

REPORT ON A RESEARCH PROJECT: “TATORT MUSIK” – HOW EXPERTS APPROPRIATE MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Background. Empirical studies about how people appropriate cultural topics are actually undertaken in the field of cultural studies, mostly focusing on the mass-reception of mass-media. Transferring this – in semiotic terms – pragmatical issue to the cognitive problem “How do we understand music?”, *tatort musik* examines an elitist laboratory situation, asking for the basic activities of musical experts while appropriating a given piece of music by using information sources of the highest multimedial quality.

Aims. By investigating professional strategies to appropriate music in case-studies, the following questions will be reflected: Can one-dimensional strategies of appropriating music by experts be found? Are the different strategies judged by the Experts as completing each other? Do exist correlations between appropriative strategies, individual everyday life strategies and other professional strategies?

How can we define “listening to music” in relation to the complexity of our activities in the service of the music before, while and after listening?

Method. In the research project *tatort musik* appropriative strategies are operationalized by means of three types of multimedia presentation of the same piece of music, i.e. “Gesang der Jünglinge” by Stockhausen. The analytical issue presents a interactive listening score (“Hörpartitur”), the narrative issue offers a databased tool of historical documents and the manipulative issue provides the user with multimedia applications (animated audio-visual graphics) in order to allow the reconstruction of parts of the music. The expert’s way to explore “Gesang der Jünglinge” by means of multimedia presentations will be digitally recorded. Personal data will be obtained by questionnaires.

Results. Results of the test will be presented at the symposium.

1. PRAGMATICS IN MUSICOLOGY

tatort musik is an ongoing experimental study that investigates the strategies of musical experts in appropriating a given piece of music. In semiotic terms *tatort musik* is located in the pragmatical discipline. Beside syntax and semantics in the linguistically based semiotic tripartition (Morris), pragmatics is defined by focussing not only on the signs and denotations but – generally spoken - on the relations between sender and receiver of signs and the signs themselves. Compared to the structure and description-related “What is...?” of syntactical linguistics (comparable to musical theory) and to the hermeneutical oriented

“What does it mean...?” of semantical linguistics (comparable to musical history in a wider sense, including the basic interest of historians in the question “Why is...?”) the pragmatical approach examines practical processes by asking “How does it work...?” Thus, pragmatical musicology can be found within the area of psychology of music (music in the stages of individual development, the acquisition of musical skills, facets of musical practicing...) and in the area of sociology of music (musical behaviour of groups, music and politics...). Following the semiotic definition of pragmatics as researches on relationships between signs and man, cognitive studies in musicology (measuring neuronal activities of musical perception, examining mental constructions of music on a structural level: perception of tones, intervals, sound gestalts in music ...) should belong to the pragmatic section as well. But in view of the methodological gaps, a generalization of all mentioned researches seems not to be useful. *tatort musik* focusses on the individual’s choice between potential activities on their way to come to a satisfying mental representation of a given piece of music (so called “appropriating music”). Thus, on a constructivistic base, the translation of decision processes into practice is examined. Accordingly, *tatort musik* must be based on a musicological interpretation of the philosophically and psychologically based theory of action (“Handlungstheorie”).

2. MUSICAL ANALYSIS AND THE WHOLE OF MUSIC

The main feature of *tatort musik* might be formulated as such: How does the meaning of a piece of music get into each expert’s mind? This question is similar to “How do we understand music?” or “How music can be analysed?”. Not only at the beginning of our investigations the terminological areas must be carefully and permanently distinguished from each other.

Taking “musical analysis” as a generic term for all ways of acquiring music, we follow Gerold W. Gruber, who classifies seven types of musical analysis: historical analysis, abstracting analysis, analysis of the history of reception, psychological analysis based on the personality of the composer, neutral analysis, determined analysis, focussing on single aspects of the music, open analysis, processing all kinds of personal experience. Gruber suggests with his enumeration that the whole of music can be divided into terms of our analytical perspective. (Gruber 1994, p. 579) This subdivision of music is manifested in the structure of academia: music theory, musical analysis, music history, musical practice... Nevertheless and unspokenly we all believe that we perceive music as a whole. Do we have to practice all sorts of musical analysis before we honestly can say we know a piece of music?

One person seldom if ever owns a universal knowledge of music. This has its roots in various reasons: individual abilities, timelimits, in which music was analysed, accessibility of information sources, profiles of academical positions ... By introducing pragmatistical methods into the cognitive field of research "How do we understand music?", *tatort musik* deals with pre-conceptual ideas and their manifestations in real acting, such as:

- Every musical expert experiences his actual knowledge of music as a whole, even when he is aware that he had applied just a part of all possible methods of analysing.
- The more professional a musical expert is, the more he feels entitled to express a valid and full judgement about a piece of music.

3. RE-ACTIVE AND ACTIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF "MUSIKVERSTEHEN"

Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht has answered already some of our questions in his book about "Musik verstehen". He calls the wellknown impression of being passively absorbed by a piece of music and at the same time actively absorbing the music the "aesthetical understanding of music" ("ästhetisches Musikverstehen"). This receptional mode both direct and sensual is the basis of our intellectual dealing with music, which he calls the "conceptualizing understanding of music" ("erkennendes Musikverstehen"). While listeners are understanding music aesthetically, a lot of things are happening to them which Eggebrecht describes as following:

"Auf der Basis des gleichartigen ästhetischen Verstehens nun freilich haben die Hörer unseres Konzerts Mozarts Musik in verschiedener Weise aufgenommen, aufgefaßt, erlebt: Sie haben auf das gemeinsam Gehörte und gleichartig Verstandene unterschiedlich reagiert. Die einen haben sich hingegeben dem Erfühlen und Empfinden der Umwelt, haben die Musik genossen und sich tragen lassen in die Welt des schönen Spiels; anderen kamen Bilder vor Augen, Landschaften, Farben, Gestalten, Aktionen. Hier war man gebannt von dem Einfallsreichtum und der Stimmigkeit, dem Singenden und dem Tanzenden, dem Lichten und dem Abgründigen des kompositorischen Geschehens; dort verfolgte man fasziniert die Gestik des Dirigenten und beobachtete – wie bei einer Fernsehaufnahmen – die Übereinstimmungen zwischen der Musik und den Bewegungsabläufen des Orchesterspiels, während wiederum andere und vielleicht die meisten Hörer gleichsam mit verschlossenen Augen schlicht verzaubert waren von der unnennbaren Schönheit der Musik" (Eggebrecht 1995, p. 22)

All these forms of „dispositional **re-acting**“ („dispositionelles Reagieren“), as Eggebrecht puts it, are of particular interest for *tatort musik* describing individual ways of **acting**, of processing music: *tatort musik* sees the listener of music focussing his perception on the various aspects of music by filtering out the possible perceptions, by defining hierarchies of senses participating (eye-based perception, body movements), by choosing activities that support the listening process (associating images), by persueing external and internal activities. How can those activities be operationalized on an experimental level?

4. EXPERIMENTAL METHODS OF *TATORT MUSIK*

In *tatort musik* appropriative strategies are operationalized with the help of interactive multimedia applications. Three different didactical presentation of the same piece of music, i.e. "Gesang der Jünglinge" by Stockhausen, are offered to the testperson: The analytical issue gives access to a listening score ("Hörpartitur"), the narrative issue offers a dynamic databased tool of historical documents around the piece. The third issue is a manipulative way to become familiar with the piece of music: animated audio-visual graphics with limited degrees of free choice allow the reconstruction of sound complexes of the piece. Thus, an elitist laboratory situation is created, artificial in the sense, that the accessibility of informations and didactical tools is optimized in every respect.

The expert's way to explore "Gesang der Jünglinge" within the network of multimedia presentations will be digitally recorded. Personal data will be obtained by questionnaires. In *tatort musik* the following questions will be reflected: Can we see a tendency towards one-dimensional strategies of appropriating music? Are there typical mixed forms? Can we see correlations between appropriative strategies, individual everyday life strategies and other professional strategies? How can we define "listening to music" in relation to the complexity of our activities in the service of the music before, while and after listening?

On the 5 ESCOM conference, we hope to present interesting results of the appropriative profiles we tracked down in *tatort musik*.

5. REFERENCES

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