

Lasse Thoresen (January 05)

## ***Project Concrecence***

Project *Concrecence* intends to bring together certain evolutionary musical approaches and materials of importance to 21st century music. It is a project of artistic research. The result of the artistic research will be the creation of new compositions exploiting new vocal resources.

The word *concrecence*, originally coined by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, describes the process whereby different aspects come together to form a collection of properties that characterizes any concrete entity in the physical world. Creative interaction among diverse approaches to the universal harmonic and energetic basis of music leads directly to rich new fields of musical consciousness and practice ready for exploration.

The projects aims at spreading knowledge about existing ways and traditions, and intends at the same time to keep open the possibility of creating novel musical expressions based on the unpredictable synergy between different musical trends and styles, as mentioned below.

### **Basic assumptions and human resources**

Musical experience is first and foremost founded in concrete sound, accordingly, the study of the sound object in terms of its inherent harmonic structure and its energetic shape as well the mutual interrelations of this to dimensions will be a central concern. The project conducts this study in the context of the human voice. It will focus on selected ways of vocal sound production developed in various cultural contexts, including non-Western cultures. In particular, it will favour two approaches:

-One approach will be The Harmonic Chant, i.e. an approach that will focus on the production of harmonics by the human voice (as known from Mongolian diphonic singing), and further integrate this into a larger framework related to Just Intonation and a generalized concept of modality. The project would seek to explore the musical and expressive possibilities inherent in harmonic chant by sharing with the participants its methods, as well as its inherent principles of composition. Dr. Tran Quang Hai is the main capacity in this regard.

-The other approach is influenced by Musique Concrete, and will be communicated by professor *Guy Reibel*, author of the book '*Jeux Vocaux*'. This approach will i.a. focus on the exploration of the musical and expressive possibilities inherent in the energetic shape of vocal sound (e.g. attack and decay, timbral change, glissandi, vibrato and granularity), and develop the gestural and structural implications inherent in this aspect of sound.

-Supplementary to these two approaches will be (other) ethnic music traditions, specifically in the first phase of the project, Norwegian Stev-song, a way of singing characterized by microtonal nuances, rich ornamentation and no vibrato. The singer *Berit Opheim* will be the capacity connected to the project to teach these singing techniques.

The working out of a microtonal solfège of micro intervals will be a parallel process in this regard, coordinated by professor *Lasse Thoresen and senior lecturer Gro Shetelig Kruse*. In later phases, music from other cultures, such as the art music of Corea, Viet-Nam, China, and Japan as concerns energetic and sonic aspects, and music from India and the Near East may be drawn into the project.

2. The project will provide opportunities for reflection on the compositional possibilities inherent in these approaches and to crystallize basic compositional techniques related to the field. The link between vocal timbre and pitch production will be related to a corresponding study of microtonality (understood as the use of pitches deviating from the tempered 12 tones), including both modal and spectral aspects. Thus sound and singing will be organically related to the larger field of musical composition.

-Resources in this field are to be found *with professor Lasse Thoresen*, whose output as a composer has been a continuous exploration of the possibilities for integration of spectrality, Just Intonation, as well as ethnic microtonal modality into an overall design. Questions of musical notation and organic compositional design will be discussed.

- Relevant ethno-musicological knowledge and research competence, as well as knowledge of their integration into contemporary composition will be dealt with (e.g. by *Rokus de Groot*, University of Amsterdam)

3. The emphasis on the concrete experience with voice and sound will be animated by a *phenomenological attitude*. Relevant aspects of the phenomenological are a *transcendental focus* (i.e. observation of as well as mastery of various intentionalities of the human consciousness), the emphasis on the *life world* (thus an emphasis on music as heard), and the capability to *bracket temporarily preconceptions* concerning music and sound. Consistent with this, the concrete experience with voice and sound will be the major focus for all involved, rather than a theoretical approach based on *a priori* models of musical organization

-The mastery of different intentionalities will be practiced and dealt with in lectures/discussion (Thoresen). It will further be addressed through the very form of the workshops in which improvisation will be an important activity. Through improvisations with defined elements, the performers, composers and conductors will have to set their preconceptions in brackets, and allow music to emerge as if of itself.

4. The emphasis on practical work and improvisation will question the traditionally complementary roles of performers, composers and conductors by including them all in improvisation sessions and workshops. The manner of conducting in the context of vocal improvisations will be one focus of the workshops (Guy Reibel).

### **Project phases.**

The first phase of the project will be realized in Norway in connection with the Ultima Festival and the Norwegian Academy of Music. The vocal sextet "Nordic Voices" will play a central role in the project.

The Ultima project through its director, Geir Johnson will play an important part in the administration, financing and commissioning of works.

Ragnhild Berstad, Henrik Ødegaard, and Bernat Vivancos (Catalonia/Spain), Edit Canat de Chizy (France), Friederich Haas (Austria), and Lasse Thoresen have so far accepted to write for this ensemble.

The second phase will consist in composing and performing commissioned work.

The third phase will be a pedagogical project

The fourth will deal with research associated with the project

The fifth will look for extension of the project on a broader international basis.

### **Seminar**

*Nordic voices* has accepted to let themselves be trained by the above mentioned tutors. The training started in May 2004, with a week-end seminar conducted by *Tran Quang Hai*.

Another weekend-seminar with him is projected to take place in March 2005. The composers are invited to take part in the seminar.

The main seminar will happen during the Ultima Festival (October 2005). The seminar will be held as an open master class for Nordic Voices, with all the tutors present (Tran Quang Hai, Berit Opheim, Guy Reibel, and Lasse Thoresen), as well as the composers involved. Thus the seminar will start a pedagogical project at the State Academy, running parallel will the professional one. Students at the State Academy, particularly vocal students and composers, will be specially invited to participate.

### **World premier**

The world premier of the works created will take place during the Ultima Festival October 2006.

### **Pedagogical project**

A pedagogic project involving vocal students and composers from the State Academy is planned to begin autumn 2006. It will hopefully involve workshops with Nordic Voices, Guy Reibel, Berit Opheim, as well as lectures on microtonality.

### **Research**

Applied music theory research: A systematic approach to the vocal solfege of microtonality will be worked out, with the assistance senior lecturer Gro Shetelig Kruse, the Norwegian Academy of Music. Benoit Aubigny (Maître de Conférences, Musicologie, Université de Poitiers, France) will continue an earlier project dealing with standardization of notation of vocal effects in the 20th century.

Theoretical research: Benoit Aubigny will discuss the role of ethnic models, both in Florentz's music, and in the Concrecence project, trying to prove the reality of an hermeneutic model in the composing process, hypothesis of a « *dialectique entre un phénomène sonore présent et des structures mentales ou spirituelles virtuelles* » (E. Tarasti). "I try to decode the functionality of the concept of « *ancestral memory* » used by Florentz, namely « *paradoxical backwardness* », i.e. archaic music that also has a potential for musical novelty in it. This idea has a potential to be extended into other fields as well".

### **International Ramifications**

A leading choir in southern France has been contacted for possible collaboration. There is also contact with Foundation Gaudeamus and the University of Amsterdam, concerning parallel projects.