

The Role of the Composer in a Contemporary Society

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What is the role of the composer in the contemporary society? This is certainly a question worth asking even if an answer might not easily or not at all be found.

The title itself makes us ask three separate questions: What is a composer? What is contemporary? And, what is society? All three questions themselves could form the topic to yet another talk, but the speaker thinks, before we truly can return to the topic of this talk, all three questions need to be answered at least to some extent.

The word *composer* is rooted in the Latin *componere*, meaning: *to put together*. In this sense, a composer is someone who puts together musical notes. Interestingly, the idea of talking about composers is a rather late idea and dates back to the Renaissance. Before then, music was, especially within ancient Greek times, divided into two areas: practical musicianship and theoretical/philosophical music science. For the Greeks, so it appears, both areas were regarded as equally significant. Pythagoras as a theorist, for instance, was well respected for this, as was the practical musician. The mythology of Orpheus indicates this just as well as Plato's considerations in *The Republic*. From a more modern perspective we can say that Pythagoras represents the rational, mathematical aspect of music while Plato refers to the emotional aspect of music. Whilst it may be true that the ancient Greeks were the only nation to recognize the rational aspect of music, the emotional aspect however had been recognized quite universally including China, Judea and the ancient Roman empire.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire and the sliding into what has become to be known the *dark ages*, this dualism between emotionality and rationality grew dramatically under the influence of Christianity which, as expressed by Augustine, viewed the emotional aspect as a threat to piety. Music at this time, which we might want to call pop music, performed by vagabonds, was regarded as vulgar. The study of music was one of the subjects that formed the quadrivium subdivision of the *septem artes liberales*. This is, the study of music theory in an attempt to recreate the ancient Greek tone system. Practical music was not part of this classical education system. As much as neumatic notation, introduced around the 9th century, preserves a Gregorian chant somewhat, generally the authors/composers remain anonymous.

Possibly, the first *real* composers are the Troubadours of the 10th century. Knights of high standing felt that their music was important enough to be written down and to be preserved in their names (quite possibly because much of this music is directed to a Lady and it would make little sense if she did not know who the author was).

Things changed dramatically with Guido de Arezzo's introduction of the five line note system around 1050 A.D. Quite possibly underrated is the fact that musical notation enabled composers to write polyphonic music for the very first time. Hence, it is a trivial observation to note that polyphonic music did not truly exist outside Western Society. This is not to say that we have forms of polyphonic improvisation (often in form of heterophony) and organization in Chinese, African, Indonesian and medieval Organum music, but the concept of conceiving polyphonic music in the head of one individual (to be called composer), written down and performed by – at times – large numbers of musicians became possible only with Guido de Arezzo. Actually, saying this is not quite correct: As much as the notation of pitch values had been instrumental in this cultural development, only the adoption of the mensural notation (notation of rhythmic values) during the

13th century finally made polyphonic composing a true possibility with Guillaume de Machault being possibly the most charismatic exponent of this art form coined as *ars nova*. In response to the ascent of *ars nova*, Pope Johann the 22nd ordered in 1324/25 under the threat of punishment composers to return to *ars antiqua*. They, however, showed little willingness to do so. Possibly for the first time in history, music or composing had become of political significance. Now, instead of writing predominantly sacred music, composers began to write more and more secular music. This scenario has remained to this very day and is reflected in the fact that besides Messian there seems to be no other major composer of the 20th century who dedicated her or his main output to sacred music. However, throughout the period of the Renaissance the main employer for composers and increasingly musicians remained the church only slowly being replaced by the aristocracy which became the main employer for musicians and composers alike towards the end of the Renaissance period at the end of the 15th century until the classical period (the 18th century with the Mannheimer Orchestra and Esterházy's court being the most famous examples). This shift of employment status produced a changed cognition. Firstly, it must have been experienced as a liberation away from centralized and strictly hierarchical organizations towards an aristocracy often in strict opposition and competition with other aristocracy and, secondly, an increased sense of self worth due to the theological agenda being replaced by freedom of thought.

One particular interesting character during this development is Count Carlo Gesualdo de Venosa around the end of the 15th century who not only wrote extraordinarily chromatic music but is also known for putting an end to both his wife and her lover when found in flagranti. Even without knowing more about Gesualdo than those two facts, it becomes apparent that he certainly possessed a good amount of liberty and sense of self worth.

However, both the increasing liberty and sense of self worth do not come along without difficulties. As observed by Stravinsky and Roland-Manuel in their *Póétique musical* in 1942, freedom can be perceived as daunting (like: Where shall I start, where shall I go and where shall I end, and even if I know these “wheres”, I still don't know the “why”). In case of Gesualdo composing appears to be an expression of control, intelligence and power. Even more, taking other contemporaries of his into account such as Johannes Ockegham, Jakob Obrecht or Josquin des Prez, it appears to the speaker, that the same psychology seems to be at work. Particularly, Ockegham's life as treasurer and diplomat at the French Court supports this statement. This, however, brings yet a new component to the surface: Composing now becomes not an emotional, rational or political instrument, but now serves self-expression possibly for the first time in history.

In order to strengthen this point, let us return to Orpheus as recorded in ancient Greek mythology. We learn that Orpheus had the power to move the emotions of others without those others being able to withstand this powerful music. So, we must conclude, this music is not self-expression but an inter-subjective evocation of emotional responses by a collective. The same approach to the emotional quality of music reoccurs later in Plato's *The Republic*. St Augustin's objections towards music again are based on the same argument that music might mislead the collective. We can indeed assume safely that this quality of self-expression is a product of the late Renaissance. We can even go so far as to say that the fact that the church found itself unable to stamp out this new music might be based on the fact that this new aspect of music left the Vatican confused because the argument against music as a form of expression, which might mislead, fell short when applied to *ars nova*.

As much as the Baroque period differs in many ways from the Renaissance, notably through the replacement of the modal system by the tonal system, the role of the composer appears not to change fundamentally apart from a feeling of steadily increasing self worth. Factors which support such developments are a) the invention of the print by Gutenberg around 1450, b) da Vinci's Anatomy around 1500 and c) Kepler's Harmonia mundi (1619). When a once theocentric view of the world becomes increasingly replaced by a homocentric view, it is no surprise that Descartes writes in his *Compendium Musicae* (publ. 1650): *Hujus objectum est sonus. Finis ut delectet,*

variosque in nobis moveat affectus. (Its object is the sound. Its goal is to entertain and to evoke various feelings (affects) in us). All theological meaning has been removed, and we are probably right in saying that J.S. Bach is the last great composer of sacred music.

However, still throughout the Baroque period, the composer might have developed a sense of increased self worth, but – so we might argue – the final stage of this development had only been reached with Beethoven and in particular with the review of his 5th symphony by E. T. A. Hoffman (in 1810), who elevated composing above all other forms of art; the words *composer* and *genius* become almost synonymous. This feeling of self worth comes across particularly within the following anecdote:

During a visit in 1812, Beethoven and Goethe walk through the park. As they are approached by some nobility, Goethe gives way while Beethoven marches right through their middle. Goethe rather disconcerted asking Beethoven how he could be so impolite receives the reply: “There are countless nobles but only two of us.”

This development is reflected by the employment status of the composer who becomes increasingly independent.

The romantic period is not only interesting in terms of the culminating feeling of self-worth. In 1829 the Matthäus-Passion by J. S. Bach conducted by Mendelssohn-Bartholdy is presented to the public and, for the first time in known history, a piece of music by a composer who has been dead for almost 100 years is being performed. This is the birth of historicism in music, a phenomenon which will have dire consequences for classical music of the 20th century, where the balance between the performance of historical and contemporary music finally tipped the scales over the performance of historical music.

However, more interesting is the question of what would motivate a composer to bring the music of a composer, who had been dead for almost 100 years, back to life. From a music theoretical and aesthetical point of view, would it not be sufficient to either study the scores or possibly have performances organized for some professionals?

We only have to think of the three main Western religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the issue at hand. Is it not so that these religion derive much of their authority from the fact that they link the present time to the past time and even to the origin of the world? Deep seated in our psyche, we believe as pointed out by Hume, that causality is a law of our mind or at least a law of nature (although it is not), and linking a present even to the past increases to the uncritical mind the validity and reality of the present event. Hence, we can conclude that with the birth of historicism, music has been brought into the sphere of a cult phenomenon comparable to religion. Indeed both, Richard Wagner and Nietzsche finally express such ideas explicitly.

The 20th century is particularly interesting because of its great many socio-economical and technical changes. Phenomena which had a direct impact on the role of the composer and the meaning of music in general are the following: a) The development of recording techniques, b) the development of broadcasting techniques, c) global commercialism and d) the development of popular music. However, we might wish to ask the question whether all these rapid technical and socio-economical developments brought about some fundamental new perspective in respect of music and the production of music. If there is one factor which seems to unite the majority of the music of the present day, then – so the speaker argues – it is the phenomenon of cult. Interestingly, it is not only the music within the realm of popular culture which has become a cult object, the same happened to a lesser degree to Classical Music and other musics such as World Music or Jazz. As mentioned above, the element of cult dates back to the romantic period, and hence we might be inclined to say that the 20th century has not brought about a new dimension to the meaning of

composing or music. Perhaps this statement is not quite true if we consider that music therapy might establish such a new dimension. We will follow this point up later on.

To summarize: A brief stroll through history has revealed that music and composing has undergone changes in meaning being of emotional or rational character, it has been a form of self-expression and self-worth, and it has been seen as a political instrument and a form of cult.

The second question, what is contemporary, is both interesting and puzzling at the same time and possesses some philosophical aspects as it involves the dimension *time*. As pointed out by Prigogine not only that, to our knowledge, there is no time reversal possible nor thinkable, but what constitutes the presence in itself is a rather intriguing if not complicated question (a question the musician as well as the composer are at least intuitively aware of). This is, what is right in front of me as my immediate future turns into the present tense only to be the past tense. To speak of the present tense as a *fleeting moment* even seems an exaggeration. Hence Prigogine's suggestions to consider the present as overlapping with the past and the future. In this sense we could say that the present fades out into the past tense and fades in from the future (possibly in form of a Gauss distribution). This rather physical approach is matched by human psychology via the terms: memory, echoic memory, actual perception, anticipation and expectancy. Here memory can be seen as past which is increasingly fading, echoic memory as the present tense still being actively working, anticipations the active mental process (involving neuro transmissions) directed into the future and expectancy the predictions of what will happen in the future. On a cultural level again, we have history, present tense and the future (predictions, speculations, expectations, utopias and fantasies). It is interesting to consider that what is contemporary today will be slightly not contemporary tomorrow and possibly within the next 10 years it will be nothing but history. We might even want to introduce the concept of half-life to a more modern (the speaker had been tempted to use the term contemporary) understanding of the concept of *contemporary*. This is, what is maximal contemporary now will become "half" as contemporary once it reaches half-life. Additionally, we have to consider that different areas of human undertaking move at different speed. While the fashion of clothes will be out of date (not contemporary) within the cycle of one year, computer technology appears to move even faster while yet again aspects of religion and philosophy appear to move at a much slower pace and in terms of evolution, the entire human history is a contemporary issue, hence our question: What is the pace of music?

We might have hoped that this would turn out to be a more straight forward answer, but it is not. In order to answer this question, we need to return to our first question: What is a composer, and what is the meaning of a composer? But we could not answer this question because we needed to understand what it means to be contemporary and what we understand when using the word *society*.

It almost appears to the speaker that while in history it seems – at least in hindsight – clear what a composer was and what role a composer fulfilled or had to fulfil, arriving at the 20th century we have lost the certainty of previous generations and maybe this is the reason for this talk: a process of self-finding.

We have not lost sight of the notion that we are still attempting to answer the question of what we mean by *contemporary*, but before we can return to this question, we might have to approach this question from a more personal point of view, where I ask myself: How do I see myself in relation to the great composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Bartok? No, I don't see popular music as the logical continuation of those composers. I see myself and other living (*living* in order to avoid *contemporary*) composers as the logical continuation. But with what justification do I make such claim? The answer lies quite ironically in the word *contemporary*.

Returning to the question of what *contemporary* means in terms of speed, according to the field of human endeavour, we find that the speed of *contemporary composing* has been set by the standards of history to be something between 50 to 100 years as a rough estimate for music to remain

contemporary. Considering popular music, we find that it defies the term of contemporary in the context of composing on two accounts. Firstly, popular music has not even been around for long enough to allow it to be put into the framework of *contemporary* composing and secondly, popular music has its own framework of contemporary which is far shorter than the term *contemporary* when considered in the context of composed music. We only have to recall the fact that popular bands such as *The Beatles* or *Queen* are considered *classics* now and this after a short period of about 30 years. In contrast to this, it frequently happens that compositions written during the early 20th century are still considered contemporary. Further, we can ask the question what is it that makes the half-life of *classical* music so much longer than the half-life of popular music. The answer to this question might be more trivial than we expect. While popular music enters the main stream of culture (just like an intravenous injection of a drug) without control or delay, *contemporary* classical music undergoes a rigid process of peer-reviewing and academic scrutiny. Additionally, *contemporary* serious music does not generally deliver instant monetary gain if at all. *Contemporary* serious music has to stand the comparison of historical serious music and the scrutiny against a speculative (expected) future – it needs to be seen to be of relevance to the future. This actually is an interesting issue because what will be relevant for the future is not entirely predictable and hence we, at the present time, are unable to formulate what *contemporary* really is. We will only be able to say what *contemporary* was in history and even this is not entirely true. As we cannot predict the future, we also cannot say what will be relevant to it. Hence, what appears to us to have been contemporary in history might be of little relevance to the future and other aspects, which had been considered as irrelevant in the past, might turn out to be of much greater relevance. However, saying this, we might want to limit this rather relativistic point of view by adding that what is contemporary is what connects with the past and what opens up possibilities for the future. The speaker will illustrate this with two examples.

Schoenberg had been enormously influential up to about 1970, very much shaping the post war generation of composers for something like 30 years. The so called *12 tone technique* was extensively used by composer and further developed into serial music. However, Schoenberg falls short in two respects when we consider the word *contemporary*. Firstly, as much as Schoenberg had attempted to generate a link with tradition in his *Fundamentals of Composition*, *12 tone technique* does not connect with the past, not even in form of an anti-thesis. *12 tone technique* and compositional techniques before it are entirely unrelated. Secondly, *12 tone technique* and its successor – serial music – have not been able to shape the future and have been dead for almost 40 years. Hence, we conclude that *12 tone music* cannot be considered as having had the status of contemporary music (perhaps, however, achieving the status of a fashion).

On the other hand, we have a composer like Bartok who did not produce a distinct compositional method, but a large corpus of compositions which exemplify a number of compositional methods. Now, interestingly, if we consider the similarity between, for example, Bartok's piece for percussion and two pianos and the sound track of *The Shining*, we clearly see that this composer had a great impact on contemporary music with lasting effect. Moreover, Bartok's relationship to the past is connected not only by his efforts to integrate ethnic elements within his compositional repertoire, but by extending tonal concepts which were present before him, and in this sense we can conclude that Bartok can indeed be considered of having had contemporary status.

The speaker admits that these two examples would require detailed validation if they were considered scientific statements. However, the point here is not to produce a scientific statement about either Schoenberg or Bartok, but to illustrate the term contemporary and, so the speaker argues, this has been achieved.

Before we move on to the question of what is our *society*, the speaker suggests looking at the one area in our society where typical classical contemporary music plays an important part. This is in the horror movie industry. The question is: Why this is the case? Is it that classical contemporary music is psychologically horrific or is socialization accountable for this fact? In favour of the first

answer are factors such as contemporary music is highly discordant, makes use of sustained notes particularly in the high and low pitch range and has become accustomed to incorporating percussion into the standard repertoire of instruments. However, the speaker doubts that these are the main factors. As music history shows there has been an increase in using discordant sounds in time and what might have sounded extremely discordant to a listener in the 17th century does not sound discordant to a 21st century listener whatsoever. However, what appears to be a major factor might be the inability of the untrained listener to make predictions. This is, the untrained ear becomes regularly disappointed (shocked) about what to expect, because the rules of contemporary composing do not follow the rules of popular music in terms of expectancy. The speaker would not be surprised that given another 100 years, listeners will have learned the grammar of contemporary music and hence will find contemporary music much less scary. So in this sense, we can say that classical contemporary music has been used in the genre of horror films because the listener, who is unaware of classical contemporary music, does not understand it and hence a feeling of insecurity and unpredictability can be produced.

We can summarize that classical contemporary music has a half-life of about 50 years, relates to classical music in a progressive way and opens further development for the future.

If it appeared to be difficult to define what a composer is and what we consider to be contemporary, we are faced with an impossible task when confronted with defining the term *society*. The very first problem we are facing, is, that we are living in a world where a great deal of different societies coexist (although the term *coexist* might appear to be an exaggeration). The speaker will illustrate this:

Let us first look at the death penalty. The world, according to Amnesty International is divided in four groups: 1) Abolitionists for all crimes, 2) Abolitionists for ordinary crimes, 3) Abolitionists in practice and 4) Retentionists. While my own birth country Germany belongs to class 1 as does my home country of choice the UK (just like all European countries), the USA belong to class 4 and Argentina to class 2. It might come as a surprise to the audience that the USA allows even for the execution of minors. Many African countries belong to class 3.

If we move into the realm of governmental structures, we live in a world where kingdoms such as Jordan, exist alongside dictatorships such as Zimbabwe, communist states such as Cuba, quasi-theocratic states such as Iran, totalitarian theocratic states such as the Vatican, federations such as the USA and democratic states such as Argentina.

Then again, the world is divided by such a number of languages that it would seem pointless to list even some of them. We live in a world where some deprived countries such as Ethiopia cannot even feed their children, while many a Westerner just worries whether he or she can afford to buy a second car or a holiday somewhere exotic. And, while we in the West might worry about whether women receive the same payment at work, in countries such as Afghanistan working women are in fear of their life (a situation which keeps changing depending on the strength of the Taliban insurgents). So the question is: What society are we talking about when talking about a classical contemporary composer? Interestingly, so it appears to the speaker, contemporary classical music plays part only within the industrial and semi-industrial nations, including Australia, Japan, Israel, South Africa, the European Community, The USA, Canada, and some South American states such as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil.

The question could be: What have these societies in common? The treatment of the death penalty is certainly not a common denominator, nor are living standards or the distributions of wealth. Religion is another attribute which is not homogeneously distributed amongst those nations. One thing, however, they have in common: they have democratic governments. As much as even these societies are divided by significant differences, they all have a humanist agenda, an agenda which is directed towards the protection and welfare of children and animals, freedom of choice of the

individual's life and tolerance towards differences in sexual orientation and religious and non-religious belief systems. Interestingly, the country which is possibly most devoted to the support of contemporary music are the Netherlands which is possibly the most liberal country in the world.

Now, before we continue our search, it appears that we have to change the initial question to: What is the role of the composer in a contemporary liberal society? This for the very simple reason that the contemporary composer does not play any role within non-liberal societies. We also know one role of the contemporary composer is that (s)he cannot be working for or towards a repressive society (which puts a question mark over composers such as Shostakovich and Penderecki). Thus, one of the roles of the composer is to work at least implicitly towards liberalization and hence there is at least some political agenda to a serious contemporary composer. This goes well together with the fact that since the Renaissance the political aspect had become part of the function of a composer undermining the power of oppressive aggregates. However, if this political element was all encompassing, surely, a composer should become a politician and hence other roles have to be attributed to a composer besides the political attribute.

A question, which the speaker finds quite intriguing, is whether composing can still be seen simply as a form of self-expression. It is a very typical common place stereotype to say that an artist is considered self-centered - maybe even selfish. However, in the light that many a great artist died in poverty, while the world after her or him derived great wealth from her or his work, such a statement must be rejected as naive and out of place. Let us look at the issue from a more logical point of view: If an artist was to create a work of art which is pure self-expression, nobody other than the artist could relate to this work of art, and even this would not be true, because such pure self-expressiveness would render this work of art meaningless to the artist once it has been completed. A work of art makes sense only then if it touches on something aesthetically true which is true to human existence as such and as such of inter-subjective truth. In order to make the point: An artist is an explorer who relates her or his discoveries to others via her or his work. In this sense we can say that the self-expressiveness is restricted to the way this explorer relates her or his discovery in her or his own style. This aspect of self-expressiveness has been, as mentioned above, become the heritage of the composer since the Renaissance.

It is interesting to note that applying this criterion to 20th century composers puts a question mark over a composer like Cage, who, for instance, claimed to have discovered *silence* which had been discovered even long before the first homo-sapience walked the earth. In fact, we might consider his piece 4'33" a form of cognitive abuse. Cage was perfectly aware that it was inappropriate to offer silence to an awaiting audience and he had cleverly calculated that the outrage which this would cause would help him to foster his fame (pretty much a sales man mentality). At the other end of the spectrum, we have a composer like Varese who made major discoveries in the context of electronic music relating these discoveries via compositions such as *Poem Electronique*. Interestingly, Varese might not pass the *contemporary composer* test along the dimension of *contemporary*. This is, it is questionable whether his music connects well enough with the past and, perhaps, even more problematically, whether it connects well enough with the future.

Before we scrutinize other dimensions which relate to the past, we might wish to consider an aspect of our industrial world we have not mentioned above. We now live in a world where the majority of sounds surrounding us are being produced by machines. Now, generally speaking, events which have a negative impact on our well-being such as accidents, assaults and natural disasters are accompanied with sudden loud sounds. Hence, such sounds generally produce in us a startle response. Now, the machines, we have been surrounding ourselves with, tend to produce exactly these kind of sounds and hence will automatically trigger off a startle response and cause us stress. Additionally, we are not only surrounded by the sound of these machines, but these machines (e.g. cars) are actually dangerous. So the argument is, that contemporary classical music can recreate or simulate the sound environment we have been creating for ourselves and de-condition the listener (making him or her being able to cope with the sounds) who otherwise might develop an avoidant

personality disorder. Interesting in this context is, that, while classical contemporary music deconditions, popular music generally masks the existing sounds (drowns them out) and hence might be likely to increase the avoidance reaction of the listener who is less and less able to cope. So in this sense, we can ascribe a music therapeutic effect in the form of music appreciation to contemporary classical music. Interestingly, it is the natural reaction of a traumatized person to develop avoidance strategies, and hence the animosity towards classical contemporary music can be explained referring to the extension of such avoidance strategies. We acknowledge contemporary music to have a therapeutic element and thus the contemporary composer to be to some extent a therapist.

We further reject a contemporary composer who intends to be working towards some form of nationalism or national identity, as this appears to be directed against a modern and liberal society. Such a point of view puts into question particularly a composer like Richard Wagner. There is one aspect we have as yet not considered nor has it been explicitly part of our cultural heritage and that is a certain cognitive aspect. However, it is implicitly part of a long standing tradition. The speaker will explain this aspect referring to compositional tools typically used during the Baroque period within fugues. This is the inversion and retrograde of a theme. Clearly, inversion is simply the reflection of the theme along a horizontal line while retrograde can be seen as the reflection along a vertical line. It is a form of order which cannot only be found within music, but also within Baroque landscaping and architecture. Further, as much as a fugue appears to be complex, we actually find it to be composed a simple elements such as the theme, the counter theme and their retrograde and inversion. This is, as Kurt Blaukopf (1984) observed, representative for the general thinking of the time, where the world is being mechanically understood and complexity is seen as something which can be reduced to some atomistic elements.

Now, returning to the composer within our contemporary society, we can ask the question whether this approach is still applicable. Do we still understand us and the world around us as the result of the combination of atomistic elements? We actually have to admit that in the vast majority of cases, this is not how we understand us and our world any longer. In fact, the most important concept of modern times appears to be *similarity*. The speaker will give an example: Referring to modern artificial intelligence, we might consider voice recognition programs. The main issue with voice recognition is that nobody pronounces words exactly the same way twice. A voice recognition programs must be flexible in order to accommodate such variations. This means such a program has to be able to identify voices which are similar enough as belonging to one person and voices which are dissimilar enough as the voices which belong to another person. This is, however, by far not the only area where similarity is of importance. It plays a large part within our human existence. We too, make constant judgements according to similarity. The speaker will give one example: A child will be confronted with such a task when having to judge whether the person in front of her or him is truly the mother even after a hair cut. Wherever we turn, should it be modern biology, chemistry, economics, psychology or sociology *similarity* has become a major concept of our times. This poses the question: How can the contemporary composer respond to this? Surely a compositional tool, such as inversion and retrograde is in stark contrast with such a modern concept of similarity. It appears that the only response can be the creation of compositional structures which operate on the concept of similarity whether these structures are to be horizontal (melodic similarity) or vertical (virtual pitch). In this sense contemporary classical music can gain cognitive relevance within our modern society.

This talk set out to investigate the question of what the role of the composer could be within a contemporary society. It was quite clear from the beginning that this would pose a task which we quite possibly might be unable to accomplish. However, surprisingly we did find some answers. We uncovered that a contemporary composer ought to be connected to the past and of relevance to the future. We also discovered that a political element must be inherent within a composer as they only exist within a free and liberal society. We further discovered that there is a therapeutic element to new music, that a composer must be seen more as an explorer than a self-centered person aiming for

self-expression and we finally argued that contemporary composing ought to be in line with modern cognition as we understand the world through the concept of similarity. Thus, we conclude that not one single answer has been found but a number of criteria which we could consider to be benchmarks.

However, it is important to stress, that these criteria as established above are guidelines only and the attempt to use such guidelines to establish norms and to use those norms in order to judge and possibly suppress an individual composer or a collective, defies the spirit of the political criterion. We might want to conclude this talk with Sir Karl Popper: The only thing we cannot tolerate is intolerance.