

BEING(S): MARK ANDRE'S COMPOSITIONAL RESPONSE TO A SYNTHETIC EXISTENCE

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Abstract: During the 2014 International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt, Berlin-based composer Mark Andre (b. 1964, Paris) lectured specifically on how his own compositional practice is concerned with ‘interstices that occur between compositional polarities – the affect, the appearance, the families of time and sound, the families of impulse responses – before they unfold themselves fragile, shadowy, breathlessly and fade away’. Drawing upon Andre’s teachings at Darmstadt, as well as certain theories on existence put forward by Michel Foucault, Jean-Luc Nancy, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Pierre Boulez, this article will work to prise open and unfold a broad, contextual backdrop for theorising the composer’s own compositional practice. In particular, this article will argue that Andre, like the authors named above, uses the position of interstices to contest the working of ‘synthetic’ structure in (Western) civilisation, and so relieve, even if momentarily – by allowing ‘being’ to freely resonate, even *speak* – any notion of synthetic impingement.

There is an over-reliance on synthetic structures that continues to be manifested in the psyche of individual human beings. It is a dependence that can go largely unnoticed; designed to seem safe and natural, it can mould the individual to a certain mode of ‘being’ with little resistance. By default, it is now a seemingly ‘human’ quality to labour toward distorting and sculpting ‘form’ (as dispersal) into something more logical, more accessible. Here, the term ‘synthetic’ is borrowed from Michel Foucault, who has documented a number of ‘ready-made syntheses’ that need to be questioned.¹ ‘Tradition’, for example, is used ‘to give special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same’.² Moreover, ‘it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin’.³ This means that ‘tradition’, as a synthetic structure, is

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 24.

² Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 23.

³ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 23.

useful because it can be used to tie together certain phenomena with time, resulting in a chronological telos. But, in so doing, it unifies dispersal; some past phenomena come to be regarded as a single unit, whilst others are merely discarded. In either circumstance, the once dispersed, singular, phenomena become compressed and bound so tight that their separate and distinct essences are no longer able to signal or communicate as autonomous and individual.

The notion of 'community' is riddled with synthetic structures. Jean-Luc Nancy, for instance, outlines how 'the community that becomes a *single* thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader . . .) necessarily loses the *in* of being-*in*-common. Or, it loses the *with* or the *together* that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being of togetherness'.⁴ Nancy adds that 'nothing indicates more clearly what the logic of this being of togetherness can imply than the role of *Gemeinschaft*, of community, in Nazi ideology'.⁵ Here, 'community', as a synthetic structure, is useful because it can endow individual human beings with a sense of belonging and reassurance. However, in doing so, every individual is also moulded into the same existence, they become indoctrinated. This is because 'community', in *togetherness*, is also a tactic that is highly political. It is an artificial scenario that is able to exert mass control, in secret. An overriding sense of lack is used to have every individual believe that something important has been lost, but in striving forward, in *togetherness*, the lost can be found and reinstated into the world of every generation to come. Nancy defines the working of this lack as the 'retrospective consciousness of the lost community and its identity'.⁶ As long as people are looking back (and forward) toward the past, then the current coercion of control can continue without its overriding reputation being contested.

The human body and mind are also subject to synthetic structures. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for instance, outline how 'many people have a tree growing in their heads, but the brain itself is much more a grass than a tree'.⁷ To be more specific, Deleuze and Guattari recognise that 'tree logic' (defined as 'a logic of tracing and reproduction') is used, for example, in psychoanalysis and linguistics to ensure that the phenomenological (dispersing) processes belonging to an individual's unconscious are 'crystallized into codified complexes', and 'distributed within a syntagmatic structure'.⁸ Here, the 'tree', as a synthetic structure, is useful because it renders the unconscious a logical and accessible model; 'the tree articulates and hierarchizes tracings; tracings are like the leaves of a tree'.⁹ Except, in doing so, the tree functions to 'maintain balance in intersubjective relations, or to explore an unconscious that is already there from the start, lurking in the dark recesses of memory and language. It consists of tracing, on the basis of an overcoding structure or supporting axis, something that comes ready-made'.¹⁰ This means that the unconscious is not only dragged up into the light of synthetic existence, but the 'intersubjective relations' come to be collapsed and buried in a desolate, rigidified mass. In turn, the once dispersed, singular,

⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. by Peter Connor et al., ed. by Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. xxxix.

⁵ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xxxix.

⁶ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 10.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 17.

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 12.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 12.

neurological chattering (internal communication) within the individual can no longer occur in situ.

The act of listening to New Music is similarly hindered by synthetic structures. Pierre Boulez, for instance, documented that 'this historicising carapace suffocates those who put it on, compresses them in an asphyxiating rigidity; the mephitic air they breathe constantly enfeebles their organism in relation to contemporary adventure'.¹¹ Here, the 'historicising carapace', as a synthetic structure, is useful because it comes to simplify the listening process; it becomes more commercially viable. This means that the listener is able to gain instant gratification whilst using the smallest amount of intellectual effort. The act of listening becomes an act of hearing 'the efficacy and security of signals; they recur from one piece to another, always assuming the same appearance and the same functions'.¹² However, in doing so, the carapace also comes to encourage a basic, superficial, listening practice that is only concerned with the (familiar) past. In consequence, the listener is no longer challenged, so much so that 'beyond a certain complexity perception finds itself disorientated in a hopelessly entangled chaos, that it gets bored and hangs up'.¹³ The idea of repeatedly listening to a piece of music to understand it better is soon regarded as a somewhat foreign activity, and so the listener's skill-set does not develop in line with the music. Instead, it quickly becomes extremely difficult to know what to do with a non-standardised piece of music. The listener is left unable to adapt to anything new and unfamiliar.

Mark Andre (b. 1964, Paris) is a Berlin-based composer who has also come to attract a small circle of discourse epitomising Boulez's so-called New Music 'boredom'.¹⁴ Andrew Clements, for instance, has described Andre's music as 'slick' and 'superficial', whilst claiming, 'no doubt Andre would use the sound of paint drying if it made one'.¹⁵ In a second review, Clements observed that the composer's music 'needs to offer a more far eventful and involving experience', 'with no destination in sight, the journey itself has to be made to matter', and that 'it's still hard to suppress a sense of "So what?" when it comes to an end'.¹⁶ Here, no attempt is made to understand Andre's music. Upon first hearing, there is obviously very little familiarity that Clements can comprehend. It is a music that cannot be understood immediately and so must therefore be dismissed as empty and meaningless. Except, in doing so, Clements constructs a façade that disguises how his own labour is using synthetic structure to aid in exerting mass control. Andre's compositional practice, as this article will aim to demonstrate, does not yield lightly (if at all) to synthetic structure; it is used primarily to contest synthetic existence. It might be argued that, in his critique of Andre's music, Clements is concealing a fear that the composer is countering coercion of control (closure

¹¹ Pierre Boulez, in Michel Foucault and Pierre Boulez, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', trans. by John Rahn, *Perspectives of New Music* 24, 1 (1985), p. 9.

¹² Boulez, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 10.

¹³ Boulez, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 12.

¹⁴ For more biographical information on Andre, as well as a reading on the aesthetic relation (s) between the composer and philosopher-theologian John Duns Scotus, please see Laurent Fenechrou, 'Seuils. Autour du triptyque ... auf ... de Mark Andre', in *Circuit: musiques contemporaines*, 21, 1 (2011), p. 23–35.

¹⁵ Andrew Clements, 'Mark Andre – Review', *The Guardian*, 12 July 2011, www.theguardian.com/music/2011/jul/12/mark-andre-manchester-review (accessed 11 August 2014).

¹⁶ Andrew Clements, 'Andre: ... auf ... CD review – Alienated Textures', *The Guardian*, 26 February 2015, www.theguardian.com/music/2015/feb/26/andre-auf-review-swr-symphony-orchestra-cambreling (accessed 18 March 2015).

of civilisation). Clements minimises this perceived threat by deeming the music worthless and inaccessible.

The over-reliance on synthetic structure is evident even in the most supportive of Andre-related literature. In particular, there is an emerging discourse that binds the composer's compositional practice tightly to his Protestantism. Martina Seeber, for instance, implies that Andre's music is rooted in religion and telos: it is 'the expression of a religious quest that has nothing less than truth as its goal'.¹⁷ The two are not completely distinct – Andre frequently uses biblical nuance to provide a certain context for his music, as will be outlined in due course – but they are separate entities. 'Religion' is not central to Andre's music; instead, Andre uses biblical nuance both to engage with and, simultaneously, deny the discourse of 'religion', a metaphorical, open, discursive field that is in centrifugal motion around the centre of Andre's music. In doing so, Andre also, perhaps inadvertently, connects his compositional practice to all sorts of other discourses in dispersal: history, community, the body and mind, listening, etc. As Christopher Fynsk says, 'there is nothing we can say about God (about his being or essence), or designate with the name of God, that cannot be ascribed to another term: love, community, the sublime, the other, Being'.¹⁸ In turn, they all come to represent the same thing: the struggle to experience the intricate difference between synthetic structure and existence.

Andre alluded to this same theory during his time as a composition tutor at the 2014 International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt. In a public lecture entitled 'Compositional Interstices', the composer, albeit in passing, referred to Nancy's work *Noli me tangere*.¹⁹ In this work, Nancy argues that the phrase 'do not touch me' may feature in the scene in St John's gospel, 20:17 – where Mary Magdalene is the first to witness Jesus after his Resurrection – but that it also 'evokes nothing that would give it a properly religious or sacred (much less theological or spiritual) character so long as these words are mentioned without explicit reference to the context in which John wrote them'.²⁰ In doing so, Andre came to situate his own notion of interstice, just like Nancy's reading of 'do not touch me', in dispersal and define it similarly, without any biblical connotation, as 'the point or the space without dimension that separates what touching gathers together, the line that separates the touching from the touched'.²¹ The notion of 'touching' can therefore be regarded as another term for synthetic structure, and the notion of 'non-touching' as existence. In creating an interstice, 'form' can no longer be suffocated, it can arise (ascend) out of a space in its vertical and horizontal, dispersing entirety; it can communicate and so be heard in the public domain. To reference Nancy, this means that 'the resurrection is not a resuscitation: it is the infinite extension of death that displaces and dismantles all the values of presence and absence, of animate and inanimate, of body and soul'.²² With this in mind, the rest of

¹⁷ Martina Seeber, 'The Measure of the World', in *Mark Andre: durch, ... zu ..., ... in, ... als ... II* (Vienna: Kairos, 2008), p. 16.

¹⁸ Christopher Fynsk, 'Forward', in *The Inoperative Community* by Jean-Luc Nancy, p. xxxi.

¹⁹ Mark Andre, 'Lecture: Compositional Interstices', trans. by Wieland Hoban, *International Summer Course for New Music* (Bessunger Knabenschule: Darmstadt, 14 August 2014), 15:00–16:00.

²⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. Sarah Cliff et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 12.

²¹ Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, p. 13.

²² Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, p. 44.

the article will function to unravel Andre's compositional practice (as the composer described it in Darmstadt) and, in turn, reveal how he uses the position of the interstice to provide a response to synthetic existence.

For Andre, it is the dependence on synthetic structure that has ultimately come to narrow and seal civilisation in an artificial existence, one that is now scarred and shrivelled. Nancy's diagnosis, for instance, is that 'tradition has folded and closed the thinking of being-in-common within the thinking of an essence of community'.²³ It might seem like a safeguarding mechanism, but synthetic structure is also an enveloping motion that is designed to cause serious impairment to the individual. To be specific, the symptoms include difficulty in perceiving 'form' as dispersed, and paralysis in the act of communication. The individual is constantly denied (and denying) the opportunity to experience the many inevitable interrupting gaps and crevasses that occur in the world. Yet, it is these same gaps and crevasses that are also vital to remaining individual; they allow dispersal to unfold. Without the gap, like a descending drawbridge, a communicative relation between two singular entities can no longer occur; each suspended entity must collapse into the other to become one. The individual is soon distanced from dispersal, and so a plethora of discourses and entities that come to demonstrate all sorts of responses to the world. It is a sorrowful, troubling scenario; as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'the world has lost its pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or overdetermination, in an always supplementary dimension to that of its object'.²⁴ The individual is no longer open to experiencing a non-synthetic existence.

II

In response to the over-reliance on synthetic structure, there are a number of questions that can be posed. Nancy asks, 'how can we be receptive to the *meaning* of our multiple, dispersed, mortally fragmented existences, which nonetheless only make sense by existing in common? In other words, perhaps: how do we communicate?'.²⁵ It is a question that speaks to every individual, and many react by first situating their own ideological stance within a particular interstice. For example, Foucault reacts to the closure of historical discourse by ensuring he can at least attempt to momentarily hold synthetic structure in suspension:

I shall not place myself inside these dubious unities in order to study their internal configuration or their secret contradictions. . . . I shall accept the groupings that history suggests only to subject them at once to interrogation; to break them up.²⁶

In doing so, he is able to theoretically reverse the coiling mechanism of 'tradition' (and other such structures), and create pockets of space that allow the 'form' of historical discourse to exist in dispersal. It is in questioning the un-questioned that Foucault is able to theorise a meticulous response to synthetic existence:

²³ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xxxviii.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 6.

²⁵ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

²⁶ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 29.

once these immediate forms of continuity are suspended, an entire field is set free. A vast field, but one that can be defined nonetheless: this field is made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them.²⁷

In turn, Foucault ultimately allows all individual past phenomena to signal and communicate as autonomous and individual.

The closure of 'community' has provoked Nancy into similarly positioning his own stance within a certain interstice, one that comes to ensure the author can 'enter into the bond (not only the "social bond", as one says today, all too readily, but the properly political bond) that binds the politics, or in which the political is bound up'.²⁸ Moreover, this particular bond 'forms ties without attachments, or even less fusion, of a bond that unbinds by binding, that reunites through the infinite exposition of an irreducible finitude'.²⁹ Here, Nancy attempts momentarily to suspend 'community' as a synthetic structure; he dislocates it from the political and re-positions it in relation to

a groundless "ground", less in the sense that it opens up the gaping chasm of an abyss than that it is made up only of the network, the inter-weaving, and the sharing of singularities: *Ungrund* rather than *Abgrund*, but no less vertiginous.³⁰

In doing so, Nancy, in theory, is able to reverse certain binding mechanisms, such as 'togetherness', lack, and the 'retrospective consciousness of the lost community', and so too create pockets of space that allow the 'form' of community (proper) to exist in dispersal. It is in shifting the base of community from the political to a 'groundless ground' that means Nancy is able to put forward the notion that 'of course, we need gestures of foundation and reversal. But their reason lies elsewhere: it is in the incessantly present moment at which existence-in-common resists every transcendence that tries to absorb it'.³¹ The individual is no longer tied to looking back (and forward) toward the past, but can exist in dispersal in the 'now'.

To respond to the impingement of 'tree logic', Deleuze and Guattari also position their stance within a certain interstice. It is from this position that the authors suspend 'tree logic' via the notion of the 'rhizome', which comes to be defined as having

no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb 'to be', but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and ... and ... and ...'. This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'.³²

The rhizome is therefore not grounded, or rooted, but is instead able to reverse rigidifying mechanisms such as 'tracing' and 'reproduction' from a state of its own inertia; it creates the space needed to allow the 'form' of thought, for example, to exist in its own dispersal. In doing so, the rhizome comes to unveil an entire landscape of its own. The authors argue that

a plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word 'plateau' to designate

²⁷ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 29.

²⁸ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

²⁹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

³⁰ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 27.

³¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 25.

something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point of external end.³³

Applied to the human body and mind, the rhizome means that the individual's brain is able to exist as 'a multiplicity immersed in its plane of consistency or neuroglia, a whole uncertain, probabilistic system ("the uncertain nervous system")'.³⁴ The dispersed, singular, unconscious 'intersubjective relations', and neurological chattering (internal communication) can all remain unimpeded in a genuine existence.

The closure of listening to New Music has also provoked comparable questioning and response. Foucault, for instance, some three decades ago, said:

I do not believe we should ask: with music at such a distance, how can we recapture it or repatriate it? But rather: this music which is so close, so substantial with all our culture, how does it happen that we feel it, as it were, projected afar and placed at an almost insurmountable distance?³⁵

And Boulez questioned 'how many listeners are ready to vary their "mode of being", musically speaking? ... there need only be this adaptation to criteria, and to conventions, which invention complies with according to the historical moment it occupies'.³⁶ Here, Foucault and Boulez come to momentarily hold New Music discourse in suspension; they forge an intervention and situate New Music amongst a nexus of other individual phenomena. For Foucault, 'what is striking to me is the multiplicity of links and relations between music and all other elements of culture'.³⁷ Boulez, too, proposes that an 'expansive respiration of the ages is at the opposite extreme from the asthmatic wheezings the fanatics make us hear from spectral reflections of the past in a tarnished mirror'.³⁸ It is an interstitial stance that does not blame the composer for writing inaccessible music, but instead comes to ask the listener (as an individual) to question their own 'boredom', to be aware of their own inherited hindrance, to try and hear the new and unfamiliar in dispersal, and to allow individual compositions to signal and communicate without impingement.

Mark Andre's compositional response to synthetic existence seems to be based on the same kind of interstitial positioning that Foucault, Nancy, Deleuze, Guattari and Boulez use to attempt to counteract enveloping motion (via differing contextual discourses). Helmut Lachenmann (with whom Andre studied composition), for instance, has declared that

Andre's sonic ideas and compositional sound-manipulation techniques are, at the same time, realistic (precise) and utopian. Precise, because the values actually exist and will come to be conveyed. Utopian, because his compositional dealings presuppose a realisation practice and reception practice that does not so readily exist (yet).³⁹

But are not all the responses outlined above simultaneously 'realistic' and 'utopian'? Lachenmann suspends any notion of Andre's compositional practice as rooted, and in doing so he is able to create the

³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 22.

³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 15.

³⁵ Foucault, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 7.

³⁶ Boulez, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 12.

³⁷ Foucault, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 7.

³⁸ Boulez, in Boulez and Foucault, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', p. 12.

³⁹ Helmut Lachenmann, 'Präzision und Utopie: Die Musik des Komponisten Mark Andre', in *Mark Andre: durch, ... zu ..., ... in, ... als ... II*, p. 5.

kind of space needed to allow the 'form' of the composer's thought, or 'dealings', to momentarily exist in dispersal. It is an intention that is ultimately wanting, and willing, to unravel any hint of synthetic binding to allow the music to unfold; it is a proposition to begin listening in reverse. To reference Deleuze and Guattari,

music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many "transformational multiplicities", even overturning the very codes that structure or aborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome.⁴⁰

In hearing the space between the 'realistic' and 'utopian' – or, the interruption – the individual listener can come to experience Bateson's 'self-vibrating region of intensities' – or, the sound(s) – that are consistent with a certain liberty and freedom.

Andre frequently uses the compositional title in dispersal, as a gesture towards his own response to synthetic existence. Often he uses a single German preposition, or a self-created abbreviation, as a means to signify that the title once belonged to another, now estranged, binding context. In Darmstadt, Andre spoke about how the title *durch* (meaning 'through'), assigned to a piece written between 2004–2005 for soprano saxophone, piano and percussion, is contextually based on Matthew 7:13–14:

Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it.

He stressed, however, that this biblical context is not essential to the compositional experience. As a single word, the title ultimately comes to turn the biblical verses inside out; it comes to focus on the vital motion needed in order to enter (and create) a seemingly sealed interstice. Andre uses the space normally assigned to a 'title' to therefore emphasise the importance of the 'between' – the interstice – and how it is essential, to reference Nancy, to 'the sharing of singular beings, and the communication of finitude. In passing to its limit, finitude passes "from" the one "to" the other: this passage makes up the sharing'.⁴¹ The title comes to assume, as well as act out, the unfolding of an interstitial situation.

From between the 'realistic' and 'utopian', Andre is able to situate his own music in dispersal. In Darmstadt, the composer alluded to Revelation 22:13 – 'I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end' – not to ground his music in the notion of 'religion', but to outline that the contextual network of his music is fundamentally 'open'. Specifically, Andre stated that his compositional practice is always situated in a *Raum* (space) that is continuously unfolding 'in its own time, in its own energy. It does not care about the piece, it does not care about me, and it does not care about the form of the piece. It is made with the piece, not written'.⁴² It is the *Raum* that comes to host, and suspend, the actual compositional material; the motion between what Andre calls *Klang und Zeit Familien* (sound and time families). In turn, Andre is able to consider these *Familien* as polarities that unfold to create certain interstices. To reference

⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 12.

⁴¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 35.

⁴² Mark Andre, 'Open Rehearsal: Mark Andre and Standardmodell', *International Summer Course for New Music* (Edith-Stein-Schule Room 110: Darmstadt, 10 August 2014), 12:30–14:30.

Nancy, ‘this moment – when the in of the “in-common” erupts, resists, and disrupts the relations of need and force – annuls collective and communal hypostases; this violent and troubling moment resists murderous violence and the turmoil of fascination and identification’.⁴³ It is the *Raum* that therefore holds the fluidity and nexus of the vertical and horizontal, making possible the delivery of a counter-response to synthetic existence.

Like with the notion of thought, positioning *Familien* as polarities in relation to one another leads to an unleashing of communication. Christopher Fynsk argues that

thought in its finitude, is exposed to alterity. Its opening to the withdrawal of Being (difference) allows this withdrawal to come about as the event in which a relation to what is is [*sic*] given. We might even say that it *provokes* the speaking that occurs in this event . . . and defines it or determines it by tracing out a site of reception.⁴⁴

Similarly, in Darmstadt, Andre spoke about the importance of exhausting polarities, and how this strategy can be used to induce their opening, or unfolding. The composer pointed out that in German *Erschöpfung* (‘exhaustion’) incorporates the word *Schöpfung* (creation).⁴⁵ The significance of exhaustion can be heard in *durch*, for example, especially when the saxophonist is instructed to ‘simulate the sound effects’ of either a ‘mild’ (1/3), ‘strong’ (2/3), or ‘very strong asthma attack’.⁴⁶ Yet, unlike Boulez’s ‘asthmatic wheezings’, this breathlessness is not to be regarded as signifying the impingement of a synthetic suffocation, but rather the struggle and exertion needed in order to create an interstitial situation. The piece does not end with a final, exasperated, gasp for air; nor does it make any attempt to create a sense of death or finality. Instead, the saxophonist makes a transition into a new role, in which, by gently blowing on a long, suspended sheet of aluminium foil, the performer creates a quiet rustling. In doing so, an interstitial situation is formed; in passing air from one to the other, the saxophonist provokes the foil into responding (answering) to a certain request, without the need for a sealing, synthetic touch.

Using systems of taxonomical organisation, Andre is able to situate his *Familien* in dispersal. The term ‘Familien’ aids this process, as it is borrowed by Andre from Lachenmann not to signify notions of the nuclear or communal, but to rather convey the idea of ‘relation, special kinds of relations between things . . . compositional energies, structural energies’.⁴⁷ Thus, the term *Familien* becomes a rubric that signifies a multitude of individual phenomena in constant motion. The rubric of *Klang Familien*, for example, comes to hold three sub-families in suspension, outlined by Andre as ‘three large categories of sounds: harmonicity, inharmonicity (e.g. tam-tam), and unpitched “noises”’.⁴⁸ By exploring the many different sounds that an instrument can make in relation to these groupings, the composer suddenly obtains a rather large nexus of options (‘impulses’/‘markers’) to choose from and position, in relation, in the compositional *Raum*. From here, each individual sound comes to signal their own nexus of character, ‘sound identity’; when placing a sound in the *Raum*

⁴³ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

⁴⁴ Fynsk, ‘Forward’, in *The Inoperative Community*, p. xxi.

⁴⁵ Andre, ‘Lecture: Compositional Interstices’.

⁴⁶ Mark Andre, ‘Erläuterungen’, in *durch*, no. 12480 (Frankfurt: Edition Peters, 2005).

⁴⁷ Andre, ‘Open Rehearsal’.

⁴⁸ Andre, ‘Lecture: Compositional Interstices’.

'you deploy at this moment a lot of energy but also a lot of information in regard to what it is, you get the passport to the sound. Is it long? Short? Inharmonic? *Piano*? Concrete, or water? Is it synthetic?'.⁴⁹ Andre's compositional practice disentangles sound from any impinging hint of historical or traditional disposition, creating the fluid structures necessary to enable us to listen in dispersal.

The *Raum*, in its design and exposure, enables Andre to question and examine his own 'parasitic' (to reference Lachenmann) impingement but the critical response to this act of interrogation has so far regarded it as somewhat 'high risk'. Habakuk Traber, in relation to ... 22, 13 ..., asserts that 'Andre's music comes close to the apocalypse of our own history'; it is 'music of asphyxiating pallor'; the composer 'presses forward into the danger zone of modern human existence from an artistic urge'.⁵⁰ Seeber, too, in relation to *Un-fini III*, argues that it is Andre's 'utopian requirements that push the music into a zone of danger, the infinite mirrored images of muse en abyme, where finite and infinite come together'.⁵¹ One might argue, however, that rather than being 'dangerous', Andre's act of introspection is more consistent with merely respecting and responding to the fact that there is an inevitable limit to the amount of control a composer can exert over the sound *and* timing of a certain work. It allows for a certain give and take to occur in the creative process, ensuring that 'the "breathing" of the situation becomes stronger than the formal horizontal unfolding of the work's form'.⁵² From here, the dispersal of structure can too be free to move and adapt to the overriding suspension(s).

In prising open his own parasitic impingement, Andre can attempt to enter into the relation between his own synthetic control and the *Raum*'s naturally occurring existential impetus (energy). The rubric of *Zeit Familien*, for instance, comes to hold nine sub-families in suspension, some of which are at work in the final moments of *durch*. The timing of the saxophonist's breathing is, for example, positioned within either the 'metric' (a time signature) or the 'chronometric' (a fermata specified by a number of seconds), whereas the aluminium comes to belong to the 'morphological' (where the breath of the material is the unit).⁵³ This means that although the saxophonist is at times instructed to stop, the sound of the aluminium rustling carries on: the foil 'doesn't care'; it decays in its own time, independent of any compositional instruction, just like the tam-tam at the beginning of 'Der Abschied' in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.⁵⁴ In doing so, Andre is able to work with various different types of interstitial tension to ensure that, 'at times, the disappearance of the impulse is followed by a disappearance of the response'.⁵⁵

Thus the unity of the work concerns what has vanished just as much as what can be physically grasped; it comes to turn a certain impulse or marker inside out to reveal another perspective – a 'trace' or a 'shadow'. As Andre says, 'notation can trap what is

⁴⁹ Andre, 'Open Rehearsal'.

⁵⁰ Habakuk Traber, '... 22, 13 ... A Music-Theatrical Passion', trans. by J. Bradford Robinson, in *Mark Andre: ... 22,13 ...* (Munich: NEOS, 2012), p. 12.

⁵¹ Martina Seeber, "'Shadowed traces of Shadows' The piano works of Mark Andre', trans. by John Patrick Thomas and W. Richard Rieves, in *Mark Andre: Piano Music* (Mainz: Wergo, 2013), p. 19.

⁵² Andre, 'Lecture: Compositional Interstices'.

⁵³ Andre, 'Open Rehearsal'.

⁵⁴ Andre, 'Lecture: Compositional Interstices'.

⁵⁵ Andre, 'Lecture: Compositional Interstices'.

important, that which is not notated'.⁵⁶ It is by negotiating, from an interstitial perspective, the type of relation between two poles that the composer is able to work much more freely with certain kinds of interstitial tension; he is able to question, and respond to, synthetic existence with a particular blend of synthetic and non-synthetic communication.

Simultaneously to exhaust and create – withdraw and provoke – is to ultimately give voice to the verticality of the interstice: to allow the resonance to sound. Nancy, for instance, outlines that '[t]he interruption itself has a singular voice, a voice or a retiring music that is taken up, held, and at the same time exposed in an echo that is not a repetition – the voice of community'.⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, too, outline how in the brain, 'what are wrongly called "dendrites" do not assure the connection of neurons in a continuous fabric', there is 'the discontinuity between cells, the role of the axons, the functioning of the synapses, the existence of synaptic microfissures, the leap each message makes across these fissures'.⁵⁸ In the moment of discontinuity, no matter how brief and fragile, the signalling of non-synthesis can arise and be heard. This is why an open, dispersing, listening practice is required. Andre has spoken about how his own interstitial situations 'are to be really observed with very accurate perspective'.⁵⁹ It is in the act of disappearance that a vertical 'temporal dimension' is created and experienced, and can come to signify, although by no means limited to, the 'metaphysical presence (of the Holy Spirit)'.⁶⁰ The sound may be quiet but it is nevertheless self-sufficient; to reference Nancy,

the beating of the heart – rhythm of the partition of being, syncope of the sharing of singularity – cuts across presence, life, consciousness. That is why thinking – which is nothing other than the *weighing* or testing of the limits, the ends, of presence, of life, of consciousness – thinking itself is love.⁶¹

It comes to signal the sound, and fundamental source of power, of the liberated, autonomous, individual: a compositional response to a synthetic existence.

III

By shifting perspective from the pole(s) to the interstice a momentum is created, one that can come to contest synthetic structure. Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, recognise that

between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other way, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.⁶²

This article has aimed to generate a similar impetus, to draw upon the work of Foucault, Nancy, Deleuze and Guattari, and Boulez to demonstrate how it is possible to prise open and suspend (even if only momentarily) certain syntheses in a variety of different contexts. Using notions of exhaustion and interruption, Andre is able to convey the sounding resonance of the interstice; he is able to invite the audience to adopt a different mode of listening, one that focuses on the

⁵⁶ Andre, 'Open Rehearsal'.

⁵⁷ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xl.

⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Andre, 'Open Rehearsal'.

⁶⁰ Andre, 'Lecture: Compositional Interstices'.

⁶¹ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 99.

⁶² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 25.

fleeting moment of transition and dispersal between sound and time families. With a working theoretical model (intervention?) now in place, we can examine, in dispersal, specific pieces by Andre and understand how we might vary our 'mode of being' to listen, without impingement, to such music.