

NEW Return

by Daniel Ott and Manos Tsangaris

Today the lives of most people are determined so very much by hard, smooth surfaces that they are apparently about to forget the three-dimensional, sculptural diversity of our existence. Screens and the firm casing of loudspeakers are the useful cold bodies of reproduction. Everything that is reproducible can easily become a commodity.

These are originally aesthetic dietary supplements. Ultimately, nourishment will also be omitted. What remains is the supplement.

Musicmusic, that's what one can hear, isn't it?

It has been reduced so much to solely its audible components (which, by the way, wasn't the way it was originally), so that it always and at all times fits perfectly into loudspeakers and headphones. Prolific availability.

Now "the music" is being equipped more and more with promotional images.

There is hardly a piece of music without a video clip. In filmfilm it is the driver of emotions.

(Watch a crime thriller without a soundtrack. No *suspense*. Film is the two-dimensional total work of art, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *a priori*.)

We are surrounded by smooth, often glassy surfaces.

A virtual space opens up behind, or to be more precise, in them.

Opening up space.

The three-dimensionality, plasticity of the real space: every living being exists in a space.

It is physical. It is "body space" (Raum-Körper), "body and soul space" (Körper-und-Seelen-Raum).

One shouldn't misunderstand us. It doesn't have to do with storming the machines. It has more to do, rather, with shifting them into the correct position. It has to do with clarifying the relationships.

A disk is a disk is a disk ...

Earth isn't (oder: is NOT) a disk.

Music theater, as we understand it, is a metamedium, a wonderful dynamic instrument that transforms the three-dimensional space and also vice versa. It can bring together all of the components of space by differentiating them. Composition and performance take care of this. We are always in tents (*skené* originally meant "tent") that are formed by the palpable physical existence, space, and language media that are involved. And we are involved. Without the people who linger in this space, who so to speak "activate" this space, it wouldn't take place. Novalis wrote, "The world has a natural ability to be animated through me (...)."

Now when the different dispositions, which also incorporate the performance conditions, become the subject matter of the composition, in other words, part of the production and the entire creation process, a human will become aware that his or her concrete and physical presence is a condition

for this experiencing: the human will become aware of himself/herself. A specific singularity is generated from this. Here, only here, can it take place.

And thus *forms* of results are produced, which cannot become commodities and which close themselves off from consumerism, which do not fit into or behind the flat screens (that, by the way, also do not ask us to jump around like idiots in a space on account of virtual realities and reach for things that are not there at all).

And one doesn't possess these events either. One cannot possess them like a disk that one plays or inserts. One cannot even stream them. They are not available everywhere at all times. This "market deficiency" is also part of its quality.

New music theater, composed installation, performance, so-called immersive circuits, "Stationentheater", one-on-one settings, etc., media-enhanced analogue composition as a metamedium instrument – all of this brings the issue of a person to a head, the issue of a person's perception and the spaces. It is the composed process itself that engages and incorporates the person, where the person's experience becomes part of the work, which cannot be separated from the event. Experience and event are two sides of one and the same proceedings, and dependent upon each other. It has to do with (It is about?) a dignified and appropriate relation between portrayal and reality.

The condition for this is to imagine and align changing *frames*, frames of the events in the performances of new music theater. That makes demands on every member of the audience in a special way. Through technological media we are no doubt accustomed to react almost by reflex to different formats, to locate and classify them in order to be able to encounter and follow them, in order to understand them. We take in a news broadcast differently than a private YouTube film, differently than a Netflix series, and so forth. In music theater, however, in these concrete, artificial, composed situations a form of participation and presence in formats is created, which transports me into real, three-dimensional, spatial, social situations. A total art work (Gesamt-Kunstwerk). Art can be all around me. It has to occasionally be discovered while wandering. It speaks to the whole person, it is experienced by the whole person. This flexibility and complexity should be an enjoyable challenge. It contradicts the naked consumerism behind the disk and is capable of serving to clarify and emotionally realize existence, without having to hire itself out.

It doesn't have to do here primarily with avoidance, for example, the avoidance of technology. Screens are not forbidden anywhere here. But they will be very consciously used dramaturgically and situationally. They also always question themselves – merely through the complex relation in the respective situational overall context. This is not a didactic or educational game. But rather it corresponds to our everyday experience and to a certain extent reverses it as well. Certain media influences that we are familiar with from technological end devices will be translated into spatially analogue and complex (theatrical) situations, will be mirrored, newly installed, and "solved" in a different way than would be possible in the technological media themselves. And so reciprocally the possibility is created to use them, to critically reflect upon them. When one comparatively considers humankind's entire previous history of media, then how young are Google, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram?

Albert Einstein remarked once that problems cannot be solved by the means that they have triggered. For this reason the technological media issues in such concrete theatrical streaming of events and responses are better preserved, are seen more clearly and reflected than, for example, in net usage, which permanently feeds on itself like a mystical snake. It is the addictive behavior with end devices that generates all of the electricity expenses.

Clarification could mean becoming aware. Becoming aware of the singularity of what is happening right now, becoming aware of the location, of where it's happening, of the situation's specialness, which at the same time objectifies the relation to the real world, but also is pointed at the respective person or group of people, is opined, *composed*, spatially substantiated, and dynamically designed. Music is the highest sculptural art form (as Joseph Beuys already said).

It has to do with clarification, even with elucidation (*Aufklärung*). Certain pestering questions will always remain the same. Who are we, where do we come from, where are we headed? And, by what or by whom are we being directed right now, defined, and perhaps exploited? How do we achieve love and recognition?

The most recent music *theater* creates physically concrete, variable, and simultaneously musicalized spaces, which make the conditions of a performance part of the production. It can reflect the framework situations within which it is taking place. It demands in a playful manner from its users that they are willing to accept and understand its dynamic process. This also means to not automatically be satisfied with conventional settings. This "flexibility" of the formats and their reception puts us into the position of being sly. Sly in regards to the reproduction mechanisms, sly in regards to a convention that wants to limit making contributions, and also (...?). It's more of a guerilla tactic than a war of the masses.

The exploration and experimentation of new forms in the most recent music theater works (*formatus* means after all "shaped, formed" – in other words, the fundamental factors of an event and the expectations and perceptions connected to them) are not merely begging for attention and for the ostensible "novelty," as one likes to insinuate, but rather a clear voice in the middle of the vociferous media orchestra of our present times, which has to be perceived differently than merely within the coordinates of a market that continuously must turn all aesthetic productions into commodities in order to continue existing.

"But in the meantime, with all of your businesses you are only concerned with staying in business." (Australian aborigines)

"Our entire perceptive ability is like the eye. The objects have to pass through opposing media in order to appear correctly on the pupil." (Novalis, *Pollen*)