

MUSEIK 1 - 10

Henrik Colding-Jorgensen, 1979

The society for contemporary music, D.U.T., in Copenhagen, Denmark, decided in 1979 on its first Children's Music Week, and I was entrusted with the task to direct and conduct a group of very young instrumentalists, and to compose a piece of music for these children to premiere as part of the programme. We would have one week together, which meant three rehearsals and one recital, so I took a deep breath and made an entirely graphic composition for the group of 10 or 15 teenagers, who applied for participation, playing various instruments. I had been employing optic and graphic notational elements in my compositions for a number of years, but this was my first entirely graphic score.

The concepts of aleatoric improvisation and graphic notation were central in the composers' milieus in many countries at that time, at a professional level. In 1971, I participated in a symposium in Stockholm, Sweden, with subjects relating to contemporary composition, and there met the American composer Earle Brown. He lectured about rehearsing and directing performances of graphic and aleatoric notations, with discussions of a lot of examples drawn from his wide experience with soloists, orchestras and ensembles, both in his own works and other compositions. That meeting was a great inspiration to me for many years to come, and still some of his enlightening statements at that time come to my mind when working with aleatoric notation.

The word MUSEIK is a combination of the Danish words MUSEUM and MUSIK, - derived from the fact, that the rehearsals and concert took place in the concert hall of the State Art Museum, Copenhagen, and the music week was realized in cooperation with the museum. There are ten sheets in all, nine of which can be used for inspiration and rehearsal as well as performance. Sheet no. 10 is designed rather for a shaping of a concert performance, and copies were placed on the music stands at the first performance.

And here the supplementary instructions end. There are no predefined "right" ways to perform or rehearse this music or to interpret the graphics. You have to find your own ways to sort out ideas and inspirations, and with an ensemble you also have to establish a trusting and confident cooperation. When playing from this kind of graphics, we are not troubled by instrumental limitations, age, experience, technical musical elements, counting of bars or beats or such, but alert and open to the visual impulses and inspirations, beyond words or semantics. Regardless of our level of professionalism we can focus on the music, forget time and place, and share - with the audience - the intense, suspended moments of expressive life.

Isn't this what music is about?

Henrik Colding-Jørgensen
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