

SOUND ART AS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The maximum degree of distance in modern music principles takes its shapes in the classical bases expressed in the denial of an Aristotelian postulate: the whole there has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Music without a beginning and an end means a refusal of the habitual system of coordinates communicated by music sounds in the classical sense. However, such principles seem to be no longer applicable to musical production nowadays. The still limitless applications of technology to art making, and sound art as a discipline, in particular, generate debate and reactions never seen before because of the ever-growing possibilities of esthetic production and consumption. This paper explores the sound art as a phenomenon in its direction, expansion, and depth in the field of media opportunities. It is aimed at contending that art communication in artistic sounds has undergone a change. The use of McLuhan and Benjamin's methodology as well as the comparison of XX century and modern composer experiences allow highlighting the areas in which the idea of artwork in sound art have changed communication with the audience. As a result, one of the basic qualities introduced by new technologies has been the creation of a new type of virtual reality resulting in new types of the esthetic relations. The most important characteristic of these relations is the emergence of a complex, or total sensual immersion, up to the loss of reference points in external reality. The effect of such illusion amplifies the fact that the element of comparison, detection of differences between illusion and reality is minimized. In this way, the critical distance to the place of which emotional reaction takes up is leveled.

Keywords: Sound Art, Communication, Aesthetic, Media, Music.

1. INTRODUCTION

A central concept of Benjamin and McLuhan's well-known theories of media (Benjamin, 1935; McLuhan, 1964) is that mediation is based on the prerequisite that world perception is already mediated by feelings. McLuhan viewed the media as 'extensions' of the human organs (technologies recreate lack of what we don't have, serving as a tools), and conversely interpreted the functioning of the senses as an indicator of socio-cultural forms. Today in numerous historical and critical works have established Sound Art as an artistic genre in its own right, as specific and independent field of art joining visual arts and music whose main focus is the research of sound behavior in a space. In many of them the connection in Sound Art between technology and aesthetics program have recognized as a base of a new communicative program.

Since Luigi Russolo and Lev Termen's experimented in the field by continuing by Iannis Xenakis' architectural projects and finishing with works of modern electro-acoustic musicians and artists using sound as material (e.g. Edwin van der Heide, Marnix de Nijs, Jan-Peter E.R. Sonntag and many others), Sound Art has expanded and deepened the field of this media opportunities as well as changed the status of art work.

2. MAIN PART

The idea of disintegrating a piece of music which appeared and was strengthened in the second half of the XX century is presented by Carl Dahlhaus' theses. "In music the disagreement and the delight in destruction and directed against the traditional concept of composition, the finished work, the letter of which is laid down, and the spirit of which was declared immutable by idealist aesthetics". (Dahlhaus, p. 265). The musical text is destroyed in post-serial music and in aleatoric texts. In the disintegration of a piece of art work, the methods, that are the technological aspect, are more essential for composers than the results, that is, the aesthetic program. This conception explains why a musical text undergoes significant changes. The scores of modern composers may look different in the form of schemes, signs, arrows. These differences give the musical material a new look in appearance too.

When composers work with a new type of sounds such as noise, the historically formed sound ideal breaks (LaBelle, 2006). For instance, in the futuristic orchestra, noises are not connected with breath at all. The blows to the metal or the thunders of collapse are not only irregular, but also opposite to anything organic. Furthermore, the modern vocal sound is the result not of just human breath but of cultivated breath. The sound gives the image of a person who is not only natural, but also revealing itself in the cultural environment. Avant Garde, for instance, is prolific in examples of art sound experimentation as shown by the migration from traditional musical instruments to experimentation with the electronic sound where it acts as an artificial product synthesized from elementary particles. In its existence, the duration and sound dynamics are not connected any more with the natural acoustic opportunities of the human voice. The electronic sound, for example, can last as much as necessary; consequently, any associations with the human breath are finally lost.

The sound presented as an artistic image allows to feel space, in particular. In its communicative aspect, the private instantly becomes public because sounds cannot be selective: they are everywhere and for everybody. The work of Sound Art developed by classic artists of this genre (see Max Neuhaus, Bernhard Leitner, Mariann Amakher) understands the sound not as an additional musical superstructure, but as organically fitted into space, not imposing itself, but revealing something new from the concrete situation and atmosphere. Seen from this perspective, the acoustical experience corresponds with the spatial and, even, the corporal. For example, in 1968, Max Neuhaus's Drive-in Music represented the radio stations located all along an automobile route, allowing drivers to listen to a composition made from broadcastings taken from different radio waves along a highway.

In a thoroughly complex study of the possibilities of the spatial and corporal influence of a sound through the monitoring sound trajectories and their localization on the human ear, the German artist, Bernhard Leitner, found that all installations are intended for individual use (see Double Arching/Temporally Shifted, Inside Expanding/Self Measurement, & Mirrored Projections). In fact, at the beginning, the space of any installation is empty. In other words, it is studied by the artist as abstraction, a geometrical and non-material space. However, thanks to the invisible sound waves, it is possible to reveal the rhythm, condensation, and convulsion of space. The sound performs, thus, as a material factor; the space shows itself as a holistic entity. The maximum of a distance of the modern musical shaping principles from classical bases was expressed in denial of an Aristotelian postulate that whole there is what has the beginning, the middle and the end. Music without the beginning and the end means refusal of the coordinate system habitual for us, it demands a new listener's installations.

The problem of adequacy of modern music perception is considered in T. Adorno's works in which the idea of opposition of regressive and structural listening developed (Adorno, 2001). Structural listening, i.e. the ability "to bring music to a theoretical concept", moves forward composers as the requirement of a certain level of listener's readiness. So the new type of listener makes a new type of communication not only with the piece of art but also with a processes in reality on which Sound Art reacts. "The changes Adorno believed to be necessary in order to relaunch 'structural listening' in the new context of the avant-garde languages suggest that his concept of 'musical logic' can be extended in principle. McLuhan insisted on the tactile component and experience of discontinuity, but was careful not to entirely rule out our rationality, preferring to advocate forms of 'non-linear logic'. In a discussion of the new customs inaugurated by television, he remarked that 'the tactual mode of perceiving is sudden but not specialist. It is total, synesthetic, involving all senses' (McLuhan, 1964: 334). This implies that 'reception in distraction' also does

not reject the idea of unity, but rather transfers it to a new semantic field. Examples of this new unity are provided by analyses of popular music which reconstruct listening experiences different to those of notated composition, but still bound up with the pursuit of meaning. Thus, it is possible to take Adorno's 'structural listening' one step further: not as a single act of perception, but as a 'situated' listening, a parallel form of what Habermas (1987a: 306) calls 'situated reason', viewing communicative processes as social practice that reflect rational forms." (Borio, 2015, 12).

Adorno in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1976) names eight types of listeners, beginning with the expert and ending with what he names the "entertainment listener". The "expert listener" is the ideal type to the extent that she or he is fully conscious, misses nothing, and "at each moment, accounts to himself for what he has heard" (Adorno, 1976, pp. 4-5). Expert is meant as conditional type of the modern listener understanding language of music and capable to perceive music structurally, i.e. to realize in its semantic communication of the moments of the past, present and future. An ultimate goal of "structural listening" is "Its horizon is a concrete musical logic: the listener understands what he perceives as necessary, although the necessity never literally causal (Adorno, 1976, 5). The effect of perception of music, thus, is fairly put into direct dependence on the nature of listener's installation.

3. CONCLUSION

For Adorno the musical idea is susceptible to historical necessity, a necessity that mediates between music and its listening society. According to these ideas we can see that Sound Art represents not only "a new type of music", it shows that we have today a new type of aesthetics relations. The important characteristic of these relations is a possibility of complex, or total sensual immersion, up to loss of reference points in external reality. The effect of illusion amplifies the fact that the element of comparison, detection of differences between illusion and reality is minimized. In Sound Art critical distance goes down, emotional reaction takes up.

In circles of critics of the modern art immersion as a form of art and aesthetic experience causes not always an unambiguous reaction: acceptance and delight is combined with concern and even skepticism. This may be interesting to analyze.

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