

MUSIC -- FOR OR AGAINST THE HUMAN BEING?

by Hans Erik Deckert

Look at the young person who has become attached to a walkman! No, you do not even have to look -- you can hear it!

Is this the proper way for us to associate ourselves with music?

It is realistic to imagine a future in which the human being, say, during a journey by train, sits with a score in hand and HEARS the music -- WITHOUT the interference of a music-machine? The fellow travellers would in any rate be relieved of being drawn into the sound-orgies of the young person infected by his walkman in the same way that it is possible for the non-smoker to escape from the smoker's contribution to air-pollution.

Music through a walkman or music through a score?

There is no question as to which demands more activity. This, however, does not mean that proficiency in the reading of scores is the sure way to the understanding of music! The reading of scores can easily be done as an intellectual discipline, totally blocking the musical experience! If we are to come closer to music, we must be able to HEAR!

This sounds banal. That which comes out of a walkman hardly involves an improvement of the sense of hearing.

But can this be called a musical EXPERIENCE?

Look again at that young person with the walkman! He SWINGS, he is TOTALLY ABANDONED to that which comes out of the gadget. The outside world seems to be eliminated. ANOTHER WORLD reveals itself through the gadget. The entrance to another dimension of existence is arranged through a technological invention!

It is not easy to comprehend how much technology is able to give things to the human being, to help the human being. Machines perform the rough work; we can reach our earth's furthest destination in only a few hours; and it takes only seconds to achieve a connection with people in every country in the world. But is ALL TECHNOLOGY a blessing? Are there LIMITS for technology's help to human beings?

Is the MUSICAL EXPERINCE, rearranged through technological discoveries, a violation of these limits -- an area where technology wrenches something from ourselves, where technology puts something in us out of power?

It is a fact that music can be experienced WITHOUT music machines, without the assistance of electric current for the production and transmission of sound.

What is possibly rendered powerless, when we are gripped, imprisoned, put "in the mood" in the most literal sense, when we achieve a EUPHORIA through a music which uses microphones, amplifiers, and loudspeakers as its most essential speaking tube?

We experience this only when we come closer to what the musical experience really

includes.

We can listen to another person. We can listen superficially, only for the simple words, for the so-called facts -- but it is also possible for us to listen such that we meet our fellow human being, also in his or her personality and radiance. Then a real communication takes place between two people. An INNER ACTIVITY is allowed to occur. In music, we can observe the inner activity when our ear ANSWERS the impulses it receives. The work of the ear is not limited to registering tones; it has the possibility of COMING TO A DECISION about these tones.

Our eyes can see superficially, but our eyes can also see clearly and distinctly. We can work with our optical impressions, or we can decide to leave them alone. We learn to live with language. We learn grammar. We try to understand each other. This requires inner activity.

Would it not be possible for us to learn to UNDERSTAND music, to go BEHIND this music, so that we also can live with it?

Can music develop to more than a sound effect, to more than a stimulating drug for the prevention of boredom, to SOMETHING ELSE than mere euphoria or other forms for numbing recreation?

This requires inner activity!

Just think of what we can discover when we HEAR a melody, a rhythm, a harmony!

We can discover the large UNDREAMT OF POSSIBILITIES of inner activities which we can mobilise.

When we are sleepy, we see less clearly. When we are listless, our activity diminishes. When we are DRUGGED, we become listless. Passivity takes the upper hand. We risk building a VACUUM in ourselves.

Is it possible that technology, when it intervenes in something so intimate, so awkward to handle such as music, can come to CRIPPLE the human being's own creativity?

It looks as if the technical media have for a long time taken music from human beings' inner core. Many types of music machines lead us from cradle to grave. New editions, new systems take the market by storm. We reach for them as never before. It is as if these music machines meet an insatiable need. Is it right to say that the technical media have taken music from the human being? Is the human being a victim of an enormous swindle?

Is slavery already made legal again---with the "gadget" as the absolute master and the human being as the obeying servant?

Never before have so many people heard so much music--ON MACHINE!

And that which remains of the traditional, additive-free musical life is on its way to COPYING the music-machine for TECHNICAL PERFECTION has become the dominating criterion in all musical review.

BUT THE MUSIC IS HERE. It has always been here. Where is it? IN OURSELVES, as UNITY in diversity, as BALANCE among contrasts, as PROPORTIONS in

structure. Unity, balance, and proportion in music are not static manifestations; they are an intense, uninterrupted inner stream of activity, a **PROCESS IN TIME**. Music **LIVES** in time. It is inhaling and exhaling, tensing and relaxing, enterprise and reassurance in the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements. Music is not the tones, but **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TONES**. The laws of music reveal themselves in the **EXPERIENCE OF PROCESS**: everything that happens in the present **BECOMES ONE** with what was and what is to come. The more the vertical and the horizontal are experienced as a unity, the larger the chance for experiencing the music phenomenon becomes.

This places great responsibility upon the one who performs the music. If he fails, the listener is not able to also work in the musical process. The listener disappears because the music is not understandable. The communal experience, the social pole cannot exist! But the listener can also fail! How easy it is to dream ourselves away from the point from which we have the possibility of taking part in a musical communion. If we **LISTEN**, the music can come to reveal itself. Only ourselves, not the machine, can perform this duty.

Why can machines **NEVER EVER** overtake musical activity? Because the musical act of creation, the **LIVING REPRODUCTION**, is a **ONE-TIME EXPERIENCE**. Everything else can be kept, except the phenomenon itself. The living moment cannot be copied; it exists in the eternal, inexhaustible **PRESENT!** And if we blend this moment with the electrofied hardware, we make the creative process **IMPERSONAL** and **ANONYMOUS**. It is after all the creative process that defines music's being!

Many people totally deny that music is threatened by its mechanisation. But only the victims of the demusicifying process speak in this way. The all-important problem of our time is that our aural channels and thereby also ourselves are corrupted by the unmusical behaviour.

Our assignment today is to open blocked ears, to develop a **CONSCIOUSNESS** that accepts that music is neither an emotional supermarket for narcissism nor a new sport for setting records but an **EXPERIENCE OF A WORLD WITH OBJECTIVE LAWS**.

We have heard Johann Sebastian Bach's music for almost 300 years; we have listened to Tchaikovsky for over 100 years. But how do we actually listen? Do we really know the great masters' incredible gifts to humanity? Do we really know Josquin des Prés, Palestrina, Dowland, Schütz, Purcell, Händel, Haydn, Mozart; Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Bruckner, Brahms, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartók, Webern, Prokofiev, Honegger, Hindemith, Britten and innumerable other masters who right now, if we open ourselves, can give us a portion of eternity?

The great European musical traditions can no longer pave the way to a musical future, if we merely consume the riches of the times past. They can however tell us something about that which was, that which could transform the concert hall to a room of devotion, a room for meditation. Today the programme notes to a concert state that one is requested to cough discreetly, to stop alarm-watches from beeping, and to come on time. Today it is common to exchange remarks during a concert, to carry on conversations, to eat sweets and rustle the wrappings, to run around, to allow the children to show off, to chew gum, to leaf audibly through the programme in spite of the musical activity. Cameramen do whatever pleases them during a concert. And if there is television transmission, the concert hall is experienced as a mixture of sauna, solarium, and train station!

A performance of Bach's St. Matthew's Passion WITHOUT applause (and without coffee in thermos bottles) is almost unthinkable today. Earlier it was a matter of course that works of this type existed in an atmosphere of total silence.

Today it is difficult to find silence, solemnity, and awe in relation to the creations of the human spirit. This says something about the languishing understanding of music in our time.

The way of music is a way of practice. This is just as true for the listener as it is for the musician. But this way must be a music-practice-way.

The ways of ecstasy and robots bring the human, as a free-thinking being, away from the music and time. Working with EXPERIENCING the musical phenomenon can bring us to the music and to ourselves.

We are given the possibility of re-realising Musica Humana, "the music of the human being's inner world," in ourselves as a projection of Musica Mundana, "the music of the world."

The elevated triangle of music -- THE TRUE, THE BEAUTIFUL, THE GOOD --can be tuned again through the art of music!

The way of music is a way to catharsis for the human being.