

present, performative, and affective being-with that is well-suited for translation into the concert experience.

Therefore, decolonizing time happens in the Thinking Together conference as a subversion of the discursive offerings at the festival through the presentation of critical theory attempting to navigate the term-cluster around coloniality/modernity/capitalism/the West, and in concerts through the elicitation of alternative forms of perception through a combination of diversified programming and curation (qua dramaturgy) of concerts. Together they are intended to present a festival conception that uses enlightenment structures that question their own complicity within colonialist systems to produce critical knowledge production experienced by the festival community. Decolonizing time becomes a programmatic idea that is used in order to alter the outcomes of existing systems of the music festival.

Returning to the decolonization of arts institutions, it becomes clear that this broader category includes but also goes beyond the approach to decolonizing time that Polzer is practicing with his festival. It addresses to a much greater degree also the constitution of the institution itself, and the position that it plays within circuits of knowledge-production that are most likely compromised in one or more regards in relation to issues of colonialism or, especially, cognitive capitalism. Without mistaking this approach with a search for intellectual and ideological purity (which, as Haraway argues, is nether possible nor remotely productive), it addresses also the specificity of the site, as well as the institution and community's relationship to both it and issues of colonialist importance.

Without speculating as to the absence of this more structural approach to decolonization at Maerzmusik, the centrality of Polzer's position as its intellectual and artistic leader should be noted as a potential hurdle to integrating this approach, which tends to eschew centralized or hierarchical structures of authorship. The centrality of the position that Polzer assumes is, despite the highly progressive approach that is put forward, structurally the same as the centrifugal regimes of knowledge-production seen already in 19<sup>th</sup> century festivals, and in its homogeneity of leadership in contradiction to the pluralist being-with multitudes put forward in the writings on decolonization by Haraway and others.

A more structural approach to decolonizing Maerzmusik (though admittedly more fundamental and a different project than "decolonizing time") would be an opportunity to investigate the history of the festival and its backing institution in light of matters of colonialization and capitalism.

## 5.9 Conclusion/Coda/Konzertemacher

Berno Odo Polzer's music curatorial approach to Maerzmusik is moving away from a sole focus on music, and heading towards a more conceptual exploration of mu-

sic's characteristics, such as its ability to shape time. This shift can be described as being *from programming musical works to a musical programming of works*. In other words, his approach to the festival is moving away from programming only one specific genre in favour of programming productions that fit to conceptual questions he wishes to explore. The relationship to music is thus twofold: one, in a "compositional" approach to assembling discrete ticketed evenings that combines selected works with a *mise-en-scène* in order to create a specific surplus of meaning out of the concert. Two, through a focus on concepts and ideas that are related to time and its perception, as well as sound. These are central to (most) musical practice, but the focus on them as concepts lets them be connected to wider societal issues, hence the subtitle "Festival for Time Issues."

While Polzer is succeeding in changing the Maerzmusik festival to become more about societal issues, and less a celebration of CCM as an autonomous art form, this does come at some cost. Polzer's festival is strongly autocratic, its focus determined by the aesthetic concerns of the music curator alone. The emancipatory themes of decolonization, ecological awareness, etc. can themselves only be lauded. Despite this, the centring of the festival around one auratic organizer does start to contradict fundamental premises of these emancipatory politics.

In addition to this, Polzer's curatorship of the festival resembles what Paul O'Neil, writing about the emergence of the curator figure, calls the mystification of the curator figure, auratizing his practice of organization, and turning the product of an enormous team of people into the perceived expression of a singular figure. The earlier comparison to Harald Szeemann means that the concept of the *Ausstellungsmacher* is close at hand, whereby for Polzer it can be adapted to *Konzertemacher*.<sup>13</sup> As with the earlier Szeemann, a contradiction can be found between the emancipated values at the centre of Polzer's festival and the establishment of the curator at its authorial centre.

A further facet can be isolated out of Polzer's seeming turn away from an emphasis on programming musical production. Each year, the curator seems to be programming less music, and relying more on his approach of composing evenings in order to fulfil their requirement of being somehow musical. This move away from the community that both the festival and Polzer himself have in the past been associated with is at first completely understandable: the New Music field increasingly seems like a small cultural niche, one that is underperforming in relation to the scope of potential of musical practices, and certainly one where artistic practices aware of or addressing current political and philosophical thought are few and far between. This effectively sets a hard limit on the abilities of this well-connected curator to address, through *musical programming*, such issues, causing him to ex-

13 Term coined by Sandeep Bhagwati.

periment with “sublimating” musicality into another facet of his programming, as for instance with the Donna Haraway evening examined in the previous section.

An alternative view on this would argue that, in keeping with Polzer’s interest in Donna Haraway, *staying with the trouble* should be what happens instead, with the festival committing to working with that problematic community that it comes from instead of moving slowly away from it. Perhaps what are needed are needed are exactly the “oddkin” that Haraway describes, the unlikely networks that can be formed when insisting on working in a damaged landscape. While not the same kind of environmental damage, there is a certain thematic similarity between Haraway’s diagnosis and the stagnation of CCM, caused by a fatigue emerging from the realization of modernism’s false promises.

When Polzer’s festivals succeed, it is because of their ability to purge themselves and their programming of a modernist nostalgia. Through the meticulous crafting of concerts and their larger embedding in a 10-day festival program, most likely only doable with an autocratic system, the music curator creates events based in the history and thinking of European experimental music, versed in contemporary issues and politics, and vibrant and interesting to a young contemporary audience from a diversity of backgrounds. This skill—to be clear, a curatorial one—is what makes this festival unique and worthy of reflection and criticism. If other musical leaders prove unable to match this level of success and relevancy, then no amount of staying with the trouble will be able to help.

