

In the twentieth century, Croatian operas acquire previously unimaginable conceptual complexity, as it is shown in the cultural-musicological study written by Ivan Ćurković about two operas based on the romantic poem *Unfortunate Mara* (1861) by Luka Botić, i. e. its dramatic adaptation by Niko Bartulović in 1922 (*Horizons of Intolerance in the Operas Adel and Mara* (1932) by Josip Hatze and *Adel's Song* (1941) by Ivo Parać, pp. 135-160). Hatze's and Parać's work differ in the structure of the music, in the use of folk elements, in the construction of the story, in the relation to the religious Other, to the political premises and political denotation of the work itself but, despite all the differences, it is clear that the very topic of fatal religious intolerance makes both operas inappropriate for a one-sided ideological reading and the use of political mobilization, and thus more prepared for continuous reception.

The study written by Elżbieta Barbara Zybert is dedicated to the role of libraries and the cult of books as the remains of the positivist cult of knowledge, and also as a means of national mobilization in the Polish national movement (*The Role of Books and Libraries in Sustaining the National Spirit of Poles in the 19th Century*, pp. 27-39). The author analyzes the role of culture in different branches of the national movement, all of which are equally marked by a tendency towards the creation and preservation of the identity of »Polishness«, but which are essentially heterogeneous and ideologically differently marked within themselves – from the Positivist Program that included ideas about the emancipation of women and the integration of the Jews, to the Nationalist Movement, which promoted hatred towards other nations in the name of statehood.

Briefly put, this volume represents a significant contribution to the contemporary mixture of musicology, history of literature and cultural studies, and at the same time it offers a problematic view of the constructivist theory of nation. Apart from gaining new insights about the role of music in the nineteenth-century establishment of the contemporary nations, this volume will also set us – through repeatedly formulated warning about the entanglements of national modernism that grew out of the Enlightenment – in front of the issue of the dangers of what is today being put upon us as a unique process of globalization.

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Alessandro Arbo: *Entendre comme – Wittgenstein et l'esthétique musicale*. Collection »GREAM«, Paris: Éditions Hermann, 2013, pp. 391, ISBN, 978-2-7056-8409-9.¹

The recent volume by Alessandro Arbo, *Entendre comme – Wittgenstein et l'esthétique musicale* (the title could be rendered in English as »Hearing-as: Wittgenstein and musical aesthetics«), is part of the growing interest in France regarding Wittgenstein's reflections on aesthetics generally and music specifically. Indeed, a number of symposia have been organized of late on precisely this topic (e.g. *Autour de Wittgenstein, (les maths) et la musique*,

¹ The author would like to thank Annelies Fryberger for her help in translating this text from the French.

ENS-Paris, 2013), and several books have recently been published (e.g. B. Goyet, *Wittgenstein et le motif esthétique*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011; A. Soulez, *Au Fil du motif – Autour de Wittgenstein et la musique*, Editions Delatour France, 2012; A. Arbo, M. Le Du, S. Plaud (eds.) *Wittgenstein and Aesthetics. Perspectives and Debates*, Ontos Verlag, 2012).

Arbo's contribution, however, even if it is part of this *Zeitgeist*, is actually the fruit of a long-term research project. As early as 2002, in these pages, Arbo published the article *Entendre comme. Réflexions sur un thème de Wittgenstein* (IRASM 33/2). He then took up this theme again in other work in 2005, 2009, and 2012 (*Typologie et fonctions de l'« entendre comme »*, IRASM 43/1).

In this most recent volume (published in 2013), the author's systematic study of the Austrian philosopher's scattered observations on music brings him into dialogue with several key moments in aesthetics, musicology, and music of the 20th and 21st centuries. More importantly, however, he maintains the necessity of placing the polyvalent »hearing-as« concept at the heart of Wittgenstein's philosophical journey. The methodology underlying this assertion consists of »bringing together, for each question, as many citations as possible, in order to then derive the conceptual core« (p. 9).²

This approach leads Arbo to devote only the last section specifically to »hearing-as,« which takes up the last third of the volume (pp. 201-293). His quasi-monographic perspective prompts him first to trace the progression of Wittgenstein's thinking in a sweeping chapter (»From picture theory to a grammar of musical discourse,« pp. 17-91) wherein Arbo's maieutic rigour is revealed. With his limpid prose, he is able to guide even the most inexperienced reader through these veritable logical labyrinths.

From the first pages, in a biographical section devoted to Wittgenstein's musical taste (»conservative,« as we are well aware), Arbo reveals the Austrian philosopher's propensity for investigating musical understanding, which, as we must underscore, »cross-cuts his entire body of work and appears at decisive moments when he deepens his thinking. It is present at the heart of his conception of language and the experience of meaning« (p. 20). It is precisely thanks to this vital relationship between music and language – and music and understanding – that a volume of this scope is necessary on the concept of »hearing-as.« This study, however, does not postulate the classic division between the so-called »first« and »second« Wittgenstein, but rather highlights at a minimum the continuity between the two, as Wittgenstein tends to come time and again back to the same themes in order to show their different facets.

The similarity of music and propositional language (put another way, of the »musical idea« and different forms of representation) based on a shared »logical structure« clearly emerges in the *Tractatus*. Arbo even goes so far as to state that »Wittgenstein uses music [as] a demonstrative paradigm for a cardinal principle of his early philosophy« (p. 33). That is to say, he insists on the internal relationship between language and the world according to »the postulate of isomorphism between the picture and the represented fact« (p. 34). To be specific, music can be used as an example within picture theory, in that a musical theme can be seen as a proposition without an objective correlation. To understand a musical idea, one must look at the »system of relations to which it refers, without which it would be incomprehensible« (*ibid.*). One must therefore understand its logical necessity.

² My translation – as will be the case for all quotes that follow.

This point leads Arbo to delve briefly into the wealth of international literature on the relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the Second Viennese School³ (p. 35ff.). But the author, excellent scholar that he is of the history of musical aesthetics, instead of consolidating this relationship, concentrates rather on the ties between Wittgenstein and the whole of formalist aesthetico-musical thinking (this subject comes up several times in the book). He never loses sight of the weight the Austrian philosopher gave to the autonomy of logic – also present in »musical tautology.« For example, melody, as a proposition, »exhibits its validity not by what it says, but by the way in which it says it, or – and this comes to the same – by the way it is constructed« (p. 38).⁴

Arbo then nuances this supposed reduction of music to an example of logic, as the *Tractatus* suggests. He does so via an exegesis which draws out and clarifies specific points in Wittgenstein's writings, without, however, resolving and thereby erasing the difficulties inherent to them. Arbo shows that the autonomy of music does not presuppose a secondary position for historical and social context, or for the axiology of a society. Rather, this interpretation of Wittgenstein calls us to consider carefully the different functions of the diverse commentaries we make on music as musicologists, listeners, critics, historians, etc. For example, »if to describe means to know how to produce a picture, which is the representation of a system of relations, the criteria we use must not be found in an analogous relationship with the object, but rather in our specific use of it« (p. 56), according to a contextual »grammar.«

In addition, as »hearing-as« shows in an exemplary fashion, the scope of Wittgenstein's aesthetico-musical thinking also has experimental and epistemological functions. Put another way, it can reveal the correctness of a tool, of a perception, of an act of understanding, according to a principle of reduction to »sayability.« With this basis, Wittgenstein can then conduct *e contrario* a reflection on the conditions of possibility necessary for grasping the unsayable, manifested in the construction of the notions of »language-games,« »forms of life,« and »family resemblance.« The latter are all founded on the observation of the »irreducibly coarse and plural nature of language« (p. 58) and on the polyvocality of its meaning in concrete use contexts.⁵ Precisely at this point, we are led to wonder about musical understanding and aspectual perception incarnated in the concept of *hearing-as*. However, Arbo chooses to leave his readers in suspense, moving forward slowly toward his goal, without ever losing sight of music.

In the following steps on the journey toward »hearing-as«, Arbo provides fascinating remarks on the primacy of context in aesthetic judgments and in understanding meaning – of note for those who work in semiotics or musical narratology. As ever, he concludes this exploration with a question: »how is aesthetic appraisal different from a simple judgment

³ As the colloquium *Autour de Wittgenstein* cited earlier demonstrates, there is even a recent discussion in France regarding the more or less direct ties between Wittgenstein's philosophy and contemporary compositional thinking, as well as its influence on music theory.

⁴ Emphasis in the original.

⁵ An indirect observation that emerges from this book is that we should refrain from drawing too strict a parallel between *hearing-as* and *affordance*, as developed in the framework of Eric Clarke's ecological musical aesthetics (*Ways of Listening*, Oxford University Press, 2005). Wittgenstein's aim is to look at understanding and aspectual perception, rather than the psychological configuration of perception (bottom-up). Conversely, we would be well-advised to look more closely at the similarities between *hearing-as* and the philosophical hermeneutics of H. G. Gadamer and L. Pareyson.

of correctness?» (p. 91). To answer this question, the author invites us to look at the concept of *expression*, essential for musical aesthetics, to which he devotes the longest section of the volume («Expression and understanding,» pp. 93-200). I would like to grant the reader the pleasure of discovering this section, which forges paths toward other contemporary aesthetic philosophies. I will cite only the debate regarding J. Levinson's notion of *concatenationism*, which has met with the opposition of P. Kivy, as is well known. In this passage, Arbo demonstrates his ability to resignify, using Wittgenstein's conceptual toolbox, this simply oppositional quarrel: he invites us to consider the twin nature of the perception-understanding plexus (two sides of the same coin) and even the contextual status of listening and works. The aesthetics of listening and that of performance thereby seem to be indissociable from ontology. «Even if we accept the idea that we should restrict ourselves to appearance or the auditory surface, multiple degrees and forms of understanding work together in order for us to grasp music in its aesthetic singularity» (p. 189). And let us not forget that the desire to understand everything gets us nowhere.

Of note is also the consideration of S. Langer's formalist thinking, not just from her famous work *Philosophy in a New Key*, but also that found in the «fine conceptual articulation» of *Feeling and Form*. Arbo-Wittgenstein's critique (pp. 102-118) goes to the core of Langer's theory – inspired by Cassirer's philosophy – by showing that it is impossible to defend convincingly a «mentalist» position, despite Langer's anti-Crocean efforts to separate intuition and expression. In the end, «the path proposed by Wittgenstein is to examine what is manifested in experience, leaving behind all dualism, and with it any urge to explain the exterior via the interior» (p. 118).

On page 200, the stage is set for the entrance of «hearing-as.» But «what do we mean by «hearing-as?»» (p. 201) «At the root of this language-game is the desire to focus on a form of *internal referentiality*» (p. 201), states Arbo, apparently echoing the *Tractatus* rather than *Investigations*. For example, «hearing something as a musical phrase does not only mean distinguishing perceptions or interpreting them as signals. One must grasp a morphology, recognize its possible adherence to rules, correctly phrase what we hear, perceive a rhythm, catch an expression, and then respond in an adequate fashion» (*ibid.*). Musical perception «thus falls under aspectual perception, which is, in turn, an apt model to shed light on our modes of understanding music» (p. 202). And the relationship with analytical philosophy thereby intensifies (J. Levinson, A. Ridley, R. Scruton, and in the background, the now «classic» R. Wollheim).

At this point, frequent readers of Arbo will have the feeling of *déjà-vu*. Already in 2002 and 2005, this Italian philosopher of music concentrated (primarily) on the *experimental* function of «hearing-as» (helping to test ambivalent musical cases). Then, in 2012, he clearly showed its *conceptual* functions (conceiving of understanding-perception in terms of aspectual perception), its *aesthetico-pragmatic* functions (favouring the perception of aspects which induce musical understanding), and its *epistemological* functions (allowing us to verify a third person's ability to understand). Thereby, he demonstrated how this notion could be used in ontological discussions on the status of the *musical work*: i.e., what does «hearing (x) as a work» mean?

It must be said, however, that when we finally arrive at the headline concept, as it were, after such a clear, informed, and open journey, we understand the importance of *hearing-as* in Wittgenstein's philosophy: therein resonates all his thinking and thereby indirectly a major portion of aesthetic philosophy from the past century.

This volume, rich in explanatory and diverse musical examples (notably those from his composer of predilection Fausto Romitelli), is an excellent debut for the »Esthétique« collection from the GREAM research centre at the University of Strasbourg.

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Simon Shaw-Miller: *Eye hEar. The Visual in Music*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013, ISBN 9781409426448.

Simon Shaw-Miller is the art historian who has already dealt in his book *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (2002) with »the visible that is always present in music, especially in the radical aesthetic of John Cage« (p. xi). In this new book he intends to expand this idea. He is aware of the contradictions comprised in the concept of »absolute music« in the early 19th century, which was a result of the emancipation of music from language. However, in any case music could not escape the visual and the author proves it through the arguments as notation, score, gesture of conductors and »emergence of the concert hall as the site (and sight) of absolute music's triumph« (p. xii). It is however not that simple. Shaw-Miller is obviously not acquainted with the brilliant study by Anno Mungen, »*Bilder Musik*«. *Panoramen, Tableaux vivants and Lichtbilder als multimediale Darstellungsformen in Theater- und Musikaufführungen vom 19. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Remscheid: Gardez! Verlag, 2006) which deals just with some performing practices that add the visual component to the so-called »absolute music« although he mentions that the concert hall might function »as a site of cinematic imaginings before the advent of cinema« (p. 105). And it makes sense because Shaw-Miller's concept of music means »a discursive practice, not isolated autonomous sound; a complex of activities and ideas, a network of cultural practices that act together to signify the musical« (p. xiii). It is evident therefore that »absolute music« cannot objectively exist. And there are good reasons that Dahlhaus writes about the **idea** of absolute music.¹

Opposing W.H. Auden's opinion that »music can be made anywhere, is invisible and does not smell«², Shaw-Miller (dubiously claiming that »Cage sounded silence«³) warns us

¹ Cf. Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Idee der absoluten Musik*, Kassel – München: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1978.

² This is the motto to »Introduction« (p. 1). Shaw-Miller begins each chapter in his book with some mottos but unfortunately in most cases does not refer to their sources. He mentions only the author and gives only her/his year of birth and death. One of the exceptions is Schoenberg's motto to Chapter 3 (p. 49), which is again repeated in the text, but with the source (p. 50); also O'Doherty's motto in Chapter 4 (p. 91) the source of which is referred to in Note 1 (p. 133).

³ Cf. for example: »There is no such thing as silence.« In: John Cage, *Silence*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961, p. 51. How can one sound something that does not exist? However, Shaw-Miller's thorough analysis of Cage's 0'00" (1962) and 4'33" (1952) [p. 157ff] proves that he understands this contradictory »sounding of silence« in a right way. In the comment on *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* Shaw-Miller writes: »Silence is central to Cage's aesthetic and is a device that inevitably emphasizes the visual in performance.« (p. 161)