

Conversations at the End of the Millennium

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Live on TV

Recorded on 28th October, 1992

Kijárat kiadó 1998 - Palatinus Kiadó

(MONORY M. ANDRÁS, TILLMANN J. A., 1998)

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When did you decide to become a musician and not anything else?

In fact, I do not consider myself to be a musician because music is a time travel for me. It is the only one among the media available at present which is capable of taking you for a real time travel. Films are not suitable for that since they come out of us. But music comes from outside, too. When I was a child I dreamt of otherworldly figures whose opal spaceships landed in front of our house. After long conversations I asked them to take me, in fact to save me from this already then perceptibly hopeless situation. The feeling, the alienation, and the mostly the sensual pleasure of these talks can be compared to music. Such is music for me, so it is not important whether I am a musician or not, as I do not know either whether one has to belong to the temporary caste of musicians or not. But I am not really interested in this. On the other hand, music is the most important.

Can one at all define what music is? What makes something music?

There are about two hundred kinds of music trends on the market today, at the same time it is becoming more and more difficult to enjoy them because the "overkill" of stimulus pouring on us through the satellites and media does not leave music untouched, perhaps it is the least untouched. So it is fashionable to match each existing note with each existing note, without any rational system. That is, these notes are matched not according to structure or ideology, but because they are unusual. This, however, leads to the general indifference of the stimulus threshold what makes beating a new and individual path in music extremely difficult since packaging

dominates over structure and form. But I have the feeling that the same applies to certain area of the sciences and to the majority of human activities called art: we are standing in front of a wall and that is the end. For the time being we can cheerfully croak at each other through the media and frontiers, we can keep on stirring the various forms, but no new, genuine "universal" artistic everyday language, valid if only in a limited circle, can be created. What happened here is that the apparent human freedom given by technique and the welfare society has, in fact, lead to the complete standardisation and alienation of the individual. The only subject and product of that world, making life better and easier, is not made for the mankind, but for keeping alive and ensuring the continuous operation of the social metabolism called market economy, for the moment impossible to exceed.

But this was not always like that.

In the beginning the music of the youth called rock music expressed that the future was ours. This can be sociologically well measured by the choice of names of the groups. And indeed: in the yard of an *VIIIth* district house brawl blared accompanied by pleasant contemporary guitar solo and everybody felt the world to be a little more familiar. That changed as time passed by and music technology developed. There came the multi-track technique and with it the age of distrust and musical betrayal. Composers, too old to play rock music, started to work hard and on their own because they did not believe any more that they could create music in the course of joint stage or studio work : "This can only be done by me. So the best is if I play alt instruments, separately on each track, and at the end I put the whole together." Thus, this is the age of alienation and distrust what has been lasting since the beginning of the seventies and it is getting worse and worse. This process was pleasantly interrupted by the short period of punk and new wave, but the speed of their castration well illustrates the fatality of the process.

And what is the situation like concerning traditionally "composed" music?

There are constructions several hundred pages long, these scores are fantastically beautiful graphically, the instrumentation and structure are fascinating. They are record performance of the human intellect, but, unfortunately, they have not got anything to do with music: they are forms and proportions impossible to listen to. Though imagined compositions or imagined musical languages are inherent in the possibilities of human art, but, in reality, these things are the nightmares of music.

Such music can only be composed by goblins for goblins which statement is not far from reality, is it. By the way, I am like that, too.

Are there any epoch-making changes in music? Is there any "development" in it?

We can speak about the ancient *Chinese* music or the ancient *Indian* culture, or about Japan, but I am very proud of being a European and I am very grateful to the fate that I could hear *Tinctoris*, *Ockeghem*, *Bach*, and *Vierne*. This culture, the end of which has been reached by us now, is unique. This is shown by the strange interaction of the East and West, originated from a common root; while in Europe the then not yet harmonic or rhythmic polyphony, the simultaneous performance of independent voices, was created around 1300, in *India*, almost at the same time, in time periodic rhythmical-polyphony was created. In addition to that imagine the intricate world, with its division of labour, of the European grinding mills and city-states as opposed to the despotic *Indian* village society. *India* simultaneously produced the same what in Europe happened with tune, harmony, and polyphony. But who knows about this? While in *India*, with minor improvements, this structure existed as a genuine musical everyday language till the turn of the century, in Europe it is good if it tasted till *Mozart*. When in 1580 a choir-master living in the Netherlands wrote a fugue to which in the majority of the cases he did not add any key-signature, and there was no rhythmic marking out, neither was the way of performance added in Italian, nevertheless a hundred years later, in a distance of 2000 km, it was perfectly performed since the person who wrote it trusted the other person who played it: "what both of us know, why should be put down".

And since then?

The quasi standard language appeared at the end of the fifties and even in the sixties, but, of course, not in the field of the so called "high arts". But, if a historian of music let's say in 300 years will be interested in finding out how the people of this century felt themselves in their skin if they played such music and started to use more and more awful and frightening notes, well, then he will find quite a good correlation between the awareness of life and music, music and the individual, music and the misery of the world. *Schubert*, who I do not like at all, very wisely says; good music is sad. Indeed, in music - especially in the East - there are techniques for making good music out of ancient misery. Look at the stock of instruments of a *Chinese* and an American circus, the difference well shows the attraction of white men towards

instruments and objects and their alienation through objects. The same applies to music. The organ is, for example, a fascinating, beautiful and alienated, intricate system, which once served God, but such a thing could only be produced by white men in Europe. Listen to the boom of the *Cavaillé-Coll* organs all over France. Certainly, there were even in the beautiful *Baroque* music such dispositions and shifts on the organ, for example in the most beautiful c-minor passacaglia, which remind rather of a big howl than of wonderful music. Perhaps, only technology developed: today fascinating technical instruments are available to white men to produce the musical equivalent of the same human misery. Today technology can be made suitable for everything and it is perfectly suitable for communicating to us this big, ancient misery with unbelievable technology and unimaginable richness. Why it does not do so is obvious from the above. Today we have the following choice: to live in a *Gulag*, or to eat hamburgers. The problem is that we have no alternative for life. The same applies to music. Today it is impossible to make good music. Under music I understand standard language, collectivity, ecstasy and tradition. Such a thing cannot be done today. But if it can, then only through certain great efforts frequently made not even in the field of music. But the music on the surface and pouring on the globe is the same as the washing-powder or the hamburger. They are produced, consumed, and forgotten in the same way and they have the same function in the life of people.

But there are always some people who make something different.

The dawdling of this handful of people will always remain, I will also potter - as cat in the sand box - with my own ideas and I will be looking for the fight. As technology develops, I discover in the instruments newer and newer ways of realisation. At the same time I also go my own way of loneliness and misery since what I want to do I cannot do together with others. After all the problem is exactly this: unfortunately, even I cannot step over my own shade. One may think over and elaborate strategies for survival and art, but when work has to be done, I do what I have to and, in fact, I am very happy if a new processor appears on the market because I know for how many things I will use it. But I also know that the product I create with its help has no such marks of marketability for which the processor was made. The point is that we, the "dawdling find", are actually absolutely unnecessary on this horrible market on which several thousand records appear every year and this is only the "white" market. I am not taking of *India* or the *Arab* world where ten millions of the diluted, rescored versions of the local, traditional music are poured on the market. We live in an

amazing ocean of music. In fact, we, a handful of people, are a small island in Europe.

How can the music of various traditions be harmonised? How do you do it?

I am trying to master the various musical languages, that is, I am time travelling, and I mix a soup out of these and the language of my own. The music of various ages and points of the compass may only be synthesised into a more lasting unity if the participants, that is, the parts originated from the various ages and countries of the world, appear in their own completely traditional and more or less faithful implementation, system and theory. I show this program in the computer; I have made the program to the fast note, but yet it is such a composition which could theoretically exist in *India* since in the course of composing I kept all existing compositional, formal and "moral" rules. Nobody has played it yet and I do not think that it will be played in the future, though, to the fast formula, it is based on the system of rules of the *Indian* masters. If it were not played and written so perfectly as it is, we could say that this is an original *Indian* composition and it could be played in *India*. The white man, and this is frightful, has such machines and these machines if programmed well - because we know that a machine is as stupid as its owner - can play even such a thing for which somebody in *India* has to learn for twenty years. I was composing this piece for half a year. It is true, I was learning the rules for twenty years, but I could make such a piece every half-year what is half-life every half a year - and this is terrible. If I showed a little dull record of this piece to a genuine *Indian* musician he would excitedly ask who plays, where he lives, what school he belongs to. And I could tell him, in its parts, from where and which school these formulae originate. They would respect the person who plays the piece very much, but if I told them that this is a computer and a program they would hate me because I have deprived them of something for which an *Indian* musician works extremely hard for years. This is the modern musical neocolonialism of the white man.

Today on the word market such music technological equipment is sold at an accessible price by which all tones, styles and forms of the history can be produced and reproduced. Any existing musical fantasy can be produced. If somebody wanted to produce an old *Provençal* song with a machine then he could do it - if skilled enough - in perfect quality. But such music is not developed or researched on these machines because when the time has come that everything can be made then nothing is made. These machines are not for the people or the music.

In fact, those who try to mix *Indian* music with European music do more harm to

these cultures as though they would simply forget about them. Of a culture remains only as much as is understood of it by white men and that is very little. At the same time the world is such that only white men are interested in it, since they have other tasks. If we understand only so much that for example the American flute of the *Quechuas* could sound like that and that and if it is now reproduced by a computer it will be like the original, then this is also very little. It is, unfortunately, not the original because to have the original we need the same environment, the same society, the same system of relations, the same ear and the same culture so that the flute bends notes, sounds, spits and is false as when the *Indians* blew it once.

Though with the help of the big synthesisers and samplers backed up with more serious external computers a really radically new sound world could be created for some reason that still was not done in the past 10-15 years. The sound picture of all instruments of the world can be recorded and resynthesised: there you are, a huge store, but the world of new sounds has not been born yet. There is this "sound park", but there is no mutual agreement and this is the most horrible in these new instruments. This is also the sound of "rich" loneliness, the standard language, the lack of conventional culture.

When for example the *Notre Dame Cathedral* was built, the stone-cutters did not talk about the infinity of God and the transcendentalism of *Gothic* art; they were just cutting the huge cold stones. But *Gothic* art was born out of this and such is *Indian* music by which the most complicated and abstract feelings can be expressed. The *Hindu-s* grouped, described with numbers and drew up a chord ratio chart of the wish for the lack of God and how it looks noted down. Why do not we have today words for the fifth heartbeat before death? We do not have words as we do not have music, either. We have no culture so our words are stuck. And since we do not have all that so there is no new language, either. There are only the old ones because they, the other cultures, had created them once. They played music, used those fantastic and ancient musical rules in their music as I am unconsciously trying to use the rules of the Hungarian language and to express something. These cultural regulations imbued the culture as the rules of the science of the spoken language in which culture the strictest musical rules of the world were used with natural ease, we could say reflex-like. Coming back to gothic and old *Indian* music: the beautiful in it is that each centimetre can be expressed by a rational element, only the whole is irrational. The same applies to my music: I can only compose it through the synthesis of the authentically participating elements of very distant, but existing cultures.

The formation of a new musical standard language would need some time. But nowadays everything is speeding up.

For this we need at least decades and for what we naturally do not have time, thus today we consume. This method is not different from how we treat the environment: we destroy our culture as we destroy the cleanness of the seas. In my "future" image there is a helmet called consociator, similar to a hair dryer in which I relive the digitally recorded life of a then fashionable actor. I want to fly to the *Andes* with a beautiful actress. It is not impossible that in the meantime - let's say before crashing - I have a look at another crispy blond beauty who is - accompanied by a large organ - eccentrically staring at a packet of anise-smelling recycled toilet paper after what naturally mystical *gamelan* music is played for me. I buy real life recorded on something like a video tape and with the help of this helmet - in the meanwhile being among you - I live that other - may be better - like. This is a possible future like the *VHS*-video. Thousand millions of people will live the life of somebody else sunk into these helmets which life will apparently be produced by big companies employing professional stars. Thus the *Aztec* android lady mermaid riding in a ribboned *Burgundian* armour on a *Cretan Minotaurus*, wearing a *Johnson & Johnson* vagina spray around her neck, smiles at the Japanese crusader of the *Vatican* blue-gold flying saucer while soft medieval *Indian music* is played, encouraging him that against obesity the best is the *Anubis*-type peristaltic worm implanted in the small intestines. Manufactured by *Exsonybm Inc.*, please allow 28 days for transportation. Well, then will soon follow the real crises, the crisis of the fullness of the globe. Now, with East Europe getting free, a horribly starved market is being established, this gives an injection to market economy which undoubtedly gives something to eat to the people and offers a democracy not yet surpassed, but which is in fact a democracy of fist-law. However, the solution of social problems in such a way - that is, people spend most of their lives by enjoying and consuming cultural products and hanging about media - has a horribly great price. The price is that from *Alaska* to the Isfand of *Bali* the skyscrapers, the clearways, the trousers, the bulbs, the snack bars are the same. The price for the fact that the *Uncle Robert* of market economy will be capable in the lump of giving to eat to hundred millions will be the human intellect and freedom. And the same music, under which I understand what up to day has been called culture, is everybody's, that is, nobody's. And when the market in *China* as wekk as in the North Eastern corner of *Siberia* will be full with consumer goods and the biosphere of the Earth will still exist, then market economy will end and the time of the real economic and cultural crisis will come. I am sure that in the meantime the plutonium containers in *Novaya Zemlya* will be removed, the ozone gap will be filled very soon, the factories for rinsing the oceans through to the last drop will be built and the whole environment of the Earth will be filtered by these big companies. Of

course, all this will not happen for us, but to keep this awful machinery going. Seemingly all this is far from music, but the fate of music is connected with the great rinsing through of the oceans. If I were wrong, so much the worse.

But there are efforts opposed to all this; experiments, movements, works of art.

For example, the everyday life of an average *Parisian* is so full of machines, he is so familiar with thousands of engines and computers, that these tasks do not have room in this way of life and in this culture besides the maintenance, operation of this system, the receipt and transmission of data, the daily management and schedule. These tasks can only be the tasks of madmen and mutants. The average modern male Western citizen is a smiling, agile, a little bristly, slim person having free time, good digestion and teeth, clean clothes, slightly creamed hair and crispy flesh, but whose brain is covered by his "culture" with slate green ciliated mould. This smiling "individuum" is very far from the possible colourful personality who can be the creative participant of a real culture. Though I suspect that jogging, the millions of leisure sports, the *UNIX* network software and the radio phone serve much more for keeping the labour force well in hand than for the freedom of the body and the time of the individual, but seemingly the quality of life is getting better and the time of lukewarm global repletion will slowly come. I am talking of the far future; *Yugoslavia*s, *Georgia*s are still to come... *China*s and *Hongkong*s will come, the whole Mediterranean is not in order, so still very much blood will flow on this Earth. But I am sure that there will be sauna on the Mars when part of the people on Earth will dream of a small piece of bread. Nevertheless, like will be more pleasant to a greater degree.

Where is the place of music in all this?

Really good music is never about health, the yes, the progress, but it always originates from some kind of essence of pain. Music is such a physical "drug" which cannot be replaced by anything else. You get ratios through your ears, constructions fly into you, which do not sneak into you through any other sense organ. These seemingly unanalysable, curious effects can only get into you through your ears in untraceable relations of ratios, rules. Men learning music in Europe, it is usual to pay attention to the order of notes, what note is preceding or following another. I think that this method is not good as opposed to the ancient *Indian* approach which, in the first place, is interested when a note is followed by another, that is, music is imagined

in its original medium, in time, it is followed by attention in time, it is evaluated and constructed in time, and not according to note height or the type of note series. The difference is essential.

Why is Indian music so important for you?

Seemingly, *Indian* music is mathematical purity and heaven in itself. But when we become absorbed in what is actually covered by this fantastically subtle system we cannot say too much good. When people say how beautiful *Indian* music is then I remember that unfortunate *Indian* who, in 1600, in a village, could only believe or know seriously that he could be free in the world only at one place: in himself, inside. Because he had nothing: property did not exist in *Asian* societies. Generally parallel with property possession was established and together with possession - ecce homo - personality. Personality does not exist in *India*, only the "great universe" where all of us will become one. At the same time the most horrible way of living together has been established in *India*. Today some of us know that we are not free even inside and a European has to know this. The greatest hope of a *yogi* or a period *Indian* intellectual was to step somehow out of the chain of regeneration. *Yoga* is a fantastic means for defeating this horrible chain of regeneration. Thus, it was worth for a *yogi* to achieve through forty years of hard effort never to be reborn to this Earth. And this is the essence of *Indian* music. *Indian* music is about this, this way of thinking is in the background of *Indian* music. So - because it is magnificent and ecstatic - it is real music, but one cannot say that it is beautiful, meditative, or free, or any other stupidity.

What chances do artists, or sensible human efforts, have today?

For me the real Western art of the 20th century is manifested in *Ohio*-type submarines. It is worth to look at the technical documentation; what can be found there serving an evil purpose and, at the same time, what achievement of the human intellect it is; in comparison to that everything else is faint. All good human efforts have to be measured in comparison to that. These can only be realised if somebody tries to learn impartially about the world as much as possible, and the less he is white, but European, and the more he can compare sensitive people from various places of the world, and he knows that every second of the day hundred millions of people come and go, potter around, think, feel and travel on the river of life towards the future.