CONTENTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME WARS</th>
<th></th>
<th>06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna Haraway Statements on Decolonizing Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yassin Al-Haj Saleh Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11 – Constructed Temporalities</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giorgio Agamben State of Exception</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurizio Lazzarato &amp; Eric Alliez Wars and Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doomsday Clock (1949–2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rab Nixon Slow Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Morton Beginning After The End</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULIUS EASTMAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Eastman Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Eastman Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Eastman The Composer as Weakling</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anton Lukoszevieze Graphic Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOULNESSLESS</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terre Thaemlitz in conversation with Nicolas Siepen and Berno Odo Polzer</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terre Thaemlitz Canto V</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZEITGEIST</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Ferneyhough Time and Motion Study I</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Ferneyhough Time and Motion Study II</td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Ferneyhough Time and Motion Study III</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iannis Xenakis Pour La Paix</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Fure Four Pieces</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER 22 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc Couraux Curatorial Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswald Store Documentation Excerpts</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terre Thaemlitz Deproduction Poster</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Fell One Dimensional Music Without Context or Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALIMS SALON</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salims Salons Script</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giordano Nanni The Colonisation of Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVEBOMB</td>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terre Thaemlitz Lovebomb/Ai No Bakudan</td>
<td></td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILM CHAUKA</td>
<td></td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arash Kamali-Servestani in conversation with Christine Bardsley</td>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIGRANTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georges Aperghis in conversation with Berno Odo Polzer</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georges Aperghis Migrants – Texts</td>
<td></td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Schöllhorn To give a face</td>
<td></td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LONG NOW</td>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THINKING TOGETHER</td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Programme &amp; Abstracts</td>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops Programme &amp; Abstracts</td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprint</td>
<td></td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE
“Music offers time a center.”— This trope by John Berger puts the two main concerns of this festival — music and time — into a generative relation. Such a “center”— in motion, elusive, non-geometric, pluri-modal as it must be — would allow for a different point of view. From such a musical “center,” one may sense the divergent temporalities each of us inhabits simultaneously, and draw relations to the ongoing fundamental transformations happening around us.

Yet the trope allows for another reading. The traditional self-image of Western art music places music outside of time as well as outside of its own time: by claiming avant-gardism — being ahead of its time, and by clinging to abstractions — time-lessness, universality, structure. Contrary to this, music — all sorts of music — may in fact be a center for and a portal to things temporal and their poli-tics; music may grant access to time in varied modalities.

More than ever, time—as a political category—is of the essence when it comes to learning to make sense of the erratic commotions of the present. Maybe music can help us find ways to do so. This is a time for listening.

This “Festival for Time Issues” thus proposes to probe the current state of affairs through the lens of time and through listening — collectively considering what today’s “beings in time” experience on a daily basis, exposed as they are to diverging and colliding temporal force fields: flexibilization, fragmentation and the maxing out of capacities; time horizons shrunk, stretched and warped; the vertigo of reciprocal speed and slowness; the loss of temporal claim and agency. – The hypothesis of MaerzMusik 2018 is that a war is raging between temporalities. Less obvious, perhaps, than today’s countless other conflicts, but no less real.

The goal of these ten days is to detect, experience, reflect upon — and occasionally escape — the time-related forces operating on us: The systemic temporal violence unleashed by turbocapitalism; the proliferation of non-human, digital time; the slow violence of environmental degradation; the speeds and spans of media attention; the permanent state of exception; the dispossessed temporalities of migration both free and forced.

The purpose of this Festival Reader is to collect and share material that grew along the way of researching, conceptualizing and materializing the fourth edition of this festival.

I want to thank the MaerzMusik 2018 core team – Ilse Müller, Ina Steffan, Linda Sepp, Juliane Spence — and its technical director, Matthias Schäfer with his team, as well as Claudia Nola and all the colleagues of Berliner Festspiele who translate and communicate its visions and ideas. I want to thank the artists, guests and co-thinkers of this ongoing investigation into the politics of time as well as the partners and supporters of this festival. Special thanks to Nafi Mirzaii for her graphic design, and the co-editors Nicolas Siepen and Barbara Barthelmes. Their precise and caring work under time pressure makes this publication what it is.

We are looking forward to welcoming you at MaerzMusik — Festival for Time Issues 2018.

Berno Odo Polzer
Artistic Director
Right thought, speech and action are now my main concerns. No other thing is as important or as useful.

Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right music.

— Julius Eastman
Right thought, speech, and action are now my main concerns. No other thing is as important or as useful.

Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right music.

– Julius Eastman
NOVEMBER 22 1963
OSWALD STORE
Oswald Store

*November 22 1963*
12:30 5:30 PM CST ABC WFAA CBS NBC
Three-screen television installation / performance (1970/71) UA

Marc Couroux Realisation
Marc Couroux
Osaward Store’s "November 22 1963 12:30 5:30 PM CST ABC WFAA CBS NBC"

In 2004, while rummaging through old art catalogues at a liquidation sale at Artexte in Montréal, I happened upon a nondescript, stapled, yellowing document, integrally typewritten, starkly displaying on its face the name of Oswald Store and a prosaic title: November 22 1963 12:30 5:30 PM CST ABC WFAA CBS NBC. Underneath it, a clarification, in brackets: JFK. Then the dates, below: 1970-1. I had long been fascinated by the bountiful lore around the JFK assassination, so the title and date of the event (one and the same) were enough to ensnare me. A dedication appeared on the second page: To the memory of Oswald Store, 1945-1973, and on the next page, the name, title and date again with a cursory description of a proposed event, typed on index cards:

ABC CBS NBC coverage played back continuous (raw) at the original broadcast time (central) synchronized (sic) on three televisions in a triangle (screens face in) at least 12 ft. apart. The performance lasts 5 hours. CBS tape starts at 12:30 as the world turns, WFAA-ABC at 12:44, NBC at 12:56. All tapes stopped immediately after CBS evening news titles at approx. 5:30 central. NOTE: Missing ABC footage covered by WFAA.

A concentrated durational enterprise was being described here, typical of the emergent video and performance art of the time, involving the simultaneous experience of three discrete streams all grappling with the same just-happened event (the shooting occurred at about 12:30 Central Standard Time, as the organ intro to CBS’s As the World Turns began to warble). The word performance is interesting. One tends to equate TVs in rooms as participating in more of a minimalist, installational paradigm that could be wandered in and out of at will. But here, duration is taken seriously, as something performed. Though the placement of the three monitors frustrated any kind of standard frontal seating arrangement, they could be close enough (12 ft.) that the sounds of each monitor would bleed together, even if the images couldn’t be taken in all at once (TV is a sonic medium first, as we all know, as the show keeps chugging along in your ears when you exit the room to dehydrate).

I turned the page and came onto a mind-blowingly dense slab of information that seemed to go on forever, an ostensible breakdown of the contents of the three major networks’ coverage of the event, typewritten onto index cards reproduced 2 per page, an archival impulse fully in keeping with the “aesthetics of bureaucracy” side of early conceptual art. And yet this wasn’t the piece per se ... or was it? These three sets of cards were then followed by a further 10 cards simply prepended by a curt description page: “WFAA first draft (excerpts).”

A list of works followed, as an appendix to the chronological onslaught. While the first few works had suitably early 1970s video art titles (dispositions, minimal tremor, blockages) the next two took on a more explicitly political character (slow violence, draft dodge), culminating in two formidable blocks in November 22 1963 12:30 5:30 PM CST ABC WFAA CBS NBC, aka JFK, from 1970-1 and, tantalizingly, a fraternal work entitled June 4 1968 11:45 PM June 5 1968 4:05 AM ABC CBS NBC, aka RFK, ostensibly the coverage of the speech, assassination and protracted death of Robert Kennedy, taking place over 28 hours on the same three networks, also (presumably) played back in synch. The work dates from 1972, one year before Store’s premature death. Unfortunately, nothing like the JFK documentation exists for this work, which would be of a wholly other scale indeed!
The catalogue simply ends at the foot of the final page: Parallel Press, Santa Fe, 1981.

No further information about Store or this work – especially regarding whether it was ever actually realized – is included in the catalogue, the only documentation of his art known to me (though I’ve searched on and off ever since). Frankly, it would have been really difficult for a young artist to obtain the equipment necessary to actualize the concept. Networks were using 2” Quad U-Matic tapes at the time and the machines that played them were not available to consumers. A dub to lower quality videotape might have worked, though tapes would have required switching mid-stream 4 times (for not accommodating more than one hour duration, the limit of the time); any possibility of precise coordination between the networks would have to be jettisoned. One wonders how Store had envisioned these streams synchronized despite such hard constraints.

By necessity, a closer reading of the main bulk of the catalogue – the fastidiously chronological cards – was in order. They detail minute-by-minute (literally) the events that occurred between 12:30 and 5:30 CST (Dallas time), as related by each of the three major networks at the time – ABC, CBS and NBC – with most of the ABC footage coming from Dallas affiliate station WFAA. (With good reason as I later realized: it is the most bracing of the three.) CBS begins first at 12:30 with ten minutes of the dreary soap opera As the World Turns (acted live, in fact, though the cast is seemingly not told of the event until after the show), with Cronkite breaking in, audio-only, at 12:40. WFAA cuts into the Julie Bonnell Show (?) at 12:45 with a breathless Jay Watson dancing in place, apologizing. NBC arrives late at 12:56 with Chet Huntley, particularly dark and macabre (“looking lk Boris Karloff”, dixit Store) and Bill Ryan (“Twilight Zone actor type”) seated unusually high on a stool. The work ends at 5:30, as both the CBS Evening News and NBC’s Huntley-Brinkley report were about to begin. Right before that, the work could be said to culminate with live coverage of the arrival in Washington of the new president Lyndon Johnson, the first time all three networks relay a live event simultaneously (remembering the startling fact that the assassination itself was only captured on a Super 8 film shot by Abraham Zapruder – who briefly appears mid-point in the WFAA coverage – and not widely viewable by the public until its general release in 1975, 12 years after the event!). Indeed, the three networks only use one camera feed for the departure of the body and arrival of Johnson, though provide separate voice-overs. It could be that Store saw in this peroration a suitable wrap-up to what turned out (in retrospect) to be a perfect narrative outline (shooting, death, shock & reaction, apprehension of suspect, swearing in and arrival of new president, each of these stages (save the last) delayed in their relay to us by reporters) and chose to end the work as the future begins to take hold again, regular (and regulatory) time kicking back in, with the character and mandate of the new president occupying the attention of the talking heads instead of the just-assassinated ex-president.

While the appended “first draft” excerpts contain bare bones notes and transcriptions, the main chronologies describe gestures and dispositions of the newsmen (only men, save for one female reporter heard at the end) in detail while speculating on states of mind and otherwise elaborating profusely on nuances too marginal to be actively tracked when one is in the thrall of a catastrophic event, but which come out after a certain distance from it is gained. Still, the welter of detail, attention
to structure, attunement to the möbiusoidal shifting or rough coexistence of moods, is something one might expect to find in a contemporary version of this work (and perhaps this one will inspire others, around similarly charged events). Store was 18 when the event occurred, which provided a full 8 years of reflection, though the cards remain curiously free of conspiracy-type speculation (save the allegations from TASS of extreme right-wing responsibility) which erupted while Kennedy’s body still lay at Parkland Hospital and escalated dramatically after the release of the Warren Commission report in 1967. Store was focused on something else. He was interested in how these events played out in their covering, in structures of coping.

Store’s analyses are occasionally cryptic, often humorous. They document the telling of events, as they are wired in, including occasional verbatim transcripts. One wonders whether Store either had long-term access to network archives or just excellent shorthand ability. Reading the cards clarifies how the narrative of the event evolved organismically over five hours. What elements circulated in and out of focus, the life-spans of narrative threads, how certain stories begin to möbiusoidally creep in, like Johnson and his forthcoming Washington arrival leeching focus from the dead president. While the components of this narrative fascinated no end in the abstract (once one became conversant with Store’s lexicon of abbreviations and newscaster initials), I had to find this footage and see for myself, especially to take stock of the wide range of emotional currents that understandably coursed through this footage, that Store painstakingly (and no doubt painfully) accounts for with sensitivity. On a side note, his curtailing of names throughout the timeline admits one exception, his own first name, and the last of the too-quickly located perpetrator Lee Harvey Oswald. Nothing there really, except for the fact that Store might have been more deeply hooked by the event on basic nominal grounds. Sometimes things just happen that way.

As fortune would have it, I managed to find most of the necessary coverage on all three networks in multiple iterations, in varying qualities, from online sellers a few days after acquiring the catalogue. A full seven hours of coverage from WFAA dropped into my lap a year later, after JK, who had previously sold me the CBS and NBC tapes, alerted me by email. Given its physical proximity to the event, the coverage from the Dallas affiliate turned out to be the most emotionally intense of all. It ended up filling a few significant gaps in the ABC coverage, though about 40 minutes of footage could not be located for this first performance (the screen will therefore go dark in these moments).

JFK is an exemplary accounting of the wayward motions of time. It rubs two temporal conceptions against each other, one inflexible and impermeable (accuracy for the history books), the other radically embodied, subjected to intense emotional and somatic inflection, of consequently varied quality. You feel the intense urgency at the start beginning to concretize itself as a past, as part of a history that is assembling itself in front of your eyes and ears, revising itself, compressing itself. An impossible onus weighed on the three networks – the main source of coverage of the event – to narrate, frame, contextualize, when the event was still being lived in discontinuous aftershocks of confusion, amnesia, absentmindedness, plain shock. The work functions chronoportatively, compounding inertias, inaccuracies, communication glitches, and newscaster shock into cascading temporal
12:30  AS THE WORLD TURNS opening, with warbly organ. (1:30 EST)
   For the next 30 minutes as the act turns.
   AD: Niagara spray starch. Sound keeps cutting out. "Good
   Housekeeping Institute" Deep Penetrating Action.
12:31  ATWT action starts. Act I. Performed live (mistakes, line
   flubs occur. Theatrical performance.
12:32  Mother & son speaking to each other in parallel dimensions.
12:33  They don't care about how artificial their conversation is.
12:34  You don't need to know the back of the story. It's given
   to you in every gesture, overacted speech.
12:35  Sudden reactions too "big" for TV.
12:36  Warbly organ comes in surreptitiously. Actress goes.
   Stumbles, it doesn't matter. Image fades but warbly organ
   continues a bit.
12:37  ATWT returns. Act 2. Same lady singing a familiar tune
   (what is it?) while dusting books. Old man comes in. "You
   do too much cleaning" & blows smoke in her face.
12:38  Family argument no one shld care abt. Theatre performers
   going thru the motions.

12:39  lady: & I've given it a great deal of thought...
12:40  FIRST BULLETIN. BREAK-IN
   Backg noise, voices, sounds of scrambling around bef
   Walter Cronkite begins reading.
   WC: in Dallas, TX 3 shots were fired at President Kennedy's
   motorcade in downtown Dallas. The 1st report says that P.
   K. has been seriously wounded by this shooting.
   More details just arrived. P.K. shot today. Just as his
   motorcade left downtown Dallas. Mrs. K jumped up & grabbed
   Mr. K. she called oh no. The motorcade sped on, Un. Pr.
   says the wounds for P.K. perhaps could be fatal.
   P.K. has been shot by a would be assassin in Dallas TX.
   (Imagine hearing this for the 1st time!)
12:41  AD: Nescafe. "It's more than an instant" (it's interminable)
12:42  ATWT interlude w/ celesta music, corporate sponsors. All
   as if the preceding announcement didn't happen.
   Card promo for Route 66.
   Loads of black. Waiting for sting or malfunction?
12:43  ATWT music starts, immediately interrupted by 2ND BULLETIN
   WC's tone shrill & urgent, but unemotional.
   WC: P.K. was shot. Governor Connally was also shot. 3
   bullets rang out. A SS was heard to shout fr the car "he's
dead"
18. & 21.3.2018

WFAA (ABC) tape 2

0:00 1 o'clock today Pres. K was scheduled to make a speech
CHALKBOARD DIAGRAM: is a crude, and you'll excuse the
art work with apologies to you Sam
triple underpass
"shot at at approx. 12:35 today"
"shot from up in here" (points to grassy area)
"the President brought the rain with him"

1:02 back to the network (ABC) with Ron Cochrane
stark background
"the vice-pres. is fine"
calm cochrane with earpiece (voices coming from it)
RC: "come in washington" + metallic feedback echo
communication difficulties
President of the U.S. SEAL

1:03 Ed Silverman recaps, also with earpiece: "4 shots"

1:04 first call about DEATH (thru earpiece): "two priests
who were with the Pres have reported that the Pres.
is dead (Ron doesn't bat an eyelid)
image of Pres. K 1917-1963 - PREMATURE
given the last rites of the Roman Catholic church at
about 1 o'clock Dallas time

1:06 Ed confirms death of SS agent
"a dozen eyewitnesses brought in for interrogation...
one suspect has been picked up...in there being quest.
phone voices ongoing
LONG TECHNICAL TRANSITION: another attempt to switch
to Washington and Ed. P. Morgan - more feedback
EPM can be seen talking but not heard

1:07 back to Cochrane - Rob. Kennedy was at home having lunch
interruptions - with the official report on earpiece

1:08 United Press reports that the PRESIDENT DIED AT 1:35
CENTRAL TIME - "that was only about two minutes ago"
Kennedy still image
photo of K in motorcade before event
"at the time the shots struck him he was standing (?)

1:09 back to death still
RC: govt sources now confirm that PRESIDENT KENNEDY
IS DEAD
"an incredible event I am sure no one except the assassin
himself could have possibly imagined would occur"

1:10 Watson and Burt Shipp
"Burt, a black day"
"SS gives away the Oak Cliff location - Watson objects
"looking for a white male, 35, 5'8" with white shirt
report that a policeman has been shot out there
Berno Odo Polzer (BOP): I’d like to begin with a personal question: You have experiences as a migrant yourself. In 1963 you left Greece for Paris, and you could not return until the end of the Greek military junta in 1974. Without wanting to compare your life story with that of today’s migrants and refugees, do you consider yourself a migrant, too, in whatever way?
Georges Aperghis (GA): Well, it’s not the same as the situation countless migrants and refugees are in today, because I decided to leave myself. I took the decision. I was not forced for political or economic reasons or because of war or other catastrophes. Only afterwards, four years after I had left, started the Greek military junta, so I could not return to Greece for several years. I was young, it was a very strong experience to leave the country and the family, friends and relations, the comfort of a beginning professional life – I had exhibitions of my paintings, newspaper critics started to write about me, I was a little bit known in Athens and all that. And suddenly I was in Paris without anything and without money (laughs) and it was quite hard.

BOP: Why did you leave?
GA: Why? I don’t know. That’s a complicated question for me. I think it was, you know, the Mediterranean family – too much love (laughs). I was a boy alone, and had to follow four ladies, my grandmother and her three sisters. They were around me like a fence. I was very happy, and very sad to abandon them – but I think I had to escape.

BOP: I ask because even if your personal story is incomparable to the forced migration you address in your piece, I think that the experience, the state of body and mind of being a migrant cannot be simulated or imitated – you either have this experience or you don’t. Does this connect you to what is going on around us in a specific way?

GA: I remember that the first year was very difficult for me. I was not sure I was able to continue to be in Paris. I had no bad experiences of xenophobia like many migrants of today, but I felt like a stranger nevertheless. It’s not only people telling you “you are a stranger,” it’s you yourself. Only little by little you start to grow relations and things start to change. I don’t think it is so much my personal story which connect me to what’s going on actually, it’s just a question of humanity, a political conscience.

BOP: How would you describe your experience of time in this period? There is a deep split between the time of the citizens as it were – the people who have a place in society, who have work etc. – on the one hand, and the time of migrants on the other hand – people who are nomads, people who have not arrived, who are not accepted, who cannot work. In other words, what is the temporality of migration?

GA: I remember clearly the state of not being able to project things. You can’t have projects for the future, because you are dependent, on the police papers and other things. That was terrible. Even me as a Greek citizen, like all Europeans at that time I had permission papers only for three months, then I had to go back to the police for a new application. The next one was six months, then one year etc. and in the end it was ten years – but that was only granted, if at all, after a long period of short-term permissions, so you never knew exactly what would happen. I lived in a hotel and I payed on a monthly basis. I was in between two states. There was a no man’s land in my heart and in my head, too.

BOP: You had no sense of future...

GA: You are in the open. On the one hand you are obliged to have a project, but on the other hand you don’t know if you can pursue or realize that project. But again, my case was very soft and
gentle. I did not have real troubles with authori-
ties, I always was able to find a job, pay my food,
and a roof. Over all I was not traumatized by any
violent situation in Greece or in France. That’s why
I think I can’t compare my situation to the
migrants stories of today.

BOP: Why did you write this piece? What was the
deep motivation behind it?
GA: I want to sensibilize the audience for this
situation. We tend to look at the migration crisis
only with an economic and logistic preoccupation –
but what is important is the human side. I want
to create emotions, because I think we can say
more with emotions than with sentences. Just to
say “you must welcome strangers” does not work.
I want to make the people in the audience cry.
I don’t know if i can, but we will see.

BOP: Is this a gesture against official politics?
GA: Yes, I want to make visible that “we” – our
societies, our politics – do more for animals than
for these humans. That’s simply crazy. I simply
want to say that these human beings are there,
that they are like us, that you can connect and
identify yourself with them. That is the problem,
people don’t identify.

BOP: Is there something of this feeling, of your
experience of migration in the piece?
GA: Perhaps the way in which I treat text and sing-
ing. The singers are like strangers that speak and
sing. There are two times. You have a time of sing-
ing and a time of the text: The singing is based
on a fantasy language. The text is spoken, never
sung. Perhaps that is a symbol for a state of split-
mindedness.

BOP: In what way does this split-mindedness
relate to your experience of migration?
The fact of feeling myself at the same time living
over there in Athens and here in Paris.

BOP: How is time constituted in these two parts,
how would you describe it?
GA: The time of singing is more lively, resembling
the energy of children, kidding or people laughing,
from time to time it intensifies to the level of
screams. This is a moving part, similar to the
material of the strings and the orchestra. So it’s
moving a lot. Whereas the part with the text is like
without time, it’s timeless or eternal. It’s sus-
pended, the score is without measures. Several
times there are two singers who say the text
together, so it’s like a choir.
The orchestra on the other hand is quite removed,
like a background, environment or natural phe-
omenon. For example rain or wind... It’s not an
imitation of that, but has a similar quality. The
orchestra in this piece constitutes something that
happens to be there, something we don’t decide
upon.

BOP: Rain and wind... sounds like a reference to
the journey of migration?
GA: Yes, the journey and the elements you are
exposed to. Things happen that you don’t decide –
war or revolution, rain or wind. So the orchestra
constitutes this force of elements that are there all
the time, that you have to pass through. The
orchestra doesn’t accompany. It is a world on its
own, has its own life.
BOP: This brings me to a question that I find very important in our context. I think it’s quite difficult and risky to incorporate or “represent” real politics and ongoing human suffering with the means of art, in this case the apparatus of contemporary music. I am very interested in the problems you encountered in finding a musical language adequate to the piece’s topic.

GA: It is extremely difficult to write music dealing with this suffering. Every day, people continue to die inside Europe and on its shores, while I am writing music – that in itself is a real problem in my position.

Another problem is the kind of musical language I have at my disposal. I think it’s easier to write songs or poems like Bob Dylan or artists like him. They can tell these stories immediately. But with my musical language, this feels very difficult.

The language of contemporary music is very sophisticated. It can easily be perceived as a luxury product. That is the problem: you cannot deal with this suffering and wrap it into beautiful paper. Dealing with this problem is very delicate, how to find different places, different expressions, different ways of singing, neither sentimental nor psychological, letting the rhythm of the text itself speak in its bare form.

BOP: What are the biggest dangers connected to what you described?

GA: The danger is to make art, to make something beautiful out of the suffering of human beings, while speaking to an audience that is very comfortable.

BOP: But you decided to do that nevertheless ... 

GA: Yes, because I said to myself I have to do that, it is important, I can’t wait any longer to say something. But this is only the beginning. I will continue to work directly with migrants in the area of Calais – the idea is not to make musical theatre for a comfortable audience, but to work with migrants and refugees for an audience of migrants and refugees.

BOP: This sounds more like the situation at ATEM, the “Atelier de théâtre et musique” you were running in Bagnolet, near Paris, between 1976 and 1997.

GA: Yes exactly. This situation feels better, it is more easy, because you are with them, it is not a product for tourists, you know. (Laughs.) The worst is the tourists, people who go to the festival and stay detached and untouched. But if I can make them cry, it is okay (laughs).

BOP: You want to touch them. There is a more general question behind that, which is, how can contemporary music relate to our political reality, our reality of crises of different sorts. Do you think there is a potential for contemporary music to contribute something to today’s problematics?

GA: I can’t speak for every composer, but only for me. I changed many things in my music, and I am now changing, too. I say to myself that I partake in all the music that exists. It is a part of us. All music is mine. Every kind of music, sacred music, oratory music, Renaissance, Jazz, Rock, everything is mine, because I am living now and I have this whole palette at my disposal, so I can use everything. There are no churches anymore with a credo and dogmatics like before. Now we are free. That’s how I feel.

BOP: That means you can relate differently to the musical reality around you. That implies that the temples and the privileged spaces must crumble and disappear, right? And you think that has happened already?

GA: For me, yes. Perhaps it is related to this stage of my life, but I feel quite free. I don’t care anymore about what the audience or critics or someone else says. That is a new feeling for me. I think I am at the beginning of something more free, with different music. I have to do that.
I want to give a face not only to the drowned corpses which wash up on Europe's shores, but to the scores of the living wandering through Europe without an identity, no longer officially recognisable as alive.

— Georges Aperghis
with original contributions by artists, graphics, photographs, documents and essays

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