Acoustic (Media) Art: Ars Acustica and the idea of a unique art form for radio – an examination of the historical conditions in Germany

The term Ars Acustica, which refers to a specific treatment of sound material in the medium of radio, originated in the WDR[1] Studio für Akustische Kunst (Studio for Acoustic Art), and was coined by the former producer Klaus Schöning in the 1970's[2]. The appearance of a new term did not, however, indicate the birth of something truly new. The creation of a name only made it possible to distinguish a particular method, material aesthetic, or form from other types of radio and audio art. It will become clear that attempts to create acoustic art, and later radio art, date back to the beginnings of the medium and even earlier. It is insufficient, however, merely to extract the history of Ars Acustica from the development of the development of the medium of public radio. The Cultural Revolution in Europe between 1910-1925, which was marked by a search for new forms of expression and the rejection of traditional bourgeois concepts of truth and culture, also played a significant role.

The text below will concentrate primarily on the conditions leading to the birth of Ars Acustica within the broader framework of radiophonic art.

Radio was originally (and is, in fact, once again today) primarily a source of news and entertainment. As a result, acoustic art within the medium is largely seen as "embellishment". It is treated as a "luxury" and subject to the mood of the day, considered at times to be relevant, at times meaningless and even bad for business. The latter view is particularly apparent in the present state-owned radio in Germany[3] and makes clear that cultural and artistic use of the medium is still not to be taken for granted. The historical role played by artistic and radiophonically based *Hörspiels* and Features in

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[1] WDR stands for Westdeutscher Rundfunk, or West German Broadcasting, and is based in Cologne.
[2] WDR-Studio Akustische Kunst, 155 works, 1968-1997, Cologne, 1997
[3] A few established programs, others were cut from the budget.

advancing the formal development of the medium is often neglected. Radio genres such as *Schallspiel*, *Hörspiel*, radio art and Ars Acustica, (to name the most common ones) indicate a fundamentally artistic treatment of the means and possibilities of the explicitly aural medium. The "*Schallspiel*" is here considered as a precursor to Ars Acustica in the Weimar Republic[4].

There were numerous experiments with acoustic, electro-acoustic and acousmatic types of play in the arts in general, but also with radio in particular, which proved, over the course of its history, to be the best suited platform for audio art distinct from music. In Germany, unlike other European countries, the terms "Ars Acustica" and *Radiokunst* (radio art) are closely linked to the history of the *Hörspiel* (and not contemporary music). A look at the development of the treatment of the working materials (voice/word, sound, and music) in both *Hörspiel* and Ars Acustica will reveal this connection.

From a historical standpoint, the responsibility for Ars Acustica in Germany (and in German-speaking countries), as opposed to its European neighbors, still lies primarily in the hands of the *Hörspiel* departments, although the stations and departments ever more rarely lay claim to the *Hörspiel* and, among other reasons, hope to appear more popular through the use of such terms as *radio art, sound art, Medienkunst or Klangkunst.*

Hörspiel – a collective term

A definition has yet to be found which does justice to the diverse form still called *Hörspiel*.

Even in the earliest phase of German radio (beginning in 1923), which focused on the search for forms of presentation appropriate to the medium, there were three fundamentally different views of what a *Hörspiel* was and what it should accomplish:

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[4] The term *Schallspiel* is understood as a deliberate treatment of the sounding qualities of the materials pitch, text, and sound. It stands in contrast with the (literature-bound and spoken word-based) *Handlungs-Hörspiel*, divisible itself into *Sendespiel* and *Wort-Hörspiel*.

The "*Sendespiel*" was intended to create a "theater for the blind", and it could be described as "in short, the continuation of theater using other means."[5] The Sendespiel, which in its use of existing literary material was the most obvious form, dominated the *Hörspiel* genre until 1926/27. It was apolitical and was seen as a chance to confront a broad and culturally "undernourished" population with classic German dramatic literature, thus establishing radio as an educational institution. In this case, the act of listening entailed the reconstruction of externally determined events.

Early on, the "*Sprach-* or *Wortkunstwerk*"[6] found its position alongside the Sendespiel. Both forms involved literary adaptation, but the *WortHörspiel* endeavored to enrich the new medium by creating distinctive literary radio art. The *WortHörspiel* is the epitome of the poetically conceived and dramaturgically spoken word. It created conceptual worlds, and its lyricism demanded the individual seclusion of completely introspective listening.

The third form of early *Hörspiel* was the "*MusikHörspiel*"[7], which probed the potential of radiophonic sound art. It was developed and explored primarily within "music departments" in experiments which combined text, music, and sound, giving equal weight to each. Here, the elements of the *Hörspiel* were treated principally as sound material.

This approach in particular addressed the novelty of radio, to which it attempted to give artistic form. The search for the qualities of radio art suggests the primacy of acoustic properties: *Hör-spiel* (literally "listen-play"), the double imperative, refers to both the invitation to play (*spiel*), and to the perception of the medium using the sense of hearing (*Gehör*). The *Hörspiel* is thus no longer limited to playing with the signifying properties of the word. It becomes a sound phenomenon, in which the various forms of expression can be organized according to their sonority.

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[5] Das neue Hörspiel (=Geschichte und Typology des Hörspiels 5, ed. Klaus Schoening), Darmstadt, 1988, p.122)
[6] Referred to below as *WortHörspiel*.
[7] Below also *Schallspiel*, although this term primarily describes the position of the technical-acoustical play.

Because radio plays today can be categorized according to subject matter or target audience, divisions by genre are called for. These include *Kurz-Hörspiel* (short radio play), science-fiction radio play, *Originalton-Hörspiel* (radio play using original sound material), *Mundart-Hörspiel* (dialect radio play), *Kinder-Hörspiel* (children's radio play), *Kriminal-Hörspiel* (mystery), *Wortkunstwerk* (word artwork) or *Schallspiel* (soundplay), *Sendespiel* (broadcast play), feature, etc. It is striking that these categories are not determined by specific formal characteristics, as is the case (at least traditionally) in music and literature. Rather, there is a constant exchange of stylistic means, but also of forms, among these so-called genres of *Hörspiel*. This leads to a broad and (at times) uncertain formal concept of each type.

If, nonetheless, one accepts the validity of these genres, a phenomenon best described as genre correspondence (*Gattungskorrespondenz*) presents itself within the radio play spectrum. This correspondence is both a considerable force behind the development of each individual type of radio play, and also decisive in the progress of the field as a whole. The aforementioned exchange is particularly evident in the development of Science fiction or Children's radio play (but also Features) after the innovation of the "*Neue Hörspiel*"[8], inasmuch as the techniques, concepts, and ways of playing with acoustic materials enter directly into the organization of traditional *Handlungs-Hörspiel* or reportages.

The legitimacy of the claimed differentiation of the subgenres of the radio play is important, despite the somewhat blurred boundaries between them. The resulting order within the spectrum was certainly not yet present in the consciousness of the Weimar republic, but from a contemporary standpoint, it provides orientation which is essential for a historical and typological consideration of the radio play and its later forms.

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[8] Produced in the milieu of the WDR since the 1970's and celebrated by publications as a paradigm change in Hörspiel production.

Schallspiel – an early form of Ars Acustica?

As previously mentioned, the development of the radio play in the Weimar Republic took place at the earliest stages of artistic activity within the medium. The novelty of radio, and the search for appropriate forms of expression, inasmuch as this search was seriously pursued, called for experimentation (see above), since common forms and methods had not yet been established. It is plausible that, after the initial adoption of existing forms of expression, interest arose in developing forms which were more "suitable" and made better use of the medium. One approach suggested a new regard for the elements of the radio play. They were no longer treated as "mere" bearers of the plot, nor as supporters thereof, but were reconsidered for their materiality and (sound)value within the complex event of the radio play, thereby expanding their significance for the first time. This reinterpretation of the elements into their auditory and self-reflexive qualities will be briefly outlined below.

Language as material

There are various possibilities for transforming written language, the starting point of literary radio productions, into a radio play. To name just a few:

Narrative speech delivers a plotline to the listener directly, using purely verbal means. It can be shaped on several levels (vocal intensity according to distance of the microphone, manner and tone of narration, etc.). This is the classic form of radio play.

Scenic speech functions similarly: the plot is distributed among several real or presumed characters or perspectives. A story unfolds along a dramatic construct. The tone of the voices follows both contemporary custom and the artistic intention of the director.

Text shaping speech is a rhythmic, dance-like and abstract approach, which begins to treat language according to its sound and structure.

All of these approaches to text material (here only briefly indicated), are further influenced by technical and (since the birth of stereophony) production-specific aesthetic decisions (microphone placement, definition of the setting, location of the actors, etc.) The essential factor of all three approaches is that they are based on a plotline which is determined by the semantic quality of the language.

Further parameters for interpreting the content of written language are emphasis, sound, rhythm of speech, speed and melody of speech, and even vocal character. In a radio composition, these qualities can free the verbal material from its "merely" literal quality. The structure of language in time can also be altered. Earlier dependence on the purely linear treatment of literature (reading as a sequence) is abandoned in favor of more musically inclined solutions, such as simultaneous speech.

As the density of the spoken material increases (ending in simultaneity), the literal meaning of the words recedes ever further to reveal the resulting sound and noise structure. A new realm is created between abstraction and fickle literalism. Radio composition and Ars Acustica can act on both levels, and the levels can be combined. The form of presentation thus gains a diverse and decisive influence on the communication of all manner of content.

In this context, it is appropriate to introduce the genre known as *Lautpoesie* (sound poetry), which is characterized by experimentation with language, or even its dissolution into pure sound (as practiced, for example, by the Russian futurists and Dadaists). Language appears here in unusual contexts and develops new artistic qualities, which will become particularly apparent in Ars Acustica.

Musical material

A similar expansion can be traced in the formal approach to *Hörspielmusik* (radio play music) and in the musical structure of the *Hörspiel*. Generally speaking, the progression began with simple signals at the beginning and end of a play (a gong, for example) and pause signals or transitional interludes between scenes. Work with leitmotifs identifying specific spaces or characters followed. Finally, music graduated to a position of independence (which then matured and solidified with the *Neue Hörspiel*), no longer *illustrating*, but now "speaking for itself". Quite early on, the musical form contributed to the structure of the plot. Thus, it becomes necessary to differentiate between *a* music in the language and plot-oriented *Handlungs-Hörspiel*, and *the* concrete composition which becomes a radio play in itself. The latter is closely tied to the search for specifically appropriate radio music which is also transmittable despite the technical

limitations of the medium. This endeavor, encouraged by the music departments of the radio stations, led to the birth of new forms.

Music in the radio play

For radio plays which present a given plot (*Wort-Hörspiel*), "eight possibilities of radio play music"[9] can be distinguished:

1. Scenic music, a complete piece of music which is necessary to the plot.

2. Music as acoustic scenery.

3. Music as a replacement for visual occurrences through musical and/or rhythmic events.

4. Music as characteristic illustration of dramaturgically elevated dialogue.

5. Music as spoken song or as a song with instrumental accompaniment (melodrama).

6. Music as accentuation (musical accent), usually using just one instrument, often percussion.

7. Music as a replacement for a dramaturgically meaningful gesture.

8. Music to represent natural occurrences.[10]

In these radio plays, the music assumes a subordinate function and is only introduced in service of the spoken communication of the plot.

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[9] Cf: Hagemann, Carl: Hörspielmusik, in: Funk, 1928, Issue 22
[10] Hagemann, Carl: Hörspielmusik, in: Funk, 1928, Issue 22, p.169; quoted according to Timper, Christiane: Hörspielmusik in der deutschen Rundfunkgeschichte, Diss., Berlin, 1990, p.29

In contrast, the *Musik-Hörspiel* (music radio play) seeks to implement independence of music and sound in the *Hörspiel*. Here, the definition of the *Hörspiel* comprehends the listening process in a broader sense as was common in the *Wort-Hörspiel*. The primacy of the spoken word made way for the combination of speech, music, and sound, which were all treated with equal importance. Such pieces were commonly performed as *Funkkantaten* or *Funkoratorien* (radio cantatas or radio oratorios) in music festivals - a tradition which is, in other forms, still present today, for example, in electro-acoustic performance practice, which is well known to be quite close to Ars Acustica.

Worlds of noise

The use of noise in the *Hörspiel* followed a similar development as that of language and music. Experimentation with noise and its inherent potential for articulation and composition was pursued before the onset of radio by the Italian Futurists. A letter dated March 11th, 1913 from Luigi Russolo to the musician Balella Pratella, who was a member of the futuristic group including Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, described Russolo's concept of contemporary music: "Today, it becomes ever more complicated. It seeks such combinations of pitches which sound very dissonant, strange and raw to the ear. Thus we come closer and closer to the music of noise (…). We Futurists all loved the music of the great masters. Beethoven and Wagner gripped our hearts for many years. But now we have had enough of them. We take much more pleasure in the ideal combination of sounds from streetcars, combustion motors, automobiles, and bustling masses, than from the *Eroika* or *Pastorale* (…). We will entertain ourselves by mentally orchestrating the sounds of metal blinds on store windows, of slamming doors, the slurping and shoving of the masses, the agitation of crowds in train stations, steelworks, factories, printing presses, power plants, and underground trains."[11]

It should be noted that Russolo and the Futurists were not concerned with a treatise on the technical world as a musical or sounding sphere. Rather, the intention was to incorporate the noises of every day (modern) life into musical events, to engage them in the apparatus

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[11] Quoted according to Prieberg, Fred K: Musica Ex Machina – über das Verhältnis von Musik und Technik (below: Prieberg/musica), Frankfurt/Main, Berlin, 1960, p.32.

of the orchestra. The Futurists' "Emancipation of noise" paves the way for artistic use of noise and it's application as a structural and dynamic building block of acoustic art.

Hörspiel in its beginnings: division and organization of play

In retrospect, allowing for some reduction and idealization, the development of the *Hörspiel* in the Weimar Republic until 1930 can be divided into three phases:

(I)　　The first phase, marked by a familiarization with the new medium and its creative potential, served "essentially to test the medial power of suggestion" or to "demonstrate possibilities for acoustic illusion."[12]

(II)　　The second phase demonstrated the dependence of the *Hörspiel* on the technical organization of the medium. At least in the *Hörspiel* as art form, acoustic sensation moved to the forefront of this organization – or, as Helmut Heißenbüttel put it later in the context of the *Neue Hörspiel*, the *Hörspiel* becomes a Hör-Sensation. This term includes reference to the changing conception of material. In this context, Döhl emphasizes the *Hörspiel*'s dependence on the medium, implying that the sensation only exists in the moment of being broadcast.

(III)　　The next phase, begun at the end of the 1920's, attempted to find expressive means for current events (or true sensation). Radical occurrences such as Lindbergh's transatlantic flight ("Der Lindberghflug" by Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill), as well as catastrophes caught the interest of *Hörspiel* authors. Examination (parallel to the literary analysis) of the First World War also occurred (in Johannsen's "Brigadevermittlung", for example). Direct reference to the politics of the Weimar Republic was generally impossible, due to the censure-like control of *Hörspiel*s. This was motivated, at least in part, by the director-generals' desire to avoid statements on party politics.

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[12] Doehl/NS-Hörspiel, p.6; Examples included the previously named "Danger" (1924) by Richard Hughes, Hans Flesch's "Zauberei auf dem Sender" (1924), Rolf Gunold's "Bellinzona" (1924, not broadcast), and Erich Ebermayer's "Der Minister ist ermordet" (1926)

All of these roughly outlined developmental phases of the *Hörspiel* in the Weimar Republic witnessed experimentation which treated the elements (music, language, sound) primarily as sound material. The "open" politics of radio, championed by the director-generals of the individual radio institutions, contributed to this spirit of enthusiastic experimentation. But the political pressure on the individual directors with regard to their programming had already begun at the beginning of the 1930's. The first purge of radio actors took place in 1932. In the years 1932-33, the majority of leaders of the development of radio (and *Hörspiel*) in all its diversity were dismissed. After the "Machtergreifung"[13], many were sent to the concentration camp in Oranienburg. Their positions were filled by loyal National Socialists, whose goal was to transform radio into a highly efficient mass medium of the party. Briefly put, practically everything which was broadcast on the radio from this point on served the propaganda campaign.[14]

Postwar radio – the long way to radio art

Historical Context

Several circumstances of the reorganization of radio were decisive for the idea of radiophonic art in the period after the Second World War.

The radio institutions were under supervision by the occupying forces, whose radio policy can be summarized with the term "reeducation". Thus, the task of radio was seen mainly as that of teaching and advising the listening public, and programming was planned accordingly. Hörspiel as well as music programs were to be conceived in the spirit of the Allies' educational goals. Since current, primarily human problems (homecoming, reconstruction, homelessness, establishing a livelihood, reorientation, etc.) were to be treated, the presence of a plot was vital. The primacy of the plot caused the predisposition toward *Wort-Hörspiele* owing to their "tendency

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[13] The seizure of power by the National Socialist Party on January 1, 1933
[14] Nanny Drechsler speaks of the National Socialist's radio work as a "barrage of propaganda", cf.: Nanny Drechsler, Die Funktion der Musik im deutschen Rundfunk 1933-1945, Pfaffenweiler, 1988, p.35.

to internalize and reduce reality to the human-private sphere"[15]. For the moment, there was no latitude from the radio organizers for technical experiments (for example acoustic film, collage and montage). From the listeners' point of view as well, the central demand on radio was for entertainment. So, the tendency toward *Wort-* or *Handlungs-Hörspiel* satisfied the needs of the audience.

An assessment of the programming of the period should also take into account that, due to the destruction of theaters, concert halls and cinemas, radio was the only remaining source of information besides newspapers, and it was also the only generally accessible institution for entertainment. In addition, the loss of most radio archives and the lack of sufficient recording methods made a direct continuation of the *Hörspiel* work and experimentation of the Weimar Republic impossible. All of these factors resulted in the increasing establishment of the *Wort-* or *Handlungs-Hörspiel,* which, in the interest of the listener, aimed as much as possible at a depoliticized and intimate receptive attitude. The narrowing of the concept of the *Hörspiel* was supported by the division of the *Hörspiel* and feature departments at NWDR in 1950. This robbed the *Hörspiel* of the potential which it had possessed until this point to relate directly to current affairs.

The plot, whether composed in literary or poetic form, stood in the foreground of *Hörspiel* work after World War II. Sound and music were relegated to a supporting illustrative role. The 'pure' W*ort-Hörspiel* became the "actual *Hörspiel*". *Schallspiele* or the current tendencies developing in the field of music (see below) made no impact on *Hörspiel* work.

Breaking the ties to functionalism

Beginning in the mid-1960's, the *Hörspiel* once again moved closer to other forms of artistic expression. Some essential reasons for this will be discussed below. Cultural tendencies of the '50's and '60's will be considered as influential factors in the development of the *Hörspiel* (to the "*Neue Hörspiel*" and later Ars Acustica), to the extent that they explored and developed techniques or manners of thinking which, beginning in the mid-'60s, led to innovation in the field of the *Hörspiel*.

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[15] Würffel, Stefan Bodo: Das dt. Hörspiel, Stuttgart, 1978, p.120.

The dissolution of language within the *Hörspiel*

The character of the language used in *Handlungs-Hörspielen* (plot-based radio plays) gradually evolved, approaching the trend toward *Konkrete Poesie* (concrete poetry). This process is already recognizable in the constant change in Günter Eich's[16] pieces. His *Hörspiele* were remarkable in that they demanded participatory thinking and judgment from the audience, challenging the security of the listeners' receptive attitude. Eich also altered the technical style and with it the entire character of the piece, particularly by choosing the (abrupt) method of cutting instead of (softer) fading.

The view of all facets of speech (sound, letter, word, sentence, phrase, in addition to manner of articulation, etc.) as phonetic or rhythmic compositional material became common from 1968/69 on, particularly in the milieu of the *Neue Hörspiel*. The work of the poet Gerhard Rühm provided preliminary work in this direction. The materiality of language was the basis of Rühm's *Lautpoesie* (sound poetry) as early as the 1950's and '60's. As a member of the Wiener Gruppe (Vienna Group), he conceived sound-poems such as "gebet" ("prayer", 1954) in which the vowels a a u e e o i sound in a sing-song in constant play with consonants, until all possible combinations have been exhausted.

Rühm's work also found phonetic material in linguistic dialect, which was particularly appropriate for sound-poetry, since dialect is typically oral language and not fixed in written literature.

In 1969, Rühm brought the experience of this work into the recording studio, where his *Hörspiel* "Zensurierte Rede" ("censured speech") was produced. In this piece, Rühm reduced a speech given in Czech to the initial and end sounds of the proclamation itself. The final effect is that one recognizes that there is a speech, but cannot make out the content – a symbolic image of the infringement on free speech by the censure. Precisely this shift in the use of language is characteristic for the

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[16] Günter Eich is one of the most important radio authors in postwar Germany.

concept of language-play in *Hörspiel*, particularly in the field of the *Neue Hörspiel* and later Ars Acustica.

Technical innovations

The entire concept of radio as an educational and entertainment institution underwent a profound transformation in the 1960's effected by, among other factors, the rise of television. The *Hörspiel* that had been broadcast until this point, primarily *Handlungs-Hörspiel*, were gradually driven out of the "market" by television and film productions. There were ever fewer listeners in general, and not only in the field of *Hörspiel*. Many authors transferred to the more lucrative medium of television. A reorientation on the part of the radio was necessary – if only in order to retain a share of the market. In this context, "the *Hörspiel* branch was liberated from its earlier responsibility for literary education and forced, in light of the competition from the visual medium, [to focus on] its specific qualities."[17] Pushed on by an external impetus, radio was moved to innovate, and Radiokunst and Ars Acustica were art forms which played with just the "specific qualities" mentioned above. Although the foundation was new, a central theme ran parallel to the beginnings of radio, that being the diversity of the generic term *Hörspiel*. The terrain of radiophonic art stood to be redefined.

At the same time, technical advances like the development of stereophony created vitally new perspectives, redefining the spatial dimensions of listening. A projection space came into being, which the listener suddenly (co)occupied. Furthermore, through the distribution of several sound-sources in space, stereophony made possible the conception of a highly complex sound image. Due to this spatial organization, an intricate composition could be differentiated and therefore grasped in its many dimensions by the listener. Improved studio techniques[18] also offered new

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[17] Hermann Keckeis, Das deutsche Hörspiel 1923-1973, Frankfurt/Main, 1973, p.108.
[18] Cf. on this point: H. Eimert/H.U.Humpert, Das Lexikon der elektronischen Musik, Regensburg, 1973 (regarding terminology) and H.U.Humpert, Elektronische Musik – Geschichte – Technik – Kompositionen, Mainz, 1987 (particularly p.57ff.)

perspectives for the mixing of the building blocks music, sound, and language, enhancing their material character.

Correspondences of genre

Seen in retrospect, the late '50s and early '60s were a time of crisis in the field of *Neue Musik* (new music), as serial techniques had led to an intellectualization and mathematization of musical parameters. What had until that point been a more or less "unified front" of *Neue Musik*, as embodied in the *Darmstädter Ferienkursen für Neue Musik* (Darmstadt holiday music courses), began to divide into various methods of composition and views of material.

The relevant directions for our purposes are:

1) Serialism and Aleatoric
2) Electronic music
3) Traditional composition, based on purely musical parameters and techniques such as were also employed in serial music
4) The inclusion of the sensory aspect of music, depending upon multimedial methods with a broadened material understanding.

The key to an understanding of the concept of border-crossing can be found in an examination of the treatment of materials. This refers to the use of signifiers, such as (concrete) sound and verbal structures, in the composition process of *Neue Musik* on the one hand, and the imitation of sound-technical and musical practices from contemporary composition in the *Neue Hörspiel* on the other hand. Changes in the vision of what music and *Hörspiel* should accomplish indeed ran parallel to one another, leading to a merging of the developments characterized by the phrases, "composer as *Hörspiel*-maker" or "music as *Hörspiel – Hörspiel* as music". This joining together of art forms was made possible by various efforts on the part of both composers and *Hörspiel*-makers. Their work will be briefly described below, as it was essential in laying the groundwork for the independent form of Ars Acustica.

As a reaction to the strict regulations and procedure within serial music, whose guiding rule was the technical organization and predetermination of every detail, the opposing principle of Aleatoric was developed: Here the law of chance was regarded as the controlling and organizing force behind both the particulars of the composition and its overall character.

The dissolution of compositional predetermination took place on several levels:

a)   Assuming the composition of a musical complex out of several formal sections, the once ordered sequence became variable. The individual segments were no longer notated in the strict continuum of a traditional score, but rather lay, for example, simultaneously on individual sheets of paper. This relatively unstructured condition resulted in

b)   A coincidental character of composition: the interpreter became active as composer as well, and the design of a piece was only complete in the collective action of its performance.[19]

βλεπε επισης σχεσεις με την πιθανοκρατικη βαση της κβαντομηχανικης

This principle of participation by the complete production team in the creation of the work found expression in the experimental *Hörspiel* of the '70's and '80's. The concept of open guidelines, or active interpreters (speakers, technicians, directors) became the only binding imperative[20], and the final form of the material was extracted or shaped through the spontaneity or chance of technical experiments.

The Aleatoric concept found another outlet in the treatment of spoken language within *Hörspiel*. The milieu of the *Hörspiel* studios in Cologne is particularly remarkable for productions which experimented with the sounding aspect of language. The choice and preparation of *Hörspiel* material was determined according

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[19] Traditional musical notation positions all voices (when there are more than one) below one another. In Lutoslavski's String Quartet (1964), however, the voices are notated in "51 sections". Cf. Günter Altmann, *Musikalische Formenlehre*, Munich, 1984, p.173.

[20] There are numerous examples for this principle.   To name just a few: Ronald Steckel „Das China Projekt" (SFB/SWF/WDR 1985 – analysed in detail elsewhere by the author of this text. The coincidental nature of materials is also a decisive aspect of M. Kagel's "(Hörspiel) - ein Aufnahmezustand" (WDR 1969) . John Cage's concepts of original sound materials (following literary motives) also fits into the category of (partially) randomly determined audio works.

to concepts of language as phonetic material, as semantically oriented literary criticism, or in its variability according to the manner of speech.

The importance of electronic (electro-acoustic) music for the *Neue Hörspiel*, the *Schallspiel*, or the experimental *Hörspiel* and Ars Acustica is obvious:

On the one hand, it was synthetic methods, such as modulation and mutation of an initial impulse, which provided material for the composition. On the other hand, the tape recorder established itself as a veritable instrument of composition, facilitating the assembly of extremely complex structures which were barely performable by musicians. As a result, the process of composition moved away from "notation", favoring an experimental approach to the materials in the creation of the work.

Beginning around 1948, the work in the milieu of Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry in the field known as *musique concrète* attempted anew to develop a form of noise music or poetry. Experimentation took place with predominantly electronically mutated natural sounds. Stimulation of realistic imagery was adamantly avoided. Rather, Schaeffer sought the aesthetic independence of sound-worlds, which he set in opposition to a purely illustrative approach. His work, which followed and continued the emancipation of noise begun by the Bruitists at the beginning of the 20th century, set the stage for *Hörspiel* or *Schallspiel* free of imagery, devoted to the self-contained world of the sound event. This fulfilled the heavy demands for a *totales Schallspiel* set forth by Knilli in his book from 1961 (see below). Thus, *musique concrète* prepared the way for the expanded notion of play in the *Hörspiel* of the 1960's and '70's. The concept of the auditory came to include language, sound, articulation, and also music. The discussion of the organization and duties of medium-specific art for the radio moved away from representational portrayal of reality, and toward a technical concept of reality, focused on that which is specifically audible. The fundamental creative principle of *musique concrète* was "that the musical value of the elements and the thus gained, newly arranged sounds become fully independent, bound only by the criteria of aural perception itself."[21] An example can be seen in

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[21] Pierre Schaeffer, Art. Musique concrete, in: Riemanns Musiklexikon, Sachteil d.12th ed., Mainz, 1967, p.618. Cf.also sound examples on the record, FONO CE 31025.

Schaeffer's "Objets liés"(1959). Although this collage used noises and vibrations of concrete objects, it allowed no conclusions about the objects themselves.

In contrast, Luc Ferrari's concept of *Anekdotische Musik* (anecdotal music) sought to "speak to the listener's experience and imagination"[22] through the use of concrete sounds. Examples include "Presque Rien No. 1" (Lever du jour au bord de la mer) (1970), in which the break of a morning becomes an acoustic experience, and his Karl-Sczuka Prizewinning "Portraitspiel" (SWF, 1971). Here, Ferrari used a discussion with a woman to convey a sense of himself in his relationship to music. The reflections are bound into an acoustic context of electronic sounds, musical excerpts, screams, and noises. Through the authenticity of the materials and their inclusion in musical-acoustic processes, this composition becomes a form of speech about music, using semantic *and* musical means.

The concepts named above share the intention to reject an art form judged to be obsolete. The experiments and their results aimed to broaden the expressive potential of acoustical means, and to set an alternative model to the "bourgeois culture business", which believed art to be removed from and above the events of daily life. A parallel can be seen in the dawn of "Happening Culture" in the 1960's, which sought emancipation by closing the gap between aestheticism and reality. Just as Happening aestheticized reality, music which included noises and the inherently mundane associations that came with them contradicted the view of art as strictly detached from everyday life.

New listening

In music as in *Hörspiel* there was the hope to reach a listening public increasingly untouched by the normal concert industry. To awaken "new listening" through the conception of unprecedented audio composition must also have been in the interest of the institution of radio, since the fostering of uniquely radiophonic qualities could have combatted the loss of listeners (begun in the 1970's at the latest, and in part due

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[22] Hansjörg Pauli, in: text accompanying record Luc Ferrari, Avantgarde, Deutsche Grammophon 2561041.

to the provision of television entertainment in every household, see above). Radio institutions were nevertheless slow to introduce the rising trends in *Neue Musik* and electronic music into *Hörspiel* productions. The initiative for radio art across traditional genre boundaries was largely limited to the artists themselves and, from this point on, included a conceptual backing in music theory.

Knilli's concept of the "totales Schallspiel"

Without actually mentioning the term Ars Acustica, Friedrich Knilli made an important contribution to the establishment of the genre as an independent form of radio art in 1961, with his paper, "Das Hörspiel – Mittel und Möglichkeiten eines totalen Schallspiels"[23] ("The radio play – means and possibilities of a total sound play"). In his theory, the acoustic layout was the singular measure of the *Hörspiel* as sound-event and was thus differentiated from the conventional *Hörspiel* using the term *totales Schallspiel*.

According to Knilli's guidelines, the elements of the *Hörspiel* should no longer relate to the outside world, but only to one another in their materiality. Here he saw a similarity to music. His *Schallspiel* was also closely tied to the aforementioned changes in the cultural landscape in Germany in the 1960's (television, electro-acoustic composition, rejection of purely internalized listening in favor of multimedia agitation and synaesthetic experiments).

Karl Sczuka Prize

The Karl Sczuka Prize[24], awarded in the context of the Donaueschinger Musiktage, honors *Hörspiel* work for musical or radiophonic excellence. It is remarkable not for its influence on the field of *Hörspiel*, but rather as it represents a reaction to existing trends. The quest to create a forum uniting new music and experimental *Hörspiel* productions reflected the growing desire to remove barriers between the two genres. From the perspective of radio as a mass medium, it is notable that thus honored works – as is seemingly the case with much contemporary artwork – never reach the masses

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[23] Friedrich Knilli, Das Hörspiel – Mittel und Möglichkeiten eines totalen Schallspieles, Stuttgart, 1961.
[24] Awarded for Hörspiel music since 1955. Since 1970, it honors explicitly radiophonic compositions in the present-day sense of Ars Acustica. Recognized today as the highest honor in the field.

and even require a certain degree of mediation. Nonetheless, the Karl Sczuka prize holds an outstanding position in the world of Radio Art, Ars Acustica, and even Audio Art in general. The elevation and distinction of at least two per year has created and continues to create a catalog, documenting the gamut of specifically radiophonic composition. The scope of the field is thus defined but also potentially expanded with each year's addition. Regretfully, the prizewinning pieces are not individually retrievable. The results appear in publications[25], but the pieces themselves remain practically unheard, barring the occasional rare broadcast by regional stations.

The theoretical importance of the prize is increased by the international nature of the pool from which the winners are drawn. Of course, there are other prizes which contribute to a complete image of audio art[26], but the Karl Sczuka prize is Europe's oldest and displays the most continuity.

An investigation of the theoretical basis of the Karl Sczuka Prize recipients since 1968 reveals a delay with respect to developments in literature and music. As shown above, the strictly mathematical, technically based or politically motivated composition methods in *Neue Musik* were already present in the first twenty years after the end of the war. A return was already underway in the 1970's – away from pure intellectualism and back to an emphasis on emotion and depth of expressivity. In the experimental phase of *Neue Musik*, receptiveness to foreign methods such as collage and use of noise had established the ties to *Hörspiel* production. Thus, the renewed consciousness of traditional melodically and harmonically based approaches represented a "remusicalization", and with it a distancing from the *Hörspiel*. And yet, [techniques and especially results of] reflection on the field of *Neue Musik* were vital to the innovation of the *Hörspiel* at the end of the 1960's. Now it was the creators of radio and *Hörspiel* whose experimentation approached the acoustic domain.

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[25] SWR (Süd-West Rundfunk) Publication Series: Grundlage I – Karl Sczuka Preis, Baden Baden, 2nd Ed. 2005.
[26] For example the "Prix Art Acustica", awarded several times by the WDR, and the "phonurgia nova" in France, etc.

Admittedly, the radical "materialization" ("Vermaterializierung") of Lettrists, Bruitists, and the compositions by Stockhausen, Schnebel, Cage, etc. had been conceived and, to some extent applied already. Yet now, with the trend returning to musical parameters in *Neue Musik*, radio artists opened a new area, which was specifically bound to radio, but also tied in literature and music to some extent. What was previously found in the expansion of boundaries or on the edge of literature or music, now created a room of its own in the genre of experimental *Hörspiel* known as Ars Acustica. The acoustical expression whose diversity had unfolded (with some interruption) throughout the course of the *Hörspiel*'s history, appears finally to have established itself , with its building blocks (pitch/sound/music, language/speech, and noise), and it seeks forms of compositional implementation.

New media and digitalization

With the spread of the personal computer at the end of the 20th century, the number of experimenters in the realm of electro-acoustical composition grew exponentially. A large portion of the resulting productions aimed at the entertainment sector and served, or even revolutionized club culture (among other areas). Audio-lounges arose in many locations, in which a mix of common beats, sound-scapes, musical structures and concrete sounds were played. An example can be found in Ambient Music, which functions both on a purely atmospheric level as acoustic wallpaper, and on the level of fine detail with a mature and explicitly aural material aesthetic. These developments in popular spheres comprised the second emancipation of concrete sounds in music. In this context, people were sensitized to a sounding world which had yet to receive attention – neither from so-called classical music ("ernste Musik"), electro-acoustical composition and musique concrete, nor any other form of sound art ("*Hörkunst*"). They thereby attained, at least potentially, the basis for a form of aesthetic listening and aestheticizing of everyday life, as well as the artistic use of the audible world, for example, in the form of Ars Acustica. Parallel to these developments, some *Hörspiel* departments also revised their self-images. They became "*Medienkunststätten*", (venues for media art) discovering live events beyond

the radio stations and, in the case of SFB[27], launching sound installations not connected to radio itself. In many cases, they even opened up to club culture.

The tremendous spread of the PC was finally the cause of numerous new career choices. Once divided areas of production could now – at least from a technical standpoint – be brought back together. What had been common in electro-acoustical composition now found its way into the field of the *Hörspiel*.
The composer or author does not create a product to be interpreted by others, but rather he executes his work himself at every stage. In this sense, he unites the roles of author, dramaturg, director, and producer in one person. As previously mentioned, music had already encountered this type of combination of musician or composer and producer in the 1950's. The last decades of the 20th century saw the addition of the author-producer. Certainly, the "simplified" technical conditions did not necessarily guarantee aesthetic value. First and foremost, they made the means of production accessible on a broad scale. It remains to hope that there are some amid the author-producers who recall the history of music, *Radiokunst* and Ars Acustica, and thus avoid reinventing the wheel on a daily basis.

Radio institutions, contemporary sound art and Ars Acustica
Radio is currently withdrawing from its responsibility the aforementioned sensitizing of the "masses" to audible phenomena and their aesthetic use. Whether in Canada, Australia, Holland, or recently in Germany at Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, Ars Acustica programs are disappearing rapidly, or, as in other institutions, they are being "starved" by budget cuts. Contemporary, non-musical, non-literary sound art, which has long since become a genre in itself, is ignored or overlooked.
It can thus be concluded today that the idea of radio-specific art has bypassed the very medium which once brought it to life: *Radiokunst* and Ars Acustica have ripened into

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[27] SFB is the former Sender Freies Berlin (today Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg). Manfred Mixner initiated the SFB-Klanggalerie in 1995, and it continued to commission sound installations in the radio station, building regularly in the 10 years which followed. The materials of the installations were then further developed for the program "Internationale Radiokunst" and broadcast as radio compositions. The leadership of the RBB cancelled the Klanggalerie in 2005 and the radio program in 2006, both without replacement.

a self-contained art form which claims its place beside visual art, literature, and music in the business of culture, in festivals, in series and clubs, on-site and online.

The fact that the institutions have rid themselves of explicitly radiophonic art at just the moment when a new audience for the field has emerged, will work against them in the not-too-distant future, when they are faced with the loss of a discriminating audience.

Andreas Hagelüken, Jan, 2006

(Trans. Allegra Silbiger)

Andreas Hagelüken, born 1963 in Homberg (Hessen), studied Musicology, Philosophy and Art History in Bonn and Freiburg. He began work in radio in 1994 with SFB (Sender Freies Berlin) and lives in Berlin and Freiburg. From 1996-1998, he worked as a cultural journalist for magazine programs on the public radio stations DLF and SDR and produced film sound and theater soundtracks. From 2000-2003, Hagelüken produced 25 issues of the sound art magazine "Sound Rules" for the radio play department of SFB. In 2000, he created the free sound archive www.hoerspielbox.de for the Akademie der Künste, Berlin and SFB. As a freelance journalist, he has published, written and produced artist profiles, features, experimental radio plays, and numerous programs on radio art for several German public broadcasters, including WDR- studio akustische Kunst and Deutschlandradio. He works as an independent editor for the program "Internationale Radiokunst" at rbb-kulturradio (rundfunk berlin brandenburg) and curates the rbb-klanggalerie. Since January, 2004, Hagelüken has been working on the anthology: "Neue Radiokunst International" for the public broadcaster "SWR 2 Klangraum – Ars Acustica". 2005-2008, he was responsible for the sound art program at radioTESLA in Berlin's *medien<kunst>labor TESLA* and "ausland" Since 2005 Co- and Soundproduction and dramaturgy of several art projects of Christoph Mayer chm., e.g. the "audioweg gusen" (www.audioweg.gusen.org), "decisions…Entscheidungen" (Linz 09) etc.
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