Edward Campbell

Music after Deleuze


The Music after Deleuze belongs to the research series “Deleuze Encounters” of the international Bloomsbury Publishing, devoted to studying theoretical-practical shifts in understanding selected phenomena in regard to Deleuze’s insights. Aside from this title, Bloomsbury also published Philosophy after Deleuze, Political Theory after Deleuze, Cinema after Deleuze and Space after Deleuze, with the intentions to continue the well-accepted series. With this book in particular, a general positive reception is justified as Campbell finds a near-perfect blend of introductory, educational presentation of key ideas and proofs whilst exploring philosophical aspects of music, an often marginalized theme. In this sense, from one perspective it is important to understand that this is not a gravitational point of research on Deleuze’s fundamental ideas, and most scholars familiar with Deleuze may not find much of “interest” other than perhaps expanding their Deleuzean view in regard to music, while in the perspective that remained, the text will enrich any newcomer to Deleuze and will entirely satisfy a wide range of scholars interested in the nature of music. There are three reasons for this: firstly, Campbell’s style of writing excels in clearness and will appeal to most readers greatly; secondly, next to cinema, music is perhaps the best “practical” medium to understand and apply many of Deleuzean concepts, and thirdly, it is so because music as such contains a marvelously reflected microcosm of the philosophical which in turn relates to the thought mechanisms. This is further supported by Deleuze himself, who “was not at all a musician and certainly not a music theorist” (p. 1), positing music in his work What is Philosophy? as exemplary fundament to all observed phenomena. On the backside, it is important to notice that many examples will require some minimal understanding of theory of music and composition. But quickly a fourth reason might emerge to counter it once we realize that the peculiar strive of the 20th century music was to differentiate itself from within, through itself, against the political era of (destructive) seminal nationalism. Juxtaposed with poetry, they both behaved in a similar fashion, as Gianni Vattimo observed, and so this is another fragment of important perspectives that dig into the “nothing, and yet” of the 20th century.

With music playing a significant role in entire Deleuze’s opus, Campbell is free to rely on an established connection folding philosophy and music, collecting all major relations between phenomenological and musical, in fact finding each other in thought as such (or more correctly: in condition defining a way of thinking). As Campbell will immediately notice, Deleuze’s core term difference is directly linked to the ability of philosophy to open one’s perspective anew, to differentiate from others, and to, in fact, think differently. Thus, as a result, a different thinking, a relevant thinking, along the line of Jean-Luc Nancy’s singulier pluriel, continually produces new worlds, new relations, and new differences. Campbell works his way through these relays by attempting to show how Deleuzean philosophemes can serve in rethinking music (aiding composers, performers, theoreticians, or historians equally), because, from the underlying importance in an ocean of the 20th century’s terror, the hunt for identity surfaced at the beginning of a new millennium. It is reflected in the overall musical progression during the 20th century, which brought an explosion of musical creativity – the difference – which earlier on Deleuze registered as a phenomenon more relevant than identity. It is therefore only natural for Campbell to dedicate the first of five chapters to difference, repetition, and variation. Campbell mainly uses references to contemporary “high art” experimental composers (such as Pierre Boulez and György Kurtág), affirms jazz to
some point, and some of the traditional forms such as the ancient Japanese gagaku of the Kyoto imperial era, whose positions on the philosophy of music touch Deleuzean concepts, using only pre-Deleuze classical composers to show points of departure, because it was Deleuze himself who used these authors to explain his insights. Campbell will therefore heavily rely on premises such as A. B. Marx’s statement regarding musical worth in terms of differentiating form, thematicism and tonal construction (p. 6), and it seems to be something that Deleuze would approve. This approach is up to debate since it ignores a rich contemporary world of non-classical music, but on the wider look it does not really affect any arguments or concepts Campbell is investigating, so I advise a reader to simply “pass over” this issue and perhaps consider expanding the presented material on their own behalf by comparing other musical worlds and their appropriate meaning.

Deleuze has started working around the historically established frame of thinking regarding the difference and identity as understood since Plato up until Hegel and further on, but in fact building his argument on Nietzsche’s and Bergson’s critical insights into categorical thinking and thus reverting the theory away from the cannon. From Bergson he adopted the theory of internal difference which “gives” any one thing its internal change in time, and therefore space, concluding in formation of subjectivity for any living being with awareness (Edgar Morin will, for example, systematically consider this “value of internal value creation” in his major work La Méthode, whilst in the wider angle this formulates the basics of Deleuze-Guattari biophilosophy ultimately concentrated in rhizome). From Nietzsche, who, in this line of argument, heavily criticized Kant for excluding (subjective) value creation while considering the moral apparatus of a person, Deleuze adopted the underlying logic of the Nietzschean return of the same – not as ever-the-same, but as ever-different-the-same, in-exhaustible, yet unifyingly the same. In overall, it was an attempt to transfer the difference in philosophical investigations from different concepts into concept of difference, and in its wake Deleuze tried to disband the limiting notion of categorical thinking sprouting since Plato’s Ideas. Campbell outlined it clearly: “In Deleuzean sense, difference is not difference from or within something. (…) at the end of this thought process, we are left with a range of likenesses and resemblances which can be classified in terms of their degree of identity and difference from the initial idea” (p. 8).

The goal was, much like for many other philosophers of the 20th century, to destroy the false idea/vision of clear, bordered, exact distinctions in the world, the idea that somehow elements develop by specific prediction model and fall under single algorithm; in other words, the goal was to unbound acausal thought. This is precisely why Campbell will compare Deleuze’s work mostly to experimentalists, for the most part for their ability to destroy compartmenting, which is a valid approach because they systematically include variation as the key characteristic. Thus, for example the 12-tone system as one such probable example, Beethoven’s notion of “underlying idea” may belong here among other, but Boulez’s use of heterophony is perhaps most important since it directly strikes Deleuze’s intentions. For Boulez, heterophony is a “way of affirming the identity of the group while acknowledging variants, even individual deviations” (p. 21). Along these lines Deleuze introduced us to the philosopheme fold, drawing from Leibniz’s incompossibility (possibility of simultaneous co-existence of the contradictory notions, or lack of thereof in respect to the tradition). Deleuze and Boulez agreed that, for many modern philosophers and artists, “divergences, incompossibilities, discords and dissonances coexist in the same world” (p. 22), and the music is projected accordingly. In this sense, what in general may seem to be presupposed as a repetition is in fact a variation. In experimentalism it is mostly expressed in a radical manner, aiming to breach the created limited of applied theories, which then emphasizes before-mentioned value of internal difference, but it also appears that further musical investigations often yield a necessity of sort, a submerged need to equilibrate between the variety and repetition, the fixed and the fluid. An act of improvisation interestingly falls between the two phenomena, and it may also spur a discussion regarding an intrinsic characteristic of signed freedom it contains, that is, in comparison to the cultural interpretations of one’s freedom of expression outside and within the art world.

As foreshadowed in the previous paragraphs, Deleuze’s early work Difference and Repetition got (over)developed in alliance with Felix Guattari and culminated in the assemblage, which is why Campbell naturally chose this referencing concept for his second chapter. Here is another good Campbell’s observation that the philosophy Deleuze and Guattari were producing eventually became their self, the “molecular image of thought” got embodied, and texts began to lack structure, to a certain degree turning into a detailed
deluge of ideas summarized in the concept of rhizome, defying the image of thought as arborescent, concept of plane of immanence, defying the fixed, lifeless structural interlocking of concepts, and the concept of Body without Organs, defying an idea of fully organized and integrated object, rather, all three are describing the factual perpetual becoming (pp. 35–36, 38–39, 40–41).

The key moment is Boulez’s concept of diagonal, here adapted into continuation logic of distinctive innovative artist’s contributions to the problems left by the precedents, which may provoke criticism from some of us. The erudite multilogue provided by Campbell in his excavation of Deleuzean-Guattarian thick conceptual mashups related to practical applications in music theory and composition come only so far, as it seems to compress the music art down into a series (again, similar to Jean-Luc Nancy and his analysis of productive plurality of worlds and knowledge) of technical solutions for technical issues. While many professional musicologists will agree on this approach for most of the discourses regarding objective components of any musical piece, these discussions and investigations often completely neglect the sheer life of artist’s performance, who is indeed a Diltheyan subject, whether it be in creation, or presentation, that is, re-evocation of his “work”. In the work many of these concepts turn visible only through direct act of creation/production and nothing else – specifically not through careful planning or problem solving – and precisely these draw most attention among the listeners. In short, in this sense Music after Deleuze is yet another study which nullifies the important praxis–poiesis relation in the context of ingenium, and allows techne to appear sovereign. While reading it is advised to see these rows of Campbell’s examples as an attempt to understand what the philosophical in the music can offer through selected artists and Deleuze himself, how close to the face of the unknown, to “silence”, can they come in logical derivation, in exact and goal-oriented literal rethinking, rather than spending your time considering how the scope of given discourse lacks because it is avoiding the core rhizomatic component – the spontaneous advancement.

Nevertheless, rhizome is a phenomenal contribution to the understanding how ideas develop and evolve, but also how thought and meaning as meaning – both as certain entities differentencing from their carriers – further evolve, spread, and organize via communication and creation, in regard to Campbell and Deleuze’s observation specifically as “chromaticism in continuous variation through which music becomes a superlinear system” (pp. 37–38). They prescribe this rhizomatic behaviour to planes of immanence accordingly, but still retain the aforementioned equilibrium, necessary strata required to maintain form and function, all in all, a minimal identity value. For Deleuze and Guattari, historical developments in musical expressions have depended upon such deterministic ideas (concepts breaking down and are uprooted from their context only to reassemble with other heterogeneous elements to form new assemblages, including on a different plane altogether), that is, ideal outbreaks from the painted, finished horizon which create “a new diagonal” along the “harmonic vertical and melodic horizontal” coordinates (p. 40) to form a new assemblage composed of various milieus. Musical sound is only one component among others within a musical assemblage, since it is formed equally from literary, artistic, philosophical and many other milieus, the elements of which are assembled to form an expressive musical territory or refrain (p. 42), and on a lower scale, a particular song is derived from more than just a sound.

In the context of music compositions, Campbell will demonstrate limits of assemblage with a series of examples working marvelously in their role of applied Deleuzean concepts, but we can also say that the entire third chapter titled “Rethinking Musical Pitch: The Smooth and the Striated” and the fourth chapter “Thinking Musical Time” are complex examples of the ideas laid and explained in the first two chapters, only specified with continuity and discontinuity. It is an important ideal pair that Deleuze inherited from Bergson, here in regard to the dimensions of space and time, that is: spatiality as it appears in pitch alteration (smooth, undivided, continuous) and temporality as it appears in musical content distribution (pp. 67–68). It is worth understanding that at this point the book strides away from the philosophical investigations and appears closer to historical accounting of various events that pushed certain compositional ideas without real effect on the philosophical advancement. Nevertheless, the fascination with two fundamentals can be drawn from their cosmological pair, that is, the unifying time-space mode at the same moment provides absolute coordinate system for everything there is in existent universe, just as it does for one tiny compositional piece, a universe of its own, while, because of its own nature, the elementary pair enables near-absolute freedom of articulation of its own matter by not being directly manipulated. Wonderfully, the veil upon which we formulate space-time relations, specifically in a musical piece,
can never cover the source of its relations: no matter what kind of division we employ in our space-time harmony, pitches are always separated by a spatial interval even when we can’t really hear it (p. 96). Similarly, manipulation of rhythm, tempo, and duration in characterizing pulsing and unpulsing modes of alteration still cannot achieve a true continuum, cannot fully blend, there is always a grounding rule that prevents absolutisation, “time in music can only be treated nominally yet undetermined”. At first it may seem in conflict, but Campbell follows J. Williams in folding the two approaches: “While Chronos closely resembles the first passive synthesis, the third relates strongly to Aion, leaving the second as a situation in which ‘the relation between Aion and Chronos’ is ‘mediate through intensity’” (p. 106). Fluidity of time as seen by Deleuze is accompanied by Bergson’s concept of time as indivisible, continuous experiential flux, and even though Bergson’s argument has been heavily criticized during his time, I agree, along with Campbell, Deleuze, and Guattari, that Bergson’s attempt to explain that musical melody, in fact, through memory which must somehow grasp all of its notes as a unity-in-instant, points to interconnecting mechanism of successive states of consciousness. And it is rightly noticed that Deleuze and Bergson share a common ground with Whitehead’s processual philosophy in number of ways, but all in all as a “influx to the other into that self-identity”. What we take from Deleuze’s philosophy of time, states Campbell, is the multiplicity of temporal possibilities. Campbell will proceed to use examples of Wagner, Brahms, Messiaen, Debussy and others, in order to show how composers strive to achieve (and show us) control over temporality by producing alternatives, mainly in rhythm and metric, to the point of elimination. Stockhausen has again proven exemplary. “With the concept of the ‘moment’ and ‘Moment-form’, Stockhausen formulates a type of musical structure in which each ‘moment’ has its own distinguished features and is perceived as a distinct ‘implicit eternity’ and not as a stage in developmental
process” (p. 121). What they are aiming at is basically the nature of haiku, or more correctly, how haiku manifests its nature in the reader/listener. Barthes noticed this phenomenon, he attempts to show us the striking moments of unusual haiku sub-structures, that is, the way it jumps at us, rather than luring, the manner in which stops us, drowning us into stasis, rather than provoking us by enslaving the language. But precisely in this “Moment-form” we find openness to poetic-theoretic depth in refusing to exclaim mastery. Haiku in fact shows ever-opening thinness of something, much like Stockhausen’s Moment-form as well as Deleuze and Guattari’s haecceity concept. They find a great example in Lorca: “five in the evening when love falls and fascism rises.”

As we can easily see, it is entirely aligned to the “dispersive” perspectives of French philosophy, and at the same time elegantly paints the elusive image of contemporary man/world. This is because their philosophy brings this phenomenological elusivity before our eyes. In a certain sense it is perhaps the finest articulation of inner mental working to date, and the appropriate thinking about it, the one Husserl, Bergson, and Whitehead would certainly be proud of. However, Campbell’s research did not end here. In the final chapter of Music after Deleuze, Campbell visits Deleuze’s semiotic investigations in regard to music. Campbell claims that there is no need for clear understanding of the field of semiotics or semiology (in other words: if you are not familiar with de Saussure, Hjelmslev, and Pierce, it does not matter), but I would greatly disagree. To truly understand the interlocked depth between semiotics and Deleuze’s post-structural philosophical (And why one would not want to? What would be the point in that?), the text requires some elementary knowledge in the way the three authors understand human interaction. Nevertheless, a less competent reader can still “collect” details on Deleuzean molecularity linked mostly to Hjelmslev’s work because his concepts bypass the traditional opposition of form and content and recognizes the arbitrary nature of simple designations of elements as either expression or content. It concentrates on stages prior to the formation and constitution of elements (as expressions or content). This is the core of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of Body without Organs, that is, “theiformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body on which all fixed categories and structures are dissolved or decomposed only to form ever-new formations of heterogeneous elements” (p. 144). Deleuze and Guattari reform the notion of meaning as following: “an interface between at least two force fields, or more specifically, between a form of content and a form of expression” (p. 145). Campbell points out Massumi’s example for understanding this, namely carpenter’s workshop and the process of making a table. In short, the carpenter’s methods and procedures are the form of expression, and while the series of states undergone by the wood in the process from that of raw material to a table is the form of content. In outmost beauty of symmetric simplicity, these understandings can be compared to phenomenological observations made by Heidegger in articulating the origin (therefore: meaning) of art. The “web” of connections between expression and content (as if to model Heidegger’s conclusions) is what Deleuze and Guattari term ‘diagram’, which is basically a sort of schemata of interaction, that is, of translational processes. These relations exist between objects themselves and in ideas. How does this relate to music? Campbell offers Pascal Criton’s operation – “translates all of this into a musical context when she notes that ‘musical writing’ involves movement from the ‘autonomization of signs’, to the extent that force-form relations circulate from sounds to sounds, from gestures to tools and to representations of time and space” (p. 146). Then Campbell draws a connection to Deleuzean molecularity: “These forces meet and enter into relations at a molecular level, below that of representational forms and in such a way that they formulate an intensive diagram composed of music’s most molecular properties and components. These range from the relatively molar character of individual chords, pitch aggregates, musical gestures, single pitches, durations, timbres and attacks to the previously unattainable sub-components of sound and pitch, all of which can be connected, disconnected and transposed in multiple ways as a new diagram is traced with its functions reorganized” (pp. 146–147). Essentially, we can say that sound is a “heterogeneous reality”, a “multiplicity made up of contingencies and determinations (…) which decrease and increase accord to the event that is in process. Again, this can be compared (or backed up, supported, assembled) with Jean-Luc Nancy’s attempt to establish multiplicity of origins of arts, that is, to show how different art produces different realities. Each cut in spatio-temporal articulations in music, however, also point out non-musical sources of becoming, the other.

Finally, to wrap the discussion and curve it back to where it started, Lachenmann’s theory behind his compositions is close to Deleuze & Guattari’s observations regarding philosophy.
Lachenmann’s tonality merges with their understanding of opinion, “by which they mean everything that is safely accepted and which seemingly protects us from chaos, is the enemy of art, and that it is art’s function to oppose opinion and to pierce the fabric of chaos in order to cast a plane over it” (p. 153). This is where the subtle elitism charges through the backdoor and again attempts to reduce music to problem-solving perpetua mobile, as they attack “the imitators” and proclaim: “Since there will always be imitators who wish to restore the clichés of opinion and to expel the previously ‘incommunicable novelty’ that has been rested from chaos, there is a continual need for new creators ‘to carry out a continual need for new creators’ to carry out a continual need for new creators’ to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out a continual need for new creators to carry out.

It is also important to spot how easily they make one akin to disliking emotional (that is, existential) world intrinsic to art, and the fullness of musical easily slips their mind. It is important to keep in mind that there is more to music than object-oriented problem solving (which is, in a sense, fictionalized), even though one might prefer one other the other. It is also important to spot how easily they detect the global stream of simplification tendencies within the world of music production, rather than composing, and that really does bear a flag of repetition that provokes mental numbness. With these thoughts being written, I conclude that Campbell’s work *Music after Deleuze* is worth reading, and, in a more important sense, worth of being included into further research.

Luka Perusić

Heinrich C. Kuhn

Philosophie der Renaissance

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Die allgemeine Strategie dieses Buches ist den Text eines Autors innerhalb einer Tradition, zu der dieser Autor gehörte, zu betrachten und kurz zu analysieren. Kuhn selbst schreibt darüber klar: „Ich behandle den Text hier nicht um seiner selbst willen, sondern aus dem Bewusstsein heraus, dass ideengeschichtliche bzw. philosophiehistorische
Texte [...] die Erkenntnis wirkmächtiger Traditionen, in denen sie (gleich ob zustimmend oder widersprechend) stehen, anerkennen sollen" (S. 62).


Am Ende des Buches behandelt Kuhn zwei Städte, die in genereller Literatur über die Philosophie der Renaissance normalerweise nicht auftauchen: Ciudad de Mexico und Peking.


Jesuit Matteo Ricci hat sich im Jahre 1601 dauerhaft in Peking angesiedelt. Seine Reise fing im Jahre 1577 an, als er für eine Indienmission ausgewählt wurde. Ricci, der schnell die chinesische Sprache gut genug gelernt hat, ist wegen seiner chinesischen Weltkarten bekannt geworden. Im Jahre 1596 hat er sein erstes chinesisches Buch Jiaoyou lun (Über...

Ivana Skuhala Karasman

We apologise to our readers for republishing by mistake the book review by Igor Eterović, “Matthew C. Altman: *Kant and Applied Ethics. The Uses and Limits of Kant’s Practical Philosophy*” in the previous issue of *Synthese philosophica* 57 (1/2014) . The book review was originally published in the issue 54 (2/2012), pp. 383–385.