

## **Music? Or not?**

What would an average visitor think, coming to a concert and seeing there a guitar-player who gets rare and long-dying-away accords from his instrument one time in several minutes, instead of playing continuous melodies? What would a visitor think, looking at a drum-player passing over the cymbals with a bow instead of beating out the time? What would he think hearing a vocalist forcing himself to make the flow of sounds that reminds of noise of wind in wires more than a song, instead of singing poetry? What would he think about sounds that are produced from a mixing desk where output and input ports are connected – is this really music?

It is not difficult to imagine the thoughts of an average person who daily faces such sort of mass-media as radio and television, the person who considers rhythm and melody to be the limitation to the music. Apparently he will leave the place, thinking that he met something too radical and obscure. It is hardly believable that this person would consider the things he heard to be music.

Properly speaking - why should it be considered as music?

The definition of music that is the most appropriate in our days and was given ages ago by Mozart is the following: music is an organized noise. Generally we take a tone as an element of the order in the sound at its lowest level. The melody and the rhythm are the examples of sound organization within time. Consonance of the several layers of the well-ordered sounds is called polyphony. In most cases the polyphony is the very thing that we get used to call – the MUSIC. If we cannot catch which musician plays which instrument and what melody - our normal reaction will be like "it is not music, it is sound abracadabra". However, very seldom we get idea that this set of sounds can also be somehow ordered. If there is no harmony, melody and rhythm in the sound flow, it does not necessarily mean that it is out of order. Probably we do not want to perceive it.

The Austrian composer and improviser Radu Malfatti introduces such notions as "form, material, and structure" for music description (and in fact, any other kind of art). E.g. an object has a form of house - so it means that it can probably be the house or its model, a piece sounds like jazz – so it is written in a form of jazz or it is styled as jazz – this way we define the form. The house is made of brick and concrete, the piece is written for piano, cello and voice – this tells us about material. And at least it is three-room-house with kitchen and sanitary arrangements and they are connected to each other by passages. The music piece consists of prelude, climax and denouement – it is the structural aspect. If we revert to the Mozart's definition of music, it will turn out that it is enough to put the sound flow into an order at least by one criterion (form, material or structure) and we will get music. Musician getting rare accords from a guitar, even no matter how far these accords are from each other in the time, somehow uses the guitar sound, hence he works with certain material in his own way. The drummer passing over the cymbals with the bow does the same in fact but works with another material. It may happen that the vocalist singing the noise of wind in wires wants to convey exactly the noise of wind and to create some form this very way. For that matter let's strain our ears to hear the sound of the mixing desk with output and input ports connected to each other. Maybe this sound develops in the time, forming some pumpings and abatements - and we can here the introduction, the culmination and the denouement in them. That proves the existence of specially built structure.

When taking a violin (material) with the purpose to play a romance (form) by the directions that prescribe some pumpings and activity decays (structure) a musician reproduces music. Let's imagine that musician does not want to read scores while playing an instrument. He/she supposes that it is appropriate to put a computer-generated tone or previously recorded noise of the city into the sound flow for some special purport. So it means that this person experiments with material. Also this person may think that the

existing stylistic frames are too narrow and he/she may perform a "free style" piece, and thus experimenting with the form. And finally he/she may not like its narrative structure and lets imagine that the concept is to deliver some emotions directly to a listener, without any images and narration. Let's assume that it is the state of deep peacefulness, and that is why the piece has neither melody nor internal structure – only serene and monotonous hum. This delivers the experiment with the structure. In all these cases an author wants to express or demonstrate something that is quite certain through the sound and thus he/she creates or reproduces the music. And in all these cases the musician does not want to stick to the tough rules of harmony, melody and rhythm. A person can be interested not in the things that can be expressed with use of those rules, but in what can be expressed through sound. He/she searches, makes experiments. That is why the product of such searches is known as "experimental music".

One of the most common mistakes is to oppose experimental music to pop-music (in particular the dance one). Techno that appeared in mid 1980s was the sort of dance music for certain, but it held an experiment in itself, refusal of melody and composition development for the sake of total repetition. The sort of electro-pop music as idm (Intelligence dance music) normally requests an experiment with sound and structure.

By now the experimental music has acquired long and rich history. At the end of 20s century such work with the sound led to the discovery of such disciplines as sound-installation, sound-design and landscape sound-design. Frequently the work result of some musician cannot be considered as "a piece", however they deserve attention because they hold interesting ideas and concepts. Some of the music critics even prefer to use such term as "sound-art" (the art of work with the sound) preferring it to the word "music". But as a result it is of no importance - the only important thing is how we perceive some music object whether it speaks to us or evoke certain associations, feelings and interests. In the opinion of many musicians and music critics perception is much more creative process than music creation itself. E.g: the British sound-artist Lee Patterson in his interview for the book "Blocks of Consciousness and the Unbroken Continuum" (Sound323, London, 2005) says that "... The focus on acute listening suggests that perception is a key part of the intellectual organization of sensory input, and therefore acts upon it in order to frame particular experiences." – and in fact this is the way we get used to realize that we deal with a piece of art. So, try to listen to some sound closer – in most cases you will realize that you are creating "a piece" for yourself, and you will also realize that this is the way to discover something new!

**/Denis Kolokol 2007/**

**/translated from russian by Irene Zharkova/**