

Thesis abstract of DLA dissertation

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Church and Theatre.

Organ works of Mauricio Kagel

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The first Kagel monography was written by his friend, the composer and theologian Dieter Schnebel during Kagel's life time, in 1970. W. Klüppelholz has regularly published several works on each period of Kagel's oeuvre. *Music of Mauricio Kagel* by Björn Heile is an excellent compendium in English.

There is no analysis focusing on Kagel's complete organ works. Daniela Philippi deals with organ music after 1960 in her extensive study: *Neue Orgelmusik*. On how the organ music of the sixties is related to its antecedents (the Swedish school, music of Messiaen) information is given in Herchenröders essay „From Darmstadt to Stockholm Tracing the Swedish Contribution to the Development of a New Organ Style” (in *The Organ As a Mirror of Its Time: North European Reflections, 1610-2000*). Ligeti's organ works are treated by K. Marshall, Herchenröder and Fassang László. Hambraeus' role in the exfoliating experimental organ style is discussed by Ch. S. Anderson in his essay „Scandinavia” (in the *Twentieth-Century Organ Music*) and by W. Jacob in „Der Beitrag von Bengt *Hambraeus* zur Entwicklung der neuen Orgelmusik” (*Orgel im Gottesdienst Heute: Drittes Colloquium der Walcker-Stiftung*). The book *Dieter Schnebel und Arvo Pärt: Komponisten als „Theologen”*, by C. Gröhn written with great sensitivity was able to unite such contrapositions like the music of Schnebel and Pärt.

Among the essays on the Kagelian instrumental theatre we have to mention here *Komposition zwischen Musik und Theater* by M. Rebstock. The identity of the performer is dealt by F. Hübner (*Entering the Stage..., Shifting Identities...*) and Ph. Auslander (*Musical Personae*).

## II. Sources

In my dissertation I used the following music scores:

*Improvisation ajoutée* (1961/1962) Litolff Peters Edition 1963

*Improvisation ajoutée* (1968) UE 18565

*Phantasie für Orgel mit obligati* (1967) Universal Edition UE 14781

*Rrrrrrr... Acht Orgelstücke* (1984) Henry Litolff's Verlag / C. F. Peters (31325)

The first version of the *Improvisation ajoutée* is a manuscript copy published in 1963. After Kagel had completed the second version for his film *Hallelujah* (1969) the first one was withdrawn by the editor (Universal Edition).

Björn Heile investigated the sources of the Kagel collection at the Paul Sacher Stiftung for his study *Music of Mauricio Kagel*. He kindly shared his notes with me. Christina Richter-Ibáñez cordially enlightened me on some questions concerning Kagel's early years in Buenos Aires. I used contemporary concert reviews, memoirs, interviews with

Hambraeus and Kagel. I am grateful for having got contemporary pictures of organs from the Walcker Orgelbau and the Orgelwerkstatt Scheffler

Beyond the literature mentioned above I investigated recordings, too: contemporary recordings played by Gerd Zacher and David Tudor, later ones by Dominik Susteck – The Complete Organ Works of Mauricio Kagel – and interpretations of Zsigmond Szathmáry and Adrian Foster.

### **III. Method**

The dissertation presents the works of Kagel for organ solo. Its unique feature is the point of view of the performer and the focus on instrumental theatre and theologian aspects. The investigation of organ music requires deepgoing knowledge of the instrument. The Kagelian notation, most of all in case of the *Improvisation ajoutée* due to its openness stands in need of explanation. It presents an extraordinary approach that results in puzzling questions for the performer. The contemporary compositions of the oeuvre (*Heterophonie*, *Metapiece*) help to find the clue to understand the compositional idea, the notation and its problems. The intention was to enlighten the context of the pieces: the emergence of the avantgarde organ music, its new techniques, its relation to serial and electroacoustic music, the development of the instrumental theatre and the situation of sacred music.

The focus is on the development, definition and several aspects of the instrumental theatre in the organ pieces. Beyond that we approach these colourful compositions each from an individual point of view: that of the sound (Klang), musique concrète and the Kagelian sense of humour.

Because of the performer's definitive role we devote a chapter to them as well.

#### **IV. Results**

My interest in modern music and modern theology, the acquaintance with composers, aestheticians and performers led me to this topic of dissertation.

When examining the context of this music I managed to find relation to modern protestant, theology that originally ensured more freedom for music in the service. The role of music in the service and the autonomy of music was a much-discussed topic at that time. Kagel's close circle of colleagues and friends consisted of organists, theologians: first of all the composer and theologian D. Schnebel who belonged to Adorno's school, also G. Zacher and C. Gottwald. Their way of thinking about music was influenced by the modern protestant theology of Bultmann, Barth and Bonhoeffer. Schnebel was a leading figure in creating informal liturgical experiments consisting of modern art and freely organised elements of the liturgy on the basis of

Bultmann's ideas. Kagel's participation in experimental liturgy is documented.

Theatrical aspect of music is essential for Kagel. The fact that the organist is not to be seen during a performance did not inhibit Kagel from composing musical theatrical pieces for the organ. All three organ works contain a second layer of sounds: vocal sounds and other noise elements created by the player and assistants in the *Improvisation*, musique concrète in the *Phantasie* and sounds of narrative in the *Rrrrrrr... radio play*. The basis for examining these pieces from the point of view of instrumental theatre was Kagel's definition: „Ich verstehe es so das Theater eigentlich nicht nur das ist was auf eine Bühne geschieht, sondern auch Video, Film oder Fernsehen, die Hörspielen“.

The most discussed composition of the thesis is *Improvisation ajoutée* because it raises puzzling questions on how to deal with the instrument, how to organize registration, what is idiomatic writing. Drawing a parallel with contemporary compositions (*Heterophonie*, *Metapiece*) shed light on its compositional idea of filtering of sounds. Comparing the two versions reveals changes in Kagel's musical thinking. In spite of the radicalism and controversial features of the first version (knowing that it was withdrawn) and all practical advantages of

the second one the original form with greater originality seems to be the more definitive one.

The relation of sacred and profane in the theological thinking of the sixties offered a background for analysis of the *Phantasie*. In *Rrrrrrr... Acht Orgelstücke* the source of Kagelian humour has been analysed.

## **V. Documentation of activity connected with the topic of the thesis**

I list also masterclasses, instrumental theatre performances and productions with electronics and one example for liturgical experiment:

18. 02. 2018. Budapest, Fuga, Centrifuga Műhely. „Barokk fordulat” – Hungarian contemporary music for harpsichord and flute. János Bali: *Pietà: Descartes levétele a keresztről* – instrumental theatre for harpsichord solo

01. 11. 2018. Budapest, Transparent Sound New Music Festival. Hans-Ola Ericsson: Mass for organ and electronics (2000)

16. 10. 2016. Fuga, Centrifuga Műhely. Balázs Horváth: *egy(et)(NEM)értés* – instrumental theatre for recorder and harpsichord

12. 06. 2016. Ausztria, Innsbruck, Jesuitenkirche: organ concert *Hommage á J. Cage*.

18. 10. 2015. Fuga, Centrifuga Műhely: Samu Gryllus:  
DoPaMiNa No.2

05. 09. 2015. Germany, Halberstadt Dom: Cage-Geburtstag  
Orgelkonzert. M. Kagel *Recitativarie für singende Cembalistin* –  
transcription for organ

2014, Halberstadt: „John Cage” 1. Preis für die Interpretation  
von neuer Orgelmusik: Pieces by M. Kagel, Messiaen

19. 05. 2014. Budapest, Óbudai társaskör „Utunk a János-  
passióhoz” Qaartsiluni Ensemble, directed by L. Rozmán – M.  
Kagel *Recitativarie für singende Cembalistin*

25. 04. 2013. Budapest. St Theresa of Avila: Zs. Szathmáry:  
*Strophen für Orgel und Elektronik*

24-26, 04. 2012. and 17-19. 04. 2013. Masteclass with Prof. Zs.  
Szathmáry (Debrecen, Budapest): Kagel: *Rrrrrrr... Acht  
Orgelstücke*, Szathmáry: *Strophen*

Csillaghegy Lutheran Church, Pentecost of 2016: psalm  
improvisation á la Schnebel – liturgy experiment