

Musicology facing the challenges of computer projection of its own interdisciplinarity¹

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This pondering about the status of musicology under the conditions of the computer medium has a double impulse. On the one side, it is stimulated by the fact that computer technology, otherwise in a state of permanent development, penetrates all spheres of science, making a strong impact on the aspects of realizing the crucial segments of scientific procedure, thereby, quite naturally, on shaping its final product. On the other side, it ensues from the analytical model for re-reading and re-classifying musicological works, that I established on the basis of the genre analogies between the compositional and musicological achievements produced during the second half of the 20th century. The research was aimed primarily at more precisely defining the interdisciplinary nature of musicology.

The mentioned starting points define the **common field** in this investigation, by a particular overlapping of the **computer«s multimedial nature** on the one side, and **musicological interdisciplinarity**, on the other. *This* field is treated here as the context for the examination of the intimations of the new profile of musical science.

¹ NOTE FROM THE EDITORS: The author of this paper informed us that the University premises in Belgrade have been seriously damaged by the war in Yugoslavia. For this reason Dr Veselinović-Hofman has been unable to prepare the final version of her paper. As this paper has been unanimously recommended with 3 A's by its three reviewers (the only case as such this year), the editors thought that it should be included in the proceedings. Unfortunately we are unable to include the references and footnotes.

The **computer«s multimedial character** relies on the medium«s ability to realize the individual and simultaneous embodiments of the visual and auditive components. Thereby, the visual encompasses not only the “fine arts« ” material as its priority, but also the verbal and kinetic, because it enables their “visibility”, in the sense of presenting and structuring either a text or any other non-semantic verbal content. It also enables the realization of movements and kinetic forms of any kind, then, the creation of any possible unfolding of their dramaturgy, as well as mediating in the process of perceiving them. Analogously, the auditive component involves not only the audibility of a sound of any origin and kind of organization, but the auditive presentation of the verbal content, as well. Therefore, we could almost claim that the multimedial character of computing lies on the specific “kinetization” of the verbo- voco- visual genre. It is conceived here as “the intersection of the initiative, activity and effectiveness of three different media”: verbal (verbo), auditive (voco) and visual. Or, simply, voco- visual, given the fact that the verbal medium is already included in the visual. And precisely because of the synthesizing intentions, I would say that *vocovisual* can be identified as *the ground for the multimedial nature of computer technology*.

Hence, it directly solicits the presence and differentiation of the multimedial genres: those based on the collage- dramaturgy of the mixed- medium, those grounded on the polyphonic treatment of the media, meaning, on the poly- medium, and those relying on the intermedial relationships, characteristic of the inter- medium. The hypertext is doubtless one of the crucial phenomena in which this problem materializes.

On the other hand, if the **interdisciplinarity of musicology** (that has otherwise always remained theoretically vague in spite of the numerous explanations) is considered not on the basis of the quantitative endeavors in tabulating the “sister” disciplines of musicology, being supposed to build this interdisciplinarity, but on the basis of the intention to define the phenomenon in principle, interesting, analytically deeply grounded findings can be reached. They led me to the conclusion that every discipline which stands outside musicology must be understood as potentially close to it,

depending not only on the subject matter to be examined, but on the individual scientific approach of the musicologist, as well. Therefore, one and the same discipline can have the status of a related branch in one musicological examination, while in another, it acts as completely marginal. This motivated me to try to establish a model of musicological interdisciplinarity, which, to my mind, explicates its logic and the principles of its functioning, in the most adequate way. I articulated them as principles of mixed-medium, poly-medium and inter-medium.

Their logic, therefore, immanent both to the very nature of the computer medium, and to the nature of the musicological treatises, determines their common plane in which, as already emphasized, the clear presages of a new kind of musicological text and status of musicology can be noticed. (Scheme No. 1)

The idea of marking the mentioned plane is very close to the standpoint of George Landow, who warns about the existence of “extremely suggestive similarities between theory and electronic computing”. Namely, he points to the approximately same time when the idea of hypertextuality and the development of poststructuralism occurred, finding the reasons for this in the fact that “both have grown out of a dissatisfaction with the related phenomena of the printed book and hierarchical thought”. In connection with this, Landow emphasizes that the mingling of creative and discursive moods (like in Barthes and Foucault«s remarks about the death of the author, Derrida«s on textuality, Kristeva«s on intertextuality, etc.), simply *happens* in hypertext.

This essential **correspondence between hypertextuality and poststructuralism** is also implied by the explained model of musicological interdisciplinarity. Because, the possibility of its identification in **musicology** (being real, of course, only in texts where the pure positivistic listing of the facts does not act as its own aim) bears, in effect, the sense of defining its **contextuality**. And this tendency of re-thinking a factographical and problem segment of music “from every possible perspective”, exemplifies the most important symptom of the poststructuralist musicological standpoint. Analogously, **hypertextuality** tends to shed light on the

chosen phenomenon from the aspect of anything that can be conceived directly or indirectly as its possible context. It is realized by the system of linking, as the crucial methodological pivot. Therefore, the **contextuality of hypertext** exhibits essentially the same problem as the **contextuality of musicology**. Their common basis is, thus, the mixedmedial collage- like structuring, polyphonic leading of the “reading- parts” characteristic of polymedial logic, and, first of all, the very idea of the way of presenting a certain object, that arises from the space among the media.

And yet, thereby, it is just hypertext that fundamentally modifies the nature of the manifestation of musicological contextuality, and not conversely. By the quantification and enlargement of the referential material, hypertext irrepressibly changes the ways of concrete musicological shaping, as if tending to “overstate”, “caricature” the function, sense and value of the contextuality of a musicological piece of work, that is, to disarrange its formal balance between the primary character of the main, and subordinate character of the supplementary contents.

Hypertext essentially moves away from the kind of articulation and realization of the printed text. In one of its two main genres, stand-alone/read-only genre, hypertext functions like a certain “database”, pertaining to the given subject matter. Whether it is about the technology of the laser disc, or digital technology of CD-ROM, the stack of information exists on some other medium (disc!), which is not the one and the same on which the memorized content is supposed to be read. The stored information ramifies from the main thematic “trunk” in every conceivable direction, where also the most remote connections with the theme and content of the main text can be established. Thus, we refer to the system on the basis of which a more extended explanation of all “key words” can be obtained. Thereby, however, the choice of spheres, notions, phenomena that will obtain their clarification in these lateral texts (in effect, remarks analogous to foot- notes in the printed text!), as well as the selection of information which is to be introduced into the computer memory, represent the parts of a defined, completed whole, created by the author. This whole is, therefore, already considered and formed in such a way that it encompasses all given referential levels. Thus, the reader has different possibilities of approaching such a text. He can

read it — of course, only through the computer monitor! — without opening the “foot- notes”, or, according to his own wish, enlighten the parts of the rich referential “treetop”, moving away from the “trunk” even to such a distance that he can lose his need and interest to go back to it. The moments of such removal embody the inversion of the initial hierarchy *the main text—the supplementary text*, an inversion by means of which the subordinate aspect, that is, the additional material, becomes the primary category. Hence, a reader has the opportunity to create his own variant of the stored content, his own cybertext. However, he realizes this exclusively on the basis of the prepared, offered facts. To quote Landow, “a spacial navigation palette is always available on the screen”.

The other genre of hypertext, grounded on the linkage of a digitalized information and electronic net, implies a certain activity on the part of the reader. This networked hypertext is not only stand- alone, but also read- and- write text. This means that it is open to free communication with users from all over the world, who can interfere in practically unlimited ways. They can use a text as the read- only, especially when its author introduces it as such into the network system, but, otherwise, they can inscribe in it their own, most diverse commentaries, add new “side” branches, fill in new data, change it... Thus, linked with the network communication, the initial text leaves its author, becoming an endless readers« conversation, one immensely open collective form with a quite uncertain fate. The author`s role is destabilized, his primarity in the creator—consumer hierarchy cedes its place to the consumer, and all this aimed at “producing” information and knowledge. Within this reversed hierarchy, the consumer takes over the author«s field becoming, according to Landow, the “wreader”, meaning, writer- reader.

Under such conditions, the musicological text encounters its own interdisciplinary projection, in the full sense of the word. Thereby, I do not refer only to the possible adaptation through which the printed text is transformed into the hypertext of both kinds, but to the fact that the former practice on hypertext has already begun to constitute a special kind of compositional technology and “rhetoric”. This means that, let us say, a hypertextual study about

one composer is to be already pre-conceived both according to the categories of the main text and the most extensive referential additions. Hence, in the supposed case, they can be activated by clicking the key-words, among which, there are also, biography, social, economic conditions, philosophy, science, technology, then, stylistic features of the author in question, particulars on his predecessors, contemporaries, analysis of compositions, explications of the notions, etc., etc., of which every single "section" can be endlessly ramified, in all possible directions. But, it still depends on the author of the hypertext, what spheres and to which factographical extent and medial form will be encompassed. Thereby, the medial means would not refer only to the verbal material, to its straight-line chaining or collage-like arrangement, but also to the collage-like organization in which different media, each within its own specificities, participate in forming the thematically determined hypertext. Therefore, within the already mentioned monographic hypertext, next to the analysis of the fragment of a ballet for example (Scheme No. 2a), this fragment could be given, according to the reader's wish, in its notated form — in one corner of the screen (Scheme 2b), and in the other, in its dance realization (Scheme No. 2c). Again according to the reader, it could be coupled with the corresponding sound picture, as well. In such a way, the screen would be visually worked out in a collage-like manner, and the reader could be arbitrarily activated as the viewer and listener, simultaneously. At the same time, such a constellation could exert the polyphonic interdependence of the visual and sound "lines", especially when the mixed-medial collage would not be ceded to the reader's will, but based on the logic of inseparable media-parts. Then, however, it would not concern the hypertextual mixed-medium, but hypertextual poly-medium. And the fact that the idea about the mentioned ways of structuring is in itself of a synthesis-like nature, means that it is essentially located in the intermedial space, more precisely, among the constituents of the "kinetic" vocovisual.

Therefore, in the supposed situation, the musicologist would not act only as the historian-analyst-theoretician-interpreter, that is, theoretician-creator, but also as the author obliged to be engaged in collecting, selecting, systematizing and articulating the data of the

encyclopedic provenience, meaning, in shaping the referential supplements. This procedure which is, otherwise, well known to the musicologist, from his rich experience with foot- notes, would be overrated during his work on hypertext. Hence, the focus would gradually shift from the selection of material to its quantification, and the musicologist's creativity could in time fall into the danger of becoming "tired", "muted" by the more or less routine formulating of supplementary texts, as well as by concentrating on the forms of their linkages with the main unfolding. The manner of expressing musicological interdisciplinarity would be thereby absorbed by the manner of realizing hypertextual multimediality, and this precisely through their, here already clarified, common plane. In this interference, the authentic musicological "ray" would be weakened. The musicologist would be compelled to think in advance in a mixedmedial or polymedial manner, but not in the framework of musicological, but primarily hypertextual articulation.

And if, at that, there would also be mention of the read- and- write hypertextual genre, the musicological treatise could — of course, depending on the scientific, educational, cultural, social profile and level of the participants included in this endless multivocal electronic "chat"— change its initial physiognomy to such an extent, that it could not be identified as musicological any more. Then, its author would, for the first time, be a real witness to his own death and the disappearance of "his" science.

Perhaps, we should not fear this. To paraphrase Mireille Rosello, we should participate in the "technological" future, in order not to be "somehow morally and socially irresponsible". However, it is precisely up to us whether hypertexts will become a threat or a promise: "The forms they will take may very well depend on how we talk about them now".

Maybe we should introduce this text and the whole of symposium to which it belongs into network communication? Maybe. For, I believe that our studies would be considerably enriched with many new facts, remarks, even unexpected commentaries at such an "electronic conference". But, to what extent would our treatises be transformed then? And where would *we* be as the authors?

