

Bodily Expression in Electronic Music

Interdisciplinary Symposium at the University of the Arts Graz (KUG) 2009

Cultural Studies and theories of art have paid increased attention to the human body for quite a while. In part, this can be seen as a reaction to tendencies within dominating art forms that are contingent upon electronic media. For these media tend to, as it were, evaporize the body, make it invisible, or leave it behind altogether. Within the realm of electronic media, the human being who invents certain sounds is no longer their bodily source. This split seems to result in absence of the body within such music. (This tendency seems to hold with some qualifications for electronic music, electroacoustic music and any other music that has been reproduced and synthesized electronically since the 1940ies.) Electronic media multiply available sounds and produce virtually unlimited access to them over space and time; yet this gain, it seems, must be weighed against a loss of bodily contact that used to be crucial to musical expression. The discourse on the body led by the humanities has recognized as yet the technologically mediated re-entry of the body into electroacoustic music *via* user interfaces. This, however, does not address some central issues in the aesthetics of electronic music. To what extent does the presence of bodies manifest itself in the experience of electronic music – the presence, that is, literally of composers', performers', listeners' bodies as well as figuratively of the 'bodies' of the relevant machinery (including those of the indispensable loudspeakers)? And how do these bodies shape the aesthetic phenomenon of musical expression? It is these questions that the Graz symposium will address.

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