Johannes Kreidler
Style Melody

-2.

In music, as everywhere else, there are worn-out concepts. Just as the old word "ideology" seems unusable to modern people who think in differences (what, after all, is not ideological?), and just as (I would maintain) the word "truth" can only be used in quotation marks, terms such as "structure" and "material" have become ever vaguer in music theory (definite meanings for these terms never achieved broad consensus in the musical world), even though they are constantly used.

-1.

In my text "Zum 'Materialstand' der Gegenwartsmusik,"[1] I showed that there is little evidence in music to support a binary understanding of "material" on the one hand and "shaping" on the other, comparable to the raw stone that is hewn by the artist. If anything, "material" could be identified materialistically in the available instruments, or if a work exhibits conceptual precision. Adopted identities, such as samples, could be termed "material"; but here too there is great imprecision, as the samples themselves are composed of particular elements, and so on.

I have therefore suggested, referring to Niklas Luhmann's art theory[2], that one should instead speak of "medium" and "form". A "medium" is a relatively loose connection of elements, while "forming" constitutes a concentration of dependency relationships. These are always intermediate steps, however; something that is a *form*, for example a melody formed from the elements of a musical scale, can in turn be a *medium*, perhaps for variations or different instrumentations. Ultimately, the difference between medium and form is itself medial. Amid these abstract recursions, individual works of art situate themselves concretely-conceptually.

0.

This text deals with the procedure I call *style melody*: using different commercial audio Software, a short melody is arranged in all manner of styles, which are heard in great numbers in succession. On the one hand, this is simply a technical innovation of modern Software, but on the other hand, it implies various forms of social semantics.

1   Johannes Kreidler, "Zum 'Materialstand' der Gegenwartsmusik," in *Musik & Ästhetik* 52 (October 2009). Online: http://www.kreidler-net.de/theorie/materialstand.htm, accessed 12/20/11.

2   Niklas Luhmann, "Das Medium der Kunst," in *Aufsätze und Reden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001), pp. 198-217.

All of these aspects—the short melody, the manner, sequence and frequency of the arrangements and the choice of sociological and music-historical contexts—are simultaneously formations and media of composition, as I shall demonstrate with various examples.

/.

1.
When I compose a new work, I try to compose only as much as absolutely necessary. For example, I use samples and composition programs or concert figures and texts from finance and politics into sounds. After all, one doesn't have to reinvent the wheel! I consider it culturally far more helpful and ethical to build on existing elements than to force something supposedly "new" at all costs. "They know no greater buildings than those a single man can build!" (Bertolt Brecht) Engaging with the things around us concerns everyone. That has nothing to do with laziness; free time is used for acquiring knowledge. (And anyway—a Protestant work ethic can hardly be the ideal.)

2.
I think that sensitivity to the semantics of the sensually experienceable is increasing. Today, even abstract color panels reveal Company logos; the oboe sounds beautiful, but also like an instrument left over from the world of bourgeois orchestral concerts. If I hear music on the radio that interests me, all I have to do is Start the iPhone app *Shazam* and hold the phone up to the loudspeaker for 30 seconds—it even works in restaurants—and the display teils me what the piece is called. On the Internet—which tends towards the *total archive—there* are collections of sounds that will soon contain every combination of frequencies, and every file has a name. Just as some cultures have numerous words in active use for varieties of plants, snow, etc., music theory has names for all the melodic building blocks such as cambiata, neighboring note etc., terms and conceptual systems that can immediately be called up on Wikipedia via cell phone. Is there any aspect of music that has not yet been verbalized?

3.
Harry Lehmann has brought into play the idea of a "substance-aesthetic turn."[3] His diagnosis is that the sonic repertoire of the avant-garde has completely lost its boundaries and has more or less been explored in full. Further progress can only occur if the focus is shifted to its semantic potentials.

---

3   Lehmann's definition: http://www.harrylehmann.net/begriffe/#gehaltsaesthetische-wende, accessed 12/20/11.

(Naturally one can still compose in a music-immanent fashion; the sonic repertoire has been fully tested, but there are still many more combinations of sounds and formal conceptions. Peculiarly enough, however, a form of Saturation is reached here too when one hears so many similarities and recurring patterns in New Music—to the extent that they congeal into clichés. This is not simply a result of using the same instruments—the combinatorial shapes are also becoming increasingly similar. The fact is, whoever composes for the violin is copying something else.)

II.

0.

For some time, I have been interested in taking up some of the established techniques of New Music as historical, and then transferring them to the present day with its methods and attitudes. For example, I realized John Cage's silent classic *4'33"* as split-screen video on YouTube, fed Brian Ferneyhough's *Second String Quartet* into the pop composition Software *Band in a Box,* had Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* spoken by a car navigation system, and applied Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*—embodying the principle of constant crescendo—to a re-mixed scene from the film *Downfall.* I also performed Alvin Lucier's pioneering sound art work *Musik for a Solo Performer* as a political performance under artificially aggravated conditions.

1.

A technique that also came into view for me is that of *Klangfarbenmelodie*: a melody consisting not of pitches, but of tone colors. This emerges when the pitches remain static, i.e., when a sustained chord changes only in its Instrumentation.

2.

How have things changed since the time of Schönberg, who first conceptualized *Klangfarbenmelodie* in 1911 in the third of his *Five Orchestral Pieces* op. 16 as an emancipation from melodic-tonal thought? The range of available instruments has been augmented by electronic equipment, and there is an increased understanding of the semantics of instruments. A typical percussion set-up is not a homogeneous instrument, but rather a collage of instruments from all manner of countries and cultures. And *Klangfarbenmelodie* is also a melody with "human intervals"—the note wandering from a cello to a horn is, so to speak, wandering from one person to another.

3.
I discovered one way of vividly revealing sonic semantics in pop composition programs. Using the Software *Band in a Box*, I can compose a melody with accompanying harmonies and choose an instrumental arrangement from 3774 styles, which arrangement is played back with synthetic sound (Example 1).

Example 1

4-
In *Living in a Box* for large ensemble and sampler, the third part features a relatively abstract—"old-style avantgarde"-Klangfarbenmelodie, arranged in patterns and augmented with a microtonal synthesizer. A mixture of Schönberg, Feldman and Stockhausen, if you will (and algorithmically generated, as these techniques can be formalized today).

The fourth part uses *Band in a Box* arrangements: from an individual chord sent through countless styles to a long melodic-harmonic passage processed from recorder trio to "Gumshoe Brit 80s Reggae Rock". With the single chord the effect is still the same as the old *Klangfarbenmelodie,* but as the time window opens further, we find an increasing divergence not only of colors, but also recognizably different styles: the melody of tone colors becomes a melody of styles.

5.
With their synthetic sounds, the *Band in a Box* styles naturally sound somewhat "trashy", especially if one considers that elements from pop music are generally looked down upon in the New Music concert hall. Furthermore, I only use

moderately advanced tonal melodies in such a context, or simply let a random generator compose them.

These media—to abandon the term "material"—are still fresher and less worn-out when employed in New Music (even though it has supposedly conquered all areas of sound) than in other spheres; that is why I use them. Another purpose is to finally break a taboo: it is still widely believed that a clarinet is obviously better than an iPod, but I do not think the aim of art can be only to drive Rolls-Royces. Not least, I want to work with socially relevant sound sources, which today means loudspeakers rather than bassoons. To me, the quality of New Music lies not only in the structural depth of complex parametrics and academically trained instrumental mastery, but also—and sometimes more—in the constellation of semantic systems; and there are many more media that suit this purpose than the conserved "New Music sound" alone.

6.

In *Stil I* for variable instrumentation we hear a succession of up to 100 different styles; for example, *Stil I Version for piccolo flute*, *Vibraphone*, *baritone Saxophone and audio playback* begins with this measure (Example 2), which is then repeated quietly 30 times and very loudly 55 times, each time in a different style arrangement (Example 3).

Example 2
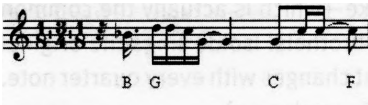
Example 3

```
Banjo & Mandolin sw. 16ths
Barbershop Quartet
Bass Riff st.8 Blues - 60's Brit
Bayou - Med. St. 8ths style
BBE_Tek Euro-Tek
Big Band - Fast Swing
Be_53s_1 - Med. ev8 Blues Rock
BE Left-hand Ev. 8ths comping
BeachCar - 60s surf shuffle rock
BeeB Rock Blues
BeeB Rock 4 Variation
BeeB Rock Blues Variation
BeeB Blues Shuffle
BeeB Slow - Slow 12/8 Blues
Beguine2 - Latin med. ev.16ths
Berlyn Euro-Tek
Bluegrass 101 w/drums -Unplugged
Bluegrass Ballad - Med. Sw.8ths
Bluegrass Boogie -Unplugged
Bgee 70s Pop swing Ballad
Bluegrass Pop - ev.8ths Bluegras
Bluegrass 101 -Unplugged
Bluegrass Rock - Up-tempo ev.8th
Bluegrass Waltz -Unplugged
Bluegrass Waltz w/drums -Unplugg
Bhangra 1 - Pop Dance from India
Big Beat - Slow Top-40 style
Aggressive Country Rock+
BigBand1 -Med. Swing Big Band
Big Pink -Unplugged
Big Sur - LA Pop Jazz
BigTony - Slow sw.16 funk rock
Bishops -MedSt8 Southern Gospel
Blakwood -Bouncy SouthernGospel
Blank 4/4 Even 8th utility 'styl
```

Recalling Schönberg's *Klangfarbenmelodie,* then, I call this *Stilmelodie.* The notion of melody, following Schönberg, is abstractly understood; it refers to a change of musical qualities in a defined medium—originally the medium of the scale, and now the medium of the stylistic palette of *Band in a Box.* The actual melody, on the other hand, remains practically static throughout the various repetitions. In this piece, the musicians begin every measure with an accent— like the mouse click that starts the next sound file (Example 4).

Example 4

7.
This technique of *Stilmelodie* is also employed in my music theater piece *Feeds. Hören TV.* In the third part of a re-staging of *Tristan and Isolde*, a short passage from Wagner's opera is performed as karaoke-which is actually the common form of entertainment for clients in Chinese brothels. Isolde sings the original melody, while the accompanying arrangement changes with every quarter note. The snare drum "clicks" through the styles (Examples 5-7).

Example 5

Example 6

Example 7


```
Question - Smooth Jazz
QwikStep - Up-tempo swing dance
90's Disco Rock
Rock Bossa #1
Rock Samba
City Rock
Rock Copa Jazz-Samba)
GypsyK style
Rock Heavy Metal
Heavy Rock
Funky Hip Hop in Swing 16ths
JamesB 70's Dance Groove
Rock Lambada Style
Medium Rock
New Orleans Rock Funk
Pop 16ths Ballad
Prinz Rock Funk (Sw.16ths)
Rap 1 Rock style
Rio Rock Samba Style
rock 1
Rock Shuffle
Slow Hip Hop
Rock-Country 'Train' groove
Racer - Ev8 fast Rock
Raindrop 60's Swing
```

All of these different styles (substance-aesthetic turn!) stand for different social groups. The style melody is a journey through society—the prostitute has to get in bed with everyone, strictly in economic time, but she sings the melody on top with extreme rubato.

8.
In the last section, "Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie", *Feeds. Hören TV* also features over 50 different metal styles illustrated with short samples. It is illuminating to see in what labels pop culture thinks! Each of these metal styles is accompanied by a dancer performing in a different dance style (Example 8).

Example 8

The functional differentiation of society: Groove Metal, Black Doom Metal, Black Metal, Post Metal, Dark Metal, Death Doom Metal, Death Metal, Doom Metal, Doomcore Metal, Drone Doom Metal, Epic Doom Metal, Traditional Doom Metal, Speed Metal, Epic Hollywood Metal, Symphonie Electric Metal, Extreme Metal, Viking Metal, Florida Death Metal, Flower Metal, Happy Metal, Avant-Garde Metal, Funeral Doom Metal, Gothic Metal, Hair Metal, Glam Metal, Poser Metal, Industrial Metal, Japanese Power Metal, Trance Metal, Sludge Metal, Folk Metal, Heavy Metal, Melodie Death Metal, Metalcore, Neo Thrash Metal, New Wave of British Heavy Metal, Second Wave of Black Metal, Nu Metal, Oriental Metal, Medieval Metal, Celtic Metal, New York Death Metal, Old School Death Metal, Opera Metal, Power Metal, Progressive Metal, Slam Death Metal, Stoner Doom Metal, National Socialist Black Metal, Swedish Death Metal, Greek Black Metal, Alternative Metal, Symphonie Metal, Symphonie Black Metal, Epic Metal, Neo-classical Metal, Technical Death Metal, Thrash Metal, True Metal, Depressive Black Metal, South American Death Metal.

9.
In *Arbeitsmarktplatz Esslingen. Musik für alle, Vermittlung vermittelt. Tragödie des Hörens, erste Roboterdemonstration*, a happening for children, young people, and amateur musicians that took place at a festival for New Music, I musically represented contradictions relating to the subject of "labor", employing the participants in the festival. For example, using style melodies we addressed the question of whether a workplace contributes to the individualization of

workers, or rather makes them all the same through Standardization and synchronization. It is always the same melody, but in a different style each time, and each musician triggers it with his or her own instrument. The ear can follow the monotonous sameness of the melody or the manifold changes of the style melody, and some styles will appeal more than others.

10.

There are, of course, other composition programs besides *Band in a Box*. In January 2009, right at the climax of the financial crisis, Microsoft brought out *Songsmith.* The Software serves the sole purpose of analyzing a melody entered by the user and deducing a possible harmonization; once again, an arrangement can be selected from a large variety of styles.

The product was launched with a commercial that tells the story of an advertising employee waiting nervously for the right idea to present at work that day. He finds his daughter, who is in the process of creating her "own" music with *Songsmith*; the penny drops, and his *Songsmith* presentation at the meeting is a triumph. That evening, he sings the happy end in a duet with his wife: "Thanks to Songsmith, now we're singin' all the time—and what a happy home well have with every word in rhyme." (Example 9)

Example 9

Unfortunately, these cozy homes were financed with loans on a massive scale until the system collapsed and triggered the financial crisis. It is precisely this Illusion of the cozy home, however, that the music of *Songsmith* embodies; for this reason, I converted fluctuations in share prices at the climax of the crisis into melodies and fed them into the Software (Example 10).

Example 10
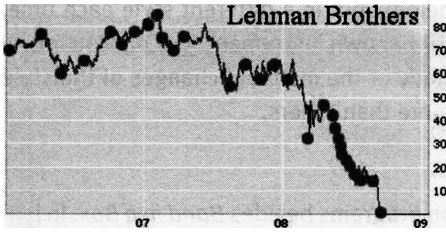
I composed almost nothing: the melodies were written by the managers of Lehman Brothers & Co. and the arrangements by the developers at Microsoft. The result is a satirical contradiction of melodies derived from an economic disaster—each descending semitone corresponds to billion-dollar losses—and arrangements that act as if everything could just keep on going. Now, two and a half years later, global stock markets are trembling once again, and I have to acknowledge that this work, despite all the sneers it provoked (people said that it was a daily gag, not art), is unfortunately more timeless than I had desired.

The piece entitled *Charts Music* and posted as a YouTube video also employs the stylistic offerings of a Computer program. The debt of the United States of America is represented by American country music, false testimonies on the war in Iraq made by state representatives are turned into a dignified string quartet, and the final dimax based on unemployment rates, growing por-nography consumption and falling stock market indices comes in the form of a breezy samba and disco pop. And although the piece, on the surface, consists entirely of pop music, it is unequivocally New Music—after the substance-aes-thetic turn.

11.
A different kind of style melody can be created through arrangements of various spatial-acoustic conditions. We know today that even the choice and placing of microphones constitute aesthetic decisions and that there is no such thing as objectivity here, only styles.

In *Kontinuum mit Melodie* I "melodized" a recording of *Orfeo* at a second level via changing filter and reverb settings using VST plug-ins (Virtual Studio Technology, an audio Software interface used worldwide). Here it is not sim-ply a matter of different frequency settings; what one can actually change is the acoustic, from different headphones—in-ear or full size—to the (supposed) reverb characteristics of the Metropolitan Opera or the Sydney Opera House. The performance spaces are themselves performed (Example 11).

Example 11
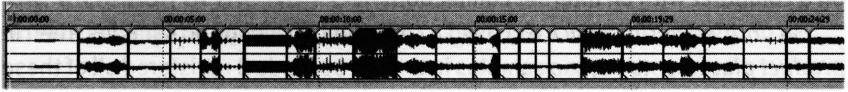
In *Kantate. No Future now* I applied the same principle to a Baroque chorale, with the second rhythmic level consisting of different filter settings and a Vibraphone adding counterpoint in a third tempo.

I also employed it in the third part of *Living in a Box:* in the middle of the algorithmicized Schönberg-Feldman-Stockhausen mixture we suddenly hear an election announcement by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel (also displayed on video). In the same rhythms that appeared earlier in the "pure" *Klangfarben-melodie*, the sound changes in its acoustic-semantic effect, from a megaphone announcement to 1930s radio crackling. At one point Angela Merkel sounds like Adolf Hitler, then like a slimy advertiser (Example 12).

Example 12

III.

1.
Polystylism has been a topos of New Music for around 50 years; Alfred Schnittke was considered its most significant exponent. In his case, however, this "pluralism" only encompassed the styles of the classical concert hall—and only those which Schnittke liked and was capable of replicating. He never combined Tibetan throat singing with Brazilian Capoeira—at most, early Classicism with late Romanticism. The difference is that the styles I employ are not musical tendencies that appeal to me; I don't identify with them, and that is not the point.

2.
Poly, "many": the large quantities are a technical achievement of digitization. Remixes have been around for a long time, but while a disc jockey used to have

two turntables and a case full of LPs, millions of music files can now be mixed on a Computer with an Internet connection.

In *untitled performance #1* I used a collection of over 9000 samples, then in *product placements* 70,200 samples in only 33 seconds (I registered all of these with the GEMA [Performing Rights Society] using a truck containing 70,200 registration forms as an art action protesting against existing Copyright laws). A great number of styles is the hallmark of style melody; I never use fewer than 50 styles. Although the melody and harmony remain constant, one never knows what style will come next—it is an "endless style melody."

3.

Composing with semantics means operating with language games - in the karaoke party at the brothel, there is a style of rock for every dient. When I speak of "melody" as a principle that can be applied to all manner of media, I continue by exploring the possibilities of-recalling Wagner's "endless melody"-an "endless" style melody, a microtonal style melody (which is conceivable, namely with only very small stylistic differences), or a style-melodic modulation, and so on.

The succession of styles is usually randomly generated; thus the Bobby Goldsbro style is followed directly by Blackwood Bouncy Southern Gospel. But I also try composing the style melody in the same way one would compose a normal melody: with (notional) steps, leaps, passing notes etc. Then the sequence Campfire Swing Strumming-Dog Funk Unplugged-Campfire Swing Strumming would be comparable to a cambiata.

Of course, that raises the question of whether the leap from Country Classical Waltz to Bossa Swing is comparable to a leap from the first scale degree to the fifth. But that is precisely where the provocation of the compositional imagination lies, and where our thought is posed the question of how far analogies are helpful.