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Musika: The becoming of an artistic musical metaphysics

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Citation

Withers, S. (2020, October 27). *Musika: The becoming of an artistic musical metaphysics*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/137929>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Issue date: 2020-10-27

Summary

“Music is about everything else,” theater director Peter Sellars said upon accepting his Polar Music Prize back in 2014. Although it is about particular musical problems, my dissertation is about ‘everything else’, too. What and how that is, could be summed up in different ways depending on one’s orientation and distance to the explored object. Below I consider three of these ways.

This work is a contribution to the philosophical study of music and to musical ontology. Within musicology, it makes an input into the discourse on musical meaning. With the presumption that consciousness is fundamental, the thesis I put forth is that music is a form of consciousness, which evolves in a mutualistic relationship with sentient beings in order to gain experience and to grow. This anthropo-de-centric proposition unsettles the established view on music as a (human) artifact and opens a space for a reconsideration of the construct ‘the music itself’. In this space, ‘music’ is recognized as a blanket term appropriately used by human musickers in the phenomenal world to describe events, works and activities based in intentionally organized sound. These very connotations render the term ‘music’ inadequate to designate a larger form of consciousness. Therefore, I introduce Musika and define it as a superset of music, which evolves sound-based forms and intelligences, as a mode of logic and organization of a yet larger information system. Musika has different laws and constraints than those operating in our Physical Matter Reality, and is populated by entities, haecceities and geographies that are uniquely characteristic of it. To ease orientation in the landscape thus conceived, I discriminate between musical entities according to their involvement with sentient beings (like us), introducing new concepts, like the Musikon or the Individuated Unit of Musical Consciousness, and discussing newly emerged tensions, like that between the Musinculus and the Musical. Musical meaning is considered an energetic aspect of the event of the Musical assemblage – the virtual territory where all actors in the musical drama meet and share an experience.

From a more distant and more general point of view, my thesis emerges through a comparative study of becomings in physics, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics, arguing that the processes, structures and problems in music are extensions and local interpretations of a fundamental implicit order that underlies and manifests across all fields, disciplines, substrates, and levels of engagements. Viewed as a reality in itself, Musika evolves its sound-based content and expression within the principles that are at work in our universe too – but

based in carbon. Zooming out further still, it could be said that my research explores patterns and protocols in both virtual and actual realities – in biology, stories, behavior, music, thinking, language, in being and becoming. These patterns trace a single commandment: try everything, allow what works, and have a single mission: lower entropy, increase organization. From such a big picture perspective, music, with all its interrelated systems, environments, theory and practice, is a way to organize and mediate reality, to integrate information, to create meaning.

A step closer to the object of research would reveal its focus on my private relations, experiences and struggles with music as an agent of meaning in my personal and artistic life. The proposition that music is a sub-system mediating a larger reality able to create myriad sub-systems, suggests that where attention should be placed on is not the ‘message’ as such, but on the medium (“the medium is the message”). As long as it is the medium that uniquely constrains, organizes and brings forth integrated meaning packaged as ‘the message’, I intentionally examine my musical medium, the piano, and the way it has framed my understanding not only of music, but of reality. I argue that the role one’s instrument plays in one’s relating to music, is not only crucial, but fundamental. In fact, it is in the practice of the medium where music and man meet and start a relationship – the physical medium, that is. However ‘magical’, ‘soulful’, ‘spiritual’ and ‘ineffable’, the consciousness of the Music work we love, obsess and write about is only able to reach us through our flesh and bones, cells and chemicals, particles and corporeal electromagnetic configurations. To us, without the physical, there is no musical, without profanation there is no transcendental, without the effable, there is no ineffable.

To conclude, this is an opus about music manifested in and through consciousness, and about consciousness manifested in and through music. It explores how music and consciousness trace the same fundamental process of evolution and construct information-based realities. Simultaneously, my dissertation is an exercise in creating a personal ontology based in world-hearing and *musicologica* – a music-informed understanding of world and man.