

312.2.0.MALT -"If I could say it, I wouldn't have to dance it"

A Philosophical Investigation of Multi-Modality
Bifrost University - May 25th 2010 - Assignment 1

1. If there is a particular sort of music that means a lot to you personally, could you describe in words why this is so? Are there aspects of musical experience for which words fall short?

Through my work as a sound engineer I have experience in working with musicians. I have also learned to play double bass for some time so I would say that I know a little bit about the background of making music. In the modern world the technical factor of music is playing a big role in every type of music. One thing that always has intrigued me regarding music is when a musician or a performer manages to overcome or step away from the technical demand one is facing when either recording or performing music.

For example in a world of endless technical improvements and possibilities in recording and producing music, when hearing or seeing someone with nothing but his instrument and possibly his voice, making music in that way it moves you and your feelings, it always gives me that good feeling of everything is probably not going to hell after all. So I would probably not be able to describe any particular type of music that means a lot to me, but rather the type of music that with out some "bells and whistles" manage to brake through the noise level and touch me in some way.

One could probably be able to describe in length all the things different music does to you when you see or hear an outstanding performance but then again, I would say this is the wrong question. In most cases, trying to describe musical experience is merely a description of what happens with in you and is probably rather meaningless to other people. And why should we be seeking some kind of transpersonal experience by telling others what we feel? In my opinion you could express your feeling regarding certain music, maybe with close friend or your spouse for instance.

On the other hand I would like to take an example of a musical experience where in my opinion words certainly fall short and I would like to mention a particular work of music was written in 1964-5 by, then a young Icelandic composer who had just graduated and was under big influence by John Cage. This work is written for assembly of 11 instruments, both strings and horns. It is a chain of

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unexpected events, so called aleatoric music, in which some element of the composition is left to chance, and some key element of a composition is left to the performer to determine when to play.

And now trying to describe the experience when I first heard this music, what I find interesting is that there are long gaps of silence in this piece. There are written gaps of 16 bars, even 24 bars, if I remember correctly, and there, the magic of this music is hidden, in the silence. In between long gaps are, what seems to be random abrupt sounds from squeaking violin or cellos, breaking of a glass bottle and people shouting. So this music is all about the silence and what happens in the silence. You never know what comes next or when it will appear which brings us to how we describe silence, how does one describe silence?

2. How do you regard the role of transpersonal meaning in the experience of music as meaningful?

I am not sure, if I understand the question correctly, but I will try. The idea of making some arrangements to prepare the audience in order to achieve some kind of transpersonal experience, I do not find so good at first sight. But on the other hand the resembling with the antenna where the performer tunes in to the mood of the music, I found appropriate and very interesting. I think when music is performed one of the major concern is, the relationship between the performer and the audience. In my opinion the music should not be presented by too much definition in words but the musician or the performer should be aware of and try to deliver what would be the essence of the music instead, I am already on thin ice here. Then again it makes difference what type of music we are talking about.

When studying here at Bifrost and looking in to the international studies I have often thought of how music and cultural activity could possibly be the answer when trying to bring peace on earth. I am sure that music could bring people of different origin together in some kind of a transpersonal experience, and it already have. Even if we have different musical apprehension program installed, so to speak.