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Nam June Paik and the New Spheres of Sound-Music – Effects/ Resonances Within the Yugoslav Cultural Space

Nam June Paik i nove zvukovno-glazbene sfere – efekti u jugoslavenskom kulturnom prostoru

Sažetak

U ovom radu autorica ispituje potencijale višemedijskog stvaralaštva Nam June Paika, najprije onaj segment koji se odnosi na korištenje potencijala zvuka i zvukovno-glazbenih istraživanja, te nastoji da utvrdi efekte njegova rada u ovoj sferi u jugoslavenskom kulturnom prostoru. Poznato je da se Paik u domenu eksperimentalnog umjetničkog rada otisnuo upravo po sticanju akademskog glazbenog obrazovanja, na Sveučilištu u Tokiju, gdje je diplomirao 1956. godine s tezom o kompozitoru Arnoldu Šenbergu. Za proširenje njegovih interesa u području glazbe i zvuka posebno je važan Paikov boravak u Njemačkoj i Darmstadt, poslijeratnoj „prijestolnici“ aktualnih glazbenih zbivanja, te suradnja s poslanicima progresivnog mišljenja o glazbi – Karlheinzom Stockhausenom i Johnom Cageom. Pod njihovim jakim utjecajem, Paikova znanja o glazbi se značajno šire i redefinišu, a kritički se pogled na dosadašnju glazbenu praksu izrazito, čak i radikalno „izoštava“. Potom, Paikovo pridruživanje europskom fluksus pokretu, početkom 1960-ih, a zatim i početak suradnje s avangardnom violončelistkinjom Charlotte Moorman, nakon njegova odlaska u New York (1964), odredilo je konačno formiranje njegove eksperimentalne umjetničke platforme, utemeljene na ideji 'regeneracije' muzike i njezine ontologije putem subverzije normiranih glazbenih kategorija. Ovo je podrazumijevalo, između ostalog: uvođenje koncepta glazbene akcije (eng. action music) ili antiglazbe; odbacivanje klasičnog zapisa glazbe; visok stupanj indeterminacije; „samodegradiranje“, kako je sam Paik istaknuo, pozicije kompozitora; transformaciju ustaljene uloge publike koja od pasivnog slušatelja postaje aktivni sudionik u procesu izvođenja; preispitivanje zvuka kao medija glazbe, rekonstrukcijom, dekonstrukcijom i destrukcijom instrumenata, odnosno proširenje zvukovnih prostora uvođenjem novih, neuobičajenih, konkretnih zvučnih objekata, ali i novih medijskih slojeva, kao što je video.

Svi spomenuti elementi, a pod okriljem opće dvadesetovjekovne potrebe za de/re/teritorijaliziranjem granica umjetnosti, dalje su se protezali ka drugim europskim lokacijama. U tome nije zaostao ni jugoslavenski umjetnički prostor, u kojem pronalazimo uzorne reprezentacije inovativnih umjetničkih stremljenja, zbog čega je moguće uspostaviti bliže ili dalje,

direktne ili indirektne veze i s Paikovim radom. S jedne strane, efekte Paikova djelovanja koji se ogledaju u potrebi za otkrivanjem i prakticiranjem novih glazbenih ideja prepoznajemo u institucionalnim okvirima i kolektivnim istupanjima, a s druge, pronalazimo ih u primjerima konkretnih poetika. U ovom su radu upravo izdvojeni oni slučajevi koji to i potvrđuju. Najprije se ukazuje na utjecaj Muzičkog bijenala Zagreb (osnovan 1961. godine) kao manifestacije lokalnog tipa koja je imala internacionalni karakter, jer je predstavljala platformu za „križanje“ inovativnih globalnih suvremenih glazbenih tokova i domaćeg stvaralaštva koje u prvi plan ističe ideju o glazbeno-zvučnom eksperimentu. S druge strane, u beogradskoj kulturno-umjetničkoj sredini izdvaja se djelovanje kolektivnih praksi realiziranih u okvirima Studentskog kulturnog centra (SKC), središta progresivnih glazbenih zbivanja tijekom 70-ih i 80-ih godina 20. vijeka. Kolektivna umjetnička istraživanja i djelovanja, prepoznatljiva crta eksperimentalnih umjetničkih praksi, imala su i svoje pandane u kontekstu glazbe te je u ovom kontekstu izdvojen Ansambl za suvremenu glazbu, prvi kolektiv za izvođenje suvremene glazbe u Hrvatskoj i Jugoslaviji (osnivan 1963), kao i beogradski Ansambl za drugu novu muziku (od 1977. godine). Pored isticanja kolektiva koji su pokrenuli pitanja subverzije glazbenih konvencija i uopće dekonstrukcije glazbe kao izvođačkoga područja, u tekstu je stavljen poseban fokus na konkretne autore i njihove inventivne doprinose u polju istraživanja zvuka, a na tragu Paikovih dostignuća. Istaknuti su: videoradovi, kompjuterske animacije iz područja sintezijske umjetnosti, kao i radovi koji preispituju medije koji prenose zvuk Vladana Radovanovića; zvukovne/ambijentalne instalacije Marine Abramović putem kojih je ona upravo postavila aktualno pitanje dematerijalizacije umjetničkog objekta; performativno-zvukovni potencijali poezije Katalin Ladik; eksperimenti i „prijestupi“ u fluksusovskom maniru Silvija Foretića. Sve spomenute umjetničke pojave autorica teksta ističe kao potvrde da je jugoslavenski kulturni prostor od početka 1960-ih godina funkcionirao kao mjesto prelamanja i umrežavanja različitih utjecaja, pa i onih progresivnih proisteklih iz sfera djelovanja i interesa Nam June Paika.

Referring to music and sound with the intention of reassessing, reconstructing, and deconstructing such phenomena, concepts, and practices is one of the most significant and recognizable characteristics of Nam June Paik's multimedia opus. It is known that Paik entered the field of experimental artistic creation just after receiving an academic musical education at the University of Tokyo, from which he graduated in 1956 with a thesis on the composer Arnold Schoenberg. In this period, Paik's compositional activity was based on creating according to the rules of the "classical" musical canon, which meant, first of all, working with standard sound sources as well as traditional musical notation and manners of composing. On the other hand, the fact that he became interested in the work of Schoenberg, a key representative of European musical modernism and who is credited with the "evolution" of the musical language of the 20th century, above all meaning the constitution of the dodecaphonic technique, testifies to Paik's early artistic curiosity and discovery-research character. Due to the need to recognize and follow the current musical "impulses," above all those coming

from Europe, in 1957 Paik went to Germany (Munich, Freiburg, Cologne) for further training, and has a particularly important stay in Darmstadt, the “capital” of current musical events. The Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music (*Ferienkurse für Internationale Neue Musik Darmstadt*) provided Paik with new perspectives on sound practice and initiated thoughts about an experimental approach in this sphere, to which important contributions were made by meetings, i.e., collaborations, with two practitioners of progressive thought about music – Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage. Under their strong influence, Paik’s knowledge of music became significantly expanded and redefined, and his critical view of his previous musical practice became markedly and even radically “sharpened.” Furthermore, Paik’s joining the European Fluxus movement in the early 1960s, and then beginning a collaboration with the avant-garde cellist Charlotte Moorman after his departure to New York (1964), determined the final formation of his experimental artistic platform, based on the idea of the “regeneration” of music and its ontologies through the subversion of normative musical categories. This implied, among other things: the introduction of the concept of *action music* or anti-music, which negates the traditional idea of a musical piece; the rejection of classical music transcription, i.e., musical notation, which represents a direct “attack” on the ontological pivot of a musical piece – the score; a type of dematerialization of the musical work which also implied a high degree of indeterminacy (the aforementioned actions influenced the redefinition and even “self-degradation,” as Paik himself pointed out, of the position of the composer); the transformation of the established role of the audience, which turns from passive listeners into active participants in the performance process, and thus the formation of the “final” appearance of the work/action/event; the re-examination of sound as a medium of music, through the reconstruction, deconstruction, and destruction of instruments, i.e., an expansion of sound spaces by introducing new, unusual, concrete *sound objects* (often electronically mediated), as well as new media layers, such as video (Nyman 1982/2011: 171-176).

All the aforementioned elements, under the auspices of the general twentieth-century need for the de/re/territorialization of the borders of art, continued to extend to other European locations. The Yugoslav artistic space was not left behind in this either, since we find exemplary representatives of innovative artistic aspirations, which is why it is possible to establish, closer or further, direct or indirect, connections with Paik’s work. These results were achieved, among other things, due to the creation of a network of new musical and artistic institutions dedicated precisely to the promotion of new art and music, as well as to the harmonization and networking of local artistic productions with foreign ones, in a set of socio-political circumstances in which the turmoil between the traditional (read: conservative) and the new was constant.

When it comes to music, the first and foremost contributions came from the formation of various festival music events. Undoubtedly, the primary place is held by the Music Biennale Zagreb, a festival that was founded in 1961 on the initiative of the originator and founder, composer Milko Kelemen. From its very beginning, this festival has presented the work of the most important American and European modernist (neo/avant-garde) composers and performers, including Cage, Stockhausen, Pierre Schaefer, Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna, Pierre Boulez, Cornelius Cardew, Mauricio Kagel, György Ligeti, Alvin Lucier, and others. An “answer” to contemporary phenomena from abroad was also provided by domestic authors, i.e., creators and performers from the region, among whom the following were presented at the Biennale: Vinko Globokar, Branimir Sakač, Dubravko Detoni, Ivo Malec, Josip Kalčić, Natko Devčić, Vladan Radovanović, and Rajko Maksimović. This “festival of the contemporary understanding of music” (as the critic Pavle Stefanović called it, see: Marinković, 2022: 83), brought a pluralistic wealth of procedures, united by an attitude of reform toward musical sound, which resulted in the expansion of a work’s scope by the introduction of noise and electronic media. Analogous to these developments in Zagreb, new art scenes (conceptual, neo-avant-garde) aimed at expanding the field and media of art were being established in Ljubljana, Novi Sad, and Subotica, as well as in the capital, Belgrade. Although a festival like the Music Biennale Zagreb, and then the Yugoslav Music Tribune in Opatija, would only be established in Belgrade in the early 90s (The International Tribune of Composers – Festival of Contemporary Music), in the harsh circumstances of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the severing of cultural ties between the republics that was part of it, innovative musical events, meaning processes of creative experimentation with sound, have appeared sporadically before, both in institutional frameworks (for example, the activities of the Student Cultural Center [hereafter: SKC], which will be discussed below), and in the field of individual poetics.

It could be said that Vladan Radovanović played a pioneering role in “preparing the ground” for the introduction of new tendencies in the Belgrade and Yugoslav environments. His creativity can not only be related to the practice of the South Korean-American coeval (both were born in 1932), but is based on several coincident points, which are certainly united by a common tendency to push the boundaries of artistic expression: like Paik, Radovanović developed his artistic profile as an academically educated composer; very early on both showed a tendency to work in the spheres of different arts, that is, to connect different media, which resulted in Radovanović’s project of multimedia / *art synthesis* (officially since the 1990s); both artists showed a high sensitivity to and interest in the use of new media technology in the creative process, which, interestingly, for both resulted from working in electronic music studios (Paik was engaged in the WDR studio in Cologne, and Radovanović was founder

and director of the Electronic Studio in Belgrade). Although it is not possible to talk about Paik's direct and concrete influence on Radovanović, it is possible to assume that Radovanović's video work, meaning his computer animations in the area of synthetic art (such as *Variations for TV*, 1977/1985, or *Short Autobiography*, 1996), as well as his need for the technological mediation of visual information (via analog or digital screens), is nevertheless a consequence of the impulses that came to the Belgrade scene from the West, starting in the 1970s. On the other hand, it is important to mention that Radovanović never renounced music as an exclusive sound practice, nor the position of the composer as a superior figure who negates indeterminism as a method, although he showed a tendency to find innovative sound/sound solutions, primarily using the potential of electronic sound. In this sense, he not only creates concrete sound works (musical compositions or other works that feature sound), but also those that (self)explore the medium of sound, whereby the primary result is the mental consideration of an artistic object. Radovanović calls this space between thinking and the artistic result, or, as he says, *the mind (umnika)* and art, *projectism*. Based on this practice, in the 1970s he realized a series of work in which media that transmit sound (tape-media) were examined, that is, their creative potential: *Voice from a Loudspeaker/Tape Medium 1* (1973), *Voice and Voice from a Loudspeaker/Tape Medium 2*, *Voice from a Loudspeaker, Reading the Text/Tape Medium 3* (1975). The project/installation *Exhibited Voices* (1976) also belongs to this group of achievements, although it does not specifically problematize the nature of the *tape* medium and the idea of its "self-mediation." The operator participated the initial realization of this work, managing nine tape recorders and nine loops on pedestals arranged in the (gallery) space according to a pre-made plan. *Exhibited Voices* are the voices of emitted words, which do not achieve any formal unity, coming from differently distributed sound sources in space. These words are positioned in physical space by repetition, i.e., the meaning matches the physical/spatio-temporal context: "the repeated word 'repeat,' the now-spoken word 'now,' the word 'here' spoken here – are tautologies that weave a network construction present only in mental space" (Radovanović, n. d.). This work is about, as the artist explains, "rounded tautological units" that indicate the phenomenological-ontological turn from "a semantic-sound-spatial construction, and therefore invisible," to "a mental synaesthetic visual-spatial construction, and therefore inaudible." In this way, "the nature of the verbal medium is overcome in order to hint at the nature of the visual medium, although it is not really visible," Radovanović adds. For this reason, the artist defines this work as *trans-media*, that is, "a transmedial concept, of construction from a concept" because it represents the transition from "materiality to conceptualization," and from "conceptuality to synthetic materialization."

This installation by Radovanović was presented at SKC in 1977, precisely at the time of the flourishing of progressive artistic events on the Belgrade scene, among which a preoccupation with sound in a non-musical context occupies an important place, that is, work with sound as the bearer of an ambient whole. The first examples of this practice in our region were realized by Marina Abramović. Namely, after completing her studies in painting and holding a solo exhibition of paintings in 1970, Abramović makes a radical poetic turn, decides to definitively leave her primary artistic vocation behind and pivot toward new artistic concepts. Along the way, she opts for sound as a creative medium, realizing *sound environments/installations* as “spaces devoid of the presence of a material art object” (Denegri 1996: 99-100). We are talking about gallery and non-gallery articulated works, meaning the spaces in which various recorded sound content is broadcast through loudspeakers, and which problematizes the then ubiquitous, global issue of the dematerialization of the art object. Undoubtedly, the development of technology and new media as a means of expression contributed to this, which encouraged the criticism of the classic craft of painting and sculpting techniques, and especially, in this case, those techniques related to the realization of the concept of landscape painting, the dominant genre of Serbian moderate modernism. Sound thus becomes a means of resistance for the artist, that is, a means of “painting” real landscapes and creating new environments. Marina Abramović formulated her first ideas about working with sound, in space, that is, in a sound installation in 1971. Then she created the work *Metronome*, which was presented in the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, and which was based on the following concept. Five metronomes were set up in five rooms, each beating at a different tempo, i.e., at a different speed, similar to the organization of a musical composition (Andante, Allegro, Vivace, Presto). The determination of the tempos is based on the artist’s own sense of the rhythm of the room she is in. The fifth metronome, in the fifth room, was not started, and thus did not produce any sound, that is, it did not mark a tempo. A metronome, as the artist herself explained, “gives a sense of time and presence. Its sound helps to focus on the here and now.” It is evident that Abramović highlights sound as a category by which we measure time, and this is exactly what makes music specifically a temporal art, and what distinguishes it from “classical” visual art practices. It could be concluded that this encounter with sound was crucial for Marina Abramović, because the aforementioned focus of the artist on time clearly anticipated the appearance of performance as a concept with which she could further problematize and deepen the issues of infinite duration, existence, and presence. Therefore, it is no coincidence what Abramović will title her first series of performances, taking into account both flow and rhythm, and that she will later use the metronome as an artistic object and symbol in several later projects (*Rejuvenator of the Astral Balance*, 2000; *The House with the Ocean View*, 2002) (Janković 2012).

Katalin Ladik appeared on the Vojvodina artistic scene in the mid-60s, as another artist who would also use sound as a material for creation and communication, which arose out of an effort to expand the boundaries of poetry, the area in which she first expressed her ideas. This expansion of boundaries included, in addition to the phonic element, also visual elements, as well as performance aspects, happenings that already defined her early works as multimedial. Her interest in music and sound first became manifest under the influence of her first husband, composer Erne Kiralj (who was otherwise known as the “Vojvodina Cage”), an interest which then began to spread after she got involved in the work of experimental composers from Zagreb and Belgrade who saw in her a particular musical-sound and performative potential. This type of collaboration resulted in her performances at the Yugoslav Music Tribune in Opatija and the Music Biennale in Zagreb (mid and late 1960s). Among the artists with whom she collaborated, in addition to Kiralj, there were: Kelemen, Branimir Sakač, Dubravko Detoni and the ACEZANTEZ ensemble from Zagreb, Dušan Radić from Belgrade, and Boris Kovač from Novi Sad. In addition, the path to her vocal research also led through early acting engagements in the theater and on the radio. Her work in studio conditions was especially important since Ladik could gain the experience of refined listening on the one hand, and a refined sense of the sound quality and rhythm of the spoken word on the other, so these parameters were given an important place in her work in relation to their literary qualities. As Miško Šuvaković points out, she connected a large part of her artistic activity with vocal and instrumental music, although she was not officially seen as a musician, but as “a kind of manifestation of musical excess and vocal miracle, which took place between music, theater, and poetry” (Šuvaković 2016: 93). With a specific manner of performance, which included a series of extended vocal techniques, Ladik stepped into the sphere of the so-called *new vocality*, getting closer to the work of avant-garde and experimental vocal artists such as Kathy Berberian, Joan la Barbara, or Meredith Monk, while, on the other hand, she remediated the praxis of the Futurists and Dadaists. Her work in the sphere of vocal-sound/musical research was shaped not only by the imperative of a sonic result, but also by the meaning which that result constitutes. In this sense, at the center of her practice is a relationship to the female body and voice – she treats the body as an instrument, a place of manipulation, as well as a source of sound, turning it into the “symbolic body of a Woman” (Đurić in: Zelenović 2018: 120); she performs sound on the body and produces sound with the body; she fights for the body and music to speak; she fights for the female voice, and criticizes patriarchal patterns in a society in which they were particularly pronounced.

Collective artistic research and work, a recognizable feature of experimental artistic praxis, had their counterparts in the context of music. Among the leaders of this idea was Silvio Foretić, the *enfant terrible* of new Croatian music,

as described by musicologist Nikša Gligo. While still a composition student at the Academy of Music in Zagreb in 1963, Foretić founded the first ensemble for the performance of contemporary music in Croatia and Yugoslavia – The Ensemble for Contemporary Music, together with Janko Jezovšek. Relying on the anti-artistic concepts of the international neo-avant-garde, and mostly on Cage’s practice of happenings aimed at revising established musical performativity, as well as on Kagel’s idea of instrumental theater, this ensemble raised questions by subverting musical conventions and generally deconstructing music as a performative field. His relatively short activity (until 1967) was marked by a series of provocative but also entertaining artistic actions, which, as in Paik’s case, i.e., in the case of the members of Fluxus, implicitly entailed radical results and vocal reactions from the public, even in the form of a ban. Experiments and “transgressions” in the Fluxusian manner – such as hammering on a piano, lying or sleeping under a piano, immersing instruments in water, banging on pans, changing clothes on stage, making various sounds such as grinding teeth, turning on an electric shaver while shaving on stage, and the rest – are just some of the mechanisms for implementing a criticism of musical and performance conventions. As the piano is, one could say, the central instrument of the system of musical temperament, this particular location of intervention relates to the problems of pianism, piano pedagogy, and virtuosity. This is, for example, the case for the event *PianoForetić* (performed since 1964), which begins with the composer sleeping under the piano, followed by the performance of his own piano compositions. This concert praxis of a daily and necessary life activity, which equates it with an artistic act in the spirit of the philosophy of Fluxus, and which can be interpreted as a reference and reaction to the lethargy of the usual concert repertoire, is present at every repetition of the project, and is also a motive that appeared several times in Foretić’s opus. Foretić’s interests in innovation further led him to Darmstadt and Cologne, where he studied electronic music (with Eimert and Stockhausen), as well as to collaborating with Kagel in the 1970s. His creations are characterized by different musical elements, means, and techniques, that he combines as necessary (atonality, dodecaphony, serialism, aleatorics, electronics, popular music, musical action, reminiscences of the music of the past), and there is also an element of social criticism and commentary regarding various “anomalies of contemporary musical life as a whole” (Gligo 2000).

When it comes to collective activity, SKC’s music program represented the center of experimental and progressive musical events in Belgrade’s cultural and artistic milieu, again in the wake of Cage’s activities. The leaders of this “movement” were the Belgrade composers Miroslav Miša Savić, Miodrag Lazarov Pashu, Milimir Drašković, and Vladimir Tošić, and all four of them formed the informal group Opus 4, active from the mid-70s to the beginning of the 80s (although these artists also cooperated with each other later, on, among

other things, the Ensemble for Other New Music). The first performance of the group under this name took place in Zagreb, in the Music Hall of the Student Center of the University of Zagreb, in April 1980, when a multimedia program was presented. Following the principle of explicit opposition to conservatism, these composers presented a series of new procedures and practices to the local community, insisting especially on a reduction and repetition that emphasizes their process of working with musical material, which, at first accidentally and spontaneously, brought them closer to the activities of American minimalists. While, on the one hand, they expanded the boundaries of music, on the other, they even went beyond them, dealing with: “the phenomenon of expanded sound and expanded media, intermedia, multimedia, performance, action, video, photography and film, semiosonic and metamusical, theoretical-object and integrated-object, happening and preconceived piece, sound environment and illustration, tape and slide” (Lazarov-Pashu in: Miladinović Prica 2018: 244).

The Belgrade Ensemble for Other New Music can be considered as a sort of correlate of Foretić’s and Jezovšek’s ensemble. This multi-keyboard ensemble performed for the first time in December 1977 at the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade, playing minimalist compositions by Miloš Raičković, from whom the idea for founding such an ensemble originated. It consisted first of young pianists, then students of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, and its composition changed over time in relation to its repertoire, and over a hundred performers passed through it, including: Nada Kolundžija, Miša Savić, Dragan Ilić, Slobodan Todorović, Branka Parlić, Lidija Stanković, Ksenija Zečević, Miodrag Lazarov Pashu, Vladimir Tošić, Milimir Drašković, and others. The ensemble was active during the 70’s and 80’s, to be renewed again in 2017. Since the group was founded with the aim of profiling performers who would specialize in the performance of minimalist music, which, a little earlier, appeared as a necessity in the world as well (the main representatives of musical minimalism, Philip Glass and Steve Reich, founded their ensembles at the end of the 60s), the focus of the program was on minimalistic compositions, as well as on examples that could be characterized as *extended music*, based on verbal or graphic records, i.e., innovative musical concepts. The ensemble was formed as an “experimental community” (Miladinović-Prica 2018: 235) in which a research-approach was nurtured, both in an individual and collective sense. With the support of the editor of the SKC Music Program, Miroslav Savić, the Ensemble toured several cities abroad, and also performed at the Music Biennial in Zagreb, in 1979, with the Michael Nyman Ensemble from London. As pointed out, the ensemble acted as a community within which the performer as an individual could profile their affinities and interests. In this sense, the ensemble formed significant interpreters of contemporary music in the region, such as Nada Kolundžija and Branka Parlić. It is important to mention that Kolundžija, in SKC in April 1980, in the current of uncovering and promoting

Cage's work in the Yugoslav environment and re-examining the classical piano sound, premiered her *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano in Yugoslavia. An integral recording of this work was released by SKC in 1981 (in cooperation with the Diskos record company), which was the second LP release of this piece in Europe (the first recording was made by the British pianist John Tilbury, in 1975).

All of the abovementioned artistic phenomena confirm that the Yugoslav cultural space functioned, since the beginning of the 1960s, as a location for the encounter and networking of various influences, including progressive ones arising from the spheres of activities and interests of Nam June Paik. Although these examples of experimental work with sound did not quantitatively follow European and world events, which is understandable in relation to the tradition, social context, and dimensions of the Yugoslav territory, it is certain that there was both individual and collective potential for seeking out new mechanisms of expression, and that, as a result, they provided an "expansion" of the borders of music, that is, an expansion of other non-musical arts through a new sound/new treatment of sound. This outcome, although it may not have had a far-reaching and long-term effect, certainly contributed to the establishment of continuity when it comes to the emancipation of sound as a creative material and the creation of a platform for contemporary reflection.

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