

# Time and space – The context of Hans Roosenschoon’s music

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## Abstract

This essay pays tribute to Hans Roosenschoon who celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in December 2012. In contrast to conventional approaches that focus on local ideologies and local political issues, the essay explores the context of Roosenschoon’s music from a global and a historical perspective. Taking as point of departure the pluralist nature of postmodernism, it investigates the interaction of cultural spaces, particularly those occupied by ‘African’ and ‘Western’ musics. The entanglement of time and space is shown to be manifest in complex, multifaceted contemporary musical worlds. In doing so, the essay interrogates the conventional absence of the ‘voice’ of music in context-driven musicology. An approach that acknowledges music as an equal partner in the musicological enterprise shows an alignment of Hans Roosenschoon’s music with global trends and issues of his time.

Keywords: Hans Roosenschoon, musical space, musical time, postmodernism, intercultural music, African music

This article is a tribute to Hans Roosenschoon for the important role that his music has played in the on-going shaping of a diverse South African musical landscape.<sup>2</sup> Roosenschoon studied at the Conservatoire of Music in Pretoria (1967-1971 and 1974-1975) and the Royal Academy of Music in London (RAM 1977-1978); he obtained a Master’s degree in music from the University of Stellenbosch (1987-1989) and a DMus degree from the University of Cape Town (1990-1991).<sup>3</sup> He has won awards from various institutions, including the University of South Africa (1975), the Department of National Education (1975 and 1988), Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO 1977), and in 1978 the Arthur Hinton Prize, the Harvey Lohr Scholarship and second prize in the Eric Coates competition (Clough, 1987:210). In 1987 he won the Standard Bank Young Artists Award for Music (Boekkooi, 1987).

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Hans Roosenschoon for putting at my disposal scores, documents and correspondence for my use in preparing this article. His comments on the first draft appear in footnotes. Another word of thanks goes to Edwin Hees for his valuable suggestions where complex issues are involved.

<sup>3</sup> See the following sources for additional information about Roosenschoon’s life and works: his website (2013a), the entries in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Geldenhuis 2005), *International Who’s Who in Classical Music* (Cummings & Neale 2002), the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Viljoen 2001), *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (McIntire 2001) and *Contemporary Composers* (May 1992). Post-graduate studies that deal with Roosenschoon’s music include Clough (1984), Gerber (1986), Jacobs (1987) and Roux (1989).

Many of his compositions were commissioned by institutions such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), SAMRO, the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies (FAK), the Oude Meester Foundation for the Performing Arts, Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) and TOTAL SA. His *Palette* for string orchestra (1977) was chosen to represent the RAM during the international visitors' week and *Iconography* was selected to be performed at the 1992 World Music Days of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Warsaw, Poland. Omri Hadari conducted his *Clouds Clearing* played by the South African National Youth Orchestra at the opening ceremony of the International Youth Festival in Aberdeen, Scotland (Cloete, 1994).

He joined the SABC in Cape Town in 1976 and remained there until 1995, first as assistant, then as producer and finally as Music Manager of the Western Cape. After two years as a senior lecturer in music theory at the University of the Free State (1996-1997), Hans Roosenschoon became Head of the Department of Music and Director of the Conservatory at Stellenbosch University from 1998-2006. Currently he is professor of composition at Stellenbosch University. He was visiting professor in composition at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in 2004 and also presented seminars on his music at the universities of Bristol and York in the United Kingdom in 2007, and at the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague in 2012 (Roosenschoon, 2013b). Although Roosenschoon has been composing since the age of 14, his earliest listed work is *Concertino* (1972) for piano and string orchestra. Because writing for the orchestra comes to him naturally, compositions for this medium dominate his output.

When dealing with the context of his music, that is, the space in which this composer functions, musicologists usually focus on social, ideological and political matters that are relevant to South Africa. In addressing issues of both musical and social space in a broader, historical perspective (the notion of time), this essay views music and social context as equal partners in order to understand Roosenschoon's music from a global point of view.

The aim of this essay is to investigate thinking about doing<sup>4</sup> during his time by following a chronological approach (the notion of time), dealing with the pluralism of postmodernism, the connecting of spaces, bridging the space between African and Western music, the space between cultures and the question: What happens to the 'voice' of music in an exclusively context-driven musicology?

## 1 Time and space: a historical approach to context

In 'The End of Temporality' Fredric Jameson links time and space with modernism and postmodernism respectively (2003:697) when he explains:

*The moderns were obsessed with the secret of time, the postmoderns with that of space ... [T]ime governs the realm of interiority, in which both subjectivity and logic, the private and the epistemological, self-consciousness and desire, are to be found. Space, as the realm of exteriority, includes cities and globalization, but also other people and nature.*

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<sup>4</sup> In my writing I usually combine 'thinking' and 'doing' because (for me) thinking cannot take place in a vacuum and 'doing' without 'thinking' removes the subject from the enterprise. But this essay turned out to take up more physical space than I originally planned with the result that this article deals only with thinking about the entanglement of time and space.

Jameson refers to Thomas Mann's novel *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*)<sup>5</sup> in his discussion of time and the philosophy of time. One of the many questions that the protagonist Hans Castorp turns over in his mind is: 'What is time?' He answers as follows: 'Time is active, by nature it is much like a verb, it both "ripens" and "brings forth." And what does it bring forth? Change! Now is not then, here is not there – for in both cases motion lies in between' (in Jameson, 2003:695). 'Now' and 'then' can be regarded as positions in time because they are linked with 'here' and 'there'.

More recently Achille Mbembe also mentions the intimate relationship between time and space. He argues that 'every age, including the postcolony, is in reality a combination of several temporalities' and that 'every age has contradictory significations to different actors.' He regards as of central interest 'that peculiar time that might be called the *time of existence and experience*, the *time of entanglement* ... This time is not a series but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones' (2001:15, 16).<sup>6</sup> Sarah Nuttall, who co-edited with Mbembe *Johannesburg – The Elusive Metropolis*, describes entanglement<sup>7</sup> as follows in the introduction to *Entanglement* (2009):

*Entanglement is a condition of being twisted together or entwined; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or a set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness.*

The concept of space can be identified with the space occupied by various peoples and interest groups, but also with the physical distance between occupied spaces.<sup>8</sup> Roosenschoon's eclectic style of writing is usually judged by the way in which he combines Western and African music.<sup>9</sup> But his music represents a much broader manifestation of bridging spaces, such as bridging the space between popular music and what was traditionally known as 'art music', between electronic music and traditionally produced music, between modernist and postmodernist strategies, etc. Furthermore, his music also links 'now' and 'then' (recalling Thomas Mann) when he travels back in time to use music from the past, linking the present with the past.

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<sup>5</sup> As in other works by Mann (for example, *Buddenbrooks* and *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*) music plays a prominent role in *The Magic Mountain*.

<sup>6</sup> I would like to thank Jaco Kruger (2013) from North-West University, South Africa, for his comments on reading the first draft of this essay and for drawing my attention to the work of Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall. But I take responsibility for possible errors in the final version.

<sup>7</sup> See point 4 below for a discussion of Roosenschoon's *Timbila* as a manifestation of entanglement of cultures within social space and entanglement of time and space in the music itself.

<sup>8</sup> The title of Roosenschoon's 2009 keynote address at the conference on the theme of *Music and Migration* organised by the New Zealand Musicological Society, namely 'Between Heaven and Earth: Diversity in the Music of Hans Roosenschoon', also reflects the concept of space.

<sup>9</sup> In African music the concept of eclecticism dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when black musicians created township music in the *marabi* style (Kruger 2013).

Hans Roosenschoon started his compositional studies in the aftermath of high modernism, a time in which originality of expression was the prime criterion. In the pursuit of uniqueness composers mixed local styles and traditions, genres and also music from various countries. Apart from non-Western music instruments, new instruments such as electronic instruments, modified instruments (prepared piano or electronically amplified string quartet) and computer music, electronic music and taped music created new modes of expression. Because of the cult of originality – every text is new – appreciation therefore had to rely on a close reading of the individual text. This high degree of self-reference complicates the formulation of general laws, which would have helped to establish a common musical practice. The fact that listeners did not have a common ‘musical language’ through which they can access and understand hermetic modernist music eventually estranged audiences. Specialized technical knowledge became a prerequisite in order to get access to the highly complex textures of this music and the accusation of elitism became a reality. From the middle of the 1970s modernism was on the decline, soon to be replaced by postmodernist notions of plurality.

## 2 The pluralism of postmodernism

Although postmodernism as a term (*post-modernismo*) was coined by the Spanish critic Federico de Onís in 1934 (Bertens and D’haen, 1988:12), postmodernism as a view of reality, as a way of thinking and doing or a *Zeitgeist* originated in America (Huysen, 1986:190). After postmodernism had first flourished in the 1960s in American literary theory, it was introduced in Europe by Jean-François Lyotard (1979) and Julia Kristeva (1980) (Bertens and D’haen, 1988:8). Jameson referred to this new world as follows:

*The place of culture and its consumption is radically different in the new global dispensation than it was in the modernist period, and one can register a different kind of transnational flow of imagery and music, as well as of information, along the networks of a new world system (2003:702).*

This ‘flow of imagery and music’ resulted in a pluralistic musical culture in which the boundaries between various kinds of spaces were eroded, a new culture that also accommodates pastiche, irony, parody,<sup>10</sup> intertextuality, fragmentation and even the absurd. ‘In absence of a cardinal principle or paradigm, we turn to play, interplay, dialogue, polylogue, allegory, self-reflection – in short, to irony. This irony assumes indeterminacy, multivalence; it aspires to clarity, the clarity of demystification, the pure light of absence.’ Irony expresses ‘the ineluctable recreations of mind in search of a truth that continually eludes it, leaving it with only an ironic access or excess of self-consciousness’ (Hassan, 1986:506).<sup>11</sup>

The scope of postmodernism is so comprehensive that I have decided to concentrate on the concept of pluralism and the dismantling of boundaries of various kinds in dealing with Hans Roosenschoon’s music. From the perspective of cultural theory, David Baldacchino argues that music as an art form ‘acts as a language that defies mono-culturism, because in its emergence, it is a form of universal knowledge characterized by a *plurality of originals*’. He defines plurality of originals as

<sup>10</sup> A first trace of parody in the music of Roosenschoon can be found in his parody of the then National Anthem in the third movement of his Sonatine for piano (1974).

<sup>11</sup> Ihab Hassan is a literary critic and the author of *Out of Egypt* (1986).

*a local terrain of knowledge, where the awareness of a universality of knowledge (enhanced by the plurality of different localities), is the initial drive towards the liberation of identity from its confined nature' (Baldacchino, 2001:189).*

In music the idea of pluralism manifested itself in an eclectic mixture of styles.

This was the time when Hans Roosenschoon was most productive as a composer. Postmodernism provided the composer with many ways in which he could express himself in a creative manner, an artistic environment that did not restrict his creativity. The result was an eclectic style of writing that many listeners find accessible.<sup>12</sup> His compositions are evidence of a finely wrought craftsmanship when he combines atonal modernist techniques (for example, those of Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki and György Ligeti)<sup>13</sup> with quotations from well-known music by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert, or when he uses these styles separately. He also taps into indigenous African music, folk music, popular melodies and electronic music.

This multifaceted nature of his style is already suggested in one of his earliest works, *Janus* for string orchestra (1973). Here he uses the *Volga Boat Song* and *What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor*, two melodies from two contrasting cultures. In another sense the use of *Janus* as title also suggests a double meaning that corresponds with that of the Roman god, who looks to the past as well as the future. As the god of beginnings, Roosenschoon's *Janus* represents the beginning of Roosenschoon's career. As Janus is the god with two faces, this work could also be seen as a prediction of the way in which his style would develop in future, namely the eclectic use of quotations from various cultures and earlier times, that is, using the music from spaces and times other than his own. The first work in which he uses African musical material is *Makietie* for brass quintet. With the incorporation of African elements, music from the Malay community (*Ghomma* 1980) and a setting of three poems by Adam Small<sup>14</sup> (*Kô, lat ons sing, O waar is Moses*, and *Ons het 'n hys gebou*<sup>15</sup> for equal voice choir, 1993) his music became less dissonant and more accessible.

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Du Plessis (1989:43), Boekkooi (1991), May (1992:782) and Viljoen (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Hans Roosenschoon comments as follows: 'Before the Polish Thaw (also known as Polish October of 1956) many works by Polish composers were censored for their modernity. But after 1956 the constraints were lifted and composers could liberate themselves from these constrictions. It was this freedom of musical expression that, to a certain extent, attracted me to the innovative works of Lutosławski and Penderecki, as well as Ligeti (in his case partly due to his miraculous escape to the West). What the "cultural police" (to borrow Hendrik Hofmeyr's reference discussed below) are trying to do with their so-called "new" and "truly African aesthetic", which they want to install in South Africa, is nothing other than what the communists enforced in the Eastern block countries just after World War II, a project that failed dismally' (2013b).

<sup>14</sup> Composer's comments: 'My setting to music of poems by the eminent South African poet Adam Small was the fulfilment of an ambition I had entertained for some time – before 1993 I tried in vain to persuade a number of organisations to get involved in such a project. Small's poetry was turned down at the time I was commissioned to write a work in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies (FAK) in 1979. However, I never regretted this because the text I chose in its place, *Ars Poetica* by NP van Wyk Louw, became a catalyst in establishing my style of the 80s' (2013b).

Roosenschoon enjoys having fun through music, something that some serious musicians, however, do not appreciate. Apart from quoting composers of the past, his electro-acoustic *If Music Be* (1984)<sup>16</sup> includes pop music, some ‘boeremusiek,’ sound effects from everyday life and even a commentary on a horse race. ‘Roosenschoon’s ability to draw and integrate material from a wide variety of sources is remarkable and his instinctive feeling for drama and comic relief is noteworthy’ (James, 1986:110). On the surface the message is ‘have fun, don’t take life so seriously’, but on a more serious note it could also signify ‘don’t give up’ (James, 1986:110).

One reviewer of Roosenschoon’s *Timbila* understands this less rigid approach to the work of art – Johan Cloete regards the climax of *Timbila*, ‘when 4 horns got to their feet and blared out Frère Jacques ... [as] a delicious example of self-mockery. “Don’t take everything so seriously”, Hans seemed to say to us here. Everything goes’ (1986, see also 1990). In spite of missing ‘mystery’ in the sound of Roosenschoon’s music, David Smith admires ‘his consistency of approach across widely separated genres, his orchestral handling which is highly sophisticated and the note of positive delight, even ebullience, that marks much of his writing’ (1995:61). But as a music theorist I had real fun when *Iconography* (1983) with its Lutosławskian controlled aleatory and Ligetian crystallization of cells from atonally stratified dissonant sound bands ends with a most traditional tonal harmonic progression in C minor!<sup>17</sup>

The year in which Roosenschoon composed *If Music Be* (1984) is also the year in which Russell Berman published his article on ‘Modern Art and Desublimation’ that later formed part of his book on cultural theory (Berman, 1989).<sup>18</sup> But I am sure that the composer had not read this article when he decided on the eclectic format for *If Music Be*, because he creates music by following his instincts and not prescribed ideas. This attitude shows an instinctive alignment with world trends, for example a postmodern distrust of the aesthetic which gave rise to the erosion of the barrier between pop art and what is traditionally known as ‘art music’. The aesthetic as a distinctive phenomenon was also weakened when so-called ‘classical music’ infiltrated public space, for example, when the slow movement of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 is heard in a supermarket as the theme from *Elvira Madigan*. The popularisation of works by the ‘great composers’ resulted in a demystification of so-called ‘high art’, which moved closer towards an upgraded ‘low art’.

<sup>15</sup> Translation: Come Let Us Sing, Oh Where is Moses, and We Have Built a House.

<sup>16</sup> Composer’s comments: ‘When Stephanus Muller (2004) deplores the modest demonstration by composers, and a general unawareness of the electroacoustic genre in SA, he fails to mention two works of importance, commissioned by the SABC, i.e. *Ballade van die bloeddorstige jagter* (1971) by Henk Badings, based on a poem by GA Watermeyer – in my opinion a more relevant work than Badings’s *Asterion*, which Muller does mention – and Peter Klatzow’s excellent work, *The Garden of Memories and Discoveries* (1975). Neither are Roelof Temmingh’s most important work in this genre *Radar* (1982) and *Abantobomlambo* (1987) by Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph cited. Curiously, there is also no mention of my electroacoustic works. So what electroacoustic desert exactly is being “deplored”?’ (2013b).

<sup>17</sup> Composer’s comment: ‘The work quotes from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. This is the closing cadence of the final chorus: “Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder”’ (2013b).

<sup>18</sup> Because of lack of space, the category of the sublime is a topic and a debate for another occasion. A basic point to consider, however, is that as far as musicology is concerned, theorists have nothing to speculate about if there is no music.

### 3 Connecting spaces

The second half of the twentieth century had to deal with the legacy of a modernist culture that expressed itself in terms of rigid categories. The binary nature of two opposing agents provided fertile ground for deconstruction; to list but a few of these binaries: high – low art, arts – crafts, art – technology, professional – amateur, local – global, high – low class, presence – absence, central – marginal, nature – culture, positive – negative, life – death, conscious – unconscious, etc.<sup>19</sup> ‘The absence of a nuanced middle ground emphasises the rigidity of the two agents. Ignoring connections between fields of investigation reinforces the boundaries between the various fields’ (Spies 2006:19).

The efforts to bridge the spaces between various cultures and various disciplines resulted not only in an upsurge of interdisciplinary studies but also in connecting art with life. ‘The postmodern flaunting of borders between disciplines and spheres of life is purposefully at work here: the postmodern artist is no bohémien anymore, but a social agent’ (Snyman, 1995:70).

Already in 1938 Theodor Adorno wrote that ‘[t]he diverse spheres of music must be thought of together. Their static separation, which certain caretakers of culture have ardently sought ... the neat parcelling out of music’s social field of force is illusionary’ (1991:34).<sup>20</sup> It is the static separation of worlds of music that Roosenschoon tried to bridge when he experimented with the combination of African and Western music in his *Timbila* (1985), the composer being regarded by Thomas Pooley as the ‘first composer’ to experiment with the integration of ‘black and white performers on the same stage’ (Pooley, 2010/2011:56).<sup>21</sup> Roosenschoon strives for interaction when he asks: ‘Is it not pretentious to try and define these categories as boundaries? If indeed they exist, is it sincere to identify with one or the other exclusively? Are we dealing here with a musical apartheid or are we part of an experience which embraces multiplicity and evolution?’ (in Levy, 1986:112).<sup>22</sup>

Almost ten years later the editors of *Intercultural Music* write in the first volume of the series that they ‘are concerned about terms referring to musics of particular cultures as “music of

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<sup>19</sup> South African ethnomusicology also reveals a categorical differentiation when it ‘reveals a tendency either towards music-making as cultural pattern or the intricacies of musical style’ (Kruger, 2006:37).

<sup>20</sup> This posthumous collection of Adorno’s essays (he died in 1969) also deals with mass culture, the culture industry, culture and administration, communication, popular culture and intellectual life.

<sup>21</sup> Apparently Pooley does not favour searching for a meeting point between Western and African music, because he describes ‘the attempts to integrate black and white performers on the same stage’ as ‘[f]ar more jarring than the works of Volans and Grové’ (2010/2011:56).

<sup>22</sup> Composer’s comments: ‘In his PhD thesis, *Sounding Margins: Musical Representations of White South Africa* (2000), Stephanus Muller refers to this article by Michael Levy but, in my opinion, very obviously and conveniently omits my statement about the equality of musics simply because it does not suit his arguments, that of problematizing the dialectics apparent in the works of South African composers who incorporated indigenous elements in one way or another. By way of one-sided arguments, Muller discredits those composers who actively created during the apartheid years and who were realigning themselves with regards to their African context, leading to a complete misrepresentation of what my intentions in 1986 were, i.e. avoiding polarization of music categories (2000:26, 30)’ (2013b).

Third World countries” or “ethnic music” that tend to imply a schism that simply does not exist. Unfortunately the idea of separateness or marginalization still persists whenever these terms are used because they create a dual tier system’ (Kimberlin & Euba, 1995:5). Categorisation may be regarded as an essential epistemological tool, as Beverly Parker points out:

*We need to see music in its varied contexts, and the use of categories is one way to refer to a context quickly. However, it is important to remember that the naming of such categories creates within us a predilection to experience music in a particular way (2008:68).*

Already in 1992 Kofi Agawu<sup>23</sup> had a problem with the separation of African and European epistemologies (1992:260):

*The insistence on an African epistemology, distinct from European epistemology, but given in European language, shows no sign of abating in ethnomusicological circles. ... To insist that African scholars think African thoughts is an exclusionary tactic, harboring the implicit claim that the African is only capable of – or allowed – one style of discourse, and that a departure from this represents a betrayal of sorts.*

Ten years later, as keynote speaker at the annual congress of the South African Musicological Society (2002), Agawu asserts that the distinction between ‘European’ and ‘African’ modes of thinking and hearing ‘originates not in Africa, but in European thought; there is no “native” way of hearing music. Ethnomusicologists ... have too long been the self-appointed guardians of African musical knowledge’ (in Walton, 2001:84).<sup>24</sup> In 2003 Agawu again emphasises this point in his book *Representing African Music*: ‘Let us, therefore, get away from simple binary divisions of the world, the cultism that wishes to see a categorical difference between Western knowledge and African knowledge’ (2003:196-7).

Although Christine Lucia seems to be aware of Kofi Agawu’s views regarding the polarising of methodologies when she refers to ‘African music’ as ‘that troublesome creature ... (never to be innocently used again, post-Agawu)’, she nevertheless asks for the development of ‘a new kind of African aesthetic, a new basis for evaluation and critique of new compositions coming out of Africa, that is precisely what school children (I would have thought) need’ (Lucia, 2002:70, 71).<sup>25</sup> The function of categorised knowledge in the pursuit of understanding a

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<sup>23</sup> Kofi Agawu who was born in Ghana is currently a Professor in Music Theory and Ethnomusicology at Princeton University.

<sup>24</sup> The fact that Walton’s report predates the year of the congress (2002) is because the 2001 issue was published after the congress.

<sup>25</sup> Composer’s comments: ‘Christine Lucia argues for a “misreading” (her terminology) on my part with reference to an arrangement of Michael Moerane’s choral work, *Barali ba Jerusalema* (in Olwage 2008). Why, in the course of her discussion, so much attention is given to an arrangement by a ‘white professor’ of a ‘black’ (my italics) composer’s work, whilst no attempt is made at contextualizing the general style of the arranger (Roosenschoon), begs the question. Although she misrepresents the work as being for tenor and piano – she was referring to an outdated vocal score instead of the orchestral version – and shows ignorance about some important detail around the circumstances of its creation, her comment that I “misread” the original is at least to the point. In fact, in everything I do – where apparitions from the past appear in my music – I deliberately misread these texts for I never pretend to give a purist rendition of something. Therefore, I propagate idiosyncratic, albeit non-authoritative,

complex issue may also be at the bottom of David Smith's statement that within a plural music culture the divergent paths lack 'a centre, a sense of school or national identity' (1995:60). Are the arguments for an 'African aesthetic' and a 'school or national identity' viable in a pluralist postmodern society that questions the idea of the aesthetic?<sup>26</sup>

Because categorisation, neat packaging and labelling provide an easy way to understand and make sense of reality, it is not strange, but also unfair in the light of Agawu's views, that interviewers and musicologists expect Hans Roosenschoon to classify his style of writing: 'Are you an African composer?' Although he does not regard himself as an African composer (Geldenhuys, 2005:364), in 1986 he describes three options available to a composer in South Africa (Levy, 1986:112). These options are also quoted by Levy (1992) and mentioned in the composer's inaugural lecture of 1998. Roosenschoon's final formulation appears in the chapter 'Keeping Our Ears to the Ground: Cross-culturalism and the Composer in South Africa, "Old" and "New"' (1999a:267-8):

*It seems possible that, through an upsurge in cross-cultural endeavour taking place in South Africa, a new aesthetic of ethnically integrated music may be evolved ... Personally, I have maintained that there are three choices open to the composer in Africa. First, one may wish to remain faithful to one's European heritage and distil one's inspiration from contemporary Western trends. ... Secondly, one may decide on a purist approach to one's African roots, and go with ethnomusicology. Thirdly, there is the option of cross-culturalism, to a greater or lesser degree, though whether one can ultimately do equal justice to both worlds remains, aesthetically and musically, a rather moot point.*

But it is clear that he is wary of the idea of categorisation when he says that "it is not really an issue of different categories or a blend of categories, for perhaps they all belong to but one world – MUSIC' (Levy, 1986:112). In 2003 'the blending of African and Western forms can still be seen as a process that is in an experimental phase' (Herbst *et al.*, 2003:149). It appears as if the experimental nature of an intercultural blend has been accepted in the field of musical creation, because when Levy reported on the *Kevin Volans Composers' Seminar: Composing in South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, he noted that

*the perennial question of the nature and/or desirability of cross-culturalism between Western and African musics in art-music composition in South Africa surfaced again, though it was clear that composers now take it more easily in their stride, and that it is no longer such a vexed issue (2002:86).*

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interpretation and believe in the merit of the ambiguity that results: certainly, I am not giving in to the dictates – especially if they are ideological – of some individual who believes he/she is speaking on behalf of a so-called new collective' (2013b).

<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere I have shown in a brief overview of musical aesthetics in the twentieth century that aesthetic understanding came to be associated with 'class privilege and the traditional alliance of sublimity and power. ... It is, therefore, not surprising that the past two decades show a loss of confidence in the aesthetic as a category' (Spies, 2006:33).

#### 4 Bridging the space between African and Western music

At the première of Roosenschoon's *Timbila*<sup>27</sup> at the Grahamstown Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts in 1985 members of the audience were baffled when at the climax of this work the four horn players stood up and played *Frère Jacques*. For them it did not make sense – what happened to aesthetic experience and unity of style? Is it ethically acceptable to link a Western children's song with the Chopi music?<sup>28</sup>

If Roosenschoon had not known the Chopi and their music (Muller 2002), how did it happen that he decided to use this music in the commissioned work for the Grahamstown Festival of the Arts? There is sufficient material on the origin and reception of *Timbila* for an article on its own.<sup>29</sup> What follows is therefore a very concise version. De Oude Meester Foundation for the Performing Arts commissioned Hans Roosenschoon to write an orchestral work for the 1985 Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown. He wanted to incorporate African music and asked Amampondo's co-operation in the project. However, it was the composer's impression that the group's white manager advised them not to become involved, because Roosenschoon would only use their fame to enhance his own image and that he is going to steal their music (Muller 2002).<sup>30</sup> When he told the festival committee that he was stuck because Amampondo showed no interest, they put him in touch with Andrew Tracey, Director of the International Library of African Music at Rhodes University. The correspondence between Tracey and the composer is available, but the outcome was that Tracey advised Roosenschoon to use the music of the Chopi, more specifically a group of xylophone players from the south of Mozambique. Tracey specifically advised Roosenschoon to use the *Mtsitso* (1973) composed by Venâncio Mbande 'for his tribal chief, whose seat is at the town of Kenge' in the south of Mozambique (Levy, 1992).<sup>31</sup> Born in 1930, Mbande left Mozambique at the age of 18 to work on the gold mines in Johannesburg. In 1956 he began his own *timbila* orchestra for which he also composed music. He joined the Wildebeestfontein North Mine in 1978, where he worked as a chef in the kitchen.

It is at this platinum mine in Rustenburg that the composer visited him in order to discuss the possibility of co-operation with the *Timbila ta Veltebisi*.

*The timbila dance is one of Africa's most complex and demanding dance/music forms, the result of years of dedication and preparation by the composers and performers, and in another sense of many centuries of refinement of style, form and instruments. The timbila dance was always associated with political power, formerly having been the prerogative of chiefs only. ...A composer is free to comment on any topic of current*

<sup>27</sup> *Timbila* is the plural of *mbila*, which refers to a key of the xylophone.

<sup>28</sup> In *To the tune of* (2007), a flute concerto, Roosenschoon uses an Afrikaans children's birthday song 'Veels geluk lieve maatjie' (also known as 'Afrikaners is plesierig') and 'Kom dans Klaradyn'. The titles of the four movements are *Tune In To*, *Which Tune?*, *Tuneful* and *Fine-tune* (Roosenschoon 2013b).

<sup>29</sup> See Roosenschoon's description of the circumstances leading to *Timbila* and its performance (1999b).

<sup>30</sup> '[E]k gaan net op ... die golf van hulle roem ry en ek gaan hulle musiek steel.'

<sup>31</sup> Moreira Chonguica of AMIZAVA (Amigos de Zavala) describes Mbande as '[o]ne of the most prominent timbila masters still active' (2012).

*interest, social, political, or philosophical without fear of retribution. Songs composed on the mine naturally reflect conditions and events on the mine. (Tracey, 1985a:61)*

The composer's 'idea was to fuse together – and yet juxtapose – the two contrasted musics, by combining their instruments and therefore their sounds, in one work. (Listen to *Timbila* on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/ARymzJV4mqk>).

'*Timbila* is the name given to the Chopi xylophones; but the word can also suggest to me to strike a note. It is with this supplementary meaning in mind that I have been guided in my approach to the work. It is an attempt by one world of sound to embrace another, searching for and hoping to strike points where they touch' (1985b:60). The second part of Mbande's *Mtsitso Kenge* provided the common ground that the composer was searching for. It has a prominent *do-re-mi-do* motif, which the composer regarded as common ground, a common denominator that symbolises a 'coming together' of African and Western music. In practice, this motif has a dual purpose in Roosenschoon's composition, namely to function as a leitmotif but also to act as a kind of signalling device facilitating the alignment of the symphony orchestra and the Chopi players.<sup>32</sup> In preparation for the première on 12 July 1985 the composer wrote to Mbande as follows: '[T]he work is constructed in such a way that basically, apart from some minor changes, your *Mtsitso* is played as usual' (1985a).

This *do-re-mi-do* motif corresponds with the opening of *Frère Jacques* and, because 'it is well known', Roosenschoon decided to incorporate it in *Timbila* (Roosenschoon, 2009). However, academia attributed all kinds of sinister intentions to the composer, for example, that he regards the Chopi music as 'child's play' (mentioned by Tracey, 1985c).<sup>33</sup> What was not generally known at the time, and most probably also not by the composer,<sup>34</sup> is that the melody of *Frère Jacques* has been sung in various African languages, namely Tshivenda, Sesotho, Setswana and Isixhosa, and that the song arrived in the Limpopo Valley towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Frère Jacques* came to South Africa through groups of immigrants and the Venda adults tell how they learnt these songs as nursemaids and labourers, or as children of labourers on the farms. Jaco Kruger and Liesl van der Merwe used the song as an example of 'songs with wings'<sup>35</sup> to illustrate the concept of cultural redefinition. The lyrics<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Discrepancies with regard to tuning are set out in Roosenschoon (1999b:291; 2009).

<sup>33</sup> David Smith, for example, describes the dilemma in a review of a CD of Roosenschoon's work as follows: 'To consider these works primarily within an African "matrix" may seem to attach too much importance to their packaging. However, it is precisely their packaging that identifies them as part of a broader current of feeling, or (perhaps) anxiety: the propriety of artistic *rapprochement* with some sort of African material, if you are a white-and-Western composer' (1995:59). The debate about ownership, opportunism, appropriation and other ethical issues still seems to be going on unabatedly. See also Barker (1996), Bräuninger (1998), Landy (2003), Lucia (2002), Muller (2001) and Pooley (2010/2011).

<sup>34</sup> Composer's comment: 'I was totally unaware of this. Serendipity?' (2013b).

<sup>35</sup> 'This concept derives from Nelson Mandela's description of stories as growing wings and becoming the property of others' (Marguerite Gordon's words in the preface of *Madiba Magic: Nelson Mandela's Favourite Stories for Children* (2002) cited in Kruger & Van der Merwe, 2012:68).

<sup>36</sup> See Kruger & Van der Merwe (2012) for the lyrics in Tshivenda, Sesotho, Setswana and Isixhosa.

*point to shared experiences across social divides: education and poverty are themes that connect most versions. Although change also involves the shedding of some local forms of knowledge, it is clear ... that time-honoured social values are promoted in new cultural forms suited to contemporary experience' (Kruger & Van der Merwe, 2012:69, 76).*

The question is: Did Venâncio Mbande know *Frère Jacques* when he wrote the *Mtsitso* that Hans Roosenschoon used in *Timbila*?

When Tracey received the score from the composer before the concert, he wrote to the composer: 'Just opened your score. It looks absolutely magnificent ... As long as everybody finds it fun' (1985b). However, it appears as if the idea of 'having fun' did not materialise at the performance (Tracey, 1985c):

*The two systems ... are undeniably incompatible; this was obviously one of your basic problems. ... I only want to mention, hesitantly, one other point, which is that I found that the horn quote of Frère Jacques raised undesirable associations for most listeners and clapped a wry smile on their faces at the moment when they should have been most elated.*

A crucial point is, however, whether the composer achieved the aims that he set out, namely 'an attempt by one world of sound to embrace another, searching for – and hoping to strike – points where they touch.' By creating 'an "answering" mode in which a do-re-me-do motif becomes like the earth's gravity ...', this structure represents a narrative on the subject of flowing together towards a shared aim' (Roosenschoon, 2009).

Judging from the rest of Tracey's second letter quoted above (1985c), it seems as if he had actually noticed this effect of progression and a pull towards synchronization, which means that the composer has indeed succeeded in his objective:

*On listening to it again now the whole work seems to take on a quite different meaning. It has become an allegory about the difficulties of co-operation and the joy on the rare occasions when it works. The point of the whole work now becomes much clearer to me because of the excitement that is generated towards the middle: first we do not know, then we have severe doubts, and the intense hope, that the two orchestras will manage to get their CDEC phrases to coincide.*

However, when Tracey feels that 'the tension and doubt should gradually become an explosion when the phrases are showing increasing signs that they might come together, and a HUGE celebration when they really are together' (1985c) it implies that he is expecting a happy ending. It may be that at this point the expectations of an African and a Western predisposition do not synchronise. From an African perspective based on the notion that 'musical performance is a performance of life' (Kruger, 2013), the absence of a 'huge celebration' may be disturbing. But from a Western point of view that regards music more as a listening experience in which the unfolding of the music in time could also communicate various meanings, the perceived absence of a celebration may be regarded as a reflection of life.

Listening to the work as a whole may lead to a more nuanced understanding, other than an understanding prescribed by the rigid simplistic binary opposition of Western – African music. By considering only the surface of the music, that which is directly perceived, *Frère Jacques* takes up only about half a minute of the time duration of 11 minutes and 29 seconds (according to the CD cover). The rest of the work consists of reworkings of the *do-re-mi-do* motif that Roosenschoon borrowed from the *Mtsitso Kenge* by Venâncio Mbande. If so little

musical space is taken up by *Frère Jacques*, it appears to me as if the issue was blown up out of proportion in order to suit the preconceived agendas of some critics. If one listens in a conventional way, that is with pitch as the main point of reference, then *Frère Jacques* could be regarded as the main point of arrival. But if one listens to the juxtaposition of various kinds of textures and timbres, to the skilful projection of the Chopi motif against various curtains of sound, and to the interplay of dynamics that emphasize the spatial character of the music, then the Chopi motif does not relate to a children's song, but it actually becomes the foreground in an exciting experience of a painting in sound.

Reviewers who were positive about the concert include Thys Odendaal of *Beeld*, who regards *Timbila* certainly as the culmination of the musical activities at the festival, a gripping experience, mainly because Roosenschoon joined diverse forces rather than bringing them into conflict with one another (1985).<sup>37</sup> Barbara van Wyk headlined her review of the concert '*Timbila* the highlight as concert disappoints' and describes the performance of Roosenschoon's work as 'an emotional experience' (1985). David Stone, Artistic Director to the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, writes as follows to C.T. Warburton, the manager of the Impala platinum mine in Rustenburg: 'The piece leads the way in showing what can be done in synthesising Western orchestral style and the instrumentalists of South Africa: its performance was an important milestone in artistic terms' (1985).

In January 1986 a radio programme on KPFA-FM in Berkeley, California dealt with South African music and *Timbila* was included along with music by Peter Klatzow.<sup>38</sup> The producer of the program, Harold Clark (1985), afterwards wrote to Hans Roosenschoon:

*Your music was received well by colleagues! ... We had many calls during the actual music and interview plays. Some of these calls were hostile to the fact that such a listeners' supported station as KPFA would play music of 'white South Africans' during the current call for boycotting South African-made products, etc. in California. Others welcomed the music and some found the interviews pointedly amazing that people could speak so openly against certain aspects of the establishment arts and government organizations ... It was a very controversial program for KPFA to do and this all made it the more exciting.*

After a performance of *Timbila* in Cape Town in April 1986, Johan Cloete wrote in the *Cape Argus*:

*Ethnomusicologists I know hate the work. They call it "dishonest" and a "crib", but, I must say, I enjoyed it. It is probably more of a fun piece than anything else, at least if one is to judge by the treatment of the major third that shapes all the pitch material (1986).*

Under the heading 'Chopi experiment disappoints' Deon Irish wrote in the *Cape Times* that '[w]hat Roosenschoon has done has probably more sociological – even political – than musical significance'. The reviewer had a problem with balance and cohesion because the Chopi xylophones are essentially outdoor instruments that blend poorly with a symphony orchestra (1986). Acknowledging the problems with the balance between the two groups of

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<sup>37</sup> 'Hans Roosenschoon se nuwe werk *Timbila* moet sekerlik as die hoogtepunt van die musiekbedrywighede beskou word. ... *Timbila* is 'n aangrypende ervaring.'

<sup>38</sup> In 1992 the BBC's Radio 3 presented a review of Roosenschoon's CD '*Mantis and Other African-Inspired Works*' (Bond 1992).

instruments, Roosenschoon wrote to Christian Tiemeyer, Music Director of the Cedar Rapids Symphony Orchestra in the USA, who conducted the first performance: ‘Time will tell whether or not this was a justified experiment’ (1985c). But what is certain is that *Timbila* will be remembered as the first opportunity for a Western Symphony orchestra to perform on the same stage with a group of Chopi xylophone players and also an opportunity in which two cultures got to know each other, and that during the years of apartheid.

In the ensuing debate about opportunism, identity, cultural ownership, exploitation and plagiarism<sup>39</sup> not much was written about Venâncio Mbande and his Chopi players.<sup>40</sup> But he and his players occupy another space on the continent of Africa than we do, and the history of their xylophone playing goes much further back in time than the official settlement at the Cape.<sup>41</sup> The tradition of xylophone orchestras was first described in 1562 by the Portuguese Father André Fernandes (Tracey, n.d.). In August 2012 Moreira Chonguica wrote about the tradition of the xylophone orchestras of the district of Zavala, ‘the cultural heartland of the Chopi people’ in Mozambique:<sup>42</sup>

*In August, as every year for the past 18 years, the timbilas of Zavala will again fill the air with their powerful and mesmerizing melodies. M’sabo, a traditional ceremony of over 200 timbilas to welcome leaders, has been revived in a smaller form with the annual timbila festival organised by AMIZAVA (Amigos de Zavala) during the last weekend of August, [and] takes place in the amphitheatre in the centre of Quissico, with a breath-taking backdrop of glittering blue lagoons framed by rolling green dune forests.*

## 5 Dealing with the space between cultures

In 1989 the importance of dealing with various cultures, not only in everyday life or in art but also in the world of music studies, manifested itself in the founding of *The Centre for Intercultural Music Arts* (CIMA).<sup>43</sup> The National Sound Archive (British Library) hosted CIMA’s first biennial international symposium in London in the following year. In the first volume of CIMA’s mouthpiece *Intercultural Music* (1995), the two editors, Cynthia Tse

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Barker (1996), Bräuningner (1998), Landy (2003), Lucia (2002), Muller (2001) and Smith (1995).

<sup>40</sup> Composer’s comments: ‘When two composers collaborate as Venâncio Mbande and I did in the case of *Timbila* (1985), the question of authorship arises. Naturally, as a member of the board of SAMRO for nearly 15 years, I was sensitive in this regard. It was obvious to me that what was required needed to go beyond the mere dedication: “to Venâncio Mbande and his Chopi TIMBILA”, which appears on the title page of the full score. Because Mbande’s *Mtsitso Kenge* was performed in its original form (although slightly altered) soon after I wrote *Timbila*, I registered the work with SAMRO both in my name and Venâncio Mbande’s. So, in terms of author’s rights I do not claim exclusivity to its creation’ (2013b).

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Tracey’s description of the Chopi players, their leader and their instruments is available on the internet (Tracey n.d.). See also Chonguica (2012).

<sup>42</sup> Moreira Chonguica, originally from Mozambique, is an ethnomusicologist, a songwriter, an award-winning producer and a saxophonist (Chonguica 2011).

<sup>43</sup> As one of the foundation members of the Council of Management of CIMA, John Blacking played an important part in the launching of the organisation (Kimberlin & Euba 1999:3).

Kimberlin and Akin Euba, refer to the 'tremendous increase in intercultural music activity throughout the world' that is caused by 'the changing political landscape, historical events, and technological advances affecting human societies in the last few decades' (1995:1). In this volume J.J. Kwabena Nketia describes interculturalism as

*'the process of identifying with or sharing in the heritage of other cultures with a view to broadening one's cultural horizon or one's capacity to understand and appreciate differences in modes of expression (1995:6, my non-italics).*

However, it appears as if reviewers found it difficult to 'understand and appreciate' the *product* of the intercultural project as a new mode of expression. The new editor of *Intercultural Music*, Robert Mawuena Kwami, for example, raised two questions: 'who decides whether an intercultural composition is "good or bad", and what criteria are used?' (2003:13). Ethical matters such as cultural ownership and exploitation complicated the issue further. In Volume 5 Leigh Landy<sup>44</sup> asks 'Why are we victims of other people's musical typologies?', referring to some ethnomusicologists and anthropologists who 'have said that contemporary art music composers gratuitously steal pieces or borrow musical elements from other cultures' (2003:104, 103).<sup>45</sup>

In his inaugural lecture Hans Roosenschoon makes the same kind of point, though not couched in such explicit terms: for a composer of Western art music who borrows from various sources, it is almost impossible to assimilate and at the same time pretend to be a purist. In spite of the various possibilities that the composer has at hand, creating a work represents a very personal statement. It does not contain facts and truths that can be verified.<sup>46</sup> I believe that, in the absence of a constative dimension, music communicates by means of its very essence, namely as a performative art.

When it comes to bridging the space between Western and African music, one gets the impression that there is less tolerance of freedom of expression amongst musicologists of Western orientation who base their critiques of Roosenschoon's music on a monolithic sociological base than amongst our African colleagues. Meki Nzewi argues for a more inclusive approach when he says that

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<sup>44</sup> Leigh Landy is the chairman of the Music, Technology and Innovation Research Group at De Montfort University (Leicester, UK). Several of his articles deal with cultural diversity in the arts (Kwami 2003:308).

<sup>45</sup> The title of his essay is 'Borrowing or stealing? Celebration or global village? Interculturalism in contemporary music from a composer's point of view.' The notion of borrowing is of course not new – the *Rondo alla Turca* by Mozart immediately comes to mind. Apart from the fact that composers use folk melodies in their compositions (for example Beethoven, Bartók and Britten), Gregorian chants of the Middle Ages represent the earliest examples of musical borrowing. Here the new work and its source can be compared because both are notated (Burkholder, 2001:9). Peter Burkholder's annotated bibliography shows a comprehensive list of sources that deal with musical borrowing – for example, the entries under the letter A alone numbers 62 titles (2003).

<sup>46</sup> 'Na my mening is dit vir 'n komponis van Westerse kunsmusiek, en wat van verskeie bronne leen, feitelik onmoontlik om te assimileer en terselfdertyd te pretendeer om 'n puris te wees. ... En selfs nadat die komponis sy pad gebaan het deur die prosesse en moontlikhede wat so pas beskryf is, bly die skepping van sy werk 'n baie persoonlike stelling. Dit bevat nie feite en waarhede wat gekontroleer kan word nie' (Roosenschoon, 1998).

*while melodies could have cultural peculiarities, melody alone does not make the cultural authenticity of a composition nor does an isolated, structurally inconsistent insertion of a rhythmic pattern that may be peculiarly African. ... [N]o rhythmic element or motif in isolation is culturally exclusive (1999:203, 213).*

In the first volume of *Intercultural Music* and under the heading 'Creative Response to Interculturalism' Nketia writes:

*It seems inevitable that creative musicians on their part, should respond to intercultural musical encounters in their own terms, for differences in musical cultures arouse not only their aesthetic sensibility but also their creative imagination. ... Thus the ultimate test of new art music that draws on African resources is not only the extent to which it truly reflects "the depth and originality that is Africa's" but also the clarity of its intercultural communication and aesthetic merit (1995:222, 237).*

The reaction of Professor Njabulo S Ndebele (then Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the North) to Roosenschoon's *Timbila* is also more nuanced when he refers to the potential response of 'black' audiences (1993).

*Some might see the experiment as yet another assault on 'black' culture. Others might see it as an example of the increasing cultural ascendance of indigenous artistic forms. Others might see it as simply an incomprehensible tradition of music they know very little of. But chances are that very few will see it as 'African' music. Meanwhile, for myself, exposed to several musical traditions, including the Western classical tradition, your experiment is exciting and worth pursuing further.*

However, South African composer Hendrik Hofmeyr does not experience the same kind of fairness amongst South African musicologists (2004):

*In the unnuanced world view of the cultural police there is place for only one fetish: the 'relevant'.<sup>47</sup> Their law is that art must reflect society – society as defined by them as amateur sociologists, of course – and those that break this law are cast into the outer darkness, branded as 'old-fashioned', 'irrelevant', 'reactionary', 'inaccessible', 'elitist' or 'eurocentric'. Generalisation is used by them as a weapon to destroy those who think for themselves, and to further their own careers within the ranks of the cultural police.*

According to Martina Viljoen, music can be reduced to a mere theoretical construct 'which serves but one politically correct interpretative agenda' (Viljoen, 2011:25).<sup>48</sup> Reporting on the 2011 congress of the South African Society for Research in Music (SASRIM) James Davies also complains about a rigidity that reinforces the drawing of boundaries and the opposition of binary oppositions (2010:194):

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<sup>47</sup> In terms of this 'fetish' music is assessed 'on the basis of how literally it reflects the social conditions in which it was written; if one were to apply this criterion to Beethoven, "Wellington's Victory" would be his most important work' (Hofmeyr 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Viljoen refers to Willemien Froneman's paper entitled 'The riches of embarrassment: On traversing hegemonies' delivered at the 2010 IMS-SASRIM Congress. '[B]oeremusiek [word] ... uitsluitlik as subjektiewiteit (verleentheid van identiteit) benader. Hiermee bedoel ek dat die onderwerp ook enigiets anders wat Afrikaners tans in verleentheid oor hul identiteit stel, kon wees. Boeremusiek is hier nie "musiek" nie, maar slegs 'n teoretiese konstruk wat één politieke korrekte interpretatiewe agenda dien.'

*Things boil down – too predictably – to questions of identity. My question is whether this should always be the default position. ... Attending closely to something other than your own immediate convictions about identity can be usefully surprising of course. But such attentiveness may also threaten the searing purity of those classes of music everyone knows to romanticize, or otherwise to damn. The vocabulary of liberation-speak, unfortunately, falls too precipitously into triumphalism, and by-now tired stories of oppression and liberation, old and new, colonial and postcolonial, yesterday and today, evil and good, impure and pure.*

The notion of identity is a complex issue that cannot be dealt with properly in this article. But I would like to refer to another form of categorisation in David Baldacchino's article 'Contemporary Music and the Question of Aesthetic Identity'. He differentiates between cultural identity and aesthetic identity and the implications of this distinction. For him, cultural identity is identified with boundaries whereas 'aesthetic identity transcends cultural boundaries and accommodates plurality.' Plurality, again, defies standardization of aesthetic sensibilities into a single identity (2001:187). But are musical scholars in South Africa sensitive to the effect of plurality on life and in the world of music (not to mention opinions other than your own) when formulating personal points of view? In 1998 Jürgen Bräuninger argued that there was a need for 'a new breed of ethno/musicologists who are well versed in western and African musics of traditional, neo-traditional and popular music genres, who are not afraid to ask uncomfortable questions – questions concerning representation, meaning, economics, appropriation, politics, and ideology and who analyse musical texts rigorously' (1998:10). Is it humanly possible for one person to be an authority in all these fields and who also has the skills to 'analyse musical texts rigorously'?<sup>49</sup> The problem is that the rigorous analysis of a musical text is more or less eliminated by exclusively context-driven studies with the result that one wonders whether there is still a 'text'.

## 6 What happened to the 'voice' of music?

The erosion of the text, and eventually also the musical text, started when the French literary critic Roland Barthes proclaimed the death of the author in 1967. He focuses on language and the reception of the text when he argues in his well-known essay 'The Death of the Author' that the text must be liberated from the author's intentions and identity (that is his/her political views, religion, ethnic origin, etc.) in order for us to understand the multiple meanings that the text can generate. According to Barthes,

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<sup>49</sup> Composer's comment: 'During the last 20 years we have seen a certain breed of musicologists acting in the role of judges and self-appointed custodians of South African music more than ever before' (2013b). Hendrik Hofmeyr refers to this group of people as the 'cultural police': 'Members of the cultural police have seen fit to attack me for daring not to subscribe to their notion of what represents (depending on their own agendas) an Afrikaans, or South African, or African style. I suppose it is understandable that they should be irritated with my "failure" to neatly label myself for their convenience. Those who wish to construct a "grand narrative" love stylistic schools (generally consisting of one true original and many followers) as it makes their job so much easier' (cited in Bezuidenhout, 2007:20).

*a text is ... a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. ... The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost.*

He concludes his essay with the statement: 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author' (Barthes, 1977:146, 148).

In music, as a reaction to the self-referential nature of the modernist style, the focus shifted to the listener as the locus of the meaning in a work, or more specifically 'in a text', as that came to be the correct word to use.<sup>50</sup> The emphasis shifted from the intentions of the composer to the interpretation of the listener.<sup>51</sup>

The reconceptualization of author and reader in an attempt to understand how texts and readers 'produce' meaning was perceived as a sacrifice of the text itself, as Russell Berman pointed out in 1984:

*The work of art which once appeared to be the final enclave of truth and resistance has been dismantled, and the end of the work means the end of art, understood in terms of the traditional bourgeois institution (Berman 1989:98).*

In 1985 Carter Wheelock showed how the stories of Jorge Luis Borges (*El Informe de Brodie* of 1970 and also other stories) imply that 'the relationship between the author and the reader of fiction requires their cooperation in the "murder" of the text.' Wheelock argues that the reader

*must abandon the notion that the intention of a body of language is to present a subject or to impart any kind of objective reality beyond the presence and function of the text as a creative process. ... What Borges is saying is that the reader of fiction is not looking for a text's agreement with reality but for completeness of idea, the fullness and coherence of his own mental furniture (1985:151-152, my non-italics).*

In 1982 Wheelock had specifically asked Borges whether *El Evangelio Segfin Marcos*, which deals with the young medical student Espinosa, 'can be read as a tale about the crucifixion of a literary text.' Borges said, 'Yes, you are right.' Wheelock concludes that the Brodie stories 'are stories about imagination [and] that the text does not finally say anything' (1985:155, 160-161).

The exclusive concern with the context of the music and the fact that music is being used to fit the musicologist's fashionable preconceived agenda resulted in a neglect of 'the music itself' (another expression frowned upon by what was originally known as the "New Musicology"). 'Why, then, should music sound but not speak?' asks the leading cultural theorist and author of *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Lawrence Kramer (2005:63). In 'an essay with a thesis or, to speak more plainly, with an axe to grind' he deplores

*the marginal standing of music in the larger critical enterprise ... Music is at best a silent partner. The attitude underlying this silence is plain enough. It is the assumption*

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<sup>50</sup> According to Fredric Jameson, in the postmodern age there could be no more 'works', only 'texts' (Pasler 2001:215).

<sup>51</sup> What I find ironic is the fact that some musicologists still cling to the notion of a composer's intentions by ascribing to a composer a supposed agenda without proper substantiation.

*that music itself is silent on matters of history and criticism.... [It] has stubborn roots, roots that are both conceptual and ideological. The conceptual persistence is shown by a bias that even inflects the prominent recent trends in musicology that have moved to embrace thickly described contextual relationships. With a few exceptions, most of the studies produced by this cultural musicology have used historical knowledge and critical theory to illuminate music, not the other way around (Kramer 2005:61–62).*

To support his thesis, he uses Beethoven's *The Ruins of Athens*, a piece that is 'short and simple but rich in contextual links ... to learn something about a moment in history by thinking about a sample of its music' (2005:65, 64). In the discussion of nine pages, more than half of them dealing with the music, Kramer provides a fascinating historical narrative based on information that the music 'itself' provides.

In 1999 Johan Fornäs wrote in the new journal *Culture Machine* that

*cultural studies keeps on learning from texts, even when this interpretation makes detours through an explanatory analysis of how they function. What texts do is certainly as important as what they say, but what makes the discursive work of texts specifically cultural is that it is mainly fulfilled precisely by their signifying force of saying something to someone. The power of culture is anchored in a capability to induce meaning, which makes interpretation the clue to critique.*

But interpretation is only possible if 'something' has been said (acknowledging the necessity of a text) and if the message has been received and understood by the receiver (the listener). Because an ideological approach foregrounds the function of the text, rather than its interpretability, I have described the relationship of text and context as an ideological power game and argued 'for a more nuanced view in which text and context function as equal partners in a kind of dialogue' (2002:195).

## Conclusion

An approach that acknowledges music as an equal partner in a contextual approach shows an alignment of Hans Roosenschoon's music with global trends and issues of his time. When considering time and space with regard to his music, a historical approach to the context of his music has shown how the entanglement of time and space manifest in a multifaceted music. Not only is the plurality of his eclectic voice a reflection of a postmodern world, but it also links with newer voices from South Africa, more specifically with Sarah Nuttall's (2009) notion of entanglement mentioned above.

Time and space also figure in her approach when she writes 'the now, from here,' venturing 'beyond the safety of difference, the easy control of the academic voice, and the comfortable negative subject position of much intellectual critique' (2009). For her 'there is a sometimes overwhelming negativity (endlessly bearing witness to the differences of class, race and gender) to academic work in the humanities, as if any other subject position, or point of analysis, is woefully naïve' (2009). But two decades earlier, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon had already referred to a 'grand flourish of negativized rhetoric' that produces questions but no solutions or answers (1988:3, 42).

In a postmodern world where opinions come to be regarded as having the force of facts, generalised statements not supported by evidence have been tolerated. But to what extent does this strategy, especially when it is linked to the application of a preconceived ideological

template, promote the academic project? Thinking in generalised, rigid categories, for example, relies on entrenched perceptions of Afrikaner homogeneity that have found their way into musicology. The potential of a more nuanced approach, a greater tolerance of different perspectives, points of view and personal positions, and regarding the music as an equal partner in the musicological enterprise might just help to find new ways of understanding the music of our time.

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