

The role of contemporary music in instrumental education

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This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

University of Agder, 2011

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Abstract

The role of contemporary music in instrumental education discusses the necessity of renewing the curriculum of all musical studies that emphasize performance and the development of the student's instrumental abilities. A portrait of Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre is included to help exemplify the views expressed, as well as the help of theoretical analysis.

Key words: contemporary music, education, musicology, ørjan matre, erich wolfgang korngold, pedagogy

The role of contemporary music in instrumental education is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter discusses the state of musical critique and musicology, describing the first waves of modernism at the turn of the century (19th/20th) and relating it to the present reality and state of contemporary music. Conclusively, it suggests possibilities of bettering the situation. The third chapter discusses the controversial aspects of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's music and life, relating it to the turbulence of the musical life during his lifetime. Studying Korngold is a unique way to outline the contradictions within Western art music that were being established during his career. The fourth chapter is a portrait of Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre and includes an analysis of his work "*Handel Mixtapes*". The chapter attempts to suggest the misunderstood aspects of simplicity and accessibility in much contemporary music. The fourth chapter includes a brief description of the problems and benefits involved in achieving a coherent exploitation of musical literature that explores the new and the traditional hand in hand. The fifth chapter discusses challenges concerning the pedagogical exploitation of the contemporary literature in teaching, while the final sixth chapter concludes and summarizes.

A summary of the interview with Ørjan Matre is included as an appendix.

Preface

The present study is a result of years of pondering throughout my studenthood. I pondered on the whys and the hows behind how music came to the place that I see before me today. Why the standard literature seems to remain unchallenged and unchanging, as if in a state of coma, while the rest of the world moves on in new directions. The curious nature of my personality seems to draw me to the unexplored, to embrace the unembraced and find alternatives that challenges the convictions of most authoritative forces. Like Christopher Columbus I would take extreme measures, and even risks, to prove a cherished point.

First and foremost, I must acknowledge Tellef Juva for his endless support and generosity of spirit. Without that special friendship, I would not have survived the strain of writing this many words! I must also thank Per Kjetil Farstad for his guidance, patience, and unconditional sympathy for my struggles.

Table of contents

	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Origins of subject	1
1.2 Purpose of subject	1
1.3 Background for general hypothesis	2
1.4 Condensed hypothesis	2
1.5 Subsidiary questions	3
1.6 Allusion to physics	3
1.7 Choice of method	4
1.8 Limitations of subject	4
1.9 Final note	5
2. CONTRADICTIONS FOUND WITHIN MUSICAL PRACTICE	
2.1 Alleged decadence at the turn of the century (19 th -20 th)	6
2.2 Musical critique post-Adorno and dichotomy between practices	8
2.3 The composer as "clarifier" of his own work	10
2.4 Bringing new music to life	11
3. ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD: HOW THE CONTROVERSIAL WUNDERKIND REFLECTED HIS TIME	
3.1 How Korngold became a controversial figure	13
3.2 Korngold's music: early modernist or late romantic?	16
3.3 Korngold's influence and heritage	20
3.4 Korngold's potential in music performance education	21
4. ØRJAN MATRE: YOUNG MODERNIST WITH A LAIDBACK APPROACH	
4.1 Classicism and modernism - cut from a cloth?	22
4.2 Biography	23

4.3 Meeting Ørjan Matre	25
4.4 Analysing the content of "Handel Mixtapes"	26
4.4.1 <u>The origins of "Handel: Mixtapes"</u>	27
4.4.2 <u>The structural content of Handel: Mixtapes</u>	28
4.4.3 <u>The timbral content of "Handel: Mixtapes"</u>	30
4.5 In reflection: contemporary music and "accessibility"	34
5. THE PEDAGOGICAL ORGANIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY LITTERATURE	
5.1 Promoting technical/instrumental development	36
5.2 Influencing the way we percieve traditional form	38
5.3 Breaking or continuation of tradition?	39
5.4 "Six Little Pieces in Aubergine"	40
6. CONCLUSION	
6.1 Summary	43
6.2 Closing arguments	44
6.3 Implications for further research	45

1. Introduction

1.1 Origins of subject

In September of 2010 I was asked to assist the young Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre (b. 1979) in performing his "Handel: Mixtapes", composed for symphony orchestra and two tape recorders. Several performances took place in both Kristiansand and Arendal over a period of three days, and I was to perform the part of the second tape recorder – a seemingly simple task, but one that ended up requiring my full concentration as well as the best of my collaborative abilities.

The process of working with the Kristiansand symphony orchestra (KSO) with conductor Rolf Gupta and Ørjan led to a long chain of thought resulting in an aesthetical gain of perspective on my part. The total scope of this unique experience ended in a severe broadening of the parameters I felt music could unfold within, leaving me with a sense of both confusion and delight that has brought upon the task of contemplating my recent discoveries in the present thesis.

1.2 Purpose of subject

As a classically trained pianist and composer, my entire approach to music has been sculpted in an environment that has practically "sheltered" me from the ongoing trends of my own time. While I and my co-students were discussing Beethoven's sonatas, Bach's "Wohltempererte klavier" and the four ballades of Chopin, students of composition and musicology were deep in their analysis of works by Helmut Lachenmann, Olivier Messiaen, and Elliot Carter. As my own personal discoveries in the world of contemporary music has helped me gain perspective and creative freedom, both as an artist - and on a larger scale - as a general contributor to society, I strongly feel that the unique pedagogical potential in contemporary music is an underestimated one that needs to be integrated into the basic curriculum of any performance-based study program

within music education. Not only as a curious counterpart to the established classical literature, but most essentially, as a vital continuation of it.

1.3 Background for general hypothesis

Do students of visual arts limit the focus of their study to one particular era or style, for example the renaissance painters? What about students of architecture, or literature? How do the study programs of various arts and sciences embrace the history of their specific fields, or for that matter, their geography? And most importantly, how does this relate to the approach found within the study of music performance?¹

There seems to be a monumental difference that casts a dark shadow over the future of western art music² and its role in general society. Through understanding the causes behind the present-day dichotomy between education in musical performance and general musical practice, one might become able to highlight the strong necessity for renewal. But what exactly could these causes be?

How should the musical performance education be hierarchized in order to establish a proper platform for dialogue between the established framework of western art music and the contributive candidates of more modern eras?

1.4 Condensed hypothesis

"Why increasing the emphasis on contemporary art within instrumental music education is important."

1 The term "musical performance" is here used by the author to distinguish it from other fields of musical education, such as composition or musicology.

2 The term "western art music" is preferable to "classical music" - the latter being somewhat inaccurate, especially in cases like this where the differentiation of terms are at risk of becoming interchangeable.

1.5 Subsidiary questions

- Is the modernist's debate on the "breaking or continuation" of tradition a matter of semantics?
- Without structuralized methods of listening and pre-defined forms to act as a supporting beam, how can any kind of musical critique become authoritative, and what clarifying responsibilities are then placed upon the composers themselves?
- Will an update of the educational curriculum compromise its quality?
- Is the inaccessibility of contemporary music a myth?

1.6 Allusion to physics

In the scientific studies of natural physics, there exists an awkward dichotomy between the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Einstein's theory of relativity explains the functions of time, space, and gravity, while quantum mechanics is the study of atoms and sub-atomic particles. To most physicist's confusion and frustration, the two theories seem completely independent of oneanother and don't comply to the same natural laws. In the quest to unite the theories and construct a singular theory that explains all the workings of the universe, some physicists have been developing what they call "String theory", a theory that, if correct, would unite all the natural laws of the universe into a single mathematical equation. It is still a controversial theory that involves much speculation, and it is currently still (2011) impossible to conduct any experiments to prove any of it. Still, "String theory" is the closest thing to rationalizing the functions of the universe as we see and percieve it³.

Alluding the problems of modern physics to those of modern music is an interesting way to contextualize the contents of the present thesis. In music, it would seem there is a need for our own "String theory", a way of hierchizing the music education in a way that successfully reveals the mutual ground between contemporary litterature and standard litterature. Through my thesis I wish to draw attention to this need.

3 See <http://superstringtheory.com/> for information about "String theory"

1.7 Choice of method

Three main methods were used in acquiring information for this project. The examination of source materials (1) such as essays, articles, and books dominates a fair portion of the text. Additionally, a preliminary interview (2) was conducted by the author with composer Ørjan Matre. Excerpts from this interview and an analysis (3) of one of his works were important in sculpting the framework of this text.

1.8 Limitations of subject

- (1) The subject of the thesis is aimed as a general criticism of not only a national, but an international negligence of contemporary music as a vitality in the education of musical performance. However, the arguments are based on the state of the domestic situation (Norway) and aren't necessarily internationally valid – however likely that outcome may be.
- (2) The present text does not adequately cover the subject of nationalism or identity-shaping through emphasis on musical ethnicity or geography. Where the music comes from is of little interest to the author. The text focuses primarily on defining a very complicated and delicate problem in the world of music education, though a heightened emphasis on ethnicity could likely be a helpful aid in the quest for bettering the grim situation this text attempts to depict. Further research could plausibly be based on this particular subject, although I have chosen not to debate it here.
- (3) For the most part I do not touch on the particular field of jazz and popular music. Western art music has its own clearly distinguishable history, and the subject debated here does not have the same sort of significance in other genres of music.
- (4) Being a pianist I am most of all familiar with the pianist's standard literature and educational situation. This does not make my study

exclusively available to pianists but the perspective of the author should be considered when reading certain chapters within the text. For example, a clarinetist's perspective would probably differ in that the clarinet is the youngest standard instrument and has the most contemporary standard literature of the orchestral family.

(5) The term "contemporary music" is used prominently throughout the text. It is a vague term in itself, but, in the case of the present text, generally refers to music that is *too young to be considered standard literature*.

1.7 Final note

It is important to stress that, in music, it seems the very nature of the art disallows us to really *prove* anything as a matter of scientific fact. However, through the argumentation and exchange of beliefs and convictions (musicology) we can bring music considerably closer to science, and hence evoke a sense of growth and understanding rather than one of confusion and decadence, which can happen during the turbulent states of our cacaphonic Western culture.

The results of my discussions presented here are intended to evoke, not convict or conclude. If any of my findings or personal opinions can inspire a gain of perspective or increased awareness on the subject of contemporary music in performance education, then my thesis has fulfilled its purpose.

2. Contradictions found within musical practice

The isolated goal of this chapter is to outline what I am referring to as contradictions in musical practice, and compare the initial reception to the modernist works premiered and published at the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th to that of present times. How has the reception of novelty in music evolved towards the modern era?

2.1. Alleged decadence at the turn of the century (19th-20th)

Just as Cesar Franck is often seen as a transitional voice between Brahms and Debussy, the symphonies of Mahler and the aesthetical debate they inspired may be seen as a foreshadowing of the coming compositional "crisis" during the early decades of the 20th century. In present day music history classes however, it is first and foremost the works of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Bartok that one associates with the term "modernism", and not Mahler or Debussy. But it is by studying the often chilled initial reception of the latter composers and their works that the very *seeds* of contemporary music reception may be traced and identified - before the crystallisation of the hardcore conceptualism and dichotomy of musical parameters emerged at full force through the guidance of such figures as Schoenberg, inspiring the 2nd Viennese School of composers in the 1940s.

"...With Debussy, there is an obviously conscious dissecting and unraveling of timbres, a splitting of tone and racking of nerves, from which we now know only one thing: that it is almost unbearable..."¹

These words stem from Robert Hirschfeld, amongst other things supplier of program notes to the Vienna symphony, and his review essay on Mahler and Debussy published late in 1907. At the forefront of his critique and that of many of his contemporaries was the notion that the emancipation of orchestration, which is to say, orchestration as an isolated aesthetic element (contrary to the secondary function of outlining the various melodic lines and harmonic

¹ Hirschfeld, in Painter: "*Sensuality of Timbre: Responses to Mahler and modernity at the Fin de Siecle*" (19th century music, Vol. 18 Spring 1995, pp. 236-256 – University of California Press)

progressions that constitute a piece of music), was the modern composer's compensation for lack of melodic invention and/or mastery of symphonic form and development. In Hirschfeld's review of the first symphony by Mahler published seven years earlier, this line of thought becomes ever more clear:

"... The intensifications are prepared dynamically through the multiplication of instruments, and not organically in the pressure and drive of motifs superimposed onto one another. There is a continuing play of colours instead of a play of constructive forces."²

Walter Niemann, known for his outspoken debunking of Mahler, Schoenberg, and Richard Strauss, expressed what he referred to as the "overvaluing" of technology among many modern composers, cleverly utilizing a quote from Johann Peter Eckermann's "*Conversations with Goethe*" to highlight his point:

"...For the first time, Goethe addressing Eckermann may speak for us: "It is always the sign of an unproductive age that it becomes so involved with the details of technique, and likewise it is a sign of an unproductive individual who does so."³

Reknown Brahms partisan Max Kalbeck, a defender of Mahler and the vividness of his art, was among those who attempted to create a new way of perceiving form and yet integrate the traditional ideals of a composer's control of the overall structure and utilization of materials. He praised Mahler for his gift of spontaneous outburst and imaginative contrasting colourations, ensuring us that the composer accomplished an intended sense of *ephemerality* (modern music being ephemeral was a key point for the sharpest of critics) through his glittering orchestrations, although he did this *without* losing control of neither his work nor his audience.

"... But the artist (in him)... is revealed through motivated changes of the most contrasting moods and always does the necessary thing at the decisive place. Yet he nonetheless brings off surprises, without losing control over the form for even a

² Hirschfeld, in Painter: *ibid*

³ Niemann, in Painter: *ibid*

moment."⁴

This continuing critical debate concerning Mahler and the success and audience appeal of his symphonies epitomised the shift of focus in modern music from melody and harmony to timbre and the art of orchestration as an *emancipated* aesthetic element in its own right. It is a fairly brief, albeit highly relevant chapter in the history of musical critique often overlooked in general music education. As shall be seen, Kalbeck's views pointed towards a liberation of creative thinking in the minds of critics. But without structuralized methods of listening and pre-defined forms to act as a supporting beam, how can any kind of musical critique become authoritative, and what clarifying responsibilities are then placed upon the composers themselves?

2.2. Musical critique post-Adorno and dichotomy between practices

It is difficult to compare the pre-Adorno trends of musical reception to that of post-Adorno, as the line of "great" critics in the tradition of figures such as Hanslick has diminished from the modern music scene and now been absent for many decades. In Eva Sedak's brilliant essay "*Some Problems in Contemporary Musical Criticism*" the author highlights the problematic aspects of creating an authoritative musical critique when faced with music that «*changes its concepts and form from one piece to the next, which evolves in a process of autogenesis, creating not only its form and expression but also its vocabulary (...)*».⁵

In today's world of mass media and mass marketing, criticism seems to have often assumed the primary role of *promoting* the art it depicts rather than attempting to contextualize it, since achieving a sense of validation through the critique itself has become much more difficult.

"When it (musical criticism) becomes a wheel in the complex mechanism of music marketing, criticism ceases to be free and independant; its greater part becomes

4 Kalbeck, in Painter: *ibid*

5 Eva Sedak: "*Some problems in contemporary musical criticism*" (International review of music aesthetics and sociology, Vol. 1, No. 2, Dec, 1970 p. 169-177)

dependent upon the interests and policies of the distributors it serves."⁶

Sedak believes that with the quantitative growth of musical critique came an automatic decline in its quality, insisting that the cacaphony of thought concerning musical critique is not caused by an increased interest in it, but rather a consequence of the commercial nature of present times.⁷

The anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Yara El Ghadman, who wrote the inspired 2009 essay "*Facing the Music*" for "American Ethnology" concerning the working conditions of young composers and students of composition, stated that contemporary western art music is a «*highly canonized, ritualized, and institutionalized art*». She stresses how the art is often portrayed as being in a state of "crisis" and that the lack of public appeal is seen as being proof of its ever increasing marginality.⁸

Indeed, the general area of Western art music is undeniably divided into two separate "schools" of thought. On the one side we have the squarely framed traditionalized romantic view of the artist, with the unquestioned aesthetical autonomy and hunt for the "gifted" prodigy as its epitomes. On the other, a fragmented world highlighting individualism and constant identity sculpting - where the very polarization and often *destructive* attitude towards the romanticised approach of its counterpart, in turn serves as its epitomes.

Of course, one should be cautious to paint the picture of dichotomy in musical practice in black and white. But what Ghadman calls "*the cherished concept of originality*"⁹ may essentially be the core of the matter. In academic environments composers are often encouraged to break boundaries, emancipate themselves from tradition and achieve a unique expression. But a barrier occurs when the music reaches an audience that requires familiarity and that wishes to avoid the existential anxiety that often occurs when composers take a "dive off the deep end" and branch into something new and undefined - often also to them. This is

6 Sedak: *ibid*

7 Sedak: *ibid*

8 Ghadan: "*Facing the Music*" (American Ethnologist Vol. 36, No. 1 pp. 140-160)

9 Ghadan: *ibid*

why the audience must be conditioned to *face* the unknown and become an active participant of the process of exploration.

To build on the observations made by Eva Sedak and Yana El Ghadan, it is this "conditioning" of the audience that dominates much of the contemporary musical critique. How can one express clear opinions in a structuralized, scientifically grounded manner without first and foremost establishing the framework of the composition of which the text is based? It simply can not be done, and hence it puts the role of the composer as *clarifier* of his intentions into question.

2.3 The composer as *clarifier* of his own work

The verbalization (or rationalization) of music is often seen as unfortunate in that it is often seen as something that questions its autonomy, especially by the composers themselves. But perhaps a change of perspective is at hand. The necessity of the composers explaining their work is not for the sake of the listener alone, but especially for the critic who needs a solid platform to build his/her reflections upon. After all, many contemporary composers even neglect writing character descriptions in their scores, only metronome markings – which seems to have become common practice among many¹⁰. The supreme autonomy of the musical language is a sensitive issue for many composers, who after all have chosen a life of expressing themselves through the communicative qualities of sound for delicate reasons. But a heightened effort to verbalize their means could only be helpful in assisting the role of the musicologist and music critic, a role that previously was so undisputed and influential.

Still, words aren't all that is required to prevent the increasing marginality of the contemporary music scene. In my 2011 interview with Ørjan Matre, he claimed that his very *presence* on stage introducing his work to the audience, as well as his participation in the performance of his work (Handel Mixtapes)¹¹ was *crucial* to the experience of the audience. It wasn't so much a matter of how he articulated

10 Some such composers are mentioned in the present text: Helmut Lachenmann and Ørjan Matre

11 See chapter 4

himself, only the fact that his presence was enough to stimulate enough curiosity in order to condition the audience to approach his work in a justifiable manner.¹²

He also recalled attending a concert in Bergen with music by Helmut Lachenmann where the composer was present to introduce his work. All the composer did was encourage the audience to use their imagination and be a free interpreter of what they heard, perhaps by visualizing beautiful landscapes. Matre and I discussed the possibility of Lachenmann presenting himself to the audience in such a romantic manner because he wished to distract the attention from all the overwhelming musicological and philosophical dissecting of his craft that had gone on throughout his career, and remind his audience that his work was in fact *music*, not philosophy - or even worse, science!

2.4 Bringing new music to life

At the congress for "New music and its criticism" in 1970 in Rotterdam, the German musicologist and vivid endorser of the development of new music, Fred. K. Prieberg, presented his paper "*Some theses on the social function of music critique*"¹³ Eva Sedak, also a participant of that congress, highlighted his views in her essay:

"Through historical and philosophical foresight he (mankind in general) tries to rationalize his own ignorance and to convert his inadequate sensitivity to an object into a sense of superiority over it"¹⁴.

Prieberg addresses a very specific condition of the human psyche, one that works against the principles of enlightenment. The American writer Herbert Spencer once referred to ignorance as «*a bar against all information*»¹⁵. When ignorance is

12 See interview appendix

13 Sedak:

14 Sedak: *ibid*

15 "*There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation*" (http://thinkexist.com/quotes/herbert_spencer)

induced on students of music since the very beginning of their education it becomes very difficult for enthusiasts such as Prieberg and his colleagues to achieve much progress through their work.

The Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre spent a couple of years as "composer in residence" for the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra (2006-07). But during this period he had no contact with the University's music faculty.¹⁶ I asked him how he felt about that during my interview with him, and he explained how he felt it was a waste of resources not to use him as guest lecturer, or to perhaps conduct one or several workshops with his music with students of the university. It seems to prove the aforementioned dichotomy between the world of contemporary music and the world of romanticized "talent hunts" found in most conservatories. Virtually none of my co-students had even ever heard of Ørjan Matre, and at the time I myself barely touched upon the name by chance. But given the promising prospects of his career today his time in Kristiansand seems a wasted opportunity.¹⁷

In comparison, the composer of computer game music Knut Avenstrup Haugen has on two separate occasions held guest lectures at the very same university. But this was arranged by the faculty of popular music and jazz, and not the classical faculty. Though, ironically enough, Avenstrup Haugen has a MA in classical piano¹⁸ and is by no means a jazz musician.

It would seem as though the composers themselves are often not seen as potential contributors within music performance education, which is a shame since such contributions would most definitely prove to be mutually beneficial. But this phenomena is not a new one. In Vienna, the orchestras were beginning to protect the heritage of their precious "Great tradition" in an act of self-defense in order to secure the continuing influence of celebrated composers such as Brahms and then Mahler. This stance was a polarization towards the development of

¹⁶ I was then a student there on the BA program (Agder University)

¹⁷ See interview appendix and chapter 4

¹⁸ I attended one of the two lectures in 2010, of which two students from the classical program participated and perhaps a couple dozen from the jazz/popular music program. In Kristiansand, film & game music is offered as an elective credit. But strangely it is not offered to classical students, only students of jazz and popular music.

modern composition - then unleashing phenomena such as dodecaphony and atonality upon the music scene in the early decades of the 20th century. Stravinsky himself exclaimed his contempt for the Viennese orchestral musicians¹⁹, while Schoenberg (after moving his activities to Berlin) turned down a teaching post in the Vienna state conservatory, stating in a postcard to Alban Berg that his decision was due to his «*aversion*» towards the city²⁰. This almost trademark ruthlessness of Stravinsky's remark in conversation with Eric W. White may conclude this chapter:

"(...) And what of Austria? The Viennese are barbarians. Their orchestral musicians could not play my *Petrushka*. They hardly know Debussy there, and they chased Schoenberg away to Berlin. Now Schoenberg is one of the greatest creative spirits of our era."²¹

3. Erich Wolfgang Korngold: how the controversial wunderkind reflected his time

Erich Wolfgang Korngold is an often overlooked composer, both in terms of the infrequent performances of his work and the complications of his historical and stylistic placing. A study of the social and artistic aspects of his lifetime may be helpful in gaining insight into the confusing and complex world of Western art music in the 20th century.

3.1 How Korngold became a controversial figure

Korngold was born in Vienna in 1897, son of the famous and influential music critic Julius Korngold. From an extremely early age he showed prodigious musical abilities by the piano and composed highly virtuosic works for the piano already from the age of 10.²² His father's advertisement of his early work led to letters of admiration coming from all over Europe, among them a now famous one from

19 White: "*Stravinsky in interview*" (Tempo, New Series, No. 97, Igor Stravinsky 17 June 1882-6 April 1971 p.7)

20 Hailey: "*Franz Schreker, 1878-1934: A Cultural Biography*" pp.55-57

21 White: *ibid* (p.7)

22 The first piano sonata was completed in 1908, his first major work to be completed

Richard Strauss:

"To learn that this music was composed by an eleven-year-old boy fills me with shock and fear and I do hope that even such a mature young genius will be able to develop normally, as one would wish him to. His confident style, his knowledge of form, his unusual expression (especially in the piano sonata) – it is really extraordinary (...)"²³

By his early 20s, Korngold had become one of the most successful composers in Europe, with the premiere of his third opera, *Die Tote Stadt*, occurring simultaneously in three major European cities. In 1930, the Viennese newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* conducted a poll inviting the public to nominate the 12 most "famous" artists living in Austria. The final result included four composers, with Korngold in 7th position and Arnold Schoenberg in 12th. The other composers mentioned on the list were Julius Bittner and Wilhelm Kienzl. However, Richard Strauss received the most nominations of all but was disqualified since he was not an Austrian citizen.²⁴

The comparison with Schoenberg is interesting. Eduard Hanslick had at different times proclaimed both Schoenberg and Korngold to be a "new Mozart"²⁵. Yet the two composers evolved towards becoming complete opposites. Korngold, born the same year of Brahms' death, was seen as someone who would continue the legacy of the "Great tradition" of the romantic composers before him. Meanwhile, Schoenberg developed dodecaphony and atonalism after feeling that the romantic idiom had become exhausted. History books tell us much about the latter composer and the lasting novelty he evoked on the music scene, but what of Korngold?

Korngold earned great financial success in the early 1930s for work as an arranger of operettas. He began to indulge himself with "light music", transcribing, and even on one occasion, stepping in to complete an opera by an

23 Schafer: *"Korngold: Complete piano sonatas"* (CD booklet)

24 Poole: *Korngold and Schoenberg and the Neues Wiener Tagblatt Poll, Vienna 1930*
<http://marianpoole.co.nz/papers.html>

25 Poole. *Ibid*

elder composer who had suddenly died before completing his commissioned work for the opera²⁶. This led to great scepticism among critics, who had expected the composer to use his talent to continue the Viennese legacy and renew their traditions.

In 1934 Korngold travelled to Hollywood, where the idea of having composers write symphonic music to film was brand new and on the verge of opening up a new market for composers to present their work²⁷. Korngold's arrival there stimulated much interest, where he arranged Mendelsohn's "*A midsummer night's dream*" for the film of the same name directed by Max Reinhardt. The following satisfaction with Korngold's work led to new job offers for him to compose original work for film - luxurious offers where he could choose which films he wanted to work on and have artistic input beyond the field of music.

Interestingly, Arnold Schoenberg (after his move to California) turned down a similar offer to work for film. According to Roy Prendergast's book "*Film music: A Neglected Art*", Schoenberg demanded an entire year to write the music as well as an active role in the production. For the commercial workings of the Hollywood studio system however, this was neither possible or acceptable and Schoenberg never wrote a single note of music for cinema²⁸.

Being of Jewish heritage, Korngold and his family moved permanently to California as the horrors of the 2nd World War erupted. Performances of his music were banned by the Nazi regime and he made composing elaborate, thematically rich film scores for the "Warner Brothers" film studio a full time commitment, composing no concert music until the end of the war.

"It was as if he had taken a vow not to compose a single note outside the genre of film music for as long as the horror was raging throughout the world."²⁹

Upon his return to Vienna after the war, the Korngold name was forgotten and his

26 "*Adventures of a Wunderkind*" (DVD documentary published on "Arthaus", 2003) 0807280036398

27 Max Steiner composed the first Hollywood film score in 1933: for "*King Kong*"

28 Prendergast: "*Film music: a neglected art*" p. 31

29 Luzi Korngold: "*Erich Wolfgang Korngold*" (Vienna 1967, p.80)

music negatively associated with the glamour of Hollywood. The composition of his opus 40, the majestic "*Symphony in F#*", was part of Korngold's plan to reclaim the position he once enjoyed in the Viennese musical life. But insufficient rehearsals led to a cancellation of the radio broadcast of its premiere, while the concert itself received poor reviews³⁰.

"I believe that my newly completed symphony will show the world that atonality and ugly dissonance at the price of giving up inspiration, form, expression, melody and beauty will result in ultimate disaster for the art of music."³¹

3.2 Korngold's music: early modernist or late romantic?

Korngold's music is generally seen as being romantic and anachronistic in its language and is most often associated with the particular branch of film scores composed in Hollywood in the 1930s and 40s. Yet, as André Previn once pointed out, this is a misinterpretation. It is the music of Korngold that inspired Hollywood and not the other way around.³²

Much has been said of Korngold's talent. He demonstrated a deep knowledge of form and harmony even before becoming a teenager, and, undeniably also due to the position of his father Julius, there was much curiosity in the musical life of Vienna as to how his art would evolve into adolescence. As a child he did not seem affected by the problems in composition that other composers of the time were facing. His attitude was based on raw emotional instinct and practical music making rather than theoretical analysis and historical or political awareness³³. But his music seems to fall into an awkward category which can neither be said to be modern or anachronistic. In fact, it can often be both at the very same time.

The way of which the young Korngold produced works seemed very spontaneous and almost "wreckless" in the sense that all of the compositional elements seemed

30 "*Adventures of a Wunderkind*" (DVD documentary)

31 http://thinkexist.com/quotes/erich_wolfgang_korngold/

32 Previn: "*Previn conducts Korngold*" (CD booklet, Deutsche Grammophone, 2002)

33 Pöllmann: Preface to the orchestral score of the *Symphony in F#* (Schott music international, Mainz 1977)

to be born onto paper in a fully evolved, mature form³⁴. As he grew older it became more and more obvious that this "wrecklessness" of his craft and unique gift for spontaneous music making was the fundamental core of his talent – he continued to be a "wunderkind", also in adulthood. It is as though his music emerged from his sub-consciousness.

An element of Korngold's music that is often overlooked is his use of irrational harmonic progressions. For example, he would often tonicize two very distant keys in the course of a single brief phrase. Yet the consistency of which he achieves these "otherworldly" effects seems to add an extra dimension to the persona of his art. Sometimes, a phrase may be completely romantic in its expression and may yet still contain harmonies that would simply have sounded awkward had they been used by Johannes Brahms or Robert Schumann.

To exemplify this particular taste in harmony one may use the opening phrase of the majestic third piano sonata (opus 25) in C major, published in 1931.

I

E. W. Korngold, Op. 25
(Komp. 1931)

Allegro molto e deciso (♩)

Example 1: Korngold's piano sonata no. 3, opus 25 (first movement)³⁵

34 Truscott: "Korngold Sinfionetta" (CD booklet, Varese Sarabande Records Inc., 1991) "Adventures of a Wunderkind" (DVD documentary, interview with Brendan Carroll)

35 Copyright: Schott music international

Measures 7 and 13 are examples of harmonic events that one would likely never find in a composition from a skilled composer of the romantic era. The piece opens clearly in C major, tonicizing the dominant key in measure 5 before the preference of D sharp to D natural tonicizes E minor on the first beat of measure 7. But the abrupt nature of this measure interrupts the gradual transition from tonic to related key areas (C, G, and E) by forcing a violent and accented second beat chord that transitions chromatically through the bass line to an awkward-sounding II-V progression that leads into an extremely complex passage resolving back in the tonic key at the end of the phrase.

Measure 13 also feels irrational but for a different reason; it is common to conclude a phrase with a simple II-V-I progression, but the fact that the progression comes unprepared is typical of Korngold. The melodic line itself is rational, and dramaturgically structured to form a logical climax towards the end of the phrase. But coming straight from the B major triad (the V of III) in measure 12 and directly into D minor (II of I) is an uncommon gesture unique in Korngold's music. The result may sound slightly awkward for those with a pair of fine-tuned romantic ears, but arguably it does so in a pleasing way.

For comparison, another quality of Korngold's that exceeds the limitations of the general late romantic vocabulary could be exemplified in the Adagio movement of the *Symphony in F#* (opus 40). The opening theme contains an extremely ambivalent harmonic "tilting", in that it shifts between two unrelated chords almost like the rocking of a ship that tilts to the left and right during strong winds.

The key of D minor is specified in the score, though the alternating use of F natural and F sharp causes a tense state of constant modulation between the two tonal centres of D natural and B natural. However, the thing that is of most significance is the use of the minor-seventh chords³⁶. The voiceleading of the dissonances is remarkably clever, bridging the gap between the two conflicting tonal worlds of D and B minor. In addition to the smooth voiceleading, note the stabilizing warmth of the trombone choir and the dense dissonant harmony of

36 Dm7 and Bm7

measure 3. This measure 3 chord is probably the quintessential "Korngoldian"³⁷ element of the entire symphony, and is arguably an A sharp minor-seventh chord superimposed over a double pedal (D natural and A natural). Either way, this harmony has the function of replacing the common dominant (A major). Again, smooth voice leading is key in bridging the contrasting tonal characters together.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the third movement of Korngold's Symphony in F sharp. The score is arranged in a system with six staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: Posaune (Trumpet), Violine I (Violin I), Violine II (Violin II), Viola, Violoncello (Cello) marked 'div. in 4', and Kontrabaß (Double Bass) marked 'div.'. The Posaune part starts with a *ppp* dynamic. The Violine I and II parts start with a *p* dynamic. The Viola part starts with a *p* dynamic. The Violoncello and Kontrabaß parts start with a *p* dynamic. The score includes a tempo marking of 'Lento' with a quarter note equal to 40 beats. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/2. The score shows three measures of music. The Posaune part has a *ppp* dynamic in the third measure. The Violine I and II parts have a *p* dynamic in the first two measures. The Viola part has a *p* dynamic in the first two measures. The Violoncello and Kontrabaß parts have a *p* dynamic in the first two measures. The score includes markings for 'div.' (divisi) and 'unis.' (unison).

Example 2: Korngold's symphony in F sharp (third movement)³⁸

The question of Korngold's stylistic belonging in a historical perspective is ambivalent and subject to much debate among Korngold enthusiasts. In 2004, musicologist Marian Poole partially concluded this matter in her study *"Placing Korngold - Aesthetic Trends in Western Art Music"* in an interesting way that perhaps reflects the view of many of Korngold's supporters. The conclusion may seem controversial to some, but considering the influence Korngold had and still has on American film music, it is a justifiable theory.

37 To the best of my knowledge, composer John Williams was the one to coin the term "Korngoldian" in his interview on the DVD release of "Jaws" ("... outbursts of Korngoldian fanfare...")

38 Copyright: Schott music international

By the end of the century, however, a different perspective was emerging. Writers were beginning to suggest that the Great Tradition had succeeded in renewing itself in a quite different way. The nineteenth-century romantic tradition of emotionally tonal symphonic music, opera and operetta had migrated to Hollywood where it continued to flourish in the genre of film music.³⁹

3.3 Korngold's influence and heritage

Korngold's chamber, orchestral, and piano music has a unique potential of bridging the gap between modernist and traditionalist. It stretches the romantic vocabulary so far the framework becomes unstable, yet it sounds spontaneous and free - and delightfully so. Within film music, composers such as John Williams and, more recently, Joel McNeely have been continuously delighting audiences worldwide with a musical idiom that is consciously drawn from the riches of Korngold's achievements. Although it was never confirmed by an authoritative source, it is often said that much of the music of both *Jaws* and *Star Wars* was commissioned to sound like Korngold's "swashbuckle" adventure scores from the 1930s. In one of the DVD documentary features from *Jaws*, Williams recalled making this remark to director Steven Spielberg after his first viewing of the film:

"Ah, this is like a pirate movie. So I think we might need pirate music for this."⁴⁰

Perhaps Williams was alluding to Korngold's scores for such films as *Captain Blood*, *The Sea Hawk* and *Adventures of Robin Hood*? A comparison of some of the adventurous music from *Jaws*, for which Williams won an Oscar in 1975, to the Scherzo of Korngold's *Symphony in F#* proves a strong connection between the orchestration as well as rhythmic and melodic themes - though Williams achieves his results without any literal allusions to the Korngold piece.⁴¹

39 <http://marianpoole.co.nz/papers.html>

40 *Jaws*, 25th anniversary two disc edition (DVD, 2005 - ASIN: B0008KLVG4)

41 Williams is often criticized for his imitations of other composer's styles. Some hail his "chameleon"-like abilities while some frown upon it. But whatever the opinion, there is no doubt about the quality of his extraordinary craft and musicianship.

In the 1970s, a couple of decades after Korngold's death, Korngold's son George formed a partnership with conductor Charles Gerhardt. Together they started a recording project with "RCA Victor" records and the National Philharmonic Orchestra to record Korngold's film music and present it to the general public. The success of this project led to following projects in various labels, most notably Naxos, who to this day continue to release brand new recordings of the film music of Korngold as well as other composers.

Unfortunately, Korngold's music does not, as of the present, hold a strong position in the concert hall although the situation is constantly improving. Brendan Carroll, who is the leading musicological authority on everything related to Korngold highlights the dilemma in this way:

"Live performances is the only way to keep a composer alive!"⁴²

3.4 Korngold's potential in music performance education

Tonal ambivalence is an unexplored subject for many students studying standard classical literature. To explore modern styles the student of any instrument is often required to compromise the skill and technical development which the standard literature offers. This happens because new music is so often intended as a polarization from what is considered "classical" and builds on unique concepts not found elsewhere. The advantage of a composer such as Korngold is therefore first and foremost one of sustaining *familiarity* at the same time as encouraging stylistic curiosity. His music is idiomatically composed, and from that perspective unifiable with the standard literature. Yet, the music offers a tonal palette bridging towards the emancipation of tonality, forcing the students to unite their love for the familiar with a curiosity for the unexplored. In education, it is beneficial for all students to achieve a genuine feeling of exploration and face aesthetical challenges within the music they are attempting to embrace.

⁴² http://www.korngold-society.org/Brendan_Carroll_interview.html

4. Ørjan Matre: young modernist with a laidback approach

Ørjan Matre (b. 1979) and his work as a composer has been specifically chosen to highlight some of the aforementioned contradictions found within the field of music performance studies. His music is rich with modern influences - both structural and in terms of timbre, texture and orchestration. But it is also music that, at its heart, is beautifully layered with a deep, passionate romanticism and uncomplicated linear unfolding that is capable of enchanting even the most untrained of musical ears, and not least the performers who play his music. This young, promising composer's talent is evident in as much his persona as his work, something I discovered during my interview with him in early February, 2011.

4.1 Classicism and modernism - cut from a cloth?

The thing that may be the most intriguing aspect of Ørjan Matre's approach to music, and likewise what makes him such an appropriate subject for this thesis, is his love and wholehearted embrace of the classical standard literature. During both rehearsals and performances of Mozart's A-major piano concerto and Tchaikovsky's 3rd symphony in September 2010 (of which the present author was present¹), the young composer would sit backstage with his head leaning forward facing the stage floor, listening with immense passion and curiosity for detail at how the orchestra and conductor Rolf Gupta treated the given challenges of such remarkable and universally cherished music. Although this music initially seemed distant from the aesthetics evident in his own compositional output, the composer on one occasion nodded towards me in acknowledgement of the expressive quality heard through the lyrical themes of Mozart. "Isn't it beautiful?", he asked rhetorically with remarkable enthusiasm.

But how could a composer who follows such a contrasting modern path, with an emancipated focus on the quality of timbre itself, rather than the outlining of thematic work *through* timbre (as evident in the music mentioned above), be so in love with Mozart – a composer who, upon first glance, embodies musical values

¹ See earlier chapter: "introduction"

that seem to be in such fierce conflict with that of his own work?

One possible answer, suggested by the present author, is one of simple philosophy. For just as a nuclear physicist's unyielding devotion to the scrutiny of sub-atomic particles prevents him from having much in common with his astro-physicist colleagues - who are far more concerned with scrutinizing the celestial objects of the skies², a musician devoted to the embrace of traditional western harmony and formal analysis is likewise prevented from understanding the views of his modernist colleagues - who, like the astro-physicists, have a far larger, more liberal approach to seeing (in this case "hearing") the universe. The solution to this communication problem lies simply in finding a common denominator, of which both directions of an art or science are equally based on.

In the case of the physicist, this common denominator could perhaps be "String Theory"³ - a theory that, if correct, will unite the study of the small with the study of the large, finally allowing two physicists with a different field of specialization to have a discussion in the university lunch room.

In the case of the musician, the common denominator is simply the natural tone row - a musical "law" of mathematics and gravitational relationships between the intervals that is the source of "reasoning" behind all music's character. From this heightened perspective, the contrast between Mozart and Matre - and countless other composers for that matter, becomes considerably diminished - since both directions of practising music can be proven to obey the same "rules".

4.2 Biography

Although unsure of his exact age at the time, Ørjan told me he began to actively compose in his childhood. As a trumpeteer in a marching band, he was offered possibilities to both compose and arrange existing music for himself and his colleagues. The resulting praise of his efforts helped encourage him to pursue his studies in composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music, with Bjørn Kruse and

2 Nuclear-physicians use the theory of "quantum mechanics" as the basis of their work, while astro-physicians use the "general theory of relativity".

3 Depicted in chapter one (introduction)

Lasse Thoresen among his more notable teachers.

His national breakthrough came when he was selected as one of four young composers to be recorded by the Norwegian Radio Orchestra in a project titled "Lights Out" with conductor Rolf Gupta. His good chemistry with Gupta led to him being offered a position as "composer-in-residence" of the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra which Gupta assumed leadership of in 2006. This unique possibility allowed the young composer to gain significant experience in terms of communicating with performers. He attended rehearsals and got to know the environment in a way that is crucial to a young composer's development and an opportunity that few of his peers have been able to achieve.

In 2010, Ørjan was one of the two selected applicants to receive a scholarship from the MIC (Music Information Centre of Norway) to endorse his music abroad over a period of three years⁴. The jury's comment upon rewarding him the honor was:

"(Matre)... unites timbral quality and curiosity in an exciting way. He has asserted himself as one of the strongest names of his generation, and his music is noticeable for both its skillful craftsmanship and its immediacy."⁵

In March 2011 his concerto for clarinet and orchestra, commissioned by renowned Norwegian clarinetist Rolf Borch, was premiered with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. In one pre-performance article conductor Juanjo Mena described the work as "rich" and "good music", associating it to both Jean Sibelius and Magnus Lindberg.⁶

Some of his mentionable works are the "Four Miniatures for Orchestra" from his debut recording project "Lights Out", the "Handel Mixtapes" commissioned for the

4 The other being Therese Birkelund Ulvo

5 "(Matre)... forener klanglig kvalitet og nysgjerrighet på en spennende måte. Han har markert seg som en av sin generasjons sterkeste navn, og komposisjonene kjennetegnes av både dyktig håndverk og umiddelbarhet." From article published on www.ballade.no 6/9/2010 titled: "INTRO til Ørjan Matre of Therese Birkelund Ulvo" (<http://www.ballade.no/nmi.nsf/doc/art2010060914445516646829>)

6 Article published on www.ballade.no 3/17/2011 titled: "Usikker på norskandel" (<http://www.ballade.no/nmi.nsf/doc/art2011031711192611230487>)

Norwegian radio orchestra, the recent Clarinet Concerto, and his sinfionetta "Atem". He has also composed numerous pieces for chamber ensembles and solo instruments, often experimenting with unusual or "awkward" instrumental combinations.

4.3 Meeting Ørjan Matre

My first encounter with Ørjan was during the preparations for the Kristiansand symphony orchestra's performances of his work "Handel Mixtapes" (2009) where I myself performed the part of the second tape recorder. Months later, I met him in Oslo for a two hour interview.

Initially, I questioned him about the methods of which he constructs his music, with an emphasis on mapping out the process from loosely constructed ideas to completed score.

"My work is always unfolded in a non-linear creative process, often beginning with material from the piece's conclusion and working my way back from there to the exposition. But it all depends on the project at hand, and often the choices emerge sub-consciously without help from a pre-selected blueprint or method of approach. Exactly what my work with developing the small cells of musical grammar I discover results in may vary immensely."⁷

Even before our interview commenced Ørjan talked about how he had avoided attempting to define or place himself as an artist. This remained true both prior to my line of questioning as well as after. What his role is, and what unique message his music carries, is something he has a most relaxed and seemingly indifferent attitude towards. He hesitated to answer as I asked him about his personal development, and what he wished to achieve through his music in the future. I mentioned Lutoslawski's early work, the "Symphonic Variations" from 1938, and how the composer later described this work as a partial goal towards "crystalising" his approach to composition⁸. But unlike the older composer, Ørjan refuses to

⁷ See interview appendix

⁸ Douglas Rust/Witold Lutoslawski: *Conversation with Lutoslawski* (The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 79, No. 1, Spring

take such a stance as he continues his journey into the misty and highly unpredictable future of contemporary music. What his role is, and later will be, is a matter he, perhaps surprisingly given his recent success, chooses to have no opinion on.

How fascinating this idea is: the idea of an almost "mindless" composer who acts upon instinct and emotion rather than the intellectualism and self-promotional cries for attention that many often associate with modern music. Ørjan Matre is not trying to be anything but honest, and perhaps this is the fundamental appeal of his talent? He devotes himself to the neutrality of his artistic existence, leaving the placing of his output within the various polarizations of society to the musicologist and public at large.

When I asked him about his immense insight in writing for percussion instruments he told me about the many hours he would spend each day in the library facilities of the Norwegian Music Academy reading scores and listening. Always curious, always absorbing knowledge almost like a sponge or piece of litmus paper.

"I was losing my perspective and had to start cutting down. I was spending too much time in the library with these scores. I eventually realized that I needed to start using my ears and listen more actively to the general soundscapes of a composition rather than scrutinising them with a microscopic attention to detail. It was a hard thing to do!"

4.4 Analysing the content of "Handel Mixtapes"

Handel Mixtapes was initially commissioned by the Norwegian National Radio Orchestra (KORK) to commemorate 250 years since the famous baroque composer Handel died. It received its premiere performance by the orchestra on the National Radio Broadcasting Network (NRK) in 2009 under the direction of Peter Szilvay, and is scored for large orchestra and two tape recorders.

1995), pp. 207-223, Oxford University Press)

4.4.1 The origins of "Handel: Mixtapes"

Prior to each of the September 2010 performances of Handel: Mixtapes Ørjan would introduce the piece to the audience. Standing directly besides him on stage I witnessed him do this four times in three days⁹, helping me to gain insight into his process of constructing the work.

According to Ørjan, the only specific request included in the commission was the inclusion of the following excerpt from one of the elder composer's minuets¹⁰:



Ex. 1: The minuet by Handel.

Matre recieved the excerpt and was immediatly baffled by the task. He repeatedly told our various audiences back in September 2010 that although he was fond of Handel's music, it was seemingly completely incompatible with his own style. The challenge was therefore how he could juxtapose these contrasting styles without scarring, polluting, or even destroying either one of them in the process?

Matre had naturally observed how dated the baroque style of the Handel excerpt sounded. It was something of the past, it evoked strong historical, geographical, and cultural associations. That aspect of Handel's minuet was to remain untouched in the finished piece. In fact, it is this very aspect that came to be the

9 In addition to the two main performances in the cities of Kristiansand and Arendal, two special preliminary performances were programmed for local music schools and their faculty to attend.

10 All reductions are by the present author, and based on Matre's original score

pre-dominant feature of the finished work.

4.4.2 The structural content of Handel: Mixtapes (and its interrelated sections)

Before revealing the actual pitch material of the work, an isolated description of the structural design might adequately reveal the artistic idea behind Matre's vision. The score is neatly divided into three re-occurring sections. Each section is recapitulated, extended, or developed for each time it occurs. The sections have very distinguished and clearly defined roles, and their names are:

"Introduction" (occurring 5 times)

"Handel" (occurring 5 times)

"Rewind" (occurring 4 times)

The first of the introductions ("I") opens the piece with 15 slow measures (44 beats pr minute), before it gradually compresses itself for each re-occurrence, evolving in textural density, rhythmic density, and by an increase in tempo (eventually reaching 132 beats pr minute).

The "Handel" section ("H") is far more perceptible as it is the only section to feature the actual menuet that inspired the work, and it is also the only section to include the two tape recorders in playback function. This section must be said to be the quintessential of the three.

The very concept of the H section is as comedic in nature as it simple: the first tape recorder (primo) records the orchestra during the initial exposition of the Handel theme. At the next corresponding section, primo then plays back this recording to the audience as the orchestra continues to play. The second tape recorder (secundo) records the playback of the first tape recorder as it plays its recording to the audience. Later, at the next corresponding section the secundo plays its recording of the recording back to the audience as primo once again records the playback. The gradual decline in sound quality and increasing values of tape "hiss" resulting from the two recording devices throwing the recording back and forth between them eventually results in the Handel theme losing its

influence on the composition. Meanwhile, the original music by Matre performed by the orchestra is getting constantly louder and more complex – reducing the strong baroque presence in the composition that was so obvious at first, and in a sense "reversing" the piece as if "flipping its axis" upside-down: the presence of Matre's compositional voice that was somewhat restrained at first has become the dominating force of the composition while the presence of Handel's theme has been gradually diminished.

The role of the "Rewind" ("R") section can be said to be the exact opposite of the I section. Where I becomes gradually compressed for each occurrence, the R section is gradually extended and elaborated for each of its occurrences. Initially, the section consists of the tape recorder performers pressing the rewind button at clearly marked instances in the score, and hence prepare the audience for the next I section. But eventually, the section grows beyond this function, both in length, and textural and rhythmical activity – the exact opposite of what happens to the I section over the course of the piece.

A structural overview of "Handel Mixtapes" might look something like this:

Section	Length (in measures)	Measure numbers in score
Introduction I	15	1 - 15
Handel I	15	16 - 30
Rewind I	2	31 - 32
Introduction II	10	33 - 42
Handel II	15	43 - 57
Rewind II	4	58 - 61
Introduction III	10	62 - 71
Handel III	15	72 - 86
Rewind III	23	87 - 109
Introduction IV	21 ¹¹	110 - 130
Handel IV	15	131 - 145
Rewind IV	23	146 - 168
Introduction V	14	169 - 182
Handel V (cadenza)	Lasting approx. 1 minute ¹²	-

- 11 At this point, the increase of tempo from $\text{♩} = 44$ to $\text{♩} = 132$ causes this particular occurrence of the section to be physically shorter than it's predecessors - despite the amount of measures having increased. Therefore, it complies with the structural nature of the piece previously described by the author.
- 12 As this is a cadenza, where the soloists (tape recorder performers) are to be as liberal and unrestricted by the framework of musical time as possible, the composer here wisely chooses to stop measuring time in a traditional

A closer look at the table above proves how the sections I and R are virtually the exact opposites of each other; one is gradually expanded (R) and one is gradually compressed (I). Meanwhile, the H section remains consistently the same, in a sense perhaps "stabilizing" the work?¹³

If we go back to the earlier example which mentioned the work of the nuclear physicist, we could perhaps once again draw a symmetrical line between the laws of physics and Matre's carefully conceived structural design. Perhaps the I and R sections are like the electrons and protons of an atom, both equalising one-another, while the stable H section assumes the role of the neutron, placed firmly asserted at the centre of the atom?

4.4.3 The timbral content of "Handel: Mixtapes"

Matre's work has no clearly audible melodic or rhythmic themes. The music evolves in a very organic, fluent manner, where the gradual densification of the audio spectrum must be said to serve as the overall theme of the work.

The opening I section starts with a very natural sounding open fifth interval (pitches G and D natural) though its message is somewhat "mystified" through a hyperactive dynamic activity. In the very first measure as many as five different dynamic markings are used¹⁴, in addition to crescendos and decrescendos that fade the voices of the various instruments in and out of the foreground. The clarinets in the following example exemplify Matre's characteristic use of voice amplification, assisting the trumpets in exclaiming the accent of the first downbeat to then fade out seamlessly in the first half of the second beat.

notated manner, and instead indicates approximately how many seconds the cadenza should last.

13 The notable exception is of course the closing cadenza, which Matre indicates should be an un-measured and more flexible section than the rest of the piece.

14 Only four of these markings are visible in ex. 2. In the orchestrated score, the F horn is instructed to play one dynamic nuance lower than the bowed vibraphone; a common practise among contemporary composers due to the superior audibility of the horn compared to that of softer sounding instruments.

Ex. 2: Opening measure from Handel: Mixtapes, C trumpets are muted (harmon)

From this tension-less, consonantic starting point Matre then superimposes a couple of added intervals of perfect fifths. The first one, occurring at the last beat of measure six, is only slightly dissonant (pitches F and C natural) and serves more as a colouration of the original fifth interval than a change of character. Moreover, this particular pair of notes occurs most notably through an atmospheric violin trill between naturally stopped pitches and their artificial harmonic¹⁵ sounding two octaves higher, a detail that further suggests their colouristic function.

The second superimposed fifth interval occurs two measures later, in measure eight. This is where the tension starts to build with the pitches of E flat and B flat causing a severe disturbance in the peaceful tone of the work thus far. The manner of which these perfect fifths are superimposed effectively exemplifies the organic fluidity of the work at large. The appliance of the fifth is anticipated in the harp.

15 The most common kind of artificial harmonic, and the only one used in "Handel: Mixtapes", is produced by lightly touching the pitch found a perfect fourth above the stopped pitch (with the fourth finger). The resulting harmonic is sounding two octaves higher than the stopped pitch. Therefore, the violin trill the text is referring to is produced by applying a swift "tapping" action of the fourth finger while the pitch stopped by the first finger remains a constant. This particular kind of trill is not uncommon in contemporary pieces.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Flutes, Oboes, Trumpets, and Harp. The Harp part is in the bottom staff, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a triplet of notes, then moving to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Flutes, Oboes, and Trumpets parts are in the top three staves. They all enter with a superimposed fifth interval, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *mf*. The Flutes part has a dynamic of *pp* and *p*. The Oboes part has a dynamic of *mp* and *pp*. The Trumpets part has a dynamic of *mf* and *pp*. The Harp part has a dynamic of *p* and *f*.

Ex. 3: Anticipation of densification through superimposed fifths (harp figure: measures 7-9)¹⁶

Example 3 shows how the appliance of the fifth is dramatized. The harp gravitates towards its declamation in the middle of measure eight, assisted by the trumpets at the exact point of occurrence. This "stinger" effect¹⁷ then decays gradually in strength through the superimposition of the interval in first the oboes then flutes¹⁸. This particular kind of colouration and delicate attention to dynamics typifies all of Matre's work.

The initial I section continues to increase in density as it in measure 14 concludes with a cluster in the lower strings featuring all chromatic pitches between G sharp in the lower tenor range of the cello and an open stringed D natural in the second violins.

16 Keep in mind this is not a complete reduction; the orchestra at large is still sounding the initial fifth from the opening measure (G and D natural), as well as the first superimposition (F and C natural). The parts included in the reduction are selected due to their relevance for the analysis.

17 The term "stinger" is most often associated with the classic film scores of early Hollywood cinema (Rosza, Korngold, Steiner, Waxman among others). The term describes a piercing vertical event in a musical score that literally sounds like a "sting". Freedictionary.com offers this general description of the word "sting": "to pierce or wound painfully with or as if with a sharp-pointed structure or organ, as that of certain insects".

18 Unlike the other instruments, the harp has no decrescendo indication. This is due to the harp's (and other plucked string instruments) natural decay in sound, rendering the eventual marking of a decrescendo passage unnecessary.

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Violin II, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Each instrument has a staff with a treble clef (Violin II) or a bass clef (Viola and Cello). The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score shows a 'divisi' instruction above each staff, indicating that the instruments are to play a cluster of notes. The notes are concentrated in the lower register, and the dynamic marking is 'pppp' (pianissimo) for all instruments.

Ex 4: "Cluster" that accompanies the initial presentation of the menuet (measure 16)

This dense cluster proceeds to lead directly into the first H section, causing a remarkable effect that was much discussed during my interview with the composer. The cluster is held through the first six measures of the following H section before fading out. The extremely soft dynamic marking renders the phenomena a musical "sound effect", a scarcely noticeable presence that fills the room, framing the Handel menuet with an "eery" aura of the past - almost like an old gramophone player.

"It fills the room, almost as though there was a fan blowing backstage."¹⁹

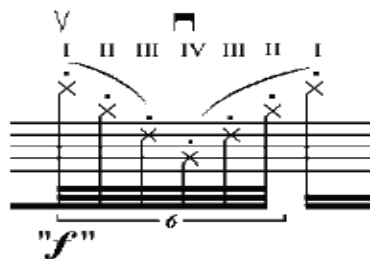
The pitch and textural material of the R section is dominated by the following special effects in the string family:

- "Col legno" (from Italian; using the backside of a string bow to attack the strings)
- The hand-produced dampening of all violin strings that result in a near pitchless, percussive "scratching" sonority
- "Jeté" (french), a technique that implies literally bouncing the bow, often over a single repeated pitch level, in order to produce an echo-like effect.
- "Glissando", the most common of the string family's special effects.

As we know, the R section is born from the initial occurrence of the tape player pressing its rewind button in measure 31. As the section grows throughout the work and gradually becomes far richer in content, the use of the above-mentioned

¹⁹ See the interview appendix.

special effects seem to contribute a continued sense of "reversal" originally specified by the distinct sound of the tape recorder rewinding its tape. The composition seems to move backwards into itself ending up in the next I section, perhaps a kind of musical allusion to the humanly incomprehensible notion of reversing time? At least, this is my philosophic interpretation of the heightened sense of surrealism in the pitch and textural content of R, in relation to the two other sections (I and H).



Ex. 5: A recurring solo violin figure found in the R section. When all strings are hand-damped, the audible result is an almost pitchless scratching sound. The roman numerals indicate which string to be bowed. The quotation marks embracing the dynamic marking (forte) originally stem from Helmut Lachenmann, where the intensity of the performance action and its resulting volume are not to be confused with each other.²⁰

4.5 In reflection: contemporary music and "accessibility"

By examining the various aspects of Handel Mixtapes that have been described above, one can clearly see how deceptively simple Matre's craftsmanship actually is. The structure is very clear and consistent, and the organic development of its musical grammar is complete. It achieves a satisfying sense of completion in that it succeeds in depleting the expressive potential of its musical framework, which must be said to be a rare thing for a youngster who had - at the time of the work's completion - not yet seen his 30th year.

Proving the evident accessibility²¹ of modern works such as Handel Mixtapes is a

20 Instructions on how to perform the less common special effects are carefully explained by Matre in the performance notes preceding the musical score.

21 Author's note: It is important to stress that, in music, it seems the very nature of the art disallows us to really "prove" anything as a matter of scientific fact. However, through the argumentation and exchange of beliefs and convictions (musicology) we can bring music considerably closer to science, and hence evoke a sense of growth and understanding rather than one of decadence which can happen through the turbulent states of our cacaphonic culture.

useful step towards defeating the modern myth of how contemporary music is generally inaccessible and irrational.

To take a step back and contextualize the results of the previous analysis, I would like to highlight one particular critic's 1914 criticism of the Franz Schreker opera "Der Ferne Klang", which premiered in 1912²².

"Schreker intentionally places the musical listener in the situation of the unmusical listener. We must listen to him the way the unmusical listen to everything. If we listen to him in any other way we do him injustice (...)."

Here the critic, who's name was Alexander Berrsche, made a crucial point towards grasping the flexible framework of modernity in music. He asserted, perhaps involuntarily, that the study and knowledge of traditional western form and harmony played no part in the embracement of the kind of art that seemed to dictate it's own premises of which to unfold.

With Handel Mixtapes, Ørjan Matre has similarly created a "design" of his own that is extremely individual and unique for this particular work. But what does it demand of any listener to embrace music "on it's own terms", as described above? Further contextualisation can perhaps be gained from the world of popular music, where structural singularity dominates much of the commercial market. Though there are notable exceptions, a pop song most often comes in the simplest of ABA forms. Musicians and songwriters of the genre find their individual expression not through form or harmony, but through poetry (lyrics) and the timbral qualities of their voice (or that of their collaborators). This brings the limitations of the human mind to the foreground: since so much of popular music is so similar in form, would that not imply that pre-fixed expectations dominate our perception of all we hear and experience artistically? And is this applicable as a reasoning behind the discontinuity of practising contemporary music in performance-based educational areas?

²² Shreker's work and it's content is of no significance here, hence only the particular formulation of the quoted critic and an interpretation of it's further implications are described.

5. The pedagogical organisation of contemporary literature

The term "contemporary music" is an extremely general one, and can be divided into countless subsidiary genres. In addition, globalization through mass medias and the blending and integrations of ethnic expression also complicates the issue of defining national styles. For example, any contemporary American composer may as well be influenced by Irish celtic music as by American folklore. Or any European composer is just as likely to embrace American jazz as much as the folk music of their own country. The global mixing pot is a wide, fascinating subject that challenges the consensus of what any music education should contain.

Since the variations of expression within the contemporary music literature are so wide, it seems difficult, perhaps even impossible, to organise it into serving a cohesive pedagogical purpose.

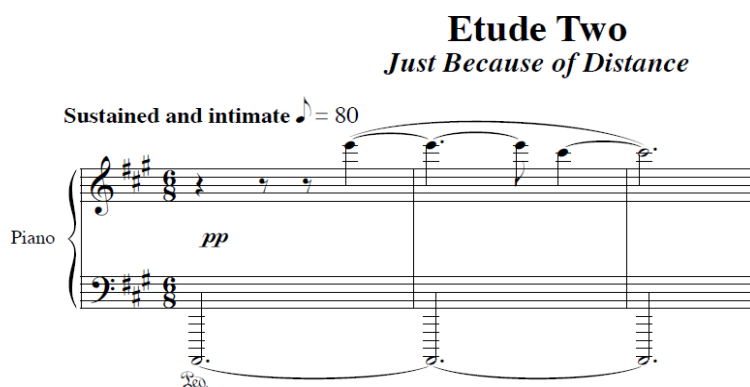
5.1 Promoting technical/instrumental development?

In the traditional education, the pianist's etudes are by composers such as Czerny and Chopin, while sonatas by Mozart are considered to be vital in acquiring a good technique. But within contemporary music technical studies are often aimed at either extending the common technical vocabulary or to pose some sort of "artistic question", usually one that challenges the traditional parameters of which music usually unfolds within. This challenges the very definition of "technique", and extends it to involve artistry as well as mechanical skill and mastery of one's instrument. This makes the definition of technique itself something that needs clarification.

"One needs only to study a certain positioning of the hand in relation to the keys to obtain with ease the most beautiful sounds, to know how to play long notes and short notes and to achieve certain unlimited dexterity. A well formed technique, it seems to me, can control and vary a beautiful sound quality."²³

²³ <http://www.ourchopin.com/quotes.html>

This remark from Frederic Chopin about technique is perhaps one that suits the level of ability required to master his own music, but in modern times the title etude has transcended its initial mechanical meaning and may even have artistic or philosophical implimentations. The young American composer Leonard Mark Lewis named his second etude for the piano "Just Because of Distance".



Example 1: From "Three Etudes" by Leonard Mark Lewis²⁴

The extreme distances between the bass and soprano voice is the concept of the movement, and the artistic exploration of this relationship is what makes the piece an "etude".

In comparison, Gyorgi Ligeti emphasized polyrhythmical structures in many of his etudes in a more mechanically grounded approach highlighting the performer's ability to emancipate their left and right hands in order to execute different simultaneous tasks. Due to the apparant differences in interpretation of the term "etude", its definition may plausibly be divided into at least two areas: an area for technical studies, and another one for artistic exploration.

An awareness and charting of the artistic and technical requirements of contemporary music is helpful in hierchizing a standardized approach towards embracing it as a relevant educational element. One possibility would be to grade the difficulty of given pieces in a way that makes it comparable to the standard

²⁴ Reprinted here with permission from the composer

litterature. The main workings of contemporary music needs to exceed the limitations of the concert hall and enter the classrooms.

5.2 Influencing the way we percieve traditional form

The young British composer Thomas Adés and his piano quintet is a great example of how contemporary music can challenge the way we percieve traditional form. The quintet features clearly delineated exposition and recapitulation sections. The exposition even has a whole-scale repeat – an unusual thing for music of the present. In fact, when Adés and the Arditti quartet gave the German premiere of the work at the 2002 "Wittener Tage fur Neue Kammermusik", a «palpable shock of disbelief ran through the audience when Adés turned back 16 pages of score to begin the repeat.»²⁵

The interesting thing about this quintet, is that it succeeds in maintaining a clearly outlined sonata structure despite the material being developed through the use of contemporary techniques. It is music that sounds tonally distorted, but that structurally points towards the influence of Brahms.

"I wondered what would happen if I wrote a piece just about the logic of Brahms's music and not about the beauty and warmth."²⁶

Through his choice of structure, Adés asks his audience to relate their experience of his music to their expectations of what the traditional sonata form is. Unlike what Eva Sedak called music that «evolves in a process of autogenesis, creating not only its form and expression but also its vocabulary», Adés is relating his work to the classical litterature, suggesting a refreshed and updated approach to percieving form. This is music that has the pedagogical potential of bettering a student's understanding of the classical evolution of form, perhaps best exemplified through Beethoven, and the framework of which it is based – first and foremost because it reveals its limitations and therefore offers a perspective not

25 Fox: *"Tempestuous Times: The recent music of Thomas Adés"* (The Musical Times, Vol. 145 No. 1888, Autumn 2004 pp. 41-56)

26 Fox: *ibid*

offered through the study of most standard literature.

5.3 Breaking or continuation of tradition?

The differentiation of the two alternatives mentioned in the chapter title is arguably only a distraction from the reality of the issue. In the search for common denominators between seemingly contrasting musical styles it becomes evident that the doctrines of traditional Western form and harmony are in fact *not* the fundamentals of musical expression, as most students of music performance are conditioned (intentionally or not) to believe, but a systematic approach towards *exploiting* them. Beyond the limitations of traditional harmony the natural tone row remains, still today, an almost untapped source for possibilities of musical expressivity begging to be creatively exploited. Schoenberg's emancipation of the twelve note row was a beginning of a process that shall continue to evolve far beyond our lifetimes, which is a beautiful thought!

However, the debate concerning the breaking or continuation of tradition is nonetheless one that occupies many forums of contemporary music.

"Retrogardism" is a brand new movement that mainly consists of visual, literal, and musical artists that believe the entire concept of modernism is merely a «*historical parenthesis*». They believe that a renewal of traditions can only be achieved by embracing it openheartedly and write music today that echoes its influence in a prominent manner.²⁷

In Norwegian composition studies today, the study of the music of Messiaen is becoming ever more important (pianist Håkon Ausbø has been encouraging the study of Messiaen with great success for several decades now) with students scrutinizing his method of constructing scales and chords and developing original sonorities where the quality of the sonorities themselves became the predominant feature of the work. So, novelty and extreme individuality of expression has become a *necessity*, and those who do not wish to accept it seem to prefer a

²⁷ Wold: "Tilbake til Fremtiden" (Morgenbladet, 4. november 2005) <http://www.morgenbladet.no/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051104/OBOKER/111040001>

study of other art forms such as film music, which is still today clearly derived from the late romantic idiom inspired by composers as Korngold and Steiner.²⁸

5.4 "Six Little Pieces in Aubergine" (composed by the author)

A quick glance at a couple of these short character pieces (composed in 2010) are conclusively included to help solidify the views of the author expressed thus far. They are composed recently, with the intention of creating music that was simple and accessible yet that somehow stretched the framework of what traditional character pieces most often tend to be. From that perspective the pieces may be seen as a process of self-exploration, so to speak.

The second movement, "*March*", was the first to be completed. In it an extremely triadic and blatantly diatonic melody in the key of C major is counteracted by a chromatic and dissonant bassline. The dualism between simple melody and complex harmony applies a sense of spirit and humour to the work.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Tempestoso" with a tempo marking of quarter note = 100-112. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and the instruction "staccato sempre". The second system includes a fortissimo piano (*fp*) dynamic marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The music features a simple, diatonic melody in the right hand and a complex, chromatic bassline in the left hand.

Example 1: Second movement from "*Six Little Pieces in Aubergine*"

The dualism is most effectively displayed in measure 7, with its Korngoldian sense of "anti-resolution" where a gravitational chromatic "pull" between emancipated pitch functions are disguised as dominant seventh chords with dissonant resolutions. The result is intended to achieve a sense of "pleasing awkwardness",

²⁸ The author spent time studying at the Norwegian music academy (2010-2011), where the mentioned observations were made

not unlike the previous glance at Korngold's third piano sonata.

The third movement is one of three variations on the pre-fixed theme consisting of pitches C, E, C, and A.²⁹

Con brio, leggiero (♩ = 92-100)



Example 2: Third movement of "Six Little Pieces in Aubergine"

Here, a canon-like passage introduces the theme through three even eighth-notes and an extended half note. Later, a seemingly interchangeable descending scalaric motive concludes the expository section:



Example 3: Third movement of "Six Little Pieces in Aubergine"

The descending figure occurs as early as in measure 13, but is first solidified at the transition between measures 16 and 17. Otherwise, the example above proves a dominant presence of the initial pitch material, both intervallically and in terms of rhythm. But in the developmental section the composition breaks suddenly

²⁹ The initials of a friend whom is the dedicee of the work

away from the hierarchical arrangement of the expository section:



Example 4: Third movement of "Six Little Pieces in Aubergine"

After "toying" with the main pitch material for a few measures, the descending scalic motive breaks away in a climactic manner marked "ff" and since becomes the dominating pitch material, whereas the C-E-C-A material becomes secondary. The harmonic language undeniably has a clear 20th century sense of dating. Yet the structural similarity to Beethoven or even Mozart is also present. Both the latter composers would use the most interchangeable motivic information of their expositions in the development sections of their sonatas, especially those composed late in their careers. The choice is perhaps related to the desire to achieve a sense of creative perfection. The usage of such material is therefore an element that challenges a composer's creativity as well as offering an opportunity to justify the existential content of the given work, making the seemingly *interchangeable* become *unchangeable*. The development section seems to alter the way we experience the contents of the exposition: it changes our view of the past.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The difficulty of achieving a coherently structured approach to contemporary

music, both in relation to its literature and its critique, has resulted in a dichotomy between practices. Within instrumental education - which emphasizes the performance of a particular instrument - the process of dichotomizing the literature has resulted in all but an exclusion of contemporary music.

Conservatories today function within the romanticized view of the artist, leaving little or no space available for living music forums and composers. The art and science of musicology seems to have drifted from being the pinnacle of Western music and to a disoriented, blurred and cacaphonic state of confusion.

The false notion of contemporary music's inaccessibility and proclaimed "marginal" appeal is at least partially derived from this. Contemporary music is now divided into so many subsidiary genres of postmodernity that it is difficult for even the most informed authorities on the subject to have a clear picture of the modern music scene.

The study of Ørjan Matre and his music is intended to show how new music can be unpretentious and cool, and how contemporary compositional techniques can help achieve good artistic results in ways that simply aren't possible within older styles.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a composer who seemed to typify the contradictions between practices that went on in the early decades of the twentieth century. His music is in itself layered with contradictions, some of which are exemplified in the present text. The benefits of using music from such composers as, for example, Matre and Korngold, is two-fold. It helps students contextualize the evolution of Western art music and assists them in evolving into matured artists, at the same time as it liberates the creative mind from the restrictions of past forms of expression. An exploration of the student's imagination would likely be encouraged through a heightened emphasis on contemporary literature in education.

6.2 Closing arguments

The evolution of Western art music throughout the twentieth and into the twentyfirst century has split the genre into radically contrasting directions. In an interview shortly before his death, Witold Lutoslawski attempted to generalize the turbulent state of contemporary music with an interesting theory claiming that the genre of new music over the past century could be divided into two schools of thought: one under the influence of Claude Debussy, and the other under the influence of Arnold Schoenberg.³⁰

The complications surrounding the definition and stylistic conditions of contemporary music are confusing and the quality of musicological writing on the matter seems inconsistent and sometimes in a state of disorientation. It would seem that postmodernism's validation of so many alternative forms of composition has diverted many critics into «*travelling shallow waters*»³¹. The result is that a lot of great music composed over the past several decades has been virtually "thrown out" of circulation all too quickly, leaving many studying music today to establish more or less of a "quasi-religious" relationship with the compositional masters of the past. There exists so much unawareness towards the quality that potentially surrounds them in their community, and not least towards the educational benefits that could come from studying and embracing it. Creating a platform that relates the classical heritage to the more "avant garde" styles of composition is a necessity that should not be underestimated. Music is alive in the present and should not be treated as a museum to glorify the past - embracing the present *evolves* our view of the past. Time is a multidimensional force of nature: the way of which we construct our future also reflects our interpretation of the past. Achieving an organic and stable relationship between the modernistic and the traditional will evoke a beautiful future for what we currently refer to as *Western art music*. But to accomplish this, the seeds must be planted in the instrumental music education. Young people studying music need to express themselves through the compositional voices of their contemporaries.

30 Gieraczyński/ Lutoslawski: *Lutoslawski in Interview* (Tempo, New Series, No. 170, September 1989, pp. 4-10, Cambridge university press)

31 Fox: *ibid*

Contemporaries that have been influenced by the same culture, the same politics, the same social conditions of the time. Embracing this necessity does not only effect the future, it changes the way of which we see the past. The instrumental music education can not afford to continue distancing itself from the rest of the evolving arts and sciences of the world.

6.3 Implications for further research

This thesis offers little input on the subject of ethnicity in music. A study of how the aspects of, for example, nationalism and globalization relate to each other would have been an interesting comparison or companion piece to the outcome of the present text.

Although the present text does vaguely address the matter, the aspect of structure is an extremely complicated subject in the field of contemporary music. A study devoted to demonstrating the accessibility of contemporary music compared to older forms would also serve as an interesting companion-piece to the present text.

Also, the theory presented describing the natural tone row as a natural source of creative possibility beyond the limitations of functional harmony is one that might be interesting to explore elsewhere. One could imagine such a study to involve a certain degree of comparison between "early music" (pre-baroque) and contemporary music.

Finally, I feel the next phase of exploration would logically concern the actual *methodology* of teaching contemporary music; how new and challenging forms can be embraced by teachers and presented to students, and what the differences and similarities are compared to the teaching practises of traditional repertoire? It is a challenging and large subject, but a necessary one!

Appendix 1 of 1:

Summary of the interview with Ørjan Matre

(conducted in Oslo on Friday February 11th, 2011)

About his background and influence:

I don't know when I started composing, but it was while playing the trumpet in a marching band that my interest hit its peak. I composed some pieces and made arrangements for the band, and the response led me to pursue studies in composition at the Norwegian Academy.

About how he works:

My work is always unfolded in a non-linear creative process, often beginning with material from the piece's conclusion and working my way back from there to the exposition. But it all depends on the project at hand, and often the choices emerge sub-consciously without help from a pre-selected blueprint or method of approach. Exactly what my work with developing the small cells of musical grammar I discover results in may vary immensely.

(...)

There is a strange reoccurring element in my music that I don't really understand. I seem to end my pieces with something completely different, something that drifts away from the center of the piece. For me, it is equally important to establish what the piece *isn't* as much as what it actually *is*. It should point outwards and inwards at the same time.

About his knowledge of orchestration:

I was losing my perspective and had to start cutting down. I was spending too much time in the library with these scores. I eventually realized that I needed to

start using my ears and listen more actively to the general soundscapes of a composition rather than scrutinising them with a microscopic attention to detail. It was a hard thing to do!

About Handel Mixtapes:

The use of such soft string clusters marked "*pp*" is something that occurs often in my music and one of my favourite effects. It fills the room, almost as though there was a fan blowing backstage.

(...)

I would suggest it was crucial for the audience that I was present to introduce and help perform the work. These things have a strong effect on the atmosphere and how the audience listens.

About the situation in instrumental music education and the exclusion of contemporary music:

It is not unique, to put it that way. It is a problem. Personally I believe the days of the "performing composers" ("*komponist-utøver*") are over and that the glorification of the virtuosic soloist and his ego no longer attracts the attention of great composers the way it did in the past.

About his time in Kristiansand and the lack of communication between the orchestra and the university's faculty of music:

It seems silly. I would have been available to contribute had I been asked. Perhaps they should have.

About his current projects:

Currently I am working on a major work for the piano commissioned by a ballet dancer. The idea is that there should be choreography to accompany the music,

but naturally I wish to write a piece that holds equally on its own. It is conceptually similar to my "+-25", also for the piano, but I believe the current work is going to become much better. I am also working on a commission from a Barytone singer in Germany, who is also a friend. I plan to visit him soon and work out the foundations of the commission with his collaboration.

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