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PERSONAL MANIFESTOS

on music, theatre & language

two manifestos

by Zachàr Laskewicz

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTES 2008

I'm republishing this collection of thoughts about language and the relationship between music and language.

It's at the very least an interesting commentary on a time which has long passed. And at best a document about being young, discovering the world and making sense of it as best you can. It may be idealistic but it does represent ideals which I still consider important.

PREFACE 1994

This publication is a combination of two texts, the first completed in 1994 and the second in 1995. They have received the name 'manifesto' primarily because the impetus for their creation grew from an awareness of a relationship between my creative work and a dissatisfaction with western society, and as such are accompanied by a feeling of breaking out in order to extend traditional boundaries. These texts are important because they form important landmarks in my personal development, and I have decided to present them together because they help to give a clear direction to the way my work has developed through the last few years. This has been involved with a search for an identity as a 'composer' of experimental music-theatre and the simultaneous personal necessity to find a theoretical language to explore the role of music in culture, something that seemed to me not to be encompassed by traditional theoretical discourses on this subject.

The impetus for the writing of both of these articles grows from intense periods of change brought about by moving first from Australia to Belgium and then from Belgium to the Netherlands. These dramatic cultural 'shifts' have allowed me to experience first hand the importance of language in the forming of individual identity as well as to make a connection between language and larger 'social' structures in which other elements involved with communication are included: manners, attitudes, ways of behaving etc. What one 'says' is changed in meaning significantly by factors extending beyond the words—how one feels about one's utterances—just as one's customs, musical traditions, political opinions and religious feelings all affect the way speech acts become expressed. Although these texts are involved on one level with an exploration of these 'language' systems which we are are surrounded by in the context of culture, at the same time they move to the level of the individual and explore my intense, personal search for new communication systems: this has expressed itself in an exploration of new 'musical'-languages that 'communicate' forms and patterns which are out of the range of traditional verbal discourse.

These articles are bound to a place and a time, and should not be taken as a direct reflection of how I feel now. Their writing has been completed with the knowledge that we never stop learning and developing, but that certain stages are reached when it becomes important to bring all the developments into an understandable form, so that future developments will have a sturdy starting point. These texts are written with such a background, and will hopefully remain useful for future reference as well as functioning as dialogues that can help people to understand my work by getting to know their internal context.

MANIFESTO ONE

Reflections on language, Culture, Art and Science

1. DEFINING LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

I have noticed at different times through the years that life seems to reach a point of conjunction in which it becomes necessary to start to piece the fragments together that seem at last to be forming part of a greater pattern. These periods are of particular personal importance and seem to occur at crosspoints in my life; spans of time signifying the end of one period and at the same time the beginning of another, dark periods of uncertainty in which everything that I have done is brought into question. Despite all the difficulty and self doubt that is brought about by such a period, being forced to question the past makes the present clearer and the structure of the future easier to define. Having emerged from such a period I feel that I have been able to form a steady base on which future work can be developed. This was made possible by being able to form my ideas into patterns, making a clear coherence from thoughts that were previously confused and unclear. This article is a collection of these thoughts brought into a coherent form; thoughts involved with my work and my identity, and more particularly the empty space between myself and my society that I bridge through my creative work.

The relationship between my work and my identity is something that I have until now been able to ignore; in the past it was relatively easy for me to distance what I was creating from who I was because in any case very little seemed to fit or make a lot of sense: I always felt very estranged from my home environment and my creative work seemed out of place, so connecting it all together was then simply impossible. Now however, being able to form my identity anew in a completely different environment[1] I have discovered that my work is in every way intricately intertwined with my identity, and the realisation of this connection has freed me up in making other personal discoveries.

Firstly I am actually surprised to find a correlation between the subjects that seem now suddenly to be of extreme importance and those that I have discussed similarly in the past;[2] subjects I thought I had long left behind but return now in a further developed form. In this regard the concept of 'language' is of particular importance, something that has concerned me and influenced my work almost from the very beginning. I have always considered that my work is primarily a reaction against the emphasis that has been placed in our society on spoken and written language as the only basis from which communication can be understood, and I expressed this through reacting against traditionally accepted conceptions of theatre language and an interest in how music is used in other societies to provide cultural unity.   In my previous work, both theoretical and practical, I have demonstrated a clear dissatisfaction with 'language' as I have experienced it through my education, where words were strictly related to facts which developed a materialistic outlook on reality; the interpretation of phenomena became restricted to a purely scientific level. I became very quickly disillusioned by spoken/written language as an expressive medium, feeling that words imposed on trains of thought, betraying the inner meaning and only saying half of what was necessary. For me the image was clear: if the imagination was a river, verbal language was an unsteady stone bridge across it, and thus I searched for other ways to tap the original source through my work. For me, the interpretation of any language object is in fact different for every person; the definition for a word as suggested in a dictionary can only act as a guide to an impression of meaning. For example, a 'dog' could be for one a carrier of love and affection and for another one of

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[1] Having lived for almost two years in Belgium.

[2] Most clearly expressed in the following article:
  Laskewicz, Z. "Music as an open creative resource", New Music Articles (Australian Music Centre 1991):
  issue 9, pp26-30.

terror and disgust, depending on the background of the involved party. This would also count of course for certain emotional and abstract concepts such as 'love' and 'compassion' —defined according to cultural (and not universal) norms. Verbal language remains a transitory medium, sometimes difficult and ambiguous where 'meaning' depends more on environment and circumstance than something sure and predetermined. In my society I was unwillingly bonded to what I interpreted as a stiflingly invariable language system in which it would be impossible to receive true self expression.

It is clear then that my initial difficulties with language reflect a larger dissatisfaction with the society in which I was taught to perceive the world in such a materialistic and logocentric way. This dissatisfaction[1] led me from an interpretation of language as word-based communication to an exploration of language in the broader context of a cultural system. Through this I have realised the importance of language in helping to define culture. I view language now as a complex communication system, only a degree of which is made up of written letters or spoken vocal sounds. Theoretically speaking I consider language as an essential characteristic that plays an important structural role in all human 'society'. In the structural sense I define 'society' as a complex interweaving of sign systems, systems in which meaning is communicated and the environment is made understandable and coherent for the inhabitants. The term 'language' in my own definition is therefore extended to include all possible forms of human communication, and in this regard 'society' could also be considered a language. An important factor of language for me is its essential 'artificiality' in that it is not inborn or natural but is learnt as a product of the surrounding society. We are therefore bound very much to our social environment through our language, and it would be difficult to deny that language has a lot to do with cultural identity.

Defined firstly through its capacity to unite a given culture, language can of course be also considered as an important means of personal expression. In other words, in addition to finding our identity by considering ourselves as figures in a given human society (restricted only by the boundaries of our 'languages') we should be able to find the means within this system to express ourselves as individuals. The very basis of my work, however, is based on a personal dissatisfaction with my society and a questioning of the very nature of the 'languages' with which I was provided. I have thus denied myself the possibility of being united with my culture or of finding self-expression through my own society, leading to a search for a new type of language, one based on illogical or musical concepts.

In order to explain the new ways of experiencing language that I have attempted to encompass in my work I can quote a friend, Carsten Wiedemann, who is similarly interested in using the concept of language as the basis for analysing and criticising society (through the medium of performance). He defines language as follows in a description of his new dance project called Word Perfect:

> A) Language - the desire to connect my individual being with others
>   in order to become part of something bigger than myself.
> B) Language - the desire to be different, to speak and to experience
>   my own voice different to another. To be the one and only.
> C) Language - which exists without reason, aim or function.
>   Language is an event in itself.

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[38] Kristeva, J. Language: The Unknown (CUP: New York, 1989): pg. 17.

This can be related to new ways that I have found to perceive my own work by placing myself in relation to my social environment. I am now able to clearly see that my greatest desire was to feel accepted into a social structure in which I could find meaning and identity, one in which I could in every way 'fit'. Unfortunately my quest for acceptance included an uncompromising desire for self expression, resulting in a sort of unwitting non-conformity where I was rejected by me peers without knowing why. Although longing to find a 'language' in which I would be able to communicate with those around me, I now realise that I could not accept the restrictions imposed by being accepted into any possible social situation offered to me at the time because it would not have allowed sufficient room for self-expression. These two contradictory possibilities can be related to Wiedemann's A and B language definitions respectively. The inability to find a compromise within the restrictions of my own social environment has resulted of course in me stepping outside society and looking inwards, somewhat embittered, and through my work providing on one level a commentary on this negative reaction and on the other creating new music-language 'structures' in which I can find my own meaning. This search for alternative language systems, in connection with the estrangement from my own society, has led me to the exploration of other cultures and how they 'communicate' through their performing arts, particularly music.

My interest in 'musical' communication reflects my dissatisfaction with society not merely through a rejection of the traditional way in which language is perpetuated, but also my alienation from our own musical culture. From receiving a traditional 'musical' upbringing and studying music later in university I have received the dominant impression that one of the primary meaning-bearing functions of music in our society is to create social divisions. We distinguish between a 'classical' and a 'popular' music, the former which is considered by many to be superior. It is true at least that a special type of 'musical' education is necessary in order to give this music some structural meaning, and there is no doubt that our society recognises an elitist division of people whom we call 'musicians' and who are commonly considered to be the only ones capable of producing music. For many, music of any value is a talent performable only by a chosen few, and in terms of classical music this represents the perpetuation of musical techniques that have little or no meaning-bearing function in contemporary society, just a limp aesthetic aftertaste of what was popular hundreds of years ago in Europe. For this reason I am more attracted to contemporary popular music because it is connected more with my own culture than some sort of lost musical aesthetic, but I have at the same time been alienated from this music because of the cultural values represented in which I can find no personal significance. Not being able to accept either paths, my research has been extended to other cultures with a differing way of experiencing music. Through these alternative paths I have been forced to question the traditional concept of a purely 'aural' musical experience as is inherent in western musical culture. According to John Blacking, the evidence of ethnomusicological research suggests that "'musical intelligence' [the way the brain understands musical experience - *Z.L.*] cannot be defined in strictly acoustical terms" and that it "can be used to organise cultural phenomena that are not usually described as 'musical'." On the same token, Gerhard Kubik observes that in African music the western distinction between music and dance is irrelevant: "one can define African music in one of its fundamental structural aspects as a system of movement patterns." My own practical experience has demonstrated an intimate connection between the experience of music and dance in Indian and Indonesian culture, and thus in my own musical 'systems' the concept of musical experience is extended from simply the aural so that elements of other contrasting language discourses can be encompassed, including vocal and movement languages.

The concept of a music-language seems my strongest statement against traditional society and at the same time presents the possibility for a solution to my language enigma. We have already defined 'language' as a complex social communication system, comprised of or intimately connected with an array of other sign systems that provide meaning for us in our societies. Music is undoubtedly one of these systems, and the way it provides personal meaning is worthy of further discussion. My own experience of music can be related to my experience of taking on a foreign language where a whole new series of symbols must be learnt—words, sounds, mannerisms and habits—to make the behaviour of a given community understandable. These elements are 'artificial' in that they must be interpreted as a structure before they can be expressed. For me the joy of the performance of music comes firstly from the feeling that I am expressing a system that is 'artificial', something that becomes willingly adopted but is not a natural part of my being; a system comprised of movements, sounds and nuances. Although I am expressing through my playing a musical system originally envisaged by someone else, using elements that are not 'my own', I feel that I can receive self-expression through the music: I find musical experience especially enjoyable if I feel like I am expressing a bit of myself within the expression of a larger cultural whole. Finding simultaneously a personal and a 'cultural' expression through the performance of a musical system Wiedemann's A and B definitions are united. This gives a firm basis for the exploration of music as a language system, one in which the traditional conception of 'meaning' must be totally rethought.

Definition C relates most closely to my work in attempting to discover music as a form of language: I have taken language as an artifact, stripping it of all the traditional meaning-based trappings, and created inwardly referring 'meaning' that is only significant in relation to the musical structure inside the composition. This fascination with the exploration of languages that actually have no 'aim' or 'function' reflects not only an interest in musical systems, but expresses directly my dissatisfaction with the traditional conception of language: the expression of something cogent and understandable, the stiflingly logical world in which I sometimes feel trapped. Through searching for an expression of language that exists on one level without 'rational' explanation I have adopted a stance which sets me in a historical structure, in this case the avant-garde in art. According to Christopher Innes there appears to be a recurring theme that has united various avant-garde art movements through the last hundred years:

> "there appears a dominant interest in the irrational and primitive, which
> has two basic and complementary facets: the exploration of dream states
> or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche, and the quasi-
> religious focus on myth and magic, the experimentation with ritual and the
> ritualistic patterning of performance."

Although relating to a series of particularly contrasting artists, these sentences could certainly describe the work that I have being doing over the last few years, although this has been expressed in various different forms: horrifying dream soundscapes, group ritual compositions and the construction of artificial languages to name a few. On another level, my dissatisfaction with western conceptions of language and music is directly perceivable in my continuing desire to deconstruct traditional methods of notating 'performance texts' (both musical and dramatic) and from the fragments to create my own notation system; a new performance language. Precisely what has led me to this point forms the important structural element for this article, attempting to explain why it is that I have reacted so savagely both against my society and language as it is generally experienced in western society.

2. LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

This discussion of language leads us directly to a discussion of cultural identity, and more specifically to my difficulty in relating to the concept of national identity in Australia. According to my personal perspective the borders of the reality which our education allows us to experience binds us to our culture primarily through the language. Since I wanted so rapidly to escape the binds of my society it was very important for me to learn completely and therefore to be able to think in another language. After not longer than a year of living in Flanders I have learnt to speak relatively fluently the native tongue: Flemish. Learning a new language is not simply learning a new set of words and a grammatical structure, it is learning to take on a set of social structures in a cultural group to which language is intimately bonded: habits, attitudes, customs, etc. What is surprising is the ease in which I have been able to loose myself from the social shell given to me in my home land and slip almost completely into another without losing my own sense of identity. I can honestly say that thoughts often arise in Flemish and that I find some things simpler to express in this language. For me this demonstrates the intermediary nature of spoken language: words become mediums of expression that are used merely as vehicles for the translation of electrical impulses (thoughts); language becomes merely the means in which one expresses an essential identity within.

Living in Europe has also helped me to form a clear image of how language is used in different ways to create social divisions, acting in one way to unite cultural groups but at the same time to separate them from one another. In Flanders and The Netherlands the language 'Dutch' is spoken. Dutch exists in a form that is learnt and spoken by almost everyone and is known as A.B.N. ('Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands' - meaning *General Civilised Dutch*). However in the surprisingly small area in which this language is spoken what could be hundreds of regional dialects are recognised. Some of these dialects are not simply a different way of speaking, but languages containing contrasting vocabularies. People from the Flemish cities Ghent or Bruges, for example, can not understand one another if the regional dialects are spoken - and it is not even an hour between the cities by car! In many social situations regional dialects are not permitted to be spoken and I have sensed in certain social spheres a distinct antagonism against those still speaking their dialects and not the language in its 'civilised' form. In reaction to this language 'snobbery', stating that there is only one proper way for a language to be spoken, I have become more aware of how language is used to manipulate society.

Language when observed in this way can be seen as a structuring/stratifying tool used by society to create divisions or unities as is necessary in certain social/political situations. This observation has caused me to investigate in more detail how language is used in by society to create these divisions. It could be said that through the centralisation of education, an emphasis is placed on creating a sense of national identity, and that this education is binding in that it gives a common 'language' and a common way in which the world can be experienced. This is of course a very sensible political move to avoid falling into complete social anarchy, but the European language purism that is still perpetuated in the education is only affective in distancing people from any regional cultural connections they might have had and reminds me also of particularly frightening 'language crimes' I have encountered in Russia. Under Soviet rule many people living in central Asia had not only to learn Russian, but were required by law to speak a completely artificial 'national' language invented by Russian officials. These artificial languages were based on an amalgam of dialects spoken in a region where hundreds of contrasting languages may have been spoken. If one believes that a language is truly an

expression of cultural identity, then robbing this of a small culture by insisting that a language totally artificial is spoken by everyone, seems to me 'cultural' destruction of the worst kind before genocide. Through this realisation I have learnt to be more careful before reacting in a negative way to someone that speaks a regional dialect of English, for example Cockney or Australian, because in supporting a 'pure' English I am supporting this dangerous imperialistic attitude: I believe that the conception of a 'pure' language is entirely artificial and exists only in the minds of those who want to use it for conformity and control in society.

Since being in Europe I have formed the idea that these European attitudes to language have developed during the imperialist age in which in terms of political control it was extremely important to create a society with a strong sense of national identity so that borders could be safely distinguished and as necessary expanded at will. I have also sensed that these imperialistic attitudes are everpresent in contemporary European society and will not quickly be removed as "nationalism is not a disease, and therefore has no immediate and miraculous cure." The reality of European nationalism was made very clear after arguing with a Flemish friend about the terrible state of affairs in Rwanda, an African state that was was once a colony of Belgium. In discussing the brutal murder of ten Belgian soldiers by Africans during a period of political turmoil, I implied that the Belgians should be aware of the degree to which they themselves can be blamed for the deaths. Belgian annexation of Africa, primarily connected with national prestige and economy, resulted in the infiltration of European political and religious systems. It could be suggested that this has helped to bring about the turmoil that now occurs. Many Belgians consider, however, that the infiltration of the Belgians in Africa, although primarily for political and economic reasons, was not entirely bad for the Rwandese because "everyone (even the Africans) has a right to an education, a right to 'know'." I am strongly against this imperialistic conception of European superiority, and do not believe that European 'knowing' is necessarily the best. As I was brought up in a colony of England I am aware of how horrific European colonisation has been. This leads me to a discussion of my alienation from Australia and how my presence in Europe can be justified considering that I seem to stand largely against Europe and much of what it represents.

My distancing from Australia can on one level be related to a personal distancing from a culture based on a particularly horrific and brutal past. Australia acted as a prison colony to England, and trying to build oneself on a history based on pain, abuse and injustice is sometimes difficult. It has been unfortunately equally difficult for me to relate back to historical achievements of the 'homeland' (England) when I cannot justify what the English did during the imperial age, the sort of mentality that resulted in a spread of European culture without regard to the cultural destruction that was brought about by such an invasion. Through the colonisation of Australia by the English, the culture of the 'natural' inhabitants—the Australian Aborigines—has been largely destroyed. Australia itself is still having problems in dealing with the mass destruction of aboriginal culture, resulting in a widespread feeling of guilt and shame. I am now aware of how important this has been in the structuring of my identity.

Elements of Australian society that are considered essentially 'Australian' seem also to have played a role in my estrangement. Recreation activities, particularly sport, are considered an essential element of a healthy upbringing in Australian society. In relation to a definition of society, sport, especially team sport, could be interpreted as a social tool designed to unite and bring prestige to a cultural group, be that a football team or a nation. From a very young age I refused to be involved in this type of recreation, especially team sports which I considered violent, dangerous and ugly. In my personal rejection of this form of social interaction I was not only rejecting the game itself, but in a broader sense Australian culture in general. Rejecting

this I was forced to stand on the fringe at a distance, searching for my own kind of cultural unity. This desire to be distant from my peers started at a very young age, and was to express itself later in many different ways - my sexuality being the most decisive. I never felt that I fitted the sort of image that was accepted as Australian, as broad and open as that may in reality be. This was reflected in a rejection of every single attribute that is considered Australian: a dislike of the beach, a dislike of sports, inability to simply relax and enjoy myself to name a few. I now realise that this distancing was in fact from the beginning a subversive act, although my desire for acceptance and my longing to live in a system in which I would be comfortable did not allow me to realise that this distancing was not simply one of the repercussions of being different (stemming from my sexuality, as I thought) but a deliberate statement against my culture and the beginning of a search for something new.

Now living in Europe, taking on new languages and speaking in English with a European accent, I feel sometimes that I have shed myself of my Australian identity. Although I am not European and never will be, at least here in Europe I am a foreigner and am accepted as someone foreign. In Australia I felt myself a foreigner when I should actually have felt at home, and this made it difficult for me to develop an identity. Australian culture seen from a distance seems now like a diluted version of European culture, comprised of elements that appear to have less significance in such an inconceivably vast wasteland. In such an environment I found it difficult to conceive of myself and my work, whereas in Europe working against the traditions of contemporary society placed me on a common level with others having a similar goal to suggest alternative ways to perceive and experience reality. In Europe I have been successful in finding an identity for myself as an artist, and I feel through this more 'real' than I have ever felt in Australia. In creating this new identity I have had to strip the past away, to create a blank slate on which I can reevaluate everything. This is directly expressed through the strict structural nature of my new music-theatre work ZAUM in which a music-language is formed gradually from the simplest of sound and movement elements.

3. SCIENCE AND MAGIC

Having already opened this discussion into relating my investigation of language and the role it plays in culture, I would like to move on from my reactions to Australian society and investigate further my experience of western society in general. As discussed to some extent in the first chapter, I have realised since being in Europe that the very basis of my work questions language and the connected cultural environment, and related to this the very notion of 'reality' that was presented to me as part of my upbringing, one in which a logical outlook forced me to observe my environment in a particularly rational way: there were no second choices, no alternative possibilities. Although my work begins by questioning music and theatre as it is experienced in western culture, this extends to a questioning of the artificial structures that we are forced to live in; in its own way providing us with a system in which to live and perceive reality but also limiting us to perceiving reality in a certain way, emphasising the rational explainability of natural phenomena according to scientific theory. This emphasis on rationality and progression is passed on in every level of our education: we are taught to think about reality in this way by our experience of mathematics and science.

My dominant impression is the distance that we seem to have placed between ourselves and the natural world, resulting from the incredible rate of scientific and technological change through the last hundred years. In western culture we seem to rely primarily on a logical system growing from an emphasis on progression and change, creating an aching gap between 'culture and 'nature'. Our perception of reality seems on one level to be fairly limited, as beings existing in limited human environments with no scope for anything apart from what fits into our rational, explainable systems. My own perception of the world has led me to think about this in a different way. I have begun to doubt that everything can simply be explained because we have scientists that tell us that it must have happened in a certain way because it fits certain theories. It seems that I have been naturally led to question this through my work.

I have not reflected my dissatisfaction in an anarchistic rejection of western culture, but rather an interest in cultural systems where a connection is recognised between the cultural and the natural environment, clearly visible in ritual performances. This has led me to explore how theatre and music are experienced, helping to provide a means in which the natural world can be encompassed, interfacing and connecting the two. It could be said that the function of art is to help to bridge this gap, although in western society the gap is so large that a great deal of art must stand against traditional society rather than be fused together with it, and in western music it is apparent to me that we have lost this connection, searching instead for a sort of aesthetic principle - the only thing left if the music itself has no particular significance other than an exploration of the sound as a sound. By contrast Balinese music and theatre connects the performers and the audience in a particularly significant ritual function that plays a role in society, uniting the culture in a different way to how we in the west experience art. Not that I am saying that I find this better or more significant, but I have always been fascinated by the unexplainability of ritual behaviour, one that recurs and has an untranslatable 'significance' that is experiencable only by the performers, one that is closely associated with music (and dance) — a cultural unity that comes from the adoption of predefined musical systems that are recognisable and become connected with a particular ritual event. The possibility that there is also 'magical' significance, something beyond the level of traditional notions of experience in western culture fascinates me. Despite the restrictions of my western upbringing there is a part of me that wants to accept that there is something that forms a structure for the reality in which I exist but am unable to perceive in its entirety.

This leads me to the work of Ivor Cutler, the simplicity of which has always attracted me because it presents a way of observing elements of life in a way in which I feel I am given a more 'real' perception, despite its apparently 'illogical' nature. In his stories and songs he has a delightful tendency to link natural elements with humans in a way that makes one aware of the existence of connections between people and nature, for example his texts sometimes concern what stones are thinking on the beach, or describe a man as he leans down to drink water from a puddle on the street, or a girl as she urinates into a ditch. I find Ivor's work surprisingly restful and reassuring, placing me in a sort of absurd universe with a refreshingly simple outlook on life.   From a concert of Ivor's work that I saw in February 1994 I will try to recollect a story called 'The Book.' In this short narrative he reflected my own rejection of western predetermined logic, using the 'book' as a more direct symbol of our reliance on scientifically, logically accurate information to explain our environment.   He began his story by first explaining that we, as humankind "think we're really smart. . . because we can talk . .":

> "My friend and I were walking in a field. The field was large and we were surrounded by acres of green emptiness. My friend looked into the sky and asked me why it was that the sky went dark and the sun went away at night. I took a book from my pocket and told him to read it, telling him that all his questions would be answered. We walked further, but he didn't ask me anymore questions because he knew I had the book. . ."

It actually seems as if my rejection of this type of logical perspective that seems inherent in western culture was a predestined element of my character, and not something that developed as a reaction to my environment. I mention for example my continual escaping into wild fantasy worlds as a child, and even later my interest in acting where I felt free to create around me situations in which the reality was governed only by my imagination. 'Theatrical' reality of this type was evidently from a young age something quite graspable and cogent. This expressed itself also through an almost obsessive interest in the supernatural. On another level, my attraction to absurd comedy , the clashing of events that seemed to have no logical connection is also worthy of mention. Through this clash, I got a sort of satisfaction that only now I am able to explain by seeing this type of behaviour popping up in my own work. This can be explained in one respect as a reaction against traditional culture that demands a certain type of perception of reality, but I actually think now that it is more complicated than that. I think it as an attempt on my part to say that absurd or illogical behaviour is not so absurd or illogical as we might at first think, reflecting a great matrix of patterns that are simultaneously developing around us. In my own way I have tried to express this feeling of fuller awareness in my work, suggesting that there is a larger entirety in which we and our actions play a role, but one that is beyond our capacity to experience.

4. TOWARDS A NEW REALITY

I feel now as if the circle has turned once more, and that in a way I am back at a beginning point. Through becoming confused in the complications that have developed in the last couple of years, some of the major things that concerned me became drowned in other affairs. Now, through recent developments, I can relate back to the past and am surprised by the correlations. The difference is that I have since then developed a vocabulary through which these ideas can be clearly and concisely expressed. Years ago I read a book by Doris Lessing called <u>Memoirs of a Survivor</u>. This book attracted me greatly, although I could not then explain why and even which elements of the book fascinated me. I could only say that after finishing the novel I felt a great sense of the joy of knowledge, of being on the brink of something new despite the apparently apocalyptic nature of the book. The subject was the gradual dissolution of society: a world is presented in which people become less and less attached to notions of personal property and move onto the streets. A woman observing this almost impassively, as if it is a naturally occurring development, moves into herself and begins to explore a symbolic world beyond traditional reality. For me this was a truly hopeful view of the future, although it involved elements that many people would consider horrifying: the disintegration of the social systems in which we now feel safe.

Now that I have been in Europe for a year I am really beginning to feel as if this is starting to happen. I am closely surrounded by countries in which small sections are breaking away from the larger nations that are gradually becoming redundant. I have a strong feeling of change, one that excites and attracts me. This has also been reflected in developments in other fields, particularly science. I have begun to become interested in new thoughts about physics which are labelled under the title 'quantum mechanics' or 'chaos theory'. Through by chance encountering this in scientific programmes on television I became incredibly excited as if I was really on the threshold of something important, but at the same time it seemed as if what I was seeing was merely confirming what I already knew. It seemed as if the world was changing and I was going to have something important to do with it as it happened.

After a little research I have made some conclusions about my own reactions to these developments in science. This relates directly back to my own rejection of the logical upbringing that I have had. Growing from the humanism of the Renaissance man began to view himself as something distinct from the world, a higher being that was destined to rule over everything else. Physical science as we understand it (as it is ingrained in our education) developed from here, receiving perhaps its high point in the eighteenth century with Newton and his theories that explained theoretically certain physical phenomena. In my own education, I could never come to grips with this type of physics, and suspected that I would never be able to come to an understanding of it because of the feeling of command over the physical world and the distance that existed between theory and reality. Now, having a small insight into the historical developments that occurred when these scientific perspectives came into existence, I am able to begin to place these things into a context. These ideas came from a time that mankind believed that every generation would produce more enlightenments and make the world for man a happier place to live. I have now realised that I have been born into a generation in which we know that things are actually not going to improve after every generation, they are in one respect going to get worse and more difficult: overpopulation, disintegration of society, dissolution of ozone layer, nuclear threat etc. It sounds pessimistic, but here we can connect back to the figure of the woman from Doris Lessing's <u>Memoirs of a Survivor</u> who through her own introversion opens the doors for a new future: it is becoming

necessary for us to stop looking towards a grand future which is rapidly losing significance but start looking sideways—into walls and through windows—attempting to find new ways to perceive the reality that surrounds us. If we are going to achieve anything it will have to be internally and not externally.

It seems to me that developments in science that went against the logical outlook cultivated in the eighteenth century have led contemporary thought into a form of introspection, comparable also to Doris Lessing's work. This has occurred through the observance of new apparently unexplainable phenomena that can not be understood through eighteenth century principles, new conceptions of science have to be made in which larger systems seem to be taking place, systems that are unfolding with an almost predestined flow. These systems do not occur according to patterns that fit traditional logic, but according to repeating patterns that take place in a predetermined way. The random, chaotic creation of matter has now been brought into question and it is beginning to seem not so absurd to say that maybe there is a reason for everything that happens no matter how meaningless it may at first have seemed. This has come through the observance of incredibly small atomic phenomena and also incredibly great events within galaxies and universes.

Particularly fascinating for me was hearing scientists using the same words when discussing quantum physics as I used when trying to explain to one of the <u>ZAUM</u> actresses the 'meaning' of the seemingly absurd actions which she had to perform: "one event (particle) can only be understood by relating it to the whole". Quantum physics recognises an essential relatedness between particles, putting stress on the relation itself rather than an individual particle and what it individually does. The action of a particle therefore can not be explained by its own movements, but through its stochastic movements in a far greater system, just as any sound or movement in <u>ZAUM</u> can only be understood by viewing the composition as an entirety and placing it in the context of the whole development.   The connections may be vague, but it is interesting to note that I had a secret suspicion that they existed before I had made these discoveries, and the first time I heard about these scientific developments (months after the premiere of the performance) I felt a secret tingling of excitement, as if I had caught a glimpse of a great secret.

It is particularly interesting to note that Wolfgang Pauli (involved with the origin of contemporary physics) ended up consulting on a number of occasions Dr. Carl Jung because of the strange nature of his dreams in which archetypal symbols were presented in combination with his most important scientific theories. He was to suggest, for the first time, an essential relationship between quantum physics and psychology, between "matter" and "spirit", bringing science for the first time since ancient Greece back onto the same plane as religion. It seems to me that this connection reflects a realisation that an ultimate (scientific) truth is unattainable to us, seen through the behaviour of incredibly small particles that do not seem to follow the patterns in a 'logical' way, forcing scientists to question science itself and delve into Eastern philosophy for the answers. In being able to accept that what is already known in western science is only a small part of a most probably unattainable 'truth', I can in my own way find reassurance and comfort in feeling that what I am doing with my work, although I will maybe never know for sure, has some sort of significance in the scheme of things.

The circle is now almost complete. It is important to quote a scientist called Carl-Friedrich Von Weiszäcke who I heard talking about quantum physics. In discussing these theories he tried to define art as: "the awareness or perception of forms by making them." He compared this

definition to mathematical structures that were also a perception of a structure through its expression, although he elaborated this by mentioning that in mathematics the structures already exist, and in art they have to be created again. I have always seen my work in this way, and to hear it discussed is now a confirmation of what I already knew. I don't accept the structures which force me to perceive reality in a certain way, so I step outside and try to create my own around me, which find true expression in my works for the theatre. This has also helped me to realise that ZAUM is no end point, but a beginning point from which I have been able to define myself and what I want to do.

MANIFESTO TWO

Language, Music and Communication

1. INTRODUCTION

The mushrooms were busy talking among themselves . . .
"What a beautiful existence!," they said to one another,
"To be able to release spores is the highest purpose in life! We are so lucky to be able to release spores all our life long!"
And with attentive devotion the clouds of powder floated into the air.

Windekind the elf and the boy Johannes were listening:
"Are they right, Windekind?"
"Why not? What could be higher for them? It is lucky that they don't aim any higher because they can't do anything else!"

In relation to my new music-theatre work <u>ZAUM</u> some new ideas about language, culture, music and meaning—and the relationships between each of these areas—have evolved. Comparable to the accompanying *Manifesto One*, these developments have had an impact on the way I see myself in relation to my work. As a result of this, a theoretical dialogue concerning the relationship between music and language was able to develop, and this paper contains some first thoughts for new ways at looking at a 'music-communication' model. The desire to write this second document grows largely from a personal need to develop some of the concepts introduced in *Manifesto One*. Though in itself significant on a personal level, I felt that it contained many points of extremity that could only be useful as starting points from which further developments would be able to take place, and not a final point as was initially intended. After a relatively long period of drafting and rewriting I realised that the time that had passed since the first initial notes and the final volume was so great that the initial paper could not be changed in line with the new developments. I had to realise that that paper was an expression of a time and a period that had passed. This is also the reality for this document.

It is important first to return to some basic theoretical concepts first introduced in *Manifesto One.* We can start with an 'ideational' image of culture in which 'sign'-systems become the essential meaning-based unit. As human beings that must 'communicate' in order for any type of interaction to occur, we rely on these intricately complicated communication systems made up of symbolic elements that are accepted communally, helping to form the boundaries within which we are able to understand the world. In this ideational sense of culture, spoken language forms but one of a myriad series of interlocking systems formed from a combination of cognitive processes and practical necessities. Being able to communicate with one another through the use of signs, we are given the tools to perform social functions and interact with one another as well as being provided with the basic material with which we can form an image of ourselves in relation to those around us.

My new music-theatre composition <u>ZAUM</u> is an exploration of the roles these symbolic systems play in human society. The composition concerns the way we, as individuals in a given social group, are restricted in our communication possibilities by only being able to encompass what is allowed by the 'languages' we are provided with. We must try to define the world and find our own identities in a way that is largely provided for us in education and social life. On one level, <u>ZAUM</u> communicates a degree of restriction, suggesting that our 'language' systems bind us to particular ways of thinking and communicating. At the same time, however, this composition expresses during its development the notion that even though we are restricted to certain symbols and concepts, we are provided with tools with which we are able to find some

sense of our selves and are ultimately free from a perception of bindings. On a symbolic level, the use of sound elements to control the actors like puppets during the performance function not only to demonstrate the restriction of language, but to suggest that 'musical' structures hidden in the subconscious underlie human 'cultural' behaviour and have an effect on the way we think about and experience reality.

This is expressed most clearly in <u>Zaum-3</u> when the five characters find unity and freedom even though the limited symbolic systems they were provided with seemed at first restricting. In this paper these notions are discussed through personal explorations of the dissatisfaction that I have had with my own 'language' systems and how that has led me to explore other forms of communication (be that vocal, musical or movement-based). The ultimate goal of this short article, however, is to use the 'communication analogy' to try to get a little closer to understanding the different ways music functions within culture.

2. LANGUAGE AND SELF

It seems remarkable that after another period of change, involved with moving from Belgium to the Netherlands which was accompanied by a number of necessary mental 'shifts' and personal realisations, I have been brought into another period of contemplation, self-questioning and realisation of change. This could have been caused by the striking change in environment, making me more aware of the contrasts in cultures brought about by differing ways of treating reality. It could be said that the great difference in lifestyle between Belgium and Holland can be traced back to historical circumstances resulting in countries ruled by systems influenced by two contrasting religions—Catholicism in Belgium and Protestantism in Holland. As I have experienced it, this contrast can be sensed in almost every element of life including the education and legal systems, leading to an inevitable influence on the general attitude of the population. For me, the first strong contrast could be sensed in the architecture, suggesting contrasting attitudes to the function of space and light. It seemed that in Belgium the buildings were designed to keep the inhabitants within, represented by a seeming restriction on the amount of natural light provided for by the placing of windows. By contrast the Dutch buildings gave me a feeling of openness and lightness; the size and intelligent placing of windows having the affect of making the rooms seem larger, exaggerated by the tactical placing of starkly designed furniture. The buildings in Holland seemed bigger although the apartments were most probably to a larger degree smaller than those in Belgium: light acts to make one aware of the world outside the building, affecting the use of space within. This is one of a myriad array of contrasts I have noticed between Flemish and Dutch societies, something I would like to posit could suggest contrasts between 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' societies. Perhaps it could be implied that the Catholics being more strongly bonded by religious concepts hold onto older ideas whereas the Protestants through their religious freedom strive for the new and the alternative, seen directly in Holland through the greater degree of movement towards alternative and 'new-age' religions.

Returning to the language analogy introduced in *Manifesto One* , it is possible to express some new ideas related to my own personal search for contrasting communication systems. *Manifesto One* concerned largely the negating of my own language, and my desire to speak, think and feel another language as if it was my own. My attraction to Dutch first grew from a strong feeling of alienation from English. I needed to find a new way of thinking, a new way of expressing my thoughts, and Dutch—even though I do not think it is an answer to all my questions on language—has managed to slip into this role.

I have since discovered that it is not simply the negation of English and the cultural system bonded to English speaking societies that has resulted in me finding such satisfaction through the Dutch language, but also characteristics of the language itself that continue to interest and fascinate me. I could actually go so far as to say that I find it a more satisfactory communication system than English, and even a system in which I feel more personally comfortable and free. In *Manifesto One* I expressed the frustration of being born into a symbolic world that was limp and empty; a frustration brought about by 'symbolic' starvation, feeling never satisfied with the language systems with which I was provided and at the same time not having the conceptual tools to be able to move beyond them. This was also characterised by an alienation from those who accepted their surroundings and cultural 'symbolism' unquestionably, even though there were many who were unsatisfied and were also searching for a 'way out'. This resulted in a feeling of 'anomie', cultural alienation, and as such I ended up on a quest for a new language, a liberation from the shackles I felt I was bonded by.

Elaborating on these ideas, I have the feeling that my alienation from English reflects not only an alienation from the Anglo-Saxon culture but also from the language itself which has become so diluted with foreign words that it becomes difficult at times to discern a precise meaning. It seems to me to be a language filled with ambiguities and foreign terms that can be interpreted in many different ways. At the same time, I am always aware of the fact that when I speak English it appears to be automatic or natural; I feel like my thoughts are directly represented in language and that language is not simply a symbolic medium that sits somewhere between the 'I' and the 'We'. This symbol system is so deeply embedded in my subconscious that it sometimes feels that I have problems commanding it entirely, moulding it into the form that really expresses what I want to say. What makes it doubly difficult is the fact that I have accepted language as being 'artificial' and the English language as being 'representative of a culture which I reject'. I am not satisfied and refuse to be forced to adopt a symbolic system that I don't understand to the degree that I find necessary. Speaking and especially arguing in English is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of 'helplessness', a lack of ability to control the 'artificial' symbols I am using to express basic communicative concepts.

This feeling of 'helplessness' is a very important image for me when discussing the English language. There are characteristics of the Dutch language that do really help me to overcome this 'helplessness' that English seems to induce. Firstly, as a composer who has an interest in symbols and the unique capability of human beings to recognise and communicate with (sound-)symbols, I can now recognise the satisfaction of speaking in a language that has not been too diluted by the adoption of foreign words. Dutch words can be easily broken up into morphemes: 'meaning-based particles', which help to give the whole structure of the word or the sentence meaning. For example, root verbs such as *staan* (to stand) can be used as the basis for other words such as *verstaan*, *bestaan*, *opstaan*, *rechtstaan* which use the basic notion of 'standing' to represent other concepts of meaning that can be related in some way to the stem. Another example is the word *last* which means load or cargo. The notion itself gives a feeling of weight or heaviness, and it can be interpreted also as meaning a difficulty or a nuisance, something 'weighing' on the shoulders. Developed from this, the word *belasten* means to be loaded or burdened with something, and the word *belasting* can be translated as taxes or rates, a weight on the wallet. In learning this language, one can get a 'feel' for the meaning of the words by simply understanding the root notions involved, which in this case is merely the feeling of weight. It is possible to imagine the meaning of other words with the same stem by comparing the prefixes and the meaning-based association connected to that root sound.

When speaking Dutch, I feel that the impact of the word units I am using will have a stronger impact than English words because I am strongly aware of the meaning-based function connected to the sound. By contrast, when speaking or especially arguing in English I feel at my most vulnerable, as if the language itself forms no protection because I speak without really knowing what I am saying: the ideas become directly expressed as 'words' with little interference from me, hindered considerably by the fact that I feel that this is not necessarily the 'natural' way for me to communicate. Dutch however gives me a real sense of command, and I feel that I can formulate arguments much more clearly. These ideas are quite alien to almost every person I have spoken to, people that seem to think that they are at their strongest when speaking their mother tongue. Some are quite shocked to hear that I feel this way about English which they find the most 'expressive' of all European languages precisely because it has adopted so many foreign words. For me, this is where English loses its potency. In order to understand the origins of this language one must study German, Latin, Ancient Greek and French (to name a few) just to get an idea of where the sounds and meanings originate, and the

studying of these languages in addition to English was not considered a necessary part of my own education. This was insufficient for my own needs, playing inevitably a role in the symbolic 'starvation' that resulted in the search for new communication systems.

Dutch seems to fulfil the role for the time being, although I am at the moment searching for other communication systems, especially musical ones (as elaborated in *Manifesto One*). My current obsession is learning Chinese. I am fascinated by a language whose writing is based on a graphic expression of meaning, growing both from sound and meaning based concepts. I want to understand how these people have expressed themselves, how they understand 'meaning' and how their philosophies have affected the different ways they have interpreted meaning and expressed it in symbols.

In *Manifesto One,* my primary approach to the concept of communication resulted in the expression of an analogy: a river was used to symbolise the communication process, where individual communication systems provide only one stone path across the river, suggesting ultimately that there are many different ways to get to the other side. I would like to take this chance to present another analogy which attempts to symbolise the concept of finding personal identity within a particular language. This analogy presents the idea that speaking in a different language is like pulling on a different jacket in that we may look different (or in this case sound different) when using another 'language'-jacket, but the colour and form of the jacket does not essentially change the identity of the person within. In this way, a different jacket gives us an alternative way of crossing the river, an alternative way of expressing our ideas into symbols that can be taken in and interpreted by the listener (or even ourselves). My big discovery therefore is learning that it is very important for me to have as many 'jackets' as possible because I now recognise that every different language gives me a different chance to understand how people conceive of ideas and thoughts. Could it be that musicians or composers, or anyone involved intimately with contrasting types of communication, are more open to this attitude to communication that rejects tying identity strictly to the vocal sounds that one makes? In relation to myself we could also discuss my own position here in Amsterdam, an international city in which I feel that I will be able to pull on the 'jacket' that I choose and not be treated as a stranger. Here I am allowed to be foreigner, to retain my personal identity without feeling like an outsider. I want to be free to be stimulated, to create while being at the same time free to express myself through whichever communication form I feel comfortable with—be that music, language or dance. *Manifesto One* spent a great deal of time discussing the difficult I have had identifying with Australia and all things connected with Australian society. It is clear now how important it is for me as a composer interested in language and communication to separate myself from this identity and find new forms of expression through other 'languages'.

From this image of language which is extended from simply the signification of abstract sound into an entire symbolic universe, I would like to end this section by taking the first steps to explore theoretically this extended concept of meaning: as human beings we surround ourselves with different layers of 'meaning' which are functional in that they provide us with a mental environment in which we are able to find ourselves, as well as providing us with an apparatus which gives us the possibility to relate ourselves to other people, objects and ideas. The ways in which these various different meaning-layers can be interpreted range from the largely functional verbal language which is used for practical purposes, and the less 'practical' expression of the meaning-based structures which can be seen in ritual, music and dance. These levels of experience fulfil basic social and cultural needs within a society, so their 'meaning-

based' functions cannot be underestimated. At the same time, a realisation of the contrasting type of 'meaning' discussed when involved in this type of research makes one realise that a model for verbal language is insufficient for the inclusion of communication systems which are beyond expression in this type of discourse, even though verbal language can be used as a means of access to these 'deeper' levels of communication. A communication model that truly encompasses 'musical' experience will have to be considerably extended, and we will have to try and do our best to avoid being influenced by our own 'cultural' restrictions, especially when looking at musical communication. The rest of this paper is involved with looking at music from a cultural perspective in order to extend this communication model. First, we are made aware of the difficulties of approaching music from other cultures with our own ideals about what the notion of musical 'experience' encompasses, and then new ideas for an extended communication model are suggested as viewed from a sociocultural perspective.

3. EAST/WEST : CONTRASTING MUSICO-CULTURAL DISCOURSES

After realising the enormous distance I had set up between myself and my own 'musical' culture through the creation of my own musical 'languages', it was clearly time for me to examine the traditions I was reacting against a little closer. It is also important to consider the factors of other musical cultures which I have borrowed to form part of my own compositional 'vocabulary'. Beginning with my own compositions, it is clear that as a reaction to western conceptions of music, I have been searching for new 'symbol' systems that unite the music into a cultural whole; that help music to act as a symbolic communication system to express structures that are entirely out of the range of verbal communication. It could be said that my music(-theatre) is not 'separate' from life in that it attempts to define or outline clear symbolic structures as opposed to a western music which has grown from a sense of an expression of the individual. Divorced from a context, western music has connected to the notion of music such things as technique and individual genius, all concepts which are alien to my conception of true musical communication. Our tendency towards development and change has resulted in music's separation from daily life, and our tendency for logicity and rational processes has resulted in the classification of 'music' as something involved with 'technique' or 'form', classical ideas that are to be held and perpetuated, based on philosophical notions of time and space that seem to lack validity in a post-colonial world. In separating music from life we have only succeeded in making it more difficult to gain a deeper understanding of structures that surround us and make up our biological beings.

Is it possible to define factors common to all 'western' music? At this stage, it would be difficult if not impossible because of the wide range of musical forms that are to be found in contemporary societies. It is possible, however, to try and discuss some of the factors that have resulted in my alienation. On a simplistic level, it could be generalised that for the past couple of hundred years there has been an emphasis on development and progress in western society. It could also be generalised that such a forward motion can also be sensed in twentieth century western 'art' music which could be associated with a similar level of forward motion, development and change. This is represented in many different ways in both the theoretical and practical performance of contemporary compositions. One of the most strikingly western musical notions is the beginning/middle/end concept of time connected with Christian religious ideals. Comparable directly to western linear conceptions of time and in contrast to the cyclical conception of time originating in Hinduism, our music must begin, have a development and finish, usually on a highly dramatic note. Our music acts also to almost divinify certain figures or 'individuals' - for example a *composer* or a *conductor*. It is less about the expression of a group or a collective and concerns more the power and command of an individual over a mass. Before I realised that these generalisations about western culture were forming in my subconscious, I had already begun to turn to the music of other cultures to fill the aching gap left by western music. My dissatisfaction with western conceptions of music was a reflection of my alienation from what I perceived as essentially 'western' thought and the ideologies connected to that culture, and this was all made doubly difficult by being brought up in Australia, a colony of England, in which these ideologies are blindly accepted by most people despite the fact that they cover years of colonial domination and violence.

Dissatisfied with the larger theoretical/philosophical structures of western music I was forced to explore other music forms, in this case Indonesian music which has largely affected the way I compose. For me a satisfying musical experience is one in which a feeling of unity is found within the musical structure. In order to be able to find a bit of one's self within music that acts to unite a person for that brief time with the cultural 'whole' means that the listener has to be extremely familiar with the musical structures involved. Cultural identification in music is important, and the understanding of a musical experience involves an understanding of the culture itself and the different ways 'music' is expressed. In Bali, as well as in a great deal of 'Indonesian' culture, the musical experience is not separated from that of dance, so a western audience that will only 'listen' to the sounds of the instruments could never hope to approach the music to a close enough level for true 'musical' communication to occur. Returning to our analogy of music as a communication system in society, learning a musical system as I have learnt Javanese music can be compared to learning a new language. One must, however, be deeply familiar with the elements of a musical language to be able to communicate with it and understand it, even more so than with normal language. One can learn a language on a superficial level but to really be able to understand the subtle nuances it is necessary to be born in the country itself and to learn to deal with all the other elements of the culture. This presents the western danger of trying to listen to and be influenced by many types of folk music which can only be understood in the most superficial way if experienced outside its original environment and on which western musical values are imposed.

A good example of this 'western imposition' is a concert I saw not so long ago by a group playing contemporary western music on Javanese instruments. After playing Javanese gamelan for many years I have developed a different conception of music, especially when hearing or playing the Javanese gamelan. I get the feeling that for the time that I am playing their music that I am expressing for that brief period a part of a larger cyclical pattern. Indeed, these instruments are a particular outlet for these larger patterns, and the repeating cyclical structures give an impression of the totality that expresses itself through the musicians. Therefore there are no individual personalities in Javanese music. It is based on a group, a collective that play together for the expression of something larger than themselves. This concert of contemporary gamelan music involved western musicians using essentially western concepts to express western musical ideals on Javanese instruments. The single figure of a conductor stood with all his power before the performers who were there only to submit to his domination. Musical patterns were expressed with a strict conception of time. The performers had only a certain number of sounds to play and they played those individual sounds at certain times as specified by the music—here we see the figure of the composer who defines a personal 'structure' that can only be felt individually by the creator. This stands so strongly against Javanese music which is involved with the unified expression of musical patterns that have no specified length and are united into a constantly pulsating rhythmic pattern. The music just 'happens' and is not brought about by the domination of a single controlling figure. For me this concert was a fragment of absurdity, a mixture of mismatched forms and ideals that still managed to create something more than the content of its parts. Despite the fact that I was disturbed by the power-based western structures, some of the composers were starting to approach these alternative conceptions of music at certain points in the performance, which produced a strange feeling of anomaly.

My own reaction against this type of western musical expression can be seen in works that I have written for Javanese gamelan. In comparison to compositions that have a strictly determined 'beginning' and 'end', these compositions are involved with cyclical repeating structures and are therefore fluid in speed, length and time. The contrasts extend further than simply an adoption of Javanese 'gong'-structures and into the concept of performance within the composition itself: compositional 'change' and development within a number of these works is determined by the individual performers who must relate their own performance to what is happening in the collective composition. In this sense, there is no further need for the controlling figure of the conductor, and the performers are free to structure the composition as they feel fit.

In general, however, a more traditional 'western' attitude to music can be sensed in twentieth century music, expressed directly by the striving for new musical forms and possibilities. This is represented in a great deal of contemporary music by composers searching for new ways that 'sounds' can be made and combined, which supposedly 'frees' the composer or performer/improviser to be able to make an open choice. These notions of musical freedom are essentially western and for me personally do not at all represent 'freedom' but rather 'restriction'. Being able to communicate musically means for me that one is completely familiar with a musical language made up of a determined number of musical symbols connected to a complex cultural background. In western music we have so many 'sound' choices that they become in effect reduced of cultural significance because of their multitude. This means that it is for me no 'language' at all, creating a feeling of absence or emptiness, and is a personal fear of mine that is directly perceivable in my compositional work: clearly expressed in the screams and cries of <u>From a Gable Window</u> and the 'empty blackness' I hoped to fill with the driving melodies of other more minimal compositions. My fear was based on the loss of language, that through my rejection of traditional communication systems I would be left with nothing; this fear was accompanied by an awareness that I stood outside of society and was threatened by the structureless chaos that could be found there.

Personal development through later composition work has luckily freed me from this fear: as I familiarise myself with more 'languages' I am able to attain more communicative freedom. As provided by the language analogy, any sort of communication system provides us with the means to cross the river, to express ourselves, and although it can be restricting in that the path across the river is in many ways predetermined, at least we can make it across. This is my bridge over the abyss. My work recognises the negative and the positive aspect of the limits brought about by these communication systems. <u>ZAUM</u> in attempting to present language and music in this way, recognises that music and dance are also communication systems that represent structures which help to give form to the reality around us. I am now sure of the meaning-based origin of musical communication and am now ready to explore exactly how it used by other cultures in order to utilise it more completely in my own work. Musical experience transcends the cultural context in which it is structured. The deeper level of musical communication, that can mostly only be achieved after the cultural 'grammar' has been learnt to a sufficient degree, is involved with the 'musical' structures that are echoed in the subconscious; musical structures that represent a 'biological' connection with the music.

4. MUSIC AS AN EXPRESSION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND BIOLOGICAL STRUCTURES: *towards a new theory of musical communication?*

Comparable to language, it is clear then that music plays an important role in culture on many different levels. The question is, how can this all be encompassed theoretically? Can communication models used for language be used to encompass music? If not, what can we use as a basis for understanding musical experience? In the following passages I will merely try to suggest some different ways that such a communication model could be presented. Maybe then we can draw a few conclusions about musical experience and understanding.

Firstly it is important to take a closer look at some long held musical myths. According to the Oxford Dictionary music can be defined as the "art of combining sounds of voice(s) or instrument(s) to achieve beauty of form and expression of emotion; pleasant sound." The western avant-garde musical tradition has successfully turned this definition inside out by saying that music is not necessarily about 'pleasant' sounds, echoing in the theories of Adorno who preached for a new music which would be used as a tool to represent social dissatisfaction. This may have been a step in the right direction, although the notion of music as a strictly aural experience remains a strong western attribute, connected to other distinctions separating creative forms into different categories. According to Robert Kaufmann "the western distinction between music and dance helps but little in understanding African music because in African musical cultures it is irrelevant. Movement patterns transcend these two spheres." In many non-western cultures, including Indian and Indonesian cultures, there is simply no distinction between music and dance, just as in the regional languages of Indonesia there is simply no word that defines music as a discourse on its own. John Blacking suggests that music should not be defined in strictly acoustical terms, and introduced a concept of 'musical intelligence' which could be expressed in human behaviour in many different forms. With this definition, music is defined as a way of thinking and experiencing reality, and can be expressed in social life in any number of different forms. Music is, therefore, no longer restricted to any form of aesthetic distinction, but rather a way of thinking and communicating. At this stage I would like to posit that 'musical' experience is a complex social one involving an array of interactions between 'musical' and other levels of cultural experience. Music, therefore, does not exist in a vacuum but is inextricably bonded to cultural life in ways that we are perhaps not even aware, and in this sense music has a bond with language which also plays such a meaning-based role in culture.

For me, the relationship between language and music as a cultural structure was made very clear when my rejection of the musical system could be extended to a rejection of the cultural symbolic load of the music and by consequence of this the society itself in its entirety. As was made clear in *Manifesto One*, my move away from language and towards music was not so much an attraction to musical aesthetics but a belief that music could communicate on a level that penetrated deeper than verbal language. The emphasis remained, therefore, on the communicative process involved; how meaning is transferred in a 'musical' experience. I have since realised that the sort of structures involved with language communication contrast considerably to those of music. Although my study of semiotics has given me the theoretical apparatus to be able to encompass both of these phenomena within the context of cultural structures, the question of theory now manifests itself: can music be encompassed in the same theoretical structures as language? Although there are areas in which music and language can be considered as comparable discourses, I would suggest that different or extended theoretical

tools would have to be used. Although we have been looking at the concept of music from a semiotic perspective emerging from the same school of thought that extended the field of linguistics considerably, it is clear that any distinctively 'language-based' models are ultimately insufficient in encompassing music. Kristeva has already noted that the linguistic models emerging from semiotics are useful only for analysing "those practices which subserve such social exchange: a semiotics that records the systematic, systematising, or informational aspect of signifying practices." Music does concern 'communication' but on many different levels setting it apart from other types of communicative activity, demanding ultimately a new communication model. Kristeva suggested that a possible way for semiotic theory to develop would open itself to influence both from the conscious and the unconscious world, in which 'meaning' is considered in terms of the *signifying process* itself rather than the more traditional sign-system analogy, resulting in influences provided by "on the one hand bio-physiological process", and the other hand "social constraints (family structures, modes of production etc." This is an important beginning point for us, suggesting a possible relationship between 'cultural' and 'natural' structures when examining music as a communicative vehicle.

It has been made clear that logical systems used for analysing language are clearly insufficient for other communicative processes, in our case music. Language however, plays a very important role in the process of musical communication, especially a great deal of popular music in which the text seems to play a primary role, so the relationship between the two should be investigated. In my opinion, the importance of text and music has been to a large degree overestimated. In a theory of examining music with text, especially popular music, the text itself should be set a little into the background and the role of the music itself brought forward. At the same time, again important in the context of the performance of popular music, the musical act should be interpreted in the context of the complete cultural event that brings about the musical performance. For example, concert events can be described as being extremely complicated events semiotically if one considers all the signs that have to be considered: the attitude and reaction of the audience to the music, the appearance of the performances, the sound of the performer's voice as he/she sings, the use of lighting, in addition to the music and the text itself. Text, then, reveals itself to be one element in a larger series of factors that make up such a musical performance, but how does the text help to communicate the meaning of a musical event?

On a surface level, we could say that the first function of text could be the way that it acts as an aid to memory—having two major forms. Firstly, the syllabic sounds can be used as a means to learn the music. For very many people it is the primary medium through which music can be learnt, where musical tones become connected with syllables. It has been theorised, for example, that the 'troping' that created a great deal of elaborations on the Gregorian chants was the result of such 'memory aids'. Secondly, the music can be used in a similar way to learn the text. The function of the music may be simply to act as a storage vehicle for the text, as the text may be the primary reason for the composition to have been written. This is especially true of western music where the text becomes the primary stimulus for the composition of the music.

In many cases, however, the role of the music can go much deeper than immediately perceivable. The music can be more functional than simply acting as a culturally accepted 'memory tool' but can be intimately involved with the subject of the text in which basic elements within the text are expressed although in a considerably different form. A common example is texts involved with life cycles, which are expressed musically by the circular, repeating structure of the music. This becomes even more complicated if we start to examine the different messages communicated simultaneously in musical structures from different

cultures and time periods. An example from our own culture is fourteenth century motets in which contrasting texts were adopted into a complex polyphony of sound and meaning. This complex combination of texts was designed to present musical 'puzzles' to bemuse the intellectuals of the time in which political and religious texts were placed into incongruous contexts. The relationship between politics and religion played a role, in addition to more complicated musical meanings: here 'musical' meanings cannot be abstracted from complex economic, religious and political contexts. Another example is the discourses that communicate simultaneously during a performance of 'abhinaya' in *Bharatanatyam* (A South Indian Dance form). Here, a complex message is told through the use of sign language dance symbols, while the text of the 'song' is seemingly involved with a different level of communication. One could go further to discuss 'nritta' in which syllabic sounds are used to designate an 'abstract' dance story involved with tension and the return to balance; the direct expression of musical structure. On this level text in combination with its expression as dance and music moves directly into the area of 'musical thinking' as introduced earlier, and is a level of musical experience that has to be more closely examined. Here the concept of 'language' in relation to music has to be rethought, suggesting that a new model should be formed based on social, psychological and biological factors.

My own reaction to the use of text has been particularly influential to my composition work. Because of my rejection of traditional 'language' and 'music' systems which I was provided with as a natural consequence of my practical and social education in a society that I found symbolically 'stifling', it was important to find a new way of adopting language, but not from the harshly logical perspective that was forced upon me. This explains my attraction to the expression of unconscious and mythical structures in music, and at the same time and on the same level my interest in making a connection between these 'musical' (biological) structures and traditional language, as this was a direct connection with the unconscious and rationally structured systems. This was accompanied by a realisation that music and language were closely bonded because they could assist one another in making a communicative link with these thought processes. In my composition <u>Songs of Incantation</u> the use of ancient Greek texts were highly important to the structure of the composition, although they were used in the original ancient Greek form that could not be 'understood' by the audience during the performance. In this case, the texts were used to help form the larger structures which I wanted to represent musically, and therefore formed the 'musical' material that was used to express these structures. In this sense text could be described as being our 'rational' connection with essentially untranslatable 'musical' structures. Bateson has suggested that "algorithms of the unconscious are coded and organised in a manner totally different from the algorithms of language." It has been suggested that these 'musical' structures hidden in the subconscious deal not with content but with pattern, and that these levels of experience involved with music, metaphor and poetry, "may lie in realms of mind and brain that are relatively inaccessible to systematic analysis."

To continue our discussion, we can move forward from text and music and explore a little closer the relationship between music and language. The two 'obvious' contrasts are (i) music does not concern the communication of individual, translatable messages like language, and (ii) music does not use symbols that can be expressed in different units of the same medium. Music is, however, involved in a powerful sort of communication which is experienced by every individual. I would like to posit that the symbolic function of music, like in examining any complex social function, can not be successfully examined without carefully and completely considering the context from which it comes. Music, like language, fulfils a very 'meaningful' role in the lives of people that are involved in its expression, which can be in any number of forms, and an attachment of symbolic or mythical meaning to musical symbols helps to fulfil

basic social and psychological needs. Music, unlike language, is to a large extent not a 'descriptive' discourse; its function is not to perform direct and practical 'functions' as suggested in Austin's speech act theory. It is involved with the internal processing and expression of certain ways of thinking in culturally accepted forms, as has been suggested by Kristeva's bio-physiological element of the signifying process. The awareness of such a cultural 'processing' of natural symbols into a musical form was explored in ZAUM-1. Here 'ritual' meanings expressed through musical sounds and gestures are attached to meaningless Russian sounds. The essential 'meaninglessness' of these symbols is expressed, but at the same time it is realised that these symbols play an important role in providing points of relation with the real world and an internal symbolic reality. Music, then, can be related to a ritual experience in which the listener recognises him/herself in a larger structure, acting to reinforce basic ideas about life and being that would suggest that these symbols are only 'meaningless' from a very superficial and scientific point of view.

Music, then, could be described as an expression of internal symbolism that is realised in a for that uses culturally accepted mediums—usually musical instruments, although certainly not restricted to this medium. The sorts of meaning these 'structures' could be said to be communicating would involve in itself a great deal of further research and discussion, but before we even go on to considering these things, I would like to make a further suggestion. Music provides a form in which other cultural systems are able to communicate: these systems provide an access to the musical structures just as the musical structures give a form for the expression of more practical cultural functions. This is most easily observable in complex ceremonial rituals, but could also be extended to 'cultural' events such as cinema or film, or even television advertisements. This image could also be extended to popular music in which the 'music' itself actually plays a seemingly subservient role to much more powerful communicative modes. In these cases, like in rituals, other elements than purely sound enter the arena. Music performs an important role, providing a 'structure' in which other culturally directed meaning-based vehicles can be placed. This is especially apparent in the performance of rituals and in the theatre.

We have already seen the implication of theory influenced by a 'sociolinguistic' communication model where meaning-based exchanges cannot be understood purely within the context of the language itself, but from the social context in which the event is expressed; observable in the social force of popular music performances. By contrast, theories involved with 'universal grammar', generally attributed to Chomsky who suggested that language is a result of the expression of a 'biologically endowed faculty', a model for language is presented in which universally applicable 'mathematical' structures were used to understand linguistic expression. This was a linguistics divorced from semantics that concentrated on the cognitive realisation of language as thought processes, one in which "the formal, syntactic mechanism of the recursive whole of language" is realised. According to Kristeva, "Chomsky claims to be more of an analyst of psychological structures than a linguist" which could be of interest to us in discussing a musical model: could it be said that the differing expressions of musical traditions are only different on a surface level, that the thought processes that affect the way music is perceived and understood are essentially shared by all humans? This possibility is explored in the context of the music-theatre composition ZAUM which uses a selection of Russian futurist texts to create a 'music-language' that only has meaning in the context of the composition itself. During the process of the work, elements from traditional theatre discourse are 'illogically' recombined as dictated by the musical structure; all of the events within the work are only 'meaningful' in the context of this structure. Through this adoption of musical structure it is suggested that

Blacking's 'musical intelligence' could have a greater impact on social life than is currently recognised. Perhaps it could be said that 'musical thinking', in its expression of internal structures, affects the way we think, behave and interact with others. In the context of this discussion I would like to suggest that music is an essential part of social existence, being a cultural expression that has symbolic value both to the individual because it is an expression of internal structures, and to the culture itself because it can be used creatively within a cultural context to provide unity.

At this stage I would like to return to the notion of form presented in my discussion of Eastern music which seems to me to introduce the idea that music is an outlet for larger structures that exist outside the everyday world of the musicians. This concept suggests that music is constant and eternal and that the musicians become the outlet for the musical expression on the necessary occasions. This notion is certainly exemplified in Balinese music where the music is used in many holy rituals, sounds considered to be direct communications from the gods themselves; sacred time in which musical instruments are allowed to play divine patterns. Perhaps music symbols, in whichever form they occur, are the expression of something more vital and intrinsic, related to structures hidden within our subconscious. This relates to the language-music analogy and also to the notion introduced earlier of the basis for these 'musical' structures. What roles do they play in our lives, what significance do they really have? To what extent are western composers interested in expressing structures that are not readily interpretable in other communication systems, and what are these structures made up of? A new discovery for me has been the observation that many contemporary western composers are trying to express in musical form structures that are not communicable in other means. Examples of these structures are DNA, or other non-socially based chemical or physical structure which can be interpreted as being vehicles that carry 'meaning' or sources of information that become in one way or another—be it not through human beings—'interpreted'. In this way these structures can be compared to the cosmological aspect of music already suggested in relation to the cyclical patterns of Eastern music, the expression of systems and ways of understanding that stand outside of expression in traditional word-based communication systems. This level of music seems to move the discussion from cultural structures that combine different communication systems simultaneously to a deeper exploration of biological structures. It could be suggested that this connection with naturally occurring structures would make it necessary for us to rethink the biological 'affect' of music on the body. Maybe the emotions that we experience through music are merely surface level manifestations of deeper biological structures.

It could be said the abstract idea we call 'music' is a phenomenon in culture that becomes agreed upon within a given social group to express certain 'structures', which have revealed themselves to be of a diverging nature. Many musical structures are agreed upon within a culture and the music therefore becomes associated with certain cultural factors: the listener is able to find his or her identity within the music. This cultural manifestation is a result of the expression of internal structures that are not translatable into logical processes, and music is therefore a largely ineffable experience. We are left with a number of different levels within which musical meaning can be viewed, spanning from the ways in which music affects our everyday social existence to a deeper level in which music is considered as the expression of structures within the subconscious that affect our thought processes. It is possible to grade these levels on four planes, beginning with the surface level and moving on each ascending level further into the realm of 'musical' thinking:

(1) On a surface level, music interacts with social life affecting our everyday existence in many different ways.   This spans from uniting us with a certain cultural group or simply demonstrating that we belong to a certain social class.

(2) Music provides a structural bed in which other social and ritual functions can take place. This stresses the importance of viewing music within a wider cultural discourse. On this level, interaction between music and other discourses could be examined. This would include the role of musical experience in dance and ritual, as well as the ways language is used in combination with music to help make the musical experience accessible to those involved.

(3)   The musical environment provided by our culture surrounds us and influences our behaviour. Careful cultural crafting designs it in such a way that it can be used both to restrict behaviour, as well as helping to provide one with tools in which these cultural expressions help one to encompass reality.

(4) Musical experience can be said to be a direct cultural expression of structures within the subconscious of every individual, forming an important tool for both self-understanding and for the understanding of ourselves within culture.

Encompassing these levels of music experience into a usable theoretical model is the primary goal of my new research project. At this point it is impossible to present any definitive statements regarding such a music-communication model, although I would like to add at this point that new streams of thought influencing the music of today can help point us in the right direction. It can be sensed that contemporary 'classical' music is being affected by two major factors:

(1) a move towards the influence of popular music (exploration of *cultural* structures), and

(2) a move to express different types of structure in music—such as DNA or quantum theory— that are not created within the context of cultural experience (exploration of *natural* structures).

These observations help me to form two major divisions in which music can be considered:

(1) *The importance of music in relationship to other cultural structures.* This involves an exploration of the importance of music in ritual, dance and theatre. This theoretical standpoint begins with the assumption that ritual theatrical events act largely as symbolic expressions of cultural needs; complicated meaning-based structures in which music can be seen as only playing a role in combination with other communication systems.

(2) *The importance of music as a biologically structured way of thinking.* This area of exploration is involved with how we 'think' musically, and is concerned with musical structures that exist in our subconscious. It is more concerned with music as a direct expression of biological structures than as an expression of cultural systems. In this way, it is involved with the direct 'composition' of music and explores which sort of biological structures could be being represented.

The collision between these two levels as viewed from the perspective of musical experience will certainly be an important dimension of further research, representing a general level of controversy in contemporary anthropological research. This duality opens up the discussion into a number of different areas, but unfortunately leaves areas of ambiguity open to further development, particularly areas that seem to bridge the two gaps. I would like to end this brief survey by presenting a number of questions which will be useful beginning points for the future:

—What is the primary relationship between 'composer' who is responsible for expressing musical structures in a culturally accepted form, the 'performer' who is responsible for realising them and 'listener' who is responsible for taking them in and making them his/her own?

—To what extent is our musical knowledge culturally based and to what extent is it inherent and biological?

—To what extent is musical experience an expression of cultural values and to what extent it it a deeper expression of 'musical' thinking?

—Where does culture end and music begin?

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