

dear composers, dear audience —

if your friend is killed in the street: can you write music?

can you work on a composition?

can you send a piece for the Reza Korourian Competition?

if someone gives a general answer to this question, i believe it will be a wrong answer.

in such a situation, a situation which we can call fundamental in a bad way, because it suspends a minimum of life preservation, of the right to live in the society as individuum, regardless different opinions and behaviours — if this fundamental consensus of a society breaks, if open violence rules, it also suspends the normal role of art.

as a result, the question about art in such a situation can only be answered individually.

if your friend is killed in the street: can you write music?

i would like to look with you at four possible individual answers.

and i would like to find some appropriate questions to each of the answers.

let us start with a person who is overwhelmed by the amount and brutality of images in media about the killings. this person cannot create art any more, because this person cannot concentrate any more. and also, this person feels that to work on a composition, on sounds, on pitches, on contrasts, on form, is pointless in view of the events which are so terribly strong and demanding.

questions which may arise here: is it against the friend who is killed in the street to preserve a space in the personal life in which an artistic referral of this killing can happen?

if image media are used in a way that they leave no choice any more rather than being overwhelmed and destroyed, where is the borderline between compassion and engagement on one side, but addiction and becoming a victim on the other side?

a second person comes to the same result, saying that art has no place and no meaning any more in this situation. but this person sees it from a different perspective.

this person decides that political engagement is the only thing which is important in this situation. go to the streets, spread the images, and if you use music, *use* music, like a flag or a parole.

questions which arise here.

is art, as real art, as art which is created in a reserved space, as art which does not simplify things but bring these things in their complexity to the audience and the community — is this art not part of the political process? or is art only for leisure and relaxation, when we had a nice diner, and then enjoy some nice sounds?

a third person may answer "yes" to the question, whether composing is possible, despite friends are being killed in the street. because for this person art is never directly related to life. art resides somehow in its own sphere, similar to mathematics, as a spiritual being which is not directly affected by the dust and dirt of daily life and its bloody bodies. so this person can somehow compose music in any situation if he or she can keep this place clean enough from daily troubles.

we may ask this person about the borderline between protection and the loss of compassion and sensitivity. is sensitivity and the ability to suffer not somehow the central precondition of art? is the main goal of art not to make us more sensitive and thus also somehow more vulnerable?

a fourth person may also be able to continue composing despite what happens in the street, but not because this person separates the street from the art. instead, she or he considers composing as a way to deal with the difficulties and hard situations of life. art would then always move between both realities: the reality of the politics, of the struggles for life, of the pain and the cries of the ones who are suffering, and the reality of sounds, of proportions, of ideas, of phantasies.

the questions we may put here are perhaps mostly related to the migration between both realities. when is the time to close the door, to shut down all media streams, for concentrating on the art? is this not a paradox in itself, to leave the friend in the street, and meet this friend in the artistic world again? how soft or hard should the heart be to make this possible? and is this something to practice, similar to practicing an instrument? can there be a growth in the ability to live in this way, and create art?

i would like to congratulate the winners of this year's Korourian Competition, and i hope they will find their way also for future works in art, and for their questions with art and life.

thank you.

jh, 13 sept 2024