

Transparency, context and meaning

– about making music for stage performances

Here are some thoughts and questions I think is considerable look upon in the field of doing music for dance performances.

What we actually want to tell

- Content, meaning. What do we (choreographer, composer etc) want to say, to express?
- We must have, in some meaning, a common goal. Work in the same direction, together.
- The musical part of the expression must always be aware of the whole expression, how it all functions together.
- As I see it: This means that music for stage performances must be communicative, or at least very aware of how it actually communicates.

Problems:

- The composer needs to express his own skill and ego in the piece.
- Or his and others need to defend the music's right to be independent. (As I see it a misunderstanding of the scenic reality, where expressions cooperate to build the whole language.)

Contextuality

- How meaning in expressions come to exist only by the their contextual appearance.
- In the small perspective: Melody tones, intervals, harmonies, rhythms, and timbre always exist in relation to each other.
- Between different parts of a composition.
- Between different languages, expressions of a performance.
- By how the performance is presented to an audience.
- By where it is presented, in which art- and society context it is played.

Dramaturgy

- Music as a dramatic mean, a dramaturgic tool.
- To keep the energy, hold the interest, keep audience present.
- The big form, the overall form. Ways of thinking.
- The composer actually becomes kind of a director.

Music & Room, Sound & Space

- About the inner room of music. The room/time phenomena.
- About how music influences the scenic (and other) rooms/spaces. Open/close.
- How rhythmic music creates rooms. (More body, more movement.)
- How more phrase-based or ambient music create rooms.
- About the sounds own spatiality.

Genre music

- How genre music like hip hop, salsa etc carry so much meanings and associations, so much party, dance etc. This can be used very cleverly, but is also a big danger.
- The striving, the aim to create an own sound, which becomes the sound of this unique performance.
- The need to understand the different functions of different kinds of music.

Problems:

- How genre music aiming to be right fashioned to today's list music risks to drown in its own banal, simple expression of teenage love. (Like some djtechno to dance performances.)

Transparency, translucency

- The music must be transparent, be able to give space to other expressions. To make them strong, not drown them.
- Think about simpleness/complexity. Is it possible to do it simpler?
- Look at the dance/play: Does it work or not? Change music to help. Most often: A question of cleaning, simplifying, diminishing – to make it stronger.
- Is transparency actually a question of the amount of structured musical events over time?

Problems:

- The need and urge from the composer to show skill and ability in complex music.

To follow or to go opposite direction. To break.

- The risk to be over-explicit. To say something one way too much.
- Emotions, can be pretentious and corny if over-explicitly expressed.
- As is it with movement. Degrees of movement. Sometimes slow moves are best to rough and vivid music. And the opposite.
- Also the same with strong/quiet, high/low, vivid/still, fast/slow etc.

Problems:

- There are no definite rules. You have to try out what is working.

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