

Letters to the Editor

From Vit Zouhar

I would like to make a comment concerning Peter Quinn's study 'Out with the Old and In with the New: Arvo Pärt's *Credo*', published in *Tempo* 211 (January 2000). It is important that articles like this focus attention on Pärt's kind of compositional thinking before 1976 and show the continuity between the serial and tintinnabuli periods, while destroying the myth of two widely independent ways of Pärt's composing before and after 1976. That is why I would like to focus once more on the 'climax' of *Credo*, the 'chaos' section of this piece. Peter Quinn wrote in his article on page 19: '[...] the metaphorical journey into chaos and destruction is completed by an unrestrainedly wild, improvised climax'. And as a note to the aleatoric black bands he continues: 'As one can see from the score, the serial element is literally blacked out, to prepare for the ultimate consolidation of Bachian tonality'. Paul Hillier described this part of *Credo* in his book *Arvo Pärt*¹ in a similar fashion: '[...] Pärt abandons conventional notation for an improvised section marked *Feroce* and *fff* throughout. Black bands indicates which instruments are playing when [...]'².

Example 1: Arvo Pärt: *Credo*, p. 27'

Before he continues, he mentions about this section, '[...] where the sense of chaos reaches an unbearable climax [...]'³. Hillier and Quinn are both absolutely right in the sense that the acoustic and graphic sense of this section should clearly be an absolute chaos. Without a doubt, Arvo Pärt's intention was to create an illusion of chaos. However, the whole piece *Credo* is not merely about the Old and New, but about the Order and Chaos, too. Arvo Pärt interprets the chaos in a more sophisticated way than it looks at first sight. He prepared a section that is a little similar to the tintinnabuli technique by way of contradiction between the hearable and readable structure. The musical structure of the whole climactic section continues in a strong serial way. In those 'black bands' musicians play improvisations, but the number 12 determines each of those 'bands' in a similar way as before Bach's *Preludium*, or the row. The trumpets, which start this section, are playing constantly after 4 bars (1+3), the trombones and the tuba after 5 bars (2+3), the horns after 56 bars (3+3), the flutes, oboes, and clarinets always after 7 bars (4+3), the clarinets and bassoons after 8 (5+3), etc. (Ex.1).⁴

¹ Hillier, Paul. *Arvo Pärt*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.61.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ This example is from my paper *Neúpadné struktury. Analytické poznámky ke skladb. Credo Arvo Pärta*. [Secret structures. About Arvo Pärt's *Credo*] which I read at the Spring Musicology Conference, held at the Palacky University in Olomouc on 15-16 April 1999.

Pärt's chaos is strongly organised around the number 12. It means that not just the 'Old-' and 'New-sections' are organised along a serial technique, but 'the chaos' is in a Pärtian way a strong serially determined structure, just as the whole *Credo*.

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(Because of shortness of space, our regular News Section has been held over to the next issue, along with a number of letters and reviews.)

(continued from p.62)

Konzertgesellschaft. As Burt himself recalls, Mautner Markhof was 'a patriarchal figure of almost Old Testament proportions'. Hence (he suggests) the texts from Luther's translations of the Old Testament; and hence, too, a 'public manner' that may suggest the later von Einem but is clearly consistent with that sense of loyalty and indebtedness to Howard Ferguson which was never supplanted by Burt's subsequent

loyalties. If today there is a 'natural' audience for such a piece beyond the ones readily available in Vienna's Konzerthaus and Musikverein and adjacent to the one that NMC first reached with its notably successful release of the Elgar-Payne Third Symphony, it is no doubt to be found at one of England's cathedral festivals. The NMC recording – made in Bratislava in 1995, with multi-national forces – should help to promote that worthy cause.

David Drew

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