

Lasse Thoresen (September 06)

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 *Kveding*, 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. As regards the understanding of the modal principles involved in archaic Scandinavian music, dr. Sven Ahlbäck is an internationally renowned capacity.

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 Korea, 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.

- The vocal sextet *Nordic Voices* (Tone E. Braaten, soprano; Ingrid Hanken (Mezzo), Ebba Rydh (Alto), Per Kristian Amundrød (Tenor), Frank Havrøy (Bariton), Trond Olav Reinholdtsen (Basso)) plays a central role in the project, as the vanguard for the practical realisation of the project.

- The *Ultima Festival* through its director, Geir Johnson plays an important part in the administration, financing and commissioning of works. The Norwegian Academy of music is contributing actively to the project sponsoring research, rehearsal and concert spaces, as well as courses.

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 *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 has 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 it self.

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 was realized in Norway in connection with the Ultima Festival and the Norwegian Academy of Music.

The second phase consists in composing and performing commissioned works. Commissions were given to: *Ragnhild Berstad* (Norway), *Henrik Ødegaard* (Norway), and *Bernat Vivancos*

(Catalonia/Spain), *Guy Reibel* (France), *Friederich Haas* (Austria), and *Lasse Thoresen* (Norway).

The *third phase* will be a pedagogical project at the Norwegian Academy of Music.

The *fourth phase* will be research associated with the project, and a possible international extension of the project.

Seminars

The vocal sextet *Nordic voices* has accepted to let themselves be trained by the above mentioned tutors. The training started in May 2004, with a weekend seminar conducted by *Tran Quang Hai*. Another weekend-seminar with him took place in March 2005.

Composers were invited to take part in the seminars. The first public seminar, entitled “Planetary Sound Syntheses” happened during the *Ultima Festival* October 2005 with all tutors (*Tran Quang Hai*, *Berit Opheim*, and *Guy Reibel*) giving workshops, masterclasses and presentations; in addition lectures were presented by *Benoît Aubigny* and *Georg Friederich Haas*, and *Lasse Thoresen*.

A similar seminar, open for the public, but with the students of the Norwegian Academy as its active participants takes place during the *Ultima Festival* 2006. Dr. *Sven Ahlbäck* (Stockholm, Sweden) will make a presentation about archaic Swedish music.

World premier

The commissioned works will be performed during the concluding concert of the *Ultima Festival*, 15th October 2006, in Lindemansalen, Norges Musikkhøgskole.

Pedagogical project

A pedagogic project involving vocal students and composers from the State commences September 2006, ending May 2007. It will aim at transferring the capacities gained by *Nordic Voices*, to vocalists (classical or jazz singers) and composers. A seminar with *David Hykes* is being planned during spring 2007.

Research

Applied music theory research: A systematic approach to the vocal solfège of microtonality will be worked out, with the assistance senior lecturer *Gro Shetelig Kruse*, the Norwegian Academy of Music. Dr. *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: *Benoît Aubigny* is working on a thesis in which the role of ethnic models both in the music of *Jean-Louis Florentz*, and in the Conrescence project, is being discussed from a semiotic point of view. Starting with a hypothesis of a « *dialectique entre un phénomène sonore présent et des structures mentales ou spirituelles virtuelles* » (E. Tarasti), dr. *Aubigny* will try to prove the reality of an hermeneutic model in the composing process. “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”. The title of the project is: “*Modèles (sonores) et process elliptiques.*”