Chapter 1

Introduction

In this chapter, I will attempt to examine...

1.1 Radical Music Today?

I believe that a central concern within my work is addressing the importance of redefining what *radical music* is today. This urgency comes from a set of preoccupations that relate to the skeptical, pragmatic and often cynical attitude towards radical thought in music creation and reception today. However, I believe this attitude is dominant not without a reason—it has to do with the notion that today music is defined negatively. Alain Badiou has clearly expressed this view in his essay entitled 'Scholium: A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of the Subject.'

> Today, the music-world is negatively defined. The classical subject and its romantic avatars are entirely saturated, and it is not the plurality of 'musics'—folklore, classicism, pop, exoticism, jazz and baroque reaction in the same festive bag—which will be able to resuscitate them. But the serial subject is equally unpromising, and has been for at least twenty years. Today's musician, delivered over to the solitude of the interval—where the old coherent world of tonality together with the hard dodecaphonic world that produced its truth are scattered into unorganized bodies and vain ceremonies—can only heroically repeat, in his very works: 'I go on, in order to think and push to their paradoxical radiance the reasons that I would have for not going on.'[1]

Here, Badiou precisely delineates the situation of the status-quo in music, where the only two main options seem to embrace either the joyful and permissive attitude towards mixing genres and styles

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[1] Badiou, 'Scholium: A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of the Subject', p. 89.

now commonly ascribed to *postmodernism* or the desolate notion of *modernist* aesthetics that to this day heroically stands in life support for more than thirty years. These two positions also seem unable to respond to the original premise of the musical avant-garde, which establishes a connection between music and radical thought. It is for this reason, that I believe *radical music* today can not be defined by neither the anti-mimetic notion of *modernism* nor its reaction, that now—under the *postmodern* banner—challenges the emancipatory potential of music, its autonomy and its capacity to accomplish.

to briefly examine the current position of music in contemporary culture in order to understand why the *aesthetic regime* in music is apparently not well received by the community. Additionally, I will propose that there should be a redefinition of the musical avant-garde

- Zizek on Fukuhiama. Crisis of Capitalism. Ecological Catastrophy. Unsustainability. Need for Radical Reform in Politics? Critique of liberal democracy - need for new alternatives. - ethical regime - defined as music - elaborate. . . Close relationship to culture and musiking. - aesthetic regime in music - still pending - emancipatory potential?

It is for this reason that I believe *radical music* today can not be defined by neither the anti-mimetic notion of *modernism* nor its reaction that now—under the *postmodern* banner—challenges the emancipatory potential of music, its autonomy and its capacity to accomplish.

It is then crucial that *radical music* be

and at the same time handicapped by on the one hand of the confusion Ranciere has described caused by the the two different ideas of artistic subjectivity.

either the confusion ascribed to the notion of *modernism* as expressed in serialism

1.2   The definition of music in the *ethical regime.*

It is interesting to note that within the visual arts the breaking from the *ethical regime of images* and the establishment of the *poetic regime of art* is what separates the 'fine arts' from other modes and techniques of production (of images, shapes, objects, etc), whereas within music there is not such a change in definition. That is to say, in the visual arts this break between *ethical* and *poetic* regimes identifies the arts as such but in music it does not change its identification. Why is it that in the musical domain it is still plausible to call the 'ways of doing and making' in both regimes *music*? Why within western culture someone who designs billboards is not considered to be a *fine artist* (it probably would fall into graphic design) while someone who writes jingles for television commercials is still a *musician*? In Chapter 3, I will come back to these question and look at the possible reasons

and implications of this difference. However, before drawing any conclusions about the consequences of this disparity, first I will examine the *aesthetic regime of art* to have a better understanding of Rancière's enquiry.

Also Ranciere: Did Music break with the mimetic regime to establish itself in the aesthetic regime? Is it still expected for a musician or composer to do something?

1.3   Free improvisation as a political model?

Nevertheless, the way by which this type of group improvisation is implemented rises some questions that are characteristic of liberal democratic models. Firstly, the idea that anyone in the group can improvise and play 'freely' giving the appearance of a permissive mode of performance is simply highly questionable. Even though in theory every performer could play whatever they want, in practice there are many unwritten rules regarding the aesthetic values of each group. For example, anti-mimetic principles dominate these free-improvisational settings, so much so that sometimes it is frowned upon by the rest of the group if any players play a recognizable tune or musical quotation. These and many other unwritten rules take place in these performances and the danger is that within apparent freedom, these improvisers might actually have many prohibitions that are imposed by themselves and the other members. The idea that these improvisations are 'free' and permissive is just plainly naive. Another problem of this form of performance is that it presupposes that each player has an equal voice in the ensemble and that no structures of power will emerge within the group dynamic. The fallacy of this stance is to think that a collective form of organization will be egalitarian just by giving its constituents an equal voice. The weaker voices of the repressed within a group—even if they are given the opportunity to speak—might very possibly not be listened to. By this I mean... (in music) Therefore, in order to have an egalitarian system, it is not enough for everyone in the ensemble to have an equal voice but there has to be some sort of empowerment of the weaker as well.

- *aesthetic regime* to performers?? confusion with aesthetic regime again... it is not necessarily that performers have a role in composition...or improvisation...they are still in the representative regime...they still use modes and resemble performance conventions (in improv) ... that does not solve the 'problem' and they are not going into the aesthetic regime., for that to happen performers have to reinvent what they do, they should do whatever they consider they should do and what ever they think performers should do.

1.4   Technology, Appropiation and Postproduction

"Consumption is simultaneously also production, just as in nature the production of a plant involves the consumption of elemental forces and chemical material" K. Marx

Sound Transformations:

"With the power of the computer, we can transform sounds in such radical ways that we can no longer assert that the goal sound is related to the source sound merely because we have derived one from the other." (T. Wishart)

In my work, sound transformations are used for the transformation of existing music.

Why transformation of musical sources? Because they may carry complex cultural symbolism.

The amount of processing can affect our ability to recognize the source sound or musical sample. Therefore, there is a wide palette of derivative music available to us: from the radically processed less recognizable source   more 'abstract' extreme; to the less processed   more recognizable source more 'referential' and quotation type music.

Performance practice and other sonic characteristics of many original musical sources is lost in the transcription to a fully notated score for ensembles of western classically trained musicians. Many aspects of sound production (intonation, groove, spectral characteristics of instruments/voices, etc) is lost via this process.

Process of derivation and sound transformation is not directly apparent to the audience. The act of appropriation is not transparent.

Nicolas Bourriaud: Postproduction, 2002.

"Starting with the language imposed upon us (the system of production), we construct our own sentences (acts of everyday life), thereby reappropriating for ourselves, through these clandestine microbricolages, the last word in the productive chain."[2]

"By listening to music or reading a book, we produce new material, we become producers. And each day we benefit from more ways in which to organize this production: remote controls, VCRs, computers, MP3s, tools that allow us to select, reconstruct, and edit. Postproduction artists are agents of this evolution, the specialized workers of cultural reappropriation."

"Throughout the eighties, the democratization of computers and the appearance of sampling allowed for the emergence of a new cultural configuration, whose figures are the programmer and DJ. The remixer has become more important than the instrumentalist, the rave more exciting than

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[2]Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005.

the concert hall. The supremacy of cultures of appropriation and the reprocessing of forms calls for an ethics: to paraphrase Philippe Thomas, artworks belong to everyone. Contemporary art tends to abolish the ownership of forms, or in any case to shake up the old jurisprudence. Are we heading toward a culture that would do away with copyright in favor of a policy allowing free access to works, a sort of blueprint for a communism of forms?" (N. Bourriaud)

1.4.1   The postmodern condition in the digital age

resurgence of image / music quotations/references - first as reaction to the anti-mimetic later with digital technology, easy reproduction, etc, etc =¿ the use of images becomes the same as before the establishment aestetic regime : commodification, capitalism, DJ culture, digital quotations (in hip-hop, sound libaries, etc, etc)

1.4.2   The liberal-comunists: Open Source, etc.

There is no music by John Oswald on the net free to download. Hypocrisy from the appropriator? Or does he fall into the logic of late-capitalism - no communism of forms? I plunder but dont plunder me. Or, at least not for free?

I propose an attitude towards music appropriation similar to that of hacker communities and the open source initiative. Not with the purpose of suggesting a communist utopia, but of being consequent with my creative process. By giving away my music, recorded sounds and experiments, code, etc, through the net, I will hopefully instigate others to do so as well. If this attitude is followed, it could promote the organization of music cyber communities that would plunder, engage with and promote each other, hopefully producing more subversive types of music.

We are far from the Bourriauds utopia. The only people how have access to (artistic) shareware are commoditized people, mostly in western countries. Isnt the DJ approach towards plunderphonics one that appropriates to make more profit and diminish costs only to thereafter feed back their product into the music industry system?

1.5   Computer-Mediated Musicking

Christopher Small argues that music is not a thing or an abstract concept, but a human activity that he calls *musicking*, meaning all individual and collective endeavors in the process of music making. Moreover, Small questions the notion that a musical work is what gives meaning to *musicking*.

> The act of *musicking* establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part . . . relashionships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world. . . . (Small, 1998)

The music we compose and perform can convey our thoughts and express our feelings. As listeners we interpret . . . make us feel and think. Empathy. Exchange.

1.5.1 Compositional Stratergies based on reshaping relationships in music making

Gilius piano pieces.

1.5.2 Reshaping relationships in music making through technology?

The introduction of electroacoustic resources into live musical performance has changed the relationship between the composer and the performer.

The use of computer technology has also fostered new collaborative possibilities between performers of different cultures.

Musicians of different backgrounds (improvisation and notated music) and traditions (Western and non-Western) may now share the stage simultaneously and productively through technology; in spite of previously incompatible performance conventions.

Real-Time computer processing allows the possibility of using the audio signal (as well as other information - like MIDI) from several live performances simultaneously as building blocks for a composition.

1.5.3 Evaluating Human and Machine Performance

Iteration and Generative Music + AI

1.6 Appropriation as a Compositional Strategy

1.6.1 Musica Derivata and Plunderphonics

"A good composer does not imitate; he steals" I. Stravinsky

Musica Derivata:

"music that is compositionally based on other music" (K. Barlow)

Plunderphonics:

John Owald, 1985. "Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as Compositional Prerogative"

Use of audio samples as a technique for composition.

Different from Musica Derivata in that it appropriates the recording of the original musical source. Information from recording (tibre, rhythm, performace practice, etc) is plundered from the original source to create a new composition.

"As a listener my own preference is the option to experiment. My listening system has a mixer instead of a receiver, an infinitely variable speed turntable, filters, reverse capability, and a pair of ears. An active listener might speed up a piece of music in order to perceive more clearly its macrostructure, or slow it down to hear articulation and detail more precisely."[3]

1.6.2 Redefining the 'Real' in Real-Time

Much has been written about the problematics of live electronic music performance using computers.[4] Most of the discussion seems to be centered in how to define what 'live' means in a performance using computer technology which escapes the "well-understood Newtonean mechanics of action and reaction, motion, energy, friction and damping."[5] The problem of what appears to be *real* regarding a computer performance is a continuing source of debate. There are some with the position that the relationship between physical action and sonic reaction must remain for a performance to continue to have 'liveness' and meaning (Croft, 2007)[6] while others argue that a new generation of musicians are satisfied with having no apparent correlation between physical effort and sound output (d'Escriván, 2006)[7].

- Barrett's position.

- Simon Emmerson Real and Imaginary Relationships

- Lacanean 'Real', 'Imaginary' and 'Simbolic'

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[3]John Oswald, "Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative," in *Wired Society Electro-Acoustic Conference*, Toronto, 1985. URL: http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xplunder.html.

[4] See Barrett(2008), Croft(2007), d'Escriván(2006) and Emmerson(2007)

[5] (Emmerson, 2007).

[6]'Theses on liveness'. *Organised Sound* 12(1), p. 59-66. 2007 Cambridge University Press.

[7]'To sing the body electric: Instruments and effort in the performance of electronic music', *Contemporary Music Review*, Volume 25, Issue 1 and 2 February 2006, pages 183-191

1.6.3 plunderphomes, ideology and the use of references

> While some start up a prolonged lamentation for the lost image, others reopen their albums to rediscover the pure enchantment of images- that is, the alterity of the *was*, between the pleasure of pure presence and the bit of the absolute Other.

> Evidence of exhibitions devoter to 'images', but also the dialectic that affects each type of image and mixes its legitimations and powers with those of the other tow.

Plunderphones reflect ideology . . . Žižek/Adorno but. . . . The artist can present their own view of these references by rearranging them modifying them. The plunderphonics artist doesn't necessarily adheres to the ideology of the appropriated material, but reflects it by the use of the plunderphones - how are they presented, modified, etc?

1.6.4 On Appropriation

What?

Code, compositional tecniques, what piece of music? Do we plunder from the "flea market or (the) airport shopping mall"? (N. Bourriaud). From the top 20 list - J. Oswald approach-, or from the hidden CDs at the back of the music store?

Who?

Music Industry? Pop/commercial? Historical (dead composers)? Music from different cultures?

Appropriation of the Other. What relationship do we want to establish with the Other? Impersonal like the 1st/3rd World relationships?

Liberal multiculturalists approach? "Other deprived of its Otherness (the idealized Other who dances fascinating dances and has an ecologically sound holistic approach to reality, while features like wife beating remain out of sight)?" (Slavoj Žižek, 2003)

Why?

For the meaning of the cultural object you are appropriating? For its symbolism? To suggest a metaphor?

For its use? "Dont look for the meaning, look for the use" - L. Wittgenstein - for example for the sonic qualities of the appropriation (intonation, groove, etc.)

How?

1.6.5 Real-Time Plunderphonics

Appropriation of audio signals from live music performances as material for a new composition

Creates a cognitive dissonance between audio and visuals.

The amount of processing of the audio signals is visible. The more processed the performances are, the more contrasting they will look in relationship with what is heard through speakers.

In contrast to acousmatic tradition, Real-Time Plunderphonics makes the process of appropriation transparent to the audience through the cognitive association between audio and visuals.

Changes relationship with the appropriated Other: The performer becomes an accomplice in the process of appropriation (or themselves).

Deals with the problematic of the lack of visual clues and theatrical elements in electronic music performance by introducing a dynamic group of live performers and an interesting and unusual visual scenario.

Some ideas of how to plunder

Get to know what and who you are plundering and figure why your are doing so before you decide how to plunder.(Know your performers, their music and why you want to work with them)

Appropriate and plunder yourself.

Plundering not as central purpose of the creative process, but rather a tool for creating new idiosyncratic audio/visual result.

Use "from raw to cooked" (Lévi-Strauss) techniques to create a narrative that navigates, in literary terms, between the real (actual performance) and the 'surreal' (extreme processed audio).

Combinations of Real-Time Plunderphonics, (Real-Time) Musica Derivata and Sound Transformations

Use plunderphones as data: reprogram, not just remix.

Micro and macro plundering.

Use also Non Real-Time tools (Scores, Samples, etc.) if suitable.

Using plunderphones as data

An example: Use FFT data of your plunderphone to trigger samples of recorded instruments.

Micro and Macro Plundering

Microplunderphonics

Plundering just microelements of sound. Not the whole spectrum of the original sound file.

Generate noise with your plunderphones and use it instead of white noise for sound synthesis

Macroplundering

Appropriate a compositions form. Use the structure as blueprint for a new composition.

Use variables of the appropriated piece (pitch, dynamics, etc.) as control structures for new output.

1.6.6 Crossing Cultural Borders?

A discussion of Simon Emmerson's Crossing Cultural Boundaries through Technology. Žižek's view of Multiculturalism.

1.6.7 Interpassivity

Interpassivity, like interactivity, thus subverts the standard opposition between activity and passivity: if in interactivity (or the cunning of Reason), I am passive while being active through another, in interpassivity, I am active while being passive through another. More precisely, the term interactivity is currently used in two senses: (1) interacting with the medium, that is, not being just a passive consumer: (2) acting through another agent, so that my job is done, while I sit back and remain passive, just observing the game. While the opposite of the first mode of interactivity is also a kind of interpassivity, the mutual passivity of two subjects, like two lovers passively observing each other and merely enjoying each others presence, the proper notion of interpassivity aims at the reversal of the second meaning of interactivity: the distinguishing feature of interpassivity is that, in it, the subject is incessantly (frenetically even) active, while displacing on to another the fundamental passivity of his or her being.[8]

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[8]From The Fantasy in Cyberspace by Slavoj Žižek