



Special Article

S y m p o s i u m

Luigi Nono and Prometeo

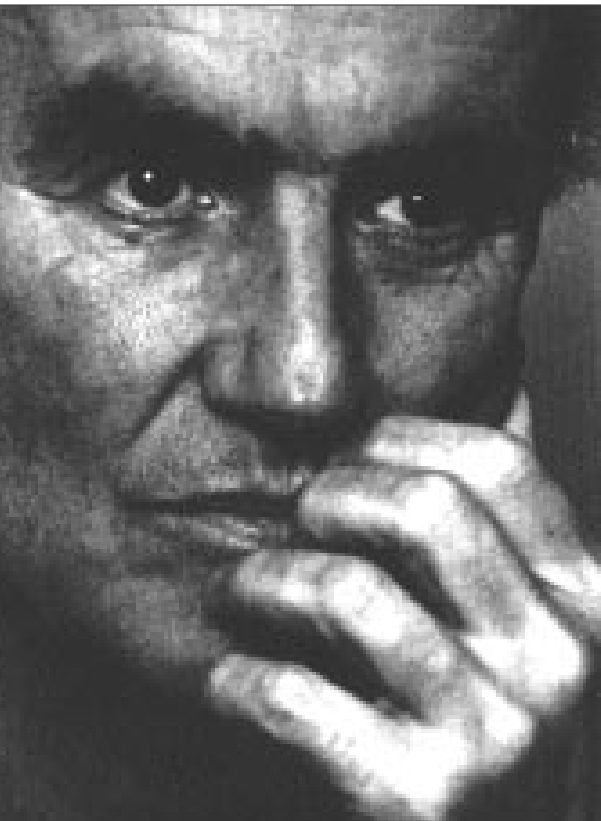
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A Dialectic of Progress and Regression

Helmut LACHENMANN: Between 1958 and 1960 I studied composition under Luigi NONO. This coincided exactly with when Darmstadt [1] was in the throes of searching for a "new music." Three central figures dominated at Darmstadt back then: BOULEZ, STOCKHAUSEN and NONO. Around the time I began my studies under NONO, while all three utilized the same techniques, it was becoming clear that NONO was taking a completely different path from the other two. To the other composers, NONO seemed stuck in a neo-Webernian [2] expressionist mode. Yet in 1958, when STOCKHAUSEN came out with «*Gruppen*» [3] and BOULEZ with «*Improvisation sur Mallarmé*» [4], both highly ornamental virtuoso works, NONO criticized them as recidivist backtracking to status quo bourgeois music. Whereas NONO as a composer really delved into the notion of music as "punctual," which had its beginnings at Darmstadt, BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN had strayed from such thinking and become more ornamental. Not only that, we might even say that NONO differed from BOULEZ and from STOCKHAUSEN in his philosophy, the ideology behind the music; his concepts of freedom were something radically apart. At the same time, NONO once wrote me this in a letter: "Look out for BOULEZ. His music is just like STRAVINSKY's. He's trying to recreate the court music of Louis XIV, who'd stay in the palace listening to music instead of hunting." On the other hand, NONO continued to use the various affective forms of the tradition—exposed elements of pathos, for instance, such as in a fanfare—things that BOULEZ and others had rejected from their structuralist thinking. What differed from music up until then, however, was

that these sounds appeared in forms broken down by his own unique methods. NONO did not employ such sonorities in any embellished or virtuoso or ornamental way; rather his creativity lay in dissecting closer and closer to the very inner nature of the sounds, creating from within the broken pieces. Works like «*Varianti*» or «*Il canto sospeso*» [the suspended song] exemplify this approach. We can discern a dialectic of progress and regression in NONO's works from that period. Trumpet parts, for instance, carry associations with BEETHOVEN's fanfares, the tympanies echo of military music. Even in the vocal parts we hear something of traditional European *bel canto*. Not that he uses them as-is; they're twisted and bent into an expression that is all his own. Nor does he take an exotic museum-like perspective, merely giving us another walk-through tour of instruments and voices as they were used in other Western music. Rather, his "scandalous" experiments at the time, we might say, lay in breaking down the old even as he maintained it. «*Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima*» and «*Prometeo*» are often cited as major turning points in NONO's oeuvre, however, I disagree. I can't help hearing «*Prometeo*» as one gigantic madrigal. That is to say, even as he uses the old categories, they are unbelievably transformed, opening up new conduits to the act of listening.

ISOZAKI Arata: Personally speaking, around when I first met NONO, somehow I gathered that this Akiyoshidai International Art Village Concert Hall was to be built for the Japan premiere of «*Prometeo*».

In Paris there is a park called *Parc de la Villette*. Originally fairly outlying, it now finds itself right beside the *périphérique* loop road. In the early

[1] International Summer Courses for New Music (*Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik*) in Darmstadt. Founded in 1946 by musicologist Wolfgang STEINECKE (1910-61) for the dissemination of music by SCHÖNBERG and others banned under the Nazis. Particularly famous from 1951 on as a mecca for avantgarde music centered on the "total serialism" (a "total" expansion upon SCHÖNBERG's twelve-note "serialism" by means of rhythms and dynamics) expounded by composers Pierre BOULEZ (1925-), Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN (1928-) and Luigi NONO (1924-90).

[2] Anton (von) WEBERN (1883-1945).

Austrian composer. Studied under SCHÖNBERG; together with SCHÖNBERG and fellow disciple BERG, is said to belong to the New Vienna School [*Neue Wiener Schule*]. Created even more rigorously twelve-note works than SCHÖNBERG, while his latter period works move toward a proto-total serialism, making him a hero of the total serialists.

[3] «*Gruppen*». In this work the 109-chair orchestra is divided into three groups of 36, 37 and 36 seated left, center and right, each playing at a different tempo so as to create shifting layers of auditory space. Premiered in March 1958 with STOCKHAUSEN, BOULEZ

and Bruno MADERNA conducting. STOCKHAUSEN also composed «*Carré*» (1960) for four orchestra groups and four choral groups surrounding the audience.

[4] «*Improvisations sur Mallarmé*». A work for soprano and orchestra based upon the poetry of MALLARMÉ. Parts I (1957) and II (1957) were premiered in January 1958, while Part III (1959) was premiered in June 1959. Thereafter, he consolidated these together with the similarly MALLARMÉ-based «*Tombeau*» (1959) and «*Don*» (1962) under the title «*Pli selon pli, portrait de Mallarmé*» (1962, revised 1983).

'80s, an international competition was held for redoing the park as part of MITTÉRAND's *Grands Projets* [5]. The brief for the competition called for an arts center complete with a large exhibition space, a music school and a concert hall. An international jury was convened of something under 20 persons from around the world, myself as one of the judges from the architect side, and in the jury representing the artist-musicians was NONO. Several other architects were also on the jury, including Renzo PIANO [6], and even more landscape designers, the chairman of the world's landscaping association—this was an all-out world effort to create landscape design here. For a fact, the architects and artists were relegated to the adjunct role of creating the "receptacle" structures. The idea being to make the park international, in a word, a gift from Paris to the next century. We reviewed and debated nearly 1,000 proposals sent in from all over the world, but landscapers' proposals were just not interesting. To the architects, they seemed stuck in 19th century thinking. There were several interesting proposals from architects, but the general consensus was that they were unfeasible. The two professional camps were on a collision course and the whole thing became a fighting match.

The French Ministry of Culture who sponsored the competition began to think that if this kept up the architects and landscapers of the world were in danger of never speaking to one another again. When all of a sudden NONO stood up and said, "So far I've listened to the opinions of both professions, but there's nothing worth discussing, nothing to show the 21st century. The landscapers are hopelessly 19th century,

the architects are hopelessly 20th century, and no one's reading forward from here. I don't want anything to do with this jury." So saying, he went home. I was enthralled with this stand up play of his. Because two years prior, when I was designing the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, I ran into the same sort of deadlock with the client, and just stood up and walked out. Remembering that, I had to think, "Good show!" It made me feel close to NONO as a person. Of course, when it came time for the second jury, he came back and judged together with everyone. And that's when the decision went to the proposal by Swiss-born architect Bernard TSCHUMI [7]—the landscapers lost. And the proposal selected at next stage of competitions for the *Cité de la musique* music facility in the Park was by French architect Christian de PORTZAMPARC [8]. The combination of these two rounded out the Park and facilities. In the midst of all these political circumstances, I realized that when NONO stood up and walked out, this was his way to break the stalemate wide open, the posture he assumed to get things moving. Now here's a man, I thought, who knows how to operate. That's one of the first things about him that earned my respect. Then when he was invited to come to Suntory Hall in Tokyo [9], I was able to spend more time with him, and we came to a very personal relationship, so much so that ultimately I ended up designing his tomb for him where he was buried on Isola San Michele. So when plans were drawn up for the Hall at Akiyoshidai and HOSOKAWA Toshio [10] was saying, "Let's do «Prometeo» for the launch," I was overjoyed. Actually, it was Renzo PIANO who'd served on the same jury who created the staging for the

[5] *Les Grands Projets*. Major public urban redevelopment scheme initiated by former French president François MITTÉRAND. Enlisted many noted contemporary architects to design such projects as the *Musée du Louvre Pyramide* (I.M. PEI), *Institut du Monde Arabe* (Jean NOUVEL) and *Parc de la Villette* (Bernard TSCHUMI).

[6] Renzo PIANO (1937-). Italian-born architect. Major works include the *Centre Georges Pompidou* (together with Richard ROGERS) and the Kansai International Airport Terminal.

[7] Bernard TSCHUMI (1944-). Swiss-born architect. Major works include the Parc de la Villette. At present, Dean of Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture. Writings include

Manhattan Transcripts (Academy Editions) and *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press).

[8] Christian de PORTZAMPARC (1944-). Moroccan-born architect. Won the 1992 *Grand Prix d'Architecture* of France and 1994 Pritzker Prize.

[9] In autumn 1987, NONO was invited to Japan under the auspices of the Suntory Hall International Program for Music Composition (Dir.: the late TAKEMITSU Toru) and on 28 November he had the world premiere of the commissioned work «2) *No hay caminos, hay que caminar*...» *Andrei Tarkovsky*» performed at Suntory Hall, Tokyo.

[10] HOSOKAWA Toshio (1955-). Japanese composer. Works include «*Jo-Ha-Kyu*» (1980),

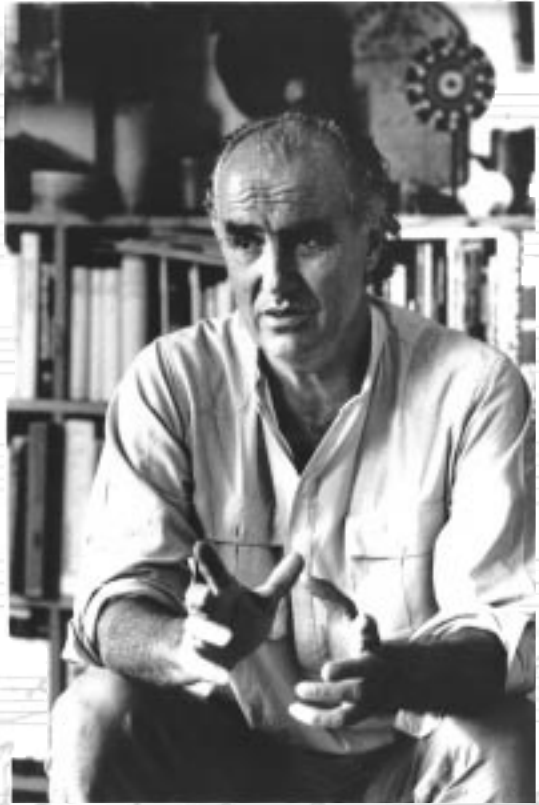
«*Preludio*» (1982), «*Tokyo 1985*» (1985), «*Utsurohi*» (1986), «*Hiroshima Requiem*» (1989) and the opera «*King Lear*» (1990). Since 1989, as Artistic Director of the Akiyoshidai International Contemporary Music Seminar & Festival he has put considerable efforts into cultivating a new generation of young Japan composers.

[11] André RICHARD (1944-). Swiss-born. Studied composition at Geneva and Freiburg before becoming Director of the *ExperimentaStudio der Heinrich-Strobel-Stiftung des Sudwestfunks Freiburg*. Worked as assistant to NONO toward the end of his career, in charge of the electronic sounds for «*Prometeo*» and many other of his works.

Luigi NONO (1924-90)

Italian composer. Together with BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN, a central figure in the landscape of post-WWII European avantgarde music. Noted for his synthesis of radical political thought and new musical techniques, he left behind a large repertory of powerful and hauntingly beautiful musical works.

Variazioni canoniche (sulla serie dell' Op. 41 di Arnold Schoenberg) 1950
Polifonica-Monodia-Ritmica 1951
Epitaph auf Federico García Lorca 1952-53
La victoire de Guernica 1954
Il canto sospeso 1956
Varianti 1957
Composizione per orchestra n.2: Diario polacco '58 1959
Omaggio a Emilio Vedova 1961
Intolleranza 1960 1961
La fabbrica illuminata 1964
A floresta é jovem e cheia de vida 1966
Per Bastiana – Tai-Yang Cheng 1967
Musica-Manifesto 1969
Y entonces comprendió 1970
Como una ola de fuerza y luz 1972
Al gran sole carico d'amore 1975
...sofferte onde serene... 1977
Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima 1980
Prometeo 1984
No hay caminos, hay que caminar...Andrej Tarkowskij 1987
La Lontananza Nostalgica Utopica-Futura 1988



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L u i g i N o n o

original premiere in Venice in '84. The competition I was just talking about took place from the end of '82 to the beginning of '83, I think it was, right around the time NONO was in the throes of giving shape to «Prometeo». That's when I met him.

Well, I was thrilled with HOSOKAWA's idea for the Japan premiere. Only there was one problem: I can scarcely read music. I didn't have a clue how to approach music as an architect. So I was relieved to hear HOSOKAWA tell me, "No, even if you could read normal scores, you wouldn't be able to read the score for «Prometeo». This is no ordinary score." That being the case, I decided I might as well work from scratch. The one and only lead I had to go on was André RICHARD [11], who told me

concretely how to best interpret the spatial structures in «Prometeo». As I understood it, the movements of «Prometeo» called "isolas"—"Isola Prima," "Isola Seconda," etc.—were apparently suggested to the scenario by Massimo CACCIARI's [12] unique contribution to contemporary philosophy, the "archipelago" thesis, so that the time-space arrangement of these "islands" forms the composition of «Prometeo». That is how I understood it. So what I had to do, then, was create "islands" in space. Islands in both the volumetric and floating sense. They could be in the audience seating or they could be on stage. Whatever was present could be scattered free-floating through space. I communicated [by fax] with RICHARD, and later with him directly when he came to Japan, about

these physical arrangements and established the placement and size of the orchestra pit. It was my idea to try to create a spatial parallel between our view of the world as "archipelagos" and the concretization of the performing space in "archipelagos."

Another thing, the image of this hall had to do with its being here in Akiyoshidai. Now Akiyoshidai is a cartesian tableland with stalactic cavities. That is, with caverns. So, during the design process I hit upon the idea, what if I overlap the cave image with that of the islands. A glass-walled court filled with water brought up front and center—this would be one of the floating islands. Actually, all the various lodges of the Village are floating like islands. So this idea of putting together a collective body of islands each with its own function referred not only the Hall but extended to the overall layout concepts. That is, the spatial configuration of this entire Art Village came to manifest the vision NONO and CACCIARI imagined in «Prometeo» as reassembled within the conditions of Akiyoshidai here in Japan. Yesterday, listening to the Japan premiere of «Prometeo», the flow of the sound in this space created here was exceptional.

Intensive Space

ASADA Akira: We have just heard Mr. LACHENMANN's comments based on his long relationship as a composer with NONO since the '50s, as well as Mr. ISOZAKI's comments based on his relationship as an architect with NONO since the '80s, so what I would like to do now is somehow link these two through a consideration of NONO and space.

Actually, in '87 when NONO came to Japan for the performance of his new work at Suntory Hall,

I had the pleasure of guiding him around Kyoto, going to temples and different parts of town together and talking. One special memory that lingers is of Daitokuji temple, with its many sub-temples each with its own rock garden or moss garden. It's a diverse little microcosm all packed compactly into one temple. How was I to describe all those spaces? Well, categorizing very roughly, I started by saying there are extensive spaces and intensive spaces, spaces that spread outward and spaces that fold in on themselves. For example, a city like Paris laid out on the grand axes of baroque city planning displays truly expansive spaces. Kyoto, on the other hand, is a simple grid, not a particularly striking city when viewed from outside, but here and there are small but dense pockets such as the temple I just mentioned folded into the fabric, and these are intensive spaces. I don't know if NONO accepted my explanation or not.

However, pursuing these thoughts further, it strikes me that NONO's music is possessed of a deep spatial sense, and that spatiality is if anything intensive rather than extensive.

This seems to have something to do with the difference at Darmstadt since the '50s, as Mr. LACHENMANN pointed out, between BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN on the one hand and NONO on the other. A problem that arose at Darmstadt in the '50s was that as the various musical parameters—pitch, duration, dynamics, timbre, etc.—were serialized and summarily structured, it got to where everything merely sounded like dots of scattered sound. How to overcome this was the issue. STOCKHAUSEN and BOULEZ's solution was that of extensive spatial enhancement, creating great fields and rich constellations of these points in a sort of



Massimo CACCIARI

[12] Massimo CACCIARI (1944 -). Italian philosopher. Collaborator with NONO from the latter half of the '70s on such works as «Das atmende Klarsein» (1981) and «Prometeo». At present, Mayor of Venice. Writings include *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture* (translated by Stephen Sartarelli, Yale University Press, 1993), *DRAN* (1992), *L'Angelo necessario* [The Necessary Angel] (Milan, 1986) and *Icone della legge* [Icons of Law] (Milan, 1985).

[13] STOCKHAUSEN's major work-in-progress «Licht» is to incorporate a "Helicopter Quartet" in which members of a string quartet are to be airborne in helicopters. «Sirius» (1976) is another work by STOCKHAUSEN.

[14] «Répons» (1981). Work for six solo instruments

(two pianos, a cymbal, a vibraphone, a harp and a glockenspiel—including real-time electronic audiotransforms) and chamber orchestra. Incorporated a full panoply of technologies developed for the *Institut Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM) where BOULEZ served as Director.

[15] In the morning of this same day prior to the Symposium, André RICHARD gave a lecture on "Electronic Music of Luigi Nono" demonstrating live electronic acoustics at the Akiyoshidai International Art Village Concert Hall.

[16] Halaphon. An apparatus conceived by German audiotechnician Hans Peter Haller, allowing sounds to move freely through a space. Utilized in «Prometeo».



planar or volumetric expansion. But not NONO; as Mr. LACHENMANN has said, he adhered strictly to points-as-points. Peering inside each point of sound, each is seen to be skewed ever so slightly, to possess a completely distinct quality depending on where it resonates from. Or else there will be some subtle interplay with the silence surrounding it. In such a way, by rigorously listening to each single sound in depth, he was rediscovering the intensive space that opens within a point of sound. Thus, whereas BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN expanded extensively outward, we can say that NONO looked intensively inward to discover an extremely deep inner space.

Such were the differences that arose when these composers sought to create literally spatial musics. In STOCKHAUSEN's «*Gruppen*», for example, the three orchestras in triangular configuration, when the brass sections hit the same bold harmonic at the climax—not to call it germanic megalomania—he creates a spectacular spatial experience backed with a certain brand of authority, an utterly extensive spatial experience. But STOCKHAUSEN's not one to be satisfied with that; he has to put string quartets on helicopters, he wants to play music in outer space, he has to go all the way to Sirius! (Laughs) [13] This goes back a bit further, but in the '80s BOULEZ turned out a robust development by placing the orchestra and solo instruments around the audience in «*Répons*» [14], then modulated the orchestra and soloists or the crosstalk (*répons*) between the soloists with live electronics. Actually, when you listen to it, you can distinctly hear the contrapuntal reverberations sound-to-sound. Nonetheless, these are strictly extensive experiments. All in all, when you listen to this work, you cannot help feel you are being feasted on a banquet of sumptuous yet somehow sterile sound painstakingly rendered with consummate skill. Though quite frankly, given my own decadent bourgeois tastes, I certainly have nothing against such sterile scintillation. (Laughs) Still, with «*Répons*», it must be said that this yet sterile product has been realized by the most highly polished technologies and massive budget that afforded an artist who stands at the very forefront of French national cultural policy. Whereas «*Prometeo*», even with its same spatial

motion of sound and resonance sound-to-sound, is of a completely different nature. Granted sounds do travel through space. But his was not the pursuit of spectacular effects such as sounds revolving or responding back and forth across an extensive space. Rather, his is more, as Mr. ISOZAKI has said, an enclosed cavern-like space, a dark space both acoustically and visually. Yet the closer we listen, we tune in on the most subtle, seemingly impossible echoes, and moreover coming from places skewed slightly from the sound sources. And as we train our ears, before we know it we find ourselves lost among these islands in a cave. What gives this work this unassuming character is, I believe, the way he uses acoustic technologies. This has been demonstrated and explained to us by NONO's longtime collaborator André RICHARD [15]. Take, for example, the "Halaphon," [16] which enables the sound to revolve spatially. But it does not merely spin the sound; that would be like a production at a world's fair pavilion, just some spectacular thrust of sound in extensive space. Whereas with NONO, he might have the sounds rotate right and left at the same time so that you wouldn't even know which way they were turning. For sure the sounds are moving, but not on any clear vector through extensive space; the various movements cancel each other out, unsettle any sense of direction, or else they dissipate in multiple directions, making for a mazelike sound journey within an intensive space. For the original premiere of «*Prometeo*», Renzo PIANO designed a boatlike structure inside San Lorenzo in Florence, and just before that NONO said, "My head feels just like San Lorenzo." Meaning, he was imagining how sounds might travel around the church interior of his own skull. Conversely put, whether San Lorenzo or Akiyoshidai Concert Hall, the whole is a skull—NONO's or again of any of our own—whose interior is the site of a sound pilgrimage that are we following, an extremely deep intensive space experience. That very probably was NONO's thinking. Which I believe was realized in an ideal form for this Japan premiere at Akiyoshidai. NONO himself is no longer with us, but this deeper intent was brilliantly realized by those who knew and understood him well. As a lover of NONO's music, I was thrilled at this opportunity to be on hand for this achievement.

CHOKI Seiji: With this Japan premiere, I conducted with my students a study of NONO's oeuvre centered on «*Prometeo*». And what struck me was, how virtually nil awareness of NONO there was in Japan. First of all, there's almost no literature on NONO in Japanese. Not that this is a uniquely Japanese problem; no collected works of NONO have come out in Italy whereas they have in Germany in German. Almost all of NONO's early works premiered in Germany. It was the 1960s before NONO's works began to premiere in Italy, from «*Intolleranza 1960*». NONO had a difficult time working in Italy, so much so that he and MADERNA made a studio in Darmstadt, so NONO himself was something of a traveler or expatriate.

Someone with such a background is probably too difficult to pin down to a single concept in Japan. My own doctoral thesis was a study of the composer BUSONI [17] who likewise was born in Italy but lived practically his whole life in Berlin. Japan has a hard time absorbing information about composers like these, who resist localizing to some one source of output. With NONO, he was already active in Darmstadt by the time he began seriously composing, and in his later years he based himself in Freiburg. His musics are just barely there in German; we here, however, can scarcely piece together a coherent picture of the composer. Was he a German composer? Was he an Italian composer? Without establishing such a framework, I fear, we Japanese would never come to grips with the likes of him.

And another thing, much of his vocal music is written in Italian, and there was little opportunity to perform it here up to now. It's hard to find out if

even his early masterpiece «*Il canto sospeso*» was ever performed in Japan. For sure, two of his most important operatic works «*Intolleranza 1960*» and «*Al gran sole carico d'amore*» [the great sun of blooming love] have yet to be staged here. That «*Prometeo*» should be the first of his major works to be put on here is something of a paradox timewise. But as always, Japan sticks mainly to 19th century operas, and we just cannot seem to break out of the mold. On many levels, there would seem to be no chance of staging NONO's operas in Japan. Conversely put, an "opera for listening" like «*Prometeo*» probably stood more of a chance of being performed.

This is still a question in my own mind, but what made him call «*Prometeo*» an "opera"? Perhaps it's all a big mistake on our part? (Laughs) If we call it an opera, if we consider it within an operatic framework, then it's a gigantic revolution. To have created an opera that eschews any kind of operatic staging or script makes «*Prometeo*» a unique work, if nothing else, in the history of opera. When we watch a 19th century-type opera, we sit in our seats passively taking in the spaces that unfold before us. The post-War operas of POUSSEUR [18] and KAGEL [19] do move toward liberating opera, but NONO has broken down open in wholly another way.

While this is definitely a "tragedy of listening," this work shows us that we do not listen with our hearing alone. Rare is the work that shows us so keenly just where we are situated in the concert hall. By the 19th century conception of opera, each individual listener is hearing the songs in an ideal space. Surely no one could possibly listen under these same conditions with even the most

[17] Ferruccio BUSONI (1866-1924). Italian composer-pianist. His best-known work is «*Piano Concerto*» (1904). From 1894 on, he spent most of his life in Berlin. Remembered as the author of *Sketch of A New Esthetic of Music* (1907) in which he sets forth theories of atonal and microtonal music, and as an annotator of BACH's works.

[18] Henri POUSSEUR (1929-). Belgian composer. In his opera «*Votre Faust*» (1967), a collaboration with French writer Michel BUTOR, a composer named Henri is commissioned to write an opera on the Faust legend, and the audience can participate by "voting" for any of several prepared paths by which the story can

progress.

[19] Mauricio KAGEL (1931-). Argentine-born composer, has resided in Germany since 1957. Has worked in a wide variety of genres, including musical theater, radio drama and film.

His representative work is the absurdist opera «*Staatstheater*» (1971) in which the singers and orchestra members go out of kilter while setting up the stage props and ballet dancers go through their exercises.

[20] *fermata*. One type of rest notation in classical music. Indicates notes and rests of free length.

[21] LaSalle Quartet. American string quartet

(now disbanded). Specialized in WEBERN and other contemporary composers. Friends with NONO ever since the '50s Darmstadt's Summer School days, they commissioned and premiered his «*Fragmente-Stille, ein Diotima*».

[22] Arditti Sting Quartet. English string quartet led by violinist Irvine ARDITTI (1953-). Was noted for their astonishing skill and polished clarity of performance, highly acclaimed for their renditions of contemporary music for strings.

advanced CD or record technologies; certainly no other work differs so greatly depending on where in the space you're listening to it or keeps you casting about for where the sound is coming from. This disorientation is not felt listening to BOULEZ's «Répons». In BOULEZ's works, the best place to hear it is where BOULEZ is conducting. Which is why he has to conduct his own works. For though physically «Répons» differs according to the listening position, that is not, it would seem, essentially BOULEZ. Nonetheless, as to NONO's acceptance in Japan, the fact that «Prometeo» should premiere here ahead of other more conventional operas like «Intolleranza 1960» or «Al gran sole carico d'amore» does have the advantage of better acquainting us with the essence of NONO the composer. While listening to a composer's works in chronological order is one way of understanding him, the perspective from culmination back toward the past is perhaps, in a sense, more in accord with the Benjaminian vision that underlies NONO and CACCIARI's texts. Which makes this premiere very thought-provoking indeed.

«Prometeo» as Non-Opera

LACHENMANN: There are three things I want to say. First, what Mr. ASADA said about STOCKHAUSEN's «Gruppen» concerns a mere 19 seconds, but we shouldn't forget that «Gruppen» is all of 25 minutes long. Granted there is a moment where the brass hit harmonics from three directions, but that moment is one of the more prosaic sounds in the work. At the same time, there are complex spatial phenomena that constitute some of the most readily comprehensible moments. Relations between NONO and STOCKHAUSEN were ambivalent. If I may transpose it to an image: there was a period for STOCKHAUSEN where he was like a child set down in front of toy train set and he enjoyed playing God, moving the locomotives around at will, which was just the period when he wrote the piece Mr. ASADA was discussing. Now if you say NONO did not have such a period, I'd have to say that he had his child's hour at the computers and machines freely manipulating sounds maybe 20 years later than STOCKHAUSEN. I am a composer who studied under NONO and as such am certainly

closer to NONO, so I can assure you that this discussion of the composers in terms of an opposition between BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN is problematic.

STOCKHAUSEN's spatial concepts are also entirely new temporal concepts. It would take a long time to explain, and I'd rather not.

I am totally in agreement with Mr. ASADA's observations that whereas BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN pushed ever outward, NONO's impetus was inward, always inward. The greatest problem with this view, however, is the tendency to mystify NONO's works or NONO himself. For a fact, the structure of his works is unbelievably simple. However, more than implementing this and that to unfold the structure, you could say his efforts were dedicated to the perception of structure itself or to making previously-unheard-of structures possible. In «Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima» he wrote heaps of *fermata* [20], all annotated to 23 seconds or whatever very precisely. The LaSalle Quartette [21] debuted it. And at that debut, the LaSalle moved their bows ever so slowly trying somehow to hold on for 23 seconds, but in the end the bowing just can't hold out. Just like at the end of a very slow SCHUMANN piece, they bowed little by little ever so economically until the sound finally died out, and still it didn't last 23 seconds. After that, when NONO learned that the Arditti String Quartet [22] was to perform this piece, he said, "They won't be able to play this piece, they can't even understand it." And yet when we heard the Freiburg performance, NONO came to me extremely enervated. "Arditti didn't interpret the piece, they realized the music I intended." Even so, Irvine ARDITTI told me, "We have to sustain the sound for 23 seconds. The length of the bow is about 87 cm. So it's simple division: if you scarcely move the bow about 3.2 cm per second, it'll last for 23 seconds." (Laughs) ARDITTI looked at the bow precisely and determined that he had to play it 3.2 cm per second, and as a result all sorts of new broken, shaky sounds came out. NONO told me. "At last we've been able to intercede in the very structure of sound put forth here. LaSalle played this piece as if it were WEBERN. But Arditti laid bare the structures within the sound and expanded them." This drive to penetrate ever inward into the sound, this dissection of sound, so as to

experience one part of the essence of music is NONO's vision. And that vision of NONO's can be heard in «Prometeo».

Then also, Mr. CHOKI questioned whether it were not perhaps wrong to call this an opera, and indeed this is not an opera. Conversely, I think the work would be all the more easier for the Japanese audience to take in because it is a non-opera. I am very fond of the ideas of the Japanese philosopher NISHITANI Keiji [23], the notion that within the self is an identical part that is nonself. I think we can hear something very close to that in this piece. When I said that «Prometeo» was a non-opera, I meant that it leaps out of the existing space called "opera," it's that sort of opera. Earlier I referred to it as a gigantic madrigal, but it's so gigantic, so very distorted, the question becomes, can it even be called music any more? If the work is a non-opera, can it not at the same time be called non-music? The reason being, music has rhythm, music has harmony, it has conventional musical elements, but here is a work that eschews all of that, does it not? Listening to the piece, we have something close to a primal sound experience. It is nowhere for the concept of music proper to arise; it is the existential site of hearing. Day in, day out, we composers are surrounded to excess by all kinds of sounds, we live listening to all kinds of music. And because we're surrounded by so very much music, we sometimes find ourselves even resenting music, but the fact that this is non-music leads us jaded composers to new vistas in sound—it's that kind of work. Not only are we in the space made possible by Mr. ISOZAKI, we are within the interior of the fragmented sound. Those amorphous clarinets, and more, the ineffably noble songs, it all shapes entirely new contexts.

ASADA: I am in near-total agreement with the first two points made by Mr. LACHENMANN. As I said before, dividing extensive spaces on the one hand and intensive spaces on the other is a little too harsh a distinction. Really it calls for a more sensitive discussion. After all, things that are said about one person tend to become critical to somehow strike a contrast. Now, as we happen to be discussing NONO, I admit I oversimplified comparisons with BOULEZ and STOCKHAUSEN. We must recognize the astonishingly high degree of perfection in BOULEZ's works, and those works using electronic modulation such as «... *explosante-fixe* . . .» [24] are truly beautiful. STOCKHAUSEN is also a great composer; his early «*Kontra-Punkte*» [25], which is to be performed soon at Akiyoshidai, is full of such exactly fresh beauty you would think it were composed just yesterday—all the more reason the later megalomaniac excesses are such a disappointment. That much said, if one had to compare them and NONO on their spatial concepts, I do believe you could say what I said before . . . was the nuance I hope got across. Now, this second point is extremely important. That is, we must not confuse NONO's peering into the interior of sound with mysticism. NONO is easily typecast. In the past he made political music as a militant communist, which came to a peak with «*Al gran sole carico d'amore*», then from the latter half of the '70s he turns more and more toward melancholic reflection, arriving at «*Frammente-Stille, an Diotima*» and «*Prometeo*». In other words, an about-face from things political. Certainly that node of change is not entirely absent. Rather, however, as Mr. LACHENMANN has said, we should emphasize the underlying continuity. For instance, in his

[23] NISHITANI Keiji (1900-90), Philosopher. Studied under NISHIDA Kitaro, preeminent philosopher of the Kyoto school (see [27]). Participated in the "Transcending the Modern" debates published in *Bungakukai* magazine. Writings include *Kongenteki Shutaisei no Tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Fundamental Subjectivism] and *Sekaikan to Kokkakan* [Worldview and Stateview].

[24] «... *explosante-fixe* . . .». Work for three flutes (with live electronics) and chamber orchestra. Originally composed in memory of STRAVINSKY, the present version was produced in 1991-93 in collaboration with IRCAM.

[25] «*Kontra-Punkte*». Work for piano, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, harp, violin and cello. All instruments except for the piano drop out one after another as the piece progresses. Premiered in 1953, it is acclaimed as an early masterpiece of total serialism.

[26] Frederico Garcia LORCA (1898-1936). Spanish poet-playwright. Poetry collections include *Romancero gitano* and *El cante jondo*, plays include *Bodas de Sangre* and *La casa da Bernarda Alba*. Shot by Franco's troops soon after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

[27] NISHIDA Kitaro (1870-1945), Philosopher. Professor at Kyoto University (1913-28). Established his own brand of "Nishida philosophy" extolling the Japanese negative-value of *mu* [nothingness], and together with TANABE Hajime formed the "Kyoto school." Writings include *Zen no Kenkyu* [The Study of Good], *Jikaku niokeru Chokkan to Hansai* [Insight and Reflection in Self-Awareness] and *Hataraku Mono kara Miru Mono e* [From Working to Seeing].

very early period NONO is writing pieces based on the poetry of Federico García LORCA [26]. Of course the key thing here is that LORCA was a poet murdered by the Fascists, and the content of the poems is also important. Only in '87 when NONO came to Japan and lectured on "The Poetry and Thought of Contemporary Music" (*Gendai Ongaku no Politikusu* [The Politics of Contemporary Music], Suseisha: Tokyo), he cited the word "verde" in LORCA's poetry, noting how the poet emphasized the "r" sound in the word to make a break. And then jumping ahead a little, he states that even Fidel CASTRO uses the severing power of "r" in his speeches. NONO finds a certain politic in LORCA "r" or CASTRO "r." So he is not putting revolutionary texts to music as mere propaganda. If we call NONO's music political, then, we must think on that level of politics from the very outset.

Conversely, we should not consider his works from the latter half of the '70s on simply as a reversal from politics to reflection. Nor moreover, should we mystify this reflexivity. This is an extremely important point. In «*Prometeo*», there appear texts from HESIOD's *Theogonia* and many other different myths. Yet this is no mere *ricorso* to mythic sources. Straightaway he gives us mythological texts alongside texts from BENJAMIN. BENJAMIN's *Ursprung* does not refer to any single "source" recovered by tracing back along linear history. Amidst of the rise of Fascism in the '30s he said that Salvation depends on tiny fissures in the continuum of catastrophe. What BENJAMIN calls *Ursprungen* [origins] are seen in strata in cross-section. The "micro-messianic power" from his final work *On the Concept of History* is one of the basic concepts underlying «*Prometeo*», which again has to be understood in context as something quite different from the absolute messianic power expected of the Apocalypse to come.

To put the thing from a slightly different angle, it is decisive that NONO and CACCIARI chose BENJAMIN, and not HEIDEGGER. Mr. LACHENMANN referred to Japanese philosophy and to the ideas of NISHITANI Keiji in particular. Now NISHITANI was a pupil of NISHIDA Kitaro [27], whose writings are so fraught with riddles that NISHITANI had to explicate and annotate them for us; that was his standing. Whereas NISHIDA himself corresponds in the German

context to HEIDEGGER—corresponds both in theory and politics. NISHIDA's *mu* [nothingness] to HEIDEGGER's *Sein* [being] as distinct from individual beings. Problems occur, however, when we start to mystify their "place of *mu*" (*mu no basho*) or "site of *Sein*" as some long-forgotten place beyond the world we live in as actual entities to which we have but to return. That is not only reactionary in theory, politically that line of thinking served indirectly to justify to the militarists in Japan and the Nazis in Germany. It is in that sense I'm saying it's crucial that NONO and CACCIARI chose BENJAMIN and not HEIDEGGER. Their "origins" are not some facile reclaiming of the meta-historical; they plant themselves squarely in actual historical process and try to get at the immediate strata exposed where that timeflow ruptures momentarily. Which naturally cancels any operatic narrative developing linearly in extensive space. They call it a reverse opera, a false opera, and that is precisely how we have to think of «*Prometeo*».

The Significance of "A Tragedy of Listening"

André RICHARD (from the floor): Personally, I think it's a mistake just to say «*Prometeo*» is a non-opera. The work is sub-titled "A Tragedy of Listening" after all. The role played by text in the work is extremely important. Not that the music is added to follow along with the text, of course, but we cannot speak of the work without the text.

In the original premiere program CACCIARI wrote that through «*Prometeo*» NONO wanted to liberate music from the governing circumstances of dynamics and sight. So as to offer up space to music alone.

Of course, in «*Prometeo*» we do see performers on stage. And in that sense, it is not entirely devoid of any visual element, but the movements on stage do not affect the auditory complexities. Taking only the harmonies, for example, the movement of sound—first one group with one sound connecting next which group and what sound—is incredibly complex. To give an example, I previously conducted chorus, and NONO asked me to bring together more voices with the exact same tonal qualities as the first soprano. And so a female chorus was formed, all with the same tonal quality as the first soprano. This chorus had two roles: to recite ancient

b) MYTHOLOGIE

2 SOPRANI (2. HALL FACH - 1. HALL FACH)
 1 BASSO (1. HALL FACH - 2. HALL FACH)
 1 CONTRALTO
 1 VOICE (1. HALL FACH)

2 SOPRANI
 UND IST GESCHEN
 AUF KEINER STÄTTE
 2. HALL FACH ...
 ES SCHWIMMEN
 ES FALLEN
 DIE LEIDENDEN
BENJAMIN
 BILDLICHES
 WIE WASSER
 VON KLIPPE
 2. HALL FACH
 IM SÜNDEN
 HINAB ...

DOCA
 VON DER WELT
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DOCA
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 VON DER WELT

→ musikalisch ⑨

myths, and to recite BENJAMIN texts as arranged by CACCIARI. The soloist only sings BENJAMIN texts. And the same goes for the alto voices. There is an alto chorus all with the vocal qualities as the alto soloist. And with the tenors, too, except for the role of Prometheus, there is again the soloist and chorus with the same vocal qualities, the soloist singing BENJAMIN texts only and the chorus reciting both ancient mythology and BENJAMIN texts at the same time. Just listening by ear you gradually lose track where's the soloist and where the chorus. That is, although there are two sound sources, because those sound sources have the same qualities they start to sound alike. It's an extremely curious experiment. For example, at the very beginning where a chorus sings the words, "Gaea gave birth to the land," the "mythology" section that follows is sung in many different harmonics. An internal continuity of sound winds its way around between the various soloists and the various choruses and the orchestra group. Because it is all so musically complex, the work is rescued from visual elements and constraints, indeed freed from them. In that sense, as to why I do not agree with the proposition that the work

is a non-opera, while granted the work has no visual dramaturgy, it does have a dramaturgy of sound. And within that sound, text is extremely significant. Because there exists this auditory dramaturgy, I think it's problematic to call it a non-opera.

ISOZAKI: Well then, I wonder if I might pose a question? Prior to the performance here, «Prometeo» was performed in Brussels [28], I believe it was staged by Robert WILSON [29]. After which I happened to meet WILSON, and when I asked him how it went, he hardly said a word. He just went on drinking until finally when it seemed he'd reached his limit, he said something to the effect that it should never have been put on stage. (Laughs) So I wanted to hear about it from someone who was involved. Now Robert WILSON is someone whose own expression is in the visual, so having him stage a work that so rejects the visual should have made for, it seems to me, a very interesting production. What was the result?

RICHARD: A very delicate question. There are some things in life you have to take on, like it or not. (Laughs) In this case, we were just lucky to

I SOLA 2' b) HÖLDERLIN

2 SOPRANI: SOLI; 2 HALFRON CONTINUI; 2 VOCI FOR. 14^o JORDAN = SCHIATO -
TEMPI PIÙ LENTI

FLB + CCB: NATURALI + VACUUM X² HALFRON ALTRI = 2
2 VOCI: MEZZOSOPRANO ARTICOLATO CARISIMANTI (P - MP - F) USARE NOISE FOR
MIGLIORAMENTO; 4 STALI 1/2 SORDO; 2 SORDI; ARRU
DESTE ARTICOLATE

CANTO: ATTACCO CIRLA *mf* *p*

FLB

CCB

CAMBIA TIMBRO

U - N - S I - S T I G E - G E - B E - N

U - N - S I - S T I G E - G E - B E - N

U - N - S I - S T I G E - G E - B E - N

BE - N AU F KEI - NE - R STA TTE -

CACCIARI's libretto (page left, top) and NONO's score (above). III. *I sola 2, b) Hölderlin* (Mitologia). Two sopranos sing, "Doch / uns ist gegeben / auf keiner Stätte / zu ruhn . . ."

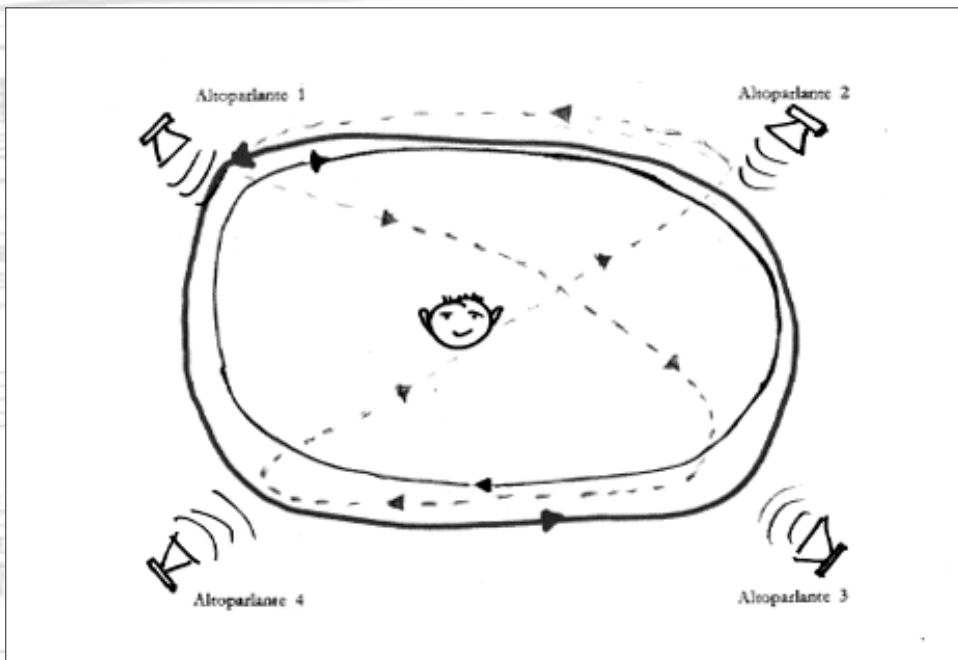


Diagram of Halaphon invented by Hans Peter HALLER.

Slow leftward rotation (outer line), quick rightward rotation (inner line), intermittent diagonal movement (dotted line).

be able to stage «Prometeo» eight times in Brussels, the condition being that we had to do it at the Opera House, not a concert hall. Actually, NONO himself once tried to stage the piece together with Jürgen FLIMM[30], but as talks went on, they came to see the impossibility of the endeavor, and eventually the project was shelved. I told WILSON this any number of times, but ultimately the decision was not mine. In the end we put on «Prometeo» and it was a flop. We just have to be on our toes from now on never to let flop like that happen again. Though, honestly speaking, neither the performances nor the production was any good. The whole show was a failure. The visual direction interfered with the performances; for a fact, the performers told me it ruined their performances.

LACHENMANN: I'd like to say that «Prometeo»

is a non-opera, not an anti-opera. As a non-opera, we can see a positive point of departure—just now André spoke of a "dramaturgy of sound"—and this exists not only in NONO, but also in MAHLER and BEETHOVEN. In that sense, this dramaturgy of sound is not something specific to «Prometeo» proper. That and, we've spoken of the importance of the text, well I've seen «Prometeo» already seven or eight times, and frankly speaking, the text is unintelligible just listening to the sound alone. Given the difficulty of the core text, indications are there will be major problems for those who come to hear «Prometeo» for the first time to make sense of it. Short of which, as Mr. ASADA has said, I suppose it's only natural that the audience make the most of a kind of sound-tripping. It would be unreasonable to expect someone listening to this music for the first time to grasp the extremely

[28] Performed as part of the Ars Musica Festival at Brussels' *Halles de Schaerbeek* on 4-6, 8-9, 11-13 March 1997.

[29] Robert WILSON (1941-). American avantgarde dramatist. Numerous collaborations with musicians such as the opera «Einstein on the

Beach» (1976) co-written with Philip GLASS. Has staged a number of operas.

[30] Jürgen FLIMM (1941-). German dramatist. Also staged many operas. Staged the Frankfurt production of NONO's «*Al gran sole carico d'amore*» in 1979.

[31] «*Moses und Aaron*». Opera by SCHÖNBERG based on the Old Testament story of Moses and Aaron. SCHÖNBERG wrote a script for three acts, but only completed music for the first two acts.

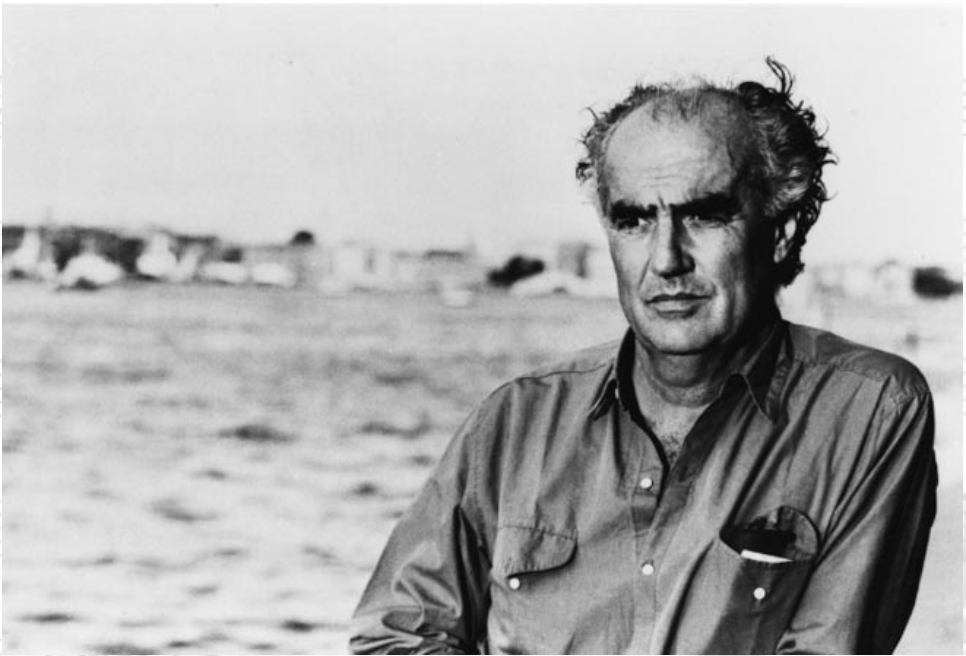


photo: Karin Rocholl

complicated concepts behind the texts.

ASADA: The question of opera or non-opera depends on the definition of opera, which gets to be all very academic. But at least I believe we can say this. Regarding the possibility or impossibility of visual staging, we are reminded via the issue of the forbidding the worship of idolatry of SCHÖNBERG's opera «*Moses und Aron*» [31]. From that perspective, might not NONO's «*Prometeo*» offer an answer to the question, is opera possible after the incomplete end of «*Moses und Aron*» at Act II? In «*Moses und Aron*», Moses is trying faithfully to obey commandments from God, particularly the forbidding of idolatry. Accordingly, he does not sing, but expresses himself in *Sprachgesang*, that is, in speech. Whereas Aaron fashions a golden calf-like idol, saying he must appeal to the visual in order for the masses to understand, which he expresses quite brilliantly in song. The conflict between these two continues for two acts until Moses happens upon an orgy around the golden calf that Aaron has bestowed upon the masses, and he breaks down saying, "Words, o words, what I lack art thou." So ends Act II; Act

III and after remained unscored, SCHÖNBERG's taking asylum in America notwithstanding.

Accordingly, while plenty of operas were written after that, in the larger sense the history of opera can be said to have been left hanging at the abrupt ending of Act II of «*Moses und Aron*». Which poses the question, is opera possible any more? Here NONO, in very radical form, provides an answer how, while banning idolatry, that is, while utterly rejecting the visual, we might still be made to experience profound drama through sound.

But perhaps this is making too much of Jewish subtexts. Of course, NONO—especially in his later years—showed great interest in Judica, though I think it was unrelated to what is called Jewish mysticism. In other words, whereas the essence of the Catholic experience ultimately reduces to the word "*credo*" [I believe], the Jewish experience is in essence "Listen, o Israel!" Did he not, then, take this commandment concentrated in the word "*ascolta*" [listen] and universalize it? By this commandment "listen," people are exposed to a diversity of "other voices," to the multifarious differences born of frequent contradictions and hostilities distributed

Prometeo – Tragedia dell'ascolto

Masterwork of Luigi NONO's later years, drawing on motifs from the Greek myth of Prometheus, with a libretto by philosopher Massimo CACCIARI composed from texts by HESIOD, AESCHYLUS, HÖLDERLIN and BENJAMIN, and spatial acoustics by the *Experimentalstudio der Heinrich-Strobel-Stiftung des Sudwestfunks Freiburg*. Initially conceived in a form closer to a traditional opera, it ultimately eschewed the visual to become a "Tragedy of Listening." The overall

framework is structured in five movements called "isolas" [islands]. Premiered at the 1984 Venice Biennale in a giant boat-shaped space (design: Renzo PIANO) installed within San Lorenzo in Florence. Amended in 1985.

vocal soloists: soprano × 2, alto × 2, tenor
instrumental soloists: flute (bass flute, piccolo), clarinet (E^b clarinet, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet), tuba (trombone, euphonium), string trio (viola, cello, contrabass), glass × 3, speaker × 2, chorus, 4 orchestras (flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, violin × 4, viola, cello, contrabass)
electronic realisation staff
conductor × 2

archipelago-like through space. That is nothing less than tragedy. In spite of which, it is that tragedy that makes possible our first profound experience. In this sense, the "Tragedy of Listening" emerges as the fundamental concept of «*Prometeo*». Actually, even without hearing the whole of the text, the commandment *ascolta* is repeated here and there impressionistically. Through the course of this we ourselves open up toward sometimes cruel, yet simultaneously subtle distinctions. That, I believe is the essence of this work.

[This symposium took place on 27 August 1998, *Akiyoshidai Kokusai Geijutu-mura* (International Art Village).]

Helmut LACHENMANN

Born 1935 in Stuttgart. Composer. Studied composition under Luigi NONO. Works include «temA», «Salut für Caudwell» and the opera «Matchstick Girl».

ISOZAKI Arata

Born 1931 in Oita. Architect. Many internationally recognized works, such as the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) and Barcelona Olympic Sports Hall. Writings include *ISOZAKI Arata no Shigoto-jutsu* [*The Workstyles of ISOZAKI Arata*] (Okokusha: Tokyo).

ASADA Akira

Born 1957 in Kobe. Economist and social philosopher; Associate Professor at Kyoto University. Writings include *Kozo to Chikara* [*Structure and Power*] (Keiso Shobo: Tokyo) and *Rekishi no Owari to Seikimatsu no Sekai* [*The End of History and the World at Fin de Siècle*] (Shogakukan: Tokyo).

CHOKI Seiji

Born 1958 in Fukuoka. Musicologist; Associate Professor at Tokyo University. Known for his multifaceted studies on 20th century music. Writings include *Ferruccio Busoni* (Misuzu Shobo: Tokyo) and *Daisan Teikoku to Ongakuka-tachi* [*Musicians and the Third Reich*] (Ongaku-no-Tomo-sha: Tokyo).

Special thanks to:
Akiyoshidai International Art Village
Archivio Luigi Nono

Background Visual: Handwritings of «prometeo» by Luigi NONO
Luigi Nono, *Verso Prometeo* (RICORDI, 1984)