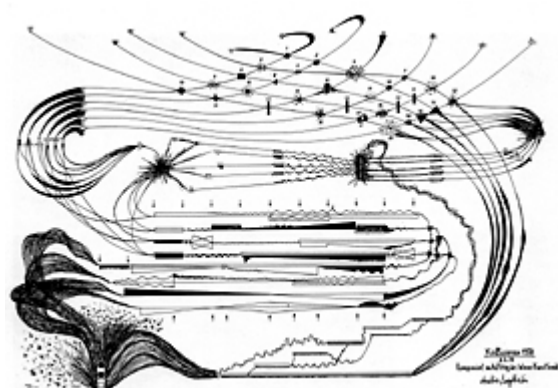


# "Scherzophren"

## Waltraut Cooper (Linz)



### Installation for piano, neon and electronics

Music by: Anestis Logothetis (Vienna)  
Nicola Sani, Luca Spagnoletti (SIM, Rome)

Commissioned by Ars Electronica Linz and Festival Arte Elettronica, Camerino.

### Scherzophren

To each of the 84 keys of a piano, neon tubes in certain colours and -instead of the strings — stored sound events (Anestis Logothetis) have been allocated. Maximum duration of these sound events is 8.5 seconds, if the key is held shorter only part of the sound event is sounded (also a rest).

Scherzophren is the continuation and combination of the —colour piano (Castel, Skryabin) and the —prepared piano (Cage)

Scherzophren is —playing with chance (the player does not know what will happen when a key is being struck), —synaesthesia (visual sensations are augmented by acoustic sensations and vice versa)

Scherzophren can be played the following ways:

a) "Music for Scherzophren" by Anestis Logothetis:  
Duration 12 minutes. A chromatic scale is played along the entire keyboard in the direction indicated and every key is held for 8.5 seconds.

b) "Synchro-Scherzophren":  
A composition is played that has been recorded on tape before or been played into a computer piano (Bösendorfer). The simultaneous playing of the recorded original and the sound of the "Scherzophren" gives the composition an additional dimension.

Choice of the following works:

- Mauricio Kagel: Metapiece
- Anestis Logothetis: Diptychon
- Christoph Herndler: Autumn

c) "Scherzophren": Any classical or contemporary composition is played, but listeners and player do not hear what they expect.

## **"Scherzophren"** **Anestis Logothetis**

The words of Polonius in Shakespeare's tragedy "Hamlet", "though this be madness, yet there is method in it", can be taken as the motto of the entire work and can be applied to the behaviour of someone who has been stripped of his power — after all, both son and ghost of the father are called by the name of "Hamlet", their mutual action thus being a model of identity and of the behaviour of spirit and reality, a model of the spirit as a mainspring affecting and guiding everyday life — in the mouth of a Polonius, however, these statements shrink to take the dimensions of the immediate circle of his daily confrontations and "madness" is soon interpreted by him to be "Hamlet's love for his (Polonius') daughter" and any action of Hamlet's is seen as purposeful "method" and the abstract is thus concretized and made tangible.

If we transfer Shakespeare's model of the collision of different levels of consciousness to the creative process, the quotation "be this madness, yet there is method in it" can first of all be applied to the disquiet inherent in any creative process aiming at innovations. Then these words come to mind when contemplating the derivative of one's concentrated and innovatory work. Considering contemporary knowledge of genes, viruses, psyche, atoms, and the universe those words illuminate frightfully and become the true maxim of our existence of interlaced relations and their physical and psychological components.

In evaluating one's personal work, we discover that we are changing sides between "Polonius, Hamlet — the son, and Hamlet — the father", between the mind that decides, that doubts and decides, and the one that interprets according to its possibilities. But the product was created in a certain stage of consciousness and in that stage it is one of those things of which we know what they are: organized material, an event, a production: a *mise-en-scène* of a momentary or elaborated mental situation by material oriented towards the senses and thus linked to the organized and organizing spirit and correlating with it. This correlate need not always correspond to the expectations of an observer who takes an aesthetic-spiritual manifestation to be the reproduction of another, possibly familiar phenomenon and arrives at Adorno's conclusion, "Artistic utopia today appears to be: making things of which we do not know what they are." (From: "Vers une musique informelle" T W. Adorno, Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik 1961.)

This stage of observation correlates with programs with which the observer has been fed and which control his evaluations. Such an observer considers himself the author of a work and therefore he — an outsider at the moment and not engaged in the creative process — can be disturbed by his own work and say to himself what Polonius said, "though it be madness, yet there is method in it" or in an interpretative wording, "it was love and its method of ascertaining itself of a material".

The doubting and at the same time competent mind — due to its structure has decided and declared the object its very own work, a manifestation of the competence of that mind, displaying the capability of its creator, who with a limited number of elements and rules knows to formulate and to understand an unlimited amount of expressions and also knows to determine the soundness or correctness of expressions.

Even if this may sound singular, it is part of the dynamic element of a society, of its guiding strata which are also to be found in every individual: those levels of consciousness that simultaneously are carrier and user of programs (the Polonius syndrome of conventions), that

are programmer (father — ghost) and creator of the kybernetikon, the steering (Hamlet — son).

The image which profanity demands of an aesthetic-spiritual work that is devoted to the senses and the spirit, is no longer a "thing", but circumstances using things as materials to become visible and audible, to manifest and document themselves. Obviously, entertainment here transgresses into work, but it is not averse to joke and fun, on the contrary it favours, even consists of, is enriched with witticism. With this approach, it was not hard on me to engage in the project of Traude Cooper, the creator of objects: to furnish the keyboard of a piano with different sound events so that a piano with such tuning controls any composition and changes it into the permutating configurations of its tuning, reduces any notation plus its signs of precision to absurdity and even proves the compository work of someone like Mozart, e.g., to be dependent on the determination by the piano manufactory, liable to chance, qualified by the preconditions of manufacture. The series of my configurations allocated to the keys sound right when the keyboard is played chromatically from left to right, from "low" to "high". Otherwise, any piece can be played on the piano and it will not be recognized as what it originally is, as the piano attaches its program to every piece. It is faithful to itself, is precise, sound in itself.