use this opportunity for improving myself in using electronics. In the 1st symphony the story was quite simple, using Kontakt Player I assigned different processed sounds and effects to a MIDI keyboard, and the keyboard part was also nicely printed in sheet music. It was like a normal piano part, only the key E did not sound like an E on the piano but rather something else. I surely will use this sampling here as well, but there will be grooves, and sequencers involved, and other things that work well in popular music.

Is this about communicating with a larger audience or rather about your own experimentation?

Both. A very delicate balance has to be held here. It's actually the most difficult task of my life. I would like to write a popular piece, I can now say that. A piece which can be sold well. It is something that I have never done before. Among others, I just had a meeting with Peter Geszti (media producer, rapper, lyricist of many successful Hungarian musicals, and other projects), from whom I asked for a little advice on how to do things in this musical. I showed him the sketches that I have so far. He said: "Make it more simple. And more simple in many ways, musically and story-wise as well." The story really should be, well, not dulled, but really simplified. And the music should not be too complicated either. The recipe is very simple, but it is so hard to really actualize.

Here comes a side-question: If we say that genres are the established schemes, in which the audience can find many well-known materials and structures, and on the other side is the experimentation: the things that are more interesting for the composer himself, than how do you think about this balance: entertaining or training the audience?

Well, potato soup should be potato soup. So, much as I hate this term *musical* and everything around it... We went to see this film *Les Misérables*. I came out from the cinema at the 70th minute. Such a crap! It is horrible! Even if there are some fun moments and musically interesting solutions, how come such a thing becomes this huge success story? After the film everybody said how stupid I was not loving it, when it is wonderful! But please, where is this thing from a Puccini, for instance? So, yeah, this is a very difficult task, and I take it as a big professional and technical challenge, that I have to compose real hits now, something really popular, so I have to place my art into, for example, the instrumentation, or into other, less spectacular things, like modulations. Into things that are not so much in the spotlight, but that are still an important part of the whole. Like, when I think of Sting, who I really like. Well there you have a very popular musical material presented in an extremely clever way. He sometimes allows himself things that the average popular musician would not allow. There are for example many musical styles within one song. Well how does he make it still work so well? These are very exciting things.

Yeah, like exotic time signatures still sounding natural...

Yes. And there is good space for such things in stage music.

This musical topic is very good. In my dissertation I write for example about how the hollywood clichés burn some style-associations into the brains of the average listener socialized on western pop culture. So, I mean, there is let's say a twelve-tone type of music in the background of a war scene or a horror scene, and after all that, when the audience hears Schönberg or some other modern music in the concert hall, they do not listen to it as absolute music anymore. They connect it automatically with these film-associations, and it is very hard to get rid of this.

Yes, they use these styles in applied situations a lot, for sure. It is very interesting. You can apply any type of music. I find it a big task of mine to try and overstep somehow these clichés. Maybe this challenge is something I can not take, it is very difficult, I suppose, you know yourself how difficult it is. The brain of the so-called mass audience is full of these clichés, it is not a surprise, they have been given this stuff in the past 80 years. But still with some clever tricks one can find the ways of staying new and individual. Not too many, but some can. Think about the Beatles for instance.

Do you ever compose for well-definable target groups? In what occasions?

Normally, yes, especially when writing for choir. The choir world is the only world working almost entirely on a market basis, that really works, and has its standard audience, that continuously needs new works. The rest are quite closed worlds. A world in a glass house, kept alive artificially, with strong institutional funding, without any market-based thinking in it. It is okay, of course, art sometimes can be independent from the market. But anyway, in the choir world you can most certainly find this target group. The choir leaders can very precisely tell you what they need, what kind of pieces they would like to commission, they can very well put their needs into words.

We might go deeper into musical details and parameters. When you try to communicate with a specific audience, what musical layers are effected in this process?

Well, the case with me is... I am not that conscious, not that aware when I compose. By me, things work and things are born rather with intuition, no matter how hard I try pushing it towards a consciously controlled process. So, rather, I have my own harmonic world, my rhythmic or melodic world, of which I know the meanings for myself, and I can hope that the audience – due to many centuries' traditions – will understand more or less the same meanings. We can think of either primitive things but also more complex things. Primitive thing is e.g. the major-minor relation, major meaning cheerful, and minor meaning sad, well these are silly stock phrases, but there are also more complicated rhythmical mechanisms, or harmonic changes, which - through the music history - became standardized. And even if not the same, but you can use something similar based on the same mechanisms.

Like for example quoting/referencing?

Not really, because quotation is a very concrete thing, but rather harmonic changes, or melody lines. This has many levels, but the most obvious level is the melody, when the melody is very similar to something familiar. But you can use much deeper structural elements, for example a small form, like a classical 8 bar period: if it is built up like a mozartian period, if you do it right, than it will have the same effect.

But do you think it works as a definite message, or is it rather an “I-feel-like-at-home” effect, which works because of the already proven dramaturgical mechanisms ?...

Well, it would not be nice if I presented it as something deliberate or conscious. Because it is not. Surely there is this “feeling-at-home” effect, which you said, and yeah, communication I find very important, you know, that poor audience and the professionals as well, they are crying out for it. It all becomes easier with these you know... They know, or they feel, even if they can not put it in words, but they know that it means this and that. And then, the composer's task is to create something deeper with the concrete musical material, the melody-forming, so these are good helping hands for the listener.

Do you use specific quotations?

No, I do not like them.

I do not mean now concrete melody-citing, but for example calling up memories about a certain place or region, in applied music, etc.

Not really. In my piece Gólyakalifa, there is a Venetian gondola music, it was needed there. But it is an applied music situation. We are in Venice, we need to hear that there. Yes, it is a hard question, but I guess it is a good potential. Geszti also told me, if we take the Master and Margarita, a very rude and dark world comes to our mind, bit like Prokofiev, Shostakovich, things like that. Probably it would be a mistake not to use this opportunity. Although it will not be easy for me, because I do not know this world well (Prokofiev, Shostakovich), I like it a lot, but I do not know it enough.

You mentioned, that there are applied music situations, and there are others. But do not you think, that the well-proven genre-association solutions and messages of the applied music work in absolute music...

(interrupts) I find this a very dangerous game. In the case of Vajda (Hungarian contemporary composer) whom I really admire, there are moments, I am always horrified... Some styles are so directly quoted, that it is too much. Some people probably find this in my music as well annoying. But anyway, a piece has to be able to stand on its own feet. I rather try to build in life-mechanisms into my music. How can I put it.. So, at Mozart a demonic d-minor with timpani and trumpets means what it means. In my 1st symphony there is a place with a similar demonic thing, it is not d minor, but a d whatever, but what causes this similarity effect, is that it is similar to 75% to the original. There is the timpani, and the unisono beginning, but that does not evoke feelings that it is taken from another piece. We just get the feeling that this is what he would have wanted to say if he lived in the time of Mozart. So actually I pick up an attitude, which I try to dress up in a modern style. But the harmonies, especially at dramatic moments, are not at all tonal, and not at all mozartian. There are also cases, when I start something, which reminds us of something, but then gradually we shove off from that, and then it is already different. I should say a more specific example for that, right?... Well.. It is quite typical by me, that the harmonization, the sound are familiar, but then they find their way to say something different and new.

You mentioned, that you believe in ever working mechanisms, which sound a bit different in different genres, but their function is the same. How do you go further, how do you go away from these, how do you differ from them, with what do you experiment to become more unique? Can you tell me examples?

(long silent thinking) Using electronics is surely one example. With this I only experimented once, and now I will again of course. Well, I have to think about that... (long thinking)

What I mean is, for example, if someone gets to a point when he admits to incorporate certain existing, well-working elements into his style, then still what do I do to add new colors to it, or sound...

Harmonic coloring or detuning is not too hard. I think, one interesting option is mixing styles. So to delicately, or even

brutally combine different material, that do not fit together well. For example in popular music many do the following recently I think: into a rock surrounding or other well-definable music they unexpectedly put it electronic, dj-like effects, so in a normal acoustic ambient, with acoustic drums, and all, suddenly different noises appear, that come from a totally different world, but works extremely well. I could mention Madonna's Frozen, which behaves like a normal acoustic song, and I think there is not a single acoustic instrument in it, everything is electronic, if I remember well. That was the album Ray of light perhaps, where everything was electronically made. It works sensational.

So, sound is one direction.

Yes, and harmonization is another, and perhaps the "bracketing" - making something parenthetical. For example when you use a musical material that seems very obvious, but then you use it just in the contrary way. Unexpected and opposite approaching of something obvious. A known mechanism which then gets totally twisted.

Can you tell me an example for that? It is very exciting, where do you make the surprises, how do you twist these mechanisms?

Once again the 1st symphony comes to mind, where the 3rd movement includes a strange trio, which rises the association of an Arabic camel-ride. Middle tempo, 3/4 bar with some changes to other metrics, then there is this Shostakovich-like, or rather Tsaikovsky-like (he sings) pentatonic melody with a totally strange instrumentation, At first it comes in with a very unusual, alienated timbre, then the same is played by the orchestra and the synthesiser, but with very strange mixtura-voicing, with fourths and fifths, and sometimes with seconds, and then comes this strange Japanese wood-block-like instrument, which the Japanese use for very short accents. (sings) So in this seemingly melodic surrounding appears the synth with a very twisted tone, so that it squeaks, it sounds really ugly, and not at all concrete, but rather stretching out like a gummy, and then this accented, very concrete percussion part is added. This is actually called alienation. It is like wondering in a familiar landscape, but the film's colors are changed. But these things are really not deliberate, not conscious. Subsequently I can maybe make the consequences, that the causes for that were this or that, but it would not honest to say, that I did it consciously.

So, you do not sit down with the concept of writing now something very unusual.

No. These things just come naturally, I can not avoid them. You know, I have a strange situation with religion. I believe in God, I believe in a certain destiny, but I also think that coincidence has an important role. I had the feeling many times, that what I wrote, was not really written by me, it just "appeared" there. When you look at it later, and you find it strange that the way it has been made, is not necessarily what you wanted.

Do you ever willingly combine different styles or genres? What is your motivation for that?

Yes, I can make an example with films. When a familiar thing comes back with different colors, meanings. What is the function of it? Alienation, making it dream-like, playing with the subconscious, so pushing it towards surreal. This has an important role, works very well, and it gives freshness to the perception. In films as well, stories with a straight timeline are okay, but are not so common nowadays. The filmmakers experiment with very interesting things, putting dream-worlds and memory-particles together in a clever way. Pulp fiction, for example. It does not start at the beginning, but at the middle of it, and then at the end, there is a twist, related to the beginning. At moments like this an alienated, detuned, subconsciously working part can do very well. It can give it a push. Of course, the amount is the key, like everywhere.

Just one more technical question: Do you in any form use the internet in your compositional process?

I would like an FTP, but it still is pretty expensive.

Maybe I put the question wrong. I mean aesthetically, not in the technical execution, but in any way, like co-operations online, some interactive stuff...

Well, I am still quite ignorant with this. (laughs) I have not tried things like this before, and I should get to know the possibilities. I would be very grateful, if somebody taught me these. I am quite isolated from these all, unfortunately I am not curious enough, although sometimes I know I should be. Somebody once complained to me how little we know here (in Hungary) about new music, and how much more it is developed elsewhere. And that we can not even imagine what kind of modern things already exist. I found it a bit over-exaggerated and frustrated: you have examples in the music history for all kinds of composers, those who are very enlightened and those who never moved out from home, both could compose masterworks. But of course I would be glad to use new possibilities, if I had the time for it, it is all a matter of time.

Thanks a lot!

Levente Gyöngyösi (Original Hungarian Version)

Hogyan jellemeznéd a saját zenei stílusodat, milyen műfajok vannak jelen a zenédben?

Igyekszem kikerülni a kérdést, mert nehéz. Nem akarom magamat undorító neo-tonálisnak mondani, de mégis az vagyok. Neo-barokk-közeli zeneszerző vagyok. Mindenkire az hat leginkább, amit nagyon sokat hallgatott, meg amiben nagyon benne van. Én nagyon sok Bartókot hallgattam régen, ezért Bartókos elem is sok van benn, meg barokkot játszom elég sűrűn, tehát azok az életműködések, és ahogy egy ilyen kisforma és nagyforma felépül, azok nagyon mélyen befolyásolják azt, ahogy én komponálok. Az persze más kérdés, hogy mennyire korszerű ez, ebbe nem akarok jobban belemenni, az biztos, hogy ez valahogy így működik. A legalapvetőbb működési funkciója az én zenémnek az ez a neo-barokk.

Ez formák tekintetében öröklődik át elsősorban?

Igen, formálás elsősorban, de harmonizálásban is sokszor. Nagyon sokszor a jazz-ben is élő helyettesítő akkordokat használok. Én is sűrűn csinálom. Amikor lehet érezni azt, hogy egy barokk zeneszerző egy frázis tetőpontját ki akarja emelni, vagy dinamikával, vagy harmóniával, azt a pillanatot, általában szöveghez kapcsolódnak ezek a kiemelések. A szöveg legfontosabb részén van vagy egy forte, vagy érdekes harmónia, vagy egy érdekes késleltetés. Ezt egy picit továbbfejlesztve én kitűnően tudom használni. Pont az aláhúzás, kiemelés célját szolgálják ezek a pillanatok. Ott nagyon sok olyan modernebb, bonyolultabb, disszonánsabb akkord elfér, amit egyébként egy barokk zeneszerző biztosan nem használna. Ez nagyon le van így egyszerűsítve persze. De nagyon sokszor van azért tényleg az, hogy van egy tonális környezet, aminek bizonyos pontjain némileg disszonánsabb és kiemelés céljára szolgáló... (Ez tök jó, mert még sohasem fogalmaztam ezt így meg. Mire nem jó ez?...)

Milyen gyakran, és milyen alkalmakkor engedhetsz meg magadnak teljes művészi szabadságot (tehát amikor csak saját ízlésed alapján, külső visszajelzésektől függetlenül komponálsz) ?

Én nagyon igyekszem úgy alakítani, és tényleg nagyon szerencsés helyzetben vagyok, mert nagyon bűdös nagy kompromisszumot nem kell szerencsére kötni. De az nagyon általános felkérés, hogy az ember írjon pl zenekari vagy ilyen vagy olyan darabot. De ez nem egy olyan nagy kompromisszum. Attól függ, hogy kinek mi számít annak. Van egy apparátus és mindenki próbálja saját szájíze szerint alakítani a zenét, hogy azon belül milyen zene kerülhet. Ezek meg szoktak általában valósulni. Az 1. szimfóniám hangvételében sem indult. A Hollerung rendelt egy zenekari darabot. Milyet? Bármilyet. Felvettem, hogy legyen benne ez, meg legyen benne az, és tetszett neki. Általában a felkérőim rugalmasak szoktak lenni és sok minden iránt érdeklődnek, és így van módja az embernek saját szája íze szerint alakítani ezt a kérdést.

Téged az inspirál jobban, ha teljesen szabad kezet kapsz?

Persze. Az embernek mindig vannak régi gondolatai, amiket igyekszik sorra megvalósítani. Most éppen musicalt fogok írni. Már szerződés is van. Elég gyakorlati fázisba jutott. Júniusban fogom elkezdni. Mester és Margarétából. Szerencsére ez az én témám. Az okos megrendelő – bár ez pofátlanul hangzik – nem szól bele ilyesmibe. Nem gondolom, hogy túl sok olyan valaki lenne, aki a Mester és Margaritát rossz műnek tartaná, vagy értelmetlen próbálkozásnak.

Egy ilyen műnél is teljesen szabad kezet kapsz műfajilag?

Hát, ez egy költség-igényes mű, tehát arról kell nagyon erőteljesen beszélni, vagy tárgyalni, hogy mi az, ami lehet benne, de a szereplőket lehetőség szerint - mert iszonyú sok van benne - azokat csökkenteni kell. Meg fogjuk pl azt tenni, hogy egy énekes több szerepet is fog énekelni, mert nagyon sok olyan figura van, több történet fut egyszerre és a történetekben nagyon stimmelnek a figurák egyik a másikhoz. Nincs kimondva, de logikusan gondolva, lehet pl. azt gondolni, hogy Pilátus a Berlioz, meg természetesen a Mester Jézus, ez nem is kérdés, és így tovább. Maga a téma rendkívül grandiózus, és ezalól nem lehet kibújni, sok kis tagkórus tétel is lesz benne, ha le is csökkentem a számukat, lesz benne jónéhány énekes, és szeretném felhasználni az alkalmat arra, hogy én elektronikusan egy kicsit fejlődjek. Az első szimfóniában viszont egyszerű történet, ott egy kontakt player-es történet volt, kiosztottunk midi billentyűzetre az általam felprogramozott és kicsit megbuherált, innen-onnan vett hangszíneket. És gyakorlatilag szépen le volt írva a kotta, a szólam úgy működött mint egy zongoraanyag, de nem az szól, hogy E, hanem más. És ez nyilván itt is kellene, de hát itt lesznek groove-ok, meg szekvenszer-jellegű indulások, meg olyan dolgok, amik könnyűzenében beváltak,

működnek.

Itt ez mennyire a közönséggel való kommunikációról, vagy inkább a saját kísérletező érdeklődéséről szól?

Is. Rendkívül keskeny egyensúlyt kell nekem itt most megtartani. Életem legnehezebb feladata, mert ugye szeretnék egy populáris művet írni, ezt nyugodtan ki lehet mondani. Olyan művet, amit jól el lehet adni. Ilyenre még nem volt példa az én történelmemben. Most találkoztam pl. többek között Geszti Péterrel, akit megkérdeztem pl., hogy ezt hogy kell csinálni, mert én nem tudom. Megmutattam neki pl. a vázlatot, ami eddig van. Azt mondta, hogy egyszerűsítsd le. És mindenféle szempontból: zeneileg és történet szempontjából is. Nem az, hogy lebutított, de a történetnek elvileg lehetőség szerint nem szabad túl bonyolultnak lenni és hát a zenében is kellenek, végülis a recept nagyon egyszerű, de nehéz megvalósítani.

Itt jön be az a zárójeles kérdés: ha azt a párhuzamot felvesszük, hogy a műfajok kialakult sémák, ahol a befogadásban egy jó pont a közönségnek, hogy nagyon sok ismert formát, anyagot stb-t hall és akkor a műfajok kontra kísérletezés, ami a zeneszerzőt izgatja jobban, tehát ezen a területen te hogy gondolkodol, hogy a közönség nevelése vagy pátyolgatása között hogyan találsz meg az egyensúlyt.

A krumpli leves legyen krumpli leves. Tehát sajnós, akármennyire gyűlölöm ezt a kifejezést, hogy musical, és mindent ami hozzá kapcsolódik. Megnéztük a Nyomorultakat a moziban, a 70-edik perc körül kijöttem. Ezt a szart, hát ez borzalmas! És még ha vannak is benne jópofa pillanatok és zeneileg érdekes pillanatok, hogy ebből hogy lesz ekkora siker? Utána mindenki teljesen hülyének nézett, hogy hát ez tök jó, hogy-hogy neked nem tetszett? Dehát hol van ez pl egy Puccinitól mondjuk? Tehát ez a nehéz feladat, hogy igen, én ezt egy szakmai feladatnak fogom fel, hogy nekem slágereket kell írnom, tehát a művészetet, ha lehet, akkor a hangszerelésbe, olyan nem látványos dolgokba szeretném beletenni, pl. modulációkba, olyasmikbe, ami nincs annyira szem előtt, viszont azért fontos részét képezi mégiscsak. Meg nekem nagyon a Sting lebeg a szemem előtt, én nagyon szeretem. Ott egy rém populáris zenei anyag van, rendkívül rafináltan. Helyenként olyanokat enged meg magának, amiket könnyűzenészek nem szoktak maguknak megengedni, tehát pl sok stílus van egy számon belül. S hogy tudja megcsinálni, hogy ez működik? Ilyen dolgok rendkívül izgalmasak.

Páratlan ütemek mégis természetesen hatnak.

Igen, és ennek pont egy színpadi műben van helye.

Jó ez a musical vonal, mert pl. írók arról, hogy alkalmazott zenében, pl. a hollywoodi zenék kliséi a mai nyugati civilizációban szocializálódot embernek erősen beleégetik a fejébe a bizonyos stílus-asszociációkat. Tehát van mondjuk egy tizenkétfokú zene a háborús jelenetben, akkor egy Schönberget, vagy bármi brutálisabb, disszonánsabb dolgot, nem abszolút zeneként hallgatja, hanem összekapcsolja ezekkel a filmes dolgokkal és ettől mennyire nehéz szabadulni.

Hát igen, szépen alkalmazzák ezeket persze. Nagyon tanulságos, mert mindenféle zenét lehet alkalmazni. Én nagy feladatomban tartom, hogy próbáljak ezeken túllépni valahogy ezeken a kliséken. Lehet, hogy ez túlnő rajtam ez a feladat, mert nagyon nehéz, ezt te is tudod biztosan, hogy mennyire nehéz. Az ún. nagyközönségnek eléggé klisékre jár az agya, nem véletlen, hogy ilyeneket kapnak nyolcvan éve, de azért ebben ügyesen meg lehet találni a módját annak, hogy hogyan tud új és eredeti maradni az ember. Nem sokan, de azért páraoknak sikerült. Akár ha csak a Beatles-re gondolunk...

Komponálsz-e meghatározható célcsoportoknak, és ha igen, milyen alkalmakkor?

Általában igen, főleg pl kórusdaraboknál. A kórusvilág az egyetlen olyan igazi majdnem piaci alapon működő világ a kortárs komolyzenében, ami működik, aminek van törzsközönsége, amely folyamatosan igényli az újat. A többi meglehetősen zárt világ. A közönsége is ki van nevelve nyugaton, de egy nagyon zárt világ, burookban, sok támogatással fenntartott mesterséges világ, nem nagyon él benne a piaci alap, nem baj ez, persze a művészet sokszor nem is kell, hogy piaci alapon megéljen, de mondjuk pont a kórusvilágban nagyon meg lehet találni ezt a bizonyos célközönséget. Kamagykok nagyon okosan el tudják mondani, hogy mit várnak, mit szeretnének, milyen darabot szeretnének, meg tudják konkrétan fogalmazni.

Belemehetünk konkrét zenei paraméterekbe. Ha valamilyen célközönséggel próbálsz kommunikálni, akkor mik azok a paraméterek a zenédben, amit ez érint. Mit változtatnál olyankor, mit szabsz rá erre?

Az a baj, hogy ez nálam... Én nem vagyok annyira tudatos, amikor komponálok. Nálam inkább az intuícióval működnek, vagy jönnek létre bizonyos dolgok, bármennyire is próbálok a tudatosság irányába hajtani, úgyhogy nekem

van egy harmóniavilágom, vagy ritmikai, vagy dallami világom, amely nekem, tudom, hogy mit mit jelent és bízom abban, hogy ez a hallgatónak is az évszázados tradíciók miatt kb ugyanazt jelentheti. Nagyon primitív dolgokra, de bonyolultabb dolgokra is gondolhatunk. Primitív dolog pl egy dúr-moll pár, dúr vidámabb, moll szomorúabb, ezek nagyon közhelyek, de bonyolult ritmikai működések, vagy harmóniafordulat, harmóniaváltások is ugye a zenetörténet folyamán egyezményesekké váltak, és ha nem is pont azt használja az ember, de hasonló elven működő dolgot használ az ember, akkor..

Mint például egy utalás?

Még csak nem is utalás, mert a zenei utalás az egy konkrét dolog, de harmóniafordulat, vagy egy dallamvezetés különösen, több szintje van, de a legegységesebb az a dallamfordulat, amikor nagyon hasonlít a dallam valamire, de ha mondjuk ennél mélyebb, szerkezetibb elemeket használ fel, tehát ha mondjuk formai elemek, mondjuk egy kisforma, egy periódus úgy épül fel, mint egy mozarti periódus, ha ugyesesen csinálod, akkor az ugyanazt a hatást fogja tenni.

De ez egy konkrét üzenet szerinted, amit lehet így kommunikálni, vagy ez egy "otthon érzem magam" hatás, mert dramaturgiailag egy kipróbált működő dolog, tehát attól hogy egy forma működik...

Hát, nem lenne szép, ha ezt én annyira tudatosnak állítanám be, mint amennyire nem az. Nyilvánvaló, hogy persze van az embernek egy otthonosság érzete, és amit te is mondasz, a kommunikáció, amit én hihetetlenül fontosnak tartok, tudniillik a szerencsétlen hallgató, a szakmabeli hallgató is ki van rá éhezve. Könnyebbé válik ezáltal, tudja, hogy ez.. érzi, hogy ha nem is pontosan tudja megfogalmazni, de érzi, hogy ez azt jelenti. És akkor tulajdonképpen az embernek magában a zenei anyagban, a dallamformálásban a feladata, hogy ennél mélyebbet alkosson, tehát ezek ilyen kapaszkodók.

Konkrétabb utalásokat használsz?

Nem szeretem.

Nem konkrét dallam idézetekre gondolok, de olyan célból, hogy pl színpadi zenénél egy bizonyos környezetet, tájegységet, stb...

Nem nagyon. A Gólyakalifában velencei gondolás kar van, az oda kellett. De ez egy alkalmazott zenei szituáció. Velencében vagyunk, akkor annak meg kell szólalni. De igen, nehéz kérdés, de nyilvánvalóan elképzelhetőnek tartom, de Geszti is ezt tanácsolta, amikor egy nagyon rossz világ jut az embernek eszébe, akkor Prokofjev, Sosztakovics, minden, valószínűleg vétek lenne nem élni ezzel a lehetőséggel. Bár nekem nehéz lesz, mert nem ismerem ezt a világot, nagyon szeretem, de nem ismerem annyira.

Mondtad, h valami alkalmazott zenei szituáció, valami nem. Mennyire gondold, h az alkalmazott zenében bevált műfaji utalások egyértelmű üzenetei abszolútzenében is...

Ezt borzasztó veszélyes játéknak érzem. Vajdánál is, akit egyébként nagyon tisztetek, mindig vannak pillanatok, amikor elborzadok ettől. Annyira direkt megidéződik egy zenei stílus, hogy az már túlzás. Biztos velem is vannak így páran, akik ennyire túlzásnak tartják. Egy zenének meg kell állnia a saját lábán. Én inkább életműködéseket próbálok beépíteni. Hogy mondjam, tehát egy Mozartnál egy drámai timpanis trombitás d-moll, az azt jelenti amit. Az első szimfóniámban van egy ugyanilyen démonias dolog, de nem d-moll, hanem egy d akármilyen, de ami az egyezést a hatást kelti, az pont ez, hogy mondjuk háromnegyedig stimmel, a nagy timpanis kezdés, meg az unisono-s kezdés is stimmel, de attól még nem lesz az az érzés, hogy ez innen és innen van, hanem csak az az érzésünk lesz, hogy ez úgy viselkedik, minthogyha ő ezt akarná mondani Mozart idejében. Tehát én tulajdonképpen egy attitűdöt veszek magamra ezzel, amit megpróbálok modern köntösbe öltöztetni, de a harmóniák, azok - főleg a drámai pillanatokban - azok azért nem feltétlenül tonálisak, és nem feltétlenül mozartiaiak. Olyan is van, hogy elindul valamilyen zenei anyag, amiről beugrik valami, és utána eltávolodik és utána már nem az. Konkrétan is kéne mondani, hmm... Ez sokkal inkább jellemző rám, hogy vannak ilyen zenei félrakások, harmóniakezelés, hangszerelés, ami nagyon hasonlít valamire, és akkor ebből úgy érzed, hogy ezt szeretné mondani a zenei anyag, de aztán megtalálja a saját maga új irányát.

Mondtad, hogy eléggé hiszel hatásmechanizmusokban, amik más műfajokban, máshogy szólalnak meg, de ugyanaz a szerepük, és az ehhez képest az eltérés, és kísérletezés hogyan jelenik meg nálad? Mi az amiben te valami újat – akár csak saját magadnak, és tők mindegy h ki mit mond rá, hogy ez mennyire forradalmi vagy nem – de hogy magadnak mi az, amiben az unikálissal próbálkozol, ha tudsz erre konkrét példákat.

(Hosszú gondolkodás) Az elektronika pl. biztos, hogy az egyik ilyen. Ezzel csak egyszer foglalkoztam, most megint nyilván fogok. Jó kérdés. Igen, ezen gondolkodnom kell.

Olyasmire gondolok, hogy amellet, hogy az ember eljut oda, hogy bizonyos dolgokat igenis beemel saját műfajába, mert működik, de ahhoz képest valahogy mégis el akarom színezni, mégis vmi más hangzással...

Harmóniailag elszínezni nem nehéz. Szerintem az egyik érdekes lehetőség a stíluskeveredés, tehát hogy finoman, vagy akár egészen brutálisan bejönnek egymás mellé olyan zenei anyagok, amelyek nem valók össze. Ezt mondjuk könnyűzenei példával úgy tudnám érzékeltetni, hogy mikor mondjuk, nagyon sokan csinálják ezt mostanában azt hiszem, hogy egy rockzenés, vagy egyszerűen behatárolható anyagba elektronikus dj-jellegű effektek jönnek be, van egy szinte akusztikus környezet, rendes dobbal, minden, és teljesen váratlanul beletesznek mindenféle zajokat, ami úgy mond egy teljesen más világból jön, de marha jól jön. Tudom mondani Madonnának pl. a Frozen-jét, ami úgy viselkedik, mint egy akusztikus szám, és asszem, hogy egy akusztikus hang nincs benne, minden elektronika, ha jól emlékszem. Az volt az a lemez, a Way of light talán, amiben minden elektronikus. És nagyon szenzációsan működik.

Tehát a hangzás az egyik vonal.

Igen, A harmonizálás a másik, és esetleg az idézőjelbe, vagy zárójelbe tevés, tehát ha mondjuk egy egyértelműnek tűnő zenei anyagot használsz, pontosan az ellenkező értelemben. Ellenkező megközelítéssel. Nagyon bejön a hatásmechanizmus, de teljesen elferdül...

Erre tudsz valami konkrét példát mondani? Mert ez izgalmas, hogy milyen paraméterben történik a nagy meglepetés.

Hát pl megint csak az első szimfónia jut eszembe, ahol a 3. tételben van egy ilyen furcsa trió, ami azt a hatást kelti, mint egy arab tevegelés. Közép tempo, háromnegyed váltakozik néha más ritmussal, van egy ilyen Sosztakovicsra, vagy Csajkovszkijra hajazó (énekel) egy ilyen pentaton szerű dallam, és teljesen idegen hangszerelésben van, először egy ilyen nagyon furcsa elidegenített színnel jön, aztán ugyanazt hozza a zenekar plusz a szintit, de úgy hogy nagyon fura mixturákkal, kvártban, kvintben, plusz még valami szekundban is, és hozzá jön egy ilyen nagyon fura, japán ütőhangszer, egy dob, olyan mint a woodblock. Arra használják a japánok, hogy rövid figcsiket játszanak vele. És ebben a dallamosnak tűnő közegben olyan a szintit, hogy nagyon el van csavarva, hozzá van rakva egy ilyen vijjogós izé, és csúnya. És abba még bejön, de semmiképp sem konkrét, hanem nyúlós. Hozzá van téve konkrét ritmusokat játszó ütőszólam. Ezt elidegenítésnek hívják tulajdonképpen, olyan mint, ha egy ismerős tájon járnál, de teljesen el lenne színezve a film, de ezek mind baromira nem tudatosak. Utólag már le tudom vonni a következtetést, h valószínűleg ez vagy az volt az oka, de nagy pófátlanság lenne tőlem azt mondani, hogy ezt tudatosan csináltam.

Szóval nem azzal a koncepcióval ülsz neki, hogy most valami nagyon eltérőt összehoznál.

Nem, ezek általában jönnek maguktól, nem tudom ezt megkerülni. Furcsán állok az istenhittel. Hiszek Istenben, hiszek, egyfajta sorsszerűségben, de nagyon sok szerepet tulajdonítok a véletlennek is. Sokszor volt már olyan érzésem, hogy mindezt nem én találtam ki, hanem úgy lett oda, valahogy. Később megnézed, és olyan furcsa, hogy ez pont ilyen lett, nem biztos, hogy így akartam.

Van tehát olyan, hogy kifejezetten tudatosan koncepcionálisan egymástól nagyon távollevő dolgokat keversz.

Van persze.

Ilyenkor mi a motivációd? Mi a folyamat?

Egy filmes hasonlatot tudnék hozni, amikor van egy ismerős dolog, de elszínezve, annak mi a szerepe, elidegenítés, álomszerűvé tétel, tudatalatti, tehát szürrealitás irányába vivés, ennek nagyon fontos szerepe van, nagyon jól szokott működni, és nagyon üdévé teszi az egész percepciót. Nagyon jó a filmekben is az egyenesvonalú egyszálon futó cselekmény, ez már nincs is nagyon, nagyon érdekes dolgokkal kísérleteznek az álomvilágnak és emléktöredékeknek a fífikás egymás mellé tétele, nagyon tetszik. Ponyvaregényt mondhatnám, tehát hogy a történet nem az elején kezdődik, hanem a közepén, és a végén van a csattanó, ami visszahat az elejére, de azért az is jó, amikor innen indul és odajut és nincs kecmec. Viszont ilyen dologban is rettenetesen jól szokott mutatni egy ilyen elhangolt, elidegenített, az ember tudatalattijára építő rész. Nagyon fel tudja dobni. Mindennek a mértéke a lényeg. Még egy ilyenben is

Egy kérdés lenne még, kicsit technikai, és lehet, hogy hamar egy nemmel válaszolsz rá, hogy a zeneszerzési folyamatban az internetet bármilyen formában használod-e használtad-e szeretnéd-e?

Marhára szeretnék egy FTP-t, csak nagyon sok pénzbe kerül még mindig.

Ezt akkor rosszul kérdezem. Esztétikai vonalom, tehát nem a technikai lebonyolítás, hanem bármilyen módon, hogy pl mással összekapcsolódva, valamilyen interaktív ügy, vagy ilyesmi.

Hát én nagyon tudatlan vagyok még ehhez. (nevet) Nem próbáltam még ilyet és igazából kéne tudnom a lehetőségeket és nagyon megköszönném, ha valaki elmesélné ezeket. Eléggé el vagyok zárva mindentől, sajnos nem vagyok elég érdeklődő erre, pedig időnként nagyon jó. Múltkor M K-val beszélgettünk a könyvtárban és az teljesen ilyen lekezelően mondta, hogy hát igen, ami itt kortárszenének van hívva, az mennyire lemaradott, pedig bezzeg a világban mennyire, el se tudjuk képzelni, hogy milyen modern dolgok léteznek. Ezt kicsit túlzásnak és frusztrálnak éreztem, a zenetörténetben mindenre van példa, hogy teljesen művelt, meg arra is hogy ki sem mozdul hazulról, és mégis kiváló zenét ír. De szívesen használnék én mindent, ha lenne rá mód és idő ezeket megismerni, ez mind idő kérdése.

Nagyon köszönöm.

Péter Pejtsik

Interview with Peter Pejtsik – Budapest, April 10th, 2013.

B.A.: How would you describe your own musical language, your own musical style?

Peter Pejtsik: It is varied. Much varied, maybe too much varied. Sometimes I fear that if I look at all the palette, all the spectrum of my work, sometimes I fear there is not one person behind it, not a single person, so it can not be pushed or squeezed into one musical personality. Naturally it is. But it is so surprising for me sometimes how different the things I write, I compose, or I orchestrate or I arrange are.

But I mean when you not orchestrate other composers' pieces but you write something really on your own.

Yes Even then. Even my sketches go in very very different directions and I am not brave enough to call it a postmodern approach. I should, I think: it would pay better. I could say, well, I do so different things because I want to. (You know I slim, because I want to be slim, and I am fat, because I want to be fat, Sometimes I am slim, and sometimes I am fat, and this is the moment when I should say sometimes I want to be slim and sometimes I want to be fat. But. Are these really so different as we see them. Nowadays we like to differentiate between light and pop, classical and modern, and different labels. And especially in Hungary this light and serious (Könnyű és komoly), which is not given for example in England and in English territories it is not that much differentiated, or the borders are not as strong between them as they are in Hungary or in Austria (U-Musik) But if you look at Mozart's Ouvre from Requiem to the little Menuets or the Menuet composing machine – I do not know if you know about that, with 2 dice you can compose billions of menuets - . There was a time when a composer was allowed to compose a requiem and on the same day a menuet, and he was not considered as postmodern or he was not considered “Ahh, son you should finally decide what you do, you should really concentrate on your aims, and focus, and get done, what you want to do, and not let yourself be distracted this name it, light music, this shit.” So I think if we could get back to that golden era, golden age or paradise, from where we have been exiled, it would be much better, it would be paradise. I Think we should, and I am trying to do that. And this does not say that, you have to put all the things together on one plate, so I would not eat the main course and dessert at the same time, I would not mix them up, because there is a time for a main course, and there is a time for a dessert. For me dessert comes first, but... (loughs)

How often and in what occasions do you enjoy full artistic freedom in composing (that is, when you can compose according only to your own taste, free from any external feedback or instructions).

That's a good question, but I should go back, I should step back one step. What is artistic freedom? Are you free from... (thinks) . Okay, what is freedom, can you define it? You want to compose something, and you want to get it out of you, and you want to get it into someone else. Do you care about the reception? If you don't care about the reception, - and I am not talking about the HIT Charts, and not talking about your mother and not your composition teacher, and not your girlfriend, anyone. - if you want to get it into anyone and want it to appeal or. No that's too much, but if you want to have some effect, and you take that effect into consideration, and you strive for it, then you are NOT free. There is no artistic freedom. I think artistic freedom was ... the concept was born in the romantic era, and I think it's stupid.

If you are really in a flow composing something and you are really busy solving a musical task and you are really into this thing, doing your musical stuff, you don't really think about getting or not getting money for it afterwards...

No. That comes before. Everything, even this conversation, or whatever you read, whatever you listen to, what you learned, what you ever written before, and seen the reception of it, and so on, so all your experiences change you. And with that changed personality you get into the flow and everything comes back. You try to be only a means, only a channel to the inspiration, and not get into the way of it, BUT you are a receiver, like a radio receiver, or you are as simple as an axe, or you are a hammer, or you are some tool. If the tool does not work, you know, even in the best state of flow, you come to the moment so you have to know how you write down a note, and you know music is not put together of notes, so you have to know how you write down a passage, how you compose.. If you are in the state of flow, if you have the idea that you want to compose a fugue, if you haven't studied it before, you won't be able to do it.

Yeah, but if you did and there is the decision weather you compose a fugue or you say “okay, I know this would be received by people that are not so highly educated musically, so I won't write a fugue, but I will write

something simpler instead.

There are people who only keep thinking in one paradigm, so the way they think is always the same: "I like that, but they won't like that, I like this, but they won't like this" I do not mind that, okay? But then, this is freedom. Freedom is what you define freedom, because they want to among their aims, their goals. Their goal is to please the customer. (laughs) Then, this is what they do. Okay let's put it even more provocative: Guys in the age of 14-15-16, many of them make bands. 90 % of them are doing it for getting girls, and not at all for music, that's just the way it is. So for many people, what you and I are talking about, is a non-existent think: "what? Music in itself? What for? There are normal things in life, and music helps getting them. (loughs) And you know sometimes I think, I don't know if it's worse or better, but it's a more comfortable way of thinking, so sometimes I wish I could think like that. But I DO know what you mean. That freedom. I think if I just concentrate on this question, when you get into the state of flow, do you care about Or before getting into the state of flow, you know what you start working at and you know where it's aimed at, so all your personality is focused that, so it's in the rules, it's in the waterpipes, you know what you want to do, and you try to achieve the goals according to that main goal. Sometimes, you have this, "Ahh, what a nice fugue can be done, I could rescue that fugue and put it away, but now let's concentrate on this thing.... And then you have a fugue for someone or something else, so..

No, I mean one can be free within some barriers as well. For some people barriers work even better as inspiration.

That's me.

Me too. But when you have, okay so a given orchestra, a given group of musician for whom you have to write is in my opinion now is not a barrier, so

Well, it is. Why?

I mean, it can be, but the

It can be frustrating that you can't have a piccolo, it can be relieving that you don't have to care about the piccolo. It can be good that you have these boundaries and it can be frustrating, but the boundaries are very different for different people. I know a guy who many years ago made me write down his melodies and arrange them, so he tried to compose through me somehow, and I tried to put his melody into a sequencer, and I hit F natural, and he said "sharper, higher" so /I played/ F sharp "ahh that's too high. Isn't there something in between them? There I felt that the 12-tone scale was a boundary for him, he really felt he wanted something in between. I think what he wanted was a certain harmony behind it that made it sound like, something sharper, and I did not give him. But at the moment it sounded as if it was too small boundaries for him. So anything can be boundaries, borders.

But let's say you have a spectrum of being quite free, and not at all free.

I don't see it like that. Taken into consideration that if I am not pushed into doing something, I usually do not. That makes me so happy when sometimes I have to finish my own things on deadline.

Okay. Deadline is the best muse, they say.

They also say, money is also a good one. But that does not work with me. Deadline does. It is very good if you are stuck in your own.

But don't you feel sometimes, that you would have some dreams to realise, but you have to put them away until you finish your work.

Ok, but what if your dreams give you the deadline. Is it a boundary or not?

Well if you feel it as a dream becoming true, even if you do it for a deadline...

I know I should, but I just feel "oh shit, I have one day to finish this, and it's so many notes"... I did not want to say I don't feel differences between pressure level. I do feel differences, and sometimes the box is too small. But I could not describe these in a scale of being less or more free, so I don't know what this scale is. It's not like "Now I am totally free, I can write what I want" or "In this project I am not allowed..." There are projects, where I know exactly what they want, but I am totally free to do that. There are people who don't even react It's there, and that was my decision, I seemingly, I am totally really totally free. Sometimes they ask: "and why is it like that? - Well I thought you would say it is not good" - "well was I supposed to?" So sometimes in projects where the final result is given in a clear defined boxes and boundaries, and sometimes I am not free in a project, where we are really free, and searching for we don't

exactly know what. For example HAVASI is a good example: we did things, if I showed you, you would say, it is definitely not that project, so we are just really searching and trying and feeling in different directions which we cut then. Either he or me, but that's true, if I cut something, I usually cut it the way that "okay, if we want this, I would drop that idea and make it this way", and he cuts it from the other side, that "I don't want this direction". Usually there is someone who... .. this is like the director in a film. Ok, this is a very good example. Non-musical. Or musical?.. The director in a film usually does not have a clue about music, but he perfectly knows what he wants for his film, and he knows the effects, he wants. And he feels, that he is happy, or he does not feel that he is happy. You compose the music of your life, and show it to the director for that scene, and the director says: "no, I do not like it." - "what? Don't you realise how good, clever, and inspired, and never heard but still confidently familiar ,..... "Well I do, but I don't care, because it does not work with the scene, it is not what I want. And then... It's not about your music It's about the aim. And the aim was a boundary, it was a border, that bound you into doing one thing and not doing the other thing But if you achieve it, you really achieved the bigger goal, which can only be seen by the director of the film. And when I am working with someone, I usually try to let them do the director's part. So I do not want to shape the overall picture, like "we do have to use a gospel choir in this"... But if it's in the picture, I try to do the gospel like you know really inspired and so... So overall I can't see freedom or boundaries as any detachable from the music making process itself. Sorry, I would be really glad to answer it the way you exposed, but I can't.

No, no, this whole thing is also about me getting to know other people's opinions about my questions and approach as well, because it's only MY approach.

Well I did not do anything else, I just opened up the scope of the question, and I try to show that everything is a boundary, even if you feel free, you are within borders and you are in a box. And you just don't realize it. That's so subjective.

There is a major difference when there is applied music where you have the director, or other people telling you during the composition process and reflecting on what you already did, to other...

And if they are not there, you do it for yourself.

But when you decide to take a project with its boundaries...

But if you compose yourself, you are playing these roles.

Sure, but I mean, w...

If you are composing your own music you are consulting yourself, you are reacting yourself, you are playing the part of the director, you are bound, you are in a box, you just don't know the box. Okay, freedom is feeling the box around you, and trying to, well, it is not the freedom, it is the act of creation, there is a box

There is a box, but freedom is the opportunity to feel your own boundaries and decide if you need these boundaries or you need others. Then you start composing, and you make decisions. And the next question would be: what are the signs of this artistic freedom in your compositions, when you can say "this one I did, because I always wanted to experiment with this musical stuff. Do you ever feel like this?"

Yes I do. I really want in this big band concert, I would not be happy if there would not be a very well conceived fugue for big band. There are little ricercare-like things or imitations, but rarely. But real at least two-three thematic sections, and between section, at least a turnary form fugue exposition. And I always wanted to compose 12-tone heavy-metal music, which is eleven tone music...

Yeah I really meant that. (just to answer your question: what is freedom). Nobody ever told you about an idea, this being succesful or not, if it can be sold or not, but you are interested in this ,and you can do this, because you are commissioned a work for, okay, a well known group of musicians, then you have your boundaries, you take this, and within these boundaries you can realise your dreams. I meant that by freedom.

I try to find a freedom in every possible situation. Really. For example the simplest pop string pads... You can do them like you know, just four chords going round and round and you can.... (there is one song, I think it's Akos song composed by Hary Peter, I remember, and in the strings part I did little canons) They always play the same three-four chords, but you can give them successive imitations, so you divide the violins into four parts, and they go around, and they don't just (sings) but they go (sings), and it gives it a different feeling. In After Crying I did a repetition in "De Profundis". We wanted repeated high chords on strings, C minor, and that was the first time I did it, and have done it a couple of times since. Instead of just playing (sings repeated notes of each part of the chord) they play (sings triad

interval patterns, each time starting on different notes of the chord in each part). And then you put these little patterns together, and they are not perfect, and it gives a much much more dense and intense feeling. Finally it is the same chord, but you know the inner structure is different. So, if I want to hear this on the orchestra, the freedom to make it in broken chords and put together patterns like that in the simplest pop production if they are open to it. So you can put if you have dreams, if you are interested in something, you can make your work, even your shit work you can make it interesting for yourself.

Okay. Thank you, so this was mainly about your own music which you compose for example for this big band, we can come back to this later. Let's talk a little bit about applied music projects or orchestrations. Do you often think about changing some musical patterns in order to address a bigger audience. I mean if you really think about "this would be a bigger a hit, if I did this or this"

In my own projects I have never been thinking about fitting big audiences.

You mean not even in orchestration works?

Well there yes. But if I talk about After Crying, I started my composing career with the fact in mind that the pieces that make music European music history had been performed to a maximum of 300-400 people at a time, and at their own time they were performed 2-3-8 times, and that's it. Since then they have been performed to thousand and thousand times, but at their own time this was only a bunch of people who they were able to touch. So what we are talking about as success today is a very different phenomenon. It was never known before. And the music we know as the cream of European music history was played to couples of hundreds who were, well, most of them, rich people, aristocrats,...

..musically educated...

..and musically educated. And we do have these people today, they are not aristocrats of the stadiums and not aristocrats of financial word and so on.. but if we look it from this side, I have reached the level, the popularity level of Haydn. (smiles) There were no more people at Eszterháza, or London.. when he played his symphonies. .. And I have more rehearsals than he had in London. You know this story, when he arrived at the first rehearsal of his symphony and he conducted, and he said "Well, it has been sight-read the best! It has never ever been so well sight-read, I am really looking forward to the next rehearsals. How wonderfully, possibly perfect it's gonna be. - "What next rehearsals?"" (laughs) So this never influenced my thinking or my phrasing or whatever. With the projects I am doing formoney, .. or for other people, I usually let them do this decision, it's not enough, it's too much, and they cut I usually throw in ideas, and they keep cutting them and throwing them away, and I am never well sometimes, but almost never saddened by this, never humiliated, I don't take it personal. If I know what they want, I know the language, and if the language and if the genre is popular enough it has its own rules, so if you use the best well-known phrases and you try to give it some originality, try to put them together in an originally way and not just copying but learning the language, talking, using the language, then you are there. And you can make many many many songs that are ready to be successful, and finally the success is unpredictable. A friend of mine once told me: "Those are adept at popular music that have success. " - I was like "do not be silly... (big pause) well.." and then I happened to understand it later. Some people do it for success and they are not at all interested in any counterpoint, any strange chords – only if it's a means to attract more people's attention, and not distract them. So what I am trying to express is mostly given by the goals and if you are able to do that, able to compose and orchestrate a good pop song then you are ready to receive the gift of fate, being successful. That's the most you can do, and of course, yes, in After Crying, this is gonna be a pop song, not a Mahler symphony, oh sorry. And sometimes Mahler symphonies can be very popular.

Can we go into details...

If that was not enough (laughs)

I mean, when you compose a pop song and at the same time you want to realise musical experiments to say, something which you are interested in, but may not be so very popular or well understood by a big audience. So how do you combine these things, if you can be

Freely, if we can get any definition for "free", what we started the whole conversation with. If we can define what free is.

Okay, but let's forget about what free is. There are things you are interested in...

Yeah I try to put everything into everything else, and if it's fun, you know it's a kind of cognitive dissonance, as they say it in psychology, which tickles your mind somewhere, and if it does, that is good, that is a good feeling And you listen

to it again and again, because you want to feel that ticklish feeling. Sometimes it is just a funny solution. A good rich feeling of “what?” and you try to differentiate the ingredients, there is some baroque trumpet playing in it, and there are RNB bass lines, and hip-hop drums, and a gospel choir, and there is a ... WHAT? Sometimes I even search for that feeling. Well this is okay but not extra. It's just okay, but then I try to open up mind for incoming associations, well associations do not income.. Incoming inspirations, and outgoing associations. I try to open up broader fields of associations. And to have ideas of very different sides of... Sometimes you know a step of two notes can be, if it's (sings), what if we put some Dies Irae in it, or B-A-C-H. Or a Jesu meine freude...

And you do it , because it tickles you, no matter if the audience understands it?

Yes, it tickles me, and some colleagues, the musical aristocrats. :-) But that is totally independent from the success of the piece, whether it is good or not, whether his fans like it or not, whether it is gonna be a big hit, or a big opus in 3 hundred years from now, and whether I am interested in it or not.

So I suppose, you are rather not...

Well I do think that the fact that we are the posterity of our great ancestors in music history, is influencing the way we see our own music. That's the first influence for that. It makes us, some of us ... We just try to push... Looking at our world as the past of the future, which is bad, because if you are not successful, you keep saying: but I will be in the future. But which future. But you know, J. S. Bach was not successful until Mendelssohn brought him back with the Passion, and now we think he is an eternal genius. And before 1824 nobody cared about him.

Yes, but even then it was only the question of broadcasting or spreading it. It could have stayed unknown without Mendelssohn's efforts. It's independent from...

Yes, it's PR. We think that we are the ultimate posterity with the ultimate opinion and a real breed(?) of who is where, who is how big, and who is great, and who is well not that great. It's changing. There is no posterity like that. And if we think whether my music would be successful in one of the later-ages, and that is enough reward for us for not being successful enough now, or even worse: it gives us directions for composing, it is unbelievably shit, it is a very very bad way. But many people do so. E-Musik composers do look at their oeuvre as a something that will be valued, valued and valued in the later ages.

Yes, so if you do not think like that, but you feel the need of communicating with someone, even if it is only one person...

Is this the question of why we are doing it?

No, but if you think about music as a way of communication... You already told, that you see music as a language

Yeah, and you have to put it into somebody

Yeah. And if this somebody is not a musician, and does not care about musical solutions that you care about, and you are interested in, then – in my opinion you start to mix your personal musical intentions realizing your musical dreams, with some solutions which make this communication more effective, so to say. Do you think like that?

No, that part, which makes you more reflecting and more easy to understand is not like a mixable ingredient. It is like the pint and the beer you put into it. It is just simply needed as a framework, that is the water pipe, that's the guts. That's what is there, what is given as a fact, it is not what you add. It's what you add your things into. That is the way I see it. It is not always mixing. It is sometimes putting the soup in the pint. It is not mixing, but still it has that postmodern strange effect that makes you go “what? A pint of soup?, that is exciting...”

What is the framework then?

The language that you understand. The people that are aimed, the focused people, that would be the framework, and if it has a whole on the bottom, it will just simply fall out, and the whole thing does not work. You can be postmodern, but if you want to punch the bottom of the pint, then, okay, let's say, you are free. You are a totally free artist, and you want to punch the bottom of the pint, and you have another idea of serving soup in the pint, you can not do both together. And you can say, you are not f**king free.

In my opinion there are certain genres that call up emotions in people who are socialized on western culture. For example Hollywood movies, they use these genre-clichés. The next topic would be, how to get rid of these clichés, or when you compose for example concert music, do you think that you can call up some emotions or send

messages through these genres? Do you quote genres like this?

I do heavily. I rely on these heavily.

Can you tell some examples as well? I mean what genres and why and where, and what you think they will communicate?

I see this whole question like,... it is the best done in baroque music with the theory of affections. So in baroque music there is a hand movement I mean for certain feelings, for certain meanings, and there are musical idioms closely related to pain, to joy, to love, to desire, to sadness, to sighs, and they cover pretty much everything. If they use it in concerto music, absolute music they do refer the same. Sometimes there is a program for example the Vivaldi concerti, there is program, and you can realize what it was really meant to be.

Can you tell some examples of your own music, for example from this big band project. If you use a specific genre-quotation where people definitely can say: "wow that was rock, that was jazz, that was whatever" - why do you use them, what do you want to communicate?

There is ultra-third relative chords used over the top of bass and sax lines, in trumpets. It gives you a feeling of extended, epic, cinematic ... yeah, I just repeated a long section, varied it in a binary form, then gave a solo section, and then da capo, and at the end I needed something more, and I could not think of anything else giving these chords, and giving it this dimension. When composing this moment, I felt like superman! (laughs) I did not want classic trumpet sound, just give the big chords. And they played it, but it did not work really, but when I raised my hand flying like superman, it was spot on what I wanted .Because the language works of patterns. Not words, but the principles, the concepts behind them. And if you can grab a concept, then everything falls in its place. And it's there. This was a good example, that superman-feeling worked. I am thinking of showing it (superman flying) while conducting it at the concert (laughs) Maybe the audience will also understand it perfectly. Funny. For example this. So the big air, the epic feel, or inferior, you know when the villain comes, and you can give it a dark character or music for, just to underline contrast, yes. I think of the HAVASI project, big brass chords used on for the opposite if you refer to The Night on the bare mountain, and you can play that with distorted guitar and bass to. And for people who know the piece it gives a, you know, it does give them . Even if they do not realize what they are listening to, they do know what it's about, the big evil, and things like that. Certain structures of Wiener Waltz, if you just lighten it up that way, just for a second. I did a tango, an orchestral tango, that was for an Indian film, and there are orchestral prelude interludes and one of the interludes I just turned that tango into Palotás , so gradually it shifts into Vienna and shifts into Hungary and the A G something and then it snaps you in the face and then "flash-back" and back to tango. You know I did the recording in London, and they did not know Palotás, but the style-effect was so strong, that everybody just runned smiling, so if you know Palotás, and you know the exact connotations, you laugh your ass out, but they even did not... That's also the type of cognitive dissonance. This is humor in music. We had a long conversation in a radio programme called the Real Crossover, with András Batta and Dávid Zsoldos, about what humour in music is. I think nobody could answer the question. I was third, and I said its basis is cognitive dissonance. A basic feature in music is this. Because you do not listen to music in a linear way, you listen to music the way that you are expecting something, and you get usually something else, OR you get wht you expect. And this always goes back and forth. And this way surprise, the false expectations and something that you have not expected and comes, and something you have expected and does not come... People really listening to music are always, well actually led by this humourous way of cognitive dissonances. Well this works in some music. In dance music for example rather rarely. I have the freedom to write odd and unexpected rhythms into a dance music, but they will not be able to dance to it. A friend of mine once told me while working with me on a song, well this is good, but this, they won't be able to dance to it. "What? I never would have thought they wanted to dance to it. (laughs) Well, the re-planning! It is very important, to see the aims of a particular piece. My daughter once asked me to compose a waltzer for their school ceremony. It would have been possible to write 4/4 into it of course, but it was not the goal. I felt really free. They would have also accepted from me some original ideas, but of course they wanted more something like a sketch in the film Anastasia or whatever. And freedom was in this case that I could write something which could be in Anastasia. Once I transcribed the Little night music. I kept the melody-notes, but changed all the characters into something modern, for example like rock riffs, or with blue notes, like with hammond and everything. Of course nobody ever recognizes the original Little night music. Anyway, I realized how fantastic Mozart was in chaining different parts together. I started to realize what a genius he was. It seems very simple, but it's full with assymetry, he does the 15th motif, but it has its original flow, with saint simplicity, you have no ideas where the cesures are between parts. 5-bar periods, and things like that. I also tried it, and it squeeks, and seem very unnatural. There is nothing strange in Mozart, but that is exactly what is very difficult in this.

Do you find innovation an important factor in music? If it is important for you to be unique, individual, to do something scientifically....

Stop! Innovation and individual is not interchangeable.

Okay, that is right

It sounds that there had been a clever little shift, but it is not true.

Ok, let's stick to Innovation.

I don't find it that important. Why? Because it happens anyway. People get fed up with music, and they search for new one. It just happens. To be individual, to be identifiable.

I mean innovation and being innovative: when you are fed up with some kind of music, and when you search for something new, the what's....

For me, all the types of music are there on the big palette of the painter, so whatever has been companted it's all there, and you can pick it as a color. If we talk about language, there is difference between innovating the language or to tell a narrative thing using the language, We not innovate it. In music these two may be interchanged, that is a question if you are using the given elements and put them in a certain order, it may be nothing new used, but still thing you express is new and it's shocking and it impresses people.

Could you express this in a less abstract way?

Well, there is nothing new in a music, but it can still be shockingly fresh and catchy. Where catchy means that it touches something very old, something archetypical, fundamental. This is what we should strive for, rather than being original. That would be the main point, finding these jams that there are in every mission. If you show them the melody they have not heard before, and they say I know this. Because it's there inside, and you just you know, removing the mud. And there is the jam(?) This is a kind of innovation but it is rather like finding a very very old meaning or structure. ... Some composers do this, and then they can't put the jam into a good socket. For example Pilgrims march second movement. The melody is finished, and after the piece is shit. That melody is something he did not write, he did not compose, he just found it, and he did not fuck it up. Or Beethoven, it happened to Beethoven a couple of times, he just can't Ode to joy... Forget it.

In case of Pilgrims March for example, you rearranged it with After Crying...

Yeah, and I only used the good one.

And there you changed the sound, and what else? The rhythm not really... Right? So when you think about grabbing something old and archetypical, what are the things that you add to make it more fresh.

A dirty groove :-)) Very low sub bass, or strange grooves and strange landscape of affections and ... I don't know, I usually think that it comes from "I want to play that melody because I like it" :-)) And then I add what comes, and then I see the picture, and I laid down the first groove, and electric guitar.

So you play it as if you had composed it, right?

.. rather as if I found it. I try not to compose too much, just play it and for me knowing it was for Pilgrim's march, and it was not from Mendelssohn himself, I just had a vision of these post-catastrophic field and the people in gas masks, and coveralls, and we just walking through it like a pilgrimage. And it was so strong, it led me into producing it. So it's usually an instinct and you try to realize and put it into something you see or hear. For example for the Big Band, I have a rhythmic and melodic structure which I can sing more or less, but it is a very strange, I can't tell the actual notes yet, there is a pure structure (sings), and I don't know whether I want it diatonic or chromatic, or whether I want fourth and fifth in it, or I don't know whether I want parallels whether I want you know or minor seventh chords or just , and this is so strange, and I fear that there is something, ...

That sounds really familiar, I often have this feeling. And actually when you try to match the certain notes to this structure, they just won't work.

Yeah. And sometimes you search for the f**ing note between the F natural and the F sharp and finally you say, it was F sharp, like the first time. Sometimes you can not be the perfect receiver, and sometimes you just come out of the flow, and ask "Wow, did I do that?"

When you do not know where it comes from.

Yeah, that is the very best flow. (...) I am addicted to flow. But I stopped at the innovation. If you invent new elements, that also innovation and putting together is sometimes only the meaning, so it's a new piece, it sounds familiar, it's very good, but even if it does only use conventional elements, it is surprising, how they are put together. Sometimes being innovative is not hugely incentive. For example the tintinapoli technique or the first tintinapoli piece of Arvo Pärt, it's rather the question of what he is NOT using. It's so little, that he uses. If it was only one piece it would have been a strange minimalistic piece, but from then on he used it as a basic compositional structure or method of his very strong new composition lives, and since he kept pushing it, it's innovative.

One last question, a bit technical, I would say. Do you ever use the internet in the compositional process?

I do not know what you want to ask, but I first want to say something. Some people who I worked together with regularly use the internet or youtube as their inspiration. "Well, I am stuck, I don't know what comes. Let's listen to some music". I was horrified, I felt it should not be coming from something else, but then I found out that, well, music is language, you are not born being able to use the language, you learn the language and everything you use, even the most personal E minor D major – "oh, that's my chord progression, I love it so much, I am the most honest, and in love, and everything, and". It is something that you learned, nothing is your own invention. You learn the language and you put together the elements of the language another way. You learn it a hundred ways, and you know a hundred sentences, and you do one hundred plus wrong, but the hundred and first is yours. It's your own sentence, but it's not your own words, and it is not your own letters of the alphabet. It's just the way you put them together and you express your own feelings, it may not be even any original, but it can be authentic. So at first I was horrified, but then I found out that it is not that horrible to turn to other music for inspiration. I first I thought it was because I thought you must be original, you must realize your inner inspiration and not listen to other, but then I found out, my inspiration and my ideas only come from pieces I listen to...

You can use the internet for gathering inspiration, but I would also be curious what you think about new possibilities, if the internet can give you as a composer, if you would dream of something doing with the internet, real time composing with other people, I don't know, something like that. If you are interested in something like that.

No, I did not feel that. Technically yes. I really find it fascinating as a conductor when the the director and the composer sitting in LA or different places, watch their picture and listen to their backing tracks and listening to our strings recording that we are just recording in the same time through source connect. That is really fascinating.

But this is a case for discussing about things that have already been done. Do you think or do you need a process that could be done through the internet internet in real time between more people, so the flow can happen there. Do you think that can ever happen?

When you are working.. well, yes. There is a program called CineSynch. If you both have the same videos and link it, then you see the video and he can stop, and you can draw on the video and add some music, and edit the time line. But this is not much different from he or she sitting there with you. It is just remote control. Let's go the scientific way. Internet can make any mutual or social compositional ways possible when people are not there, but that's a technical possibility. It could have been done without the internet if they were together. I can't really think of anything else the internet could give... Ok let's reverse it and check if there is something that we should use the internet for if we are here near eachother, and is there something we should switch on the internet for, or get connected... Well, actually I find very very nice that youtube started to become an all-mighty music library. The fact that you have access to this large public domain library or not public domain library, that effects.

Iva Zabkar

Interview with Iva Zabkar – Vienna, May 3, 2013.

B.A.: How would you describe your own musical style? Which genres do you like to borrow from?

Iva Zabkar: I ask myself the same question every day. I can not really answer it. I think it is easier to say for what purposes these music pieces can be applied. But specific genres... well pop music or jazz or new music, I do not know...

So you like to do all of these...

Yes, so it depends on the function of the music, and I usually like to do music which is combined with other mediums. So I realized at some point that I do not really compose “pure” music, because for me it always has a strong link to pictures, even if it is not actually film music. It is always connected to something else.

I was about to ask if you also like to compose absolute music (non-applied music)...

So, in the past few years I do not really compose absolute music. If I had the time to write music only for myself I would do electronic stuff, free improvised music, I would do sound collages. I am somehow very much into this “sound” direction, into sound design. I combine things that do not normally belong to each other, or I detach sounds from their original functions and I put them into some new ambiance. So that would be absolute music for me. I also have this inner need to compose for an orchestra. I have never had this kind of instrumentarium. It just has not come yet. .. If I had the time for myself....

Would you use the acoustic orchestral instruments only, or would you blend here some electronic sounds as well?

If I had the need to write such I thing, I do not know, no idea. I would leave it open. I am always stumbling around this stylistic question, because it is very difficult for me to give these things names. But anyway, I can say I prefer composing for films, and in film music – as we know – everything is possible.

What does artistic freedom mean to you? How often and in what occasions do you enjoy full artistic freedom in composing (that is, when you can compose according only to your own taste, free from any external feedback or instructions)?

I think when composing absolute music one can manage to work completely freely. Then one can say “now I do whatever I want, and however I want”, and if at the end this music reminds the listener of something else, it is simply inevitable. It is just an illusion to think that one can create something completely new. At least, I think so, that everything exists, and one has the chance to create something new only by combining things already there.

How often and in what occasions do you compose with the intention of reaching larger audiences? You work often with directors and producers...

Yes, every day, always. When you are working on a commercial spot or an image film, that is the ultimate “I-have-to-be-able-to-address-the-masses” situation.

You can also be very specific: What strategies do you use at these occasions, which musical / non-musical parameters are effected during this process and how? (Form, sound, ...)

Well, I can talk about things that I have already done. I am somehow lucky enough to have achieved, that people call me up in the need of specific styles and sound. That is this piano thing, calm, and nice, and sad, and romantic, and melancholic... so, stylistic terms: no idea... Anyway, people know why they are calling me up, they know what they want from me. I work with these strategies... I had the opportunity once to do something very different. That was a black-and-white movie. It was totally crazy, strange, with a very abstract story. There I worked in a quite different way. I had sound collages, I had a little bit of Bach, I had drone sounds, completely detuned tones...

Did you do it because it was musically challenging for you, or did you want to communicate something specific with that? (with quoting Bach I mean)

It was special in this case. This film had very little sound, very few dialogs, and it had quite a lot of time jumps. One could not really follow, what happens, and what it was all about. So, I gave myself the task to explain with sound everything that could not be explained with the visual side alone. I told myself “I have to save this film with sound”. I can reveal musically whole new correlations in the film. Let's say: “leitmotiv”, it is not a leitmotiv in this case, but it is

like when you hear a signal and you can make links in your mind: “Oh, ok, we are there now in this or this place or time...” That is also a kind of communication with the audience. So, of course I want to communicate with the people. How could you not do so anyway?

Well, you can say: “I either communicate only with a smaller target group, that is musically trained, or not... there are different thoughts and concepts regarding this area...”

Yeah, yeah, I know. My opinion is, that I think I would like to always communicate using my heart. I do not really care with which stylistic direction, so the most important thing is that something comes through. It is totally indifferent if there are some minor 9th intervals involved, or major 3rds, it all does not matter, if you sit down and listen to the music and nothing comes through, then there is something wrong. That's what I think, so it does not matter if you solved your mathematics homework within the music piece. So, I don't know... For the record, I do not know if it belongs here or not, but yesterday I worked again on Kotomaki (electro / ambient / sound design project by Iva Zabkar). I made a new track on Monday. It is really just for myself. I do not know to which genre category this music would belong, or who would listen to it. But it is really my own thing. I made this track on Monday at home, and there is a 6/4 time signature, there are acoustic layers with piano and electric bass and clarinet. And on the top of that you have a totally messed up drum track, with a beat that you really can not head-bang to. But it always gets repeated, within this 6/4 time signature, so this time range is given. I had done something similar before. I showed it to Christian (Christian Mühlbacher, jazz arrangement teacher at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, composer, percussionist), and he was totally freaked out, really. I had to stop the music after 15 seconds. He could not stand it. - Apropos: new music! - So, I had to stop after 15 seconds, and then he started an unstoppable monologue about how impossible this was, and what I was thinking, and he was really knocked out. He had to go smoking and the lesson was over. So, it is interesting how you can shock people with such things. I thought in the times of contemporary modern music, everything goes. But he was really freaked out because of this messed-up, anti-rhythmic drumming track. Of course, first of all, he is a percussionist.

And was this drum pattern looped?

I had made a remix earlier, based on a vocal quartet piece from Norway or Sweden. I had just taken a song from them, I put it into Logic (audio production / sequencer software), and I started tinkering around it, I played a drum track onto it, but I was never on the beat, and I did not think about a time signature. Now, with this newer piece I made on Monday, I had the rhythmical grid, and there were these instrument tracks used, and I also used this unrhythmical drumming from earlier, but I looped it within this new 4-bar or 8-bar structure. Then I copied it many times, so it was always repeated in the same way. And I played it to Christian yesterday. Now he stayed and listened till the end, and said things like: “ok, explain it to me a little bit...” and “I would like to hear the click track to it.” He talked about it for a while and then asked, “ok, where and who would listen to this kind of music?”, and I said: “actually I don't care about it...” Who would ever ask this question when composing contemporary modern music? ... I take familiar sounds, that we know from this super-tight, 4/4 beat electronic music, and then I say: let's do something else, something strange with it.

Alienating...

Something like that, yes. Estrangement. It is not dance music anymore. It is music with irregular heartbeat. ... So, do I want to communicate with the people?: Actually, yes.

Do you do live concerts with Kotomaki?

No. We are constantly thinking about it, and it would be only partly possible. We would have to produce extra live versions. For that we do not have the time. The next task would be maybe to make an EP. But live performances, maybe not yet.

It's great that we have from you the Kotomaki project as absolute music, than we also have film music or applied music. Do you think that target groups can be addressed by quoting specific genres? Do you think a composer can communicate specific meanings by evoking typical genre-associations, and if so, do you use/quote any of these stereotypical genres in your music?

Give me an example, what you mean.

Well, I have a few hypotheses. For example, there are these stereotypical solutions known from Hollywood blockbuster movies, and people socialized on western film culture have these automatisms,... Erotic scene - Smooth jazz with (Iva already interrupts) saxophone...

Saxophone, yeah.

Right?

Evidently.

Yeah. So, how do you handle these associations?

Well, I use them.

So you use such genre-quotes in your music...

Yeah. It would be silly to totally avoid them, but it would also be silly to use only these. It completely depends on the actual project and how they fit in. And there is also the aspect of parody which also works very well. One can use such things as well. I had a short film, with a scene in it, where young boys are at a playground. There is this very long sequence, and there is a point, where one boy heroically decides to help the other boy being attacked by some schoolmates. At this point – well, there is music all the time under this long sequence with a specific tempo, which fits very well to all parts of it – and here begins a little military drumming. That is one example. It is totally stereotypical, but it works totally well. After I did it, I was thinking, “ok, we get it, but is it universally valid? Or is it meaningful only to those who know this music, who already heard military drumming, or who already saw such films, or how... ?

Yeah, why is it working...

Right. Why is it working. It works, but is it valid overall?... In this case you can say music helps, only if you understand this type of music.

Can you give more examples? For example if you quote rock music, what is the most important aspect of rock that makes it applicable for you, or with any other genre...

Well, rock... If I ever used rock music... I make rock music very rarely, mainly because without real instruments, it is unimaginable. I would use drums, distortion guitars, and bass, and harmonically there are of course different styles. There are things that always work well. A film project comes to mind: There is a life-saving scene, where I also had drums, guitars, that is like indie pop, not real rock, I rather differentiate between them. Anyway, there I had this harmonic progression: I - V - VI - IV. . So what happened? At the screening the cinematographer and the editor said it was too “girly”, like Alannis Morissette. It should be more boy-like, more heroic. Then I said, “ok, earlier you used Indiana Jones music as temp track than after that some American Beauty soundtrack within this 12 seconds. Then, I decided to show the scene to many friends and colleagues, to get some help in deciding, whether it works with my music or not, whether I am stupid or the boys. I was like: “Temp track”...

It kills us.

Yeah, totally. And so, there was a big discussion, and the director of the film got super angry, because he had kept saying from the beginning, that this scene has a limit: it works with some of the viewers. He does not know for whom, and he does not know anything about the music, but it works. So, ok these four chords, in this order. What did I do then? I left actually almost everything the way it was, I only changed the order of the chords. I even left the gestures of the guitars and the rhodes, but I changed the harmonies: related to major : II - IV - VI - V., and suddenly it was all ok. So, there is also the question of these harmonic stereotypes, whether they can be used universally for the same. But here, finally, it worked well. I was like: “haha, I hardly changed anything”. But at the end this second version was used, and I think everybody was satisfied with it. Another story about stereotypes comes to mind. KUMA is a feature film about a Turkish immigrant family in Vienna. It was so, that I had two Turkish instruments, although I have to say, I did not want to make an ethno film, but rather a western perspective, or a western way of observing this topic. So authentic? Yes and no. Anyway, we had a Turkish musician to play all the music. In the focus of the story are the persons of the family and two women, the young lady who gets married in Vienna, and the mother. My musical concept was to develop the musical themes from the beginning to the end of the film so that they represent the personal development of the young lady, growing out from a strict traditional Turkish thinking into a western personality with independent decisions, new tasks, so she leaves her old origins and takes responsibility for her own decisions, so positions herself as a person that has its say. Musically it is resolved with themes played by these Turkish instruments (Ud and Saz), and that gradually changes until it develops into a guitar, and there the harmonies are also a bit transformed.

So you had at first some traditional instruments and scales and then you “westernized” them...

It was very interesting, this experience that I had. Luckily, I had been listening to a lot of traditional Turkish music before,

that counts a lot, and that had a strong influence on my music making, my musical taste. I had listened to many kinds of music from all around the world. Not only world music, but real authentic, traditional folk music. And among them I had listened for some time also to Turkish music, so I had it in my ears to some extent. Of course you can never get deep enough with all these different scales. I made a little research, and it is astonishing just how many different scales they have. And you may think “oh, it sounds all the same” but with these quarter-tone or even smaller intervals there are huge differences in different tunings, and some music is for this or that tuning, while some is for another. And it all works in a very different way: they do not have this scale degree thinking like we do. They rather have a melodic thinking related to a root note. (Like what we also used to have in the past) So, as I said, I developed a melody that is based around a root note. I like doing it in other cases as well. So it belongs to my musical dictionary. So this very modal thinking, I would say. So after I had this melody, we invited this Turkish musician to play it. He said he did not need any sheet music, he had been living in Austria for 20 years, he teaches and plays the Ud and the Saz, so he was super trained musician. He listened to my music and said it was no problem, he would play it easily. So, I had in the beginning this traditional original melody. That he could play really easily, but then came a transition phase with a between-two-worlds type of melody, which was based on two different scale degrees. Thinking in minor it was I. and then V. minor. So we can say it was a natural minor scale. And he just could not get it. He simply could not understand how that was supposed to work. It totally overwhelmed him. I said to him “it is easy”... root note, minor third, root note, fourth, root note, fifth, then a little transition to the V. degree, that root note (already in V.), second, root, third, then yet another couple of notes upwards. And he could not understand this V: root, second, root, minor third part, because it was out of this “we are in one scale with only one root note” thinking, and so he could not play this other minor third related to the V. degree, because he got stuck in – if we name it a minor and e minor now – he simply always stayed in a minor and could not play the e minor. And so it did not work, and we spent a lot of time struggling with it. Then I said to him: ok we will use two scales in this piece, not just one, but two. The first one is a minor, and the second is e phrygian. And that made sense to him, and he managed to play what I imagined. So that was very interesting, regarding whether some stylistic patterns work universally or not. So sometimes they work completely different out of Europe or out of the western culture. When it is sad, it is not necessarily minor, but rather whatever scale with the diminished something and with the quarter-tone stuff. It was an interesting moment for me. Regarding stereotypes. So, we have to remember: if we are working on a film meant for the Asian public, we have to do deep research...

Do you ever willingly combine different styles or genres? What is your motivation for that?

I do not have a master plan for that. I can tell you another example for that from another short film that I scored. Its title is *The Funeral of Harald Kramer (Das Begräbnis des Harald Kramer)* and there we have this funeral scene with Harald Kramer in the coffin, and there is the whole family present, and the Wife – as we get to know later – had all the time had a relationship with her Yoga teacher, who is a crazy punter. And this Yoga teacher starts interrupting and sabotaging the ceremony. No priest is talking, but instead this yoga teacher makes crazy noises (sings)... it is totally funny. And there was the question if we use music in this scene or not. And if yes, what kind? What kind of music do you hear at funerals, no idea. Something normal we did not want for sure. So we did the following: I took the Swan from Tsaikovksy (sings), you know, which I got played by the sitar and a pan flute, or normal flute, don't remember. And the sitar plays the accompanying chords. It was completely strange. That classical piece fit the ceremony, but this yoga teacher was really into these esoteric stuff, so this sitar style was his type of music. And this combination was very funny. Strange but at the same time somehow funny. So talking about combinations, yeah I do it often, and on different purposes. It depends on the actual project.

You also composed concert pieces for big band in the last few years, right? That is not an applied music situation, and there we also had many examples of mixing folk music with jazz for instance...

Yeah yeah. I did that as well. Somehow when I spent more time around jazz back then. I do not do it anymore, but that's a long story. Anyway, when I used to play more jazz, I also had some experiments in this ethno-jazz field. I also listened often to music of this kind. It has always been interesting for me listening to genre-blending music. So, world music is also something similar.

And why is it interesting for you? Why is it more interesting as “normal” folk music?

I don't know...

So, are you thinking like “ok, this is folk music, but it is not punchy enough, or something is missing, something we should add from another style”...?

No no. I do not think like that. I have always liked listening to traditional folk music as well. It is interesting because it

has very different origins, it comes out from different needs, has different purposes. It is for me closer to the 'real' meaning or more important meaning of music. It is not conceptualized, that made it always attractive for me.

It is simply honest...

Yes, exactly. And I find this a very strong aspect. I used to hate Austrian folk music. This I-V V-I degree. I could listen to everything, but I could not take that. By now, somehow I understand it better, and I think it is very strong in its right location, when you stand somewhere on the hillside and you hear it, and “wow, it is really cool”. I used to like world music, all kinds. Nowadays I do not like all of them, I think I had enough. It is saved inside of me, this concept, thank you, but it is sonically not that interesting for me anymore. If I need it for a new project, it is no problem, I can do research, I can listen to it again. But somehow nowadays I am seeking for something that I have not heard before. How to explain... I do not limit myself to an album, or not even to a song, where I could say “wow that is something new”. It is connected with my views described earlier, that I think, everything already exists, and the only aspect where I see the possibilities for creating something new is the aspect of combining. How I mix, how I stop things, which instruments I put together, and this is where styles become mixed. Here am I looking for things that I have not heard before. And here a big role is played by one's personal preferences for choosing sounds, instruments, or styles. It is a complex interplay between finding something interesting and also liking it. I can say something is interesting for me because of the way it is produced, or performed, and then comes the question if I even like it or not...

You were also about to tell something about the big band project, right?

Oh, yes, it was also a mix.

It had some Croatian influences as well, am I right?

Well, the ultimate balkan-jazz piece was rather from Lana (Lana Janjanin, fellow composer student at the media composition faculty of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna). My piece was in the one hand influenced by electronic music, more specifically by Cinematic Orchestra, which is actually not purely electronic music, but has much in common, and in the other hand it contains a balkan melody in 7/4 beat. I wrote a big band piece in 7/4... (laughs)

And what exactly came from Cinematic Orchestra?

There are songs that hit me completely the first time I heard them, and have accompanied me ever since. I wish I can some time have the same effect on some people with my style... There is this album (from Cinematic Orchestra) with 6-7 tracks on it, which are quite long. It is called Everyday. That is the title of the album. The tracks are actually played on acoustic instruments, but the forms are very interesting. They have a structure of x bars, that gets repeated and repeated, and there are always only some minor changes added.

Minimalistic...

That's right. Well, not exactly, but somehow yes. And this album hit me totally, I knew it by heart, I listened to it so very often. There are until today things in my music, like small building blocks, that return all the time, and I vary only something small in them. For example I also do similar things in Kotomaki. But for that, one really needs time. It is nowadays very difficult to achieve, that somebody really sits down to listen to music for 5 minutes. It is not easy. Anyway, I also did this in the big band piece. There was a guitar pattern and a harmonic structure of 16 bars, and there also was a bass riff, that was being repeated all the time. Onto this basis, different instrumental groups, different sound layers were added. It is not common in a big band piece. It comes from another style area. It was built up like that, always a bit more, and all instruments that entered also stayed in, so it became a big sound mass. Then, at the end I had something melodic, then a break, and after that came this balkan melody. Then it was followed by the returning of the 1st part with a solo, then the whole thing got built up again, then after the recapitulation of the balkan theme, there was a coda. So, I made also such a thing once. I do not know myself why I did it.

Do you find *innovation* an important factor in your work? In what terms do you think your pieces are unique or new? In which musical parameters of your pieces can this innovative attitude be best observed?

In the age of the internet, with this feeling that “everything is there, everything is given” the ground is pulled out from under our feet. The art is to pick something out of that.

But if you find individualism an important aspect in you music making, how do you make your way to be unique?

(Laughs)

So, I mean, do you experiment with the sound, or melody, or...

No, I think if it emotionally touches me, I mean, that it has an effect on me somehow, when I am working on it, than it is all right. If additionally other people like it as well, wonderful, hurray. If it does not move anybody else but the composer him/herself, than it is also "OK". This need to address other people is second-rate. If you can not even address yourself with your music, than it is somehow wrong. If you hysterically try to create something new, which even you do not like, or which does not touch you in some way – and it can also make you crazy, or sad, it does not necessarily have to be delighting. So even if it makes you crazy, it does something to you, and that is right. And if it does not do anything to you, than something went wrong.

Iva Zabkar (Original German Version)

Wie würdest du deinen musikalischen Stil beschreiben? Welche Genres sind die die du gerne ausborgst?

Die selbe Frage stelle ich mich tagtäglich. Ich kann es nicht wirklich beantworten. Ich glaube es ist leichter zu sagen für was sich diese Musik alles anwenden lässt, aber Genre-mässig ich kann mir das nicht sagen halt Popmusik oder Jazzmusik oder neue Musik oder, weiss ich nicht...

Also du machst alle gern...

Ja, also eben, wegen der Benutzung sage ich es vielleicht so, ich mag am liebsten Irgendwas kombiniert eben mit einem anderen Medium. Also ich bin irgendwann draufgekommen, dass ich eher selten nur Musik mache, weil das für mich immer irgendwie eine Verbindung hat mit Bildern, auch wenn ich jetzt nicht z.B. Musik für Filme mache. Es ist halt immer mit irgendetwas verbunden.

Ich wollte gerade fragen ob du absolute Musik auch gerne komponierst.

Also jetzt in den letzten Jahren, mache ich, also für mich absolute Musik. Wenn ich nur Zeit hätte für mich Musik mache, würde ich elektronische Musik machen, ich würde frei improvisierte Musik machen, ich würde Sound Kollagen machen. Ich bin sehr in diesen Sound richtung irgendwie gekippt. Mit Sound Design. Ich kombiniere Sachen die normalerweise nicht zusammengehören, oder dass ich Klänge zweck-entfremde und dann irgendwie anders einsetze. Also das wäre für mich der absolute Musik. Ein inneres Bedürfnis ist ein Orchesterwerk zu schreiben. Diese Besetzung hab ich noch nicht gehabt. Es kam einfach noch nicht. Wenn ich die Zeit hätte für mich.

Rein Akustisch, also großes Orchester, oder mit Elektronik gemischt?

Wenn ich das Bedürfnis hätte sowas zu machen, weiss ich nicht, keine Ahnung. Das würde ich offen lassen. Diese stilistische Frage, dass ich wirklich wo ich wieder stolpere, weil ich mich selber schwer tut diese Dinge einfach eine Namen zu geben. Ich kann einfach nur sagen, ok, ich mache Musik für Film am liebsten, und dass, wie wir wissen, kann einfach alles sein.

Und was heisst Künstlerische Freiheit für dich? Wie oft und bei welcher Gelegenheit hast du volle künstlerische Freiheit beim Komponieren (d.h. komponieren unabhängig von äusseren Feedback/Anweisung, und nur nach deinem eigenen Geschmack)

Ich glaube wenn man absolute Musik schreibt kann man es schon schaffen auch komplett frei zu arbeiten, und dann einfach zu sagen, ich mag das jetzt so wie ich will, das ist dann am Ende den Zuhörer auf was anderes erinnert das wird sich nie vermeiden lassen, das ist einfach Illusion, dass jemand schafft was komplett neues. Also ich empfinde das so, dass es einfach alles gibt, und dass man nur die Chance hat etwas neues, oder für sich was neues zusammenzusetzen. Aber dass ich da jetzt das Art Neue finde. Das glaube ich nicht.

Wie oft und bei welcher Gelegenheit komponierst du in der Absicht ein breiteres Publikum anzusprechen? Hast du schon mal so gedacht? Du arbeitest auch mit Produzenten, und Regisseuren...

Ja, täglich. Immer. Wenn du ein Werbefilm, oder Imagefilm hast. Das ist nonplus ultra für "ich muss andere Leute ansprechen können".

Du kannst auch detailliert musikalische Sachen sagen, Bei solcher Gelegenheit was für Strategien verwendest du? Wie, und Welche musikalische Parameter werden in diesem Prozess betroffen? (Form, sound, ...)

Also ich kann einfach nur von den Sachen ausgehen die ich gemacht habe. Ich habe irgendwie das Glück, dass mich langsam Leute anrufen wegen bestimmten Stilen und bestimmten Klang. Das ist halt dieses Klavier -dass ist ruhig, dass ist schön, dass ist traurig, romantisch, melancholisch... Also Begriffe der Stilistik... keine Ahnung. Dass mich die Leute die mich wirklich anrufen, sie wissen was sie haben wollen, das heisst ich arbeite dann natürlich mit den Strategien... ich hatte einmal die Gelegenheit was komplett Anderes zu machen. Das war ein schwarz-weiss Film. Der war total verrückt, seltsam, die Geschichte total abstract. Da hab ich ziemlich anders gearbeitet. Ich habe Sound Collagen gehabt, ich habe Bach verwendet, ich habe es kombiniert mit Drones-Klängen, ich habe vielen Schichten gehabt...

Hast du es nur gemacht weil es für dich musikalisch interessante Material war, oder wolltest du auch was konkretes kommunizieren?

In dem fall, es war speziell, dieser Film hatte ganz weing Ton, ganz wenig Dialog, und hatte ziemlich viele Zeitsprünge, Mann hat nicht wirklich ausgekannt, wie was dass überhaupt soll. Und ich hab mir dann selbe mich die Aufgabe gestellt, dass ich das irgendwie klanglich erklären muss, wass mann über die Bild, über den Erzählstrang alleine nicht verstanden hätte. Ich hab mir selbe dann diese blöde Idee aufgebrummt, dass ich dass retten muss. Ich erkläre musikalisch dass so dass man auf einmal einen ganz neuen Zusammenhang versteht. Ich sag jetzt eine blöde Stichwort: Leitmotiv. Es ist nicht so, aber dass ich halt ein Signal höre, und das dann in Kopf verbinden kann: "Aha, ok, wir sind jetzt da, oder in der Zeit, oder in dem Ort... Dass ist auch eine Art Kommunikation mit dem Publikum auf einen anderen Art und weise. ... Natürlich will ich die Leute ansprechen, also eigentlich habe ich das nie verstanden wie mann dass nicht möchte...

Na ja, du kannst auch wählen: "ich kommuniziere jetzt mit einer kleineren Zielgruppe, die musikalisch ausgebildet sind, oder nicht, darüber gibt es verschiedene Meinungen.

Ja, ja ich weiss. Meine Meinung ist immer, dass ich möchte immer mit dem Herz kommunizieren. Es ist mir relativ egal mit welche Stilistik, also das wichtigste für mich ist dass irgendwie was rüberkommt. Es ist egal ob es jetzt irgendwelche kleine Nonen passiert oder dur terzen, es ist eigentlich vollkommen egal, wenn du drinn sitzt und du anhörst, und es kommt nicht rüber, dann ist irgendwas falsch. So empfinde ich dass dann ist es irgendwie hast du matematischen Hausaufgaben gemacht, aber ich weiss nicht. Beziehungsweise, ich weiss nicht ob das jetzt grad reinpasst, aber ich hab gestern wieder Kotomaki gemacht, [Experimental electro Project von Iva Zabkar] ich habe am Montag einen Track gemacht. Es ist wirklich für mich. Das ist ein Projekt, was wirklich ganz für mich ist, obwohl ich auch nicht weiss in welche Schiene das reinfällt, wer das hören könnte. Aber es ist wirklich ganz für mich. Ich hab am montag ein Track gemacht zu hause, und es ist so eine Metrum, es ist 6/4, es sind so akustik Flächen mit Klavier und e-bass und Klarinetten. Und darüber ist so halt ein total kaputtes Schlagzeug, total nicht-mitklopfbaren Beat. Der sich immer wiederholt. Dieser 6/4, dieses Metrum ist vorhanden. Ich hab einmal schon sowas gemacht, ohne Metrum. Ich hab es dem Christian vorgespielt und der war fix und fertig, der ist wirklich rausgegangen. Ich musste nach 15 secunden aufhören – APROPO neue Musik! - Ich musste nach 15 secunden stoppen, und er hat dann 10-15 Minuten fassungslost monologisiert wie das sein kann und überhaupt, und ganz fertig. Er sagte er muss rauchen gehen, und dann hat der Unterricht beendet. Also, es ist sehr interessant wie mann Leute mit sowas schocken kann. Also in zeiten von Zeitgenössische musik wo ich einfach gedacht habe es geht alles, aber er war so einfach von diesen kaputten anti-rhythmus Schlagzeug komplett geplättet. Also vor allem er ist Schlagzeuger.

Ist dieses Schlagzeug Track auch geloopt?

Ich hab früher eine Remix gemacht von ein Gesangskvartett, aus Norwegen, oder Schweden. Ich hab einfach ein Lied von denen genommen und ins Logic hereingetan, und habe einfach begonnen, dazu zu tippen ein Beat und noch ein paar andere Sachen gemacht. Und da habe ich dann gar nicht aufs Metrum geschafft. Jetzt bei dem Stück am Montag habe ich halt schon diesen Raster gehabt, weil diese Flächen, also dieses eigentliche Stück mit den echten "Instrumenten", das war ein Entwurf für was anderes, da habe ich begonnen diesen Beat darüber zu spielen, aber es ist irgendwie im Raster geblieben, und das wird alles schon geloopt, also das war alles so 4-tagtig, 8-tagtig. Ich hab das kopiert und es kommt immer wieder so wie es ist. Und ich hab ihm das gestern vorgespielt, ich habe gesagt: "schaumal, hier ist wieder was zum rausrennen", und er ist wirklich drinnen geblieben, bis zum schluss angehört, und sagte, "ok, erkläre mir das jetzt, und... den Klick würde ich gerne zuhören." Er hat wieder so ein bisschen drum diskutiert. Und hat gesagt: "Ja, aber was glaubst du, wo, wer sollte das anhören?" und ich hab gesagt: "dass ist mir eigentlich vollkommen egal" Wer stellt sich diese Frage, wenn irgendjemand was Zeitgenössisches schreibt.? Also ernste Musik... Ich verwende einfach nur die Klängen die wir normalerweise kennen als diese super ordentlich 4/4 beat, elektronische Musik, etwas, was wirklich "tight" ist, und ich verwende das und gehe davon aus und sage, ja das ist jetzt irgendwie anders.

Verfremdet?

JEIN. Zweck-entfremdet sag ich jetzt mal. Es ist nicht mehr tanzbare musik, es ist Herzrhythmus-störte musik... Also, hab ich den Anspruch das es andere Leute anhören wollen? Grundsätzlich ja

Und mit Kotomaki, habt ihr Konzerte?

Nein, wir denken manchmal darüber nach, und das wäre nur Teilweise machbar, aber es ist so viel fein Arbeit von Computer, dass man da wirklich extra Live Versionen machen müsste. Die Zeit gibt es nicht. Das nächste was irgendwie, vielleicht ein machbares Ziel wäre so eine EP zu machen. Aber Live-auftritte vielleicht noch nicht.

Es ist ja super, dass wir jetzt Kotomaki als absolute Musik von dir haben, und wir haben dazu Filmmusik, angewandte Musik. Glaubst du, dass Zielgruppen mit bestimmten musikalischen Genres angesprochen werden

können?

Nimm mir ein Beispiel wie du das Meinst.

Ich hab ein paar Hypothesen. Zum Beispiel. Es gibt Klischés, die wir von Hollywood blockbusters schon kennen, und die Leute die auf Westlichen Filmkultur sozialisiert sind, haben so Automatismen. Erotische Szene – Smooth Jazz mit Saxofon

Saxofon (lacht)

Ja, oder?

Selbstverständlich!

Ja, also wie gehst du mit diesen um?

Ich verwende diese schon.

Also verwendest du solchen Genre-Zitaten in deiner Musik?

Naja, also es wäre total blöd dass halt dass garnicht verwenden, oder es wäre auch blöd wenn ich sagen würde "ich verwende das nur". Es kommt total einfach auf das Projekt an und wie es stimmt. Und es gibt auch noch die Aspekte PARODIE, der auch immer ganz gut funktioniert, man kann diese Dinge auch verwenden, aber wo ich z.B. bei einem Kurzfilm,... es gab so eine Szene mit Jungen mit dem Spielplatz. Es ist eine ganz lange Sequenz, und irgendwo es gibt zwei Jungen, und in der Moment wo eine Junge sich entschliesst den anderen zu helfen, weil der irgendwie gemoppt wird von den Schulkollegen. In dem moment verwende ich- also es läuft die ganze zeit Musik, das hat in der ganze zeit einfach das ein tempo was wirklich passt über alles dort, und in dem Moment beginnt so eine kleine Militärtrommeln. Also das ist jetzt ein beispiel. Das ist total klischehaft, aber es funktioniert total gut. Ich hab das dann verwendet, und hab mir gedacht, "ok, wir verstehen das", aber ist es allgemein gültig? Oder versteht man dass nur, wenn man das kennt, wenn man irgendwie solche Filme gesehen hat, oder wenn man militär Musik kennt, oder so...?

Warum funktioniert es?

Genau. Warum. Es funktioniert schon, aber ist es allgemein gültig... In dem fall kann man es hier verwenden weil man es eh so versteht, wie es gemeint ist.

Kannst du noch konkretere Beispiele erwähnen. Z..B. Wenn du Rock zitierst, was ist für dich von Rock wichtig oder anwendbar, oder von irgendwelchen Stil jetzt...

Von Rock... Wenn ich das verwenden würde.. Dieses Genre verwende ich eigentlich kaum. Ich würde Schlagzeug und Stromgitarren und Bass verwenden, und harmonisch gibt es ja auch Stile... Es gibt Dinge die dann immer funktionieren. Es fällt ein eine Szene, wo es gibt eine Rettungsmoment, und da hab ich auch Schlagzeug, Gitarren, aber dass ist eher Indie Pop, kein Rock, das unterscheidet sich jetzt eher. Und da hab ich z.B harmonisch ... I. V. VI. IV. Stufe verwendet. Was ist passiert? Beim Screening hat der Kameramann und der Cutter haben gesagt, es klingt mädchenhaft, wie Alannis Morissette, ... Viel zu braf, und da sind doch Jungen, und der rettet den und blablabla... Ich sagte "Ok, ihr habt als TempTrack Indiana Jones verwendet und nacher irgenwas von American Beauty in dem 12 Sekunden. Deswegen hab ich es an Alle geschickt weil ich war so platt, ob es funktioniert oder nicht. bin ich deppert oder sind die deppert... Und ich so "Ok Temptrack..."

Es tötet uns...

Jajaja, total. Es gab eine richtig grosse Diskussion bei diesem Screening, und der Regisseur ist schon ultra böse geworden, weil er hat von Anfang an gesagt er hat jedes mal eine Gänsehaut für diesen Szene, und das funktioniert für ihn, du weisst nicht warum, der kennt sich null aus mit musik, aber es funktioniert. So, ok, diese vier Stufen in diesen reihenfolge. Was hab ich gemacht? Ich hab eigentlich alles so gelassen, hab nur die Harmonien geändert, ich hab auch die Gestik behalten von den Gitarren, und von Rhodes, aber ich hab die Stufen geändert, auf dur bezogen: II - IV - VI - V, und auf einmal war es ok. Das ist auch so ein Ding, bezüglich Harmonien, ob man sich so diese Klischés bedienen kann, find ich harmonisch auch ein grosses Thema, es hat irgendwie dann reingepasst. Und am Ende ist es so geblieben. Ich habe auch gesagt, ihr dürft nicht jetzt auf den Klang hören, es ist noch nicht gemischt, dass muss man unterscheiden, und ihr musst euren blöden Temptrack vergessen. Am Ende waren glaube ich alle zufrieden. Eine andere Klische-sache: für KUMA, Spielfilm über einen türkische Einwandererfamilie in Wien. Und der war auch irgendwie..., ich habe da zwei türkische instrumente verwendet, wobei man auch sagen muss, da war die Idee nicht einen Etnofilm zu machen, sondern eine westliche version, also ein westliche Anschauen von denen. Also authentisch?: JEIN. Weil

sonst hätten sie auch einen türkischen Musiker, oder Komponisten fragen können, dass der das macht. So, was habe ich da gemacht? Es gibt die Familie als Hauptpersonen und noch zwei Frauen und die junge Frau die da eingehiratet wurde und die Mutter. Und musikalisch war das Konzept so, das ich von Anfang bis zum Ende des films die Musik so entwickelt wie die junge Frau sich auch entwickelt von dem sehr türkisch aufgewachsenen häuchen Denken auf also welche Welt sie halt lebt, welche aufgaben sie zu erfüllen hat, bis zu ein westlichen einständigen..., dass sie geht dass ihre ursprünglich gedachten Rolle heraus, und übernimmt selbst Verantwortung und entscheidet selbst und positioniert sich selbst als eine Person die was zu sagen hat. Und musikalisch ist es dann so verlaufen, dass am Anfang, also es gab themen von zwei türkischen Instrumenten gespielt wurden (von Ud und von Saz) und das hat sich dann immer mehr entwickelt bis es dann irgendwann zu eine Gitarre wurde und dann haben sich auch bischen die Harmonien verändert.

Du hast also Themen mit türkischen Instrumente und gewisse ostliche Skalen z.B. Und dann ist es westlich geworden...

Das war sehr interessant, das Erlebnis was ich da hatte. Zum glück hab ich früher selbe viel türkische musik gehört, das spielt wahnsinnig viel rein, in dem wie ich Musik mache und was ich für Musik mach, selbstverständlich. Was ich selbe für Musik höre. Und auch ein grosse Teil von dem war auch Volksmusik aus alle Welt. Nicht nur Worldmusik, aber wirkliche traditionelle Musik, und z.B habe aus der Türkei eine Zeit lang viel gehört und hatte das ein bischen in Ohren. Natürlich kann man das nie so nachstellen mit den ganzen skalen. Ich habe ein bischen nachgelesen, es ist unpackbar wie viele Skalen die haben. Oder du denkst, "ja, wahrscheinlich klingt alles gleich", aber mit diesen Vierteltonverschiebungen oder noch kleinere Unterteilungen, hin und her, und dass ist dann für die Stimmung, und dass ist dann für die. Aber es funktioniert ganz anders, es gibt nicht diesen harmonischen stufen-denken so wie wir das bei uns haben, sondern wirklich so auf einen Grundton basierend auf diese Skalen. Also, Grundton und dann halt ein sehr melodisches Denken. Wie wir das warscheinlich auch früher gehabt haben vor ein paar hundert Järchen...

Ja, ich hab schon so eine Melodie entwickelt, die auf diesen Grundton basiert, das mach ich übrigens auch sonst gerne. Das kommt auch sonst im meinen Musikalischen Wortschatz vor. Also diese sehr modale Denken, eigentlich. Ich habe diese Melodie entwickelt, und dann haben wir ein türkischen Musiker eingeladen, der das spielen soll. Er hat gesagt: er braucht keine Noten, er lebt schon seit zwanzig jahren in Österreich, und unterrichtet und spielt Ud und Saz und alles, super-wahnsinnstolle Musiker. Er hat das angehört. "Wird schon gehen, wird schon gehen". Es gibt diese "originale musikmelodie", er hat das noch gut geschafft, dann gabs so eine Melodie, so eine „zwischen den Welten-Melodie“, diese Übergangsfase, die aufgebaut war eigentlich auf zwei Stufen (musikalisch). In moll gedacht auf der I. und dann auf der V. stufe moll, also denken wir natürliches Moll. Und er hat das nicht und nicht verstanden, wie das funktionieren kann, das hat ihm komplett überfordert. Ich habe gesagt, es ist halt einfach (...) Wie soll ich das jetzt sagen ohne es singen zu müssen... Also, Grundton, moll terz, Grundton, Kuart, Grundton, Kvint, mit einer kleinen Überleitung auf die V. stufe. Dann Grundton (von der V. Stufe), Sekund, dann noch einpaar Töne hinauf. Grundton, kleine sekund, grundton, terz,... Und er hat das einfach nicht verstanden, weil es ist ausgebrochen aus diesen "ich bin in einer Skale, und ich hab einen Grundton", und er hat nicht geschafft, die andere Mollterz zu spielen von der V. stufe, sondern er ist irgendwie – nennen wir das jetzt a moll und e moll. - er ist einfach in A moll geblieben, er hat nicht geschafft eine e moll zu spielen. Und dann hat es nicht funktioniert, wir haben ur lange Zeit gehabt. Dann habe ich gesagt, wir verwenden bei diesen kleinen Stück zwei Skalen, nicht nur eine, sondern zwei skalen, und der erste Teil is a moll skale und der zweite Teil ist der e phrygisch skale. Und das macht irgenwie sinn, und dann hat es funktioniert. Das war ganz spannend hinsichtlicht auch weil du gesagt hast diese Stilistiken funktioniert das?, wie kann mann diese Klischés bedienen das es einfach auserhalb Europe, oder westliche Musikkultur, das es unter umstanden sowas von ganz anders ist. Wenn es traurig ist ist es nicht moll, sondern es ist xy Skale mit der vermindeten irgendwas, und vierteltongeschichte... Das war ein sehr interessante Moment. Eben auch bezüglich Klischéverwendung, was mann da machen kann. Das heisst wir merken uns, wenn wir ein Film für den asiatischen Raum machen, dann müssen wir sehr gut rescheschieren!

Kombinierst du manchmal absichtlich verschiedene Stile / Genres? Was sind dafür deine Motivationen?

Ich habe diesbezüglich kein Masterplan. Da habe ich auch ein lustiges Beispiel aus ein anderen Kurzfilm, das heisst Die Begräbnis des Harald Kramer, und da gibt es eine Szene wo diese Mann, der Harald Kramer halt vorne ist im Saak, und es ist halt die Beerdigung und es ist die ganze Familie da, und die Frau, was man erst im nachern entfährt, hat ein Verhältniss die ganze Zeit gehabt mit ihre Jogalehrer, und der ist ein verrückter Strizzi, und es ist so, dass er diese Zeremonie quasi abhält, dise Begräbniszeremonie. Es redet nicht ein Pfarrer sondern er mach das so mit Klangschalle und so (singt)... zum Schiessen komisch. Und da war die Frage: verwenden wir in diese Szene Musik, und wenn ja, welche? Was hört man bei einen Begrebniss für Musik. Bei einer Begräbnisfeier. Keine Ahnung. Irgendwas Normales

wollten wir nicht haben. Dann haben wir folgendes gemacht, ich hab den Schwann von Tsaiovsky, (singt) das hab ich spielen lassen von eine Sitar, und von einer Panflöte, oder querflöte, ich weiss jetzt nicht genau. Ok, und die Sitar spielt halt die Akkorde, und es war total seltsam, aber das ist halt auch ein klassische Stück, haben wir genommen mit der Idee weil diesen mechtigen Joga Guru, das war sein Musikauswahl, nachdem er so esoterisch drauf ist, und so das war diese Kombination, das war lustig, ziemlich seltsam, aber irgendwie lustig. Also bezüglich Kombination, jaja, mache ich. Aus unterschiedlichsten Gründen. Es kommt auf der Aufgabestellung an.

Du hast auch Big Band Stücke, also absolute Musik in der lätzten Zeit komponiert, oder? Das ist Konzertmusik, und da haben wir sehr vielen Beispiele von Volksmusik mit jazz und so gehabt.

Jaja, das habe ich früher auch, wie ich irgendwie mich mit Jazz beschäftigt habe, das habe ich irgendwie abgelegt, aber das hat ganz andere Gründe. Wie ich mich mit der beschäftigt habe, das war ganz interessant für mich, diese Ethno-jazz Ansatz. Das hab ich früher auch, wie ich noch gespielt habe, habe ich das auch verfolgt, hab oft solche Musik gehört. Es ist für mich bis Heute noch interesant auch Musik zu hören die eben Genre-übergreifend arbeiten. Also World music an sich ist schon sowas.

Und warum ist es interessant für dich? Oder warum ist es interessanter als “normale Volksmusik” zu spielen?...

Weiss ich nicht.

Also wenn man so denkt, “ok es ist Volksmusik, aber es ist nicht punchy genug, oder irgendwas fehlt noch, und deswegen kombinieren wir es mal mit was anderes...”

Nein, nein. Also ich weiss nicht, ob ich so gedacht habe, das denke ich mehr Heute nicht. Ich mag nach bevor echte ursprüngliche Volksmusik. Es ist total interessant, weil es hat eine ganz andere Ursprung, es kommt aus einem anderen Zweck heraus, der für mich so nah am echten oder wichtigen sinn der Musik ist. Es ist nicht konzipiert, das fänd ich immer interessant.

Es ist einfach ehrlich...

Ja, genau. Und das find ich wahnsinnig stark. Früher konnte ich österreichische volksmusik nicht anhören, diese I-V V-I stufe. Ich habe alles gehört, aber das konnte ich nicht. Mittlereweile find ich das auch wahnsinnig stark in der richtigen Umgebung, wenn du irgendwo in der Bergen stehst, und du hörst, woow, es ist wirklich toll. Früher habe ich World music gemagt, alles, mitlereweile gefällt mir nicht alles, weil ich glaube ich schon abgehört hab, es ist abgespeichert für mich, danke schön, es ist nicht mehr klanglich interessant. Wenn ich es für einen Projekt bräuchte, dann ok, dann kann ich nachören, nachschauen, kein Problem, und jetzt mittlerweile ist es eher die Suche nach irgendwas, was ich noch nicht gehört habe. Etwas interessant... Wie kann ich dir das erklären.... also ich beschränke mich auch noch gar... nicht einmal einen album, nicht nur einen Lied, wo ich das gefühl hab “o wow, das ist was Neues” und als ich dir am Anfang gesagt habe, das hängt mit dieser Einstellung zusammen, die sich in mir entwickelt hat zur jetzigen zeitpunkt: dass es alles gibt, und das einzig Neue in meinen Ohren oder meine Ansicht nach ist die Frage des Zusammenstellens. Wie ich etwas kombiniere, wie ich aufhöre, welche instrumente ich verwende, und das hat genau mit diesen Mischen von Stilen zu tun. Da bin ich immer auf der Suche nach neuen Dingen die ich noch nicht gehört habe. Dann spielen natürlich auch persönliche Vorzüge von Klängen, sag ich jetzt einmal, oder von Instrumentenauswahl oder von Stilen spielen mit ob mir das dann gefällt oder nicht. Aber ich glaube dass ich das nochmal abstrachieren kann, ob ichs interessant finde wie es gemacht ist, und ob es mich zusätzlich auch gefeällt, ob es gut produziert ist, oder es interessant gespielt ist jenachdem das ist jetzt wieder Genre-unterschiedlich. Und auch ob es dann zusätzlich mir gefällt, und warum es mir gefällt...

Wolltest du nicht noch was mit dem Bigband projekt erzählen oder?

Ja, mein Big Band stück war eine Mischung...

Es hat was Kroatisches gehabt, oder?

Nein, also diese wirklich balkanesqe hat die Lana geschrieben, balkan-jazz. Und mein Stück war eine mischung aus, oder eigentlich beeinflusst von elektronische Musik, ganz konkret von Cinematic Orchestra, was eigentlich auch nicht wirklich elektronisch ist, aber irgenwie diese Genre mit reinkommt. Es war der eine Aspekt, und der zweite Aspekt, in ein Teil war ein balkan angelegte Melodie in 7/4 takt. Ich habe ein Bigband stück in 7/4 geschrieben... oder 7/8. (lacht)

Und was ist von Cinematic Orchestra gekommen?

Es sind Lieder die mich einfach voll erwischt haben und dann mich begleiten für immer. Ich wünsche mir das eben, dass ich das machen kann in meinen persönlichen Stil auch. Es gibt dieses Album, da sind nur 6 oder 7 Stücke oben, und die sind ziemlich lang. Das ist „Every day“. So heisst das Album. Die Tracks sind eigentlich akustisch gespielt, aber von der Form her sehr interessant. Sie haben halt so eine Form von x Takten, das wird dann wiederholt und wiederholt, und es ändert sich immer ein bisschen irgendwas.

Minimalistisch.

Genau. Also stichwort minimal music. Nicht ganz, aber irgendwie schon. Und dieses Album hat mir total gefrescht, das konnte ich auswendig, ich habe es ganz oft gehört. Es ist bis heute auch ein Ding das in meiner Musik immer wieder vorkommt, quasi wie Bausteine, und ich ändere immer nur ein bisschen was, zB. in Kotomaki habe ich immer sowas, wo man wirklich Zeit braucht. Heutzutage sehr schweriges Thema, dass man sich mal hinsetzt und sich 5 minuten Musik anhört, das ist nicht leicht. Und das habe ich eben in diesen Bigband stück auch so gemacht. Es gab ein Gitarren-pattern und eine harmonische Struktur von 16 Takten. Es gab ein Bass Riff, das hat sich die ganze Zeit wiederholt, und auf das aufbauend kamen immer mehr Flächen von der einzelnen Instrumentengruppen dazugespielt, also das ist normalerweise untypisch für ein Bigbandstück, also es ist stilistisch von woanders her genommen. So hat es sich aufgebaut, immer ein bisschen mehr, immer ein bisschen mehr, und der Rest ist halt, alle Instrumente die da zugekommen sind sind geblieben und es ist halt immer eine grössere Fläche geworden, und dann am Ende kommt was melodie-artiges, dann gab es einen Bruch und dann gab es diesen „Balkanmelodien“. Dann gab es wieder den ersten Teil harmonisch, mit einem Solo, und dann hat es sich wieder gesteigert und es hat wieder diese balkan Melodie, und dann gab es eine Coda. Ich habe auch sowas gemacht. Ich weiss nicht auch warum ich es gemacht habe. Es kam einfach so.

Haltest du *Innovation* einen wichtigen Faktor in deiner Arbeit? In welchem Sinn findest du deine Werke einzigartig und erneuernd? In welchen musikalischen Parameter kann man diese Innovativität beobachten?

In Zeiten des Internets, so irgendwie dieses Gefühl von „es ist alles da“ es ist alles ein, quasi vor der Füssen geworfen, jetzt ist es die eigentliche Kunst etwas DAVON auszusuchen.

Aber wenn du individualismus wichtig findest in deiner musik, wie findest du dein weg das zu schaffen?

(Lacht.) ...

Also machst du was Klanglich, oder melodisch, oder ..

Nein, ich glaube, man ist solange dabei, solange es einem selber etwas emotional gibt, das was man macht. Solange ist man auf den guten Seite, und dann... Wenn man noch Glück hat, dass es anderen auch berührt dann ist es wunderbar. Wenn man damit nur sich selber berührt, und niemand anderen, dann ist es auch OK. Den Anspruch anderen Leuten anzusprechen ist zweidrangig: solange du dich selber ansprichst mit deiner Musik, dann ist es irgendwie gut. Wenn du Krankhaft versuchst irgendwas neues zu erschaffen, was dir dann selber nicht gefällt, oder was dir selber emotional nichts in dir tut, es kann dich ja auch wahnsinnig machen, musst du nicht immer fröhlich dazu tanzen können, sondern es kann dich ein Paar mal verrückt machen. Aber es macht dann was, und dann ist es irgenwie richtig. Und wenn es irgendwie nichts bewirkt dann ist irgendwas schief gelaufen.

Christian Mühlbacher

Interview with Christian Mühlbacher – Vienna, June 11st 2013

How would you describe your own musical style?

Ok, so in general, I am happy to be able to say that I am independent from particular categories, let's say. So I think I do not really need this label thinking because the possibilities to realize my dreams in many fields are pretty much wide enough. Still, I think in many cases people can recognize my style and say, yeah, that is definitely Mühlbacher. So it has evolved that I work in many musical fields.

Do you compose both applied music and concert music?

I compose mainly applied music and concert music. My opportunities to do media music were relatively slim. It is a question of knowing the right people and if you were socialized in the right place and so on. I did have a few chances. In these cases it is totally clear what kind of role the music will have. It is an artistic decision which one of the sometimes really versatile possibilities to choose, but after that the goals and ways are obvious. In applied music you can have a free goal and then it is all about fulfilling your own goals. That is where technique comes in.

So have you chosen to do more concert music, because you can be more free there, or where you have more chances to experiment?

Well, as I said, it has a lot to do with your relation to people with whom you could work with. It just evolves. For a long time I would have been glad to do a lot of film music, I did not have too many opportunities. Once, a long ago, I had a project. They wanted music especially from me. They had heard a Tango from me and then they wanted material out of that. So I picked some excerpts from it, re-recorded them and put it together. A tango made of tatters. But it was composed a tango in the first place. In other cases I tried... so I only work very rarely exclusively with computer. For me it was always important to have real human beings to play the music. Usually there is the composed music... however, how to put it, I often like to cross the borders between sound design and music so I think printed sheet music is not needed in all cases. So it can be solo improvisations by some players combined with a given structural sketch from me. Or for example I also enjoy using some specially edited, strange samples. But in applied music I have the possibility for that rather rarely. Maybe some additional electronic playback tracks added to the live music, but, I mean it is not really funny listening to a CD-player in the Konzerthaus...

How often and at what occasions do you compose with the intention of reaching larger audiences? Do you ever do so? So I mean, when you know, that it should appeal to really many people and ...

Well, I surely would have to accommodate myself, and have to understand. I did not care about the whole thing for a long time. However, after some time one has to admit, ok, writing music that no one wants to hear, is also a very sad thing. For that, one has to be so convinced of his concept, and be able to say, that is my goal of life, and if I somehow earn my daily bread, that's all right, the main thing: I have not curved. On the other hand one can feel it right away, and I mean it is really joyful sometimes to feel that they get what you composed. There is of course a real danger... well not for me, I did not go that far to say "it must be commerce, it must be marketable". It did not ever have any importance to me, it was never primary. And of course one has to be the type of person to be able to do that. One has to really want to be commercially successful, from deep inside. Then, it can happen, I mean then he has better chances to become successful. I always try when I have something that is heading towards a clear direction, that I still add something surprising to it, so when it seems to go to one resolution then I turn it back somehow, maybe with just one strange note, which is surely not Ö3 Hit Radio compatible, but still, you feel it MUST come at some point. So, my music always needs an open-minded audience. But actually one has to be open for everything. I mean, even in the commercial direction.. I was just flipping through radio stations in my car the other day, and it is unbelievable how many different kinds of commercial music exists, it is just insane!

But you do think that music is a kind of communication, don't you?

Yes, I do. I think, when you are standing on the stage and you do something, you at least have to feel the need to give something to the people. Also if you say, ok, I need a bit of your patience here, you have to have 20 minutes before you hear the first element that will relieve you. So sometimes it has to be that much time. So, it means: I require something, but I also give something. Also, because sometimes I myself enjoy these things very much. I can give you an example

from these so called commercial things that I did. I had a project that went on for ten years. It was Mühlbacher's USW. Every time a full evening without a pause, full with new compositions by me. Between the pieces there were transitory improvisations performed by guests that I invited, guests that I knew I could steer into specific directions and with whom we could make smooth transitions between different things. In this case, therefore, it was very important to play with the right musicians. I had a passion for big ensembles, and improvisation within big ensembles is a special topic. But I am good at it, I can use this element a lot. Once, at such a concert came a piece called Dahaam, which was basically a ballad with lots of normal triad chords and close harmonies placed in low registers – meaning that you could feel the vibrations through your body alone, - and there were all these “nice” harmonies. It is actually quite predictable music. It was, in this case, also important to have the right players that can hold the notes long enough. And over this, comes a slowly evolving melody of sixteenth-notes, again a bit in contrast with these clear chords, so you could say, it was a rock ballad performed by brass. The melody is also very “nice”, while it has a slight funky touch to it, but it was not like a usual 16-bar closed-form periodic melody, but rather it goes on and on until a big climax, then into a solo from which it then calms down again, so it has a real arch-like form. I had composed it originally for USW, then I made a version for big band with wind ensemble, and so on, and it always got this feedback: “How very nice it is!”, and then I definitely had to arrange it for ProBrass, and so this has also become my path, so to say, that I usually use big brass ensembles, and from the beginning it was clear for me, that this 16-bar melody and the big sound with this amount of players work best with musicians that primarily come from classical music traditions while still being open for everything else. So, I realized, that this is the situation where it has the most intensive effect, and I always keep hearing people say – as I also did two weeks ago – that “I heard it so many times, but still I always have to cry at this piece”. So, yes, it is such a feeling to be able to give the listeners such intensive moments with this piece, so of course, I am interested in it. I would be less glad to hear “oh, that was a nice gala-something from the beginning to the end”, which of course sometimes also has to be done, but then it is more like an arranger job, like Dancing Stars, or something like that...

Do you think this ballad works well because it sounds familiar to the audience, or...

Well, I would not say it sounds familiar: I do not know any pieces that would be really similar to it. I mean, of course we know all the elements, so – we are again at your topic – the elements alone are not at all new, I can not reinvent the overtone system, that cannot be done. All the elements are already there, I mean a drum beat with 2-4 is not at all new, but the combination and the context in the case of ProBrass... it follows a Nino Rota arrangement, so there it also creates a contrast, and there I can presume that the audience is open and really ready to listen, so with ProBrass I can really take it for granted. When there are 500-1000 listeners there, it can really work well, when the piece has got something... Of course, at the first couple of performances I thought, ok, little applause, maybe that means it is rubbish, or inappropriate, or something, and anyway it is natural that a piece with a quiet ending does not provoke such frenetic applauds. But after a while as people got to know the piece, - for example last year at the “Woodstock der Blasmusik”, a funny initiative – after the first few chords they immediately say: “Oh, now it comes!”, and then I felt it is OK, everything. (laughs)

Ok, about such combinations, could you tell some more examples, I mean, why is it interesting for you to mix elements...

Simply because I do not want to tie myself down too much, I do not want to be forced to always compose pieces like Dahaam. I want to be allowed to write some wild things as well, like it can be Free Jazz, or the newest modern music with totally harsh notes, and Multiphonics and Electronics and what so ever... And that can also create intensive moments for me, and maybe that is what makes me different from other people who do that – although I can not really imagine someone doing something very intensive and not enjoying it for himself as well, but anyway, sometimes people do it [write music] to please only the intellect. Like, “Great piece, its just, one can not listen to it, but ok.”

...but it is a super idea...

Super idea (laughs), yeah, something like that. I mean, it can also be good sometimes, I also have written some music of which I thought, it is actually quite good, but it is hard to understand. There I tried hard to build in some of it, but then to give something else as well, and this why such stylistic diversity gives joy, because you can change scenes, I mean, also within one concert. So, you can change colours, you can even confuse people or frighten them, in terms of making them think to themselves: “Oh, my God, it is not going to go on like this for the whole concert, is it?”, and these are the exact moments when you can bring in something new and surprising to change the colours, to change the wallpapers. I mean it is boring when one always says the same, and as we said, the elements are all there, and I was quite lucky, at least at the beginning of the 90s, when it was like, you could stay serious while also working in all possible fields. I

used to have that feeling those days, and now, when maybe it does not look like that anymore, well it does not bother me really.

I see. You have mentioned Funky for example. It is always interesting to reference to dance music in a concert situation. How do you approach this?

Well, ok, you have to add, that Funky in our circles very rarely means really dance music to anyone. Of course, it is an import, without question. It stems from Soul music actually, and it is not so directly the primary musical style in Brass music, that you would say it is dance music. I was interested in it certainly also because of my instrument being the drums. I mean, a young drummer in the 70s-80s, could not pass by Funky, and of course it is real fun to play. Although one must see clearly that not all the fun that a musician has when playing is transportable to the audience. One has to think about it and say to himself: "I can not only play what I as a performer enjoy playing". It is very common, somehow with every instrument, "wow, this run sounds fantastic, I play it again!" and someone out there in the audience thinks "well that is unbelievable! What on earth is this, what does he have to say to me with that?" And at the same time, if that run is placed at the right moment it can be like "Oh, Wow". So it can resolve some other things, when it is not too obtrusive, or something. So that is how funk or rock comes into play. I still gladly play rock, but I like to mix it with some at least partly traditional sounding swing passages.

That means, you prefer switching between styles in a linear fashion? So, I mean a rock part followed by a swing part?

Yeah, that is mostly what happens. I do not know, there is some very old stuff, for example a piece of mine called Lamento, if you want some examples. That is simply a cha-cha tempo, so also a mix, and the B-part is a Swing. Although I am not sure if it is ideal in this case, but it can be done without any difficulties, so yeah, normally I mix things mainly part-wise or passage-wise. That means I come out from a swing passage I go through a ballad part and then I go into a funky piece, or something like that. I think I rarely do it with sharp-edged sudden changes, though that is also possible of course. I like to create longer arches with the help of the rhythm. At moments when I feel it would be difficult to stretch an arch any further, I interrupt it by introducing some other rhythms. And also, in this piece [Lamento] it works well, that Funk and Swing have different main loudness levels, in terms of the instrumentation also, I mean, of course you could play funk quietly and swing very loud, but... [...] I have composed something for a sound installation, which was mainly done with computer. It is a *collage*, and there are parts with large orchestra, also Electronics, lops, so a collage with many elements. There, too, appears for a short moment a little Funk. Then it gets rockier and it swings afterwards, then there are orchestra clouds. So, yeah, I mix very gladly, that is true. (laughs)

Ok. Your motivation for mixing is also interesting to me. For example, there are these associations with which one can communicate specific meanings, I mean, the people socialized on western culture are used to these Hollywood clichés: like erotic scene, saxophone, smooth jazz, and things like that. And it is hard to avoid these connotations, even in concert music.

Where you see pictures, you mean?

Yeah.

Absolutely, and I really like to make people see pictures when listening to my music.

So, how do you approach this? I mean, you can use these connotations and try to control what the listener will see at certain passages, but you can also try to avoid these, and try maybe to alienate...

Well, yes, I do that as well gladly, so alienating, or sometimes mixing in a little devil-like... So, as we know, pleasure and pain are near each other, so an odd note in the middle of a nice Pad can create some fine tensions. And then you can resolve it, or resolve a whole music piece...

And do you sometimes try to communicate something specific with genres?

Well, maybe not exactly with genres, but rather with the way I use them.

You have already mentioned the changing of scenes. Is it a general atmosphere of a scene, or...

Well, as you said, for an erotic scene I could use a tenor saxophone and such. But I do not do it because my concept tells me to begin an erotic scene at the last third of the piece. I rather think like, I need a smokey tenor saxophone sound at this moment, it [the erotic connotation] comes with it eventually. I do not want the pictures to be totally specific. Instead just generally "oh, that is nice" or maybe something like "wow, that grooves", so altogether it is rather autonomous music.

Ok. Do you find innovation an important factor in your work?

Well, innovation. I do not strive for it so hard to create something very new. Actually when you look at it, you think “what is new, really?”. Or for whom is it important. As already said, the elements are all there. Every once and a while, let's say in every decade, new instruments are invented. Like, from the saxophone, through the guitars, synthesizers and computers to the samplers, or whatever. When you stay up to date in these fields, you can at least pick up some new instruments. When it is interesting I also work with electronics some times, why not?

So, the innovation concerns mainly the sound domain? Or which musical parameters?

Innovation, like “I have made a sensational discovery that will determine the German musical scene for the next hundred years” or something like this... I mean the elements are already discovered. I have been told so also in my educational institutes, so that in reality novelty comes from combination. I would also say, I also do it automatically, even without thinking: 'aha, this combination has not been found yet'.

Ok, it does not have to be a revolutionary discovery, just something you like, something YOU think is new.

When you think of it [a new idea], sooner or later it turns out, that this or that person has already done that before, or even if you do not realize, it still has been done before anyway, so for me it does not have any priority to do something really new. But I think, despite of that, I do have found many new combinations. But I do not strive for it too hard.

In what direction do you make experiments with instrumentation, or sound?

I often like to create “clouds” with instruments, whenever it is possible. It can also be done with a marimbaphone, for instance, but I do not use it for the length of a whole concert. So, say, “Vibraphone! At last!”. On the other hand, with brass you need many instruments to create such, really atmospheric, pulse-free things, like, for a simple example, to climb from very low to very high. Not in a linear way, but step-wise, so that you can experience a feeling of levitating. And for that I need more people, and that is what I would call my sound, when such things are possible. I mean, it could be done also with electronics, by transforming existing materials, but again, a sample, or a sound is also nothing new, because it has already been there.

Maybe a last question: improvisation. There is also a mix of improvised and written parts. What parts do you like to fix or tie down, and what do you like to allow to be free?

Well, at the beginning of my studies I thought: “ok, now I have to learn everything, and then at the end I will improvise freely. That was sort of a life plan for me. The only problem is, that one can not make a living with free improvisation. There are a lot of other things to learn, like technical know-how, and so on. And one can not learn everything, that also has to be accepted, there are borders. I do it this way, I gladly improvise sometimes, when there is a chance. And here we are again at the specific musicians. I really had to uprear my own ensemble, USW. It took more then ten years. All the members, and also new musicians that play with us sometimes, have to be musicians of whom I can assume that they understand the directions in which my music is going. It is essential that there is no one there who would turn against the evident musical directions, and say: “I play now something totally different!” I do not need this in this case. I mean, once the musical direction suits me, then I will like the improvisation as well. There are, of course, a thousand different types of improvisation, actually. There is the straight-ahead jazz solo improvisation, no question, which I also apply from time to time.

Could you please tell me a specific example?

Yeah, for the latest thing I did with USW, that was originally created for a commission, we worked with Bruckner 4. We picked elements from it and turned them into a whole-evening program of mine. That means, it is full with short references to Bruckner, but generally it sounds the way Mühlbacher's USW always sounded. In it there is a passage... I worked on it, and I had my overall concept: I had some Bruckner elements arranged to a specific order, and some compositions of mine, that I thought fitted well to Bruckner, were built in between these elements. Waldbeat and such things. And there is a recitativo-like passage in the Bruckner 4th where it was clear to me, that I would have some “kicks” with bass and drum kit fill, and that I want to arrive into a rhythm. I did not want it to end, like: “plubs!” and over, I mean, tonic and that was it. And we had a cool instrument called the Tubax, which is a contrabass saxophone. It could have been done with a bariton saxophone actually, but it sounds different. And we had exceptional improvisators with us. I wanted to write a bebop-like part there, not too fast, so that the instrument can still play the notes, it needs some time, you know. Then, I would say a traditional swing was played under that, so the form of this passage over which the guy plays solo after the theme is a very normal jazz thing, but with tubax it is something really different. But still, ok, Bebop lines...

And the lines were written down?

Well, the theme is written down, and for the improvisation he has given chords and traditional jazz improvisation. The new thing in it was this: to the tubax theme a kind of counter theme was added on the soprano saxophone, that always plays a sort of mirror image of that theme. It is not so strictly a mirroring, but you can actually hear it that way. And it is maybe a new combination. At least, I have not found such things in bebop before. And it sounds just like a traditional jazz improvisation in the middle with backgrounds with on-the-beat accents. And there comes the theme which is actually also a traditionally rooted musical passage, and it gets dissolved again... (thinks) There is a part in the Bruckner 4th with these heavy triplets (sings), that goes into a drum solo section, which is in 7/8. Bruckner also may have intended to write it that way, only he did not. (laughs) And then it flows into a 7/8 funky, which I took from somewhere... So for sure you can speak about combinations in my case. That is true.

I would like to ask yet how you instruct your improvising musicians?

There are a couple of elements and a couple of signs, like, for example, when I put my hands in front of my eyes, then it means – not “go to jail”, (loughs) but – it means: Fog. I had to transport what I wanted to hear. When I do this, then it means down, or when I do this, it means up. Or tremolo, or arpeggio is also a typical sign that I often like to give Preinie (drummer). Does not matter what passage it is, it can be an atonal section, or whenever he has chords, he puts wonderful arpeggi on the top of them or something, so it is partly improvised but it is also controlled, so that it suits the actual overall flow. This can also be wonderfully combined.

So, you do it all live, without any rehearsing or preparing?

Well, it IS rehearsed, in case of projects such as the Bruckner one. Partly because the ambiance (the venue) there is quite big, I mean Sanct Florian Bruckner Fest Linz, Brucknerhaus, Large Hall, it is a place where I want to arrive rehearsed and prepared. Though, I try to keep the rehearsals as short as possible so that the tension is maintained. It can become over-rehearsed sometimes, like, there are moments, like “oh no, here comes the FOG again”. I mean, of course the players experience it in a different way than the audience, because the audience hears it for the first time anyway, but the players say to themselves “ok it was FOG the last week as well”. It has to give joy to them as well every time. It has to stay fresh.

Christian Mühlbacher (Original German Version)

Wie würdest du deinen musikalischen Stil beschreiben?

Gut. In der summe bin ich relativ froh darüber dass ich nicht unbedingt abhängig bin von gewissen Schubladen, sagen wir jetzt mal so, deswegen, also, ich hoffe, so zu sagen, dass ich eigentlich dieses Schubladendenken nicht brauche, weil quasi meine Möglichkeiten halbwegs breit gefächert sind, dass ich in Umstände bin mich in verschiedenen Terrains zu verwirklichen in dem Sinn also. Dennoch hoffe ich weiters dass so unterm Strich bei vielen Dingen auskommt, OK wenn man es wüsste, könnte sagen, das ist Mühlbacher, klar. Also es hat sich herauskristallisiert auf verschiedene Arten zu arbeiten.

Komponierst du auch angewandte Musik und Konzertmusik?

Ich komponiere hauptsächlich angewandte und Konzertmusik. Die Gelegenheiten für mich Medienmusik zu machen waren relativ gering, das ist eine Frage von welche Leute kennt man, wo ist man sozialisiert und der Gleichen. Paar Gelegenheiten hat es gegeben. In diesen Fällen ist es völlig klar was für eine Aufgabe die Musik haben wird, so zu sagen, da ist es dann, würde ich mal sagen, zunächst schon eine künstlerische Entscheidung, welche der manchmal doch vielfältigen Möglichkeiten man wählt, und dann ist aber klar wohin es muss. In dem Fall ist das Ziel vollkommen klar. Bei Angewandte Musik setzt man sich das Ziel Frei, so zu sagen, und danach geht es auch darum das eigene Ziel sozusagen zu vervollständigen. Und da kommt Technik in spiel.

Dass heißt du hast auch gewählt eher Konzertmusik zu komponieren weil es da freier ist, oder weil man mehr experimentieren kann?

Wie gesagt es hat viel mit dem Umgang zu tun mit Leuten, mit denen man so arbeitet in Prinzip das ergibt sich. Ein Zeit lang hätte ich gern sehr viel für Film zum Beispiel gemacht, es hat sich nicht viel ergeben. Es war ein Projekt auch schon wieder lange her. Da war kvasi wollten Musik von mir. Sie hatten einen Tango von mir gehört, und sie wollten Material aus diesen. Dann hab ich so zu sagen also mit dem Material irgendwie Details herausgeholt nochmal aufgenommen und mitbesteht. Ein Tango aus fetzen und Elemente davon. Aber der war auch ursprünglich als Tango komponiert in dem Fall. In anderen Fällen habe ich dann wirklich versucht. Also ich hab selten wirklich nur mit Computer gearbeitet, ja. Es war mir immer wichtig, dass es Menschen gibt die da was spielen. Es hat in normalen Fall mit komponierten Noten zu tun, wobei ich, wie soll man sagen, die Grenze zwischen Sound Design und Musik schon ganz gern auch überschreite, beziehungsweise Lust darauf habe. Also es muss nicht jetzt alles in Noten ausgedrückt sein, finde ich. Also es kann einerseits von freien Improvisation bestimmten Solisten gepaart mit einem Leitfaden von mir sozusagen. Oder auch wirklich also seltsamen Samples z. B. in spezielle Art und Weise bearbeitet, es macht mir schon Spaß, aber in Bereich der Angewandte Musik habe ich relativ wenig Gelegenheit dazu ab und zu vielleicht mal eine Zuspiegelung zu Live Musik zusätzlich elektronische Natur, aber ich meine, es ist ja nicht besonders lustvoll in Konzerthaus ein CD-Spieler dazu zu hören.

Wie oft und bei welche Gelegenheit hast du es als Ziel mit ein breiteres Publikum zu kommunizieren? Gibt es manchmal? Wenn du es wirklich weißt, dass die Musik wirklich für vielen Leuten ankommen sollte, und ...

Ja, dann würde ich mich ganz bestimmt Richten trotzdem, ich muss verstehen, es war mir lange Zeit völlig Wurst. Wobei man dann mit der Zeit schon darunter leidet, OK Musik zu schreiben die niemand hören möchte ist auch eine recht traurige Angelegenheit. Da muss man entweder so überzeugt sein von seinem Konzept, wo man sagen muss, das ist mein Lebensinhalt, und wenn ich irgendwie mein tägliches Butterbrot kriege irgendwie, dann muss das genügen, aber Hauptsache ich habe mich nicht gebeugt, auf der anderen Seite man merkt natürlich schon, ich meine, es macht ja oft Freude wenn man etwas geschaffen hat was dann ankommt und das merkt man dann schon. Die Gefahr dabei ist, also für mich also soweit gehe ich doch nicht dass ich sage, OK, Kommerz muss es sein, es muss gut verkäuflich sein. Es war tatsächlich nie wirklich von Bedeutung. Das habe ich nie primär also versucht irgendwie herzustellen, also irgendwelche Versuche man muss auch zu bestehen, man muss der Typ dazu sein. Man muss irgendwie, ich sag das jetzt abwertend eine kommerze aus sein, und muss das irgendwie wollen, von sein tiefsten inneren, dann wird das auch ganz gut gelingen, also hat besseren Chancen dass es gelingen kann. Ich hab immer wieder versucht zu wie ich das eher mache selbst wenn ich etwas habe was also sicher klar und deutlich kommt, dann versuche ich trotzdem etwas dazu zu addieren oder sein die Sache in eine Richtung zu lenken wo sich das dann irgendwie umkehrt und der gleichen, also wie soll man sagen, den einen ganz schrägen Ton, der so zu sagen also ganz bestimmt nicht Ö3 tauglich ist und doch noch hinzubringen, aber am besten so hinzufügen das der irgendwie kommen MUSS. Also für meine Musik braucht sowieso

immer Leute die irgendwie offen sind. Aber in Wahrheit man muss für alles offen sein, also in der Kommerz Richtung, als gestern habe ich durchgezappelt durch das Autoradio, und es ist eigentlich unglaublich was für verschiedene Sorten Kommerzes gibt in dem Sinn (lacht), ist eigentlich Wahnsinn.

Aber du glaubst schon dass Musik eine Art Kommunikation ist oder denkst du wie anders?

Das denke ich doch und ich glaube wenn man sich auf die Bühne stellt und etwas tut, dann muss man so mindestens irgendwie das Gefühl haben den Leuten etwas geben zu müssen, und es wenn etwas ist, wo man sagt, OK, ich brauche jetzt eure Geduld, ihr müsst jetzt 20 Minuten Zeit haben bevor das erste Element kommt was euch dann erleuchten kann, also mitunter muss so viel Zeit sein. Also das heißt ich fordere dann schon etwas aber ich gebe auch gern etwas, ach deshalb weil mir die Sachen mitunter selbst viel Freude machen. Es gibt also jetzt ein Beispiel zu nennen, ich sag dich mal die unter Anführungsstrichen kommerziellen Dingen die ich gemacht hab, das war eigentlich auch aus eine vielleicht zu Erklärung, ich hab so ein Projekt gehabt, es war 10 Jahre lang, Mühlbacher's USW. Immer ein komplette Abend pausenfrei durchgespielt mit laute frischen Stücken von mir gepaart mit Improvisation von Leuten wo ich gewusst habe ich kann sie lenken in eine Richtung bzw. Wir können Übergänge schaffen von einem Ding zum nächsten und der gleichen, das heißt im dem Fall was sehr wichtig: mit den richtigen Menschen zu arbeiten. Ich hab auch ein Feber für große Ensembles und Improvisationen in große Ensembles ist ein spezielles Thema. Aber das ist mir gelungen und dieses Element kann ich verwenden und aus einem diese Konzerte ist so ein Stück hervorgegangen das heißt Daham, das ist eine Ballade in Grund genommen, und das hat dem mich also eine ganze menge tiefes Blech dabei hatte, es sein in Grund genommen zu meisten normale Dreiklänge und es ist ein sehr obertonal gesetzt in der tiefen Lage, was soviel bedeutet, man kann es körperlich spüren, kvasi die Schwingungen übertragen sich denn körperlich bereits, und dann sind sozusagen ich sag jetzt mal unter Anführungszeichen schöne Harmonien. Es ist also durchaus erwartbare Musik in dem Fall. Wichtig war in dem Fall natürlich dass ich auch da die richtigen Spieler hab die es lang genug durchhalten können und der gleichen. Und über das ganze Ding kommt eine sehr lange aufbauende Melodie, aus Sechzehntel eigentlich, wieder ein bisschen konträr zu diesen reinen Akkorden wo man könnte sagen, ja das ist eine RockBallade von Bläsern gespielt oder so etwas. Die Melodie ist auch sehr schön, sie hat aber doch auch ein Funky touch irgendwie, und es wäre auch nicht grad eine Melodie wo mann sagt, ok ich schreibe mal eine 16-taktige hübsche Melodie die in sich abgeschlossen ist, sondern sie geht richtig raus zum Höhepunkt, und ab dort geht's dann in mittels solo und so weiter wieder hinunter, es ist ein richtige Hügel. Und das hab ich zuerst für USW geschrieben, und dann hat es eine Version gegeben für Bigband mit Blasorchester, usw, und es hat immer wieder diesen Eindruck hinterlassen: Ma ist es scheh' und so, und dann hab mal das unbedingt für ProBrass machen müssen, das ist also auch eine meiner Schienen sozusagen wo ich öfters was oft was mach also ein großes Brass Ensemble, und mir war von vorne klar bei denen geht es eigentlich am besten bis auf die 16-Melodie, aber der Ton, das Volumen der einzelnen Spieler die auch also hauptsächlich aus der Klassische Musik kommen und dennoch offen sind für alles mögliche, also dass das dort am intensivsten kommen würden dass es tatsächlich auch gelungen, und das ist so ein Moment, wo ich immer dann wieder, auch jetzt also vor zwei Wochen irgendwie gehört, "Ich habe es schon so oft gehört, und ich hab so oft weinen müssen bei dem Stück", und .. ja, das hat doch was, also wenn ich im Stande bin mit dem Stück Soetwas zu geben, oder so etwas ähnliches, so intensive Momente, das wäre es eigentlich, dann interessiert mich das auf jeden Fall. Ich möchte mich weniger auf die Bühne stehen und "Toll, das war ein schönes Gala-Ding von vorne von bis hinten", wie soll man sagen, - muss man auch machen mitunter, aber dann ist es mehr Arbeit oder Arranger-Arbeit was weiß ich Dancing Stars oder so.

Glaubst du dass dieses Ballad funktioniert weil das Publikum hört etwas was sehr bekannt klingt, oder...

Na ja, bekannt klingt... das kann man nicht sagen. Also jetzt wirklich was vergleichbares kenne ich nicht. Ich meine, man kennt natürlich irgendwie Elemente, und da sind wir villeicht auch bei deinem Thema, die Elemente selbst sind ja nicht neu, ich kann die Obertöne nicht neu erfinden, das geht ja nicht wirklich. Das heißt die sind da und alle möglichen anderen Elemente sind da, also ich meine ein Schlagzeug Beat mit 2-4 ist auch nichts neues sozusagen, aber die Kombination und auch das Umfeld in diesem Fall jetzt mit ProBrass, OK da passiert das nachdem irgendwie vorher weiß ich nicht, ein Arrangement von Nino Rota Musik passiert ist, dann ist es sowohl ein Kontrast, ich kann dann dort davon ausgehen, das Publikum ist prinzipiell bereit zuzuhören, und bei Pro Brass kann man auch davon ausgehen, OK es sind doch 500-1000 Leute oder so vorhanden, das heißt es ist schon eine Menge, wo man sagen kann, OK es geht anspringend wenn es was hat, ja? Und natürlich denkt man sich bei den ersten Paar Aufführungen, na ja, OK, wenig Applaus, denkt man, ist es doch Mist, oder fehl am Platz, oder sonst etwas, es ist natürlich klar wenn ein Stück ruhig endet, dann gibt es nicht diesen frenetischen Applaus. Aber mit der Zeit wo die Laute begonnen haben das zu kennen, es war letztes Jahr z.B bei der Woodstock der Blasmusik, eine witzige Institution, und es erklingen die ersten Akkorde, und "aaa, das kommt jetzt" und OK dann ist es OK Alles.

Ok, gerade diese Kombination, wenn du noch Beispiele sagen könntest, wäre super, also warum ist es interessant für dich zu mischen...

Also aus der einfachen Grund weil ich mich nicht fest nageln möchte, ich möchte jetzt nicht nur so Dahaams schreiben müssen, ich möchte dann auch, OK es kann auch einmal ganz wild sein, und es kann Free Jazz sein, und so die neueste NeuMusik mit ganz strengenden Klängen, und Multiphonics und Elektronik, und ich weiß nicht was. Und auch das kann intensive Momente erzeugen, und das hebt mich vielleicht ab von anderen Leuten die das tun, obwohl ich kann mal nicht vorstellen, wenn jemand was intensives macht, das eben das nicht dann selbst Freude bereitet, also möglicherweise brauchen manche Menschen um einfach nur... um den Intellekt zu befriedigen, könnte sein. Tolles Werk, kann man sich nicht anhören, aber. OK.

...Super Idee...

Super Idee, (lacht) ja. So auf die Art. Beziehungsweise, ich meine, es kann gut sein, ich meine, ich hab auch dinge, wo ich sag, das ist eigentlich schon ziemlich gut, aber es ist schwer vertaunlich, ja? Dann bin ich halt bemüht dass ich irgendwie ein bisschen einzubauen auch. Dann nochmal was anderes zu geben, und gerade dieses Stil-Vielfalt macht man deshalb Freude, man kann irgendwie die Szenen wechseln, also innerhalb eines Konzertes aber auch. Das heißt die Farben wechseln, man kann völlig verwirren, und dann kann man sagen, möglicherweise sogar Angst erzeugen, nämlich Angst in dem Sinn, dass man sich irgendwo sagt "Gott, es wird das Konzert doch nicht die ganze Zeit so weitergehen", so zu sagen, aber genau dann irgendwie gibt es Platz irgendetwas etwas anderes zu bringen und überraschen und Farben wechseln und Tapeten wechseln, also es ist langweilig wenn man immer das selber sagt, und wie gesagt von diesen Elementen gibt es wirklich zu hof, und ich war ziemlich glücklich wie man gesehen hat, zu mindestens Anfang der neunziger Jahre, hat das doch so ausgesehen es würde man ernsthaft bleiben können und sich trotzdem überall bedienen dürfen. Dieses Gefühl hatte ich, und jetzt wo das vielleicht nicht mehr ganz so aussieht ist mal schon egal.

Ok. Du hast erwähnt Funky z.B, es ist immer interessant so Tanzmusik zu zitieren bei einem Konzertsituation. Wie gehst du damit um?

Also gut, dazu kann man sagen, Funky in unserem Bereichen ist Funky eigentlich selten wirklich Tanzmusik für irgendjemanden, es ist natürlich eine Import, keine Frage. Irgendwie aus den Soul wurzelt letztlich, es ist bei Blechgesicht ist es nicht so direkt die Primäre Musik irgendwie die man sagt das ist jetzt Tanzmusik in dem Sinn. Es hat mich aber natürlich interessiert hat auch mit meinem Instrument zu tun, Schlegelzug: junger Schlagzeuger, 70-80 Jahre, ist klar, ich meine, da kommst an Funky nicht vorbei, und es mach enorm Freude, muss man aber auch begreifen, dass nicht alles was das einem Spieler spaß macht, dann auch irgendwie zum Publikum transportierbar ist. Das muss man bedenken, und man muss sich selbst einschränken und sagen, ich kann nicht nur das spielen was mir als Spieler gefällt. Ich meine es gibt schon sehr seltsame weise auf jeden Instrument irgendwie: "wow der Lauf ist, ist der nicht zu bond, ich spiele das und spiele nochmal", und irgendjemand sitzt da draußen und denkt sich "o das der wixe, Unglaublich, was soll das jetzt, der will mir nämlich nichts sagen damit". Auf der anderen Seiten kann der Lauf irgendwie im richtigen Moment eingebaut sein: "O, wow." Also es kann wieder was anderes auslösen, wenn es nicht zu aufdränglich ist vielleicht. Gut. Also daher kommt jetzt Funk und Rock, also ich sag jetzt mal, alle den Rock den ich gern gespielt hab, spiele ich in Ansätzen nach wievor gerne, nur ich mag es auch mischen also mit durchaus ein teilweise zu mindestens traditionell wirkenden Swing Passagen oder dergleichen ...

Das heißt linear wechselst du lieber? Also manchmal ich weiß nicht straight Rock und dann swing?...

Das kann durchaus passieren, was weiß ich, ich meine, die Sachen gibt es ja auch schon ewig, es gibt ein Stück von mir das heißt Lamento, wenn du Beispiele möchtest. Da ist nichts weiter wie..., eigentlich ist es ein Cha-cha Tempo, also auch ein mix, und der B-Teil ist es halt ein Swing. Obwohl ich bin in diesem Fall nicht sicher ob es ideal ist, aber das kann man tun, es ist an für sich kein Problem. Normalerweise mische ich es eher stückeweise, oder abschnittweise. Das heißt ich komme aus so einer Swing Passage raus, gehe über eine Ballade in ein Funk Stück hinein, oder dergleichen so. Also ich mische das weniger gern scharfkantig, obwohl es ist durchaus denkbar. Ich erzeuge auch über den Rhythmus gerne längere Bögen, und dem Moment wo ich das jetzt kvasi unterbreche ist es irgendwie schwieriger den Bogen weiter zu ziehen. Das mag sein auch, weil Funk und also grad bei dem Beispiel, weil Funk und Swing ja doch, sagen wir, vielleicht eine andere Grundlautstärke hat, von der Instrumentarium her. Ich meine man kann natürlich auch Funk leise spielen, oder etwas lautes swingendes, es geht im Prinzip schon. Es fällt mir jetzt kein Beispiel ein, aber klar, glaub ich, auch den Sachen gewechselt oder Abschnitte, oder von 6/8 zu reine Zehszentel Musik zu gehen, oder solche Dinge. Das kann ich mir ohne Weiteres vorstellen. Auf der anderen Seite, es gibt auch Orchestermusik, und selbst das zu mischen macht mir spaß. Ich hab für eine Installation, Einz der wenigen letztlich am Computer gefertigten Dinge, das ist eine Kollage, da kommen große Orchesterpassagen vor, und Münden, also Elektronik geblooper, also eine

Installation, so zu sagen, die sich alle diese Elemente bedient, und dann blitzt einmal ein wenig Funk auf, und der gleichen, und wird es rockig und swingt es wieder dahin, und dann kommt eine Orchesterwolke. Ich mische irrsinnig gerne, das stimmt schon.

Ok. Die Motivation hinter diesen Mischungen ist für mich auch interessant. Also,... es gibt diese Assoziationen mit denen man wirklich ganz bestimmte Sachen kommunizieren kann. Die Leute die auf den Westlichen Kultur sozialisiert sind, haben schon diese Hollywood Filmmusik-Klischees, also erotische Szene Saxophon, smooth Jazz, und solche Sachen. Und man kann es manchmal wirklich nicht vermeiden auch nicht bei Konzertmusik.

Wo man dann Bilder sieht, meinst du das?

Ja, oder?

Sicher, auf jeden Fall. Und ich möchte total, dass man bei meiner Musik einfach Bilder sieht.

Wie gehst du damit um, also man kann es auch nutzen, und ich weiß schon welche Bilder das Publikum hier sehen wird... und ist es für dich gut, oder willst du davon weggehen und etwas verfremden?

Naja, das mach ich schon auch gern, eben, sogar verfremden, oder ein leichtes Teuflischen z. B. einbauen. Ich meine man kennt das auch mitunter liegt Lust und Schmerz nah bei einander, so ein schräger Ton der da drinnen liegt in einen wohlgemachten Pad, dann erzeugt das Spannung wiederum durchaus. Ich meine kann man da auflösen, kann man überhaupt die ganze Musik wieder auflösen.

Und also so bestimmte Bedeutungen willst du nicht kommunizieren mit Genres?

Mit Genres nicht unbedingt. Aber mit der Umgang damit.

Du hast schon gesagt Szenen wechseln. Ist es so ein allgemeines Gefühl, oder...

Also wie du sagst Erotik Szene ich könnte tenor Saxophon brauchen und der gleichen. Ich mach das jetzt nicht weil mein konzept sagt, OK am Beginn des letzten Drittels fangen wir mit der Erotikszene an. Aber ich kann mal schon vorstellen, das ich mal denke, OK und am diese Stelle brauche ich ein sehr rauchiges tenor Saxophon, es ist schon durchaus drinnen, ja. Ich möchte die Bilder jetzt vielleicht auch garnicht so klar haben. So allgemein: "so ist es schee'," oder je nach dem... vielleicht so in die Richtung, "wow das groovet". Also insofern doch eher autonome musik.

Ok. Haltest du Innovation einen wichtigen Faktor in deiner Arbeit?

Na ja, Innovation. Es ist mir nicht ums biegen und ums brechen wichtig dass mein Ding also jetzt so wahnsinnig neu ist. In Wahrheit man sieht sich um und denkt sich, was ist denn jetzt neu, wenn man also Leuten den es wichtig ist. Oder so. Wie gesagt, Elemente sind alle da. Es werden ab und zu sagen wir jetzt mal dekadeweise sinngemäss neue Instrumente erfunden oder entdeckt. Das könn man von Saxophon über die Gitarre, Synthesiser, Computer letztlich, Sampler oder was auch immer. Über diese Ecke ganz gut verfolgen und natürlich nimmt man dazu mindestens neue Instrumente auf, oder wenn es interessant ist, arbeite ich gern mit Elektronik, warum nicht.

Also die Erneuerungen sind eher in Richtung Sound? Welche musikalische Parameter sind betroffen?

Die Erneuerung per se, als "Ich habe jetzt eine völlig neue Entdeckung gemacht die die Vorherrschaft der deutsche Musik für den nächsten Hundert Jahre gewährleisten wird", oder irgend so etwas. Ich meine die Elemente waren denn trotzdem schon mal da, nicht? Und das hab ich irgendwie auch in meinem Studium eigentlich glaubhaft vermittelt bekommen, na ja, was kram neues in die Kombination in Wahrheit. Ich würde fast behaupten das passiert automatisch ohne dass ich mal denke, "aha diese Kombination hat es noch nicht gegeben."

Es muss natürlich garnicht so revolutionär sein, aber wenn es dir spaß macht, oder wenn du es glaubst dass es was neues ist...

Ich möchte nicht unbedingt, wenn ich es glaube, man kommt dann darauf ja der Mensch hat das auch schon gemacht hier oder da, oder wenn man nicht darauf kommt ist es trotzdem so. Es hat keine Priorität, dass ich jetzt was neues erfinde, in dem Sinn. Das möchte ich nicht sagen. Ich glaube dass es trotzdem durchaus schon etliche neue Kombinationen rausgekommen sind. Das ist mir auch nicht unrecht. Ich suche nicht kampfhafte danach.

Mit Instrumenten, oder mit Sound wie, welche Richtungen experimentierst du?

Ich mag gerne wenn es möglich ist mit Instrumenten Wolken erzeugen zu können. Ich kann mal, ich meine man kann es mit Marimbafon auch z.B, aber ich halte das dann doch nicht ein ganzes Konzertlang durch. So mal sagen "Vibrafon! Endlich!" Auf der anderen Seiten beim Bläsern oder so braucht man dann eine Menge, siehe große Besetzungen um

wirklich so atmosphärische auch pulsfreie Sachen zu erzeugen, nehmen wir einfaches Beispiel von ganz tief oder ganz oben hinauf klettern. Nicht linear, aber quasi etappenweise, stückeweise, also dass man quasi diese Levitation erleben kann, mitunter, wenn es gut gelingt, also dazu brauche ich mehrere Leute und das würde ich dann als meinen Sound bezeichnen, wenn solche Dinge möglich sind. Mit Elektronik kann man es natürlich gut machen, mit Nachbearbeitung bestehende Dinge, aber auch hier ein Sample oder ein Sound ist ja auch nicht neu, sondern ist er schon da.

Vielleicht eine letzte Frage. Improvisation. Es ist auch eine Mischung von improvisierte und geschriebene Teile. Was ist für dich wichtig dass es fixiert ist, und was magst du gern frei lassen?

Also ich habe mal ursprünglich gedacht, als ich angefangen habe mich professionell mit musik zu beschäftigen, ich habe mal gedacht, OK jetzt muss ich alles lernen, und um Schluss improvisiere ich mal frei. Das war von eine Idee von einem Lebensplan. Problem mag sein, dass man von frei Improvisieren nicht leben kann. Es bleibt immer von anderen auch da, diesen technischen know-how und so. Und man kann auch nicht alles lernen, das muss man auch akzeptieren, irgendwo ist ein Schluss, es ist Grenzen gesetzt. Ein bisschen in die Richtung gehe ich schon, ich mache es sehr gerne, wenn es möglich ist zu improvisieren, und da wiederum sind wir bei den speziellen Leuten, ich musste mir meine Ensemble, jetzt USW z.B. so richtig erziehen. Es ist über die 10 Jahre passiert und überhinaus. So dass jeder der dabei ist, und wenn ein neuer mit dabei ist mal, dass es ein Mensch ist von dem ich annehme, der versteht das schon, wenn das rund herum so in die Richtung läuft. Also ich meine dass es niemand da ist der sozusagen die Musik oder die offensichtliche Richtung, die hörbare, empfindbare Richtung jetzt für die Musiker auch, kontrakarriert und sagt "Ich mach jetzt ganz was anderes!". Das kann ich in dem Fall nicht brauchen, also dass heißt die Richtung stimmend für mich. Dann ist die Improvisation auch OK. Natürlich gibt es auch da Tausend verschiedene Sorten Improvisation im Wahrheit, es gibt die straight-ahead Jazz solo improvisation überhaupt keine Frage. Auch die kann ich gern, oder brauche ich immer wieder.

Kannst du da auch ein bestimmte Beispiel sagen?

Ja ich hab jetzt in mein letztes Ding für USW, das wurde letztlich über einen Auftrag entstanden, wir haben uns mit Bruckner 4. beschäftigt, und Elemente daraus zu einem abendfüllenden, also mein Programm umgestaltet. Also das heißt es blitzt immer wieder Bruckner auf, und um strich hört es sich an wie Mühlbachers USW immer geklungen hat. Und da gibt es z.B eine Passage, da war ich grad in der Arbeit und hab mir gedacht das der grobe Fahrplan war klar, also die Bruckner Elementen zu irgendwie in der Reihenfolge gelegen, und immer wieder eigene Stücke eingebaut in die Angelegenheit auch wo ich denke das passt jetzt zu Bruckner, Waldbeat oder solche dinge. Und da gibt es z.B eine Passage, da bin ich quasi, .. es gibt in der Bruckner 4 eine Rezitativ-artige Passage, es war klar mit so Kicks mit bass und Drum kit fill, und dann war es klar jetzt möchte ich zu einem Rhythmus kommen weil ich möchte jetzt nicht Plubs und aus, also Tonika, fertig. Und wir hatten ein tolles Instrument dabei und zwar das tubax, es ist ein kontrabass Saxophon, das könnte in Wahrheit ein bariton Saxophon machen, aber es klingt schon anders. Und hervorragende Improvisatoren. Ich hab mir gedacht ich möchte jetzt ein Bebop artige Stück machen dafür, nicht zu schnell, damit noch das Instrument Töne entfallen kann, es braucht schon Zeit aber, OK. Dann würde ich jetzt mal sagen, da liegt traditionelle Swing darunter, die Form dieser Einheit worüber der Mensch auch soliert nachdem er das Thema gespielt hat, sehr normale Jazz-mässige Sache, halt mit Tubax macht schon mal was anderes. Aber trotzdem OK, Bebop-Linien..

Und die Linien sind geschrieben?..

Also das Thema ist geschrieben, ja, und dann ist klar OK, hat er Akkorde und traditionelle Jazz improvisation. Was da vielleicht neu dazu kommt ist: zu dem Tubax-Thema gibts ein sopran Saxophon gegenthema, was sozusagen immer eigentlich eine art Spiegelung davon ist, ja? Kann auch allein bestehen, das drückt dann nicht so dass man sagt es ist eine Spiegelung, man kann es aber schon hören in Wahrheit. Was vielleicht auch eine neue Kombination ist. Das hab ich von Bebop jetzt noch nie gefunden muss ich gestehen. Hört sich aber dann trotzdem an wie eine traditionelle Jazz improvisation in der Mitte mit backgrounds auch hartnäckig auf der Einz. Und da passt das Thema dazu, würde sagen es ist letztlich sehr traditionell verwurzelte Musik Abschnitt und der wird dann eigentlich wieder abgelöst durch... (denkt) Es gibt in 4. Bruckner ein Teil mit diesen schwer Triolen (singt) , es geht das um Drum-solo dort hinein, das war allerdings auf Siebener, das hat der Bruckner vielleicht gewollt aber nicht geschrieben... (lacht) Und mündet eigentlich einen Funky Siebener den ich wieder von woanders verwendet habe. Also insofern das sagen kannst bestimmte Kombinationen, .. das ist halt liegt mal halt so.

Ich möchte noch fragen, wie instruierst du den Leuten die improvisieren.

Es gibt ein Paar Elemente und es gibt ein paar zeichnen, also beispielsweise wenn ich die Hände so vor meine Augen halte dann heißt es nicht ab ins Gefängnis. (lacht), sondern es bedeutet das Nebel, das musste ich quasi mal

transportieren was ich möchte. Wenn ich so mache heißt es ab, oder wenn so: dann rauf. Oder tremolo, oder Arpeggios ist ein typisches Zeichnen den ich den Preinie immer gerne gebe, egal was es ist, frei Tonale Moment, oder wenn er Akkorde hat, er legt mal dann wunderbare Arpeggi und dergleichen. Insofern es ist improvisiert, aber es ist gelenkt, weil es entspricht dem Fluss der gerade da ist. Das kann man wunderbar kombinieren.

Also du machst es alles live, und es ist nicht geprobt, und vorbereitet, sozusagen.

Naja, geprobt ist es dann also bei solchen Sachen wie der Bruckner Geschichte schon, weil also wie soll man sagen das ambiente war dann doch groß genug, also Sanct Florian Bruckner Fest und Bruckner Fest Linz, Brucknerhaus, große Saal, da möchte ich schon vorbereitet dort hingehen, wobei ich versuche die Proben sehr knapp zu halten um das nicht zu überspannen, irgendwie, es gibt so auch diese Moment "oh, ne, es kommt schon wieder Nebel". Ok, ich meine, das erleben die Spieler anders wie die Zuhörer, weil die hören es zum ersten Mal, aber die Spielern sagen, ja OK, das war jetzt letzte Woche Nebel. Das muss dann schon auch noch Freude bereiten. Es muss Frisch sein.

Felix Raffel

Felix Raffel is a Berlin-based pianist and composer. He completed his piano studies at Hanover University of Music and Drama. In addition he studied film music scoring at the University of Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg. Many of his film scores have been screened on television or at international film festivals all around the world. He received the Jerry Goldsmith Award for his orchestral film score for "The Boy Who Wouldn't Kill" at the Film Music Festival Úbeda, Spain – another one, the music for the commercial "Jugend denkt um.welt", was nominated. Beside his composition activities, Felix successfully took part in several national and international piano competitions.

Interview with Felix Raffel – 14. March 2014 - (excerpts)

How would you describe your own style?

I consider myself mainly a film composer. [...] It would be difficult to name a certain concert music style.

Is film music attractive to you because there you have the possibility to use many different genres?

Yeah. I have been always interested in trying out different musical styles. Concert music is a totally different musical world., there you do not have the possibility to do that as much as in film music. If I wrote concert music, perhaps the style that would mostly attract me would be minimal music. It is not that far away from the aesthetics of film music.

How often do you enjoy full artistic freedom, when you can make all the decisions according to your own taste?

Well, at the moment I am not doing that, I mean, I am basically mostly writing for film or theater projects, and there you do have to adapt to the thing you are writing for. There you write the special kind of music that the project needs. So, generally in film music you do not have that kind of artistic freedom in terms of that you can not choose the musical style the way you want.

If you can write independently from external instructions, what are the most obvious signs in your music of this freedom?

Well, first of all, probably, the choice of style, and also harmonically. I do not find myself writing so many chromatic things in film music, because it needs to be backgroundy all the time, it must not draw too much attention to itself, in a way. You have to listen to dialogue and all these. Musically it does not need to be too sophisticated. In concert music there is a lot more freedom. In film music you are not supposed to write that many melodies, they have to be rather motives, that can be learned pretty fast so that you don't really have to listen to them. In concert music melodies are allowed to be longer, they can attract much more attention to them.

Do you sometimes write music for projects that need to address large audiences?

I do not really think that much of audiences. The most important in film music is that the music has to adapt the general concept of the movie. If the film itself has a rather high artistic level and is not suitable for that large audiences, then the music itself has to have a certain artistic level. [...]

Sometimes directors tell composers to write something more accessible. If you write accessible music what does that mean to you?

It means that a certain audience has to be able to grab the music right from the beginning, it should be not too complicated, it should be melodic. There is always a tension between being understandable, and still not be too ... cliché-full. [...] In most cases I write tonal music. My own musical language is not that experimental, it is not based on twentieth-century harmonies. It comes more from the Romantic and nineteenth century musical background, and also has that jazzy, pop-rock style influences. I am often searching for strong melodies, that people can sing along. My own music is rather tonal, this appeals better to people, than 20th century harmonies. I have a melodic approach. Everything else has to take care of that.

Do you ever combine different styles? What is your motivation for that?

Yeah, sometimes I do that if that makes musical sense. [...] Jazzy tunes can be played by an orchestra, or an electric guitar can also be part of an orchestra. [...] Last year I did a feature film about a shooting at a university. It was a drama, it had to do with social disabilities, so my first approach was that, to express that the figures are social cripples. We had an orchestral recordings for that, but I felt, that only with the orchestral body alone you could not feel the dangers of the figures enough, so I started adding some electronic elements to that, some synthesizers, and also some electric guitars, to add that edgy and also modernistic feelings. Also, kind of, like , I wanted to say that we were in the year 2013 and not in 1960 or whatever. So, that is also probably part of that. Because part of our musical language nowadays are electronic elements.

And what elements were there from electronic music? Rather effects or melodies as well?

Yeah, also melodies and certain sounds, that suited pretty well with the orchestral elements.

Do you think that target groups can be addressed by quoting specific genres? Do you communicate with genre clichés?

Yeah, I think in certain situations it can be helpful. [...] I think it was my first student film I ever did. It was kind of like a black-and white movie, and it had to do with a rocker guy on a bike who sees an attractive lady. I first tried to write symphonic music, and synthetic sounds and it just did not work. And then I wrote quite a rocky song for that, and it worked perfectly well, because it gave the guy much more a feeling he already had in the picture, and that was good for that. You could say, that's a cliché, but if it makes the guy cooler, or make him feel more what he is, or what he is supposed to be, than it's totally allowed to do things like that. Or, probably the TV-series I am doing now, we are trying out different things, it is an adventure movie, and the theme I was first working on was more like an Indiana Jones-inspired theme, but I think what was required for them [the producers] was more an "agent-like" theme, which means more jazzy or big-bandy approach of doing that, which in my opinion works even better, so... which is also a total grab into the stylistic clichés: using over-the-top jazz music for agent-like guys. But it works if it adds that certain feel to them, which is probably missing in the movie. [...] One thing that is very important about film music, is that it has to be understood from the very first moment on. It is not like a concert recording where you can listen to it six times, like a Mahler symphony or whatever, where you probably really have to take time to dig into the piece, that is often not the case with the film. At least not with the things you can't consume all the time. So you have to choose a musical style that is understood by as many people as possible. I think that is very important. Which sometimes limitates you as an artist, but as long as you accept that, that is totally ok.

What are your techniques to stay simple but avoid clichés?

[...] I present a motive, and then I repeat it again, so that the listener can learn it, so that he does not have to listen too much to the music, but it stays unconsciously. Like: tadam tadam, tadaadam (sings), my answer to that would be tadam tadam, tadaadam, totally the same rhythm. So I think

periodically. Also if I try to be more inventive, I give the listener some time to easily learn the material. Also, in film music, but in concert music as well, sometimes you need repetition to underline something, that is important to you. Some composers in the concert world say: I do not want to repeat myself at any time in my whole piece again, because I have already given that specific information. But I do not think the ear works like this. Your ear cannot save that much information per second. [...]

Do you find innovation in your work? In what terms do you think your music is innovative?

Compositionally I am more on the traditional side. I would not consider myself as someone who reinvents the wheel. [...]

You can also say small things that you like to do in order to make your music sound more interesting, to you in the first place...

Well, in these days so many things are done by computers, at least in film music, so, I believe in writing music down also by the hand, because it makes you think more about certain notes, and about how things are written well in a traditional compositional point of view, and I think not many film composers do that nowadays, so they are sitting at the computer and record ideas immediately. [...]

[...] I just finished a documentary about Thailand. I used some flutes and some percussion instruments and blended them into my symphonic film music. They had that certain feeling that they had in their own style too, so I tried to be a bit puristic in that.

Did you use Asian scales as well?

Yeah I did, to keep it authentic in a way, but they were supposed to play middle-European-influenced elements, so they had to sound like something that might have come from Asia too, but of course integrated in a style that is supposed to be film music. [...]

Kutiman

Short Bio

Ophir Kutiel professionally known as Kutiman, is an Israeli musician, composer, producer and animator. In 2009 Kutiman released "ThruYOU," is an online music video project mixed from samples of YouTube videos that has received more than 10 million views. Time Magazine named it one of the 50 Best Inventions of 2009. Due to the success of Thru-YOU, in October 2010 Kutiman was invited by YouTube to perform at the "YouTube Play" grand opening at Guggenheim in New York City.¹

Interview with KUTIMAN (Ophir Kutiel) 31st October, 2013

B.A.: How would you describe your own musical style?

Ophir Kutiel: First of all I have to say that I am really bad at definitions and defining my music and my art, and it is much more easier for me to just create stuff, then explain it. I find it really hard to explain what I did or why I did it. But I think for us growing up in the internet age, I think, it is less important where you come from, so a lot of my influences are the same as probably yours or someone from even, I don't know, America or from Australia. And, I don't know, I just love music, I can't say which genre is my favorite, because there is not such a thing, I just love good music, it can be rock, it can be jazz, it can be classic. And there are some pieces for instance in classical music that I do not like, and some that I do like, and the same in rock and funk and jazz, I just love music, and I grew up on whatever I could listen to. There is no such a thing as Israeli music, so, like folk Israeli music. Even Israeli music is made out of influences from Europe and from Africa and different places, so I don't have like my roots music. So I think most of the influence comes from the internet and music that just people gave me.

Ok, I agree, maybe it is more difficult to say what genres you like, but you can maybe tell what you do not like, when you are talking about a classical piece that you do not really like. Can you explain why you don't like it, or what elements?

I don't know, I love groove. That is the first thing that got me in music, that made me fall in love with music. I remember as a child listening in the radio to the song Yekeke, you remember this song Yekeke... And that was the first time I heard something groovy, and I fell in love with it. And sometimes in classical music or in any genre when I feel the groove I tend to like it, and I like usually minor, much more than major. Like, I like the deepness in it, and the sadness in it. And usually when you combine the two of them together, that's what I really like. Like Minor + Groove. And lot of the times in classical music you can find it. ... and a lot of genres I guess, minor groove is my combination.

After having a classical jazz education, you were amazed by Funk music. What do you like most in the genre Funk, compared to what you had learned earlier. So like classical jazz vs Funk. What is the difference for you?...

I did not have any special classical education, I just learned piano at a neighbor's house, so obviously she taught me classical pieces, but it was not something professional or something like that, and then I went to a jazz school, because that is the only school for music that we have here in Israel, and I never really got jazz, I never really understood it. And I was a little bit intimidated by all the information, and all the rules, and all the changes, and you know a jazz school is sometimes like a lot of information you know and forget the music. And suddenly a friend just gave me a big box with CDs of like James Brown, and Parliament, and even psychedelic like King Crimson, and a lot of stuff I had not heard about before, and I guess the simplicity is what maybe fall in love with it. It is so simple, anybody can play it, and it's so well composed, and it is like a puzzle, you know the bass is doing this, and he drums is doing like exactly the opposite, and the guitar.., it is like a puzzle, when it works it's magical to me.

Ok. Well, it is interesting you mentioned King Crimson as well, because, well, that seems to be a bit more complicated music, than James Brown for example. I am a big fan of King Crimson by the way, but I think it's much more complex music. What elements of Funk do you incorporate in your own style and why? What is funky in your music, and what is different from funk. If you. I dont know if you think that way.. You can also tell me if the question sounds really stupid because this whole thing is also about me understanding the differences how composers work. So I would be interested if you know what new elements you add to traditional funk in order to make your music sound fresh?

I think the combination, like if you say James Brown and King Crimson together... I think I got a lot of influence from James Brown and from King Crimson and sometimes I like to combine the psychedelic with the raw funk. So a lot of the times I will just build like a traditional funk groove and then play like a sweet or psychedelic melodies on top of them. And sometimes it makes the funk a little bit softer and more melodic, or I like to use a lot of ninth notes, if you play a c minor to play the D on the top and go you know like softer melodies. But a lot of the times I am just trying to imitate something, I get something completely different. I guess most of the music was created this way. People trying to imitate something that they love, and they end up with something new.

Yeah something personal...

Yeah. So most of the time this is the case. I don't really analyze it too much, to think how I am gonna make it different. I am just trying to do something that I love, and end up with something, that even sometimes I don't know how it came out.

Yeah. I suppose that's the better way to work. I mean a lot of people in education tend to be really complicated and they are too often analyzing what they are doing. I also have this sometimes.. Hmm.

Yeah.

But, is this music meant for dancing? I mean if you compose your music do you think about how the audience will react, or how they will listen to it?

Well, not really, like obviously I think how the people will react, but not necessarily in a dance floor. I guess I also prefer to listen to music at home or in the car, then in a club. I guess this is where I am aiming to, but no, I don't really try to make it practical for a dance floor. I am trying to I don't know.. (laughs)

Ok. Does popularity influence your music making? When you say ok, a lot of people are following me on YouTube, so I have to please them somehow, so do you compose sometimes with the intention of reaching larger audiences?

1 Kutiman's Bio on Wikipedia – Retrieved December 13 2013 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kutiman>

Well, I would love to say no. And it would be very noble of me to say no, but of course I think about the audience, and of course I am thinking about larger audience, but I think I am loyal to myself and to my taste, I mean I never released something that I think would reach a larger audience but I don't like it. And a lot of the times again I am starting to compose something and I am thinking, ok, this time I am gonna do something that will reach larger audience, but eventually I find myself just drifting with my own taste and eventually forgetting about people and audience and I am just doing what I want to do, or what I feel as good. And I think this is also how I get the best results. When I am not thinking, and I am doing it from the love to music, you know, so that it is more pure.

...so that it remains honest as possible.

Yeah, I really believe that.

Yeah. It is interesting, I did many interviews with composers working in the fields of classical crossover, you know, when sometimes these terrible Vivaldi-remixes, when we hear original Vivaldi with some techno drums.

Yeah.

It can be sometimes funny, but most of the time I feel that there is a strategy behind it. So that it is made for a large audience.

Yeah

And sometimes it is interesting to see what they do to their music in order to make it more simple, or to make it more popular. But obviously, you don't think that way, right?

Not really. I think that way, but again if you look at my repertoire, you will see that there is no real intention to go commercial or to go really, like, crossover, I don't think I can do it. Even I really needed the money, I don't think I could do it.

When you start working on a new piece, do you normally have a plan for the form and structure, or do you go ahead step by step?

I don't have a plan whatsoever. Usually I start it just from Youtube, just watching youtube videos, not even planning to work on something, and then running across a drummer or something that I think, wow, this guy is cool, I could build a full track on top of this video, it is really unique, Then I start from there, I just imagine I am doing my own music. So for instance if I find a drummer, and then I just loop it, and play it in the background and then I start searching for I don't know I want a bass, or I want a funk bass, I can find myself searching for a bass, but then I see in the related videos a guitar, and then I go to the guitar, and then it takes me to a Kalimba, and then it takes me to a violin. And then it is just, whatever the Youtube-God gives me... Sometimes I am searching for something specific, but eventually I find myself finding a different instrument that fits exactly with the drummer or the first video that I chose, so I go along with it, because you know not like in a studio, I don't have a lot of options, so if something works, and I like it, I just go along with it. I can't say: no, I want here a guitar that plays this riff exactly. I am just searching for things that will work together, and it is actually quite relieving in a way, 'cause sometimes when you work in a studio and you have a lot of options, then you can find yourself with too many options. I don't know this works, but this works as well... In the Youtube process, sometimes it can be very frustrating, searching and searching and not finding, but as soon as you find something that works, you know that THIS IS IT!

But sometimes you pick, I don't know, just one chord or just one note from a sample, or from YouTube video, and you play your own melody with notes or samples taken from another video, is that right?

Yeah. It is, but I don't sample it and then play the notes. Sometimes if I have melody, and I want to double it with something, so I search, for a lot of the times, I search for just the scale, like I write "G-minor scale on the guitar", and then someone plays the whole scale, and then I have all the notes, so I can create my own melody, but a lot of the times I do it to double something that I found already played.

Ok. What kind of main principles do you keep in mind when picking the right sample from Youtube? Is that the sound? Or if you have already a groove... You synchronize them together with this video editing software, is that right? So this BPM-synch is in your video editing software.

Yes, sometimes, I cut it more then stretch it. Yeah, and actually keep in mind a lot of stuff when I search for a video. First of all it has to be a video with not too many views. Like, if sometimes I can find something that works perfectly, but it got like 50000 views, so it is too much for me. And this is also frustrating sometimes, that I find something perfect, but I think it is too big already. And a lot of the times I keep in mind the video frame sometimes, I see a frame or a person that I really like, and I say, wow this frame is perfect, but he plays something terrible or so. So sometimes I have to really struggle in order to try to put him in, somehow to find one note, "just give me one note and I will put you in". And sometimes the other way round, Sometimes for instance I search for an MC, for a hip hop mc, for one of the tracks, and most of them were just singing you know like stuff that I did not connect to, you know saying things that I did not like. It sounded really good, but I had to let them go. Or sometimes I see,... I give you an example, I did this jungle track, and I searched for a drummer. I searched for jungle drums, and I saw, as you can imagine, I had a lot of options of crazy crazy crazy drummers, but a lot of the times, I did not like their attitude, I don't know, they were like showing off..

Sorry, is this the "Real democracy" video, you are talking about?

No this is the "Babylon band".

Oh yeah, Ok.

And I saw like monsters on the drums, and eventually I saw this kid, that is not such a good drummer but his video was "I am gonna show you how to play jungle on the drums". And there is this trick to play jungle on the drums and he was not that good but still he wanted to teach other people to show them the trick, so I instantly said, that is the guy for me, I like his attitude, I like his vibe. So it is not strictly musical, and it is not strictly video, it is a combination, that I have to feel, this is the right person.

Ok, sounds interesting, great. And how much do you think about the sound, or the sound quality of the samples. Sometimes you are adding some reverb, or you edit the sound as well. But how concerned are you about the sound quality?

Well it has to work. It is never good studio quality, but it has to work on some kind of level, you know. Sometimes, as I said, the video is so strong, or the person is so strong, and the sound quality is poor, but I fall in love video so much, that I will do everything that I can just to make it work. It is, I don't know how to say it in English, but it is like, you have to find like the right balance between good sound quality, good frame, and the character. And it is like sometimes, the character is strong, but the sound is poor, sometimes, the sound is great, but the character is poor. When I feel the balance is right between all of them, I use it.

When you work with these multimedia-samples, the whole process is a bit of technological creation, because you work with a software with all its limitations. Does the technology you use support you in freely realizing all your ideas, or does it in any form mean limitations for you? How would you expand these boundaries?

I think its not like the software I use is not like hi-end technology, it is just basic video editing, but I can edit it on a bpm grid instead of frame grid. So

it does not do any magic or something like that. If I find something that is slightly not on time, I can just cut it and edit it to the time, but it does not do any magic, like, people sometimes think that I can mix anything with anything, but it is not true. It helps me, but just, you know, cutting no more than that, like I don't do pitch shift, I try not to do time stretch, so it's mainly searching for the right video, and then tweaking it a little bit.

In what direction do you think your work can be developed in the future?

Wow. That is a tough question. I don't know, I really hope and wish myself in interested and fascinated by new things all the time and to create it with the same passion I created like Thru-You, and my album, and all the things I do, and I really hope, I won't fall into this place you know thinking about crowd and thinking about people, and thinking about success. I don't know, I am into video and music, I am finishing my own album, that is just studio music, no tricks, no samples. I don't know, music and video, and all the combination between them.

You have just made this Thru-Tokio project. Is it that like you travel a lot, and whenever you visit a new place, you collect street musicians as well?

It I not really street musicians. I have like a producer, and we do pre-production, you know, to find the people and set locations with them. Its a series called Thru-the-city. Whenever I have an opportunity to go to a different country, I try to feel my impression of the place and music and people thru their music, kind of an interesting way.

Ok, well, thanks very much Kuti, it was really nice talking to you.