

Pärt, Bach and the Bees

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Abstract

Wenn Bach Bienen gezüchtet hätte ... (If Bach Had Been a Beekeeper ..., 1976) is the most enigmatic composition from the formative year of Arvo Pärt's *tintinnabuli* style and creates an intriguing conflict with the common narrative depicting Pärt's oeuvre. The piece combines Pärt's compositional methods from contrasting stylistic periods and challenges the position of *Credo* (1968) as the watershed between avant-garde and *tintinnabuli*. The polarity of the opposing styles in this piece still resembles the aesthetics of his collages; Pärt's last connection with Bach's original music sheds new light on his earlier compositions as well as on the complexity of composer's creative search of the year 1976. Until now *Wenn Bach ...*, which could be considered a transitional work alongside *Credo* and Symphony No. 3, has not received the reception it merits.

The legendary concert of the ensemble Hortus Musicus in the Estonia Concert Hall on 27 October 1976 is considered the breakthrough performance of Arvo Pärt's *tintinnabuli*-style music, although it was not quite the first, nor yet a real breakthrough. Among the seven new works by Pärt in the programme of this concert, there was one that was very different from the others, bearing the curious and playful title *Wenn Bach Bienen gezüchtet hätte ... (If Bach Had Been a Beekeeper ...)*. In the context of the programme, it was as if the piece were a stranger from another world. Much of its score was pre-recorded and played from a tape recorder, its sound is extremely dissonant, and its title raised (and continues to raise) doubts as to whether the work was meant to be taken seriously.

The work has also left most writers on Pärt's music perplexed, and it was virtually absent from the academic debate until Christopher May's dissertation at Oxford in 2016. Paul Hillier considers it a curious exception among the earliest *tintinnabuli* works: "It is a strangely whimsical work; nothing in Pärt's new idiom prepares us for its chromaticisms, which seem to lie at an uncomfortably oblique angle to the *tintinnabuli* scales and triads" (Hillier 1997: 100). The work's 1976 premiere was based on a score that had not yet been orchestrated. The entire structure of the main part was played on the harpsichord, while most of the texture had been prerecorded, and the elucidating final section on early music

instruments failed in that performance owing to extremely uncertain intonation. Therefore, it would not have been surprising if the composer had withdrawn the work, as he has done with several of his scores. Instead, the composer has frequently returned to this unconventional work and, together with the first orchestrated version for piano, wind quintet and string orchestra from 1980/1984, known from Neeme Järvi's superb recording for Chandos in 1992,¹ there are now as many as four new versions: in 2001 a version with added percussion was born, in 2019 Pärt changed some of the formal proportions to slightly abridge the work, and in 2020 added four wind instruments and percussion to the 2001 version. Hence the extent to which Pärt has reworked *Wenn Bach ...* over such a long time is unique in his oeuvre.

Of the early *tintinnabuli* compositions, *Wenn Bach ...* is the only one in which Pärt used borrowed music – Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude in B minor from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1.² The dissonant soundscape and the dramaturgical function of the Bach quotation are reminiscent of Pärt's collages of the 1960s, as is the turning towards Bach and the motif of his initials. It may seem that this work was born "at the wrong time" or "too late". This is also the apparent reason for the work's poor reception among academics. However, *Wenn Bach ...* eloquently expresses the search of the year that the *tintinnabuli* style was born. The search was hectic and even panic-stricken,

¹ Arvo Pärt. *Collage* 1993. CD. Philharmonic Orchestra, Neeme Järvi, recorded in 1992, Chandos, CHAN 9134.

² Since 1976, the only comparison in Pärt's oeuvre is the *Mozart Adagio*, written in 1992 in memory of Oleg Kagan and based on the second movement of the Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Sonata in F major, K. 280 (189e).

as Pärt himself has said, and there are aspects in the work that thoroughly explain the nature of Pärt's stylistic turn. Indeed, it is far too simplistic to reduce the whole turnaround to the "revelation" that came on 7 February 1976 with the piano piece *Für Alina*: the complex and conflicted *Wenn Bach ...* was born long after this piano piece and is chronologically surprisingly closely linked to the birth of a new creative concept and to the preparations for the legendary concert presenting *tintinnabuli* on 27 October 1976.

Pärt's relationship with Bach's music in his avant-garde period is often interpreted simplistically, and the composer himself is partly to blame for this for defining this relationship as a black-and-white opposition to his own style in a much-quoted interview with Enzo Restagno:

Turning to Bach was for me a way of stating my position regarding my experience with twelve-tone music. I wanted to step outside the situation, in order to step into something that I had not yet explored. In my state of extreme discomfort at that time I wanted to prove to myself how beautiful Bach's music was, and how hateful mine was. (Restagno et al. 2012: 14)

Without wishing to cast doubt on these words, I shall try to show that Bach's place in the musical life of the 1960s was very different from that of today, and that the modernists of the time were more influenced than we might think by both the preclassical period as well as by the new aesthetics of orchestral performance that emerged with the rediscovery of Baroque music in the 1950s.

Enzo Restagno rightly writes that Bach's work, and the repertoire of the preclassical period in general, had been completely neglected in the Soviet Union of the 1950s, and that Rudolf Barshai (1924–2010) founded the Moscow Chamber Orchestra in 1955 with the express purpose of promoting awareness and interpretation of the music of the preclassical period (Restagno 2004: 124; Restagno 2005: 127). However, the founding of this orchestra had a much broader meaning and background. In Western Europe a number of chamber orchestras with an ensemble-like playing

style were founded after the Second World War, not only bringing late Baroque composers such as Corelli, Vivaldi, Bach and Handel into the canon of the orchestral repertoire, but also creating opportunities for modernist composers.

Chamber orchestras, just like the chamber choirs that were founded at around the same time, brought new demands in terms of sound culture. Precision of detail and alertness to rhythm distinguished them from the typical sound of traditional larger orchestras and choirs. In 1960, Samuel Saulus (1933–1990), a talented flautist, and the conductor Neeme Järvi (b. 1937) founded a chamber orchestra in Tallinn, apparently following the example of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and of the Virtuosi di Roma (conducted by Renato Fasano), which had repeatedly performed in the Soviet Union, including Estonia. From the very beginning the orchestra's programmes included works by Bach and Handel, as well as works by Estonian modernist composers commissioned by the orchestra. (Kõlar 2022) In the 1960s the orchestra also premiered several works by Pärt. At that time the manner of performing preclassical music no longer necessarily guided young composers towards neoclassical writing, but rather adopted a new aesthetic of string playing that brought the rhythmic and formal structure of the music into clear focus. For example, this new orchestral aesthetic can be seen in Pärt's *Collage über B-A-C-H* (1964), his first work of this kind, written for the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra,³ with the instruction *preciso* for the opening movement.

These two repertoire trends, early and avant-garde music, both of which aroused distrust in the Soviet Union, had something in common. Both departed from the massive soundscape of late romanticism, from the dialectic of functional harmony and from the narrative form strategies that derived from it. In the Soviet Union, these two trends of "unofficial music" (Schmelz 2009) were most brilliantly united by Andrey Volkonsky (1933–2008) – the author of the first serial works as well as founder of the first early music ensemble in the Soviet Union. Volkonsky is also said to have influenced Arvo Pärt to look for alternative tonal language in early music. With his ensemble

³ During the 1960s this orchestra performed under different names. At the premiere of the *Collage über B-A-C-H*, conducted by Eri Klas, the orchestra was known as the Estonian Radio Chamber Orchestra.

Madrigal and his know-how that was unique in the Soviet Union, he certainly provided the impetus for the creation of Hortus Musicus in Tallinn (1972), and this early music ensemble was very important in the birth of Pärt's *tintinnabuli* style. In 1978 the Tallinn Festival of Early and Contemporary Music organised by Andres Mustonen (b. 1953), the founder and leader of Hortus Musicus, became a major event of "unofficial music" in the Soviet Union. It featured Hortus Musicus alongside the leading figures of Soviet avant-garde music.

The coexistence of early and avant-garde music was not unusual in 1960s Western Europe either, but in the Soviet Union the symbiosis was stronger and lasted significantly longer. The situation of Bach's music in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist Soviet Union was, however, somewhat special. Bach had a firm place in music education and in the students' repertoire, but not in concert life. This is why in 1957 Glenn Gould's Bach performances in Moscow were met with the kind of enthusiasm that was later reserved for rock stars. But at the time Gould was also performing the music of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, and in his Moscow lectures, he emphasised that the twelve-tone music of the Second Viennese School had its roots in the European polyphonic tradition and in Bach, thus reinforcing the bridge between Bach and avant-garde music.

At the same time, Bach, who had remained on the margins of musical life, was viewed by many Soviet composers as nothing less than a guardian angel: the turn to his compositional techniques was linked to the need to seek ways of rationally ordering the tonal system in a situation where a move towards the twelve-tone and serial music was ruled out by cultural policy. For example, Dmitry Shostakovich wrote his *24 Preludes and Fugues* under the harshest Stalinist pressure in 1950–51, shortly after his public condemnation as a "formalist" (1948). Following Shostakovich's example, Rodion Shchedrin wrote a similar cycle in the 1960s – close in time to Pärt's collages of 1964–1968. In the liner notes to Tatyana Nikolayeva's 1987 recording of Shostakovich's complete *Preludes and Fugues* (Moscow Studio Archives, MOS 19065), Lawrence Cosentino explains that these works represent an "extraordinarily bold

and shockingly profound act of self-healing". And Pärt has used similar terms to explain his turn to Bach.

Pärt's relationship to Bach's music is thus ambivalent: on the one hand, Bach represents the polyphonic tradition, which organically underlies Pärt's compositional technique in the works of his early years such as *Partita* for piano (1958) and the First (*Polyphonic*) Symphony (1963), while on the other hand, in his collages – *Collage über B-A-C-H* (1964) and *Credo* (1968) – he places Bach's music in polar opposition to the avant-garde style. But there is a third link too: Pärt uses the motif of Bach's initials not only in the *Collage über B-A-C-H* but also in three other works from 1964,⁴ as if seeking the composer's support and blessing for his music. Again, this is nothing new in 20th century modernism – we find this motif in works by Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Paul Hindemith, and many others – yet its share in Pärt's twelve-tone rows is remarkable. All three of these ties come together in the 1976/1984 work *Wenn Bach ...* The work therefore comes into an intriguing conflict with the common narrative of Pärt's creative career, according to which in 1968 *Credo* marked a resolute break with avant-gardism, after which the composer began his painful search for a new creative paradigm outside existing compositional practice. However, recent analyses by several authors such as Kevin Karnes (2017) and Christopher May (2016) have brilliantly demonstrated that the renewal of Pärt's compositional technique sprang organically both from his own earlier experience with serial music and from a more general search in the music of the 1970s. In the introduction to the collection of articles *Arvo Pärt: Sounding the Sacred*, the editors Peter Bouteneff, Jeffers Engelhardt and Robert Saler sum up this insight by stating that "Pärt's genius lies not in an ex nihilo innovation but rather in the creative adaptation and evolution of nascent themes that shaped an entire generation of musicians in his context" (Bouteneff et al. 2021: 5). In this context, *Wenn Bach ...* is a bridge between two experiences that are contradictory only at first sight (May 2016: 61). At the same time, however, it is also a sincere testimony to the painfully intense search of 1976, the fruits

⁴ *Diagramme* (piano), *Quintettino* (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn), *Musica sillabica* (12 instruments; withdrawn).

of which were not yet evident in the concert at the end of October that year, but rather in the spectacular series of works that followed in 1977: *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, *Tabula rasa*, *Fratres*, *Summa*, *Arbos*, and others.

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Wenn Bach ... is a serial work in its basic structure, as are many of Pärt's other early *tintinnabuli* works, including *Tabula rasa* and *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*. However, elements of serial technique can also be found in many of his later works. My argument is based on the view that serial technique is a principle for structuring a composition, clearly separate from tonal language. And here I see a serious misunderstanding in the overall Pärt narrative, which contrasts the serial technique of the 1960s with the post-1976 *tintinnabuli*: in 1968 *Credo* put an end to the pandissonant soundscape of post-war avant-gardism, but not to serial technique. The Russian musicologist Svetlana Savenko cautiously drew attention to this as early as 1991 when she wrote in *Sovetskaya Muzyka*: "It is as if Pärt is transferring the idea of serialism onto modal material, and the total diatonic style of *tintinnabuli* turns out to be the flip side of the total chromatic of serialism, its dialectical opposite ..." (Savenko 1991: 19; transl. Karnes 2017: 13). If we fail to take account of this connection, we underestimate one of the basic principles of Pärt's creative thinking, which is reduction.

Pärt created an excellent example of the principle of reduction as early as 1963, when he composed the choral miniature *Solfeggio* immediately after the *Perpetuum mobile* for symphony orchestra, transferring the reduced structure of that pandissonant orchestral work to a choral piece based on the C major scale. Paul Hillier described the latter as prophetic because of its use of the simplest conceivable material – the diatonic scale – while at the same time avoiding any connection with tonal harmony (Hillier 1997: 90). Several writers have seen *Solfeggio* as a foretelling of Pärt's post-1976 style, but it seems that the connections of this miniature with Pärt's characteristic structural procedures are more multifaceted than has been shown so far. What was first achieved here was, on the one hand, the liberation of serial technique from dodecaphony and, on the other, the separation of diatonic

material from tonal harmony – an idea that would later be realised in the *tintinnabuli* technique.

Already in the 1960s, in two works related to Bach Pärt used the 12-tone rows in a somewhat reduced manner. In *Collage über B-A-C-H*, the main series consists of 10 tones rather than 12, while in *Credo* it is a circle of fifths, a simplification *ad extremum* of the idea of twelve-tone music. Whereas in *Collage über B-A-C-H*, the 10-tone series begins with the motif B-A-C-H, in *Wenn Bach ...*, it is only this four-tone motif that forms the basis of the entire serial structure. One of the most prominent Russian music theorists, Yuri Kholopov, refers to the use of an ordered pitch-class series that is shorter than twelve tones as microserialism (*микросерийность*): for example, the introduction to Anton Webern's String Quartet, *op. posth.* (1905), is based on a three-tone motif, which is treated in the same way as the usual 12-tone rows – in transposition, inversion, and retrogression (Segall 2020: 6). The four-tone main motive B-A-C-H (B_♭-A-C-B_♭) of *Wenn Bach ...* undergoes a number of procedures similar to those of the 12-tone rows in Pärt's works of the mid-1960s, *Perpetuum mobile* and *Pro et contra*. In these works, too, the serial procedures are reduced to a simple and schematic form when compared with the practices of post-war avant-gardism. All the more so are they reduced in the case of the series with only four-tone. Moreover, it is easily recognisable as a motif much used in Western music and, at least at the beginning of the work, the principle of its rhythmic arrangement is audibly traceable.

This rhythmic arrangement is similar to that of *Pro et contra*, part 1, but also to *Perpetuum mobile*: the densification of the texture is achieved by the systematic addition of rhythmic units in a simple arithmetic progression. The structure of the main part of *Wenn Bach ...* contains four main segments of music, labelled in the score with the successive letters of B-A-C-H and each of the segments further divides into four subsections (May 2016: 44). In the original 1976 version, the four main segments are connected in sequence, but from the orchestrated version of 1984 onwards, they are separated by 2-, 3- and 4-measure segments respectively, in which a detail from the final section of the work – the modified Bach quote, i.e. the ascending scale with *tintinnabuli*-sounds – appears in a growing dynamic. In the early

Figure 1. *Wenn Bach ...*, 1976/1984 version, construction of ostinato scheme (May 2016: 438).

Segment	B-A-C-H transposition	Voice (Rehearsal mark)	Rhythmic units in a bar	Ostinato duration (bars)	Segment length (bars)
B	B ₁ -A-C-B ₁	1	1 (semibreve)	1	10
		2	2 (minim)	2	
		3	3 (triplet minim)	3	
		4	4 (crotchet)	4	
A	A-G ₁ -B ₁ -A ₁	5	2 (minim)	2	20
		6	4 (crotchet)	4	
		7	6 (triplet crotchet)	6	
		8	8 (quaver)	8	
C	C-B ₁ -D-C ₁	9	3 (triplet minim)	3	30
		10	6 (triplet crotchet)	6	
		11	9 (nested triplet)	9	
		12	12 (triplet quaver)	12	
H	B ₁ -A ₁ -D ₁ -C	13	4 (crotchet)	4	40
		14	8 (quaver)	8	
		15	12 (triplet quaver)	12	
		16	16 (semiquaver)	16	

versions of the work each of the 16 subsections of the main part followed in their length a simple mathematical logic: 1, 2, 3, and 4 bars in the B segment; 2, 4, 6 and 8 bars in the A segment; 3, 6, 9, and 12 bars in the C segment; 4, 8, 12 and 16 bars in the H segment (Figure 1). In the last two versions of 2019 and 2020, the composer decided to shorten this rigorous scheme in the interests of compactness of musical form, while retaining the mathematical logic. At the same time, he prescribed a slightly slower tempo, so that in fact the duration of the work remained almost the same as before. But during an interview at the Pärt Centre in October 2019 Pärt expressed doubts as to whether this “concession” to the listener was really justified.⁵

However, another dramatic element is added to the increasingly prolonged segments of the work: in the final segment of each section, an increasingly aggressive triadic “signal motif” appears, with the number of repetitions increasing from one to four. Dramaturgically, this motif is paradoxical: as a triadic motif it contrasts with the chromaticism of the clusters in the opening section, and based on the experience of previous collages it could be considered an element from the so-called “positive” side. On the other hand, this motif joins the work’s vigorously pulsating rhythmic background and comes across as harsh. In Pärt’s musical diary, it is described as “a piercing signal” and “through a wild thicket”.⁶ Nora Pärt has attached particular importance to

⁵ Arvo Pärt Centre (APC), unpublished archive interview with Arvo Pärt by Kristina Körver, 8 October 2019.

⁶ Arvo Pärt Centre (Arvo Pärdi Keskus), APK 2-1.17, p. 123, 26 August 1976.

the image of the signal and associated it with the panic-stricken creative search of 1976. She sees here a mnemonic connection to radio signatures, to signals from some distant unknown space.⁷ These are like signs with an abstract meaning, concentrated information, and against the background of a certain aggressiveness of the work as a whole, one can even see a connection with the apocalypse. Pärt gives a dramatic function to this signal motif in the music he composed a few years later for the Polish science fiction film *Pilot Pír's Inquest* (director Marek Piestrak, Zespoły Filmowe, 1979), in which the humanely and technically minded worlds collide: during the film's opening credits, this motif is played against a particularly aggressive rhythmic background, which is nevertheless very similar to the pulsation of *Wenn Bach*....

As in Pärt's earlier collages, but for the last time in his work overall, the counterforce to the aggression in *Wenn Bach* ... is borrowed music, this time from Bach's prelude in B minor (BWV 869, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1): its details punctuate the main sections of the work, while the entire first half of the prelude (17 measures) has been worked into the final resolution of the piece. The three-part texture of the prelude is slightly thinned out and its voices are complemented with the *tintinnabuli*-triads, neutralising the tonal processes of Bach's prelude.

Why did Pärt choose this prelude? In the above-mentioned interview in October 2019, Arvo and Nora Pärt recalled that this prelude had been Nora's favourite for many years, and perhaps the music simply lay open on the piano. Yet such a coincidence is hardly likely, because already in the early stages of the piece's composition Pärt was clearly looking for a meaningful connection. On 11 April 1976 the first blueprints of the work's structure appear in his musical diary, along with the remark that a quotation is needed for the end of the piece, a beginning of Bach's own work on the theme of B-A-C-H.⁸ However, no suitable quotation could be found. The idea of using the Prelude in B minor does not appear

until September of the same year, and in the diary it is then immediately accompanied by the *tintinnabuli*-voices.⁹ It is likely that in this Prelude Pärt found a link with the basic elements of *tintinnabuli*: a predominantly gradual movement in the lower part, often within an octave, which emphatically represents diatonics, in contrast to the tense chromaticism of the B-A-C-H motif. In the two upper voices, however, structures of triadic harmony appear, with melody lines beginning with rising fourths – intervals that also dominate the signal motifs that run through the work.

The borrowings from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* create a remarkable bridge between the end of Pärt's avant-garde period and the beginning of his new style, inasmuch as *Credo* and *Wenn Bach* ... quote the first and last preludes of Bach's essential collection. The beginning of the C major prelude used in *Credo* symbolizes the pure, so-called "white-key music", while the "walking bass" of the B minor prelude, which moves in steps within an octave, stands in Baroque music for the concept *omnes*: the circle of all the keys in the cycle is completed here, and Bach amplifies this character further with the exceptionally chromatic subject of the fugue that follows, containing all 12 tones of the octave. One cannot be sure that this image of the "beginning and end" of the tonal system actually inspired Pärt, but the connection is too significant to rule out the possibility. Moreover, one can see here a link to the mirror symmetry so characteristic of structures in Pärt's work: for example, alongside the first sketches of *Wenn Bach* ..., he constructs in his diary a number of mirror-symmetrical melodic patterns.¹⁰ Such a mirror symmetry of beginning and end is beautifully realised in the opening section of *Credo*, where the material does not fully coincide with the four opening measures of Bach's prelude in C major (as it might seem) but connects the beginning and end of the prelude – the first two and the last two measures – as a palindrome. A slightly different synthesis of the initial and final sections of Bach's prelude

⁷ APC, unpublished archive interview with Arvo Pärt by Kristina Körver, 8 October 2019.

⁸ APK 2-1.9, pp. 51–56.

⁹ APK 2-1.18, pp. 15–17, 13 September 1976.

¹⁰ APK 2-1.9, pp. 58, 60, 13 April 1976.

occurs in the final measures of *Wenn Bach ...*. The first half, borrowed from Bach's prelude, ends in the dominant key, F# major, while the added *tintinnabuli*-voices remain in B minor, and in the original 1976 version this dissonant connection between the two keys persists until the last chord. From the 1984 version onwards, however, this dissonance is resolved: without the *tintinnabuli*-voices, the final cadences of the first and second half of Bach's prelude sound in succession.

Bach's prelude in B minor appeared in Pärt's musical diaries quite late in the composition of the work, in mid-September 1976, a month and a half before the legendary concert of October 27. In the space of a few days, the diaries recorded not only the solution to the work *Wenn Bach ...*, but also the formation of the structure of the cycle performed on October 27 and its name, *Tintinnabuli*. On September 12, a cryptic entry appears in the diary: "Each piece has its own formula (number), bell-ness (колокольность) – bound up with the principles of bell-ness. Variability is also bell-ness."¹¹ And the next day: "Tintinnabuli – a generic name for a series of works. There are currently seven of them."¹² Pärt has never wanted to theorise about the connection between this name and his new style and has always maintained that it was a metaphor summarising his strivings at the time. In any case, as regards the genesis of his style, it is intriguing that, while finding this metaphor, he was working most intensively on *Wenn Bach Bienen gezüchtet hätte ...*, a piece which, among those of the very first *tintinnabuli* cycle, seems to be the furthest from the essence of the new style. The structure of the cycle is also recorded in the diary of September 12–13, and there we see *Wenn Bach ...* at the climax of the cycle, together with the piano piece *Für Alina* (see Fig. 7 p. 40).

Leo Brauneiss has spoken of Pärt's *tintinnabuli* technique as the emancipation of dissonance (Brauneiss 2003: 21). Pärt was already moving towards this in his 1963 choral miniature *Solfeggio*, the piece which also marks the beginning of

a radical reduction of serial technique and its alienation from 12-tone music. Perhaps it is because of the title *Tintinnabuli* which unifies the seven works by Pärt premiered on 27 October 1976, that greater attention has always been paid to their pitch organisation. However, the works which consistently exhibit the basic characteristic of the *tintinnabuli* technique – the regular blending of the M- and T-voices – are still in the minority among these seven. Nevertheless, in all of these works Pärt explores how to deal with reduced musical material, applying mathematical order to melodic and rhythmic structures and shaping texture and form on the basis of rigorous formulae. *Wenn Bach ...* is perhaps the most daring experiment in this direction in the cycle; moreover, as we have seen, despite – or perhaps even because of – the interest the work has increasingly attracted among conductors and musicologists, it has given the composer no peace in his search for a final, definitive form.

But still, why the bees ...? The four minutes of heaps of clusters are indeed reminiscent of a beehive, especially when performed with a partially pre-recorded harpsichord at the 1976 concert. These clusters produce a rather aggressive effect, and variations of the title of the work have also included wasps. The work is dedicated to Ofelia Tuisk (1919–1981), an Estonian musicologist, one of the few who dared to support modernist compositions, including those by Pärt, at the predominantly conservative meetings of the Estonian Composers' Union. In Pärt's musical diary from late August 1976 *The portrait of a musicologist on the background of a wasps' nest*¹³ was conceived as the (sub)title for *Wenn Bach ...*. But there really is something about the bees – these marvellous creatures – that we don't grasp. The bees' dance seems random and disorderly, but an enquiring eye can see that this movement is the expression of previously learned information and a vital code indicating where to look for food.

¹¹ APK 2-1.18, p. 13: "Igal teosel on oma valem (number), колокольность – связана принципами колокольности. Variantsus on ka kellalisus."

¹² APK 2-1.18, p. 19: "Tintinnabuli – üldnimetus teosteseeriale. Praegu on neid 7."

¹³ APK 2-1.17, pp. 123, 128, 26–27 August 1976: "Muusikateadlase portree ühe herilaspere foonil."

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Pärt, Bach ja mesilased

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Toomas Siitan

Arvo Pärdi *tintinnabuli*-stiili legendaarsel esmaesitlusel 27. oktoobril 1976 Estonia kontserdisaalis oli seitsme uue teose hulgas üks, mis teistest suuresti erines: mängulise pealkirjaga „Wenn Bach Bienen gezüchtet hätte ...“ („Kui Bach oleks mesilasi pidanud ...“). Teos oli selles kavas otsekui võõras teisest maailmast ning jäi kuni Christopher May 2016 Oxfordis kaitstud väitekirjani akadeemilisest diskussioonist peaaegu välja. Teose seerialik struktuur ei olnud esmaesituseks veel läbi orkestreeritud, selle põhi-osa esitati klavessiinil, kusjuures suurem osa faktuurist oli eelsalvestatud. Selle „pilti sobimatu“ teose juurde on helilooja aga palju kordi tagasi pöördunud ja aastatel 1984–2019 on temast valminud neli erinevalt orkestreeritud ja pisut muudetud vormiga uusversiooni.

„Wenn Bach ...“ kõigutab Pärdi loometeed kujutavat ja üldiselt omaks võetud narratiivi, milles 1976. aastal leitud *tintinnabuli*-stiil on varasele avangardistlikule loomingle järsult vastandatud. Helilooja muusikapäevikud annavad teosele 1976. aasta pingelistes otsingutes seni näidatust palju tähtsama koha, selle saamislugu lisab olulisi tahke *tintinnabuli*-tehnika mõistmisse ning teost võib koguni näha kaht loomeperioodi ühendava sillana (May 2016: 61). Seitsmest teosest, mida esitleti 1976. a. oktoobris ühendava pealkirja all „Tintinnabuli“, esines *tintinnabuli*-tehnika põhitunnus – M- ja T-hääle reeglijärane ühendamine – vaid üksikuis. Kõigis neis uurib Pärt aga, kuidas käia ümber taandatud muusikalise materjaliga, kandes matemaatilist korrapära meloodia- ja rütmistruktuuridesse, ning kujundada rangete valemite põhjal faktuuri ja vormi. Sellel suunal oli „Wenn Bach ...“ tsükli vahest kõige julgem eksperiment: Pärt tugineb siin oma 1960ndate serialismi-kogemusele, aga ei lähtu enam 12-helireast, vaid 4-helilisest ja suure sümbolkaaluga kromaatilisesst motiivist B-A-C-H, mida ta kasutas korduvalt ka oma varasemates teostes.

1950.–60. aastatel, mil Bachi muusika ei kõlanud kontserdilavadel kaugeltki nii sageli kui 20. sajandi lõpul, oli see mitmetele nõukogude heliloojatele eeskujuks helisüsteemi ratsionaalse korrastamise võimaluste otsinguil olukorras, kus ideoloogiline kontroll välistas liikumise dodekafoonina ja serialismi suunas. Juba oma tudengiaja teostes on Arvo Pärt selgelt otsinud tuge polüfoonilise muusika traditsioonilistest tehnikatest ja vormidest, distantseerudes ometi neoklassitsismist. Uusi võimalusi avasid heliloojatele ka alates 1950ndate lõpust asutatud uut tüüpi ansambliliku mängulaadiga kammerorkestrid ja -koorid, mis töid kontserdielu repertuaarikaanonisse hilisbaroki heliloojaid ning hakkasid samal ajal tellima ja esitama modernseid uudisteoseid. Nende koosluste uudne kõlakultuur, detailitäpsus ja rütmierksus eristus suurte orkestrite ja kooride varasemast traditsioonist. (Kõlar 2022) Uue muusika esitustavad kujunesid ka paralleelselt 1960. aastatel Lääne-Euroopast alanud vanamuusikaliikumise esitustavadele, mis mõlemad vastandusid akadeemilistele esitustavadele.

Pärdi veelkordne – ja viimane – pöördumine Bachi poole 1976. aastal on seni märgatust sümboolsem ning „Wenn Bach ...“ näib olevat „Credo“ kõrval teine teos, mis võtab kokku helilooja eelneva kogemuse, tähistades oma dramaatilise väljenduslaadiga otsustavat pööret kompositsioonitehnikas. Teose struktuuri alusmotiiv B-A-C-H kujundab klastrilise, dissonantse kõlamaailma, millele Pärt on vastandanud – taas sarnaselt oma 1960ndate kollaažitehnikaga – tsitaadi Johann Sebastian Bachi prelüüdist h-moll kogumikust „Hästitempereeritud klaviir I“. Pärdi loomingulist üleminekuperioodi (1968–1976), mis algas teosega „Credo“, raamivad seega nimetatud kogumiku esimene ja viimane prelüüd. Nii nagu „Credos“, ilmub Bachi-tsitaat ka teoses „Wenn Bach ...“ valitseva klastrimuusika kõlavastandina, ent seekord juba töödeldult *tintinnabuli*-tehnikka keskse elemendi – funktsionaalharmooniat tühistava ja staatiliselt püsiva põhikolmkõlaga. *Tintinnabuli* põhimudeliga seob tsiteeritud Bachi h-moll prelüüdi ka selle bassihäält läbivalt kujundav diatooniline helirida.

Teose pealkiri võib olla takistanud selle sisemise dramatismi mõistmist, sest mesilased on ju armsad olevused. Kuid Pärdi muusikapäevikud lasevad aimata pingelist, Nora Pärdi sõnul koguni paanilist loomeprotsessi, mille keskmes oli „Wenn Bach ...“ 1976. a. aprillist septembrini: teost läbivat signaali-

motiivi seostas Nora Pärt koguni apokalüpsisega.¹ Teose põhikujundeid kasutas Pärt hiljem väga piinevas kontekstis muusikas Poola ulmefilmile „Navigaator Pirx” (1979). „Wenn Bach ...” on pühendatud muusikateadlasele Ofelia Tuisule (1919–1981), kes Pärti sel ajal heliloojate liidu koosolekuil kõige julgelt toetas, ning kõrvuti mõtetega oma tõe eest võitlemisest iseloomustab teost Pärdi muusikapäevikus lause „Muusikateadlase portree ühe herilaspere foonil”.²

„Wenn Bach ...” ei ole „pentsikult tembutav teos”, võõrkeha Pärdi uue idioomi naabruses (Hillier 1997: 100), vaid pigem helilooja esimeste seeriatega alanud otsingute loomulik jätk. Juba oma 1963. a. loodud kooriminiatuuris „Solfeggio” oli Pärt ühendanud seeriatehnika taandatud helimaterjaliga, luues C-duur helireast staatilise, helistiku funktsionaalsust välistava ning vaatamata läbivale dissonantsusele kirkalt mõjuva helipildi. Ning kui varaste *tintinnabuli*-teoste juures on uudsena kirjeldatud eelkõige nende helikõrguslikku korraldust, siis on neis ja eriti 1977. aasta vaimustavas teosteseerias, kuhu kuuluvad „Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten”, „Tabula rasa”, „Fratres”, „Summa” ja „Arbos”, taandatuna kasutatud seeriatehnikal täita seni märgatust oluliselt kaalukam roll.

¹ Kristina Kõrveri avaldamata intervjuu Arvo Pärdiva, 8.10.2019, Arvo Pärdi Keskus (APK).

² APK 2-1.17, lk. 123, 128, 26.–27.08.1976.