

## Appendix B

### Greatly sensitive: Alfred Schnittke in Tallinn<sup>1</sup>

ARVO PÄRT

Even though we did not have much opportunity to see each other, Alfred Schnittke and I had a long friendship. In February 1976, Schnittke came to Tallinn for recording sessions of his *Requiem*; our encounters on those February days were very important for me. In 1976, I was in a long phase of searching for a new direction and for my own musical language. I had spent years in a sort of seclusion, experimenting as a composer. At this time, I felt like the fruit of my long search was ready to open itself for me at any moment.

It was a time of great inner tension for me; I was bursting with a feeling of anticipation, and I felt anxious and ready for the birth of something completely new. Yet, at the same time, I felt desperate and helpless about how I should embody the New. I was like a pick-up note that hangs in the air, ready to be resolved at any second.

Alfred was the first person I opened up to about this. It was not easy to tell someone about something so vague, a thing that, for me, had neither form nor substance, name nor addressee. I could only share this with someone who was very close to me, someone greatly sensitive. This someone was Alfred.

Alfred reacted very wisely. He did not attempt to evaluate the material I had shown him, but he perceived the situation very astutely and accurately identified this developing phase of my search.

The only advice he gave me was to leave the experimental stage on paper for real sound. He was very insistent that I should make my many filled notebooks into sound instead of staying behind closed doors with all my sketches.

His words were like midwifery – the scales fell from my eyes. Soon thereafter, I went public with my new system of composition, the tintinnabuli style. After a short time, I dedicated one of my first works from those years to Alfred Schnittke, *Calix (Dies Irae)*, which was written for the same instrumentation as his *Requiem*. Later on, *Dies Irae*, in a new version, became part of my larger work *Miserere*.

At a concert in Tallinn one year later, in 1977, Alfred played the prepared piano part in both his *Concerto Grosso* and the premiere of my *Tabula rasa*.