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## Music and Artistic Citizenship: In Search of a Swiss Identity

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Although, for obvious reasons, one cannot speak of a “Swiss music” in terms of a unified, homogeneous culture or style, this does not mean there are no observable constants within the variety of its manifestations and its development over time. More than individual elaborations, historical conditions have had the greatest influence in determining the aesthetic principles which have imposed themselves; general behaviour and interests have outweighed particular interests, and the way the country has defined itself as a distinct community in relation to its neighbouring nations. This essay draws upon well-known studies to examine music, art and culture from historical, social, civil and political perspectives in an attempt to critically re-examine the question. It will be shown how a certain Swiss musical identity is constituted with regard to its functional role in the country’s interests, as an expression of a collective dimension, as a regulating organisation of its integration within society, and as a permanent and recognised dialogue with the institutions. The fact that certain characteristics recur both in situations of conservative withdrawal and in those of opening to new influences, leads us to speak of a shared value in the diversity of attitudes.

About the fact that Switzerland has been the location of choice for travellers and refugees from all over the continent, someone has said that this country has more often welcomed the people who have found comfort and refuge here than it has welcomed the messages they have brought with them. The same cautiousness that has allowed the nation to create stability by avoiding involvement in the issues that have made Europe tear itself to pieces in devastating wars, and that has nourished its political outlook and determined its social policies, has consequently made it keep a safe distance, for better and for worse, from the ideas that created the tensions that led to conflict. Neutrality as a declared political neces-

\* This study is an expanded version of a text included in the catalogue of the exhibition *Enigma Helvetia: arti, riti e miti della Svizzera moderna* (Lugano 2008), mostra a cura di Pietro Bellasi, Marco Francioli, Carlo Piccardi, Cristina Sonderegger, Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2008; the original Italian version has also been published in: *Musica/Realtà*, 30/2 (July 2009), pp. 17–66.



sity quickly translated itself into ideological neutrality, which meant, in effect, retreating into isolationism and cultural autarky. In reality, the determining factor in the evolution of Swiss-style self-sufficiency can be seen in the various forms of autonomy that characterise the communities of which the Confederation is made up: pride in independence, in taking one's fate in one's own hands, is accompanied by a permanent state of individual alertness for the sake of maintaining and cultivating original principles – with the result that the principle of conservatism is accentuated. In Switzerland, unlike other countries, conservatism is not only peculiar to institutions: it is also to be found within the body politic, which is ready to react against any conceivable threat to the established order.

The country's socio-economic geography is another factor, inasmuch as there is no great metropolis in which productive energies would be concentrated and would lead onward to objectives intended to move beyond tradition. In addition to having to take linguistic, cultural and cantonal autonomy into account, the Swiss situation has also been, and still is, largely conditioned by small and medium-sized urban centres that are in competition with each other and that tend, therefore, to consolidate and then hide behind their individual cultural heritages. On the positive side, this has established stable middle-class centres that have accompanied the process of institutionalising culture with solid, intense cultural practices, but it has also led inevitably to a slide towards conservatism; little space is given to innovative manifestations capable of going beyond such tightly knit cultural fabrics and of attracting attention beyond national borders. This is exemplified by the very birth of the modern Confederation, in 1848, as a decentralised national state, lacking in centripetal force but holding together disuniting forces as if by alchemy (but in fact thanks to a pact that, in effect, balanced the relationship between urban and rural areas). Under such circumstances, culture was given the civic responsibility of embodying traditional, local values; instead of providing the public's imagination with ideals that would have attempted to surpass the oppressive state of subjection that had existed since the *ancien régime* (as had occurred in the nations that had undertaken reforms after '48), people were reminded of the myth of the founders of the original Cantons' league, which had ridded itself of the imperial yoke back in the Middle Ages and had kept it at bay for centuries, protected, at least symbolically, by the mountains. The myth of *homo alpinus* was proudly held up as a national emblem in the cities where new industrial economics arose more quickly than in the countryside, establishing an organic bridge between the tranquil, archaic way of life of Alpine people and the agitated life of the city, inasmuch as it put a brake on tendencies toward modernity.



Another aspect of conservatism is represented by the nation's democratic arrangement, which sets Switzerland apart from other countries, not only as a region independent of the Empire and founded upon the liberty of its citizens, but also in its dissimilarity to the monarchic regimes that surrounded it as late as the Nineteenth Century. Now, if we accept Tocqueville's observation about the uniformity of ideas and the levelling off towards the lowest common denominator under democratic regimes, in which consensus would be the median between extreme positions ("l'égalité est moins élevée peut-être; mais elle est plus juste"; "le génie devient plus rare et les lumières plus communes"),<sup>1</sup> this country would pay for the advantage of its stable *mediocritas* by making outstanding people marginal; they would be allowed to have their say, but they would not be likely to prevail. The value of this *mediocritas* (which would not necessarily be a limitation) can be seen in the phenomenon of group participation – which Tocqueville mentioned with respect to the United States – understood as managing differences from the bottom upwards.<sup>2</sup> From the corporative forms created in ancient times as a means of protection, this phenomenon was transformed, in the Nineteenth Century, into a means of active participation in civic life. Precisely in this sense, it is significant that one of the most important characteristics confirming the tendency towards union is musical in nature. Choral societies and bands clearly helped to cement the nation's collective consciousness, not only because of the symbolic nature of group activities, but also thanks to the organisational side of an artistic activity that was closely bound to the working organisation of each community. Ernst Ludwig Gerber bears this out in his *Neues historisches-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler*, in which he states that the Allgemeine schweizerische Musikgesellschaft – founded in 1808 on the initiative of Hans Georg Nägeli – was "the only association of musical amateurs in Europe."<sup>3</sup> The *Festspiel* phenomenon – mass spectacles that became frequent at the turn of the Twentieth Century – illustrates this at several levels. It is significant that this typically Swiss performance format grew out of the occasional *Musikfeste*, with their surprising resources, drawn from the community; along with festivals dedicated to gymnastics and sharpshooting, they were a venue at which the Confederation became something real, thanks to the participatory nature of the event, with its predominantly liberal basis. Singing together was a tangible demonstration of the demolition of ethnic and class differences, as the

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres*, sous la dir. de André Jardin, Jean-Claude Lamberti et James T. Schleifer, Paris: Gallimard, 1992, vol. 2, pp. 776–777, 851–852.

2 Ibid., pp. 730–731.

3 Antoine Cherbuliez, *Die Schweiz in der deutschen Musikgeschichte*, Frauenfeld/Leipzig: Verlag Von Huber, 1932, p. 319.



amazed reporter for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* noted at a music festival in Lucerne in 1850: “Gli illustri e potenti signori di Berna, di Basilea e di Zurigo cantano e fraternizzano coi montanari e gli artigiani di Glaris, di Baden, di Zug, d’Olten, di Lanzburgo [Lenzburg], di Zofingen.”<sup>4</sup> This happened mainly at the *Festspiele* that were regularly organised for anniversaries of important moments in national history: through their singing, the people themselves became actors in celebrating national historical events. Collective participation took on such great dimensions that it impressed outside observers even more profoundly. In 1892, Ernst Curtius attended Rudolf Wackernagel’s *Festspiel für Kleinbasler Gedenkfeier*, with music by Hans Huber, and said that its sacred, ritual aspect was reminiscent of the concept of citizenship developed in the Hellenic *polis*.<sup>5</sup> Wagner, too, took note of this in his essay, *Ein Theater in Zürich* (1851): in describing a theatre that would be free from the hedonism of Italian tradition and from the Parisian vogue for the purely spectacular, he theorised a development that would grow out of the vast diffusion of *Gesangvereine* (choral societies) in Switzerland: “fast jede Gemeinde ihre Kräfte für den Gesang zu einer tief bildsamen Wirksamkeit vereinigt, der nur noch eine Richtung auf das Dramatische zu geben ist, um ihre Bedeutung für die gemeinsame Bildung zu erhöhen.”<sup>6</sup>

Now, it is well known that choral activities in the Swiss context were the foundation of an artistic life that – thanks to such deep roots – was capable of guaranteeing a traditionally high level even in the most remote areas. This widely diffused and solidly organised practice made it possible to draw on amateurs for dealing with highly demanding compositions. Although opera was at that time still inaccessible, oratorios were a different matter: they were divided into roles for individuals and small and massive groups, and this brought them within the reach of amateur and semi-professional resources, so that they established a solid, organic bridge to the city’s middle-class artistic life.<sup>7</sup>

Although much of what was produced was purely local – a repertory relegated to the margins of cultural life and bearing witness to the activ-

4 Carlo Piccardi, “Il *Festspiel* ticinese tra storia, leggenda, mito e edonismo”, in: Carlo Piccardi – Massimo Zicari, *Un’immagine musicale del Ticino. Al canvetto di Arnaldo Filipello e la stagione del Festspiel*, Lugano/Milano: Giampiero Casagrande Editore, 2005, p. 21.

5 Ibid., pp. 143–144.

6 Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, hrsg. von Wolfgang Golther, Berlin [...]: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., 1911, vol. 5, p. 47.

7 Hermann Danuser, “Felder der Imaginären in schweizerischer oratorischer Musik”, in: *Entre Denges et Denez... Dokumente zur Schweizer Musikgeschichte 1900–2000*, hrsg. von Ulrich Mosch, Basel: Paul Sacher Stiftung, 2000, pp. 172–174.



ism of well-meaning but minor composers – in a few cases artists of prestige and with unarguable academic credentials participated; they represented the official side of culture, and some were exponents of the avant-garde. In this regard, the case of René Morax is exemplary. In Mézières in 1908, Morax founded the Théâtre du Jorat; the building was adapted from a large, wooden hayloft, and this country theatre, which traditionally attracted people from all over Canton Vaud, became a temple of popular entertainment thanks to the epic nature of the dramas presented there. Morax could switch from a composer like Gustave Doret, whose roots were obviously in folk music, to the young Arthur Honegger (with his *Le roi David* and *Judith*), whose advanced style had already secured him a reputation in Paris, but who, in this case, was able to compromise with the requirements of collective feeling. This strongly marked the young Swiss composer with respect to the idea of communication based upon economy of mean. He had not known what to do with the combination of soloists, large chorus and small instrumental group at his disposal, but Stravinsky, who, a few years earlier, had composed *L'Histoire du soldat* for performance in villages far from middle-class theatre life, encouraged him by advising: “C’est très simple, me dit-il, faites comme si c’était vous qui aviez voulu cette disposition et composez pour 100 chanteurs et 17 musiciens.”<sup>8</sup> Besides, it has already been noted how the fruit of Stravinsky’s collaboration with Ramuz is the most important example of the aesthetic ideas expounded by the *Cahiers vaudois* with respect to the conjunction of regionalism and modern internationalism; its premise was the point of contact between the separate but similar rural ways of life in French Switzerland and in Russia.<sup>9</sup> The resulting lesson in functionalism shows how great was the compatibility among the levels of musical production within a context in which the objective of a type of musical expression whose motivation was a strong dose of collective and even civic communication was also related to the highest musical types, notwithstanding the clear-cut distinctions regarding conception and results. Honegger’s case is symptomatic: although he was born in France and had established himself there, he was unlike his fellow-members of the “Groupe des Six” thanks to an identifying trait that Milhaud called “atavism:”<sup>10</sup> a propensity for choral singing, which came from familiarity with the psalms sung in Protestant churches and from his ties to the his country of origin – especially his

8 Arthur Honegger, *Écrits*, sous la dir. de Hugnette Calmel, Paris: Champion, 1992, p. 150.

9 Jürg Stenzl, “‘Aber abseits wer ists?’ – Über Musikkulturen in der Westschweiz”, in: *Musica*, 40 (1986), p. 126.

10 Joseph Roy, *Le rôle du chœur dans les oratorios d’Arthur Honegger*, in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 34 (November 1992), p. 15.



studies in Zurich under the guidance of Friedrich Hegar, one of the main figures in the development of choral music in Switzerland.

The choral imprint that was so common among Swiss composers, as well as the morally instructive nature of the oratorio form, was derived from that democratic experience – from Hermann Suter's *Le Laudi di San Francesco d'Assisi* to Frank Martin's oratorios (*In terra pax*, 1944; *Golgotha*, 1945–48), from Conrad Beck's *Oratorium nach Sprüchen des Angelus Silesius* (1933–34) to Rudolf Kelterborn's *Die Flut* (1964), and all the way to Klaus Huber's deformed choral frescoes (*Erniedrigt – geknechtet – verlassen – verachtet*, 1975–82, etc.), which, with the lacerated tensions of the intervals in the sound-picture, reflect the sufferings inflicted on humanity by the forms of injustice that are so common in the modern world. Thus the presence of first-rate composers on celebratory occasions is no surprise: they are motivated by a sense of civic duty and, above all, they dialogue with a generic public and do not shun, in the name of linguistic rigour, the function of interpreting their public responsibility through the brotherhood-inducing power of music. Works composed for celebratory occasions include Arthur Honegger's *Nicolas de Flue* (1939), Willy Burkhard's *Laupen* (1939), Albert Moeschinger's *Tag unseres Volkes* (1939), Conrad Beck's *St. Jakob an der Birs* (1944), Erich Schmid's *Das gerettete Land* (1947), Walther Geiser's *Inclyta Basilea* (1951), Rolf Liebermann's  $3 \times 1 = CH + X$ . *Festkantate zum Bundesbrief 1291* (1991) and even *Festspiele* that have been updated with a jazz language: Herbert Meier and Daniel Schnyder's *Mythenspiel*, composed in 1991 for the Confederation's Seven Hundredth birthday (the authors were criticised by groups of artists who had called for a boycott of the anniversary's official events), George Gruntz's *Napoleon + Basel* (1988) and, also by Gruntz (although the project was never realised) *Basel 1798 – ein Festspiel 1998*.<sup>11</sup>

It is obvious that, given the necessity of satisfying the expectations of a vast public – starting with the mass of choristers who are regularly mobilised for this type of operation – aesthetics had to reach a compromise with simplified modalities of communication. But unlike the situation in totalitarian states, in which this type of orientation was imposed from above, in Switzerland it derived from a tradition of cultivated music that had evolved with the awareness of music's social value – seconded by the necessity to find symbolic ways of supporting unity for the sake of survival. The choral tradition, initiated at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century by one Hans Georg Nägeli and then adopted for pedagogical reasons by Pestalozzi's militant followers and conceived as a tool for partici-

11 Sigfried Schibli, "Basler Festspiele", in: *Musikstadt Basel*, hrsg. von Sigfried Schibli, Basel: Buchverlag der Basler Zeitung, 1999, pp. 86–89.



pation in the life of the nation, became the backbone of the country's musical life and determined its development. Although the attraction of other European ethnic and national cultures was strong – and Swiss musicians continued to be educated abroad, in the conservatories of Leipzig, Munich, Berlin and Paris, with consequent stylistic influences – Swiss composers' identity was bound up with their propensity for choral works and to the moderation typical of the degree to which they adhered to their respective aesthetic models.

It would be too hasty to dispose of the artistic value of the works of Hans Huber, Hermann Suter, Volkmar Andreae, Otto Barblan, Walter Courvoisier, Joseph Lauber and Fritz Brun by describing these composers as minor, marginal artists who lagged behind their times, whereas it is precisely these characteristics that reveal the importance of their rootedness in the socio-cultural context of their field and how their strengths were proportional to their organic relationship to the common outlook, even more than to the degree of their need to be accepted at an institutional level. Music, more than any of the other arts, depends upon its social and institutional status, and this is particularly true in the case of Switzerland, where self-regulation based upon fundamental organisational structures functioned. In fact, the nature of the federal state means that cultural and educational responsibilities are the prerogative of the cantons, not of the central government, and this is why there is no basic unifying premise in these areas. Nevertheless, a strong common trait characterises this artistic situation, especially with respect to music, with almost unidirectional effect, albeit with no authoritarian reference.

This is demonstrated by the history of the Century-old Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein (Association of Swiss Musicians; ASM), which has functioned since 1900 not only as an organisation with some of the responsibilities of a trade union, but above all as an institutional point of reference; through its annual festival, it exercises considerable influence on aesthetic orientation. The choice of the works presented during these periodic events has determined, by its *exempla*, the evolution of a musical development that has taken place under a sort of collective vigilance.

We must not forget that Switzerland, a country that often welcomed personages who had difficulty working and expressing themselves elsewhere, hosted Richard Wagner from 1849 to 1858, Ferruccio Busoni and Stravinsky during the First World War, Hermann Scherchen and Wladimir Vogel during the Nazi period and Sándor Veress after his escape from communist Hungary. These were people with radical aesthetic points of view that left few immediate traces, precisely as a result of the radical nature of their poetics. It wasn't so much closed-mindedness as it was a form of immunity: despite the interest in and respect for personalities of



that calibre, their high profiles inevitably created attitudes of rejection, based upon rejection of a type of culture that was separate from society. Precisely because the modern Confederation was born in 1848 under the influence of a radical revolution, the civic conscience that developed within that context – with its strong emphasis on social integration combined with respect for individuality – demanded artists' participation in the process of consolidation of values that were held in common. This distanced Switzerland from the course of Nineteenth-Century art, the guiding principle of which was the cult of genius, honoured for its ability to excel by not adhering to bourgeois norms, by fleeing towards the enchantments of the imagination; and this tendency was reaffirmed in the Twentieth Century, although the concept of the prophetic, avant-garde artist, admired for his or her capacity to jump the gun by proposing ideas that were ahead of their time, turned that tendency upside-down. Exclusive attitudes of this sort, which recognised special, aristocratic status for artists, were unlikely to take hold in a country that was constitutionally democratic and that asked art to put itself at the disposal of the community.<sup>12</sup>

This explains why there was such a long list of minor composers who have long been condemned as marginal and derivative: they were asked, as conscientious citizens, to keep to the middle of the road and to maintain a permanent dialogue with the public. This is why Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire, a hotbed of Dadaism, did not resonate locally, and why Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 10, and Schönberg's *Quintet*, Op. 26, which were performed in Zurich in 1926 at the Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), not only left the audience puzzled but also influenced only two young musicians, Alfred Keller and Erich Schmid<sup>13</sup>, who left Switzerland in order to connect with international musical developments (both of them became pupils of Schönberg in Berlin in the following years). That event's importance and prestige did not suffice to persuade the ASM to become a national arm of the ISCM; in fact, it was precisely the latter organisation's openness to radical trends that caused the Swiss organisation to refuse to join. In the 1930s, the ASM preferred to participate in the Permanent Council for International Collaboration among Composers (Ständiger Rat für die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Komponisten), of which Richard Strauss was president. This alternative organisation was created in Wiesbaden in 1934 by the Nazi German government; its objectives were less controversial, and

12 Roman Brotbeck, "Expoland mit schwieriger Nachgeburts und ungezogenen Söhnen – zur musikalischen Avantgarde in der Schweiz der sechziger und frühen siebziger Jahre", in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 274–275.

13 Ulrich Mosch, "Dodekaphonie in der Schweiz", in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 231–233.



only in 1945 did the ASM – thanks to its president, Paul Sacher – decide to establish a fundamental relationship with the ISCM.<sup>14</sup> Hugo Ball had declared that “the Swiss prefer yodelling to cubism.”<sup>15</sup>

On this subject, Erich Schmid has provided significant testimony. Schmid had returned to Switzerland after Hitler had come to power in Germany, and he had hoped to find support within the ASM for his work as a composer; the string quartet that he sent to the association was sent back to him without comment, but, he recalled, “I heard later that one of these gentlemen had said that as long as he was a member of that council, such a thing would never be performed.” No wonder: his *Sonatine for Violin and Piano*, Op. 1, first performed before Schönberg in Frankfurt in 1930, had secured his admission to the classes of his future teacher, but when it was played the following year at the Festival of Swiss Musicians in Solothurn it was greeted only by laughter.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the ASM functioned as a corporation, the prime task of which was to defend already extant points of view, thereby acting, almost on principle, as a conservative body. It is unlikely that such a situation existed in any other country besides Switzerland, where there was a permanent, self-governed channel at composers’ disposal for their self-affirmation and social recognition; this happened selectively, however, and with moderate results in comparison with the international scene – and the reason for this was the prevalence of territorial ties. The sense of prudence that guided the ASM’s leaders is confirmed by the minutes of the committee that chose the thirteen compositions to be presented at the annual festival in 1933: “Henri Gagnebin, Frank Martin et George Humbert insistent pour que l’on ne change pas trop les programmes, que l’on ne présente pas d’œuvres problématiques, mais autant que possible des œuvres dont la portée est déjà expérimentée,”<sup>17</sup> Thus, whereas international cir-

14 Ibid., p. 277. Concerning the ISCM’s attitude with regard to politics see Anton Haefeli, “Politische Implikationen einer ‘unpolitischen’ Organisation. Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik zwischen 1933 und 1939”, in: *Musik im Exil. Die Schweiz und das Ausland 1918–1945*, hrsg. von Chris Walton und Antonio Baldassarre, Bern: Peter Lang, 2005, pp. 103–120.

15 Chris Walton, “Heil Dir, Helvetia! Anmerkungen zur Musikpublizistik eines ‘neutralen’ Landes”, in: *Musikwissenschaft – eine verspätete Disziplin?*, hrsg. von Anselm Gerhard, Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2000, p. 317.

16 Kurt von Fischer, *Erich Schmid*, Zürich: Kommissionsverlag Hug & Co., 1992, p. 16.

17 Thomas Gartmann, “Weitergehen, den Weg, den man vorgezeigt bekommt...”. Erich Schmid und die kulturpolitische Situation in der Schweiz 1933–1960”, in: *Arnold Schönbergs “Berliner Schule”*, hrsg. von Heinz-Klaus Metzger und Rainer Riehn, München: Edition Text + Kritik, 2002 (= Musik-Konzepte, 117/118), pp. 24–25. See also Roland Moser, *Der Komponist Erich Schmid*, in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 3 (February 1985), pp. 11–14; Christoph Keller, “Eine Oase für die Wiener Schule – die Dirigenten Hermann Scherchen und Erich Schmid in Winterthur und Zürich”, in: *Entre Denges et*



cumstances (the two world wars and the advent of totalitarianism) brought Switzerland waves of personalities whose perspectives were forward-looking and who were fleeing from the limits imposed in their own countries<sup>18</sup>, local artists responded for the most part with protectionist attitudes.

Busoni commented significantly on conditions in Zurich. It was actually in the Swiss city that his aesthetic viewpoint assumed its final form, as demonstrated by an open letter to Paul Bekker in his famous essay, *Junge Klassizität* (1920).<sup>19</sup> In a letter dated 7 September 1918, to Egon Petri, Busoni – who had had contacts with the Dadaist leaders, especially Hans Richter – mentioned the importance of a place where “isolated” people who had been displaced by the war could find a home: “Unter ihnen war Lenin [...] R[omain] Rolland, Paderewski [...] Letzthin besuchte mich

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Denezzy, p. 81; Norbert Graf, “Auch wir ‘Zu Lebzeiten vielleicht gar nie aufgeführt’? Schweizer in den Meisterklassen für Komposition von Ferruccio Busoni und Arnold Schönberg in Berlin (1921–1933)”, in: *Musik im Exil*, pp. 89–102; Christoph Keller, “Zum Klavierwerk Erich Schmid”, in: *Arnold Schönbergs “Berliner Schule”*, pp. 8–19; Lukas Näf, “Wege zum reifen Musiker: Zur Ausbildung von Erich Schmid in Frankfurt und Berlin (1927–1933)”, in: *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, 26 (2006), pp. 15–39, Juliane Brandes, “Erich Schmid Drei Sätze für Orchester op. 3”, *ibid.*, pp. 41–72; Burkhard Kinzler, “Dodekaphonie und Demokratie als Basis einer ästhetischen Haltung: Das Notturmo op. 10 von Erich Schmid”, *ibid.*, pp. 73–88; Christoph Keller, “Zum Klavierwerk von Erich Schmid unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Fünf Bagatellen op. 14 von 1943”, *ibid.*, pp. 90–100; Lukas Näf, “Zwölftonmusik aus der Schweiz: Erich Schmid”, in: *Schweizer Musikzeitung*, 4 (2007), pp. 19–20, Roland Moser, “Zu seiner Zeit. Über die späte Wahrnehmung von Erich Schmid’s Werken”, in: *Au carrefour des mondes. Komponieren in der Schweiz*, hrsg. von Jaël Hèche, Michael Kunkel und Bernard Schenkel, Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2008 (= Édition dissonance, 1), pp. 427–432. Discouraged by his isolation, Schmid stopped composing in 1949, when he opted definitely for conducting and succeeded Volkmar Andreae as conductor of the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich.

18 Beyond the Zurich circle of Dadaist artists one must recall the initiatives of the Maison des Artistes at the Castle of La Sarraz near Lausanne, with the International Modern Architecture Congress of 1928, which brought together Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Alberto Sartoris and various others who were united in their determination to fight raging academicism; and, the following year, the first congress of independent filmmakers, during which Sergei Eisenstein, Hans Richter and Ivor Montagu produced a polemical film aimed at the other participants: Ruttmann, Tisse, Buñuel et al. (see Antoine Baudin, *Hélène de Mandrot et la Maison des Artistes de La Sarraz*, Lausanne: Payot, 1998; Jean-Marie Pilet, *Hélène de Mandrot et la Maison des Artistes au château de la Sarraz: chronique – extraits des archives: éléments de la correspondance, 1920–1948*, Lausanne: Archives de la Maison des Artistes, 1999; *Le cinéma indépendant et d’avant-garde à la fin du muet: Le Congrès de La Sarraz, 1929*, sous la dir. de Freddy Buache, Lausanne: Travelling, 1979–1980, = Travelling, 55).

19 Laureto Rodoni, “‘Die gerade Linie ist unterbrochen’ – L’esilio di Busoni a Zurigo”, in *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft / Annales Suisses de Musicologie / Annuario Svizzero di Musicologia*, New Series, 19 (1999; *La Svizzera: terra d’asilo*), p. 51.



Rilke und Wassermann.”<sup>20</sup> Yet he never managed to feel anything other than “heimatlos” (in a letter to E. Andreae, 25 July 1920)<sup>21</sup>, and he spoke of his “vier Jahren ‘Gefangenschaft’” – which is how he defined his Swiss years in a letter to his son (6 March 1920)<sup>22</sup>. Despite the assistance and favours he enjoyed thanks to Volkmar Andreae, culminating in 1917 with the presentation of his *Arlecchino* and *Turandot Suite* at the Stadttheater, under his own baton, and notwithstanding the honorary doctorate conferred on him by the local university and the substantial circle of friends, both Swiss and exiled foreigners, that he managed to gather around him, he still saw Switzerland as “eine Art Sanatorium,” as he wrote to Max Oppenheimer in 1915.<sup>23</sup> And in a letter to Philipp Jarnach, he first reaffirmed his opinion of the closed, asphyxiating atmosphere there, then communicated the “liberating” effect of his arrival in Paris in 1920 and finally described in greater detail the reasons for his discomfort in Switzerland:

Der Bogen der weitausgreifenden Geste [...], ist mir wie eine *Heimkehr*; so vertraut und lang entbehrt. Man zählt hier einem auch weder die Jahre an, noch was er ausgibt, noch ob er in Begleitung einer Dame gesehen wird, noch ob er ein Automobil besteigt. Ich war mit der grossen Geste erzogen und konnte mich nie daran finden, dass sie etwas tadelnswertes sei, wie Zürcher gelten lassen wollen. Ich war überhaupt damit aufgewachsen, nie sichtbar werden zu lassen, ob ich arm oder reich war. (Ich war arm und galt für reich). Nun ist mir dieses Abrechnen auf Heller und Pfennig, im Vermögen, im öffentlichen und privaten Leben, sehr verletzend. Das ist in der Schweiz normal und selbst offiziell.<sup>24</sup>

This statement perfectly defines the constitutional Swiss reticence to accept the privileges of aristocracy, which, vice-versa, were closely connected to the Romantic, decadent and constitutionally anti-democratic concept of the artist as an individual who bases his or her work on distinctions of this sort. This concept can be seen even more clearly in the pitiless irony displayed in a letter of Busoni’s to the Zurich banker Albert Biolley, specifically regarding Swiss composers:

Es ist mir schon einige Zeit aufgefallen, und nun steht es bei mir gleichsam als Prinzip fest, dass die Schweizer – sonst solid und bürgerlich=gewissenhaft, in der Musik (durch die Geschichte) so merkwürdig sorglos und flüchtig sind. Wenn Sie die Genealogie Raff – Huber – Andreae – Schoeck nehmen (die besten Namen), so begegnen Sie bei Allem demselben Zug einer schnellen, kritiklosen, routinen ähnlicher Produktion. Das erklärt sich, glaube ich eben daraus, dass diese Musiker – als “Künstler” – sich der bürgerlichen Solidität als

20 Ibid., p. 77.

21 Ibid., p. 75.

22 Ibid., p. 71.

23 Ibid., p. 52.

24 Ibid. Letter to Philipp Jarnach (10 March 1920), typewritten transcription of the original (Dent Collection, Rowe Music Library, King’s College of Cambridge).



erhoben fühlen. (Genau so, wie in England, der "Künstler" – wo alle in Frack kommen – glaubt, in einer Sammtjacke erscheinen zu dürfen). Aber, das ist ein Irrtum, wie Sie perfekt wissen. Das, was ich versuchte zu beschreiben, ist der Dilettant, und nicht der Künstler. Der Künstler – ist der peinlichste Mann und immer – *en grande tenue* – wenn er schafft.<sup>25</sup>

Busoni's reasoning is the result of a monarchic idea of art, based on privilege, entirely foreign to the republican concept that, in Swiss life, had to do not only with the politico-social system but also with works of art, inasmuch as those works were supposed to take into account a will to participate that was extended to the entire body politic; this was all the more real and unavoidable because Switzerland had achieved a balance between and an integration of the urban and the rural. Roman Brotbeck, who recalled how the great Nineteenth -Century Swiss writers defined themselves through their rejection of aristocratic culture, with its hyperbole and affectation, also underlined how Swiss composers came from the middle class (merchants, teachers, Protestant pastors etc.) and chafed at identifying themselves with that culture. Based as it was on individualism, that culture gave birth to the avant-garde as a force for radical renewal, to the point of detaching itself from society, whereas Swiss artists had a hard time with the idea of severing their roots. Unable to see themselves as prophets, they were at most capable of identifying themselves as outsiders within traditional currents, and in order to avoid isolation they dedicated themselves to teaching. (We add, parenthetically, that perhaps it is not by chance that Switzerland has been a fertile terrain for important pedagogical enterprises: Emile Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva, Mimi Scheiblaue's school of eurhythmics in Zurich, and Luzius Juon's school of singing in Chur).<sup>26</sup>

## Corporative Closed-Mindedness

The Twentieth Century's avant-garde movements were antagonistic towards tradition, yet they were all based upon the principle of the creative centrality of the individual – a sort of aristocracy of the spirit (although apparently in agreement with political radicalism). Implicit in this lay the

25 Ibid., p. 78. The same ideas are expressed in Ferruccio Busoni, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Ferruccio Busoni und Volkmar Andreae: 1907–1923*, hrsg. von Joseph Willmann, Zürich: Kommissionsverlag Hug & Co., 1994.

26 Roman Brotbeck, "Zum Schweizerischen in der Schweizer Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts oder die Nibelungen-Identität", in: *Schweizer Töne – Die Schweiz im Spiegel der Musik*, hrsg. von Anselm Gerhard und Annette Landau, Zürich: Chronos, 2000, pp. 255–257.



notion of an initiation, the hierarchy of which dictated even the geographic aspect of its development, starting with the metropolis as a laboratory for new humanity, an outpost that increased rather than reducing the distance from what took place in the outskirts. There can be no doubt that the Nazis' ferocious fanaticism against the avant-garde ("entartete Kunst") derived from their perception of the distance between new concepts of art, whose nature was cosmopolitan and had developed in modern capital cities, and the traditions connected to its territorial roots, which were held up as non-negotiable, absolute values.<sup>27</sup> For artists who had chosen to leave Germany for Switzerland after 1933, the greatest difficulty encountered was precisely that same degree of incomprehension on the part of an outlying area that held onto the idea of the primacy of a national-popular aesthetic – a sort of "Blut und Boden" motto that clung to the image of a rural country – to the Alpine myth – and that on the whole shut itself off from the messages of modernity that reached it from the metropolis. Paradoxically, the exponents of "degenerate art" sought refuge in a Switzerland that, although not a dictatorial state, had proclaimed itself a place that had the same traditional artistic values in the name of which the Third Reich had condemned its best talents to exile. It is not insignificant that one of the most honoured musical personalities in Nazi Germany was Heinrich Sutermeister, a Swiss composer predisposed by attitude and training to produce music that was in keeping with the "new, tempered Romanticism" ("stählerne Romantik") that Ernest Krause recognised in the composer's *Zauberinsel* – with reference to the concept that Goebbels had set forth in his speech in 1933 to the Reichskulturkammer; this was connected to the "heroischen Lebensauffassung" and to the "Mut [...] den Problemen ohne Zucken in die mitleidlosen Augen hineinzuschauen."<sup>28</sup> Sutermeister's operas – beginning with *Romeo und Julia*, which Karl Böhm conducted in Dresden in 1940 – were performed innumerable times in Nazi Germany, and he was officially supported by the regime's music critics. He declared his dissociation from abstract formal tendencies and psychological refinement – characteristic aspects of more advanced modern music – and tended, rather, "vers des procédés nouveaux et moins recherchés, visant à la simplification du tissu polyphonique [en dédaignant] la nuance pour n'user que de tons très tranchés."<sup>29</sup> This was perfectly in

27 On this subject, see Carlo Piccardi, "Legittimazione della Nuova musica nel teatro", in: *Paul Hindemith nella cultura tedesca degli anni Venti*, a cura di id., Milano: Unicopli, 1991, pp. 138–139.

28 Antje Müller, "Heinrich Sutermeister, der 'Neutrale' im NS-Staat", in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 25 (August 1990), pp. 11–14.

29 Robert-Aloys Moser, *Regards sur la musique contemporaine 1921–1946*, Lausanne: Librairie F. Rouge & Cie, 1946, p. 36.



keeping with the ideal Nazi aesthetic, which aimed at involving a broad audience through the effects' straightforwardness. Although, as a Swiss citizen, he adopted a neutral, apolitical attitude, Sutermeister helped to prescribe a populist line for German music, and he even allowed his works to be performed together with works that professed fidelity to Nazism, as in Dresden in 1944, when his *Klavierkonzert n. 1* was given its first performance on the same evening in which the cantata *Führerworte* by Gottfried Müller, on a text by Adolf Hitler, was also presented.<sup>30</sup>

Nor should we close our eyes to the fact that Othmar Schoeck not only won the 1937 Erwin von Steinbach Prize from the University of Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany, but, when he was attacked at home by the socialist newspaper "Das Volksrecht" – which compared his acceptance to Toscanini's dignified refusal to conduct in Bayreuth after the Nazis' accession to power – he replied only that "als Schweizer bin ich neutral."<sup>31</sup> This is not terribly surprising, given the role that Jacques Handschin, one of the most illustrious Swiss musicologists of the first half of the Century, had ascribed to Switzerland as "das Land des Abwägen zwischen den verschiedenen Kulturströmungen,"<sup>32</sup> predestined, in a sense, to make moderate choices.

Thus it happened that German artists who had fled from the police in their country because they were exponents of an art that was despised for its excessiveness, often found, in their Swiss exile, equally difficult conditions, such as having work permits denied, sometimes arbitrarily, or granted only conditionally. In the case of the numerous actors and dramatists who had flocked to Zurich's Stadttheater, there were actually occasions on which part of the audience protested against and interrupted performances, so that the police had to intervene. Only after war broke out and the Nazi threat required choosing sides uncompromisingly did the antifascist "line" of programming match up with the country's mobilisation in defence of independence.<sup>33</sup> The problem was particularly thorny for writers, because

30 Jürg Stenzl, "Im Reich der Musik, Heinrich Sutermeister und Carl Orff zwischen 1935 und 1945", in: *Musik & Aesthetik*, 5 (October 2001), n. 20, pp. 46, 64–65. Sutermeister never referred to the subject of his relations with Nazi Germany. For that matter, the problem of his music's role in that situation was shelved, at least as long as musical life was dominated by conservative exponents. In 1967, when Heinz Holliger dared to object to the prize that the ASM had awarded the composer, he was severely reproached in the press by Willi Schuh (ibid., p. 65).

31 Chris Walton, *Othmar Schoeck: eine Biographie*, Mainz/Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1994, p. 223.

32 Jacques Handschin, "Die Rolle der Nationen in der Musikgeschichte", in: *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, 5 (1931), pp. 1–2.

33 Klaus Völker, "Welttheater in der Enge oder 'Grosses Theater' in einer bequemen Stadt?", in: *Ausgangspunkt Schweiz – Nachwirkungen des Exiltheaters*, hrsg. von Christian Jauslin und Louis Naef, Willisau: Theaterkultur-Verlag, 1989, pp. 66–69.



the Schweizerischer Schriftsteller-Verband (SSV) took on a sort of partnership role with the Federal Police for Foreigners, starting with the general meeting that took place in Baden in 1933 – as Charles Linsmayer has brought to light.<sup>34</sup> On that occasion the police were provided with recommendations that remained in effect until 1943; they limited the right to asylum in Switzerland to “‘literarisch und geistig hervorragenden’ sowie ‘aus politischen Gründen in Deutschland verfolgten’ Schriftstellern” and denied the right to live here to “Allen übrigen ausländischen Schriftstellern und Journalisten, insbesondere also den kleinen Zeilenschreibern und den unbedeutenden Gelegenheitsautoren.” This resulted in what was practically a surrogate police function, carried out by Felix Möschlin, the society’s president and an avowed admirer of Mussolini, as well as by Karl Naef, the zealous secretary whose opinions were accepted by the authorities. Personages like Thomas Mann were welcomed for reasons of prestige (federal councillor Giuseppe Motta got moving immediately on behalf of an author who had been awarded the Nobel Prize), but others were turned down on debatable aesthetic grounds that served as a screen for the nasty defence of professional interests: our writers saw their foreign counterparts as dangerous competitors. Often, those who were not turned away were faced with limitations in the exercise of their profession, as a result of which they suffered poverty and isolation. This is what happened to Robert Musil: the SSV recommended to the police that he be made to promise not to contribute to any Swiss newspapers or periodicals, not to give lectures in public or on the radio and not to accept jobs in editing or publishing. This took place as early as the end of 1933, when negotiations between Möschlin and Wissmann, Goebbels’s right-hand man, were underway to allow members of the SSV the benefit of the same rights and privileges as members of the German Reichskulturkammer. It is obvious that there was a relationship between these successful negotiations and the way in which artists in exile from Germany (and upon whom the Nazi regime looked down) were treated, and it would also explain why, in 1935, the SSV managed to forbid the Fischer-Verlag – a publishing house of the highest repute – from establishing itself in Zurich.<sup>35</sup>

Although the situation in the world of music never reached so extreme a point, there was no lack of attacks against guest musicians – and

34 Charles Linsmayer, “Sie haben den geistigen Verrat bereits vollzogen”, in: *Der Kleine Bund*, 154 (05.07.1997), pp. 1–3; published in a two-part French translation in: *Le Nouveau Quotidien*, “Quand la Société suisse des écrivains dénigrerait les auteurs juifs allemands” (21.07.1997, p. 12) and “En 1933, la Société suisse des écrivains demande à la police de refouler les ‘pisse-copies’ allemands” (22.07.1997, p. 12).

35 Ibid.



for the same two reasons: worry about defending the territory of Swiss-born artists from competition and worry about the infiltration of ideas and concepts considered extraneous to Swiss life and traditions. The truth is that this problem had already arisen during the First World War, when, with the violent unleashing of nationalistic feelings, this country's neutrality needed to be maintained by giving a specifically Swiss character to artistic expression. An alarm was sounded at the general meeting of the ASM at Basel in 1917: the invasion of foreign music was denounced, and the necessity of protecting Swiss musicians' artistic and economic interests was proclaimed. The problem was even more strongly felt in 1920, when the Swiss franc's high exchange value against other currencies made our country a particularly attractive workplace. At that time, the ASM managed to ensure that it would be consulted by the authorities before the latter would grant entrance visas to foreign musicians.<sup>36</sup> Thus the groundwork for protectionism had already been laid before circumstances in the nearby dictatorships acted as an impulse towards immigration. The ASM did not take long to act: in 1935, it circulated a pamphlet, *Der Schweizer Solist im heutigen Konzertleben*, which discussed the influx of foreigners in such large numbers as to damage the vital interests of equally competent Swiss artists or even to endanger their very existence. The document went so far as to propose an "Appell an das Publikum der schweizerischen Symphoniekonzerte: Fördert die Konzerte schweizerischer Künstler durch regen Besuch!"<sup>37</sup> This attitude became so ingrained that as late as 1953, the local musicians' corporation (like the Schweizerischer Schriftsteller-Verband's function of forewarning the federal police regarding permits for foreign writers – a practice that went on until about 1950) aligned itself against the Migros's Klubhaus-Konzerte, which had undertaken to bring Herbert von Karajan and the Vienna Philharmonic to Bern; the stage was reserved instead for Ernest Ansermet and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. On that occasion, Franz Schnyder, director of the Club Concerts, got around the obstacle by moving the eagerly awaited concert to nearby Fribourg, to which audience members were taken gratis by a special train.<sup>38</sup> By way of demonstrating the corporative power of these associations, which

36 Wilhelm Merian, "Fünzig Jahre STV / Cinquante ans de l'A.M.S.", in: *Der Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein im zweiten Vierteljahrhundert seines Bestehens / L'Association des Musiciens Suisses dans le second quart de siècle de son existence*, hrsg. von Hans Ehinger, Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1950, pp. 31–32.

37 Matthias Kassel, "Begründung: Überfremdung' – die Schweiz als Exilland während des Zweiten Weltkriegs", in: *Entre Denges et Denezy*, p. 374.

38 Claudio Danuser, *50 Jahre Klubhaus-Konzerte – Ein historischer Rückblick*, in: *Musik für alle – 50 Jahre Klubhaus-Konzerte*, hrsg. von René Karlen, Zürich: Migros-Genossenschafts-Bund, 1998, p. 16.



took hold even in the most spontaneous, radical artistic sectors (those seemingly reluctant to see themselves as members of organisations): as late as 1998, Action CH-Rock proudly insisted on having a fixed quota of Swiss music played on national radio programmes – and this attempt met with success.<sup>39</sup>

It is difficult to establish the degree to which the frequency of protectionist operations in the 1930s was caused by sheer defence of vital interests rather than by rejection of the new artistic trends that were penetrating Switzerland along with their creators, thereby jeopardising the cultural “establishment”. Setting aside the fact that the distance between corporative-style organisation and autarky is a short one, another fact is that the coercive measures of the day effected, above all, individuals who represented a distinct alternative to the dominant, conformist line. In 1935, when Wladimir Vogel was invited to Basel by Harry Goldschmidt to give courses on “new music,” he was stopped by the police, even though the courses were to take place privately, at the home of a medical doctor. The police later denied Vogel a residence permit on the grounds of *Überfremdung* (that there were “too many foreigners.”) Throughout all the war years, which Vogel spent at Comolengo, in the Onsernone Valley, the federal police did not grant him a residence permit, made him leave the country every three months and allowed him to travel within Switzerland only with a pass issued by the cantonal authorities.<sup>40</sup> But it was at Comolengo, in the residence called “La Barca,” which Aline Valangin, his lifelong companion, had given him, that Vogel organised “Cours de vacances pour la musique” from 1 July to 15 August 1936. There, along with classes in modern English music (taught by Alan Bush), understanding early music (Manfred Bukofzer), early organ music (Victor Schlatter), Gregorian chant (Martino Signorelli) and quarter-tone composition (Alois Hába; his presence was announced but he was probably not there), there was a course “musique à douze tons” given by Willi Reich, Alban Berg’s pupil, who was about to immigrate to Switzerland and who would play an important part in the country’s musical culture. Thus, for the first time in Switzerland, in a remote valley in Ticino, a dozen pupils found themselves rather casually gathered together to follow explanations of a compositional method that had been officially banned in Nazi Germany and that would long continue

39 Judith Wyder, “Rock, chanson et techno”, in: *La vie musicale en Suisse*, hrsg. von Dominique Rosset, Zürich: Pro Helvetia, 2001, p. 65.

40 See the documentary entitled *Wladimir Vogel. Itinerario di un compositore europeo* (*Wladimir Vogel, Stationen eines europäischen Komponisten*), done by this author for the Televisione della Svizzera italiana in 1988. See also Walter Labhart, “Vom Überleben der Musik in finsternen Zeiten. Wladimir Vogel in der Schweiz (1933 à 1948)”, in: *Swiss Made*, hrsg. von Beat Schläpfer, Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 1998, p. 249.



to be regarded with suspicion: in those difficult times, it had taken on connotations regarding politics and life itself and had become a sort of *lingua franca* of the alienated and persecuted and of artists who had been severed from their cultural roots.<sup>41</sup> There is something symbolic in the fact that this first course in twelve-tone technique took place in a remote mountain village, far from indiscreet eyes, in a place that (among other things), thanks to Valangin and her first husband, Wladimir Rosenbaum, had conspiratorially hosted many other exiled – Toller, Tucholsky, Brentano, Silone, Curjel, Mendelssohn and Canetti.<sup>42</sup> The dodecaphonic technique was still accepted by only a few individuals outside its original Viennese circle and was still marginal even within the ranks of the ISCM, but the resistance to it in Switzerland was even greater, inasmuch as it had come to be considered subversive. Vogel himself, like Ernst Krenek, had not at first played the game; he approached dodecaphony only after having left Berlin, where he had played an essential role in a very different, shared, balanced modern style, and after uprooting had lacerated even his musical language. It is not by chance that after having given it a try in his *Violin Concerto* (1937) and *Madrigaux* (1939), he fully adopted twelve-tone technique only during the composition of *Thyl Claes*, which was composed at Comolengo between 1937 and 1942. In the second part of this dramatic oratorio – which was clearly meant as a protest against oppression, and in which Philip II's persecution of heretics in Flanders is seen as a metaphor for fascism's violence – the passing over to this new compositional technique can be noted<sup>43</sup>. But Switzerland, which was spared political catas-

41 Carlo Piccardi, "Tra ragioni umane e ragioni estetiche. I dodecafonici a congresso", in: *Norme con ironie. Scritti per i settant'anni di Ennio Morricone*, a cura di Sergio Miceli, Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1998, p. 215. In 1943, once again at Comolengo, Vogel took action to organise a two-week course and made contact with Erich Schmid, with the intention of giving him the job of dealing with dodecaphonic technique. This initiative, dedicated to the theme of "music and the figurative arts", was never realized (Gartmann, "Weitergehen, den Weg", p. 31).

42 Hans Oesch, *Wladimir Vogel. Sein Weg zu einer neuen musikalischen Wirklichkeit*, Bern/München: Francke Verlag, 1967, p. 61.

43 Concerning the "résistance" character of dodecaphonic language in the second part of *Thyl Claes* see Friedrich Geiger, *Die Drama-Oratorien von Wladimir Vogel, 1896–1984*, Hamburg: Von Bockel, 1998, pp. 109–121. Concerning the political orientation of Vogel's music see Hanns Eisler, "Ein neuer Sieg der Arbeitermusikbewegung; Erfolg der Arbeitermusikbewegung. Aufführung von zwei neuen Arbeiten Wladimir Vogels", in: id., *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1924–1948*, Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973, pp. 136–139; Thomas Phleps, "Ich war aber nie Parteimitglied", Zum kompositorischen Schaffen Wladimir Vogels um 1930", in: *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, 33 (1991), pp. 207–224; Doris Lanz, "Vom Gleichschritt zur Entfremdung? Zur Beziehung Wladimir Vogels zu Hanns Eisler – einige Fakten und Thesen", in: *Eisler-Mitteilungen*, 12 (February 2005), n. 37 (*Eisler und die Schweiz*), pp. 4–10;



trophe but prodded into compressing its own society in order to resist external pressures, could only have favoured modernism's more moderate trends, such as neoclassicism and the "New Objectivity," these trends, which were based on the principle of giving priority to functionality rather than ideology, could easily be absorbed and dealt with instead of stirring up opposition. Music in Switzerland had already been developing through forms and means of expression tightly connected to the great public demand for participation, thus in the 1920s and '30s it was all the more easily induced to maintain the median level of expression and to take care not to break the delicate thread of dialogue with the public. It is worth noting, for instance, that the ASM had already taken to heart the problem of military music during the years of mobilisation: the group's general meeting at Thun in 1915 was dedicated to a discussion of the importance of raising the level of the compositions, and this resulted in much assistance to army bands. The association was likewise preoccupied with the question of functionalism during the second mobilisation: at the general meeting at Langnau in 1944, a division colonel argued for the importance of military marches.<sup>44</sup> For that matter, even in recent years the ASM's festivals have reserved a place for liturgical music.

## Difficult Path towards Modernism

Exiled, alienated foreigners were driven to strengthening their identity in individualistic ways that resulted from the lack of an organic relationship to a participatory audience, whereas the Swiss – who felt threatened not as individuals but rather as parts of an endangered nation – faced the opposite problem: they were driven to reinforcing collective identity. In

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Doris Lanz, *Zwölftonmusik mit doppeltem Boden – Exilerfahrung und politische Utopie in Wladimir Vogels Instrumentalwerken*, Kassel [...]: Bärenreiter, 2009. More generally this theme has been discussed by Albrecht Dümling, "Dodekaphonie als anti-faschistisches Potential. Eisler Ideen zu einer neuen Verwendung der Dodekaphonie", in: *Die Wiener Schule und das Hakenkreuz. Das Schicksal der Moderne im gesellschaftlichen Kontext des 30. Jahrhunderts*, hrsg. von Otto Kollerisch, Wien/Graz: Universal Edition, 1990 (= Studien zur Wertungsforschung, 22), pp. 92–106, and Friedrich Geiger, "Anweisungen zum nicht Mitmachen"? Zum Konfliktverhältnis von Zwölftonreihentechnik und NS-Ideologie", in: *"Entartete Music" 1938 – Weimar und die Ambivalenz*, hrsg. von Hanns-Werner Heister, Teil 1, Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2001, pp. 162–178.

44 Merian, "Fünfzig Jahre STV", pp. 27–28, 47.



those years, the essential problem of the relationship with modernity was determined by the need to moderate ambition by exploring new expressive frontiers without diminishing the civic conscience that bound the artist to the duty of adapting to the community's expectations – which could not jibe with avant-garde musical languages.

This widespread situation did not stop Switzerland from illuminating the international scene through special events at certain key moments. Two such musical events were centred on Zurich's Opernhaus: the world premiere of Alban Berg's *Lulu* on 2 June 1937<sup>45</sup> and that of Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* on 28 May 1938. These operas had been banned in the Third Reich and at that point could be heard only in Switzerland, among German-speaking lands. The eagerly-awaited *Lulu* premiere was a sort of last will and testament from the Viennese composer, who had died not long before, and it was a reference-point for the avant-garde adherents of the twelve-tone technique, whereas *Mathis* was a manifesto-opera by a composer who had been forced into exile; its subject was an artist's torment over the restricted space allotted to art in a time of war and persecution. Although these events resonated more internationally than nationally (they aroused more cautious interest than real involvement), they planted seeds that would bear fruit after the war. The same was true of the premieres of some plays with, most notably, the first performances of crucial works by Bertolt Brecht at Zurich's Schauspielhaus: *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* on 19 April 1941 (with music by Paul Burkhard), *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* on 4 February 1943 (music by Huldreich Georg Früh) and *Lebens des Galilei* on 9 September 1943 – not to mention the occasion that the Volksbühne offered to the workers assembled in Zurich's Volkhaus in 1938, to attend the performance of *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar* and, on 1 May 1941, *Die Mutter*. It is likely that, in one sense, the advanced artistic messages that came from the outside were more readily welcomed in trade-union circles than elsewhere, as is shown by the great effort that the Zurich Arbeiter-Sängerkartell lavished on the production of *Jemand*, a "weltliche Kantate" by Hans Sahl with music by Tibor Kasics – another Hungarian émigré, who had grown up in Zurich and who had returned to participate in the Cabaret Cornichon starting in 1934, after having worked as a jazz pianist in Berlin's cabarets.<sup>46</sup> As the composer of

45 Concerning the relatively positive reception of this opera see Norbert Graf, "Generöse Weltliebe' oder 'schwüle Erotik'? – Kunstpatriotismus auf einer neutralen Bühne Zur Aufführung von Alban Berg *Lulu* 1937 in Zürich", in: *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 60 (2003), pp. 236–260.

46 Elsie Attenhofer, *Cornichon – Erinnerungen an ein Cabaret*, Bern: Benteli Verlag, 1975, pp. 80 ff.



the music for this “secular cantata,” and so as not to compromise his application for Swiss citizenship, he used the pseudonym Victor Halder. Sahl, too, had fled from Berlin; in 1934, after a stay in Prague, he had arrived in Zurich, where he was active for awhile at the Cabaret Pfeffermühle and Cornichon, but he had to leave Switzerland immediately as he had been unable to obtain a residence permit. Friends in Zurich arranged the *Jemand* job for him, and on 1 May 1938 Eight Hundred performers were mobilised for the performance at the Limmathaus. The success was such that a series of performances was arranged under a huge tent set up in the Bellevueplatz. The piece recounted the parabola of a worker from birth to violent death: a lengthy struggle against injustice and oppression ended with a death sentence pronounced by the army of a capitalist-fascist state. On this occasion, the reviews were generous.

The *Tages-Anzeiger* commented that “der Sozialismus hat ein repräsentatives Festspiel erhalten, das man vielleicht politisch, aber nicht künstlerisch anfechten kann.” The accent on the work’s questionable political message was significant, because it would have had a hard time taking hold in Switzerland, given the peaceful situation that the unions and employers had negotiated in 1937, as part of the “geistige Landesverteidigung.”<sup>47</sup>

By describing the event as a *Festspiel*, the journalist established a parallel between the sort of militant, political, “Weimar-style” oratorio and the Swiss genre of musical-dramatic spectacle, which was resuscitated in those years as a show of mobilisation in favour of freedom based on consensus. This explains why the Social Democratic party was able to insert a *Festspiel* into the programme of the National Exposition, the *Landesausstellung*, held in Zurich in 1939, alongside the individual cantons’ official *Festspiele*. That work, which, for purposes of instruction, was based on the class struggle principle, was called *Der neue Kolumbus*; it is significant that its authors – Albert Ehrismann for the text and Georg Früh for the music<sup>48</sup> – had been part of the Cabaret Cornichon, which, although ideologically aligned with the “spiritual defence of the country,” had openly antifascist characteristics and reflected Berlin’s [pre-1933] artistic opposition to Hitler. These characteristics did not fail to arouse the protests of the German and Italian authorities’ representatives in Switzerland.<sup>49</sup> Evidently the presence on

47 Martin Stern, “Schweizertheater und Exildramatik”, in: *Schweizertheater. Drama und Bühne der Deutschschweiz bis Frisch und Dürrenmatt*, hrsg. von Hans Amstutz, Ursula Käser-Leisibach und Martin Stern, Zürich: Chronos, 2000, pp. 493–496.

48 Stern, “Das Festspiel”, *ibid.*, pp. 142–144.

49 Attenhofer, *Cornichon*, pp. 30–34.



Zurich's stages, in those years, of artists who had left Germany<sup>50</sup> functioned as a reference-point that could present an alternative – however marginal – to the conservative structure of the traditional *Festspiel*. In fact, the tensions of the time occasionally led to the creation of “manifesto”-style works that did not constitute an actual trend but that can still be held up against the example of the solid tradition of patriotic *Festspiele*. One revealing document is Albert Ehrismann's dramatic legend, *Das neue Land oder Kolumbus kehrt zurück*, which, in 1946, during the seventh Arbeiter-Turn- und -Sportfest – organised by a left-leaning association – again took up the subject of the Ehrismann work that had been performed in Basel in 1939.<sup>51</sup> The parable reverses the story of the discovery of America: the indigenous people persuade the colonisers who have come from the sea to return to the Old World – Franco's modern Spain – to bring back liberty. Rolf Liebermann composed the music, which bears the imprint of Kurt Weill's songs and of Hanns Eisler's martial sounds. In addition to having breathed the Weimar-like atmosphere of Zurich's cabarets – in which he had taken part<sup>52</sup> – Liebermann had also gone to Ascona in 1940 to study composition with Wladimir Vogel. The latter not only taught him the principles of the twelve-tone method, to which he would apply himself, but undoubtedly also communicated the spirit of the “Kampfmusik” that he had developed during his Berlin years. And if the radical dodecaphonic perspective that the Russo-German Vogel brought with him aroused suspicion in itself, the ideological context of his previous work aroused it to an even greater extent. Here, too, Vogel's role constitutes an essential piece of evidence regarding a situation in which political militancy, which could not be exercised by foreigners, manifested itself between the lines, in a nearly underground way.

50 Many Austrian and German artists were active in the Cabaret Pfeffermühle and Cornichon, where the composers Robert Blum (*Grosses Oratorium für Zufriedene*, 1934), Tibor Kasics, Huldreich Georg Früh, Walter Lang, Werner Kruse, Rolf Liebermann and, occasionally, Arthur Honegger also participated (ibid., pp. 13–14, 38–40, 108, 314–315, 319). Concerning the flowering of cabaret at this time thanks to foreigners see Ursula Käser-Leisibach, “Das schweizerische Cabaret”, in: *Schweizertheater*, pp. 346–351.

51 Stern, “Das Festspiel”, p. 151.

52 Liebermann had become accustomed to writing in the Brechtian style as the composer of songs for the Bärenstube Cabaret, as music director of Zurich's Volksbühne and especially because he had set poems by Bertolt Brecht for Liselott Wilke, an actress at the Zurich Schauspielhaus who was then his partner. Under the stage-name of Lale Andersen, she had been one of the first performers of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in Berlin; see Verena Naegele, “Liebermann”, in: *Theaterlexikon der Schweiz*, Zürich: Chronos, 2005, vol. 2, p. 1105; see also Gisa Aurbeck, *Rolf Liebermann*, Hamburg: Eller & Richter Verlag, 2001, pp. 20–21.



Such was the case in the spoken choruses in *Thyl Claes*, which bring a significant, modern dimension to the clamouring populace under Philip II's dramatic oppression of Flanders; this was closely connected to Vogel's earlier experience in Berlin's "Arbeiter-Musikbewegung." In particular, the men's unison chorus (No. 12: "Ton frère est mort sur la roue") reveals a surprising similarity with the soft march typical of some songs of the French *maquis*. Thus, his band composition *Devise*, presented at the ISCM Festival in Barcelona in 1936, existed also in a clearly politically-orientated choral version (*Schliesst die Einheitsfront*) and reappeared in the cantata, *An die Jugend der Welt*, composed in 1954 for the Jeunesses Musicales congress in Hanover; its more moderate text calls for justice in a world in which wars have not yet been banned, but its tone recalls the spirit of struggle that had stirred people up during his Berlin years.<sup>53</sup> The composition that perhaps best symbolises the difficulties Vogel experienced in professing his political ideals is his *Ticinella* quintet, composed at Ascona in 1941 and based on some Ticino folk motifs. Conceived as a tribute to the country that had given him refuge, it clearly allows one to decipher – in a sort of cryptogram – themes that marked his coming of age in Germany. Via the cheerful little military song of Swiss soldiers enjoying themselves ("Addio la caserma"), one can hear the dark omen of his *Ritmica ostinata*, which Hermann Scherchen had presented in 1932, in a monumental version for winds (*Sturmmarsch*) with the Berliner Posaunisten-Vereinigung, and which is remembered for having immediately taken on antifascist connotations, in opposition to the brown shirts who were marching to their war-like anthems through the streets of the German capital.<sup>54</sup>

With its double meanings, Vogel's little composition illustrates the precariousness of foreigners in Switzerland during the years in which intellectual protectionism held sway and was made official by the policy of the "geistliche Landesverteidigung." Many paid dearly for this. Others were able to command respect on the basis of their reputations, as was the case with Hermann Scherchen, the conductor, who, thanks to his connection – which dated back as far as 1923 – with the orchestra of Winterthur's Musikkollegium, managed to obtain residence in Neuchâtel in 1937. He had had similar experiences in Berlin to those of Vogel, and he demonstrated the same political propensity, which was looked upon with suspicion by the federal police authority; this is clear from the investigation of

53 Carlo Piccardi, "Wladimir Vogel: la cifra politica berlinese oltre l'insegnamento di Busoni", in: *Ferruccio Busoni e la sua scuola*, a cura di Gianmario Borio e Mauro Casadei Turrone Monti, Lucca: LIM, 1999, pp. 89–105.

54 Friedrich Geiger, "*Ticinella* – Wladimir Vogel im Schweizer Exil", in: *Musik im Exil*, p. 69. See also Oesch, *Wladimir Vogel*, pp. 54–55.



his relations with the Hungarian spy Sándor Radó, who, from Geneva, passed information on the Third Reich to the USSR<sup>55</sup>. Scherchen's leanings were betrayed as well by his willingness to help the trade unions and the democratic left, where he found a surrogate for the radical militancy that had never taken root in Switzerland; it created the illusion of a direct line between art and the working class. This happened on several occasions: in Zurich in 1944, when he gave a course on the Beethoven symphonies, accompanied by a concert cycle; in Bern in 1946, with an address on and performance of the *Symphony n. 5* during the assembly day of the VPOD (public services union); and, finally, in Zurich on 1 May 1947, with a performance of the *Symphony n. 9* that included a "Beethovenchor" made up of students and workers, in addition to the Winterthur orchestra<sup>56</sup>.

Above all, Scherchen, in his pragmatic way, found a method for balancing his great openness towards advanced modern trends with the restricted views of the Swiss provinces, thanks to generous, tireless activity, first in Winterthur and then at Radio Zurich, where he performed Swiss music regardless of whether it was contemporary or historic. There is a long list of composers, to some of whose works he gave world premieres, and it includes the entire little national pantheon – dozens of names, from Volkmar Andreae to Edward Staempfli and from Robert Blum to Frank Martin. Lothar Kempter, in his celebratory book for the Four Hundredth birthday of the Musikkollegium, described the years of Scherchen's direction as a "perennial federal music feast."<sup>57</sup> Fundamental works were performed within this framework, as was the case on 3 March 1943, in a concert that included Hans Studer's *Rondo auf alte Schweizerlieder*, pieces by Conrad Beck, Albrechtsberger and Schubert, and the presentation of Anton Webern's *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 30, with the composer present.<sup>58</sup> Thanks to this and other events for which the credit goes to Scherchen, isolated Winterthur became a stronghold of international modernism.

But we must not be fooled by these facts, because conditions for achieving comprehension were by no means to be taken for granted, especially with respect to the outposts of dodecaphony.<sup>59</sup> Before it reached Winterthur, Webern's composition had been refused by Ernest Ansermet in Geneva and by Paul Sacher in Basel. Notwithstanding the many merits that Zurich's Pro Musica association, founded in 1934, earned for itself in pro-

55 Hansjörg Pauli, "Dossier 769033 – Bundesfeierliche Marginalien zum 100. Geburtstag von Hermann Scherchen", in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 29 (August 1991), pp. 8–9.

56 Hansjörg Pauli – Dagmar Wünsche, *Hermann Scherchen Musiker 1891–1966*, Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1986, pp. 9–10.

57 Ibid., pp. 9–10.

58 Keller, *Eine Oase für die Wiener Schule*, p. 87.

59 On this subject, see Mosch, *Dodekaphonie in der Schweiz*, pp. 228–243.



moting contemporary music, it is noteworthy that the first compositions by the Second Viennese School to appear on its programmes were heard in 1940–41 in *Hauskonzerte* that were not part of the main concert series.<sup>60</sup> Something similar happened in Basel, at a concert for a few friends on 10 February 1940, introduced by Willi Reich. It included Webern's *Lied* ("So ich traurig bin"), Op. 4 n. 4, which dated all the way back to 1909 and yet was sufficient to spark interest in the new compositional method in young Jacques Wildberger (thanks also to his study, at Paul Baumgartner's suggestions, of Schönberg's *Suite*, Op. 25):

Nun musste ich nur noch einen Lehrer finden, der mich beim Erlernen begleitete. Das war kein einfaches Unterfangen, da in der konservativen Schweizer Musikszene die Dodekaphonie nicht als vollwertige Kompositionsmethode anerkannt, sondern beargwöhnt wurde als "intellektuell konstruiert" und deshalb "unnatürlich" und antimusikalisch. So wurde Wladimir Vogel mein Lehrer, der mich in eine neue musikalische Welt führte. Schon vorher war ich auf ihn aufmerksam geworden durch das Oratorium *Thyl Claes, fils de Kolldraeger* (1938–1945) nach dem Roman von Charles de Coster. Das war politische Protestmusik. Der Unterdrückung der Niederlande durch Spanien stand für Hitlers Terrorregime. Eine wichtige neue Erfahrung: Das bürgerliche Tabu – strikte Trennung von Kunst und Politik – wurde hier durchbrochen. Vogel war deshalb ein nicht überall gerne tolerierter Emigrant.<sup>61</sup>

In reality, despite the prestige that opened Italy's doors to Vogel after the war, with performances at Florence's Maggio Musicale and the Venice Festival, he was not much esteemed in Switzerland. In 1950, on the occasion of the ASM's fiftieth anniversary, his name was not even listed among the dozens upon dozens of people sketched by Willi Schuh in the summarising essay included in a celebratory volume.<sup>62</sup> More than twenty years went by after his arrival in our country before the ASM inserted one of his compositions into one of its festivals: *Dal quaderno di Francine settenne*, presented in 1957 at the festival held in Locarno, where the best-known composer

60 Joseph Willmann, *Pro Musica der neuen Musik zulieb*, Zürich: Atlantis Musikbuch, 1988, p. 56.

61 Jacques Wildberger, "Wie ich als Komponist die Schweiz erlebt habe", in: *Entre Denges et Denez*, p. 224. See also Jacques Wildberger, "Meine Kompositionsstudien bei Wladimir Vogel", in: *Jacques Wildberger oder die Lehre vom Andern*, hrsg. von Anton Haefeli, Zürich: Hug Musikverlage, 1995, pp. 175–178.

62 In reality, Vogel's name appears only once: he is identified as Rolf Liebermann's composition teacher. Willi Schuh, *Die Musik in der alemannischen Schweiz 1900–1950. Ein Überblick über die Schaffenden / La musique en Suisse alémanique 1900–1950. Brève revue des compositeurs*, in: *Der Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein*, p. 243 (german ed.), p. 227 (french ed.). Also, it must be remarked that Vogel never occupied a composition chair in a Swiss conservatory, though it seems that an invitation to this effect did come from the Conservatory of Bern. According to Theo Hirsbrunner, Vogel refused because he judged the proposed salary to be too modest.



resident in Italian Switzerland could not be overlooked. It is significant, however, that it was performed a few days after the ISCM's festival in Zurich, where his *Gotthardkantate* had been given its world premiere as part of the programme chosen by an international jury – thus not in the concert of Swiss music organised by the ASM.<sup>63</sup> This shouldn't surprise us, given the fact that Vogel became a Swiss citizen only in 1954, two whole decades after his arrival in Switzerland<sup>64</sup>. It is noteworthy that his first, indirect contact with the ASM dated back to 1935, when the society – more intent than ever on supporting Swiss artists – went so far as to protest, officially, the patronage that the Swiss ambassador in Brussels had granted to Vogel's oratorio *Wagadu* (conducted by Hermann Scherchen), owing to the presence of Basel's Sterk'sche Privatchor.<sup>65</sup> And the hitches in the path towards admission to the ASM – which Vogel had officially requested in 1953 – constitute a real psychodrama. The request was acceptable, according to the statutes, given Vogel's uninterrupted residence in Switzerland since 1939, but not according to the committee presided over by Paul Sacher, who considered him “unassimilated.” After having settled upon a sort of exam and a series of limitations, a meeting with Sacher ended with the proposal to admit the applicant as “ausländische Mitglieder des STV.”<sup>66</sup>

63 Bernard Geller, “75 ans de réalisations. Histoire de l'Association des Musiciens suisses / 75 Jahre Aufbau. Geschichte des Schweizerischen Tonkünstlerverein”, in: *Tendances et réalisations. Volume commémoratif publié à l'occasion du septante-cinquième anniversaire de l'Association des Musiciens Suisses (1900–1975) / Tendenzen und Verwirklichungen. Festschrift des Schweizerischen Tonkünstlerverein aus Anlass seines 75-jährigen Bestehens (1900–1975)*, hrsg. von Max Favre, Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1975, p. 58 (French ed.), p. 61 (German ed.).

64 Similar vicissitudes were experienced by another composer emigrated to Switzerland in 1949: Sándor Veress. His request for Swiss citizenship, deposited in 1972 was only received in 1991 due to bureaucratic difficulties (see Doris Lanz, “Ein gewundener Weg zur Passhöhe. Dokumente zu Sándor Veress' Einbürgerung in die Schweiz”, in: *Sándor Veress. Komponist-Lehrer-Forscher*, hrsg. von dies. und Anselm Gerhard, Kassel [...]: Bärenreiter, 2008, pp. 241–277).

65 Thomas Gartmann, *Der Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein 1933 bis 1945: ein Berufsverband, der sich nicht mit politischen Fragen befasst (?)*, in: *Musik im Exil*, pp. 39–58: 51.

66 Friedrich Geiger, “Musik und Macht. Paul Sacher als Präsident des Schweizerischen Tonkünstlerverein”, in: *Paul Sacher – Facetten einer Musikpersönlichkeit*, hrsg. von Ulrich Mosch, Mainz: Schott, 2006, pp. 153–159. This did not prevent Sacher, many years later, from commissioning Vogel to write the *Komposition für Kammerorchester* (1976). Regarding his “nationalistic” *forma mentis* with respect to filling official positions, one must recall his polemical stand, as honorary president of the ASM, against Martin Fläming, “Landeskirchenmusikdirektor der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche” (Music Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church) in Saxony, who had applied for a position in Bern in 1962: he was described as a “refugee from East Germany” (ibid., p. 151).



Despite the fact that conditions had changed since the long-past end of the war and that totalitarianism was no longer creating pressure at the borders, the siege mentality with respect to foreigners persisted for a long time.<sup>67</sup> For a similar period, this attitude was accompanied by resistance towards radical methods, and dodecaphony was judged to be “kompliziert”, “konstruiert” or “rabiät”<sup>68</sup> – to such an extent that in a circular of April 1953, in which the ASM’s committee had to make a decision regarding the admission of Jacques Wildberger on the basis of three compositions that he had presented, Sacher cynically declared: “Keine Jury wird diese ‘Werke’ annehmen, wir werden sie nie hören müssen & könnten deshalb ruhig Aufnahme beschliessen.”<sup>69</sup>

The spiritual defence of the country was almost obsessively interpreted in a heatedly protectionistic manner, to such an extent that in 1940 even Hermann Scherchen – a maestro to whom Swiss music owed more than to anyone else – had his application for membership in the ASM turned down because the statutes required a residency of at least ten years for foreigners. But behind this legalistic attitude lurked opposition to what the conductor represented culturally, as was demonstrated by the association’s intervening with the Foreigners’ Police bureau so that Scherchen would not be allowed to teach a composition course at the Bern Conservatory. This intervention originated with Paul Sacher, who, once again, was particularly active in defending the rights of the natives: in 1942, in keeping with the stricter rules applied to foreigners, he called for “a purge” in the lists of the members (“eine sofortige Säuberung des Mitgliederbestandes”). This watchful zeal was then extended to other associations, such as the Union of Professional Conductors, which intervened, for instance, against the engagement of Paul Klecki (a.k.a. Kletzki) – the Jewish maestro who had had to leave Poland with the arrival of the Nazis – for a concert with

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67 This is demonstrated also by Sacher’s intervention, as president of the ASM, to block the nomination of Bernhard Paumgartner to the directorship of the Basel Conservatory in 1947; the latter was a prestigious musician and musicologist, but he was an Austrian citizen (Ibid., pp. 151–152). The minutes (edited by Sacher) of the ASM committee’s meeting of 21 January 1936 document the association’s attentive vigilance towards foreign artists (the baritone Hermann Schey, the Italian tenor Salvati, and the composer Erwin Lendvai, who was looking for a position as conductor of “Arbeitermännerchor”, a working men’s choir), so that they would not escape the attention of the authorities. Gartmann, “Weitergehen, den Weg”, p. 34.

68 Geiger, *Musik und Macht*, pp. 129–130.

69 Ibid., p. 130. The same happened to Hermann Meier, a pupil of Wladimir Vogel, who adopted twelve-tone technique during the 1940s. See Urs Peter Schneider, “Verschiedenes zu Hermann Meier”, in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 108 (December 2009), pp. 6–23.



the Radio Beromünster orchestra in 1944.<sup>70</sup> It mattered little that impediments of this sort were dictated above all by the wish to defend Swiss artists' professional space from competition. In themselves, these acts went beyond pure administrative procedures: they prevented occasions for enriching the country's cultural life. The closed attitudes that had been decided upon as a response to the advent of totalitarianism at the nation's borders were often accompanied by a sense of peril regarding infiltrations that might destabilise the aesthetic order, which, at the time, was perceived as a civic virtue. Paul Sacher stated this as early as 1935, in an article in the *Schweizerische Musikzeitung*, in which, notwithstanding his pride in the historic role of our country as a land of political asylum, he dared to ask whether or not it was opportune to grant citizenship to foreign artists when faced with the fact that "the evolution of our musical life does not necessarily benefit when it falls under the foreigner's influence."<sup>71</sup> Thus it is clear that in such a context, there was maximum suspicion towards radical artistic expressions and that the attitude towards dodecaphony in particular was one of open hostility. The fact that adherence to the twelve-tone system was anything but neutral is clear not only from the second part of Vogel's *Thyl Claes* and by Vogel's role in supporting the aesthetic path chosen by Luigi Dallapiccola in his *Canti di prigionia*,<sup>72</sup> written during the same time, but also from the work of Erich Schmid, the first Swiss dodecaphonic composer: among those of his works that remained unplayed, owing to his isolation, there were four a cappella cho-

70 Gartmann, *Das Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein*, pp. 55–56. "Die Schweiz ist stolz darauf, durch alle Zeiten der Ort emigrierter Ausländer gewesen zu sein [...] Für uns drängt sich nur die nahezu unlösliche Frage auf, wie die einheimischen Künstler [...] vor der ihnen daraus erwachsenden Konkurrenz geschützt werden können. Auch die Einbürgerung wird ja von Ausländern leider häufig nicht aus idealen Gründen erworben." This is what Sacher wrote as far back as 1935 in the *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* (see Jürg Erni, *Paul Sacher Musiker und Mäzen – Aufzeichnungen und Notizen zu Leben und Werk*, Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1999, p. 166) – the review that did not fail to publish various writing by exiles from Nazi Germany, such as Leo Kestenberg, Hans Mersmann, Hans Gál, Otto Erich Deutsch, Rudolf Klein, Ernst Krenek, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt and Willi Reich (Gartmann, "Weitergehen, den Weg", pp. 33–34). But this was only after 1938 – whereas previously it had published reviews of musical activity in Germany by German critics who did not hide their alignment with national politics (Walton, "Heil Dir, Helvetia!", pp. 313–317). Concerning the vicissitudes of Paul Klecki see Antonio Baldassarre, "Paul Klecki: Dirigent und Komponist im Exil. Versuch einer Interpretation seines Schaffens im biographischen Kontext", in: *Musik im Exil*, pp. 11–38.

71 Gartmann, *Das Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein*, p. 50.

72 Carlo Piccardi, "Wladimir Vogel – Aspetti di un'identità in divenire", in: *Komponisten des 20. Jahrhunderts in der Paul Sacher Stiftung*, hrsg. von Hans Jörg Jans, Basel: Paul Sacher Stiftung, 1986, pp. 200–203.



ruses (*Gesänge der Zeit*, Op. 15, on poems by the worker-poet Bruno Schönliank), conceived in 1930 and revised in 1940. The last of these, programmatically addressed to the “betrayed” and to the “oppressed,” incites people to rise up at the sight of the “great light,” which enflames the vocal texture through the tension of extreme registers, lacerating it by the dilation of intervals. Thus, there was a reason why Swiss musicians looked suspiciously at a compositional practice that would inevitably take its place here as in the rest of Europe, but with a noteworthy delay.

A special distinguishing mark of twentieth-century modernity, must be attributed to jazz, and the radio, here as elsewhere, was one of its principal means of diffusion. The fact that a form of expression that was famously seen as a demonstration of internationalism, city life and youthful spirit appeared during the decade prior to the Second World War (when the international political situation caused Switzerland to shut itself, with increasing rigidity, within the confines of its heritage as symbolised by its ageold myths) posed a problem that was not only social but also, and to a considerable extent, political. One symptom is the fact that in 1942, the Farmer’s Union asked the directors of the Swiss Radio to broadcast jazz only after 9 p.m., when farmers were already in bed<sup>73</sup>. But in cities, too, opposition to this syncopated music, which was considered deviant, sometimes took on authoritarian connotations: the campaign against it in Basel’s bars and dance halls in 1940 and the following years reflects this situation, which reached surprising levels of hysteria<sup>74</sup>. The truth is that German Switzerland, which was most exposed to pressures from the agrarian sector, was heavily influenced by the farmer’s strong roots in tradition – a tradition closely bound up with patriotic demonstrations. These were believed to be under attack by “a new illness, a real plague” (“ein neues Unheil, eine wahre Seuche”) – that is, “by jazz music, which threatens to supplant the good, domestic rural dance music (“Ländler-Tanzmusik”), as the *Schweizer Musiker-Revue* declared in 1944<sup>75</sup>. Although an important spot was given to Teddy Stauffer and Fred Böhler’s orchestras in Zurich’s National Exposition in 1939<sup>76</sup>, thanks to the international success of some of these Swiss combos, this type of music remained suspect until the end of the war and the concomitant “spiritual defence of the country.” Radio Geneva demonstrated the greatest degree of openness towards this new musical language, and the activism of its director, Félix Pommier, led to

73 Mäusli, “Ein Tanzorchester mit Schlagzeug ist eine Jazzband”, in: *Jazz und Sozialgeschichte*, hrsg. von ders., Zürich: Chronos, 1994, p. 23.

74 Mäusli, *Jazz und geistige Landesverteidigung*, Zürich: Chronos, 1995, pp. 84–94.

75 Ibid., p. 121.

76 Ibid., p. 141.



the idea of creating a small jazz ensemble under Bob Engel, in 1935; it was meant to serve all three national radio networks with six hours of broadcasts<sup>77</sup>. The German Swiss Radio, however, was rather hesitant about this – so much so that the director-general, Alfred Glogg, even forbade the broadcasting of hot jazz that Radio Beromünster had picked up from the antenna of Radio Sottens; he later had to modify that directive<sup>78</sup>. This happened in the summer of 1940, when France had capitulated to the Nazi German army – thus one suspects that the move was connected with the intention of not irritating Germany, which, as was well known, had for some time limited the broadcasting of jazz. It is in fact noteworthy that in 1943, after the German defeat at Stalingrad and the Allies's gaining of the upper hand in the war, the German Swiss Radio became more open to this kind of music and even created its own jazz orchestra<sup>79</sup>.

Despite this situation, it was actually from our country that an invitation went out to re-establish relations that had been interrupted by the war, among musicians who had adopted Schönberg's method and who had been separated as a result of political events. On 12 December 1948, at Orselina, Wladimir Vogel held a seminar to prepare for an international congress on twelve-tone music, which was then held in Milan from 4 to 7 May 1949 and gathered a significant international group of composers who had already distinguished themselves within this new trend: Luigi Dallapiccola, Riccardo Malipiero, Serge Nigg, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Eunice Catunda, Hans Joachim Koellreutter and André Souris. Also present

77 Ibid., p. 134.

78 Ibid., p. 142. Artur Beul, a composer of successful jazz-influenced songs, has testified that his "Swing in Switzerland" was some time forbidden within the radio's programming. See Gabriela Schöb, "'S mues scho e biz mee dehinder sii' – Schweizer Schlager und 'Geistige Landesverteidigung' – Zusammenhänge zwischen Musik und einer Mentalität gewordenen Ideologie", in: *Schweizer Töne*, p. 206.

79 Mäusli, *Jazz und geistige Landesverteidigung*, pp. 142–146. Concerning the repercussions of the international situation (German in particular) for the presence of jazz in Swiss radio programmes see also Theo Mäusli, "The Swiss Music Scene in the 1930s: A Mirror of the European Conditions?", in: *Music and Nazism*, hrsg. von Michael H. Kater und Albrecht Riethmüller, Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003, pp. 258–268. Similar prudence – not to say opportunism – was to be found at the same time in the Schweizerische Musikforschende Gesellschaft, which only in 1943 – when the war had begun to go in favour of the Allies – admitted onto its committee three eminent researchers who had long since immigrated to Switzerland because they were Jewish; and it was also from that moment on that Willi Reich's signature began to appear regularly in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Walton, "Heil Dir, Helvetia!", p. 319). By engaging Bob Huber's orchestra in 1944, the German Swiss Radio finally equipped itself with a regular ensemble for recreational music (Bruno Rub, "Vom Beromünster-Mix zum DRS-2-Format – der Jazz im Deutschweizer Radio", in: *Jazz in der Schweiz. Geschichte und Geschichten*, hrsg. von Bruno Spoerri, Zürich: Chronos, 2005, p. 335).



were the few Swiss composers who used the system: Erich Schmid, Alfred Keller and Hermann Meier, in addition to Rolf Liebermann. To this list, the name of Edward Staempfli should also be added; he had resided in the Lugano area since 1944, and he participated as a pianist in the concerts held in conjunction with the meetings at Orselina and in Milan.<sup>80</sup> Beginning in 1949 he began to compose according to the Schönberg method. Although the Milanese congress was surpassed the following year by the “total serialisation” line in the summer courses that transferred the musical world’s attention to Darmstadt, it remains, historically, an important stage in the growing post-war affirmation of the creative potential of this radical compositional technique – a genre of modernism that had not compromised its principles and, above all, that had kept its distance from political events and had not allowed itself to be dragged into the whirlpool of nationalisms that were responsible for the devastation of the continent. It had re-emerged from the tragedy with all of its universalising power intact. Although the Milan congress ended with a generic profession of faith, it meant a great deal as a symbol of the search for motivations beyond national fences. We may ask, then, why it was that this meeting, which had been conceived in Switzerland, took place abroad, or, at the very least, why its follow-ups took place at Darmstadt in 1951 and at Salzburg in 1952 rather than in Switzerland.<sup>81</sup> The lack of connection to the international rebirth of artistic fervour was the price that music – the art that is most closely tied to the society of its day, especially in Switzerland – had to be pay for the long process of diminishing the isolationist spirit that had become entrenched during the world war. This also explains the Zurich Schauspielhaus’s lost opportunity to make itself Bertolt Brecht’s base of operations following his return to Europe from his American exile, before he found refuge with the Berliner Ensemble – where the Swiss Benno Besson blossomed, after having made contact with the German playwright in Zurich. Evidently the cold war atmosphere did not allow that institution to entrust itself openly to an artist who was outspokenly aligned with the communists.<sup>82</sup>

80 Piccardi, “Tra ragioni umane”, pp. 215, 256–257.

81 Gianmario Borio, “Kontinuität der Moderne?”, in: *Im Zenith der Moderne. Die Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946–1966*, hrsg. von ders. und Hermann Danuser, Freiburg (Breisgau): Rombach Verlag, 1997, vol. 1, pp. 183–184.

82 This is demonstrated by the lack of attention given to *Antigone*, which Brecht directed at Chur’s Stadttheater in February 1948, thanks to Hans Curjel. Zurich’s theatre hosted it without much fanfare during a single matinee in March. And despite allowing him to present the premiere of *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* on 5 June 1948, it didn’t give his name as director, attributing the staging instead to his assistant, Kurt Hirschfeld, as a result (so it seems) of problems with the Foreigners’ Police



The most sensational episode took place in 1944, when the German Swiss Radio chose Hermann Scherchen as head of musical programming and conductor of the reorganised Zurich studio orchestra. Although he had worked in favour of Swiss music as regular guest conductor of Winterthur's Musikkollegium Orchestra from 1923 to 1950 – where he distinguished himself for programming many performances of music by contemporary Swiss composers<sup>83</sup> – Scherchen was a German citizen and a political leftist. The choice of a foreign musician actually led the Association of Swiss Musicians to call upon its members to boycott the radio and, during a special meeting, to petition the Federal Council to see to it that the position was given to a Swiss musician, “inasmuch as the nomination of a foreigner, alien to the Swiss mentality (“der zu dem schweizerischem Wesen fremd ist”), to the post of music director of the German Swiss Radio Orchestra, official and representative in Switzerland and abroad, signifies an undeserved moral and artistic degradation of our musicians”<sup>84</sup>. In this case, the administration of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation resisted the pressure and rejected the resignation that the conductor had turned in. By giving this important position to Scherchen, the administration demonstrated an openness that was quite audacious during those years of strong inward-turning tendencies, because Scherchen brought with him new organisational ideas (thanks to the experience he had gained at Radio Königsberg from 1928 to 1931) and, more generally, because of the open-mindedness shown towards personalities who were bringing in new ideas from abroad<sup>85</sup>.

Some years later, however, after Scherchen had spoken (23 June 1950) about “Czechoslovakia 1950” during a cultural week organised by the Swiss Worker's Party (Partei der Arbeit) and had used positive terms to describe his experiences at the Prague Spring Festival in 1949 and 1950, fierce polemics broke out in the press over the presumed scandal of a high func-

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bureau (Völker, “Welttheater in der Enge”, pp. 71–81). Concerning the presence of German artists in the Zurich Theatre during the thirties and forties see *Das verschonte Haus. Das Zürcher Schauspielhaus im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, hrsg. von Dieter Bachmann und Rolf Schneider, Zürich: Amman Verlag, 1987. A similar situation characterised the Lucerne Festival. See to this effect Verena Naegele, “Luzern als ‘Gegenfestival’: Mythos und Realität. Die Anfänge der Internationalen musikalischen Festwochen Luzern”, in: *Musik im Exil*, pp. 237–254.

83 Pauli, “Dossier 769033”, pp. 9–10.

84 Gartmann, “Weitergehen, den Weg”, p. 35.

85 With respect to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation's intellectual and political level, one example will suffice: Radio Beromünster's broadcast from Bern, on 12 May 1940, of the world premiere (directed by Ernst Bringolf) of Bertolt Brecht's *Der Verhör des Lukullus* (John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, London: Hertford and Harlow, 1959, p. 47).



tionary of the national radio praising a communist regime. On that occasion, and give the Cold War atmosphere, the German Swiss Radio did not have the strength to resist the overall pressure; since it could no longer keep the conductor in an administrative position, it asked him to resign<sup>86</sup>. Nevertheless, just as the same organisation had entrusted Huldreich Fröh (music director of the Cabaret Cornichon and composer of the incidental music for the first performance in Zurich of Bertolt Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, in 1943) with running its music division, even after Scherchen's departure it gave that position (until 1957) to Rolf Liebermann, who had just as intensively frequented the same nonconformist cabaret circles; this demonstrated the organisation's capacity to set itself up as an alternative to the conservatism that dominated other official institutions.

For the matter, Liebermann – Vogel's pupil in Switzerland – had been one of the few people behind the first initiative aimed at re-establishing the war-interrupted relations with musicians who had adopted Schoenberg's method and had been dispersed and separated by political events. In view of this, we may ask the question of why Switzerland – the only country in the centre of Europe that the war had spared and whose institutions had remained intact – missed the objective of becoming the centre of musical renewal, while a small German town (Darmstadt) assumed this role. The Basel Conservatory's composition course that was instituted in 1960 and entrusted to Pierre Boulez – followed by Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1963 and by Henri Pousseur in 1964 – arrived late in the day and as an imported academic gesture, whereas if the country had been capable of abandoning its prejudices and of making use of the talents it was hosting, the conditions for disseminating an aesthetic model after the war would have existed much earlier.<sup>87</sup> And the fact that those courses were conceived and financed by Paul Sacher – in other words, by the same leader of Swiss musical life who had previously been one of the main supporters of “conditional” modernism – ought to give us pause. His new openness must be interpreted within the framework of the changes that had taken place since the war. It was in stark contrast to the position of Ernest Ansermet, the

86 Hansjörg Pauli, *Hermann Scherchen 1891–1966*, Zürich: Kommissionsverlag Hug & Co., 1993, pp. 44–45. Concerning the difficult relationship between Scherchen and Switzerland see also Konrad Rudolf Lienert, “Aufbruch, Ermüdung, Kesseltreiben. Dass der Dirigent Hermann Scherchen sich zum Kommunismus bekannte, gab seiner schwierigen Beziehung zur Schweiz den Rest”, in: *In den Hinterzimmern des Kalten Krieges. Die Schweiz und ihr Umgang mit prominenten Ausländern 1945–1960*, hrsg. von Jürg Schoch, Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2009, pp. 233–254.

87 Robert Piencikowski, “Ein pädagogisches Experiment – die Meisterkurse für Komposition an der Musik-Akademie Basel Anfang der sechziger Jahre”, in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 262–269. See also Theo Hirsbrunner, “Pierre Boulez als Lehrer in Basel”, in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 23 (February 1990), pp. 12–14.



other historic exponent of musical modernism in Switzerland, who, precisely in 1961, had published his book, *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine* – a treatise that tried to establish a borderline between indistinct organised sounds in the serial system and tonality as the only language that could claim a reason for being expressive. Roman Brotbeck has explained the change in attitude as a consequence of Switzerland's new-found position as a flourishing country with a modern economy, more open to things international and converted to belief in the coexistence of tradition and progress, without precluding anything. The avant-garde, which had previously been looked upon with suspicion owing to its extremist aspects – the equivalent of revolutionary attitudes – took on an alternative meaning in this new phase: in opposition to the Eastern European countries, in which socialist realism was imposed from on high, the avant-garde bore witness to the highest degree of the freedom that Western society allowed its artists, who could work with individual autonomy of expression.<sup>88</sup>

88 Brotbeck, "Expoland", pp. 274–277. Concerning the conditioning of the "geistige Landesverteidigung" even after the war see: Roman Brotbeck, "Dauer und Verdrängung, Zur musikalischen Situation nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg", in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 120 (25.–26.05.1996); Thomas Meyer, *Augenblicke für das Ohr, Musik im alten Schweizer Film – Facetten einer wenig beachteten Kunst*, Zürich: Kommissionsverlag Hug & Co., 1999; Theo Mäusli, "Schweizerische Musik – ein Sektor in der Front der geistigen Landesverteidigung", in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 417–428; Thomas Meyer, "Mehr als ein mühsamer Broterwerb – Arthur Honeggers Beitrag zum Schweizer Filmschaffen", in: *Musik im Exil*, pp. 225–236; Thomas Gartmann, "La música de hoy en Suiza: al encuentro de las culturas", in: *Revista de Occidente*, 310 (March 2007), pp. 30–46, to which one can add the works concerning other artistic fields: Bernard Gasser, *Ciné-journal suisse. Aperçu historique (1923–1945) et analyse de tous le numéros de 1945*, Lausanne: Travelling, 1979 (= Travelling, 53, 54); Hervé Dumont, *Geschichte des Schweizer Films. Spielfilme 1896–1965*, Lausanne: Schweizer Filmarchiv/Cinémathèque Suisse, 1987; Alexander J. Seiler, "Die entfremdete Heimat", in: *Film in der Schweiz*, hrsg. von Bernhard Giger et al., München/Wien: Carl Hanser, 1978, p. 7; Martin Schlappner – Martin Schaub, *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart des Schweizer Films (1896–1987)*, Zürich: Schweizerisches Filmzentrum, 1987, p. 25; *La Suisse, les Alliés et le cinéma: Propagande et représentation, 1939–1945*, sous la dir. de Gianni Haver, Lausanne: Antipodes, 2001; *Le cinéma des pays autoritaires et leur impacte en Suisse*, sous la dir. de id., Lausanne: Antipodes, 2004. And a reminder of some more general works: Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*, Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1970–1976, vol. 3–7, 8–9 (Dokumente); Werner Möckli, *Schweizergeist – Landigeist? Das schweizerische Selbstverständnis beim Ausbruch des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Zürich: Schulthess, 1973; *Die Landi. Vor 50 Jahren in Zürich. Erinnerungen, Dokumente, Betrachtungen*, hrsg. von Kenneth Angst und Alfred Cattani, Stäfa: Rothenhäusler Verlag, 1989; Catherine Guanzini – Peter Wegelin, *Kritischer Patriotismus: Neue Helvetische Gesellschaft / Patriotisme critique: Nouvelle Société helvétique / Patriottismo critico: Nuova Società Helvetica 1914–1989*, Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1989.



## Emancipation and Radical Impulses

A significant moment occurred at the world festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Zurich in 1957, which is remembered for the first staged performance of Schönberg's *Moses und Aron*. The festival refreshed memories of the Swiss city's centrality twenty years earlier, at the time of the premieres of works for the theatre by Berg and Hindemith, and it included an exhibition of the most advanced trends in serialism – in particular, the presentation by the RAI's Phonology Studio in Milan of a series of works that included compositions by Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna and Henri Pousseur, organised in collaboration with Radio Zurich.<sup>89</sup> Thanks to its technological thrust, the radio – which had already served in the 1930s and '40s as an emblem of modernism and a very important instrument for the diffusion of new music<sup>90</sup> – now took on a propulsive role.

The radio – in this case, the Basel studio, thanks to its director, Fritz Ernst, and to the head of its music department, Conrad Beck – had already received recognition for having organised a symposium on “Elektronische und konkrete Musik” (19–21 May 1955)<sup>91</sup>, to which the pioneers of electro-acoustic music had been invited. Talks were given by Herbert Eimert and Werner Meyer-Eppeler, founders of Cologne Radio's Electronic Music Studio<sup>92</sup>, as well as by Pierre Schaeffer, founder of the ORTF's Groupe de Recherche de Musique concrete, who presented compositions by himself and Pierre Henry; and by Maurice Martenot, inventor of the ondes Martenot. This instrument was heard in a concerto composed by André Jolivet and conducted by Paul Sacher, who also conducted the premiere of the *Concerto for Mixturtrautonium and Electronic Percussion* (a magnetic tape produced by Radio Bremen and Radio Basel) by Oskar Sala, who performed the work and gave a talk about it together with Friedrich Trautwein, inventor of the trautonium; the instrument was also discussed in a lecture by Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt.

89 Willimann, *Pro Musica*, p. 143. For more on the whole event, see Heidy Zimmermann's, “Der Klang des grossen, weiten Welt. Zum Weltmusikfest der IGNM in Zürich 1957”, in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 134–144.

90 Carlo Piccardi, “Tra creatività e realtà quotidiana. La musica moderna alla radio svizzera”, in: *AAA – TAC Acoustical Arts and Artifacts – Technology, Aesthetics, Communication*, 1 (2004), pp. 29–52, more complete version of Carlo Piccardi, “Moderne Musik im Schweizer Radio”, in *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, pp. 121–136.

91 Zimmermann, “Der Klang des grossen, weiten Welt”, p. 139, and Fred Prieberg, *Musica ex machina*, Berlin [...]: Verlag Ullstein, 1960, pp. 128–130.

92 Among other things, some very recent compositions were presented: *Studie II* (1954) by Karlheinz Stockhausen and *Seismogramme* (1955) by Henri Pousseur.



Hansjörg Pauli, as a “vaterlandloser Geselle”, remembered his programmes of avant-garde music as the product of a loss of direction (“Als ich in den frühen sechsigern via Zürcher Radio über die Gegenseite zu informieren anfang, bedeutete man mir, ich würde der kulturellen Überfremdung Vorschub leisten”),<sup>93</sup> yet those broadcasts contributed significantly to the modernisation of the Swiss musical scene. At almost the same time, in 1959, Jacques Guyonnet founded the Studio de musique contemporaine in Geneva, while, thanks to André Zumbach, the Centre de recherches sonores de la Radio suisse romande was initiated. The Diorama de la musique contemporaine began its operations in 1964, and for over a decade – once again, thanks to the radio – it provided a very up-to-date overview of new music.<sup>94</sup> This did not happen without difficulties, some of them dramatic, as can be deduced from the “manifesto,” published by Guyonnet in the *Journal de Genève* in 1966, against conformism in French Swiss musical life; this bears witness to an authentic generational conflict.<sup>95</sup>

Assistance for the forces of regeneration arrived in 1964 from Lausanne’s national exposition, which was intent upon providing a fresh image of a technologically up-to-date country, no longer faithful to its centuries-old principles and traditions merely for a sort of complacent contemplation of its own diversity, but as a solid base from which to take off towards future horizons. The Swiss artistic scene found a motivation therein for leaving its protectionistic circle of firm values behind and for risking a lively confrontation with the most advanced tendencies. Despite the fact that the exposition’s official cantata, *Croire et créer*, had been commissioned of Heinrich Sutermeister, a representative of traditionalism,<sup>96</sup> radical currents managed to take their place in a process that, from our perspective, may even be seen as a turning-point. It must also be

93 Willimann, *Pro Musica*, p. 202.

94 Piccardi, *Tra creatività e realtà quotidiana*, pp. 47–48; see also Piccardi, “Moderne Musik im Schweizer Radio”, p. 132. See also Philippe Albéra, “Musique suisse du XXe siècle”, in: *La vie musicale en Suisse*, p. 30.

95 “J’accuse Ernest Ansermet et le ‘milieu’ qui, pour des motifs sans doute forts divers, a suivi la consigne de ses aberrants interdits esthétiques, d’avoir – consciemment ou non – étouffé une génération de musiciens” (Jacques Guyonnet, “Pour une politique de la musique”, in: *Journal de Genève*, 29–30 October 1966, reprinted in: *Schweizerische Musikzeitung*, 107, 1967, p. 135). See also Stenzl, “Aber abseits wer ists?”, p. 128.

96 It must be said that on this occasion in the army pavilion, the public was invited to see a projection of the film *Wehrhafte Schweiz*, where one could observe a continuity with the spirit of defence which had fed the consciences during the war, set to music by Robert Blum, the composer of soundtracks for several patriotic films in earlier times (Meyer, *Augenblicke für das Ohr*, p. 71).



remembered that the most important musical event was represented by Rolf Liebermann's symphony, *Les échanges*, for 156 electronically controlled office machines, in the pavilion that illustrated the Swiss economy's worldwide penetration. The arrival on the scene of a new generation of composers – Jürg Wyttenbach, Hans Ulrich Lehmann, Heinz Holliger, Thomas Kessler, Eric Gaudibert, Francesco Hoch, Balz Trümpy, Gérard Zinsstag et al. – quickly reduced the distance between our aesthetic frontiers and those that had been expanding internationally. Although no Swiss had been involved in Hermann Scherchen's work at the Experimental Electro-acoustical Studio founded in 1954 at Gravesano, near Lugano, ten years later the transformation was already in progress. (At a seminar held at the Studio from 23 July to 5 August 1956, three key new works from the Darmstadt workshop were presented: Pierre Boulez's *Structures*, Luigi Nono's *Incontri* and Stockhausen's *Kontrapunkte*. The event went unnoticed.)<sup>97</sup> Thanks to the above-mentioned courses in Basel, the assumption of professorships of composition in Swiss conservatories by new people – Klaus Huber in Basel in 1964, Rudolf Kelterborn in Zurich in 1968, Jacques Wildberger and Robert Suter in Basel in 1968 – and Klaus Huber's composition seminary at Boswil in 1969, a new network had been created to prepare the way for a changing of the guard.<sup>98</sup>

The process had accelerated, but it needed time before its objectives could be recognised. Although the post-war avant-garde had taken shape as a real alternative experience at a distance from organisational norms (even the ISCM, which had played a key role between the two world wars, lapsed at that point), within Switzerland that phase continued to be experienced as a collective fact rather than an individual one, as if solving the problem depended upon the conquest of officialdom. In other words, the strategy was to occupy the ASM and change its course, instead of trying to counter its moderate tendencies. At first, a concert of experimental music was presented under the name of *Avant-garde in Switzerland* at the association's festival in Lugano on 30 May 1970, but the work of Pierre Mariétan (horn), Giuseppe Giorgio Englert (tape recorder), Rainer Boesch (piano

97 Carlo Piccardi, "Alla scoperta di Hermann Scherchen", in: *Bloc notes*, 48 (2003; *La musica nella Svizzera italiana*, a cura di id.), p. 141. At the seminar, tape recordings of these compositions, along with Schönberg's *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31, and Webern's *Variations*, Op. 30, were played (Luigi Nono, "Die neue Kompositionstechnik", in: *Gravesaner Blätter*, 6, December 1956, pp. 19–20, published in Italian translation in: Luigi Nono, *Scritti e colloqui*, a cura di Angela Ida De Benedictis e Veniero Rizzardi, Lucca: Ricordi-LIM, 2001, vol. 1, p. 15).

98 Patrick Müller, *Kompositionslehre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, in: *Entre Denges et Denezzy*, p. 259.



and machines) and Urs Peter Schneider (electric organ) was received negatively by the members.<sup>99</sup> It is worth noting that three of these four Swiss artists were working abroad.<sup>100</sup> Nor was there a warmer welcome at the 1972 festival in Bern for the Neue Horizonte Ensemble, which played compositions by Mariétan, Schneider, Boesch and Roland Moser. This is why the association, “which had always considered itself one big family,” but which was worried about having to confront a schism at the festival in Yverdon in 1973, set up an “concert d’information sur la musique d’avant-garde;” it included three pieces of electro-acoustic music by Werner Kaegi, Roland Moser and Rainer Boesch, followed by a collective improvisation, for which the presence of almost all the participants was requested.<sup>101</sup> This premise insured that in the following years advanced music was not segregated, but was instead mixed in with all the other types of music; in the end, this development completely altered the equilibrium, so that looking ahead towards innovative, internationally competitive objectives was favoured over fidelity to a sort of “national popular” model.

The equilibrium was broken in the 1960s, during the years in which even Switzerland lived through the youth movement’s social protests. Indeed, the disturbances in Zurich – the so-called Globus-Krawall of 1968 – demonstrated a degree of radicalisation that was significantly higher than what might have been expected in a country whose social system was, on the whole, tranquil. The “Swiss malaise”<sup>102</sup> also involved the associative relationship that had conjoined the world of culture and art with the institution, up to that point. In this sense, Switzerland’s 1968 was doubly radical: on the one hand, it was recognisable as a repercussion of the international phenomenon; on the other, it was a specific reaction to the values represented by the “spiritual defence of the country” that had continued to be operative long after the end of the war.<sup>103</sup> As a result, and for a fundamentally ethical reason, the unity among Swiss writers was broken. With the creation of the Olten Group movement in 1971, the most significant part of the cultural centre became an expression of the bad conscience of the most aware sector of the citizenry against the selfishness, materialism, pettiness and obtuseness of post-war Swiss society, by de-

99 Geller, “75 ans de réalisations”, p. 139 (french ed.), p. 146 (german ed.).

100 Carlo Piccardi, “Lugano: musicisti svizzeri in festa”, in: *Lo spettatore musicale*, July-August-September 1970, p. 24.

101 Geller, “75 ans de réalisations”, p. 147 (french ed.), p. 156 (german ed.).

102 Georg Kreis, *Die Schweiz in der Geschichte. 1700 bis heute*, Zürich: Silva, 1997, p. 264.

103 Mathias Spohr, “Wie kommen Schweizer zu identischen Zeichen ohne einheitliche Sprache?”, in: *Schweizer Töne*, p. 248.



nouncing the contradictions of society and political and economic scandals.<sup>104</sup>

Politics alone could not solve these problems; thus, as at the time of the “spiritual defence”, politicians appealed to the world of culture to reinforce the national conscience. In 1996, after the question of the Nazis’ victims funds hidden in the Confederation’s banking institutions had exploded, an independent commission of experts, headed by Jean-François Bergier, was entrusted with the task of shedding light on what happened and on Switzerland’s behaviour during the Second World War. Given the country’s ruined image, economists and politicians called upon the world of culture to restore our purity, in a sort of lasting pact that would be able to hold up under varied and contrasting circumstances. In parallel, and thanks to culture’s symbolic value, the honing of a critical conscience was also, if not above all, connected to culture, which, during the last forty years, has begun to act in provocative ways. In music’s case, the post-Webernian path and, in general, the choice of radicalism, were also perceived as a form of liberation from the closed-mindedness of Swiss musicians vis-à-vis foreign approaches during the inter-war period. This may explain why the confrontational attitude – which created in every nation a new radicalism based on the rebellious youth movement of 1968 – lasted longer in Switzerland than elsewhere, and why it is still going on: experimental practices are widespread, and the overall scene is independent, especially with respect to the cinema, which most directly reflects reality. It seems set to become almost a common denominator within the framework of the country’s cultural and linguistic variety, just like the boring conformism on national values that obtained in the previous phase.

As to music, emphasis must be laid on the practice of improvisation that became widespread during the same period, in the liberating wake of spontaneity (seen as an objective). Elsewhere, this tendency was marginal, but in Switzerland it motivated and continues to motivate a noteworthy group of musicians: Peter Streiff, Pierre Favre, Irene Schweizer, Peter K. Frey, Jacques Siron, Christoph Baumann, Christian Kobi, Fritz

104 Solidarity was shown towards immigrants in the face of growing xenophobic attacks, and with the “Bern Declaration” of 1968, awareness of the North-South problem began to develop. Jean Ziegler launched his missionary-like offensive by denouncing perversions within the realm of high finance. Similarly, in 1989 indignation grew over the scandal of the federal police’s illegal gathering and registering of information about thousands of citizens, which caused Max Frisch to turn in his Swiss passport – and the following year, on the occasion of the awarding of the Duttweiler prize to Václav Havel, Friedrich Dürrenmatt provocatively described Switzerland as a prison. More recently, a sense of guilt has emerged over the question of the Holocaust victims’ goods that had been hidden away in bank vaults (Kreis, *Die Schweiz in der Geschichte*, pp. 265–266).



Hauser, Jacques Demierre, Katharina Weber and others. Among its organic reference-points are the Internationale Tagungen für Improvisation, held triennially since 1990 and organised by Walter Fähndrich in Lucerne; Bern's Zoomin festival, held for the fourth time in 2007; the Taktlos and Ton Art festivals, also in Bern; and the Werkstatt für improvisierte Musik in Zurich, where, in the 1980s, collectives like Koprod, VAL 5 with Alfred Zimmerlin and Markus Eichenberger (among others), UnknownmiX with Magda Vogel and Ernst Thoma and the Drift dance ensemble participated.<sup>105</sup> The activities of clubs like the Domizil experimental electronic collective are concentrated in Zurich. Although, after nearly forty years, the phenomenon has lost much of its determination as a force of opposition, it is still attractive thanks to its value as an alternative aesthetic example.

All of this has taken place in our country alongside a considerable branching out of the various performing arts, visual arts and literature. This has often led to real events in sound that have stressed live, physical performance and have increased the liberating function of movement within the theatrical space. Vincent Barras and Pierre Thoma come from the literary arena, Gérald Minkoff from the plastic arts.<sup>106</sup> Christian Marclay has approached music via the plastic arts, whereas Ruedi Häusermann conceives of music as theatricality. *Skulptur und Komposition* was the title of a 1992 exhibition in Zurich in which the artist Niklaus Lehnherr and the composer Alfred Zimmerlin created the *Raum-Gänge* installation. Other interdisciplinary couplings of this sort have been attempted by Stefan Rinderknecht, a musician from Baden, with Beat Zodener, an artist from Wettingen, and by Roland Dahinden, who has created sound installations for the works of Daniel Buren, Sol Le Witt and Philippe Deléglise.<sup>107</sup> Oscar Wiggli explores the generating material of his sculpture through the acoustic (not to say acousmatic) dimensions of his compositions, which are often connected to the sounds of the foundry from which his works

105 Peter Kraut, "Erfahrungen am Rande der Musik", in: *Performativ – Performance-Künste in der Schweiz / Le "performatif" – Les arts de la performance en Suisse*, hrsg. von Sybille Omlin, Zürich: Pro Helvetia, 2004, p. 65. This development, determined by the participation of a youthful audience, is often a result of putting alternative venues to use: the Rote Fabrik in Zurich, Kulturwerkstatt Kaserne in Basel, Reithalle and Dampfzentrale in Bern and Boa-Halle in Lucerne (Thomas Meyer, "Alternative Kulturbetriebe in der Schweiz", in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 28, May 1991, pp. 20–23). The connection between jazz and avant-garde music in Switzerland in terms of improvisation has been discussed by Thomas Meyer, "Improvisierte Musik in der Schweiz", in: *Dissonanz/Dissonance*, 22 (November 1989), pp. 19–24.

106 Kraut, "Erfahrungen am Rande", p. 65.

107 Thomas Meyer, "Quand la musique s'installe", in: *Passages*, 22 (Spring 1997), pp. 24–26.



emerge.<sup>108</sup> Listening to Jean Tinguely's crooked, caterpillar-like mechanisms helps to understand their alienated aspect.<sup>109</sup> The interdisciplinary entwining is becoming ever tighter, and the relationship is moving farther and farther away from the norm: at Basel's Gare du Nord, the staged concert or musical theatre is dominant.<sup>110</sup>

Improvisation as an open pathway to previously unknown experiences has become a given for the younger generation of composers, such as Silvie Courvoisier, Daniel Ott, Mischa Käser, Daniel Weissberg, Edu Haubensak and Dieter Jordi.<sup>111</sup> These new categories justified the creation, in 1985, of an improvisation class – unique in Europe – and taught by Fährndrich at Basel's Musik-Akademie. At Bern's Hochschule der Künste a class in music and media arts has been initiated, while at Bienne's HKB the pianist Pierre Sublet aims his teaching in the direction of instrumental theatre.<sup>112</sup> The fact that the aspects that subvert the approved languages have emerged for the most part in the German-language part of the nation probably has to do with the destabilising element created by Romanticism in German culture; this was less pronounced in the Latin sectors, which tended towards the norms of classical values.

For that matter, the tendency towards provocation has even broken into representative places – first, with the Olten Group's boycott of the Confederation's Seven Hundredth anniversary in 1991, and then with Ben Vautier's slogan, "Suiza no existe" in the Swiss pavilion at the World Fair in Seville in 1992; this was the main argument that led to the failure of the legislative initiative for giving one percent to culture.<sup>113</sup> The fact is

108 Francis Dhomont, *Métal vibrant*, ibid., pp. 36–37.

109 Andreas Langenbacher, *Les trompe-l'oreille de Jean Tinguely*, ibid., pp. 28–29.

110 The subject is treated more broadly in: Françoise Ninghetto, "Les débuts: de Dada à la performance, en passant par Fluxus et le happening / Die Anfänge: von Dada, Fluxus und Happening zur Performance"; Rayelle Niemann, "Der Körper als Medium: das Performance-Netzwerk Schweiz / Le corps comme instrument: la performance et son réseau en Suisse"; Dagmar Walser, "Das postdramatische Theater: auf dem Weg zur Performance? / Le théâtre postdramatique: sur la voie de la performance?"; Christina Thurner, "Aus der Reihe tanzen: Körper, Raum, Zeit / Danse à part: corps, espace et temps en mouvement", in: *Performativ*, pp. 17–58.

111 Kraut, "Erfahrungen am Rande", pp. 63–64.

112 Ibid., p. 66.

113 More recently the case of the film *Bienvenue en Suisse* (2004) – financed by the Federal Bureau of Culture – with an erotic pun on the surname of the Minister of the Interior Couchepin – and in 2005 the Thomas Hirschhorn's installation at the Swiss Cultural Centre in Paris (*Swiss Swiss Democracy*) insulting the right-wing federal councillor Christoph Blocher caused the politicians to overreact; in the first case, the director of the Federal Bureau of Culture resigned; in the second, parliament made a punitive decision to reduce by a Million Francs the federal subsidy to Pro Helvetia, the national foundation for culture, which had been the exhibition's curator.



that these are merely minor incidents (games played by each side to try to gain points) in a tight, necessity-based relationship between the two camps, which, in Switzerland, are more interdependent than ever. Paradoxically, although Switzerland does not have a centralised ministry of culture, it has always been forced to turn to culture as a means for furthering its identity as a nation in the collective celebratory rites of brotherhood – a difficult task in a country that is constitutionally characterised by diversity. In the Nineteenth Century, Switzerland's differences coexisted through an equilibrium that was certainly conservative but also necessary for safeguarding federalism – that is to say, the richness and autonomy of its components. This was done by showing that the values of Alpine culture constituted an identifying heritage, not only in the countryside but also in the industrial cities. Thus, the demonstrative function of culture, and especially of art, as a manifestation of the coexistence of these differences, became a necessity that was looked after by the professional associations of writers, musicians, painters, architects, directors etc., even when they didn't necessarily agree with the political choices. The growing sharpness of their critical attitudes did not stop artists from collaborating in events celebrating the Confederation's Seven Hundredth anniversary – of which they were the soul – or of contributing to Expo '02 by taking advantage of the means put at their disposal to a degree unknown, proportionally, in other countries. In recent years, they have brought life to the Festival of the Arts – at Lucerne in 1997 and in the Engadine in 2000. This festival is significant as a joint effort of the "club of five:" the Society of Swiss Painters, Sculptors and Architects; Association of Swiss Musicians; Swiss Filmmakers' Association; Swiss Writers' Society; and the Olten Group. Without having sacrificed anything of their radical visionary style – indeed, in some ways exaggerating their collective management of provocation – they have held onto the traditional concept of the festival as a priority of the communal event, inasmuch as it is a creative space, as opposed to an avant-garde that is accepted elsewhere as a laboratory for individuals. In other countries, regular meetings of the artistic professions – in the form of cultural assemblies – do not exist as they do each year at Solothurn's Literary Days and Cinema Days. Even the Swiss version of the techno movement, which has created an international reference-point with Zurich's Street Parade, has distinguished itself by transferring its deafening *raves* beyond the city limits and into the Alpine clearings and pastures.<sup>114</sup> The significant Alpentöne festival, a biennial event, began at Altdorf in 1999 on the crest of a wave of interest in the Alpine sound-perspectives

114 Christian Hubschmid, "Der Club und die Strasse: Der Performative Lebensraum", in: *Performativ*, pp. 73–74.



that was reborn when trumpeter Hans Kennel began playing the alpenhorn – as early as the 1983 Alpine Jazz Herd, with Jürg Solothurnmann, followed by the Contemporary Alphorn Orchestra, with Mytha and Habarigani – and then, in 1994, with trombonist Robert Morgenthaler's *Roots of Communication*: both of them were initiators of an original Swiss jazz current.<sup>115</sup> Although not all of them have achieved the level of results of violinist Paul Giger's brilliant meditations in sound (*Alpstein*, 1991)<sup>116</sup>, it is worth noting that significant numbers of artists have succumbed to the call of territorial identity as a way of recouping an archaic folk culture, even though they have chosen to perform in an international idiom. This culture has been revitalised precisely thanks to its having been mixed with an ethnic component, as, for example, in *Roots of Communication*, which moves from the alpenhorn to the Australian didgeridoo; at other times, it is used as a point of departure for unusual explorations in sound, as when Kennel converts the alpenhorn into an idiophonic instrument by rubbing it with the mouthpiece.<sup>117</sup> I am not aware of other countries in which "neo-traditional" forms have experienced a similar confrontation between original and experimental versions, as realised, for instance, by the Oberwalliser-Spillit, which has made itself available to Heinz Holliger, an avant-garde artist, to perform his *Alpcheher*.<sup>118</sup>

115 Peter Rüedi, "Patrie imaginaire", in: *Passages*, 22 (Spring 1997), p. 18; see also Peter Rüedi, "Der Gang um die Welt oder die lange Heimkehr – kleiner Versuch über Jazz und Volksmusik", in: *Jazz in der Schweiz*, pp. 394–401.

116 Roland and Gabriel Schiltknecht, George Gruntz, Mathias Rüegg, Christoph Baumann, Christy Doran, Werner Lüdi, Heiri Känzig, Mani Planzer, and Daniel Schnyder, in addition to the singers Erika Stucky, Betty Legler, Corin Curschellas, Christine Lauterburg and Eliana Burki.

117 This was also Balthasar Streiff's practice when he "roared" while playing the alpenhorn, or with the horn player in the Gelato Misto Musicale ensemble, who held it upside-down and sang through its bell.

118 See also the Stimmhorn Duo, made up of the poly-instrumentalists Balthasar Streiff and Christian Zehnder, who "cross the Alps" and adventurously join up with the sound universe and harmonics used in Tibetan meditational practices (Richard Butz, "CD – Coda", in: *Passages*, 22, Spring 1997, pp. 65–66). As a result of these practices, the term "Neue Volksmusik" imposed itself. Even if it loosely fits into the undifferentiated reality of World Music (as "alpine World Music"), thanks to an initiative of the national foundation for culture Pro Helvetia, launched in 2006 to encourage creativity in this domain (*echos*), one can affirm that the phenomenon has officially been recognised. Following the example of Holliger we have seen the emergence of a "Jodelopera" *Zimmerstund* by Daniel Fueter and a film *Urmusig* by Cyrill Schöpfer as well as other contributions by Urs Peter Schneider, Jürg Wyttenbach, Heinz Marti, Daniel Ott. This is not only an urban phenomenon (of the town creating a relationship with the countryside) but also the result of evolving contributions by popular musicians (Fränzti da Tschlin, the violinist Arnold (Noldi) Alder and the *Ensemble*



Despite everything that the research into experimental sound may signify with respect to the distancing and surpassing of established values, it is telling that an artist like Walter Fähndrich chose the peaceful little valley of Richisau, at the head of Klöntal lake, to disseminate an “Alpine benediction.”<sup>119</sup> The pioneer of this research, Pierre Mariétan of Canton Valais, who founded the Acoustical Laboratory for Urban Music in Paris in 1979, created *Paysmusique* in 1991 for the celebrations of the Confederation’s Seven Hundredth anniversary; this is an image in sound of Switzerland through the music of its dialects as taken from on-site recordings. Even for radical artists – those who have chosen to ignore their roots, often by fleeing from their mother country – a return is somehow necessary; this is true, above all, for the post-1968 artists who were particularly intolerant towards the dominant mentality, which was closed and short-sighted, not to say mean. The fate of many Swiss artists has been and still is expatriation, if only by virtue of the fact that the cultural capitals that are their reference-points (Paris, Berlin, Rome etc.) are located beyond their borders, since history passes through the metropolises. But “die fremde Stadt ist ja als die fremde Welt die Kälte, während das Eigene die Wärme ist.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, the call of one’s place of origin may win out, in the end, in a polarised situation of this sort.

Today, with openness prevailing over globalism, the balancing-point decidedly tends to lie outside the country, which is perceived as small and lacking in too many things; it is seen within a competitive image and compared with the great outside realities, and vain ambitions regarding abstract visions often assert themselves, above and beyond the evidence and of the urgent nature of concrete national issues. This happened with Expo 02, which looked towards a universal way of life that would seek a

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*Klan*, author of the “Jodelopera” *Loba*). Concerning these questions see Thomas Meyer, “Zäuerli un Hudigäggeler. Eine aufgefrischte Volksmusik boomt in der Schweiz”, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10.01.2009. See also Pirmin Bossart, “Im Nischengebirge”, in: *Musikszene Schweiz – Begegnungen mit Menschen und Orten*, hrsg. von Christoph Merki, Zürich: Chronos, 2009, p. 530–547. This anthology gives a rich overview of Switzerland’s multiple levels of musical production.

119 Thomas Meyer, “Ein Alpsegen von Walter Fähndrich”, in: *Das Klöntal*, Näfels: Museum des Landes Glarus, 1996, p. 12 ff. Concerning the practice of sound installations, of which Fähndrich has become a specialist see Thomas Meyer, “Das Netzwerk der Klänge in Raum und Zeit – Über die Arbeit von Klanginstallateuren, Klangräumern, Klanguausstellern und ähnlichen Freiklangberuflern in der Schweiz”, in: *Elektroakustische Musik in der Schweiz*, hrsg. von Bruno Spoerri, Zürich: Chronos, 2010 (forthcoming).

120 Peter von Matt, “Zirkelexistenzen – Die doppelte Heimat der Schweizer Literatur”, in: *Swiss Made*, p. 96. The author notes how the theme of the cold suffuses Swiss literature (Gotthelf, Keller, Inglin, Walser).



“modern” qualification for its values.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, the practice of harking back to cultural archetypes and the use of associations as a means of affirmation through the power of the collective remain typically Swiss characteristics, even in the realm of artistic behaviour. Inasmuch as they are practices that ensure a functional relationship with the institution – and this is especially clear in the case of subsidies granted to the film industry – these are factors aimed at preserving the organic nature of an artistic scene that denotes specifically national characteristics, perfectly integrated into the internationally accepted system of values. This is no longer an era of “national popular” communications, although the extremism in the denunciation of the established order in any case maintains its civic value. Yet the sense of participating in a common reality, and the mind-set that still causes people who work in the arts to recognise institutions as partners in dialogue, are traits that continue to distinguish Swiss artistic life. Thus, alongside the peculiarly Swiss forms of direct democracy, one may refer to “artistic citizenship.” Through the primary tool – associations – the arts sectors have developed a relationship that includes making claims upon the authorities and the establishment, but that, above all, makes them participants in society. One of the most recent examples is the vast “Gallerie 57/34.6 km” project, promoted by Pro Helvetia in the work sites for transalpine tunnels, the musical branches of which are called “Construction sonor.”<sup>122</sup> Even in situations in which the artistic product is radically distinct from everyday ways of feeling, these results often demonstrate artists’ dedication and their ability to direct their creative energies towards objectives that are of common interest and that possess social and civic relevance.

(English translation: Harvey Sachs)

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121 Carlo Piccardi, “Tra realtà e velleità – Riflettendo sui molti messaggi dell’Expo 02 appena conclusa”, in: *Corriere del Ticino*, 22.10.2002; and in more extended form in: *L’onda*, 110, 10.10.2002, pp. 2, 10.

122 This project, which was issued on two CDs published in 2004, brings together the elaborations realised by the composer Bernd Schurer of Zurich, beginning with the sound recordings made at the St. Gotthard and Lötschberg Alptransit worksites (*Construction sonor fieldrecordings*) and the elaborations of the same material by thirteen other composers.



## Abstract

This paper attempts to define the condition which allows us to identify, within the reality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "Swiss music", not as a recognizable style or language, but through habits and behaviours, its social and political meaning. Beyond the cultural and linguistic differences, a common attitude is represented by the collective practice of music throughout the country, which has determined both the very close relationship with institutions, and the importance attributed to common values. This profound integration, its contribution to society, and the regulative function of the Swiss Musicians Association, are at the origin of its conservative character. Although Switzerland has protected refugees, and in particular artists persecuted for their radical ideas, their welcome has always been very wary and often contrasted, delaying the contributions of Swiss artists to the avant-garde movements. Only in the second half of the century, does one find an affirmation of the positions advanced and an attitude of contestation towards political power. But even in this case, the fact that the forms of dissidence, instead of creating breaches, managed to impose themselves within the Swiss Musicians Association shows the primacy of the communal dimension over the individual one.

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