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## THE PROSPECTS OF RECORDING

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by GLENN GOULD

In an unguarded moment some months ago, I predicted that the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by electronic media. It had not occurred to me that this statement represented a particularly radical pronouncement. Indeed, I regarded it almost as self-evident truth and, in any case, as defining only one of the peripheral effects occasioned by developments in the electronic age. But never has a statement of mine been so widely quoted—or so hotly disputed.

The furor it occasioned is, I think, indicative of an endearing, if sometimes frustrating, human characteristic—a reluctance to accept the consequences of a new technology. I have no idea whether this trait is, on balance, an advantage or a liability, incurable or correctable. Perhaps the escalation of invention must always be disciplined by some sort of emotional short-selling. Perhaps skepticism is the necessary obverse of progress. Perhaps, for that reason, the *idea* of progress is, as at no time in the past, today in question.

Certainly, this emotional short-selling has its good side. The afterthought of Alamogordo—the willingness to kill off a monster of their own creation—does more credit to the pioneers of the atomic age than all the blessings this generation can expect that breakthrough to give birth to. And if protest against the ramifications of man's ingenuity is inevitable, and even essential to the function of his genius, then perhaps there really is no *bad* side—just amusement at and, ultimately, acceptance of that indecisiveness which proclaims the frailty of man's continuing humanity.

In any event, I can think of few areas of contemporary endeavor that better display the confusion with which technological man evaluates the implications of his own achievements than the great debate about music and its recorded future. As is true for most of those areas in which the effect of a new technology has yet to be evaluated, an examination of the influence of recording must pertain not only to speculations about the future but to an accommodation of the past as well. Recordings deal with concepts through which the past is re-evaluated, and they concern notions about the future which will ultimately question even the validity of evaluation.

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The preservative aspects of recording are, of course, by no means exclusively in the service of music. "The first thing we require of a machine is to have a memory," said a somnolently pontifical character in Jean-Luc Godard's recent film *A Married Woman*. In the electronic age a caretaking comprehension of those encompassing chronicles of universal knowledge which were tended by the medieval scholastics—an encumbrance as well as an impossibility since the early Middle Ages—can be consigned to computer repositories that file away the memories of mankind and leave us free to be inventive in spite of them. But in limiting our investigation to the effect of recordings upon music, we isolate an art inhibited by the hierarchical specialization of its immediate past, an art which has no clear recollection of its origins, and therefore an art much in need of both the preservative and translative aspects of recording. As a recent brief prepared by the University of Toronto's department of musicology proposing a computer-controlled phonographic information system succinctly noted, "Whether we recognize it or not, the long-playing record has come to embody the very reality of music."

As concerns its relations to the immediate past, the recording debate centers upon whether or not electronic media can present music in so viable a way as to threaten the survival of the public concert. Notwithstanding the imposing array of statistics which testify to the contrary ("Ladies' Lyric League Boasts Box-Office Boost Third Successive Year"), I herewith reaffirm my prediction that the habit of concertgoing and concert giving, both as a social institution and as chief symbol of musical mercantilism, will be as dormant in the twenty-first century as, with luck, will Tristan da Cunha's Volcano; and that because of its extinction, music will be able to provide a more cogent experience than is now possible. The generation currently being subjected to the humiliation of public school solfège will be the last to attain their majority persuaded that the concert is the axis upon which the world of music revolves.

It is not. And considering for what a brief span the public concert has seemed predominant, the wonder is that pundits allowed it ever would be. To its perpetuation, however, a substantial managerial investment is currently committed ("For Rent: Complex of Six Acoustically Charming Auditoria. Apply J. Rockefeller."), and we must realize that to reckon with its obsolescence is to defy the very body of the musical establishment. It cannot be overemphasized, however, that the fate of the public event is incidental to the future of music—a future deserving of far greater concern than is the fiscal stability of the concert hall. The influence of recordings upon that future will affect not only the performer and concert impresario but composer and technical engineer, critic and historian as well. Most im-

portant, it will affect the listener to whom all of this activity is ultimately directed.

If we were to take an inventory of those musical predilections most characteristic of our generation, we would discover that almost every item on such a list could be attributed directly to the influence of the recording. First of all, today's listeners have come to associate musical performance with sounds possessed of characteristics which two generations ago were neither available to the profession nor wanted by the public—characteristics such as analytic clarity, immediacy, and indeed almost tactile proximity. Within the last few decades the performance of music has ceased to be an occasion, requiring an excuse and a tuxedo, and accorded, when encountered, an almost religious devotion; music has become a pervasive influence in our lives, and as our dependence upon it has increased, our reverence for it has, in a certain sense, declined. Two generations ago, concertgoers preferred that their occasional experience of music be fitted with an acoustic splendor, cavernously reverberant if possible, and pioneer recording ventures attempted to simulate the cathedrallike sound which the architects of that day tried to capture for the concert hall—the cathedral of the symphony. The more intimate terms of our experience with recordings have since suggested to us an acoustic with a direct and impartial presence, one with which we can live in our homes on rather casual terms.

Apparently, we are also expected to live with it in the concert hall. Some of the much-heralded links in that prodigious chain of postwar auditorium catastrophes (Philharmonic Hall of Lincoln Center, Royal Festival Hall, etc.) have simply appropriated characteristics of the recording studio intended to enhance microphone pickup, the special virtue of which becomes a detriment in the concert hall. Proof of this is that when the audience is sent home and the microphones moved in close and tight around the band, Philharmonic Hall—like many of these acoustical puzzles—can accommodate surprisingly successful recording sessions.

Just how great a change has come about can be seen in a comparison between recordings made in North America and Western Europe and those originating in Central and Eastern Europe, where—for reasons both economic and geographic—the traditions of public concertgoing retain a social cachet which for North America's split-level suburbia has long since been transferred to twelve-tone doorbells, nursery intercom, and steam room stereo. One need only compare a typical Continental reverberation such as that present in the Konwitschny recordings from Leipzig or (though it somewhat contradicts the geographical assumptions of my argument) in van Beinum's from the Concertgebouw with the Studio 8H sound

of Toscanini's discs of the late thirties and forties or with the Severance Hall balances for George Szell's recent Epic recordings to appreciate the modifications that the North American attitude to recording can impose on even the most resolute martinet.

A more precise comparison can be found between the discs made by Herbert von Karajan with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London for EMI-Angel and the same maestro's recordings for DGG in Berlin. Any number of the latter (I am thinking now of such releases as the 1959 performance of *Ein Heldenleben* with a distant brass and all but inaudible timpani) suggest a production crew determined to provide for the listener the evocation of a concert experience. The EMI recordings, on the other hand, provide Karajan with an acoustic which, while hardly chamberlike, at least subscribes to that philosophy of recording which admits the futility of emulating concert hall sonorities by a deliberate limitation of studio techniques.

Further evidence of this curious anachronism can be found in some of the recitals recorded by Sviatoslav Richter in Eastern Europe, of which the magnificent performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, taped in Sofia, Bulgaria, is a good example. Here is a great artist with an incomparable interpretation transcribed by technicians who are determined that their microphones will in no way amplify, dissect, or intrude upon the occasion being preserved. Richter's superbly lucid playing is sabotaged by some obsequious miking which permits us, at best, a top-of-the-gods half-earful. Unlike their colleagues in North America, who are aware of serving a public which to a considerable extent has discovered music through records and who evaluate their own presence in the booth as crucial to the success of the end product, the production crew in Sofia, offstage in the wings of some palace of municipal amusement, made no such claims for the autonomy of their craft. They sought only to pursue it as an inconspicuous complement of Richter's performance.

The North American and Western European sound strives for an analytic detail which eludes the Central European displacement. By virtue of this Westernized sound, recording has developed its own conventions, which do not always conform to those traditions that derive from the acoustical limitations of the concert hall. We have, for instance, come to expect a Brünnhilde, blessed with amplification as well as amplitude, who can surmount without struggle the velvet diapason of the Wagnerian orchestra, to insist that a searching spotlight trace the filigreed path of a solo cello in concerto playing—demands which contravene the acoustical possibilities of the concert hall or opera house. For the analytical capacity of the microphones has exploited psychological circumstances implicit in the concerto dialogue, if not within the ability of the solo instrument itself, and the "Ring" cycle as produced by a master like John Culshaw for Decca/London attains a more

effective unity between intensity of action and displacement of sound than could be afforded by the best of all seasons at Bayreuth.

Another item to be added to our catalogue of contemporary enthusiasms is the astonishing revival in recent years of music from preclassical times. Since the recording techniques of North America and Western Europe are designed for an audience which does most of its listening at home, it is not surprising that the creation of a recording archive has emphasized those areas which historically relate to a *Hausmusik* tradition and has been responsible for the triumphant restoration of baroque forms in the years since World War II. This repertoire—with its contrapuntal extravaganzas, its antiphonal balances, its espousal of instruments that chuff and wheeze and speak directly to a microphone—was made for stereo. That prodigious catalogue of cantatas and concerto grossos, fugues and partitas, has endowed the neobaroque enthusiasm of our day with a hard core of musical experience. A certain amount of this music has then found its way back into the concert hall and re-engaged the attention of the public audience—sometimes, indeed, through considerable musicological enterprise. New York's Jay Hoffman, perhaps the last concert impresario truly deserving of that once-proud title, offered his audience on consecutive evenings during Christmas week 1964 comparative versions of *Messiah* according to G. F. Handel and other editors. But this scholarly exactitude has come about by virtue of a recorded library which enables such works to be studied in great number, in great privacy, and in an acoustic that fits them to the proverbial T.

From a musicological point of view, the effort of the recording industry in behalf of Renaissance and pre-Renaissance music is of even greater value. For the first time, the musicologist rather than the performer has become the key figure in the realization of this untapped repertoire; and in place of sporadic and, often as not, historically inaccurate concert performances of a Palestrina mass or a Josquin chanson, or whichever isolated items were heretofore considered approachable and not too offensively pretonal, the record archivists have documented a new perspective for the history of music.

The performer is inevitably challenged by the stimulus of this unexplored repertoire. He is also encouraged by the nature of studio techniques to appropriate characteristics that have tended for a century or two to be outside his private preserve. His contact with the repertoire he records is often the result of an intense analysis from which he prepares an interpretation of the composition. Conceivably, for the rest of his life he will never again take up or come in contact with that particular work. In the course of a lifetime spent in the recording studio he will necessarily encounter a wider range of repertoire than could possibly be his lot in the concert hall. The current archival approach of many recording companies demands a

complete survey of the works of a given composer, and performers are expected to undertake productions of enormous scope which they would be inclined to avoid in the concert hall, and in many cases to investigate repertoire economically or acoustically unsuitable for public audition—the complete piano works of Mozart which Walter Gieseking undertook for Angel, for instance.

But most important, this archival responsibility enables the performer to establish a contact with a work which is very much like that of the composer's own relation to it. It permits him to encounter a particular piece of music and to analyze and dissect it in a most thorough way, to make it a vital part of his life for a relatively brief period, and then to pass on to some other challenge and to the satisfaction of some other curiosity. Such a work will no longer confront him with a daily challenge. His analysis of the composition will not become distorted by overexposure, and his performance top-heavy with interpretative “niceties” intended to woo the upper balcony, as is almost inevitably the case with the overplayed piece of concert repertoire.

It may be that these archival pursuits, especially where the cultivation of earlier literature is involved, recommend themselves to both the performer and his audience as a means of avoiding some of the problems inherent in the music of our own time. One is sometimes inclined to suspect that such phenomena as the baroque revival provide refuge for those who find themselves displaced persons in the frantically metamorphosing world of modern music. Certainly, the performance traditions indigenous to those areas of repertoire revived by the microphone have had an enormous influence upon the way in which certain kinds of contemporary repertoire are performed and have, indeed, bred a generation of performers whose interpretative inclinations respond to the microphone's special demands.

The recordings of Robert Craft, those prodigious undertakings in behalf of the Viennese trinity Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern—not to mention Don Carlo Gesualdo—tell us a good deal about the way in which performances prepared with the microphone in mind can be influenced by technological considerations. For Craft, the stopwatch and the tape splice are tools of his trade as well as objects of that inspiration for which an earlier generation of stick wielders found an outlet in the opera cape and temper tantrums. A comparison between Craft's readings of the large-scale orchestral studies of Schoenberg, especially the early postromantic essays such as *Verklärte Nacht* or *Pelleas und Melisande*, with the interpretations of more venerable maestros—Winfried Zillig's glowingly romantic *Pelleas* of 1949, for instance—is instructive.

Craft applies a sculptor's chisel to these vast orchestral complexes of the youthful Schoenberg and gives them a determined series of plateaus on

which to operate—a very baroque thing to do. He seems to feel that his audience—sitting at home, close up to the speaker—is prepared to allow him to dissect this music and to present it to them from a strongly biased conceptual viewpoint, which the private and concentrated circumstances of their listening make feasible. Craft's interpretation, then, is all power steering and air brakes. By comparison, in Zillig's reading of *Pelleas* (on a now withdrawn Capitol-Telefunken disc) the leisurely application of rubatos, the sensual haze with which he gilds the performance as though concerned that clarity could be an enemy of mystery, point clearly to the fact that his interpretation derived from a concert experience where such performance characteristics were intuitive compensations for an acoustic dilemma.

The example is productive of a larger issue with which the techniques of the recording studio confront us, and I have deliberately chosen to illustrate it with an example from that area of twentieth-century repertoire least indigenous to the medium. Whether Craft's analytic dissection of such repertoire is appropriate, whether there remain positive virtues to the presentation of late romantic fare in the concert hall, is not really the point. We must be prepared to accept the fact that, for better or worse, recording will forever alter our notions about what is appropriate to the performance of music.

Of all the techniques peculiar to the studio recording, none has been the subject of such controversy as the tape splice. With due regard to the not-so-unusual phenomenon of a recording consisting of single-take sonata or symphony movements, the great majority of present-day recordings consist of a collection of tape segments varying in duration upward from one twentieth of a second. Superficially, the purpose of the splice is to rectify performance mishaps. Through its use, the wayward phrase, the insecure quaver, can, except when prohibited by “overhang” or similar circumstances of acoustical imbalance, be remedied by minute retakes of the offending moment or of a splice segment of which it forms a part. The antirecord lobby proclaims splicing a dishonest and dehumanizing technique that purportedly eliminates those conditions of chance and accident upon which, it can safely be conceded, certain of the more unsavory traditions of Western music are founded. The lobbyists also claim that the common splice sabotages some unified architectural conception which they assume the performer possesses.

It seems to me that two facts challenge these objections. The first is that many of the supposed virtues of the performer's “unified conception” relate to nothing more inherently musical than the “running scared” and “go-for-broke” psychology built up through decades of exposure to the *loggione* of Parma and their like. Claudio Arrau was recently quoted by the English journal *Records and Recordings* to the effect that he would not authorize the release of records derived from a live performance since, in his opinion,

public auditions provoke stratagems which, having been designed to fill acoustical and psychological requirements of the concert situation, are irritating and antiarchitectural when subjected to repeated playbacks. The second fact is that one cannot ever splice style—one can only splice segments which relate to a conviction about style. And whether one arrives at such a conviction pretaping or posttaping (another of the time-transcending luxuries of recording: the posttaping reconsideration of performance), its existence is what matters, not the means by which it is effected.

A recent personal experience will perhaps illustrate an interpretative conviction obtained posttaping. A year or so ago, while recording the concluding fugues from volume 1 of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, I arrived at one of Bach's celebrated contrapuntal obstacle courses, the fugue in A minor. This is a structure even more difficult to realize on the piano than are most of Bach's fugues, because it consists of four intense voices that determinedly occupy a register in the center octaves of the keyboard—the area of the instrument in which truly independent voice leading is most difficult to establish. In the process of recording this fugue we attempted eight takes. Two of these at the time were regarded, according to the producer's notes, as satisfactory. Both of them, number 6 and number 8, were complete takes requiring no inserted splice—by no means a special achievement, since the fugue's duration is only a bit over two minutes. Some weeks later, however, when the results of this session were surveyed in an editing cubicle and when takes 6 and 8 were played several times in rapid alternation, it became apparent that both had a defect of which we had been quite unaware in the studio: both were monotonous.

Each take had used a different style of phrase delineation in dealing with the thirty-one-note subject of this fugue—a license entirely consistent with the improvisatory liberties of baroque style. Take 6 had treated it in a solemn, legato, rather pompous fashion, while in take 8 the fugue subject was shaped in a prevailing staccato manner which led to a general impression of skitishness. Now, the fugue in A minor is given to concentrations of strettos and other devices for imitation at close quarters, so that the treatment of the subject determines the atmosphere of the entire fugue. Upon most sober reflection, it was agreed that neither the Teutonic severity of take 6 nor the unwarranted jubilation of take 8 could be permitted to represent our best thoughts on this fugue. At this point someone noted that, despite the vast differences in character between the two takes, they were performed at an almost identical tempo (a rather unusual circumstance, to be sure, since the prevailing tempo is almost always the result of phrase delineation), and it was decided to turn this to advantage by creating one performance to consist alternately of takes 6 and 8.

Once this decision had been made, it was a simple matter to expedite

it. It was obvious that the somewhat overbearing posture of take 6 was entirely suitable for the opening exposition as well as for the concluding statements of the fugue, while the more effervescent character of take 8 was a welcome relief in the episodic modulations with which the center portion of the fugue is concerned. And so two rudimentary splices were made, one which jumps from take 6 to take 8 in bar 14 and another which at the return to A minor (I forget in which measure, but you are invited to look for it) returns as well to take 6. What had been achieved was a performance of this particular fugue far superior to anything that we could at the time have done in the studio. There is, of course, no reason why such a diversity of bowing styles could not have been applied to this fugue subject as part of a regulated a priori conception. But the necessity of such diversity is unlikely to become apparent during the studio session, just as it is unlikely to occur to a performer operating under concert conditions. By taking advantage of the posttaping afterthought, however, one can very often transcend the limitations that performance imposes upon the imagination.

When the performer makes use of this postperformance editorial decision, his role is no longer compartmentalized. In a quest for perfection, he sets aside the hazards and compromises of his trade. As an interpreter, as a go-between serving both audience and composer, the performer has always been, after all, someone with a specialist's knowledge about the realization or actualization of notated sound symbols. It is, then, perfectly consistent with such experience that he should assume something of an editorial role. Inevitably, however, the functions of the performer and of the tape editor begin to overlap. Indeed, in regard to decisions such as that taken in the case of the abovementioned A-minor fugue, it would be impossible for the listener to establish at which point the authority of the performer gave way to that of the producer and the tape editor, just as even the most observant cinemagoer cannot ever be sure whether a particular sequence of shots derives from circumstances occasioned by the actor's performance, the exigencies of the cutting room, or the director's a priori scheme. That the judgment of the performer no longer solely determines the musical result is inevitable. It is, however, more than compensated by the overwhelming sense of power which editorial control makes available to him.

The characteristics enumerated on our inventory represent the past rendered in terms that seem appropriate to the electronic age. Although they compile, by themselves, an impressive list of present-day convictions about the way in which music should be performed, they do not, except by implication, suggest a direction for recording to pursue. It is quite likely that these preferences engendered by phonographic reproduction—clarity of definition, analytic dissection by microphones, catholicity of repertoire, etc.—will deter-

mine to a considerable extent the kind of sound with which we shall want our musical experiences to be endowed. It is less likely that the recording industry will always concern itself primarily with an archival representation of the past, no matter how painstakingly embalmed, but for a long time to come some portion of the industry's activity will be devoted to merchandising the celebrated masterworks which form our musical tradition. Before examining the larger ramifications for the future of recording, I should like to consider here some hardy strains of argument that perennially decry the influence of recording upon standard items of the repertoire and upon the hierarchy of the musical profession.

These arguments sometimes overlap each other, and it can become rather difficult to detect the area of protest with which each is concerned. However, under a general heading of "humanitarian idealism" one might list three distinguishable subspecies, which can be summarized as follows: (1) An argument for aesthetic morality: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf appends a missing high C to a tape of *Tristan* otherwise featuring Kirsten Flagstad, and indignant purists, for whom music is the last blood sport, howl her down, furious at being deprived a kill. (2) Eye versus ear orientation: a doctrine that celebrates the existence of a mystical communication between concert performer and public audience (the composer being seldom mentioned). There is a vaguely scientific pretension to this argument, and its proponents are given to pronouncements on "natural" acoustics and related phenomena. (3) Automation: a crusade which musicians' union leaders currently share with typesetters and which they affirm with the fine disdain of featherbedding firemen for the diesel locomotive. In the midst of a proliferation of recorded sound which virtually erases earlier listening patterns, the American Federation of Musicians promotes that challenging motto "Live Music Is Best"—a judgment with the validity of a "Win with Willkie" sticker on the windshield of a well-preserved '39 LaSalle.

As noted, these arguments tend to overlap and are often joined together in celebration of occasions that afford opportunity for a rearguard holding action. Among such occasions, none has proved more useful than the recent spate of recorded "live" performances—events which straddle two worlds and are at home in neither. These events affirm the humanistic ideal of performance; they eschew (so we are told!) splices and other mechanical adventures, and hence are decidedly "moral"; they usually manage to suppress a sufficient number of pianissimo chords by an outbreak of bronchitis from the floor to advertise their "live"-ness and confirm the faith of the heroically unautomated.

They have yet another function, which is, in fact, the essence of their appeal for the short-sellers: they provide documentation pertaining to a specific date. They are forever represented as occasions indisputably of and for

their time. They spurn that elusive time-transcending objective which is always within the realization of recorded music. For all time, they can be examined, criticized, or praised as documents securely located in time, and about which, because of that assurance, a great deal of information and, in a certain sense, an emotional relation, is immediately available. With regard to the late Dutch craftsman who, having hankered to take upon himself the mantle of Vermeer, was martyred for a reluctance to live by the hypocrisy of this argument, I think of this fourth circumstance—this question of historical date—the van Meegeren syndrome.

Hans van Meegeren was a forger and an artisan who for a long time has been high on my list of private heroes. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the magnificent morality play which was his trial perfectly epitomizes the confrontation between those values of identity and of personal-responsibility-for-authorship which post-Renaissance art has until recently accepted and those pluralistic values which electronic forms assert. In the 1930s van Meegeren decided to apply himself to a study of Vermeer's techniques and—for reasons undoubtedly having more to do with an enhancement of his ego than with greed for guilders—distributed the works thus achieved as genuine, if long lost, masterpieces. His prewar success was so encouraging that during the German occupation he continued apace with sales destined for private collectors in the Third Reich. With the coming of VE Day, he was charged with collaboration as well as with responsibility for the liquidation of national treasures. In his defense van Meegeren confessed that these treasures were but his own invention and, by the values this world applies, quite worthless—an admission which so enraged the critics and historians who had authenticated his collection in the first place that he was rearraigned on charges of forgery and some while later passed away in prison.

The determination of the value of a work of art according to the information available about it is a most delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal. Indeed, it strives to avoid appraisal on any ground other than that which has been prepared by previous appraisals. The moment this tyranny of appraisal-dom is confronted by confused chronological evidence, the moment it is denied a predetermined historical niche in which to lock the object of its analysis, it becomes unserviceable and its proponents hysterical. The furor that greeted van Meegeren's conflicting testimony, his alternate roles of hero and villain, scholar and fraud, decisively demonstrated the degree to which an aesthetic response was genuinely involved.

Some months ago, in an article in the *Saturday Review*,\* I ventured that the delinquency manifest by this sort of evaluation might be demonstrated

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\*See p. 92.

if one were to imagine the critical response to an improvisation which, through its style and texture, suggested that it might have been composed by Joseph Haydn. (Let's assume it to be brilliantly done and most admirably Haydnesque.) I suggested that if one were to concoct such a piece, its value would remain at par—that is to say, at Haydn's value—only so long as some chicanery were involved in its presentation, enough at least to convince the listener that it was indeed by Haydn. If, however, one were to suggest that although it much resembled Haydn it was, rather, a youthful work of Mendelssohn, its value would decline; and if one chose to attribute it to a succession of authors, each of them closer to the present day, then—regardless of their talents or historical significance—the merits of this same little piece would diminish with each new identification. If, on the other hand, one were to suggest that this work of chance, of accident, of the here and now, was not by Haydn but by a master living some generation or two before his time (Vivaldi, perhaps), then this work would become—on the strength of that daring, that foresight, that futuristic anticipation—a landmark in musical composition.

And all of this would come to pass for no other reason than that we have never really become equipped to adjudicate music per se. Our sense of history is captive of an analytical method which seeks out isolated moments of stylistic upheaval—pivot points of idiomatic evolution—and our value judgments are largely based upon the degree to which we can assure ourselves that a particular artist participated in or, better yet, anticipated the nearest upheaval. Confusing evolution with accomplishment, we become blind to those values not explicit in an analogy with stylistic metamorphosis.

The van Meegeren syndrome is entirely apropos of our subject, because the arguments contra the prospects of recording are constructed upon identical criteria. They rely, most of all, upon a similar confirmation of historical data. Deprived of this confirmation, their system of evaluation is unable to function; it is at sea, derelict amidst an unsalvageable debris of evidence, and it casts about in search of a point by which to take a bearing. When recordings are at issue, such a point cannot readily be found. The inclination of electronic media is to extract their content from historic date. The moment we can force a work of art to conform to our notion of what was appropriate to its chronology, we can attribute to it, arbitrarily if necessary, background against which in our analysis it can be portrayed. Most aesthetic analysis confines itself to background description and avoids the foreground manipulation of the object being analyzed. And this fact alone, discarding the idle propaganda of the public relations machines, accounts for the endorsement of the recorded public event. Indirectly, the real object of this endorsement is a hopelessly outmoded system of aesthetic analysis—a system incapable of

a contribution in the electronic age but the 'only system for which most spokesmen of the arts are trained.

Recordings produced in a studio resist a confirmation of such criteria. Here date is an elusive factor. Though a few companies solemnly inscribe the date of the studio sessions with each recorded package, and though the material released by most large companies can, except perhaps in the case of reissues, be related to a release number that will suggest an approximate date to the aficionado, it is possible that the music heard on that recording will have been obtained from sessions held weeks, months, or indeed years apart. Those sessions may easily have been held in different cities, different countries, taped with different equipment and different technical personnel, and they may feature performers whose attitudes to the repertoire under consideration have metamorphosed dramatically between the taping of the first note and the last. Such a recording might currently pose insuperable contractual problems, but its complicated gestation would be entirely consistent with the nature of the recording process.

It would also be consistent with that evolution of the performing musician which recording necessitates. As the performer's once-sacrosanct privileges are merged with the responsibilities of the tape editor and the composer, the van Meegeren syndrome can no longer be cited as an indictment but becomes rather an entirely appropriate description of the aesthetic condition in our time. The role of the forger, of the unknown maker of unauthenticated goods, is emblematic of electronic culture. And when the forger is done honor for his craft and no longer reviled for his acquisitiveness, the arts will have become a truly integral part of our civilization.

All creative artists claim, when challenged, that they have nothing but disdain for the limited vision of their present audience, that posterity will be their judge. For composers, recording makes this threat a fact, and if they have some executant skill, ensures that posterity will judge them not only for their works but for their interpretations of those works. Since the advent of the phonograph, its impresarios have been intrigued by the idea of letting composers make their notations permanent. In the early days, such efforts ran to the dilettantish noodlings of Gustav Mahler's keyboard transcription of excerpts from his *Des Knaben Wunderborn*. A decade or two later, full-length works were needed for the catalogue, and Richard Strauss, for instance, was represented by a performance of his own glorious *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* Suite—rendered with so contemptuously indolent a spirit that no conductor concerned about the renewal of his contract would dare to follow.

In recent years the archival policies of several of the larger record companies have prompted them to put on tape the works of some of today's most

distinguished composers in performances which are in every sense competitive with those previously in the catalogue. One thinks of Benjamin Britten's superb realizations of his own major scores for Decca/London, interpretations which show no trace whatever of that understatement so often associated with the composer-executant. In this country, Columbia Records has, for the past decade or two, been transcribing the complete works of Stravinsky with the composer at the helm. (Aaron Copland is even now embarking on a similar project.)

Stravinsky's merits as a conductor have long been a subject of debate; but as he proceeds each year with this monumental task, it becomes increasingly apparent that his rhythmic propulsiveness, melodic cynicism, and shyness about rubatos are all performance characteristics which go to the heart of Stravinsky the composer. The question, however, is to what extent these authentic documents will inhibit future conductors from indulging that revelatory aspect of interpretation wherein they attempt to uncover new facets, or new combinations of old facets, in the work of such a composer as Stravinsky. (Would our curiosity be more than academic were Beethoven's piano sonatas listed by Schwann in performances featuring the composer?) If one can judge by the efforts of such disparate Stravinskyans as Bernstein and Karajan (the latter rather uncharitably berated in the press by the composer for a recent release of what is surely the most imaginative and, in a purely compartmentalized sense, "inspired" realization of *Le Sacre*), the influence of these recordings cannot as yet really be considered decisive. On the other hand, it may be that Stravinsky's Stravinsky will afford a scaffolding upon which future conductors will feel compelled to erect their interpretations of his works.

I should think the composer-recorded testaments are the thin edge of a rather different sort of wedge. Their influence may have less to do with inspiring or inhibiting future generations of interpreters than with discouraging the independent performance tradition itself. There is, after all, no reason why the performer must be exclusively involved with revisitations of the past, and the re-emergence of the performer-composer could be the beginning of the end for that post-Renaissance specialization with which tonal music has been conspicuously involved.

Even as one examines those works of the present day designed for conventional instrumental forces, it is apparent that electronic reproduction has had an enormous (though perhaps for certain composers indirect, if not subliminal) influence. Paul Hindemith, for instance, with his Bauhaus modernism and his joyous linear style, which sometimes suggests nothing so much as a pre-Renaissance contrapuntal jubilee, was a composer whose works were, and are, a "natural" for the microphone. Many other composers of compara-

bly conservative bent have been treated to recordings of their works which have made apparent balances that are virtually unobtainable in a concert hall. (An obvious example: Frank Martin's *Petite Symphonie concertante*, which—with its solo forces of harp, harpsichord, and piano against a tutti of strings—offers sonorities that having once been heard in a recording so splendidly engineered as the DGG performance conducted by Ferenc Fricsay will be forever unsatisfactory as offered in a public concert.)

With those works that utilize electronic equipment not only for their reproduction but to facilitate the process of their composition as well, one senses the fulfillment of certain dominant ideas manifest in the composing procedures of the twentieth century. Electronic music is an infant craft still toddling uncertainly between the comfort and security extended by those of its parent procedures that mimic the sonorities of conventional instruments and the intriguing challenge afforded by possibilities indigenous to electronic means from which new compositional premises will eventually be elaborated. Professor Marshall McLuhan, communication theory's man of the hour, has observed: "The meaning of experience is typically one generation behind the experience—the content of new situations, both private and corporate, is typically the preceding situation—the first stage of mechanical culture became aware of agrarian values and pursuits—the first age of the planter glorified the hunt—and the first age of electronic culture (the day of the telegraph and the telephone) glorified the machine as an art form." Perhaps for this reason, the most accessible electronic scores are those that superimpose conventional instrumental or vocal textures upon electronically produced sound sources—such works as Henri Pousseur's superb ballet score *Electre*. The one temporary disadvantage of these compromise works is that they create a climate of public acceptance which encourages the proliferation of recital evenings executed by stereophonically marshaled speaker platoons—exhibitions organized by diehard impresarios convinced that each auditorium is potentially St. Mark's, with or without a resident Gabrieli. The new audience at these events is as remote from a genuine electronic participation as were those skeptical window-shoppers who in the late 1940s queued up for an appliance-store demonstration of a ten-inch Milton Berle in glorious black and white.

Whatever the present limitations of electronic music, whatever the stimulus of that "feedback" through which it has inspired more conventional forms of music making, many of the constructive methods peculiar to it have transferred with remarkable ease to conventional instrumental and vocal idioms. The reiterated note pattern, with measured crescendo and diminuendo; the dynamic comparison between close-up and far-distant statements of the same configuration; the quasimechanical ritard or accelerando; above all, the possibility of a controlled release and attack of sound—all of these motives

have been borrowed by the post-Webern idioms which so decisively influence our compositional experience at present. Indeed, the influence of these electronically derived manifestations is so widespread that they appear in any number of works by composers avowedly hostile to tape music. Consciously or not, they are employed because of the fascination that such gestures, symbolic of an autocratic composing process, hold for the creative musician.

One must be careful, however, to assert that "autocracy" in this sense does not necessarily suggest singleminded authority. The composer, indeed, may not long retain that splendid isolation which early electronic experiments indicated would be his. It may well be that the effect of editorial afterthought upon performance will breed a type of technician-cum-performer whose realizations of the diagrammatic intention will be just as essential to the reputation of a composer as was the devotion of the itinerant virtuoso in earlier times. "Autocracy," then, as a description of the composing process in the electronic age, may simply suggest the possibility that the composer will become involved in some portion of each procedure through which his intention is made explicit in sound.

One of the first musicians to grasp the significance of recording to the composing process was Arnold Schoenberg, who, in a dialogue with Erwin Stein transcribed in 1928, remarked: "In radio broadcasting, a small number of sonic entities suffice for the expression of all artistic thoughts; the gramophone and the various mechanical instruments are evolving such clear sonorities that one will be able to write much less heavily instrumented pieces for them." Intentionally or not, the development of Schoenberg's own style demonstrates his understanding of the medium and its implications, and it is hard to think of certain of his works, perhaps especially those from the earlier years of his experiments with twelve-tone technique (the Serenade, Op. 24, or the septet, Op. 29, for instance), without realizing how indigenous are their gloriously eccentric instrumental combinations to the mobile microphonic dissection. And the theories espoused by Schoenberg, as the leading radical of music in the twentieth century, have become so influential, so much a part of the contemporary musical gesture, that, approved or spurned, they have affected the music of the last two generations as profoundly by their intense molecular analysis as drugstore paperback psychology has been affected by Sigmund Freud. Schoenberg's theories, to simplify outrageously, have to do with attributing significance to minute musical connections, and they deal with relationships that are on the whole subsurface and can be projected with an appropriate definition only through the intercession of electronic media.

Even as Schoenberg strove for choice regulation, other composers have elected to delegate selection privileges. Both procedures, however divergent their sponsors' intentions, have in common a denial of that condition

of compositorial ambiguity which was the essence of late-nineteenth-century romanticism. At the present time, in such excursions as aleatoric music—that triumph of quasi-improvisatory buck passing—these decision-making privileges have been relinquished ostensibly in favor of the performer. But it seems reasonable to suggest that such privileges will not need to remain the exclusive preserve of a tape editor-interpreter. They could quite possibly be delegated directly to the listener. It would indeed be foolhardy to dismiss out of hand the idea that the listener can ultimately become his own composer.

At the center of the technological debate, then, is a new kind of listener—a listener more participant in the musical experience. The emergence of this mid-twentieth-century phenomenon is the greatest achievement of the record industry. For this listener is no longer passively analytical; he is an associate whose tastes, preferences, and inclinations even now alter peripherally the experiences to which he gives his attention, and upon whose fuller participation the future of the art of music waits.

He is also, of course, a threat, a potential usurper of power, an uninvited guest at the banquet of the arts, one whose presence threatens the familiar hierarchical setting of the musical establishment. Is it not, then, inopportune to venture that this participant public could emerge untutored from that servile posture with which it paid homage to the status structure of the concert world and, overnight, assume decision-making capacities which were specialists' concerns heretofore?

The keyword here is "public." Those experiences through which the listener encounters music electronically transmitted are not within the public domain. One serviceable axiom applicable to every experience in which electronic transmission is involved can be expressed in that paradox wherein the ability to obtain in theory an audience of unprecedented numbers obtains in fact a limitless number of private auditions. Because of the circumstances this paradox defines, the listener is able to indulge preferences and, through the electronic modifications with which he endows the listening experience, impose his own personality upon the work. As he does so, he transforms that work, and his relation to it, from an artistic to an environmental experience.

Dial twiddling is in its limited way an interpretative act. Forty years ago the listener had the option of flicking a switch inscribed "on" and "off" and, with an up-to-date machine, perhaps modulating the volume just a bit. Today, the variety of controls made available to him requires analytical judgment. And these controls are but primitive, regulatory devices compared to those participational possibilities which the listener will enjoy once current laboratory techniques have been appropriated by home playback devices.

It would be a relatively simple matter, for instance, to grant the listener tape-edit options which he could exercise at his discretion. Indeed, a significant step in this direction might well result from that process by which it is now possible to disassociate the ratio of speed to pitch and in so doing (albeit with some deterioration in the quality of sound as a current liability) truncate splice-segments of interpretations of the same work performed by different artists and recorded at different tempos. Let us say, for example, that you enjoy Bruno Walter's performance of the exposition and recapitulation from the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony but incline toward Klemperer's handling of the development section, which employs a notably divergent tempo. (I happen to like both performances all the way through, but there's no accounting for taste.) With the pitch-speed correlation held in abeyance, you could snip out these measures from the Klemperer edition and splice them into the Walter performance without having the splice procedure either an alteration of tempo or a fluctuation of pitch. This process could, in theory, be applied without restriction to the reconstruction of musical performance. There is, in fact, nothing to prevent a dedicated connoisseur from acting as his own tape editor and, with these devices, exercising such interpretative predilections as will permit him to create his own ideal performance.

It's tempting to speculate upon the innovations which this splice-conscious listener will demand in the editorial practice of magazines such as *High Fidelity*, where the reviewing staff is already strictly segregated along chronological lines and where, for example, Nathan Broder is automatically restricted in his assignments to material deriving from the year 1756 (May to November). Clearly, this horizontal specification will need to be superseded by a more progressive—and perhaps, in the light of multichannel possibilities, more vertical—review policy, in which, at least for longer works, the staff might choose to spell each other relay-fashion, with Alfred Frankenstein handling splices in chromatic textures, Harris Goldsmith specializing in percussive overhang problems, and Denis Stevens dealing with choral climax adjacencies.

The listener's splice prerogative is but one aspect of that editorial mix which recorded music encourages. In terms of its unselfconscious juxtaposition of a miscellany of idioms, it will have an effect similar to that which André Malraux—in his *Voices of Silence*—attributes to art reproductions. One result of this stylistic permissiveness will be a more tolerant regard for the artistic by-products of those cultures which are, from our Western point of view, chronologically "out of sync." The transmission of events and sounds around our planet has forced us to concede that there is not just one musical

tradition but, rather, many musics, not all of which are concerned—by our definition of the word—with tradition.

One thinks, for instance, of Russia, a country which—with its belated awakening to Western European tradition—offered as recently as the later years of the nineteenth century a splendid Shangri-La for the most extraordinary artistic experiments. By no means part of the mainstream of Western European thought, these were experiments of a culture which, because it had for centuries operated from a quasinationalistic limbo wherein it sought immunity to the modes and mores of the West, was oriented toward an altogether different chronological sequence. Having missed the adventure of the Renaissance, the empire of the Russias found a substitute Renaissance in the importations of that eighteenth-century "entente de culture"; and ever since, it has vacillated between an assignation with the traditions of Western thought and the fond hope of fidelity to the memory of its past. Surely, those contemptuously original masterpieces of Mussorgsky—with their deliberately awkward harmony, their ruthless simplicity cloaking a high complexity, their disdain for the worldly temptations of salon success—are implicit confirmation of the message of that extraordinary exhortation from Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, itself an astonishing preview of electronic culture: "There are those who maintain that the world is getting more and more united, more and more bound together in brotherly community as it overcomes distance and sets thoughts flying through the air. Alas, put no faith in such a bond of union."

Through simultaneous transmissions, through radio and television particularly, the art of such a country becomes for those of us on the outside rather too easily accessible. Such media encourage us to invoke comparisons between the by-products of such a culture and those to which our own very different orientation gives rise. When we find that the expression of that culture represents what seems to us archaic ideologies, we condemn it as old-fashioned or sterile, or puritanical, or as possessed of any other limitation from which we consider ourselves emancipated. With simultaneous transmission we set aside our touristlike fascination with distant and exotic places and give vent to impatience at the chronological tardiness the natives display. To this extent, Professor McLuhan's concept of the "global village"—the simultaneity of response from McMurdo Sound to Murmansk, from Taiwan to Tacoma—is alarming. There just could be some fellow at McMurdo, "out of sync" and out of touch, revivifying C major as Mozart never dreamed of!

But these intrusions pertain only to those media developments that reproduce images or sounds instantaneously. Recordings arouse very different psychological reactions and should always be considered with this proviso in mind. Whereas simultaneous reception reveals differences on a current,

comparative, indeed competitive basis, the preservation of sound and image makes possible the archival view, the unimpassioned reflection upon the condition of a society, the acceptance of a multifaceted chronological concept. Indeed, the two utilizations of electronic transmission—for clarification of present circumstances occasioned by radio and television and for indefinite future re-examination of the past permitted by recording—are antidotal. The recording process, with its encouragement of a sympathetic “after-the-fact” historical view, is the indispensable replenishment of that deteriorating tolerance occasioned by simultaneous transmission. Just as simultaneous reception tends to provoke unproductive comparisons and encourages conformity, preservation and archival replay encourage detachment and non-conformist historical premises.

In my opinion, the most important of the missing links in the evolution of the listener-consumer-participant, as well as the most persuasive argument for the stylistic mix, is to be found in that most abused of electronic manifestations—background sound. This much-criticized and often misunderstood phenomenon is the most productive method through which contemporary music can confide its objectives to a listening, consuming, Muzak-absorbing society. Cunningly disguised within the bland formulae from which background sounds are seemingly concocted is an encyclopedia of experience, an exhaustive compilation of the clichés of post-Renaissance music. Moreover, this catalogue provides a cross-referenced index which permits connections between stylistic manifestations with fine disregard for chronological distinction. Within ten minutes of restaurant Muzak one can encounter a residue of Rachmaninoff or a blast of Berlioz proceeding without embarrassment from the dregs of Debussy. Indeed, all the music that has ever been can now become a background against which the impulse to make listener-supplied connections is the new foreground.

The stylistic range of most background music at present offers an appreciably greater variety of idiomatic citation than can be found among all the disparate ideologies to which “serious” musicians of recent times have subscribed. For commercial images on television or for restaurant Muzak, the background may be confined to idioms which at their most advanced draw upon the clichés of impressionism. On the other hand, the musical backgrounds of many grade-B horror thrillers coming out of Hollywood exploit advanced idioms (Leonard Rosenman’s score for *Cobweb* was a typical offshoot of late-Schoenbergian twelve-tone). As background material, some significant scores find their way into the listening experience of an audience that would almost certainly avoid them as concert music.

These scores achieve this, of course, under the cover of neutrality. It is axiomatic in the composition of background material that its success relates in inverse proportion to the listener’s awareness of it. It attempts to harmo-

nize with as many environmental situations as possible and to minimize our awareness of its own intrusion and character. Indeed, it can succeed only through a suspension of conventional aesthetic values.

There is an interesting correlation between the neutrality of this background vocabulary—the unobtrusiveness of its contribution—and the fact that most background music is conveyed through recordings. These are in fact two complementary facets of the same phenomenon. For since the recording does not depend, as does the concert, upon the mood of a special occasion, and relies instead upon relating to a general set of circumstances, it exploits in background music those abilities through which that phenomenon is able to draw, without embarrassment, upon an incredible range of stylistic reference—summoning to the contemporary world idiomatic references from earlier times, placing them in a context in which, by being accorded a subdivided participation, they achieve a new validity.

Background music has been attacked from many quarters—by Europeans as a symptom of the decadence of North American society, by North Americans as a product of megalopolitan conformity. Indeed, it is perhaps accepted at face value only in those societies where no continuing tradition of Occidental music is to be found.

Background music, of course, confirms all the argumentative criteria by which the opponents of musical technology determine their judgments. It has no sense of historic date—the fact that it is studio produced and the stylistic competence of its musical substance prevent this; the personnel involved are almost always anonymous; a great deal of overtracking and other electronic wizardry is involved in its making—hence such arguments as those of automation, aesthetic morality, and the van Meegeren syndrome find in background music a tempting target. This target, however, protected at present by commercial rather than aesthetic considerations, is immune to attack.

Those who see in background music a sinister fulfillment of the Orwellian environment control assume that it is capable of enlisting all who are exposed to it as proponents of its own vast cliché. But this is precisely the point! Because it can infiltrate our lives from so many different angles, the cliché residue of all the idioms employed in background becomes an intuitive part of our musical vocabulary. Consequently, in order to gain our attention any *musical* experience must be of a quite exceptional nature. And meanwhile, through this ingenious glossary, the listener achieves a direct associative experience of the post-Renaissance vocabulary, something that not even the most inventive music appreciation course would be able to afford him.

As this medium evolves, as it becomes available for situations in which the quite properly self-indulgent participation of the listener will be encouraged, those venerable distinctions about the class structure within the musical hier-

archy—distinctions that separated composer and performer and listener—will become outmoded. Does this, then, contradict the fact that since the Renaissance the separation of function (specialization) has been the professional lot and that the medieval status of the musician, one who created and performed for the sake of his own enjoyment, has long since been supplanted by our post-Renaissance orgy of musical sophistication? I should say that these two concepts are not necessarily contradictory.

This overlapping of professional and lay responsibility in the creative process does tend to produce a set of circumstances that superficially suggests the largely unilateral participation of the pre-Renaissance world. In fact, it is deceptively easy to draw such parallels, to assume that the entire adventure of the Renaissance and of the world which it created was a gigantic historical error. But we are not returning to a medieval culture. It is a dangerous oversimplification to suggest that under the influence of electronic media we could retrograde to some condition reminiscent of the pre-Renaissance cultural monolith. The technology of electronic forms makes it highly improbable that we will move in any direction but one of even greater intensity and complexity; and the fact that a participational overlapping becomes unashamedly involved with the creative process should not suggest a waning of the necessity for specialized techniques.

What will happen, rather, is that new participation areas will proliferate and that many more hands will be required to achieve the execution of a particular environmental experience. Because of this complexity, because so many different levels of participation will, in fact, be merged in the final result, the individualized information concepts which define the nature of identity and authorship will become very much less imposing. Not that this identity reduction will be achieved without some harassment from those who resent its implications. After all, what are the batteries of public relations men, advertising executives, and press agents doing if not attempting to provide an identification for artist and producer in a society where duplication is everywhere and where identity in the sense of information about the authors means less and less?

The most hopeful thing about this process—about the inevitable disregard for the identity factor in the creative situation—is that it will permit a climate in which biographical data and chronological assumption can no longer be the cornerstone for judgments about art as it relates to environment. In fact, this whole question of individuality in the creative situation—the process through which the creative act results from, absorbs, and re-forms individual opinion—will be subjected to a radical reconsideration.

I believe the fact that music plays so extensive a part in the regulation of our environment suggests its eventual assumption of a role as immediate, as utilitarian, as colloquial as that which language now plays in the conduct

of our daily lives. For music to achieve a comparable familiarity, the implications of its styles, its habits, its mannerisms, its tricks, its customary devices, its statistically most frequent occurrences—in other words, its clichés—must be familiar and recognized by everyone. A mass recognition of the cliché quotient of a vocabulary need not suggest our becoming saturated with the mundanities of those clichés. We do not value great works of literature less because we, as men in the street, speak the language in which they happen to be written. The fact that so much of our daily conversation is concerned with the tedious familiarities of common courtesy, the mandatory conversation opens about the weather and so on, does not for a moment dull our appreciation of the potential glories of the language we use. To the contrary, it sharpens it. It gives us background against which the foreground that is the habitat of the imaginative artist may stand in greater relief. It is my view that in the electronic age the art of music will become much more viably a part of our lives, much less an ornament to them, and that it will consequently change them much more profoundly.

If these changes are profound enough, we may eventually be compelled to redefine the terminology with which we express our thoughts about art. Indeed, it may become increasingly inappropriate to apply to a description of environmental situations the word “art” itself—a word that, however venerable and honored, is necessarily replete with imprecise, if not in fact obsolete, connotations.

In the best of all possible worlds, art would be unnecessary. Its offer of restorative, placative therapy would go begging a patient. The professional specialization involved in its making would be presumption. The generalities of its applicability would be an affront. The audience would be the artist and their life would be art.

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## MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY

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One Sunday morning in December 1950, I wandered into a living-room-sized radio studio, placed my services at the disposal of a single microphone belonging to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and proceeded to broadcast “live” (tape was already a fact of life in the recording industry, but in those days radio broadcasting still observed the first-note-to-last-and-damn-the-consequences syndrome of the concert hall) two sonatas: one

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