Culturologically-oriented Musicology and Its Cognitive Basis

Reflections on Tobias Bleek and Camilla Bork's Volume of Collected Essays
Musikalische Analyse und kulturgeschichtliche Kontextualisierung (2010)

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Kulturwissenschaft and Musicology:
A Report on the German Academic Landscape

For a German musicologist interested in the state of the discipline in general, *Musikalische Analyse und kulturgeschichtliche Kontextualisierung*, the title of Tobias Bleek and Camilla Bork's volume, is sure to make all bells ring. The buzzword here is "cultural-historical" (*kulturgeschichtlich* or *kulturhistorisch*), an attribute that, since the turn of the 1990s, has stirred the humanities in Germany. Furthermore, it has been of special importance because of its intertwinement with a rather serious disciplinary crisis in musicology. Connected with this were numerous scholarly trench-warfares; and the position taken in these quarrels determined the success or failure of personal careers. Which connotations were attributed to "culture" or "cultural history" by German musicologists? And in which way are these terms suited to shape scholarly careers?

Whereas in North American musicology from the mid-1980s onwards, dissatisfaction with the state of the discipline stimulated the emergence of the so-called "New Musicology," in Germany voices discussing the current state of the discipline and its potential for renewal and innovation, accumulated around the turn of the millennium. In

1999, for instance, the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, the profession-
al association of the German musicologists, published a memorandum
in its organ *Musikforschung* in which it emphasized the significance of
musicology within the humanities, arguing that it was a discipline "with
a strong interdisciplinary orientation in the sense of *Kulturwissen-
schaft*" (Gesellschaft für Musikforschung 1999, 1). The memorandum,
however, seemed to be hardly triggered by methodological interests
alone. The beginning of the text pointed to the downsizing of academic
musicological positions and the elimination of entire departments. In
other words, the call for the discipline's reform seemed to be first and
foremost a response to a disciplinary crisis that had been sparked off by
the decision of several university administrations to close musicological
departments; the horror was intensified by numerous rumors of further
departmental closures impending in the near future. It is my impression
that the crisis is overcome now. Whether the methodological renewal
employed to end the crisis has successfully been implemented in mu-
sicological research and teaching, however, remains to be discussed in
greater depth in this essay.

The methodological approach endorsed by the 1999 memorandum
basically drew on a discipline that had become popular in Germany
since the later 1980s: *Kulturwissenschaft*, an academic field sharing
some elements with cultural studies, but essentially representing an in-
dividual discipline specific to the German academic scene. (Since there is
no adequate English translation for contemporary *Kulturwissenschaft*,[1]
hereafter I will use the neologisms "culturology" and "culturological."
The closely related attribute, "cultural-historical," is equivocal; it can
be synonym of a specific, rather recent method, as it will be discussed
in my essay, but can also refer to a traditional approach focusing on the
reconstruction of folk cultures. I will keep this ambiguity when I quote
other scholars, simply because I do not know which nuances connected
with the term "cultural-historical" they had in mind. If I use the term in
my, the author's, voice, it will be synonymous with "culturological.")
Contrary to the memorandum's claim that musicology is essentially cul-
turology, at the time of its publication the statement expressed a vision
rather than describing the academic reality. This was demonstrated by

the analysis, published a year later by Jan Hemming, Brigitte Markus, and Wolfgang Marx, of the topics covered in seminars and lectures in German musicology departments. According to them, the percentage of interdisciplinary, culturologically oriented, and methodologically up-to-date courses was minimal (less than 5%) (Hemming, Markus, and Marx 2000, 385). In other words, of those musicologists who taught in academic institutions, only few practiced a culturological (and/or cultural-historical) approach to music. Thus, not surprisingly, junior scholars writing their PhD thesis with a culturological approach in the late 1990s did not meet much understanding on the part of senior musicologists; they were either marginalized or simply passed on from musicology to *Kulturwissenschaft*. Nonetheless, the theoretical discussion continued with an issue of *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* dedicated to the state of musicology in which two contributions focused on "musicology and culturology" (Lütteken 2000; Massow 2000) as did two more articles published elsewhere (Berone, Fuhrmann, and Grant 2004; Callela 2009), the former explicitly connecting the closure of German musicological departments with the need for a new, culturologically-oriented approach to music (Berone, Fuhrmann, and Grant 2004, 114).

While the disciplinary crisis was specific to musicology, the emphasis on a culturologically-oriented method basically complied with the developments occurring in other humanistic disciplines: the so-called cultural or, more precisely, culturological turn. While, from the 1950s to the 1970s, *Kulturwissenschaft* played a rather marginal role, since the late 1980s, coinciding with the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the Cold War, it suddenly drew much attention in all other humanities. Thus, the 1990s can be described as the heyday of *Kulturwissenschaft*. Although the discipline was taught differently in different academic institutions in Germany, it was typified by the academic staff of the culturological department of Humboldt University, first and foremost, Hartmut Böhme and Thomas Macho. They epitomized what was considered to be the "new" *Kulturwissenschaft* in Germany of the end of the 20th century. Drawing on the broadly canvassed, interdisciplinary studies of Ernst Cassirer, Aby Warburg, Georg Simmel, and Norbert Elias in the early 20th century, *Kulturwissenschaft* dedicated itself to the interdisciplinary

investigation of cultural practices, discourses, epistemes, and mentalities that were characteristic for a society or social group of a specific time-period. (Culturology is distinguished from European ethnology, *Volkskunde* (folk studies) and cultural studies, the latter revolving more around class, gender, and identity.)

Focusing on cultural practices, discourses, epistemes, and mentalities, *Kulturwissenschaft* effectively coincided with new methodologies that had been developed in the preceding decades and were intensely discussed on the international floors: New Historicism, the history of mentality, and discourse analysis. These methodologies shared with the studies of Cassirer, Warburg, Simmel, and Elias the broad, interdisciplinary horizon, necessary to reconstruct a mentality or a discourse infiltrating all segments of culture. In this light, *Kulturwissenschaft* offered a forum for the application of methodologies that could not be adopted by scholars working in the traditional philologies whose subjects were limited to art works, or music, or literary texts, etc.

It was culturology's potential for interdisciplinary perspectives that, in the 1990s, made it the key reformatory force for the traditional philologies (art history, literary theory, etc.). Adopting the culturological goal of reconstructing mentalities, cultural practices, and discourses, scholars in the traditional philologies investigating artworks, for instance, aimed less at shedding light on the outstanding qualities that made these texts and objects works of art in the emphatic sense than employing the materials in order to reconstruct mentalities, cultural practices, and discourses (thus shifting the focus from the works to their cultural contexts). In brief, the culturological approach has tended to invert the hierarchies between the *actual* object of the scholar's analysis and the object's cultural *context*. Today, in Germany, as in the United States, departments are dedicated not to "German literature," but "German literature *and culture*." Thus, having strongly contributed to a methodological shift in the humanities, culturology as an independent discipline has made itself redundant now in German academic institutions. And culturological departments, having expanded in the 1990s, are going to be shut down now.

As indicated above, for musicology as an academic discipline, the cultural turn operated as a life belt. For in the past the emphasis on

specialized music-theoretical knowledge and music analysis—the ability to read a score and proficiency in harmony and counterpoint—had musicology catapulted out of the circle of the humanities whose interdisciplinary discourse focused on the analysis of texts and images, but not sounds. After the cultural/culturological turn, however, members of other, non-musicological academic disciplines made the effort to include musicologists in interdisciplinary, cultural-historically oriented projects such as *Sonderforschungsbereiche* (special research areas) and *Graduiertenkollegs* (interdisciplinary doctorate programs) because the participation of—to them—rather "exotic" musicologists investigating abstract sounds has contributed to the prestige of those work units. The reintegration of musicology into the family of the humanities helped to prevent further closures of German musicology departments. Thus, today, musicology departments officially present themselves as devoted to the study of musical culture, and job announcements often explicitly ask for scholars with a cultural-historical approach. Moreover, not a few musicologists include "music and culture" in their official list of research interests.

This is the outer appearance. Yet, as in 1999, when the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung published its memorandum, today there is still a striking discrepancy between the theoretical interest in *Kulturwissenschaft* on the one hand, and the actual employment of culturological methods on the other. To put it bluntly, the contextualization of music-historical research certainly plays a significant role. Yet, this contextualization is mostly not a culturological one aiming at the understanding of mentalities, cultural practices, and discourses, but rather a sociological, biographical, political one—that is, the kind of contextualization one was familiar with *before* the culturological turn. Rare examples of what I consider to be a culturological approach are individual chapters in Laurenz Lütteken (1983) and Annette Kreutziger-Herr (1991), as well as Wolfgang Mende (2009) and, if I may be allowed a self-reference, my own work. In Germany today, the only widely visible musicological field with a frankly culturological approach is gender studies. (Apologies to those German musicologists whose culturologically-oriented research I have overlooked. I will be grateful if they draw my attention on their work.)

The reasons for this divided, quasi-schizophrenic disciplinary situation are rather apparent. On the one hand, the cultural-historical approach offered a solution to the immediate threat: the closure of musicological departments in the 1990s and 2000s. The label "cultural-historical approach" not only made musicology look modern but also provided the basis to integrate musicology into a fruitful dialogue with various other disciplines. On the other hand, the advantages complemented by the official turn toward the culturological approach in musicology could not erase one of the central arguments against that approach: the suspicion, or fear, that the investigation of cultural contexts was replacing that of music, and that the delving into new methods came at the cost of neglecting what was considered to be the basic competence and focus of the musicologist: music analysis (as regards the traditional main focus of musicology; see Lütteken 2000, 32–33).

What is the Basis of the Relationship Between (Autonomous[2]) Music and the Extra-musical Context?

In light of the state of the discipline, the explosive nature of the title of Bleek and Bork's volume becomes apparent: *Musikalische Analyse* and *kulturgeschichtliche Kontextualisierung* (Musical analysis and cultural-historical contextualization) complies with the methodological vogue in musicology, i.e., the culturological approach. At the same time, it claims to achieve what the skeptics of the cultural-historical approach principally doubt to be achievable, namely the fruitful *connection* between musical analysis and a cultural-historical or culturological perspective.

However, as Camilla Bork told me in an informal conversation on her volume,[3] challenging established academic beliefs and prejudices was not the actual concern of the publication. As Bork mentioned, the actual aim was to publish a volume in the honor of Reinhold Brinkmann, who died only a few months after the release of the volume (in October 2010). The volume's title and topic were developed later. According to Bork, the combination of musical analysis and cultural-historical

contextualization appeared to the editors as appropriate description of Brinkmann's scholarly profile. However, in the introduction to the collection of papers, Bleek and Bork describe Brinkmann's method as follows: as based on a "microscopic view" of music resulting from not only the "personal listening experience and the performance at the piano respectively, but also the philological investigation of the [musical] work's sources" that was "always embedded in a *broader historical perspective, including socio-historical aspects*, as well as questions of aesthetics and hermeneutics" (7; italics added). So, in this quote, the editors characterize Brinkmann's scholarly approach not as a culturological, but simply a socio-historical one, i.e., the kind of approach which, in the 1970s and early 80s, was extremely popular among scholars who had been sensitized to socio-political issues by the student and protest movements around 1968. Brinkmann (1973), for instance, contributed to the debate on the mechanisms of political music in West Germany of the 1970s. Yet, only few of Brinkmann's publications pursue an approach that includes a cultural-historical perspective in a progressive, i.e., culturological, sense. References to concepts that might have shaped mentalities and discourses (such as the concept of nature that is mentioned in the context of the analysis of Brahms Symphony No. 2) remain undeveloped (Brinkmann 1990, 29ff). So, what did inspire the editors to attribute a culturological approach to Brinkmann since he obviously did not pursue one?

The actual stimulus seems to have been Brinkmann's acceptance speech on the occasion of the conferment of the prestigious Ernst von Siemens Award in 2001 (Brinkmann 2001; 2009). In this speech, segments of which were republished in the journal *Musiktheorie* in 2009, Brinkmann advocates not only the contextualization of music but also complementing contextualization with musical analysis:

I have . . . the vision of a new musicology that, in the set framework of a context-oriented profile, does not forget the merits of the analytical approach to the musical work and defines this formerly dominating method now functionally, that is to say, employs it partially. (Brinkmann 2009, 362)[4]

This formulation, equally awry in German as it is in the English trans-
lation, suggests a remarkable shift: from the focus on music analysis to
its subordination in the service of the contextualization of music. Fur-
thermore, as Brinkmann points out in the paragraphs before the quote,
the type of contextualization he is mentioning should be a culturologi-
cal one.[5] In sum, Brinkmann's 2001 vision consisted of a musicological
method in which the cultural contextualization did not serve to merely
complete the main musicological study that revolved around musical
analysis, but musical analysis, i.e., the pointing out of compositional
peculiarities, served to make the analyzed composition graspable as the
product of a specific cultural context.

In light of such a program, a fundamental question arises: how can
music reflect (or articulate) non-musical cultural paradigms typical of
a specific time-period that manifest themselves in discourses and prac-
tices? Or, more generally: how can music reflect (or articulate) extra-
musical phenomena? This question is addressed in the first chapter of
Bleek and Bork's volume—and now I focus on the publication to be
reviewed in this essay. The editors did not explain the order of the vol-
ume's chapters. However, the fact that they start with a chapter by Bet-
tina Schergaut on Adorno, followed by a chapter of Hermann Danuser
with rather theoretical reflections on the volume's topic, indicates that
this question must have seemed to them to be fundamental. Employing
Adorno's socio-musicological and aesthetical thought as starting point
for a volume on "music analysis and cultural-historical contextualiza-
ton" is most reasonable since the philosopher considered the relation-
ship between musical structure and context as essential for the under-
standing of compositions: their form as well as their meaning. In this
light, Adorno's way of discussing this relationship can serve as a model
for similar enterprises. Most appropriately, given the volume's topic,
Schergaut's chapter pursues two questions: first, on which basis can

> both foci of reflection [on the autonomous artwork *and* on its role as
> social fact] be related to each other? [Second,] [h]ow can the works be
> simultaneously understood as "entities for themselves" [*Fürsichsein*], as
> "products of internal logic and consequence," *and* "moments related to
> spirit and society" (Ä[sthetische]T[heorie], 519) (16).

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What is Schergaut's answer to these questions? Despite the excellent fit between Adorno's interests and the subject matter of the volume, Schergaut as author and "director" of her chapter focuses rather on the "enigmatic" than the "clarifying" Adorno. She outlines various of Adorno's thought figures, describing the relationship between (autonomous) music and social facts, and discerns five of them: the "internal and external" of the musical work (section 1); "musical analysis as revelation of the music's meaning" (section 2); "music as translation of social conditions" (section 3); "musical physiognomic" (section 4); and "musical meaning and social utopia" (section 5). As Schergaut demonstrates in her chapter (20), the same observation made by Adorno already in 1932 has basically to be applied to all these aspects: namely that the "mechanism of mediation [between a musical style (here: objectivism) and a political ideology (here: fascism)] is still unknown" (Adorno [1932] 1984, 744). In brief, Schergaut focuses on revealing argumentative aporias.

This procedure is no doubt justified in itself. However, as far as the volume's topic is concerned, it leaves the potential of Adorno's thought unexplored. To elaborate only on two of Schergaut's examples: her first main section, on the "internal versus external" dimensions of the work, reminds one of Adorno's theory that the musical material, i.e., the musical "style," "technique" or "language" of a composition is "sedimented spirit" mediated by the consciousness of human beings (19).[6] So, unsurprisingly, Adorno obviously supposed that if he, the ideal perceiver, related various—structural or expressive—aspects of a composition to social conditions, he did this because the composer's imagination had before transformed personal social experiences (representing aspects of the general condition of the society he/she was living in) into musical features. If we understand Adorno's statement on "sedimented spirit" in this rather sober, objective way, the question arises: what is the nature of the mental transformation of "social experiences into musical features" carried out by the composer? It is not difficult to imagine the range of possible transformations. Here are some examples taken from Adorno's writings: a composition that does not articulate time, i.e., appears to be stagnating (especially in comparison to compositional styles

of the 19th century that are considered to articulate the concept of linear, teleological time), might mirror a stagnating society in which the composer believes to live; a cool, anti-expressive composition (especially in comparison with highly-expressive romantic music) might be the result of the composer himself feeling to have been denied his own subjectivity and, thus, being drawn to compositional techniques that similarly do not express subjective emotions[7]; and a piece of music which is composed by several composers or freely-improvised might be inspired by the ideal of communal, democratic work modes.[8] What is, however, the basis of such transmutations of social circumstances, and their impact on the individual's mind, into compositional techniques? Here Adorno, as discussed by Schergaut, also made some helpful suggestions.

Schergaut points to Adorno's assumption that the relationship between autonomous composition and social conditions is partially based on analogies (30). This observation helps us to further understand the essence of my preceding examples. In all three examples, the relationship between music and a social condition derives from similarities both sides—music and society—share with each other: a specific concept of time (stagnation), an expressive mode (lack of expression), or the mode of production.[9] In contrast to causality or consequential logic, similarities constitute analogies, i.e., a rather vague, random type of relationships that a listener of a composition might, but does not need to construct, on the basis of associations, additional knowledge, and the like. In other words, relationships that are based on *ana*logical thinking do not describe a natural, true fact, but only an effect of individual perception and association. The latter, however, is not arbitrary, but stimulated by external verifiable factors, facts, and events. Thus, historical knowledge does give us clues that make the construction appear to be more or less likely, depending on how the associations and the observation of similarities *fit* with other kinds of historical knowledge.[10]

So, in light of these reflections, the relationship between the artwork and a social context appears to be based on standard cognitive processes, which, under the heading "cross-domain mapping" have been investigated in some depth by linguists, philosophers, and cognitivist scientists such as Gilles Fauconnier, Jerry A. Fodor, Mark Johnson,

George Lakoff, Mark Turner as well as, among musicologists, Lawrence M. Zbikowski.[11] For music, the automatism of cross-domain mapping means that we automatically relate structural or expressive features to similar musical or extra-musical features if we recognize the similarity, and other aspects (like the piece's title) "clue" us to those associations.

In the context of traditional musical aesthetics dominating still today, however, cross-domain mapping has to be considered as scandalous. For it implicitly demonstrates that Hanslick's claim that music does not refer to extra-musical things or phenomena has to be put in perspective. No doubt, Hanslick was right to stress that music, like any other sign system, *actively* refers to nothing; this, however, is of little importance since it is the sign user who, drawing on conventions or usage, *attributes* to things or phenomena including music a referential quality, i.e., he/she interprets things or phenomena *as* signs by relating them to phenomena. So, since it is the sign user and his/her community who determines what is considered to be a sign and which musical sign refers to what (intra- or extra-musical aspects), Hanslick's observation is irrelevant to the question whether or not autonomous music reflects extra-musical phenomena, such as, for instance, social conditions. Such a perspective also affects our understanding of Adorno's attempts to explain the relationship between autonomous music and social context; their vagueness and hermetic quality seem to be strongly influenced by the desire to maintain the notion of autonomous music as entirely unaffected by extra-musical influences (including associations and analogies constructed by the composer).

It is evident that the cognitive mechanisms I have outlined above do not only apply to *social* contexts but also explain the relationship between music and *cultural* contexts manifesting themselves in mentalities, cultural practices, and discourses. So, on the basis of these theoretical reflections on the cognitive mechanisms that underpin that listeners construct relationships between music and extra-musical phenomena, how do the various case studies of Bleek and Bork's volume, following the introductory chapter on Adorno, (re)construct the relationship between music-analytical results and the cultural context of their various subject matters?

How to Carry out Cultural-historically Sensitive Musical Analysis?

Camilla Bork explores the love scene in Paul Hindemith's opera *Cardillac* (1926) in light of the specific discourse on love that, prevalent in the 1920s, was marked by an extraordinary coolness (and thus antithetical to what is usually associated with love: affection, intimacy, passion, compassion, eros, obsession, and the like). Since a discourse on emotions such as love reflects a specific emotive-mental climate, Bork's is an ideal subject matter for the exploration of the culturological approach to music. To build her notion of the discourse on love in the 1920s, Bork has drawn on Helmut Lethen's well-known characterization of this time-period as marked by a general cool conduct (Lethen 1994), complementing this with a study by Elke Reinhardt-Becker (2005), who elaborated on Lethen's theory as regards the emotive mode "love." It is more than plausible that Bork relates this emotive-mental climate to Hindemith's music since *Cardillac* is usually classified as representative of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, i.e., a style marked by the avoidance of expressiveness in the romantic sense. Additionally, she supports her culturological contextualization of *Cardillac* with references to the general music-aesthetical discourse of this time period. She quotes Paul Bekker, who— particularly influential in shaping this discourse—identified a "fight [*Kampf*] against the opera of sentiments [and] emotional conflicts" (75) in 1934.

Whereas correspondences between musical style and mental climate are rather obvious—the knowledge of the mental climate in general does not lead to any knew insight as regards the music; it simply confirms how its expressive mood is usually described—, Lethen and Reinhardt-Becker's microscopic observations provide further details of the articulation of coolness in culture. According to Lethen, the cool individual replaces the natural expression of his/her feelings with a contrived visual gesture (84). He describes emotive coolness, typical of the 1920s, as a form of masking akin to the masking practiced in the 17th century when the ethics of deception, as advertised by Baltasar Gracián in 1647, for instance, strongly permeated individuals' actions (71). It is this understanding of coolness as playfulness and masking in the sense

of inauthentic acting—"as if"—that inspired Bork's focus on the music. She classifies the performance instructions for No. 3 and the actual love scene No. 6—"tempo of a (not too slow) minuet" and "grazioso," respectively—together with the fugato in the same number, as well as the pizzicati, figurations, and trills in both numbers, as elements of the Baroque idiom. The playful character of the polyphonic passages— "escape and hunt" as variants of hide and seek—emulates the deceptive "court conventions" and the modes of motion associated with Castiglione's *sprezzatura*, which also operates as expressive mode of the 1920s "cool" disposition and concept of love (81–83). To further complement these findings, it would have been interesting to learn something about the intertwinement of the Baroque idiom with the peculiar, "inconsistent" atonality[12] Hindemith employed in these numbers as well as in the whole opera. For, according to my listening experience, it is the combination of Hindemith's personal "tonal" language with Baroque gestures that create what comes across to the listener as anti-expressive, demonstrative coolness. Furthermore, a word on the Baroque clichés in *Cardillac* in comparison to the Baroque idiom as it shapes Hindemith's music in general would have been desirable in order to clarify whether the findings—the relationship between cool mentalities and the Baroque idiom—are specific only to *Cardillac* or Hindemith's music of the 1920s more generally.

In any case, it is obvious that Bork's cultural-historically oriented musical analysis aims at revealing the meaning of musical aspects—here, the Baroque idiom—not in general, but only in a specific context (here, the era of cool conduct). In order to achieve this, the culturological reconstruction of the context that precedes or accompanies the musical analysis serves as a looking glass that directs the mind of the musical analyst on musical details or peculiarities. Vice versa, stimulating the hermeneutic interpretation of specific musical aspects, musical analysis can also serve for a new or more complete understanding of the culture of a time-period[13] (even though in Bork's chapter all culturological ideas were adopted from Lethen [1994]). In this light, the culturological approach to musical analysis achieves what is not far from what Zbikowski (2009, 100) has defined as "one of the challenges faced by applica-

tions of conceptual metaphor theory to music": namely "showing how music can serve not only as a target for cross-domain mappings, but also as a source." Within the framework of the culturological approach, music might not operate as a source of cross-domain mapping, but as source of a more intimate understanding of culture. Thus, employing a method that combines musical analysis and culturological contextualization, the scholar ideally obtains insights on both sides: that of music *and* of the cultural context.

I have described Bork's chapter in such detail because, in my view, it exemplifies particularly well the culturologically-based method in the context of musical analysis, and the mutually beneficial roles culturological and musical analysis can play for one another. As we will see, the remaining chapters that revolve around case studies employ cultural contextualization in quite different ways. In Tobias Bleek's chapter on Ravel's "Duo de la théière et de la tasse," from his lyric fantasy *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (1925), the relationship between musical analysis and cultural context remains rather undeveloped—despite Bleek's pertinent reconstruction of the cultural-mental context. Quoting contemporary publications—a novel and a newspaper article—, Bleek points to *dansomanie*, i.e., the desire for entertainment and the enthusiasm for new, modern dances dominating Parisian life after the annulment of the official interdiction of public dance that came with the end of World War I. Bleek convincingly demonstrates that Ravel's "Duo" must be considered in the context of *dansomanie*, especially its focus on jazz-related dances such as foxtrot and/or rag,[14] all of which were brought to Paris by the American allies and seemed to have inspired Ravel. This observation, however, explains only the choice of the genre, not the specific form which is at the center of Bleek's analysis. It remains unexplained what inspired Ravel to include the foxtrot in a *stylized, deformed* manner in his opera. Why did Ravel choose to parody the dance instead of simply imitating its style? Bleek does not give a culturological, but musico-aesthetic answer to this question. According to Ravel's musical poetics, musical material cannot be simply adopted, but has to be transformed (106).

Reading on, more questions arise: to what degree did the stylization

in terms of grotesque deformation contribute to the lively reception and popularization of the "Duo" that Bleek describes in such satisfying detail? In the same vein, Bleek suggests that the intense reception proves that Ravel's piece touched a nerve in the audience of the time-period. In fact—this is my interpretation—, the numerous arrangements of the "Duo" as dance to be actually danced suggest that it depicted the "crazy" mentality of *dansomanie* even more accurately than the original foxtrot. However, what did the "nerve" touched by Ravel consist of, exactly, above and beyond *dansomanie*? This would have been a truly culturological question. The omission of these questions calls, in turn, for another question: was the demonstration of a culturological approach really Bleek's actual subject matter? Reading the chapter closely, it seems to have initially been written for a different purpose: the defense of Ravel's composition against the contemporary critique that Ravel did not master to imitate the style of foxtrot. Not surprisingly, the passage that appears as the actual summary of the chapter focuses on this aspect. Bleek states here:

> [I]n his fantaisie lyrique, Ravel did not aim at a stylistically true representation of 'authentic' jazz music—whatever this is. . . . [He] used elements of early foxtrot whose idiolect he . . . mastered well [despite his critics' allegation] in order to design a stylized foxtrot by means of various procedures of [grotesque] exaggeration and deformation. (112–13)

Jan Philipp Sprick's chapter shares several features with Bleek's. The first paragraphs as well as the subtitle, "Arnold Schönbergs Violinonzert op. 36 im Exilkontext," suggest that the chapter's purpose is to investigate Schoenberg's Violin Concerto (1936) in light of the composer's specific biographical situation: his early years in the American exile. A culturologically-oriented musicologist would exploit the composition's context by delving into the vast field of exile research and adopt (or develop) a theory on the specificity of the mentalities—the feelings, beliefs, and opinions—of Third Reich refugees in the United States. It is on this basis that he/she would investigate the music. Yet Sprick omits this important transdisciplinary step. Instead he bases his investigation

of the concerto on a single personal statement of Schoenberg of 1943, which confirms what non-emigrants imagine emigration is like: the experience of "homelessness" and, if the host country uses a different language, "speechlessness" (119–20). In this light, Sprick suggests that the employment of twelve-tone technique in the Violin Concerto revitalizes Schoenberg's early view on twelve-tone technique of the time-period before his emigration in 1933 in order to "assure himself [Schoenberg] of his artistic identity in a new environment" (136).

Not only is the reconstruction of the refugees' mentality missing but the paragraphs revolving around exile are additionally rather marginal in comparison to other subjects discussed in Sprick's chapter: the reconstruction of the genesis (the choice of the genre, the preparation of the premiere, the dedication to Anton Webern), the musical analysis carried out more or less independent of the consideration of extra-musical determinants, and the comparison between Schoenberg's music theory and practice—in brief, classical musicological topics that, as has been the case in traditional German musicology, are loosely connected with each other.

Even though the cultural-historical contextualization found therein could have been worked out in more depth, the chapters surveyed so far do lend support to the overarching subject matter as indicated in the volume's title. By contrast, Andreas Meyer's chapter on John Cage's lectures I–VI, given in the framework of the Charles Eliot Norton Lectureship at the Harvard University in 1988–1989, seems hardly to be in the right place. Meyer's chapter is an electrifying music-historical account; yet it is not a contribution to what the volume claims to assemble: examples for the combination of musical analysis and cultural-historical contextualization.

The chapter explains the framework in which the lectures were given, how Cage was chosen for this job, the audience behavior, and the possible models and sources (Wittgenstein and Beckett) of Cage's mesostics. In sum, Meyer discusses the genesis, "performance" history and reception history, but not the cultural history of the lectures, neither in a traditional nor in a modern culturological sense. Neither does Meyer investigate Cage's lectures as regards the specific zeitgeist shaping the United States of the late 1980s (Reagan era); nor, finally, does he inves-

tigate the cultural meaning that the fragments quoted in I–VI might allude or evoke.

What Are the Limits of Culturological Contextualization?

The remaining two chapters, by Anne C. Shreffler and Hermann Danuser, respectively, are less case studies than explicit discussions of the culturological approach in musicology. Focusing on "political music," Shreffler's starting point is the observation that different cultural-historical contexts stimulate cultural agents and perceivers—composers, concert organizers, listeners—to attribute different (political) meanings to the same music and, on this basis, employ it for political purposes, such as propaganda. In this light, her chapter pursues

> the question how a work of autonomous music stimulates specific associations and can be object of attributions, including those of a political kind, and how, at the same time, this music is based on "extra-musical" thought patterns and participates in the formation of social ideas. (137)

Shreffler's main argument is that the various meanings are—in my words—so "external" to the composition and its musical means (i.e., arbitrary in essence) that they can contradict each other. She demonstrates this—the randomness of the (political) meanings attributed to music—by means of Igor Stravinsky's *Movements for Piano and Orchestra* of 1959, juxtaposing musical analysis with the discussion of political contextualizations without any mediation between both. The spectrum of meanings that Shreffler reconstructs as regards Stravinsky's composition is "politically progressive" and "neutral" because it cannot be "politically appropriated" vs. "usable for political purposes" or "reflecting intellectual belief systems." As a non-specialist in Stravinsky's music, I take it that the investigation of what kind of political meaning has been attributed to Stravinsky's composition, and in what kind of context, is per se a valuable contribution to the field; the case of *Movements*, by the way, reminds one of the similarly varying politicizations of Beethoven

and his music, particularly his *Fidelio* and the Ninth Symphony (cf. Dennis 1996; Buch 1999; Stanley 2008; Kutschke 2010). Additionally, in light of the notorious confusion regarding the nature of political music—the debate on political music around 1970 is a paradigmatic example of this confusion (see Kutschke 2006; 2009a)—, Shreffler's point about the multitude of (political) meanings attributable to one and the same composition is no doubt of utmost importance. Given the semiotic foundations of the meaning of music, and the cognitive mechanisms involved in the composer's shaping and the perceiver's reception of music, such attribution of meaning, in specific cultural contexts (cf. section II of this essay), appears to be no more than natural.

The most enlightening contribution to the volume is that of Danuser—less because it helps to bring the culturological approach in musicology into its own but rather because it demonstrates which misunderstandings have led to the well-known criticism that the culturological approach is rather useless for the comprehension of specific compositions, and the musical techniques employed therein. The basis of Danuser's objections seems to be worries about the neglect of music as consisting of individual, unique compositions:

> The musico-sociological specificity [*ein Spezifisches*] . . . of the relationship of a [musical] text to its extra-aesthetic [equivalent to extra-musical] reference systems is *essentially distinguishable* from the work-based analytical specificity . . . : the category of the individualization of the work that is a central focus [of musical analysis] . . . *does not play any—or at least an entirely different—role* . . . [as regards the extra-aesthetical reference system]. This is because social, cultural dimensions can be recognized only on a *general* level with terms that claim validity beyond the individual cases. (58; italics added)

In other words, Danuser's central concern regarding the culturological approach in musicology is that social and cultural aspects manifest themselves only in those musical aspects that several compositions share with each other and are, therefore, not specific to an individual work. This implies the idea that musicology aims at demonstrating the unique-

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ness of a composition[15] by relating the individual work to the general compositional techniques or standards of its time and revealing how it is distinguished (from said standards). In his chapter, for instance, Danuser sheds light on the first movement of Schubert's Piano Sonata in C major, D. 840, by analyzing it in light of sonata form. What is the basis or background of Danuser's supposition that culturological knowledge cannot contribute to reveal the specificity of a work? I suppose, it is an idea of cultural knowledge that is rather general and, in contrast to the actual work done by cultural historians, consists in little more than vague catchwords. Such a notion of culture is recognizable in the following quotation from Danuser's chapter:

> Whoever, for instance, wishes to consider bourgeois inwardness as a manifestation of social and political mentalities [Befindlichkeiten] in the epoch of the German and the Austrian empire of the late 19th century, can find it in different contexts, in the [bourgeois] home, the salon and concert hall, where melodrama, piano song, lyric piano piece, and other solo- and chamber music genres were cultivated. The production- and reception-aesthetic foundations of this culture were obligatory for all participating individuals, including those who were opposed to them . . . ; and a cultural historian can reconstruct their specificity only if he generalizes individual features of individual products [and] . . . of individual human beings into a larger picture of social praxis, for which the category of genre, [i.e.,] the joint between artwork and society, represents a cognitive key source. (58)

This example reveals, in my view, various essential misunderstandings of the culturological approach to music. Mentalities such as inwardness are not objective, fixed systems of opinions, beliefs, and emotions, but have to be reconstructed from various cultural sources (literature, letters, juristic protocols, journalist publications, but also cultural practices, art works, and music). Depending on the sources, a mentality, as a complex system, takes on new nuances. Thus, as mentioned above, the relationship runs both ways. The culturological contextualization on the basis of cultural-historical knowledge does not only direct the interpretation of a composition, but also leads to the reshaping of

the cultural-historical knowledge in light of the specific features of the composition. The notion of mid-19th century bourgeois inwardness, for instance, is different in light of different compositions. To give just one example: in Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis*, inwardness is closely connected with eeriness and doubt, as expressed not only by the text but also by such musical means as ambiguous harmonic progressions and Phrygian cadences. However, in order to consider a specific feature of a composition—such as its eerie tonal ambiguity—as characteristic of a specific mentality or culture, it is essential to have a precise and complex knowledge of this mentality or culture such that allows one to relate music-analytical findings to mentalities and the like. So, inwardness might be an excellent label to refer to what characterizes the bourgeois mentality of the mid- and late 19th century; yet in order to relate it to music in a productive, enlightening way its notion must be much more nuanced. (The same holds true for another of Danuser's examples: Marxism [cf. 56].)

Furthermore, not all compositions of a specific time-period equally articulate the prevalent mentality. Although Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, op. 19b belong to the lyric piano songs, i.e., the genre that Danuser classifies as articulating the 19th-century inwardness, its No. 3, "Molto Allegro e vivace," obviously a kind of hunting song is hardly inward-oriented, except, perhaps, for the coda after the apotheosis of the finale. So, while genres might operate as a clue for the direction of the in-depth investigation of *a* piano song or *a* lyric piano piece, the culturological contextualization, however, is not complete through this step alone. A fruitful culturological study needs to include the investigation of individual compositions and their musical peculiarities.

Moreover, in order to effectively relate a mentality to music in the context of musical analysis, it may be necessary—depending on the mentality's characteristics—to reshape it; that is, to reformulate it in a way that permits to (re)construct similarities between mentality and music. To give an example developed in the framework of my latest research on Baroque music[16]: it is not sufficient to have an in-depth knowledge of the theories promoting the ethics of deception in the 17th-century. Those ethics can be employed for the investigation of music only if the researcher reconstructs the consequences of the ethics of deception on

the contemporary individual's mentality: namely a mental-semiotic split between true intentions and the false message, one that naturally accompanies deceptive utterances and activities. Such a change of perspective invites to pursue the question whether the music of the same time-period is marked by a comparable semiotic split that manifests itself in different, contradictory layers of the composition's texture and—if it is vocal music—its relation to the verbal text. To unveil such layers, however, the in-depth investigation of music including the reconstruction of the rules and styles dominating during the music-historical era is indispensable.

Last, but not least: Danuser's preference for the focus on the specificity in disfavor of general aspects of a work, neglects that the specificity of compositions (in the emphatic sense) is relevant only in the classical-romantic period. Before that, individual compositions shared a much wider range of characteristics with each other while individual features were much harder to discern; after that, in the so-called new or avant-garde music, musical language and style increasingly dissolved into individual compositional procedures used for the creation of only one work or a small group of works. Thus, there isn't any *general* background, such as conventions of genres and forms, serving as the basis for the illustration of the work's specificity. It is in light of this that the culturological approach to music analysis is particularly valuable. It offers an alternative perspective on music that, most importantly, can comply with the composer's perspective. For instance, various avant-garde composers let themselves be inspired by their cultural and/or socio-political environment, balancing out the lack of an obligatory musical language (cf. Kutschke 2009b). To conclude, it is not the case, as Danuser claims, that the cultural contextualization leads to the neglecting of specificities; rather, the opposite is true: it can help to discover peculiarities that, investigating the music in established music-analytical instead of culturological terms, have thus far been overlooked.

How do these various misunderstandings fit together with the fact that, in the 1990s, Danuser himself was a widely estimated author of articles on "postmodernism in music,"[17] a subject matter that revolves around the postmodern zeitgeist and thus naturally requires a cultural-

historical perspective? Strikingly, those articles are marked by cursory references to composers' names and titles and, connected with this, the absence of in-depth analysis. The extent to which this absence, the misunderstanding of the application of a culturological approach in musicology and, resulting from this, the skepsis toward this method are related to each other remains, however, subject to speculation.

Conclusion:
What an Ideal, Culturologically-oriented Research in Musicology Should Be Like—My Vision

All chapters of this volume are excellent in themselves—even though my focus on the mechanisms of the culturological approach in the context of musical analysis has dedicated much too little time to adequately acknowledging them as contributions to their specific fields of research. However, as examples of a cultural-historical (or culturological) approach to music and music analysis, they do not hold up to what the title of the volume promises. In this respect, the volume complies with the described discrepancies between the fact that numerous institutions and scholars are indicating interest in "music and culture" and the actual scarcity of studies applying a culturological approach to music. The fact that only one contribution to the volume can be considered as truly culturologically-oriented rises the question whether the skepticism about the culturological approach is perhaps caused less by the allegedly small measure of insight that is gained from it, as critics claim, than the complexity of the matter, complexity that Hartmut Böhme, Peter Matussek, and Lothar Müller have described, as regards verbal texts and their contexts, as follows:

> The orientation toward the concept of discourse has diminished the significance of the author as the decisive authority of the constitution of meaning and, additionally, it has revoked the hierarchical relationship between "text" and "context." This has led to an extreme complication. . . . The formerly ostensibly clear relations between text and

context have dissolved in the process of reconstructing the circulation, transformation and exchange between cultural practices and domains of discourse. (Böhme, Matussek, and Müller 2000, 14)

In light of this complexity, a culturological approach in musicology requires a range of methodological skills, each indispensable and complementary to one another: in addition to musico-analytical excellence, a basic understanding of the functioning of signs and the cognitive processes of cross-domain mapping which underpins the culturological contextualizaton of music; a broad cultural-historical horizon and a "nose" for cultural specificities, mostly hidden under the phenomenological surface, as well as the willingness to conduct intensive cultural-historical research; and, based on this, the ability to develop individual culturological theories germane to a time-period; and, last but not least, the ability to intertwine all these various threads with each other, going back and forth between musical analysis and culturological research and, in this way, reconstructing the relationship between musical work and context. This, however, is currently rather a distant goal in Germany, one that might be achieved not only through substantial education at universities, but also work habits that build on those established in natural sciences: namely fruitful co-operations involving culturologists, music historians, and music theorists on equal terms.

Notes

1. The literal translation "cultural sciences" would be misleading because *Kulturwissenschaft* belongs to the humanities, not the natural sciences. "Cultural studies" is equally inadequate because the contents and methods central to *Kulturwissenschaft* are different from those of cultural studies.

2. This essay focuses only on musical sign systems. Secondary aspects of music, such as texts and titles consisting of verbal rather than musical signs, will not be considered in this essay.

3. Conversation of the author with Camilla Bork on February 16, 2011.

4. Brinkmann (2009) is a shorter version of Brinkmann (2001).

5. In light of my outline of the history of the culturological approach in the humanities of the 1990s, one aspect of Brinkmann's position is truly remarkable: he conceives of *Kulturwissenschaft* as a version of cultural studies (which, in fact, it is not) (Brinkmann 2009, 362).

6. The complete quote in the *Philosophy of New Music* reads: "The demands made upon the subject by the material are conditioned much more by the fact that the 'material' is itself a crystallization of the creative impulse, an element socially predetermined through the consciousness of man. As a previous subjectivity—now forgetful of itself—such an objectified impulse of the material has its own kinetic laws. That which seems to be the mere self-locomotion of the material is of the same origin as is the social process, by whose traces it is continually permeated. This energy pursues its course in the same sense as does actual society, even when energy and society have become totally unaware of each other and have come into conflict with each other" (Adorno [1948] 1973, 33).

7. These examples can be found in Adorno ([1948] 1973; [1956] 1982). See a detailed description of the first two examples in my *Wildes Denken in der Neuen Musik* (Kutschke 2002).

8. In the 1960s and 70s, ensembles such *Scratch Orchestra, Free Music Group, Musica Elettronica Viva,* and *Hinz und Kunst* emphasized these connections as the basis of their musical productions.

9. As regards analogies between social conditions and music, see Kutschke (2002).

10. By "fit" I refer to the meaning of the term as used in correspondence and coherence theories of truth, according to which the key criterion for the truth of an assertion is its "fitting" within the whole system (of knowledge) considered to be the truth.

11. The term "mental map" (or "cognitive map") was originally coined by cognitive scientists investigating mental representations of geographical rooms (Kitchin 1994).

12. Tonality and atonality are two extremes of a continuum including a multitude of "hybrid" sign systems (such as enlarged tonality) in the middle. My formulation "inconsistent atonality" qualifies Hindemith's musical language of the mid-1920s as first and foremost atonal. His

atonal language, however, includes tonal allusions and, in this light, appears to be "inconsistent."

13. See, for instance, the analyses in Kutschke (2007).

14. According to Bleek, "Rag" and "Foxtrot" were used as synonyms (93–94).

15. In the original quote in German: "Werkindividualisierung" (58).

16. Cf. my paper, "The Departure from Feudal Ethics around 1700: The Autonomization of Musical Expression in the French *tragédie en musique*," paper presented in the *Research Colloquia* Fall 2009 (23 September 2009, University of Hong Kong).

17. Danuser (1984; 1990a; 1990b; 1993; 1997).

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