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Florian Edler, Markus Neuwirth und Immanuel Ott

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Marcus Aydintan, Florian Edler,
Roger Graybill und Laura Krämer

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Ewa Schreiber

To hear anew ...

Contemporary composers and the repertoire of the Viennese classics¹

1. The composer-critic

In an interview with John Palmer, Jonathan Harvey invokes one of his early teachers, Erwin Stein, a friend and erstwhile pupil of Arnold Schoenberg:

It was a generous idea – to have my eyes opened under the guidance of Erwin Stein. Stein told me about Schönberg, Berg and Webern whom he knew personally, of course, as well as Stravinsky. He didn't analyse these works for me, but what he did do was to analyse Beethoven in the Schönberg manner. He gave me a classical Schönberg teaching of how classical structures are built, getting down to the basics of structural formation. One didn't get this at Cambridge.²

The composer's words evoke two important issues. First, the continuity of music history depends in equal measure on current compositional output and on the actual practice of teaching composition and interpreting other people's works. Secondly, analysis always tells us something essential about a composer; it reveals his ›listening self‹ and demonstrates how we can perceive a given composition.³ These issues are also addressed by other major composers and

1 Translated by John Comber.

2 Palmer 2000.

3 Insight into the subtle relations between subjectivity and musical analysis is offered by Naomi Cumming 2000, p. 45: »A statement ›I hear it like this‹ is implicit in most forms of analysis that are not purely mechanical, but it cannot be used to resolve any kind of dispute about alternative readings«. Opposing the dichotomy of senses and reason, the author also argues that various interpretative approaches to music have a common source: »Reasoning is embodied in a sensuous form [...] and retrospective thought allows the rational content of the perception to be abstracted from it.« (Ibid, p. 47.) Thus Cumming enters the debate on the status of music analysis, particularly intense during the 90s, and argues that the explanatory function of analysis tallies with its contribution to auditory experience. Cumming's views are close to ideas voiced by Mark DeBellis, among others. See DeBellis 1995, p. 117–131.

critics of the twentieth century. Elliott Carter, instructed by his experience as a music critic, states that discussing examples of other composers' work often helps one to form a better understanding of one's own compositional dilemmas. »Usually, in his writings, the composer-critic is trying to clarify or change his attitudes and feelings about certain elements of his own style by discussing other related things.«⁴ Carter singles out Charles Ives, who, »like every composer, is seeking his place and his own style in relationship to other music as he hears and experiences it.«⁵ Edward T. Cone also argues that critical reflection is essential for a composer: »Not every critic is a composer, but every composer is a critic.«⁶ Every decision that a composer makes in respect to revising his own works or reworking the compositions of others requires critical selection and the taking of choices with an awareness of the various possible solutions to the problem.⁷ If for a moment we are placing the composer in the role of interpreter and critic, it is worth quoting a couple of tips from the musicologist and music historian Karol Berger: »We historians have no right to impose on critics any limits concerning the contexts within which they might want to place the objects they interpret. Critics may be illuminating and persuasive even when they disregard the historicity of the artwork.«⁸ »We want the arts to speak to us, not only observe how they spoke to others.«⁹ So the critic is most often the person who mediates between the work and the contemporary world.

It would seem that the interpretative and critical role of composers, necessarily orientated towards their own times, still requires due appraisal and investigation. Even though important works have been published on this subject,¹⁰ it continues to be treated as secondary in relation to compositional output; in the case of contemporary composers, research into their critical reflection lags behind studies of their output. The attitudes of composers are manifest in their compositions and in their reflection, expressed most enduringly in writing. The present text will focus on the role of composers as interpreters of other people's

4 Carter 1997, p. 338.

5 Ibid.

6 Cone 2009, p. 134.

7 Ibid, p. 122.

8 Berger 1999, p. 227.

9 Ibid., p. 226.

10 They concern especially composers who lived during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century and were known to be passionate about writing, such as Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, Claude Debussy or Arnold Schoenberg. See Plantinga 1967, Donnellon 2003, among others.

work and show the extent to which reflection of this kind can enhance our perception of their creative attitude, and even of historical changes.

2. Classicism as a reference point

»We do not have to call upon any historical sympathy to appreciate the work of Mozart and Beethoven, and the late works of Haydn: they are still in the blood of most musicians today«,¹¹ asserts Charles Rosen. Those words seem all the more meaningful in that they issued from the pen of a leading performer of the work of Elliott Carter, and the entire book on classical style is dedicated to Helen and Elliott Carter, with whom the author discussed the subject many times.¹² It was the eighteenth century that gave rise to a cohesive, integrated style »so powerful that it can apply almost equally well to any genre«. ¹³ Rosen writes that »The creation of a classical style was not so much the achievement of an ideal as the reconciliation of conflicting ideas – the striking of an optimum balance between them.«¹⁴ Within that ideal, the expression of dramatic effect is linked to the elegance of a work's logical design. The author also emphasises that the emergence of the classical style, despite the attainment of a remarkable cohesion, was marked by irregularity and disorder.¹⁵

The second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century were to become the classical era, both in the narrow sense of the word with a capital ›C‹, as an era opposed to romanticism in the view of later times, and in the more universal sense of an era representing a constant point of reference for further generations. Classicism also proves essential in terms of the changing social status of the artist. It was in the times of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as Norbert Elias argues, that artisanship rivalled artistry.¹⁶ As the output of Ludwig van Beethoven evolved, the myth of the artist also grew in strength.

The fact that the works of Joseph Haydn and Beethoven have found their way into the blood of most musicians today can be interpreted also in a dif-

11 Rosen 1998, p. 47.

12 Carter 1991, p. 549.

13 Rosen 1998, p. 47.

14 Ibid., p. 43.

15 Ibid., p. 57. A profile of the classical style can be found in the chapter »The Coherence of the Musical Language« (p. 57–98).

16 Elias 1993.

ferent, more ambiguous, light. Peter Burkholder mentions »the emergence of a permanent repertoire of musical classics«¹⁷ that occurred during the eighteenth century, over the 140 years between the death of Georg Friedrich Handel and the death of Johannes Brahms. He argues that the stamp of the classics left a very strong imprint on twentieth-century composers, since every composer had to compete with his or her predecessors and aspire to create works that attain an equally lofty position, and thereby also a lasting place in the concert repertoire.¹⁸ This relationship has been described in a variety of ways: ambivalently, in terms of the »anxiety of influence« (Joseph Straus¹⁹), or more harmoniously (Karol Berger). Berger, contrary to the contemporary lamenting of the end of music history²⁰, points to composers who, despite the signs of cultural crisis, have perpetuated the musical tradition and sought to inscribe their music within its canon. He numbers among them György Ligeti, Witold Lutosławski and György Kurtág, who seek to enrich the tradition of art music in unexpected ways.²¹

3. In search of classical ideals

Within the context of the considerations outlined above, it is worth asking how composers have manifested their attitude towards the classics. What categories have they used to describe classical works, what connection does that have with their own aesthetic preferences and their own output? In an attempt to answer these questions, at least to some extent, I turned to the writings of selected composers of the second half of the twentieth century. My choice was dictated by several considerations. The attitude to tradition displayed by representatives of the post-war musical avant-garde (such as Pierre Boulez, John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen) is often studied and discussed. It is worth noting that,

17 Burkholder 1991, p. 412.

18 Ibid., p. 412–413.

19 Joseph Straus employs a theory formulated in the 70s by the literary critic Harold Bloom (Bloom 1973) in relation to works by Alban Berg, Béla Bartók and Arnold Schoenberg. See Straus 1991, p. 435.

20 Berger refers to debates carried on during the twenty-first century by American musicologists, and his text was originally a paper delivered to a conference organised at Princeton University in 2012, entitled *After the Ends of Music History* and dedicated to Richard Taruskin. The conference title alludes not only to the last sentence of Taruskin's *Oxford History of Western Music*, but also to the current status of the canon of classical music.

21 Berger 2014, p. 192.

despite the rhetorical gesture of a ›new beginning‹, that attitude is neither unequivocal nor uniform.²² The composers cited in the present text include figures not among the doyens of the avant-garde. There are both composers who owed a great deal to the avant-garde without identifying closely with its achievements and also somewhat younger colleagues who learned their craft from Karlheinz Stockhausen or Luigi Nono. They all belong to the modernist current, as more or less radically understood, yet they come from different circles of European, and even American, music. They are Jonathan Harvey, György Ligeti, Witold Lutosławski, Helmut Lachenmann and Elliott Carter, all of them linked by an inflated need for self-reflection and verbal commentary, and by the same stroke a powerful need to be a critic of other composers' work.²³

In the writings and utterances of the selected composers, the classics occupy a special place, in terms of both the high appraisal of their work and also their place in the narrative of music history. The main ideas identified with the classical style in music are order, balance and unity in diversity, and at the same time a sense of beholding a product of the composer's conscious will.

In the book *Music and Inspiration*, Harvey devotes a chapter to how a composer measures up to an ideal. In first place, he cites the notions of order and unity, associating both of them primarily with classicism. He regards the Viennese classics as the »foundation of our present day mainstream sense of musical order«. ²⁴ He also emphasises that »the idea of unity is most immediately associated with the music of the classical era«, ²⁵ and he discerns the fullest realisation of those ideas in the mature output of Haydn and in the music of Mozart. Lutosławski reveals similar views, when he declares that »for me, all Haydn's symphonies are a model of excellent balance, just the right portions of music, perfectly placed in time.« ²⁶ Ligeti, in turn, evinces a fascination with the cohesion of a tonal musical language. Beginning with issues connected with rhythm and closure, he describes how a tonal system came to be created. »The

22 See Skowron 2016 and Moraczewski 2015, p. 16.

23 When analysing what composers have said, it is always worth keeping in mind the circumstances in which they said it and their possible motives for doing so. The utterances used in this article most often come from lectures that were subsequently written down and published, but there are also excerpts from radio programmes, books and interviews. The chief criterion for the choice of sources was their variety, as well as cohesion between the views presented here and other declarations made by a particular composer.

24 Harvey 1975, p. 32.

25 Harvey 1999b, p. 138.

26 Kaczyński 1995, p. 17.

European composers in whom tonality [...] appears in perfect balance and in the purest form are Haydn and Mozart.«²⁷ In Harvey's opinion, the classical style »exhibits a new type of order: widely contrasting elements of melody, rhythm and harmony are welded into one law-abiding equilibrium, with such success that we instinctively feel that the disparate elements *belong* together«.²⁸ Carter expresses a similar reflection in a lecture on time, when he shares his fascination with the opening scene of *Don Giovanni*: »The most varied, most absorbing and exciting and most compressed six minutes of opera [...] could never have been written before Mozart's time, for up until then there were no musical techniques flexible, aphoristic, and varied enough to give form to such a heterogeneous collection of musical ideas and characters«.²⁹ As Harvey sees it, the idea of a complex unity, so characteristic of classicism, assumes the rank of a paradigm of the whole of Western music,³⁰ and still today it remains at the centre of composers' interests. Its essence can be encapsulated in the following words: »The greater the contrasts successfully unified in a single work, the more important that work seems to be.«³¹

In the case of Lachenmann, a composer with a profound fixation on the past, the attitude towards the ideals of classical style proves more complicated. In the commentary to his work *Accanto* (1975/76), perhaps his most personal essay on classical style, he writes: »Mozart's Clarinet Concerto is for me the epitome of beauty, humanity and purity, but also – and at the same time – an example of a fetishised means of fleeing from oneself«.³² So Lachenmann feels himself to be, on one hand, an heir to the classics, whilst at the same time he is opposed to the commercial and ideological abuse of their legacy, appealing for the restoration of music's former dignity.³³ An example taken

27 »Die europäischen Komponisten, bei denen die Tonalität [...] in der perfektesten Balance und in der reinsten Form erscheinen, sind Haydn und Mozart.« (Ligeti 2007c, vol. 2, p. 127)

28 Harvey 1999b, p. 138.

29 Carter 1997, p. 316.

30 Harvey 1999a.

31 Ibid., p. 26.

32 »Das Mozartsche *Klarinettenkonzert* ist mir Inbegriff von Schönheit, Humanität, Reinheit, aber auch – und zugleich – Beispiel eines zum Fetisch gewordenen Mittels zur Flucht vor sich selbst« (Lachenmann 2015, p. 390.)

33 An interesting interpretation of this declaration is proposed by Alastair Williams, who compares Lachenmann's views with the current of historically informed performance and regards *Accanto* as an attempt at restoring »the truth value (the authenticity) of Mozart's music by peeling away the layers of commodification associated with the ›beauty concept««. Williams 2012, p. 91.

from Beethoven's String Quartet No. 10 in E flat major, Op. 74, among other pieces, enables the composer to formulate one of the key notions of his musical reflection: the notion of structure, understood not just as a meaningful ordering of heterogeneous elements representing a temporal projection of the sensory and acoustic properties of sounds, but also as a manifestation of the composer's will, a product of an operation consciously organising the material in this particular way.³⁴ This aspect is addressed more directly by other composers. Lutosławski writes of Haydn's symphonies that they »show great refinement in the art of what I would call conducting the listener through a piece of music.«³⁵ Carter, meanwhile, relishes a feature that he calls, rather poetically, »human touch«: »I want to feel that the composer is always present behind every note, awake, alive to its position in time as it passes and aware of what he is communicating, as is sharply true of the best works of Mozart and, indeed, of most all music I admire.«³⁶

4. Classical unease and social conventions

Although the classics are associated with cohesion, order and unity, one can also detect in their music a kind of tension. This aspect is addressed most radically by Lachenmann: »Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven: already for them, to compose meant to break the established forms and norms with the clarity and independence of thinking volition and to venture out of the security of social communication habits into the insecurity of one's own responsibility with regard to the musical material.«³⁷ What is more, the composer discerns a dialectic in the tonal system itself. »Negation of the norm, namely consonance, itself becomes the norm. Dissonance means departing from consonance and at the same time acknowledging it as tension aimed towards it.«³⁸ An ambiguous approach to

34 Ibid., p. 60.

35 Kaczyński 1995, p. 169.

36 Carter 1991, p. 549.

37 »Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven: Komponieren hieß schon für sie: mit der Klarheit und Selbständigkeit des denkenden Willens etablierte Formen und Normen sprengen und aus der Geborgenheit gesellschaftlich verankerter Kommunikationsgewohnheiten sich heraus in die Ungeborgenheit der eigenen Verantwortung gegenüber dem musikalischen Material wagen.« (Lachenmann 2015, p. 24.)

38 »Negation der Norm, nämlich des Konsonanten, wird ihrerseits zur Norm. Dissonanz bedeutet Abweichung von der Konsonanz und zugleich deren Bestätigung als darauf bezogene Spannung.« (Lachenmann 2015, p. 23.)

convention is also mentioned by György Ligeti. Analysing the opening Adagio from the String Quartet in C major, KV 465, he points to the »supreme subtlety of Mozart's composition technique«. ³⁹ According to Ligeti this is manifest in such things as a balancing on the edge of convention and an ambiguity of tonal functions (depending on their interpretation in a local or a global context), and also in the rich modulation strategies and in the chromatic tensions resulting from leading notes or from the crossing of voices. ⁴⁰ »What happens here in terms of harmony and voice-leading«, states the composer, summing up his analysis, »can still be explained within the binding convention [...], but, as in other chromatic passages in Mozart [...] here it is about the continuation of a tradition, which from the late fourteenth century onwards [...] was regarded as an extravagant peripheral phenomenon.« ⁴¹

For Lachenmann, Mozart's output attests to an uncompromising social stance, and the richness of his compositional art »activates one's hearing far beyond the usual scope and irritates social behaviour«. ⁴² »Going beyond the services rendered within the framework of social convention«, he concludes, »Mozart turned the cultivation of music into the cultivation of the spiritual.« ⁴³ Lachenmann's thinking on this question tallies with the views of Norbert Elias, who is opposed to the radical separation of output from a composer's social existence. ⁴⁴ The expression of individual personality and freedom at unexpected points in a work, the »Ich-Ton«, attesting to a negation of social principles and codes, is

39 »Ich glaube, nach all diesen faktischen Darlegungen erübrigt sich eine Würdigung der höchsten Subtilität der Mozartschen Satztechnik.« (Ligeti 2007b, vol. 1, p. 277.)

40 Ibid., p. 277.

41 »Was hier harmonisch und in der Stimmführung passiert, ist noch innerhalb der herrschenden Konvention erklärbar [...], doch wie in anderen chromatischen Sätzen Mozarts - [...] - handelt es sich um die Fortführung einer Tradition, die seit dem späten 14. Jahrhundert [...] als extravagante Randerscheinung [...] galt.« (Ligeti 2007b, vol. 1, p. 274.)

42 »Es übersteigt die Möglichkeiten dieser Sendung aufzuzeigen, wie Mozarts Sprache [...] das Hören weit über das gewohnte Maß hinaus aktiviert und das gesellschaftliche Verhalten irritiert.« (Lachenmann 2015, p. 274.)

43 »Über die Dienstleistung im Rahmen der gesellschaftlichen Konvention hinaus erzwingt Mozart die Beschäftigung mit der Musik selbst, als Beschäftigung mit dem Geist.« (Lachenmann 2015, p. 274.)

44 According to Elias, visible even in Wolfgang Hildesheimer's demythologising biography of Mozart (1977) is »the idea of a man who develops into a great artist entirely from ›within‹, independently of his human fate« (Elias 1993, p. 51). In our times, a similar view seems to have been propounded by the music philosopher, Peter Kivy, who argues that Mozart possessed innate genius: »However in the case of Mozart the child, it does not seem as if genius, in any sense, was *achieved*. [...] It just seems to have *happened*.« Kivy 2009, p. 20.

also discerned, in a semiotic analysis of Mozart's works, by Eero Tarasti, who has no hesitation even in linking this phenomenon to the idea of a »continuous avantgarde«. ⁴⁵

For many, however, the strict correspondence of musical works to a social situation proves to be a delicate and controversial matter. »To be sure,«, argues Ligeti, »a Mozart string quartet reflects the social situation: the decline of the aristocracy and the ascent of rationalism, but the quartet itself offers only traces of that which has happened socially. To call a string quartet by Mozart or Haydn reactionary is infantile«. ⁴⁶ The composer resolutely defends the autonomy of music, defining musical works as »thought structures [...], communicated by means of acoustic signals« ⁴⁷ and realising that the position of his own output also depends on such an interpretation. ⁴⁸ The modernist dispute over the autonomy of music, typical of twentieth-century aesthetic polemics, particularly in the American academic environment, ⁴⁹ can also be regarded as a historical legacy, as a conscious mutual influence of the Classical-Romantic age and the modern age.

5. The classics and new music

As Ligeti stresses, the happy times of harmony between musical language and a composer's creative intentions have passed irrevocably. Today, the discovery of a universal grammar would be utopian and totalitarian, since speech,

⁴⁵ Tarasti 2008.

⁴⁶ »Ein Mozart-Streichquartett spiegelt freilich die gesellschaftliche Situation – Untergang der Aristokratie, Aufkommen des Rationalismus –, aber in einem Mozart-Streichquartett aufzeigen, was sozial geschehen ist, kann man nur in Spuren. Ein Mozart- oder Haydn-Streichquartett reaktionär zu nennen [...], ist infantil.« (Ligeti 2007a, vol. 1, p. 233–234.)

⁴⁷ »Wir müssen sehr klar unterscheiden zwischen musikalischen Werken als in sich geschlossenen oder nicht geschlossenen Gedankengebilden, die durch akustische Signale kommuniziert werden, und der Umwelt.« (Ligeti 2007a, vol. 1, p. 233. English translation: Ligeti 1978, p. 21.)

⁴⁸ Ligeti's response was linked to accusations levelled by left-wing students at the elite, apolitical music of the avant-garde. Charles Wilson (2004) writes about a »rhetoric of autonomy« typical of Ligeti, which becomes also an indispensable tool for promoting his output on the musical market.

⁴⁹ Not without reason was the translation of Ligeti's text, which was originally uttered during a discussion in Darmstadt, published in the American journal *Perspectives of New Music*. If we recall that in Lachenmann's opinion Ligeti provided examples of »regressive avant-garde«, the dispute will reveal itself in full. See Lachenmann 2015, p. 29, 32.

as a cultural schema, should form spontaneously over the course of history.⁵⁰ Lachenmann also contrasts the familiar language (›vertraute Musiksprache‹) of music in the classical style with the loss of language (›Sprachlosigkeit‹) typical of contemporary music.⁵¹ That opposition even forms the thematic axis of his composition *Accanto*, in which a quotation from a work by Mozart appears strange in its new context. In light of this, one may ask what inspiration contemporary composers can draw from classical output.

In his book *The Music of Stockhausen* (1975), Harvey argues that the relationship between note pitches and tempo proportions which the German composer highlighted has historical precedence in works by Haydn and Beethoven.⁵² The author considers this problem on the level of both microstructure (analysing the relationship of rhythmic groupings and harmonic functions in selected works by the classics⁵³) and also macrostructure (comparing the metronome markings of individual movements of Beethoven symphonies): »The more one studies and listens to music of this period, the more one becomes aware of a perpetual passacaglia of I-IV (or II) V-I, constantly transformed, now meandering, now concise. [...] It is a fascinating hierarchy of forms within forms. In fact macro- and microstructures.«⁵⁴ Harvey discovers elements of the temporal relations proposed by Karlheinz Stockhausen in the analysed examples. He suggests that the theory was merely revealed by Stockhausen, although it was »unconsciously felt in previous music«.⁵⁵

Another important aspect in Harvey's writings is the manipulation of the harmonic series. Summarising the changes that occurred in twentieth-century harmonic structures, the composer writes: »It may be objected that a Mozart or neo-classical Stravinsky had a marvellous ear for the layout of chords on the orchestra, and this was nothing if not acoustic manipulation of the harmonic series structure. It is certainly the notion behind all concepts of ›blend‹ in tonal

50 Ligeti 2007c, p. 133.

51 Lachenmann 2015, p. 168–69. It is worth adding that the composer owes a great deal in this respect to the ideas of Theodor W. Adorno. See Williams 2012, p. 78.

52 Harvey quotes examples from Beethoven (Piano Sonatas, Op. 14 No. 2 and Op. 49 No. 2, Quartets, Op. 59 No. 1 and Op. 135), Haydn (Quartets, Op. 54 No. 3, Op. 64 Nos. 1, 5 and 6, Op. 77 No. 1) and Mozart (piano sonatas and mature quartets).

53 See Harvey 1975, p. 32: »For example, if the tonic poses a certain texture in duplets, one would expect the modulation to the dominant to define a speed $1\frac{1}{2}$ time as fast, since a fifth has a vibrational speed $1\frac{1}{2}$ faster than its fundamental, in other words, triplets«.

54 Ibid., p. 32.

55 Ibid., p. 34.

music – one realizes how much when listening to tonal music and then atonal through a bad car radio (as I do).«⁵⁶

Lutosławski seeks models of ›large closed forms‹: »I am seeking principles, by means of which I would be able to compose large-scale works characterised by their own development, twists and turns, solutions, and so on. In other words, works that are closed, elaborate, yet integral ›sound events‹.«⁵⁷

Inspirational for Carter proves to be a comparison of contrasting phrases of different speed, dynamics, texture and tonality, so typical for Mozart and his »human sensitivity to many facets and degrees of musical contrast«,⁵⁸ which he exploited in his Double Concerto and String Quartet No. 2.

Ligeti declares that combining his experience in an electronic music studio with his experience of teaching classical harmony and counterpoint enabled him to elaborate the concept of micropolyphony, even if he identifies it solely with a particular stage in the development of his output. What fascinates Ligeti in polyphonic texture and what he himself puts to use in his works is »the inner vibration« that arises »through interference patterns [resulting] from the drifting of voices rubbing thickly against one another.«⁵⁹

Lachenmann is most interested in thematic work (›Durchführungsprinzip‹), which acquired a radical form in the music of Schönberg and which he exploits in his own output. Instructive in this respect may be an analysis of the first movement of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 10 in E flat major, Op. 74.⁶⁰ This only becomes fully comprehensible when we consider it within the context of analysis of new music, and above all the notion of structure. Lachenmann often mentions how difficult it is to discard tonal thinking; despite this, the grasping of details and the meticulous tracing of the changes to specific chordal and rhythmic figures means that he himself appears to analyse Beethoven beyond the context of thematic entities and harmonic tensions. Later, he proceeds to a similar examination of a passage from Anton Webern's *Fünf Orchesterstücke* Op. 10 and passages from his own compositions.

56 Harvey 1982, p. 4.

57 Lutosławski 2011, p. 160.

58 Carter 1991, p. 549.

59 »Die interne Vibration entstand durch Interferenzmuster aus den Schwebungen der sich dicht gegeneinander reibenden Stimmen.« (Ligeti 2007c, vol. 2, p. 128.)

60 Lachenmann 2015, p. 118–121.

6. Summary

In this brief survey of views and analyses, the classics come across on one hand as key, exemplary figures, impossible to overlook in compositional reflection. On the other hand, their output proves to be ambiguous, full of inner tensions and dialectic. In this respect, composers' thinking strikes up an interesting dialogue with the thinking of musicologists and music philosophers. In practice, classical music may constitute a source of inexhaustible and highly diverse inspiration on various levels: form, texture, the shaping of time and contrasts of expression. Within the context of composers' writings, music history becomes less obvious, richer, and its continuity and turning points appear in a new light. Although each of the cited composers owes a great deal to the post-war avant-garde, creative continuation and inspiration prevail in their discourse and their music over the rhetoric of a radical break with the past. What is more, it is in the attitude of the classics that they find hallmarks of social opposition and attempts at renewing musical material. From this perspective, even the figure of a ›new beginning‹ consistently proclaimed by the more radical composers seems ambiguous and problematic. In the spirit of the words of Charles Rosen, even stylistic revolution is constrained by the nature of the language in which it is to be effectuated and which it is to transform. According to Lachenmann, the works of our tradition continue to hold secrets for our perception. And regardless of how old they are, they will be heard anew.

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Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań

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