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Under Pressure: An Interactive Appropriation of Helmut Lachenmann's Pression

(In der englischer Sprache)

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Abstract

(english)

Under Pressure is an interactive appropriation of Helmut Lachenmann´s 1969 work for solo cello, *Pression.* It portrays the original score as a "2D Platformer" video game, wherein a user controlled avatar collides with elements in order to trigger a variety of sound events. This corresponding written part examines the ideological and philosophical background of appropriation and its relation to larger movements such as modernism and post-modernism. The first section explores the figure of Helmut Lachenmann and his relation to modernism, the second section on appropriation and its relation to postmodernism, and finally the last section examines Under Pressure from a theoretical standpoint, where Under Pressure is framed as a form of artistic research as it proposes interactive appropriation as a way of both researching and experiencing the original work in a new way.

(deutsch)

Under Pressure ist eine interaktive Appropriation von Helmut Lachenmanns 1969er Werk für Solocello, *Pression*. Es zeigt die Originalpartitur als „2D Platformer" -Videospiel, bei dem ein benutzergesteuerter Avatar mit Elementen kollidiert, um eine Vielzahl von Klangereignissen auszulösen. Dieser entsprechende schriftliche Teil untersucht den ideologischen und philosophischen Hintergrund der Appropriation und ihre Beziehung zu größeren Bewegungen wie der Moderne und der Postmoderne. Der erste Abschnitt befasst sich mit der Figur von Helmut Lachenmann und seiner Beziehung zur Moderne, der zweite Abschnitt über die Aneignung und ihre Beziehung zur Postmoderne und schließlich der letzte Abschnitt untersucht Under Pressure von einem theoretischen Standpunkt aus, in dem Under Pressure als eine Form künstlerischer Forschung dargestellt und dadurch schlägt die interaktive Aneignung vor, um das Originalwerk auf neue Weise zu erforschen und zu erleben.

Introduction

Under Pressure is an interactive appropriation of Helmut Lachenmann´s 1969 work for solo cello, *Pression.* It is a participatory work, in that it requires a user to interact with the score of *Pression*, reimagined as - and completely transformed into - a 2D-Platformer, a type of video game, where a user controlled avatar collides with surfaces in a 2D imaginary world. When the avatar collides with the various objects in *Under Pressure*, the gamified score acts as both an instrument which the user plays, and as an open work, which is completed by the interaction of the user.

The work is inspired by postmodern appropriation artists whose visual appropriations of original works invite us to question "the surety of our initial readings" (Kruger 1982, 90) and to look at works critically, to see original works as already shrouded in ideology, or to "expose reality as a representation" (Foster 1992, 118). Appropriation allows us to reconsider what we might have missed in the original work, suggesting that even the original is not an original, but rather, is already a representation of the culture which created it. *Under Pressure* seeks to exaggerate processes inherent to *Pression*, in order to see the original again, or to see *through* the original. The modernist fascination with the score, for example, and above all the complex score, is exaggerated, taken quite literally, even ridiculed in *Under Pressure*, to the point that we literally experience "score-music," which is after all, a perhaps logical conclusion of this preoccupation, but not the original intention of the ideology it stems from. The score becomes the producer of sound as *Under Pressure* does to *Pression* what *Pression* does to the cello. The score of *Pression* interrupted, as it is in *Under Pressure,* takes the original *corporeal* concept of *Pression*, and de-corporealizes it. *Pression* is thus taken away from the performer, away from the cello, and away from Lachenmann as it is brought to a digital interactive world where in the tradition of cyberpunk, the body is left aside to explore questions of identity (Gulga 2011, 46).

Under Pressure is a work of artistic research in that it seeks to increase knowledge, "through the mode of artistic experience" (Klein 2012). Through the aesthetics of interaction, the

user is invited to experience another art form from a new perspective (Kwastek 2013, xiv). This perspective-through-interaction is made possible, not by inviting the audience, or the user, to a finished product, but rather to the site of art-making itself (Jevtić 2018, 6). In the case of *Under Pressure*, one is thus not only invited to the site of art-making, but to the site of research-making, and thus to the site of interpretation-making. Appropriation of *Pression* into a new interactive artwork offers the opportunity for an expanded perceptual vision of the original, as well as of the ideological background it represents. As research is initiated from the position of "not-knowing" (Klein 2012), so too, the readings of Lachenman which *Under Pressure* enables are a result of a search for knowledge, and the work is not a finished product. As in the case of other appropriated works, certainly as is the case with other interactive works, the readings and meanings depend on the user and on those who engage with the work. Lachenmann said himself that *Pression* was formed from setting the elements in play (Lachenmann 2004, 109) - *Under Pressure* is an interactive appropriated work is formed by setting the readings in play.

Finally, I consider this work to be a postmodern reading of a modernist Lachenmann. Therefore, Section 1 deals with an explanation of modernism and how it applies to the figure of Lachenmann and Section 2 deals with postmodernism and how it applies to the act of appropriation. It has been suggested that modernism and postmodernism exist, and are defined in relation to one another, that they are "in a continual process of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts" (Foster 1999, 207). For this reason, no single moment can truly be modern or postmodern, each moment containing the potential of both. Therefore, it is not my intention to definitely define Lachenmann or even my work as modern or postmodern, rather it is my intention to use the terms as a lens with which we shine light on the various concepts at work. Indeed, perhaps as a reluctantly true postmodernist, I do not espouse one or the other, but see each term, *modern* or *postmodern,* as a methodology for creativity and exploration. Section 3 thus describes how the concepts surrounding the two led to the creation of *Under Pressure: An Interactive Appropriation.*

1.   Modernism and Lachenmann

"Es ist ja eine Binsenweisheit, daß es kein intaktes, `jungfräuliches´ Material gibt, alles ist schon berührt." (Lachenmann 2014, 194).

"It is of course well-known that there is no intact 'virginal' material: everything has already been touched." (translation my own).

The above quote presents a curious insight into modernist composition. It so succinctly touches upon several prominent aspects of musical modernism: the search for the new, the aversion to the recycled or old, and thirdly, perhaps most interestingly, the traditionally masculine undertones of modernism itself. All three will be examined in the sections that follow. The quote is indeed of Lachenmann´s own words, taken from his conversations with Heinz-Klaus Metzger in 1988, as found in the collection of his writings, "Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966 - 1995." (trans. "Music as Existential Experience") (Lachenmann 2014, 194). The excerpt is also quoted at length in an essay by Ulrich Mosch entitled "Das Unberührte berühren" (trans. "Touching the Untouched") (title translations are my own) (Mosch 2006, 25).

1.1 Lachenmann and the New

The first aspect connecting the above quote to musical modernism, as mentioned, is modernism´s commitment to the search for the new, which is characterized by Lachenmann above as "virginal material." The subject of the new is ubiquitous in the literature on modernism (Habermas 1983, Jameson 1984, Groys 2014), so much so that one could claim that a commitment to finding the new is synonymous with the modernist pursuit itself. That the new is almost compulsory within all fields that are affected by modernism has been characterized as modernism's "conservatism of the future" (Groys 2014, 28). This conservatism refers to the transfer of value from the past to the future which occurred in the modernist era - the value that was placed on tradition in the pre-modern world, is placed on future in the modern one. In modernism, the future is thus met with a reverence which was traditionally awarded to the past (Habermas 1983, 4).

This spirit of the future arose from the belief in infinite progress, a belief which was inspired by the rapid advances of the scientific revolution (Habermas 1983, 4). Indeed, scientism is a notable characteristic of 20th century modernist composers, particularly as found in such prominent figures as Stockhausen, Boulez, and Babbit (Bosma 2013, 9). Each of those composers favored a scientific and technological discourse when referring to their own music and compositional processes, an influence which had a great effect on the discourse surrounding composition and electro-acoustic music in the generations which followed (Bosma 2013, 10). This influence of scientism can be found in the work of Helmut Lachenmann, who approaches composition with "the focus of scientific analysis" (Rihm 2014, 26) as he "takes the sound apart, examines it with his ear, and puts it back together again" (Rihm 2014, 26). Lachenmann's commitment to the new, and thus to the modernist pursuit of the new, are reflected not only in his words, whereby he characterizes his commitment as a search for the "untouched" (Lachenmann 2014, 194), but also in his reputation among theorists and his contemporaries, where it is

considered that "no one is more closely tied to an emphatic notion of the new in music than him" (Rihm 2014, 23).

1.2 Lachenmann and the Old

The discussion of the new immediately brings the question of the old. Lachenmann's words come across as a lament at the loss of new material; they are like a complaint, characteristic of someone who arrives too late: everything is already touched; there is nothing left. The conundrum which faces the modern composer, according to Lachenmann later in the excerpt, is how to compose new music with no new material? Instantaneously, if all that is left is old material, the question arises: what to do with it? The usage of old material becomes a contentious subject within modernism and is at the forefront of Lachenmann's public dispute with fellow composer Hans Werner Henze (Lachenmann 1997).

In the autumn of 1982, after a concert of Hans Werne Henze´s music in Stuttgart, which featured the works, *Kammermusik, Pollicino* and *Margaret Walzes,* there was a podium discussion held in the auditorium with Henze himself present (Lachenmann 1997). Also in attendance at this concert and subsequent discussion, as an audience member however, was Helmut Lachenmann. In the exchange which followed, Lachenmann makes clear how he feels about Henze's musical citations of motives and styles from the past. During the discussion, Lachenmann at some point arose to speak, whereby he accused Henze of creating a "utopia" (ibid, 196) in his works; that by not altering the traditional style he quotes from, he was not offering enough of himself (ibid.). He characterized Henze´s use of traditional materials as a "purée of culture" (ibid.) that was "no longer completely credible" (ibid.). Henze, who wrote of the event in his book, *Die englische Katze: Ein Arbeitstagebuch 1978-1982* (translation: The English Cat: A Working Diary, 1978-1982), wherein he writes that he was taken aback by this exchange and later cited Lachenmann´s "bad manners" (ibid., 89). Henze responded on the evening on the evening however by saying, the artist "has not only the right but also the privilege

to be happy (Glücklichsein), to reach for Utopian relationships from time to time" (ibid.). Lachenmann, in return, published his, "Offener Brief an Hans Werner Henze" in the *Neue Musik Zeitung* in 1983, where he continues his attack on Henze, accusing him of simply helping himself to old material with out any attempt at deeper reflection of the same material, as he believe is the case in his own music (ibid., 190). Lachenmann accuses Henze of exploiting traditional material through his stylistic appropriations. In the most damning moment of the letter, Lachenmann writes, "...just because one cheerfully roots around in a tradition doesn't mean that one is rooted in it - not by a long shot" (Lachenmann 1997, 190).

When answering the question of traditional material, it is safe to say that Lachenmann believes he gets it right, while Henze, on the other hand, gets it wrong. Lachenmann claims his own music allows the traditional, familiar material to reflect, and that by putting such material in a new context, he provides the opportunity for "a new hearing" (Lachenmann 2014, 194). He cites the example of the "beautiful cello string," (ibid.) found at the end of his cello work, *Pression*, in which during a piece built entirely of extended techniques, the familiar sound of the open string is heard. According to Neuwirth, the conventional, most characteristic sound of the instrument, appears here as only one of many possible sounds available to the instrument, rather than the most important, and through this new context, one hears with new ears (Neuwirth 2008, 85). Henze, on the other hand, does not treat the material enough for Lachenmann´s approval. By quoting romantic styles directly, and not changing them enough, or quoting without enough reflection, Henze lends himself to the attack from Lachenmann that he is simply exploiting such material. Lachenmann´s characterisation of his own compositions, and the way he explains this maneuvering of old material into new contexts, interestingly connects him to the third aspect of musical modernism: traditional masculinity.

1.3 Lachenmann and Masculinity

"Es ist ja eine Binsenweisheit, daß es kein intaktes, `jungfräuliches´ Material gibt, **alles ist schon berührt.** Aber auf dem Weg über diese Erkenntnis und über die strukturelle Brechung des alten Zusammenhangs mittels eines neu zu entdecken muß sich das Paradoxe ereignen, **daß solcher Zustand von Jungfraulichkeit erneut hergestellt wird,** daß am Ende im neuen Zusammenhang **etwas Unberührtes, etwas Intaktes** im doppelten Sinn herauskommt, funktionierend im neuen Kontext, und unter diesem Aspekt zugleich **unberührt,** geheimnisvoll wegen seiner neuen Transparenz."
(Lachenmann 2014, 194) (emphasis mine).

(trans. "It is of course well-known that there is no intact 'virginal' material: everything has already been touched. However, on the path to discovering this realization, and through the structural breaking of the old context with a new one, the paradox must occur that such a state of virginity is re-established, that in the end, something un-touched, something intact in a double sense, which functions in a new context, and within this aspect remains at the same time untouched and mysterious by virtue of its transparency"). (translation mine).

When Ulrich Mosch quotes this above excerpt in his essay, *Das Unberührte berühren,* Mosch, for whatever reason, does not mention the term "virgin," instead choosing the slightly less provocative, "touched" and "untouched" (Mosch 2006). Since he continues with an analysis of the music itself, and reflects on Lachenmann's process of putting older material in new contexts, perhaps it is justified that the gender implications are beyond his scope. Yet, the virgin metaphor is central to Lachenmann's statement, and what is striking, is not only that the metaphor is used to reference the material, the quest for that material, the supposed restored newness that his music gives the material (he himself referring to his own music as a process of restored virginity), but also, how closely this virgin metaphor, in all three of its aspects, follows the concept of virginity as it was originally used in Greek mythology, where virginity was seen

not only as a quest and a challenge (MacMachallan 2007, 4), but where even the idea of restored virginity has its origins (MacMachallan 2007, 5).

Lachenmann implies that as a modernist composer, one would indeed prefer new material, yet has to face the reality that there is simply none left. The metaphor works because of the preference for virginity within the history of western culture. Virginity was valued for much of western history, as well as various important traditions throughout the world, where it features as a status symbol of potency, power, and autonomy (MacMachallan 2007, 4). The idea of the non-virgin as something already touched, is an indication of shame and the loss of value which comes with lost virginity. Even Lachenmann uses the term "intact," when referring to the desired musical material, which implies that through the loss of virginity something is broken and un-restorable - a reference to the intact hymen which was a measure of virginity for centuries. The theme of the virgin is reflected in many Greek myths, where the possession of an "intact virgin" (MacMachallan 2007, 8) is often portrayed as a quest, usually undertaken by a conquering, male figure, as is the case within the myths including Artemis, Athena, and Hestia (8). In the case of those three, as well as with Hera, their power is heightened by their ability to restore their own virginity, and thereby overcoming the integrity and status they had lost (4). (Who else can restore virginity, but a God?) Hera, for example, bathed yearly in the waters of Kathanos to restore her own virginity (8): is the "new hearing" (Lachenmann 2014, 194), which Lachenmann rewards us with, a type of musical Kathanos? Not only does Lachenmann claim this power for himself in new music, but in the case with his criticisms of Henze, and with his open declaration that nothing new is left ("Es ist ja eine Binsenweisheit") (Lachenmann 2014, 194), he seems to dismiss other attempts at accessing the material, representing a defensive, even jealous ownership over it, determining how and who is allowed to use it.

In *Reflections on Gender and Science*, Ellen Fox Keller demonstrates how sexualized language as metaphors for knowing go as far back as Plato, yet in modern science take on a characteristically dominant masculine language (Keller 1985). In the writings of Francis Bacon, one of the most important theorists of modern science and early contributor of the scientific

method, talks about the scientific mind as "taming" (Keller 1985, 36) nature with "the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to her foundations" (Keller 1985, 36). The mind and nature in the writing of Bacon are met in a "chaste, holy and legal wedlock" (Keller 1985, 36), but one that requires the domination of nature, as Bacon writes, "I am come in very truth leading you to Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave" (Keller 1985, 36). This language of domination is an expression of the modern mind, which is supposed to unemotionally look at its object, and objectively cast judgement. The scientism of musical modernism, which rejects personal, subjective, and effeminate modes of expression is an inheritor of this rational, master-like mindset. This explains the important role of the musical score within modernism, where "the position of the viewer is often considered as an active and masculine position" (Bosma 2013, 25). It has been suggested, however, that such autonomy is only an illusion, that it at least leads to a sensation of competence, and thus is far from neutral: it is a type of subjective pleasure (Keller 1985, 98).

Serialism; high-art vs. low-art; musical scholarship framed as scientific discovery; and cryptic forms of analysis are all "signs of a dominant masculinist, highly rational, heteronormative discourse in music all too unhappily but accurately characterized by the word 'discipline'" (Brett & Wood 2001, 599). The subjective pleasure of being disciplined, or autonomous, is perhaps why it is important for Lachenmann to clarify that his work *Pression* is "not funny" (SchAdvStudy, 2018), although a common reaction upon first time listeners is indeed to laugh (Jahn 1988, 60). In a discussion about *Pression* at the University of London, Lachenmann insists "the piece is not comical (*lustig*), it is not fun with such things…in a really serious sense this is cheerful (*heitere*) music" (org. *Das Stück ist nicht lustig, es macht nicht Spaß mit diesen Dingen…In einen ganz ernsthaften Sinn, ist es eine heitere Musik*) (SchAdvStudy, 2018). Is there really any difference between the happiness, or *Glück,* of Henze´s music, which Lachenmann ridiculed in the 80s, and the cheerfulness, or *Heiterkeit,* of *Pression* as Lachenmann describes it years later? Or, does one simply appear more objective, more disciplined, more masculine?

Stereotypically masculine values include "activity, reason, control, independence, desire for knowledge and focus on things, technological processes and abstract ideas instead of human relations." (Bosma 2013, 23). As these things are coded as masculine, they tend to be preferred by theorists and culture. The feminine approaches would include patterns of thought which are "qualitative, personal, emphatic, improvisatory, collaborative" (Maus 1993, 266). Theorists have suggested that because of these processes being regarded as feminine, it is for this reason they are undervalued in culture, and particularly in musicology. Modernism has been criticized by feminist theorist Susan McClary as being essentially anti-feminine (Bosma 2014, 24); for example, Adorno´s ideas of the '"castrating' effects of modern culture" (McClary 1989, 73) and the "revulsion towards 'effeminate romantic excess' of expression" (McClary 1889, 73). Couldn't Lachenmann´s public attack on Henze, after all be read as a very public castration of an "effeminate romantic" composer?

1.4 Lachenmann and Postmodernism

As it has been observed, no single moment is completely postmodern or modern, and the transition between the two is not always clear (Foster, 1996). Indeed, as both movements exist in a state of flux, draw inspiration from each other, and define themselves in terms of the other, it often occurs that even within a single piece, or a single person, both modern and postmodern elements are contained. The same is true for a composer such as Helmut Lachenmann, who is above all tied to musical modernism, yet also exhibits the influence of postmodern tendencies. In an unlikely comparison, Lachenmann has this much in common with electronic composer and theorist, Denis Smalley. Both Smalley and Lachenmann create in the wake of the musical modernism and the science-like focus of European figures like Boulez and Stockhausen; both exhibit modernist as well as post-modernist tendencies, with their taxonomy of sounds juxtaposing their free style of composition; and both are influenced in unique ways by the electronic composer, and pioneer of musique-concrete, Pierre Schaeffer.

In her work *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-garde* (Born 1995), Georgina Born frames the work of IRCAM as undoubtedly modernist, representing a place where "scientific and technological discourses on music tend constantly toward the transcendent and universalizing" (Born 1995, 20). Born, on the other hand, frames the GRM as a place of postmodernism (Bosma 2013, 11). GRM, which was begun by Pierre Schaeffer, favored musique concrète, a process where recorded sounds are manipulated by ear, and less by the serialist, modernist approach favored by IRCAM, which according to Born, antagonistically ignored musique concrète (Bosma 2013, 11). Denis Smalley, in the tradition of Pierre Schaeffer, favored electronic music which was manipulated by ear, as he warned against the scientific formalism characteristic of serialism (Bosma 2013, 11). This attempt to avoid science-like and rigid approaches is characterized by Born as empiricist and thus as post-modern. On the other hand, Smalley´s modernism is evident not only in the way his spectro-morphology represents a quasi-scientific taxonomy of sounds and classifications, but also in how his words reflect modernist tendencies of meta-narratives (Bosma 2013, 11): Smalley writes in Spectromorphology and Structuring Processes, "…we must now realize that spectro-morphological thinking is the rightful heir of Western musical tradition" (Smalley 1986, 93).

Lachenmann´s attack of Henze, and his insistence that Henze is not rooted in the tradition, and the implication that he himself is, represents a similar modernist tendency to meta-narratives, not unlike the above quote of Smalley. (The word heir, of course, reminisce of the lineage from a King to Prince). Nonetheless, Lachenmann´s musique concrète instrumentale is, like Smalley, influenced by Pierre Schaeffer, and also represents a process of both modernist science-like taxonomy, and science-like classifications (*Pression* is after all, somewhat of a catalogue of extended techniques for the cello). On the other hand, Lachenmann has described his compositional process as building an instrument, and then freely playing on it, whereby once the building blocks of his piece are determined by his detailed search for sounds and structural elements, his composing is then similar to playing freely with the material at hand (Lachenmann 2008, 109). In the case of Smalley and of Lachenmann, modernist obsessions with lineage and dominance, as well as propensities to scientific like classifications, coexist with a spirit of free

play, and a more subjective compositional process. Going back to Lachenmann´s characterization of *Pression*, whereby he characterized it as cheerful as opposed to funny, Lachenmann has said, "*cheerful is free, and a game with the various elements*" (SchAdvStudy, 2018). Finally, Lachenmann´s willingness to use older and recycled material, or to feature traditional quotations, even if he dismisses such attempts by other composers, and even he does refer to it in modern masculine language as a process of restored virginity, is somehow still a post-modern tendency of quotation and recycling. Nonetheless, Lachenmann would seemingly be against any such characterizations of himself as post-modern, as he has denied it in the past: "*Helmut Lachenmann expressly defend[s] himself against the aesthetics of postmodernism, pointing out that music can only be detached from its historical context with frightening naïveté, without sensitivity to the decided wear and tear of emphatic material.*" (Gratzer 1990) (orig. *Helmut Lachenmann verteidigte sich als einziger ausdrücklich gegen die Ästhetik der Postmoderne, darauf verweisend, daß man Musik nur mit beängstigender Naivität aus ihren historischen Zusammenhängen lösen könne, ohne Sensibilität für den entschiedene Verschleiß emphatischen Materials*). (translation from the German my own).

1.5 Currency of the New

In the modernist era, the loss of tradition was, not only no longer feared, as had been the case in the past, but the finding of new uncharted territory became a *must* (Habermas 1983, 5). This *must*, however, leads to what Boris Groys writes is an "extra-ideological compulsion to innovate" (Groys 2014, 4), a compulsion to innovate "even when the times by no means call for it" (Groys 2014, 28). To what extent does the "new" become a type of currency, nothing more than a "marketing strategy" (Groys 2014, 38) in a system of competition? In the inequality of our modern system, a capitalist system of unequals, the need to both establish one´s autonomy is at conflict with the need to establish one´s place in an already affirmed hierarchy (Keller 1985, 103). This conflict is reflected in Lachenmann and Henze´s public row. Here, the conflict is between Lachenmann´s desire to uproot tradition with new musical processes, but at the same

time implying he is the next step within that same tradition. For Lachenmann, Henze, who has no problem engaging with the tradition, is supposedly not even a part of it ("*just because one cheerfully roots around in a tradition doesn't mean that one is rooted in it - not by a long shot.*") (Lachenmann 1997, 190). It would seem that those are conflicting desires - to upend tradition or take your place within it?

The conflicting desire between autonomy from the tradition, and the desire for remaining within the hierarchy, is reflective of the conflicting desires between independence and intimacy. The normal response of conflicting fears (of losing boundaries on the one hand, avoiding loneliness on the other), is to introduce a measure of control - controlling others from becoming too close, or too far. (Keller 1985, 103). In a culture where the "new" is a compulsion, then the "new" becomes a type of currency with which one can buy one´s place into the hierarchy. It no longer matters if something is actually new or not. It simply needs to be marketed as such, and believed in as such. It is at this point that I introduce my work *Under Pressure*. It began by recognizing the fact that the figure of Lachenmann is both an important figure within the western musical tradition, but is paradoxically there for his reputation as an upender of that same tradition - "*no one is more synonymous with the new in music than him*" (Rihm 2014, 23) - two conflicting positions remain. For this same reason the paradox arises that the surface characteristics of his music - the instrumental techniques of musique concrète instrumentale - are also synonymous with new music today, whereby, one does not need to be "new" in order to be new, one needs to only imitate Lachenmann´s music to be new. It functions the same as money, the value of which is determined by our belief in it. This is why I call musique concrète instrumentale a currency of the new.

2. Postmodernism and Appropriation

As Frederic Jameson has pointed out, although postmodernism may appear to be anti-modern, it is also a recognition of a basic failure of modernism´s own terms: "the new buildings of Le Corbusier and Wright did not finally change the world" (Jameson 1984, xvii). At a certain point, the grand promises of modernism, and the utopian visions its artists inspired, were less and less credible. Modernism slowly seemed like a failed project, "its Utopian ambitions were unrealizable and its formal innovations exhausted" (Jameson 1984, xvii). Do the abstract sounds of modernism actually lead to any societal change? Is a "new hearing" (Lachenmann 2004, 194), as supposedly provided to us by Lachenmann, actually a "new hearing," or is that simply jargon? Are ugly sounds simply ugly sounds? Who cares, anyway? A breakdown of the mystique and the authority of modernism occurs within post-modern works as they begin to position modernism not as the final stage in an overreaching, all-encompassing historical lineage, but rather, simply as one stylistic genre among many.

2.1 Incredulity to Meta-Narratives

In *The Postmodern Condition* Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as an "incredulity to meta-narratives" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Insofar as modernism alludes to all encompassing grand narratives, say of progress, it could be said that the role of the postmodern artist is to call these narratives into question. In the post-modern world there are an infinite and increasing number of viewpoints, histories, and practices - what Lyotard refers to as a "crisis of narratives" (Lyotard 1984a, xxiii). There is an estrangement from one another among the various fields of knowledge, with an increasing tendency to specialization and further alienation. Lyotard explains this estrangement with the theory of language games: which begins from the premise

that all knowledge is a play of utterances. These utterances, or collection of statements, have no reference outside of the game, or outside the field of knowledge in which they find themselves in. Legitimacy, therefore, within a field of knowledge, is driven solely from within, and not from an external standard of truth (Lyotard 1984a, 10). In our world of specialization, of infinite language games, spread across multiple fields of study, all-encompassing theories of knowledge are increasingly difficult to justify, as the rules of one game are not translatable to the next: an overview of the entire picture is no longer even possible.

The genre-crossing associated with certain postmodern art is a testament to the need to recognize the presence of multiple fields, all the while causing us to question the subscription to the idea that our own bubble is the only one. As much as it challenges the grand narratives behind modernist projects, postmodern art also reveals the minor narratives within our postmodern world of pluralities. At its best, post-modern work exposes the latent ideologies we subscribe to and makes us aware of the existence of our own language game. The postmodern work explores boundaries in order to hold a mirror up to its own situation. The postmodern artist does not so much follow pre-established rules, as much as the artist attempts to find the rules as a result of the work (Lyotard 1984b, 81). Only by transgressing a boundary can the artist invite us to question why it is there.

2.2 Beyond Initial Readings

If a crisis of narratives characterizes the post-modern world, a singular definition of post-modern art is difficult to formulate. Perhaps such a definition would only miss the point entirely. It is an art which exists in a world where, according to Lyotard, a complete overview of knowledge is no longer possible (Lyotard 1984a, 10). Any work which makes us aware to this loss of a centralized truth could be described as post-modern. *Under Pressure* takes as its starting point an artistic practice which is particularly useful for pointing out the post-modern crisis of narratives: the practice of appropriation. Appropriation as an art form, whether intentionally or not, is a particular type of work that has been useful for signifying the language games of our

cultures, and blurring the boundaries between them. I say both intentionally and unintentionally, because even the most naive version of sampling, in its very nature, represents a diminishing of the meta-narrative: this or that sampled work no longer exists in its own bubble, it is forced into a comparison, or an equalization with other ones. Direct appropriation, or the appropriation of an entire work, as in appropriated photography, goes even further: it seems to suggest that even the original is not an original, but rather is already a representation of something else, a symptom of the culture which created it. By repositioning the original work, sometimes with little or no changes, the appropriation challenges us to look again. Appropriation asks us "to look through the images critically" (Foster 1998, 146), and to question "the surety of our initial readings" (Kruger 1982, 90). Appropriation allows us to reconsider what we might have missed in the original work, to consider how the original picture is not the entire picture. The act of appropriation, too, becomes a performance, or a living installation, where the new interpretations which arise, and the struggle over controlling those interpretations becomes part of the work. One characteristic example of a larger spectacle resulting from the act of appropriation, and thus making its way back into the interpretation(s) of both the original as well as the appropriation, can be found in the work of artist Richard Prince.

In the 1980s, Richard Prince, as he is known for, photographed images whose copyrights did not belong to him: he took advertisements from magazines, particularly advertisements from the tobacco company, Marlboro, which featured American cowboys, and he photographed those pages, claiming the new photographs as his own. One of the images, "Untitled (Cowboy)," sold for $1.2 million at auction - the highest selling photograph of all time up until that point. The original photographers - the ones who were hired by Marlboro to go into the desert and take pictures of the cowboys - were very publicly displeased with Prince´s work. A TIME Magazine documentary featuring the photographers gave voice to their disapproval: they believed Prince had stolen their work (TIME, "Untitled (Cowboy)") . In the same documentary, Prince defends his practice rather mischievously: "It wasn't important who took the photograph. *I* took the photograph. I *literally* took it" **(**TIME, "Untitled (Cowboy)") - his point being, of course, that the image on the wall was the result of his own photographic activity, even if his subject was itself

another image. Nonetheless, in a stunning rebuke of their ownership, the original artists had indeed already renounced their copyright claim when they sold their services to Marlboro.

The work is successful in that it opens up many avenues of discussion and thought-provocation. By exploiting the image as it were, Prince only re-performs the exploitation of the image of the American cowboy by the Marlboro company. The pristine images of the American cowboy are at odds with the harsh economic reality of the 1980s, the time in which they were released **(**TIME, "Untitled (Cowboy).""). Prince is offering an image essential to the identity of Americans, essentially exposing how advertisement and the capitalist system exploits these identities. After all, the cowboys themselves are only actors, and the entire scene is one that is staged: the original image was a "constructed image" (Prince, TIME, "Untitled (Cowboy)"). Through the work of Prince, we question whether or not the American cowboy really exists, or whether or not it is itself nothing more than a myth; we question the self-assured pleasure these images evoke in our minds; we question the extent to which nationalist images control us; we question the motives of the Marlboro company who purchase the works of photographers in order to sell a deadly product.

In Prince´s work culture itself becomes the subject of artistic practice. His work represents "the shift from the artist as somebody who makes something to somebody who recognizes and points something out" (Willis, TIME, "Untitled (Cowboy)"). Pointing out things which are already there is very different from the already mentioned modernist quest for the new. When characterizing his collages Prince explained, "it´s not really about being new, it´s more about this idea of something continuing" (VICE, "Continuation Painting with Richard Prince"). In the case of the cowboy images, by exploiting the exploitation, the works continue the logic of the original, even to a place the original had not intended. And although he claims his work is not about the new, it does open up new avenues for artistic practice, as well as new avenues for viewers to think critically.

2.3 Thinking Music

For his 2009 composition, *Fremdarbeit,* Johannes Kreidler paid two other composers to analyze his own musical works and to subsequently return to him new compositions in the style of his own music. The two composers, each from China and India, were hired by Kreidler for a relatively small price to compose works for Kreidler´s commission from the Festival Klangwerkstatt in Berlin. Kreidler himself received 1500 Euros, while he paid the foreign composers a total of only $150 for their works (kreidler-net.de). *Fremdarbeit* thus imitates the outsourcing of industry synonymous with the global capitalist system. It also cleverly implicates the German new music scene in the exploitation of cheap labor. The composer from China, X. Xiang, offers his services cheaply, for $10 a piece, even though he indicated on his website that he is poor, and that cares for a wife and a child (Johannes Kreideler, "Fremdarbeit Melbourne 2016"). The work highlights the fundamental question at the heart of all critical appropriation: who owns the work and what is allowed? The Chinese and Indian composer of *Fremdarbeit* are in a similar position as the photographers to the Marlboro campaign whose photographs were appropriated by Richard Prince. In both cases the original authors sold the rights to their own work for money - on the one hand, money from the Marlboro company, and on the other, money from the commission of the Berlin Klangwerkstatt Festival. In each case, art, or the act of art making, was transformed into a labor commodity.

As Peter Ablinger is quoted as saying, he would much rather read the scores of Mozart symphonies than listen to them (Schrödinger 2014, 183). It is a clever indication that music is as much about the thoughts we have surrounding music, as it is about the sounds we hear when we listen to it. The same transformation represented in the work of Duchamp, whose ready-mades implied that art is not only a retinal art, but one of ideas, is also the transformation in critical music, or music that is not simply sound, but working on the thoughts surrounding sound (ibid.). Just like in visual art, there are many forms of appropriation, and not all attempt to be critical. In *Experimentelles Oriental: Neue Musik und andere Andere* (Corbett 2000), John Corbett makes a distinction between appropriation which imbues the music with a particular flavor, and

appropriation which seeks to make fundamental changes to artistic practice. For an example of the first kind, Corbett suggests a composer like Henry Cowell, who adopts the scales of the East in order to provide his music with a new exotic sound, while a composer like John Cage, in contrast, takes the processes and philosophy of the East and attempts to use them to change the working process of his own musical tradition (Corbett 2000). That both composers adopt from the Oriental world, but achieve very different results, is an indication that not only what one appropriates has an effect on the resulting music, but perhaps more so, it is the intention, or the way in which one appropriates, that separates a critical work from a non-critical one.

3. Under Pressure: An Interactive Appropriation

In the previous sections, I tried to demonstrate how a postmodern reading of Helmut Lachenmann leads to various critical insights into the practice of new music, and to the understanding of modernist musical practices. *Under Pressure* is a culmination of the above thoughts surrounding Lachenmann and his relation to new music. Through the tools of postmodernism, I was given a chance to bring theory to my observations surrounding his work. However, as an artist, all critical theory and concepts inevitably have to find their way into my own artistic practice. *Under Pressure* is the result of this endeavor. It is not enough to read Lachenmann through text, but also through further artistic endeavors. In this way I consider *Under Pressure* to be artistic research in that it seeks to increase knowledge, "through the mode of artistic experience" (Klein 2012). In this final section, I explain concretely, how these concepts made their way to become *Under Pressure*, and why I think it is important or interesting to handle the material in this way.

3.1 Why Lachenmann?

"Er ist der wahre Konservative: er schuf sich sogar eine
Revolution, um Reaktionär sein zu können."

- Hanns Eisler über Arnold Schönberg (Eisler 1973)
-

"He was the true conservative: he even created a
revolution in order to be reactionary."

(translation my own)

As a young composition student in New York City, I remember my fascination after I first was given the score to Lachenmann´s *Pression*. I was especially mesmerized by the notation: the graphic of a cello as the music´s clef, and how the lines and symbols on the page pointed to actions the cellist should take, rather than notes he or she should play. Hitting, pulling, scraping, and grabbing the bow and instrument in various ways: the piece seemed much opposed to the usual traditional notation and performance practice. As a string player, I nonetheless recognized the practicality of the notation, although it seemed entirely mischievous. There was already a paradox between the serious, scholarly-like complexity, and the forbidden noisy music which would surely result. The piece was radical: the disruption of patterns, the introduction of forbidden elements, the pure noise - everything I love about the avant-garde was suggested in this work.

Three years later, I was studying composition in Stuttgart and was asked to play double-bass in the ensemble dedicated to the yearly student composer´s recital. In our first rehearsal, the ensemble director noticed that the violin student was reluctant to play something in the score we were working on - a composition from a fellow student. The violin part asked him to scrape the

bow along the strings. The student was timid, and concerned for his expensive bow. The director came to him and asked for his instrument, took the instrument and bow, and demonstrated how he should grab the bow, and how he should use it to produce the sound. "The Lachenmann Bow Grip" is what he called it, as the student skeptically reproduced the sound and grip as soon as the instrument was handed back to him. When I heard those words, particularly coming from a university professor, I realized I had witnessed the moment an avant-garde piece becomes institutionalized. The subversive nature of Lachenmann´s music had vanished before my eyes. I suppose it is a matter of relationship: the movement was indeed "new" to the student, and unlike anything he had encountered before, however, instead of a radical act of subversive music, here we had a director, a representative of the university, imposing the radical act on a student. Simultaneously, the name of Helmut Lachenmann appeared to enter the university curriculum, and thereby becoming just another name among many. The Lachenmann Bow Grip implied there might be a Beethoven Bow Grip, or a Brahms Tremolo, situated in the history books alongside the Bartok Pizzicato. At this moment Lachenmann appeared to me as one of those white busts of a composer which line the sides of a European concert hall. How to reconcile those two visions: radical progressive or conservative master?

The paradox which exists in Lachenmann is found, as my research has attempted to show, not only in the music, but in the figure of Lachenmann himself, particularly in his words. I came to realize that Lachenmann represents a more conservative relationship to music than the surface characteristics of his music suggest. In the case of Lachenmann, especially a piece like *Pression,* I found that in contrast to what the writing on the music suggests, where it is said that *Pression* is a complete break from the weight of tradition (Orning 2012), or that it will bring a change to society (Kohler 2005), rather, from my reading, it is the subjugation of noise to traditional compositional elements like meter, rhythm, and form which give the piece its essence.

3.2 Why Pression?

Pression is all at once where we supposedly touch the untouched (Mosch 2006), where we are offered a new hearing (Neuwirth 2008, 85), and even where our virginity is restored (Lachenmann 2014, 194). An appropriation of *Pression* would indeed be an interesting place to challenge the meta-narrative. After all, *Pression* is where the aspects connecting Lachenmann to modernism are most glaring: everything from the relationship to the new, the relationship to the old, and the relationship to musical virginity. We have observed that Lachenmann approaches composition with "the focus of scientific analysis" (Rihm 2014, 26) and that science according to Bacon is there to penetrate nature´s "innermost chambers" (Keller 1985, 36), *Pression* seems to have penetrated the innermost chambers of the cello and returned with a new way forward in contemporary composition. It is as if every part of the instrument and bow have been examined for opportunities of contemporary sound and once catalogued, reassembled into a cohesive work of contemporary composition. *Pression* after all is essentially a catalogue of extended techniques for the cello, and thus its methods have become a practical guide for the new in new music today. The deconstruction of the cello is happily taken up and brought to an exaggerated step in *Under Pressure,* where the normal order and sound of the original score are frustrated, pulled apart, collided with, and seen and heard from unusual angles.

As Richard Prince´s work takes the exploitation of the American cowboy by the Marlboro company to the next step, *Under Pressure,* takes some important elements of *Pression* and pushes them to a different conclusion. What has been said about *Pression* can be said about *Under Pressure,* although the meanings would change: for example, one hears the sounds (in our case through virtual colliders) where they originate ("*man hört, mit welchen Energien und gegen welche Widerstände ein Klang bzw. ein Geräusch entsteht*") (Lachenmann 2001), the various elements of the music are a game ("*cheerful is free, and a game with the various elements*") (SchAdvStudy, 2018), and the normal performance practice of the cello is disrupted (Orning 2012) - in the case of *Under Pressure,* it is a work for cello without a cello, a process of de-corporalization.

The score of *Pression* interrupted, as it is in *Under Pressure,* takes the original *corporeal* concept of *Pression*, and de-corporealizes it. It moves the site of the work from the cello back to the score. In so doing, it suggests that the score was the site of *Pression* all along, contrary to the reading of Pression as performative work (Orning 2012), or as the emancipation of the noise (Linke 2016, 118). It ridicules the modernist preoccupation with score, by ironically creating quite literally a type of *score music.* At any rate, contrary to the move of physicality in the arts, *Under Pressure* seems to explores the cyberpunk tradition of leaving the body aside (in this case the performer) in order to focus on the question of identity and consciousness (Guga 2011). The identity at question here is the modern score itself. Through de-corporeality, and the focus of the score as imprisonment, the identity of *Pression* is fundamentally challenged. In some sense, *Under Pressure* does to the score of *Pression,* what *Pression* does to the cello.

The use of the unpitched, *concrete* sounds of the instrument in *Presssion* has been referred to as the "emancipation of noise" (Linke 2016, 118) whereby noise becomes musical material alongside its traditional neighbor, and is therefore liberated. It has also been suggested that because of the unusual nature with which the cello is used, it is a radical break from history, and that therefore not only the sounds, but also the performer are liberated from the weight of tradition (Orning 2012). It has also been suggested that the music of *Pression,* radical in its nature, has a similar effect on society as it does on music (Kohler 2005). All three positions left me skeptical, as I see *Pression* neither as liberating music from tradition, nor as having the political power that a modernist reading would hope for. If anything, I have made the point that a stylistic copying of instrumental musique concrète has stifled creativity in new music, not progressed it (See Section 1.5).

As far as liberation goes, noise is not exactly free in *Pression*; noise is carefully regulated according to the score, while compositional, even traditional tools such as dynamics, rhythms, and pitch are what hold the piece together. In any case, it is not an open score, but one that leaves little room for improvisation. What separates Pression from an improvised attacking of the cello in unusual ways, such as in a noise concert or at a typical underground improvised session, is

precisely its use of score and organization, precisely its adaptation of the main features of traditional European concert music. Noise is not liberated in Pression, rather it is tamed. The weight and history of European composition subsume even those parts of the cello which had previously evaded it. Pression does not avoid classical hierarchical structures, but deeply affirms them. It affirms that the European compositional tradition can extend its control into areas which otherwise may have thought to have been beyond its control.

3.3. Why a Game?

"Science advances by learning how things worked in the past then improving upon them. Video games are quite the same in that they learn how things worked in the past, improve them, and then **double the explosions.**" - From the Unity 2D Manual. (emphasis mine). (Calabrese 2014, 5).

The above tongue-in-cheek aphorism about *doubling the explosions* inadvertently hints at an interesting theoretical concept however: that which has been called "happy violence" (Gulga 2011, 45). It refers to the implication that the various forms of corporal violence in games, whether the innocent game-over death of Mario Bros., or the more violent gun action of first-person shooter games, is a form of the actual body (the safe body at home) learning a "new gestural language" (Gulga 2011, 45). In other words, through transgressing the boundaries of pain, or even the boundaries of physics (something like flying would fall into this category), our digital bodies go places and experience things that our actual bodies usually do not. Our body and mind, although presumably safe in a chair, experience the new-found "perceptual abilities" (Gulga 2001, 45) at the other side of our physical world.

The newfound "perceptual abilities" (Gulga 2011, 45) associated with the concept of happy violence is not unlike those that are the result of appropriation and certain post-modern art, which seeks to "poke through the image screen" (Foster 1998, 146) as it attacks those objects of representation, those very works and images of culture, and the ideological traditions they represent. By breaking through the image, in other words, breaking through the standard interpretation, or the initial reading, we are perceptually enhanced with readings which lie on the other side. Although we sit safely in our chairs, like video game players, we walk through the cracks in what Foster calls "the symbolic order" (Foster 1998, 156). For example, the symbolic head of Lachenmann in *Under Pressure*, which is used to explore the world of *Pression,* itself collides with the various elements of the original score, and in so doing, it invites the user to think with, to think about, and most importantly to *think through* the figure of Lachenmann, as a comedic element of *happy violence* encourages the expansion of our perceptual capabilities, particularly in the form of new musicological readings.

3.4 Interactive Appropriation as Artistic Research

This exploration of *Pression* which *Under Pressure* provides is a fitting answer to the suggestions that the usual forms of analysis do not work with Lachenmann´s *musique concrète instrumentale* (Fillber 2009, 60). In other words, the old methods of analysis do not suit the new methods of composition which *Pression* represents. Appropriation of *Pression* into a new interactive artwork offers the opportunity for an expanded perceptual vision of the original, as well as of the ideological background it represents. *Under Pressure* is a work of artistic research in that it seeks to increase knowledge, "through the mode of artistic experience" (Klein 2012). Through the aesthetics of interaction, the user is invited to experience another art form from a new perspective (Kwastek 2013, xiv). This perspective-through-interaction is made possible not by inviting the audience, or the user, to a finished product, but rather to the site of art-making itself (Jevtić 2018, 6). In the case of *Under Pressure*, one is thus not only invited to the site of art-making, but to the site of research-making, and thus to the site of interpretation-making.

As research is initiated from the position of "not-knowing" (Klein 2012), so too, the readings of Lachenman which *Under Pressure* enables are not a finished product. This essay has attempted to explain the positions and readings available from the starting point of its creation, from the outset, however, the finished product of this work is in the participatory result and reactions of those who interact with *Under Pressure* itself. In *The Open Work*, Umberto Ecco describes the position of the composer in those certain pieces with unfinished elements, or compositions which purposefully contain performer decisions that influence the final result: "He does not know the exact fashion in which his work will be concluded, but he is aware that once completed the work in question will still be his own*"* (Eco 1989, 19). With this form of research, that is, research-through and research-with interactive appropriated works, the real readings are still to come. The hope is that the project is rich in meaning, much the way Richard Prince´s *Untitled (Cowboy)* relies on cultural participation in the form of perception and judgements. Lachenmann said himself that his music was formed from setting the elements in play (Lachenmann 2008, 109), and my hope is that this project is setting *the readings* in play.

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