On Music and Politics – Activism of five Dutch Composers

Louis ANDRIESSEN, Reinbert DE LEEUW, Misha MENGELBERG, Peter SCHAT, Jan VAN VLIJMEN

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This article is about five Dutch composers: Louis Andriessen (1939), Reinbert de Leeuw (1938), Misha Mengelberg (1935), Peter Schat (1935) and Jan van Vlijmen (1935). With all their differences, they have a number of things in common: they all studied with Kees van Baaren, they joined forces in music-political action and they collaborated on the opera *Reconstruction*. Their operations were successful insofar as they led to changes in Dutch musical praxis, but that was not their only aim: they were also intended as political gestures on a larger scale than that of the concert hall.
The article consists of four sections. The **introduction**, which fills the background of the five composers' activities, is followed by a **concise chronology** of the most important musical-political events of the period. Section three consists of a number of relevant **documents** from the archives of Louis Andriessen, the only one of the group to have saved such material. The choice, while based on a lengthy consultation with Andriessen, is the author's own. Finally, there is a series of **interviews** with Misha Mengelberg, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen made especially for this article, which deal primarily with Kees van Baaren and the politics of his pupils, and fragments of interviews with Andriessen, De Leeuw (see also *Key Notes 1)* and Mengelberg made in 1975 and early 1976 in connection with a tour by Phil Glass and his ensemble. The article is followed by personal comment by Elmer Schönberger.

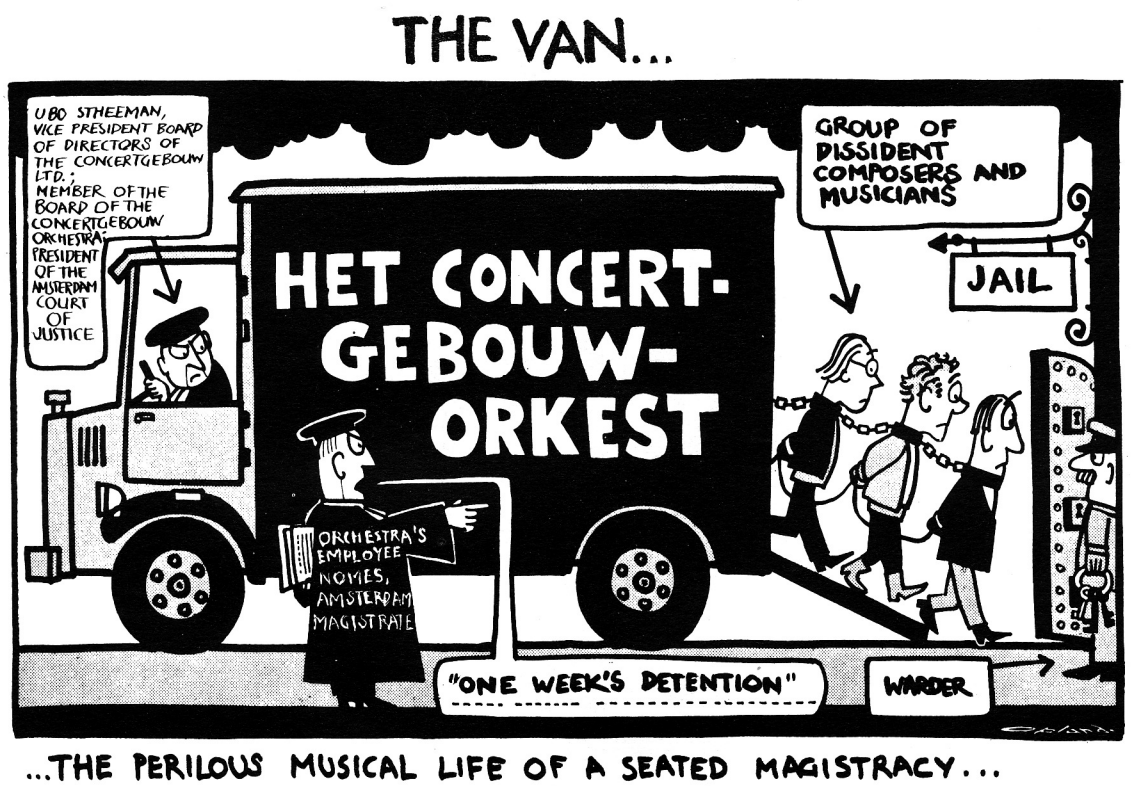
Introduction

In the second half of the 1960s the Cold War lost its grip on Holland. The country's political and economic leaders failed to isolate and discredit the growing radical opposition to capitalist repression, Dutch tractability in NATO and the horrors of the American war in Vietnam. The second half of the sixties saw the rise of Provo, a major dock strike in Rotterdam, demonstrations against the Vietnam war and sit-ins staged by workers and students in factories and universities. The poorer neighbourhoods of the Dutch cities began to demand their rights and the soldiers organised a conscripts' union. The most bitter pill to swallow was the loss of faith in the United States as the great champion of democracy. The older generation could not forget that the Americans had helped free them from the Fascist yoke, and that when the people in the cities of Western Holland were dying of starvation in the streets in 1945, American bombers dropped bread, like manna from heaven. These memories meant less to younger people. It was the young who led the radical opposition of the latter sixties, and as most of their opponents were older the struggle had the appearance of a conflict between the generations. In fact, this was a fable the social sciences arm of the establishment did their best to spread. In vain: their version of what was happening was belied by developments. There were both hip young conservatives and gray-haired radicals whose political faith had survived the Cold War. Progressive young filmmakers brought the middle-aged Joris Ivens back in triumph to Holland, twenty years after he had left because of the way the Dutch government had maligned him for his support of the Indonesian struggle for independence.

Prior to this, in the first half of the 1960s, the more progressive music students had gathered around Kees van Baaren, director of the Hague Conservatory. In the latter part of the decade five of them – Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Misha Mengelberg, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen – launched a number of sensational musical and music-political actions and were soon looked upon as a group despite their considerable individual differences. Aside from their having studied with Kees van Baaren they had one other important thing in common: they did not shut themselves off from the world to do their composing, but took an active part in the politics of music, often jointly. Soon enough they realised that their field of action was a constituent part of the larger arena of political power. They began to take a stand on all the issues of national and international politics that preoccupied other radicals, starting with the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

It would seem logical to regard the intense political activities of these five musicians, who before long were to help to fix the course of contemporary Dutch music, as one more outgrowth of the radical climate of the latter sixties. This is true to the extent that their commitment is inconceivable without that surrounding atmosphere. But that, too, was partly of their own making. This amounts to an essential difference between them and their counterparts in the other countries of western Europe, and thus between the musical climate in Holland and that in, say, West Germany or France. With the single exception of Henze, no prominent young German composer played a role of any significance in the campaigns of radicals against the Springer concern, the war in Vietnam or the persistent strain of Nazism in that country. In France, where even the traditionally conservative judiciary formed action groups in May 1968, very little was heard from the composers. What were the origins of the adherence of The Five, as they came to be called, to the radical cause?

Their teacher Kees van Baaren was somewhat anarchically inclined. It was certainly exceptional that far from evading political questions, he actually posed them on occasion. Nonetheless, it would be distorting matters to say that he inspired the specific political commitment of his pupils. A close analysis of the activities of The Five reveals a rough division into two phases. In the first phase, a joint campaign was undertaken to try to get Bruno Maderna appointed as permanent conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra in order to shake up the orchestra's outdated



programming policy. This brought them into conflict with the Dutch musical establishment and one of their two main aims: *to bring about a radical change in the standard practices of the music world*. Though they could not conquer the Concertgebouw, they could infiltrate it. More significantly, they succeeded in broadening the basis of musical life. Their 'inclusive concerts', in which the lines of demarcation between the various musical genres – and thus between various segments of the public – were demolished, attracted a great deal of interest. Misha Mengelberg organised the Instant Composers Pool, a group of musicians whose improvisation was rooted in jazz. Improvisation also played a role in the STAMP concerts, in which the composer-organiser-saxophonist Theo Loevendie mixed several different genres in an atmosphere of complete informality. Reinbert de Leeuw started the *Rondom* concerts, each put together around a specific musical theme. Peter Schat organised the Amsterdam Electric Circus (see *Key Notes* 2). Jan van Vlijmen became director of the Hague Conservatory and began moulding a new generation of musicians. The mobile music-making of *De Volharding* (Perseverance), half of whose members come from the world of jazz, is to a certain extent also marked by improvisation. Louis Andriessen took this group to sit-ins in universities and factories, to political demonstrations and neighbourhood centres in poor areas. As new compositions were written for them and used by the group as the basis for improvisation, the traditional gap between composer and performer was bridged.

But the Amsterdam Electric Circus and *De Volharding* bring us to the second phase of the evolution in which the five musicians became actively involved in the struggle of the leftist radical opposition: neighbourhood actions, sit-ins, solidarity with boycotted Cuba and with the 1968 May movement in France, and their *support for the struggle of the people of Vietnam*. This, as Peter Schat has explained, became the second major theme of their protest. In phase two, the first major theme – radical change in the world of music – was not forgotten, but it was reformulated in terms of its broader political implications. The Netherlands has a complex system for the organisation, performance and financing of social and cultural activities. Though the rest is in hands of private organisations, the financing is taken care of to a greater or lesser extent by government at all its various levels. The functioning of this system depends on the existence of mixed commissions, creating an inextricable tangle of state and society. The Five – and they were not alone – found this out when they started their Maderna campaign and came into conflict not only with opponents inside the musical establishment but even more with the machinery of government, and through it with the political status quo. The best-known example of this was when the judge at the trial of the composer-protesters turned out to be a board member of the Concertgebouw. In addition, a crystal-clear picture emerged of how the interests of big business meshed with a conservative musical policy. Incidents like this led to the sudden and extreme politicisation of the composers' activities and of the composers themselves. This, along with the tremendous impact of the events of May 1968 in France, explains why so many police were called out when the composers held a protest concert on May 30 in the Carré Theatre in Amsterdam, at that time threatened with demolition by real-estate speculators. The nervous authorities felt themselves threatened with nothing less than the outbreak of the revolution! Since 1972 the political climate has been more conservative. But the clock has not been turned back. The gains made in the politics of music have translated themselves into musical practice, and the new impulses are being elaborated further.

The chronology, documents and interviews that follow will provide a more concrete picture of the activities of The Five than can be given in the scope of this introduction.

1958 Kees van Baaren becomes director of the Hague Conservatory. Peter Schat leaves Utrecht for The Hague with him. Louis Andriessen is already studying in The Hague. Misha Mengelberg arrives a year later, followed at some distance by Reinbert de Leeuw.

1960 Peter Schat and Willem de Ridder set up The Mood Engineering Society.

From front to back: Misha Mengelberg, Hugo Claus, Harry Mulisch, Peter Schat, Reinbert de Leeuw, Jan van Vlijmen and Louis Andriessen.

The Nutcrackers, with The Five as their nucleus, are joined by dozens of other musicians at a public meeting which results in the founding of the Movement for the Renewal of Musical Praxis *(Beweging voor de Vernieuwing van de Muziekpraktijk,* or BEVEM). Seven committees are set up to study the concert system, music training, government policy and the media. Reports on these subjects are issued. Consultation and cooperation with other action groups such as TOMATO (for the theatre) and the radical BBK, the Association of Visual Artists.

Concise chronology

1963 Misha Mengelberg, Wim Schippers, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams and others are active in Fluxus.

1966 Louis Andriessen, Misha Mengelberg, Reinbert de Leeuw, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen meet in Amsterdam to launch a campaign designed to secure Bruno Maderna's appointment as permanent conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra and thus to reinvigorate that fossilized institution and transform it into a major centre of living music.

Provo demonstrations in Amsterdam and other Dutch cities. The headquarters of Provo is located in the basement of Peter Schat's house.

Three-day riot in Amsterdam.

The board of the Concertgebouw refuses to enter into any form of discussion with The Five.

1967 The Five publish the brochure *Achter de Muziek Aan* (Following the Music), an account of the categorical refusal of the authorities to discuss the future of the Concertgebouw Orchestra with them.

Misha Mengelberg, percussionist Han Bennink and reed-player Willem Breuker institute the Instant Composers Pool, a company of improvising performers and composers.

1968 The May Events in France. Andriessen, Mengelberg and Schat start a series of Political-Demonstrative Experimental Concerts. The first one is held on May 30 in the Carré Theatre in Amsterdam, which is surrounded by police.

The STEIM (Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music) is set up in Amsterdam.

1969 The Five resume their campaign against the Concertgebouw with the Nutcracker campaign. The demonstraters are forcibly removed from the premises.

The Five collaborate with writers Hugo Claus and Harry Mulisch on the opera *Reconstruction,* commissioned by the Netherlands Opera Foundation. The performance of this work, whose hero is Che Guevara, elicits considerable local and international protests.

The Five together with Ton de Leeuw, Jos Kunst and several others resign from the Netherlands Association of Composers after the board dissociated itself from the Nutcracker actions.

The Nutcrackers Ensemble puts on a surprise performance in the KLM terminal while a closed concert is being given in the Concertgebouw for guests of the airline. The musicians escape before the arrival of the police.

1970 A brief sit-in is staged in part of the Concertgebouw, resulting in the prosecution of a large number of musicians and others.

The Inclusive concerts are launched, a series of free concerts breaking through the traditional barriers between music genres, between types of the audiences, between performers and composers.

Musicians for Vietnam is set up.

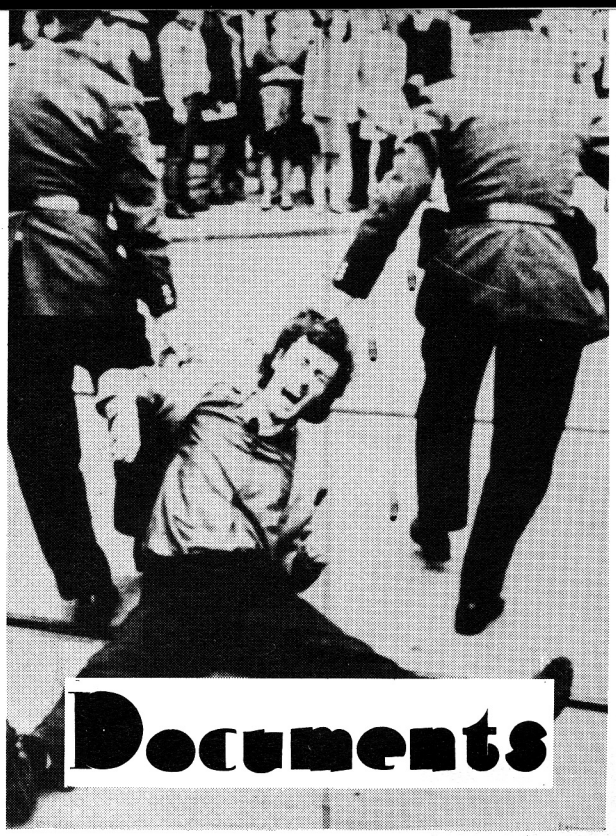
The flautist Frans Brüggen and other musicians voice sharp criticism of the Concertgebouw authorities at public meetings and demonstrations.

Kees van Baaren dies, and is succeeded at The Hague Conservatory by Jan van Vlijmen.

1971 to the present
The 1971 Holland Festival includes concerts of compositions by Van Baaren and his pupils and by Pijper and his school.

Reinbert de Leeuw begins his thematic *Rondom* concerts as successors to the Inclusive concerts. Louis Andriessen launches the socialist music ensemble *De Volharding,* which makes its debut in 1972 before a vast and enthusiastic Inclusive concert audience. Peter Schat founds the Amsterdam Electric Circus, an itinerant troupe, like *De Volharding* and the Instant Composers Pool.

The Five and BEVEM return to the bosom of the Netherlands Association of Composers, which assumes responsibility for the work begun by BEVEM.



Amsterdam 1966

Documents

1967
From *Following the Music: the Concertgebouw under discussion,* a brochure by Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Misha Mengelberg, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen.

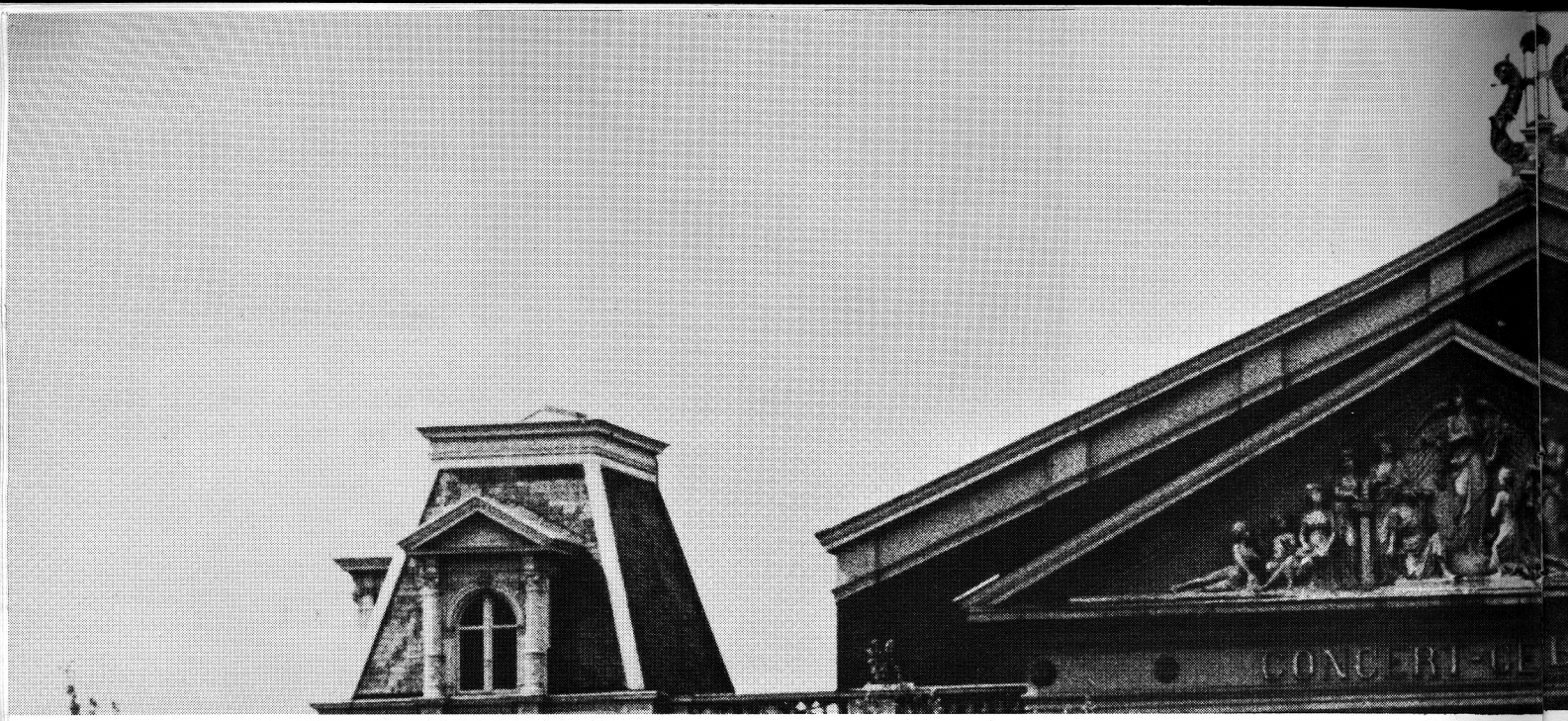
In the first place we ask nothing more than that the Concertgebouw live up to its image as a stimulus in European musical life.

1968
From *Musical and Political Commentaries and Analyses of the Programme of a Political-Demonstrative Concert of New Dutch Music in 1968,* a brochure compiled by a working group in collaboration with Konrad Boehmer. Introduction by Peter Schat.

Ignoring the politico-social context of concerts has more than one major advantage. In the first place, one always feels uncomfortable making political statements in connection with music. Music is after all incapable of expressing anything at all, let alone of communicating political views. Musicians will agree with this instinctively, and they will be right. At traditional concerts this is never necessary: the implicit agreement about the place of the concert in our lives was drawn up in the last century and everybody can be assumed to be (or not to be) familiar with its contents. When 'burgher' *(citoyen)* became an honorific a new society evolved with a new music (from Beethoven to Wagner) within an entirely new context – that of the French Revolution. The society of burghers has since consolidated itself; the bourgeoisie is in the ascendant – so we can forget the context and listen to the masterpieces in all tranquillity . . . Then there are more practical advantages to ignoring or assuming implicit acknowledgement of the context: you can put music on a non-partisan pedestal as 'the queen of the intellect', where she can reign unsoiled by the dirt of political reality and thus constitute a top-notch paying attraction for the masses who like to launder their consciences in their free time.
If that's the way it is, why should we put on a political concert, which can only force the issue? Not because music can change society. It can't even evoke or nourish the growing disgust with late capitalism and all its economic and fascistic violence. To repeat – music cannot express anything but music.
Because we want to stay out of the clutches of the established order, to avoid being used as an ideal symbol of some cliché like 'the progressivity of our social system' or the false pluralism that congratulates itself because 'we can tolerate it here', without of course any essential change taking place. In defining our context we are concerned to prevent our actions being used to justify society as it is and perhaps, later, being used against us.

1969
From *The Nutcracker Information Bulletin,* by the Nutcracker action group.

We have deliberately refrained from attacking the programme policy of the Concertgebouw because we believe that this element of general policy cannot be viewed as an isolated phenomenon. The general policy of the Concertgebouw Orchestra – and with it of course all the large Dutch concert organisations – is a direct consequence of the position they occupy in society as a whole. The social position of the orchestras has undergone no basic change since their foundation. They still serve the needs of the same social class for whose benefit they were founded. This explains why any review of the orchestras' guiding principles is impossible, why their structure, for example, hasn't changed in eighty years and why any and all plans for restructuring them are consistently torpedoed. This position is maintained in the first place by a board with enormous artistic and administrative authority . . . There is no means of telling how this board, only some of whose members have professional qualifications of any description, actually functions. The mere fact that most of the members are chosen more for their social status than for their competence helps to ensure that decisions are not made in the full light of day. A board lacking competence in artistic affairs is able to hire and fire conductors, artistic directors and orchestra musicians. To what extent the board actually uses these and other powers is impossible to ascertain, since everything takes place behind closed doors.
That the Concertgebouw Orchestra sees itself primarily as a commercial export rather than as an artistic centre is put in so many words in a press release put out by the orchestra itself: 'Judge for yourself. For the past fourteen years our orchestra has had an exclusive contract for the entire world with Philips – before that it was Decca . . . We appear regularly on Dutch and foreign television; right now, for example, we're doing three extensive – and expensive – projects with United, an international television company, that works only with the world's greatest orchestras.'
And:
'It is not without significance that when our national airline wants publicity of a certain kind in America, they choose our orchestra to underline it.'
If we cannot discount the relation between the structure of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, the functioning of its board, the commercial influence of record companies and the advertising business on the one hand and the orchestra's social status on the other, no more can we think of the programming policy as distinct from it. That policy is equally at the service of the orchestra's status, making structural renewal impossible. As for new music – the only compositions to be performed are those whose form and orchestration fit the existing structures and even these are played only once in a while (preferably in separate concerts), as if in settlement of an unpaid bill, and do not form part of the real repertoire.
Earlier attempts to open a debate on the programming policy were made impossible by the refusal of the Concertgebouw Orchestra to enter into any kind of serious discussion. We were unable to speak to all the people responsible for the policy. In a television debate the then director was empowered only to issue a statement, not to enter into a dialogue. The press supported the attempts of the action committee (consisting of W.A.L. Beeren, Frans Brüggen, Theo Bruins, Wessel Couzijn, Rudolf

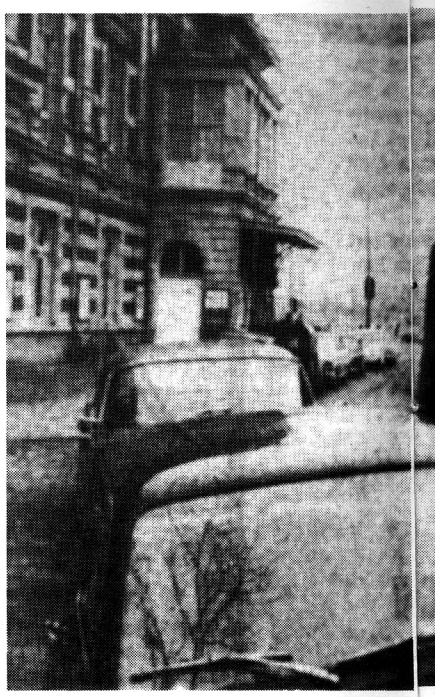


Escher, Dick Hillenius, Jan Kassies, Han Lammers, Reinbert de Leeuw, Harry Mulisch, J. Reichenfeld, Dr. W. J. H. B. Sandberg, Peter Schat, Bert Schierbeek and Jaap Wagemaker) to conduct a public discussion of the programming policy with regard to contemporary music and the related issue of the choice of conductor. The total failure of these attempts is made abundantly clear by the fact that they were not followed by any change in policy.
The plans advanced from various quarters to work towards a restructuring of the orchestral system and to give new music more of a chance were just as ineffective as the 1966 campaign . . .

Moreover, given the present situation, it is virtually impossible to organise new forms of music-making outside the existing structure. For practical reasons all attempts of this kind are dependent on the good will of the Concertgebouw Orchestra (borrowing its musicians, for example, or its percussion instruments). The 1968 series of experimental concerts was granted a government subsidy thanks only to the fact that two of the works to be performed had been commissioned by the state. It was made quite clear that this was an exception and it was actually a condition of the subsidy that no future applications were to be submitted for performances not planned under the auspices of the existing organisations. At the last moment the Concertgebouw Orchestra threatened to withhold its cooperation when they discovered that some of the programme notes were not consistent with their own ideas. The offending booklet had attempted to define the political and social context of the concerts. What bothered them were not the quotations from Lenin, Mao, Guevara, Trotsky and the like, but the references to the status and function of the Concertgebouw Orchestra itself. Lenin's remark 'This is not the moment to be moved by the Appassionata, it's the moment to crack skulls' was apparently considered less dangerous than 'The Concertgebouw Orchestra, to give an example, represents "for more than just a few" the glory of our capitalist system, and has earned the nickname of Groothandelsgebouw (Wholesale Trade Building) Orchestra . . . The Concertgebouw Orchestra can now quietly resume playing – without gasmasks – for I. G. Farben, of Zyklon B . . . The Concertgebouw Orchestra's specialisation in Mahler and Bruckner is all very well, good and necessary, but for whom, for which audience? . . . Piet Heuwekemeijer, the former director of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, had a good idea for solving those problems. The orchestra should be enlarged to the point that it could be split up into several specialised orchestras, which could perform in different places at the same time. But Heuwekemeijer was fired.'
These are the passages that were censored by the chairman of the Concertgebouw Orchestra Society. Moreover, the organisers were forced to recant some earlier proposals in writing before the concert was allowed to take place.

Because in previous attempts to start a debate the directors of the Concertgebouw Orchestra had insisted on dictating the rules of the game – thereby demonstrating unequivocably their unwillingness to discuss anything at all – there was no choice but to seek other means of opening the discussion. Only action, like interrupting a performance, was equal to the challenge of breaching the status quo.
A press communiqué issued by the officials of five unions of orchestra musicians threatened a boycott of the composers involved in the action: 'Should the action group take the same line in her future operations the composers involved, including Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Misha Mengelberg, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen, will have to reckon with the possibility that Dutch orchestra musicians will no longer perform their works.'
Like the union of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, these unions were trying to narrow the blame for the action to a small number of composers, and threatening one (Jan van Vlijmen) who had no part in it at all. Another question is whether sanctions of this kind are the proper business of a union.

Although most of the leaders of the action group are not short of ideas as to how our musical life ought to be organised, they do not consider it relevant to arrange them as a coherent body of ideas to be held up against the existing one. Social structure cannot effectively be combatted by attempting to replace the existing models by others that have not been evolved in a truly democratic manner. That is why the primary goal of the action is *openness*, the only possible starting point for promoting the democratic consciousness required to produce ideas for new forms. Alternatives that are formulated in advance of such a process can easily be manipulated and incorporated in the existing structure without the underlying principles of that structure being affected in any essential way.
Openness is the foundation for all social renewal. Needless to say, if the structure of a single institution, such as the Concertgebouw Orchestra, is successfully assailed this cannot be effective as long as the democratisation of society as a whole has not taken place. What is required in order to get that under way is for everyone to lay bare the mechanisms that are holding back democratization in his own field. For truly effective action, this is the only possible starting point.



Police rounding up musicians. Concertgebouw, Amsterdam 1969.

1970
From *Ideological Contradictions as the Root Cause of Different Conceptions of the Theory-Practice Problem in the BBK, Tomato and Nutcracker Action Groups;* minutes of a meeting.

The Nutcracker
a (points of departure)
– the official musical culture is not universal. It belongs to only one class, the bourgeoisie, which uses it to pursue ideological self-affirmation – to seek its own identity;
– the actions are not intended simply to disturb the ideological peace, but to point up the grades of property ownership on which it is based. The underlying idea is that it is absurd to imagine that democratization of the cultural sector is possible without a fundamental shift in its economic underpinning;
– the above-mentioned grades of property ownership are expressed inter alia in the pseudo-democratic distinction between high- and low-brow music, which is a reflection of the class society and which is manipulated by the ruling classes to obscure the contrasts between the classes (ideology of social pluralism as obscuration of the true contrasts);
– this leads logically to the manipulation of all musical information, one means of doing so being provided by the authoritarian administrative structure of the music-cultural institutions that are operated exclusively by and for the bourgeoisie;
– this implies the interweaving of those cultural institutions with the capitalistic production process; sustained by subsidies from public funds, these institutions work not only for a relatively small group of consumers but also directly for the financial interests of capitalistic monopolies (Concertgebouw Orchestra-Philips).

b (actions)
– The Nutcracker chooses its actions and determines their form only after making the following analysis:
a what where the consequences of previous actions?
b what tactical errors were made?
c what was changed (achieved) by those actions?
d how should we respond to the reactions?
– Nutcracker's aim is neither a purely theoretical presentation of its insights, which could not change anything, nor a blind activism that loses sight of the political points of departure and stated aims. As a result, The Nutcracker prefers its activities to derive from thorough analysis based on a close interaction of theory and practice, with their mutual dialectical influence.

c (stated aims)
– The principal aim is openness in the arts policy. The Nutcracker demanded of the institution that was the target ot its first action a public debate on the matter of openness between all concerned. It is however aware of the fact that this openness will never be attained as long as the basis of the present policy is left fundamentally unchanged. That basis is the system of the economic ownership.
– the demand for openness implies that the official culture, which now belongs to one class only, must become universal, i.e. it must belong to the entire populace. Needless to say, this must be preceded by an extended process of consciousness-raising engendered by the activities necessary to attain the goal. The goal however is not to reproduce in a democratic system the split between high and low culture that is the product of the class society but to acknowledge that the split itself is regressive and then to abolish it;
– The Nutcracker is aware of the fact that, in order to be effective, actions intended to achieve this goal cannot be limited to the field of the arts – to the ideological superstructure. In view of the fact that a democratic universal art can only emerge from a society organised on fundamentally democratic lines, individual protest actions can fulfil only a relatively minor function within a political process devised to change society as a whole and to lead to an all-embracing political and social emancipation. Actions in the cultural field can never take the place of actions intended to change the social-economic base; only within the context of the latter can they serve any purpose.

1970
From *Statements by Reinbert de Leeuw in the music monthly Luister (Listen) and Misha Mengelberg in the daily De Volkskrant*

The last action led to a public debate on television. The issue was programming policy. Nothing has changed. Now our target is the structure of the Concertgebouw. And that's a political issue. The Concertgebouw is essentially the same as it was fifty years ago – the cultural self-affirmation of the social elite. Its programming policy is only a symptom of a social and political situation, and that's what we want to talk about now. (RdL)

Escalation takes place when you have a widening gap between what you want to happen and what's really happening. You have to state that clearly, because the result could be discouragement rather than rage.
The rage has grown. We've been at it since 1964 and nothing has changed yet. The Maderna campaign had no result at all. (MM)

1970/71
From *Plan for Ensembles,* by one of the BEVEM working groups.

The following Plan for Ensembles amounts to an improvement in the position of chamber music, i.e. of the opportunities to perform chamber music and of the conditions under which it is performed.
The plan not only contains a detailed argumentation of the *raison d'être* and origins of chamber music ensembles, but also discusses ways and means of creating the organisational and financial conditions required for the proper functioning of these ensembles. The urgency of the need to change the present situation arises from recent major developments in the area of chamber music.
These developments require a new definition of the concept of chamber music.
In this plan the term 'chamber music' is no longer used exclusively for the traditional types of ensembles such as trios, quartets and quintets but is also applied to larger ensembles (such as wind ensembles), ensembles formed more or less peripatetically and ad hoc combinations and groups that function as a kind of workshop for composers and performers. By way of exception, smaller ensembles are sometimes included in orchestral programmes, but this is a strictly marginal phenomenon that is moreover limited to ensembles whose members all belong to the same orchestra.

The subsidy policy with regard to chamber music is in urgent need of revision not only because of the growing importance of chamber music but also because of the financial and organisational plight of most ensembles.
Present government policy leaves scarcely any room for the support of chamber music ensembles. Unless something is done about this, a number of ensembles will be doomed to disappear, and others will be sentenced to a marginal existence. To help effectuate this essential change the following plan, which contains several concrete proposals, has been put together.

The past few years have seen a striking increase in the number of chamber music ensembles.
This increase can be traced to several sources:
1 the musicians
2 composers
3 the repertoire, and growing public interest in it
4 the opportunities for performance, especially in places and locales inaccessible to orchestra.

1 *Musicians*
An essential difference between most ensembles and orchestras, apart from their size, is the place of the musician within the whole. An orchestra is a mechanism with a fixed composition and organisational structure to which the participating musician must adapt himself. He occupies a place within a fixed situation and lacks the means to influence that structure or the way it functions in any vital fashion. An ensemble, however, generally comes into being through the efforts of the members themselves, so that it functions in accordance with their intentions and capacities. The composition of the group, as regards both the number of instruments and the choice of instrumentalists, the repertoire and the organisational form are all determined by the players themselves; the genesis of the ensemble is the result of the musicians' free choice. This results in a fundamental difference between playing in an orchestra and being a member of an ensemble that is formed in this way.
Playing in an ensemble formed in the manner described above moreover gives the musician greater opportunities than does straight orchestra work to widen his field of artistic and professional experience. At the same time, ensemble work makes heavier demands on the musician's personal capacities and on his ability to work together with others.

2 *Composers*
The form of collaboration that has emerged between certain of these ensembles and composers has had the effect of narrowing and in some cases even closing the gap that has grown in this century between the production and reproduction of music.
The tendency we notice in many new compositions to appeal more directly to the creativity of the performers and to allow them to contribute to the final results has grown out of this form of collaboration, which for many composers has become an essential means of moving out of their isolation. In recent years this has led to the formation of ensembles made up of composers and performers (with improvisation frequently playing a role of importance), such as the *Domaine Musical* and the groups around Stockhausen, Globokar, Cardew and Rzewski.

3 *Repertoire*
This form of music-making makes it possible to hold concerts with a more direct contact between performers and audience. Concerts like those held in Amsterdam last year, where ensembles of all kinds played in rotation, prove that with this new form of presentation a new public can be reached. It is a way of breaking through the fossilised ritual of the conventional concert.

As a practical approach to the urgently needed revision of the subsidy policy, the following proposals have been formulated:
A Members of ensembles that meet certain criteria relating to composition, repertoire and quality should be partially freed from their orchestral duties with a view to their devoting the time thus gained to playing in an analogously subsidised ensemble.
This means that it will be necessary to stipulate by contract the percentage by which the various duties of the players are to be reduced. The exact solution in any given case will depend on the coordination of the schedules (concerts, tours) of the orchestra and the ensembles. The division of duties between the two functions will depend on
1 the choice of the ensemble players themselves
2 the opportunities offered by the ensemble in terms of repertoire and employment (some types of ensembles, such as wind ensembles or string quartets, have by their nature a larger repertoire than others, like percussion groups or oboe quartets)
3 the level of the ensemble
This will lead to a different situation for each ensemble. (The ratio of time spent with the orchestra and the ensemble may vary from 40/60 to 70/30.) Members of ensembles which are not spinoffs of an orchestra will be allotted an analogous percentage and the ensembles will be subsidised in a similar way.

B The performance of works whose instrumentation necessitates an ad hoc ensemble should be made possible via project subsidies. On the basis of subsidy applications specifying the participants, the compositions to be performed, the number of rehearsals and concerts and the subsidiary costs, the costs of such concerts can be covered if they meet certain standards (relating primarily to the choice of the works and the players). The players can of course be drawn from an orchestra, an ensemble, or neither.
Because of the growing popularity of this type of ensemble formed, for the sake of a repertoire that is otherwise seldom or never performed, it will be necessary for the musicians who wish to participate in such projects to have the contractual right to be freed from their orchestral duties for short periods every now and then. Depending on the preferences of the musicians and the available opportunities to participate in such projects, a certain maximum limit could be set (say three periods of two weeks per season, with the option of taking the periods consecutively if the project concerned is a particularly ambitious one).
The members of some smaller ensembles for which the repertoire is large (notably the string quartet and the wind quintet) may find it necessary to be released altogether from their other responsibilities so as to function optimally as artists and reach their highest attainable level.
It must be made possible for ensembles of this kind to be subsidised fully, with the guarantee of a reasonable salary for their members. The granting of such subsidies to new or budding ensembles should not depend first and foremost on the number of concerts given – it should be aimed at creating the right conditions for attaining the desired level by allowing them to work towards this end for a number of years.

1972
From *De Volharding*, a brochure by the group of the same name.

The Volharding has set itself the aim of contributing through the practical aspects of music-making to what is known as 'the materialistic theory of art', which is, in music, to expose the links between the conception of music (composing), its production (performance) and its consumption (listening) and to change those links. Its starting point in this exercise is a critical stance *vis-à-vis* current praxis, which only confirms existing relationships. This critical attitude emanates from a critical attitude towards society as a whole.
De Volharding is intent upon demonstrating that through its approach to repertoire and performance it can reach new and different audiences that are more involved in the production (a functional audience) and for that reason demand a different approach to composing. *De Volharding* starts with the advantage that it can deploy a number of musical techniques because its members consist of both classically-trained musicians and jazz musicians, each representing different musical disciplines associated with different social classes.
A prerequisite for working with *De Volharding* is that the musician be totally committed to both the repertoire and the audience. Both are permanently open for discussion, within the group and with outsiders; this can sometimes even take the form of letters to organisers.
As a result *De Volharding* plays a completely different role at, say, a political meeting than

would another group. It is building up a repertoire based on the social commitments of the listeners and the performers. (It should be added, though it is an obvious point, that while we take the audience's needs and tastes as a starting point, we are also out to *develop* and criticise that taste as well).
The members of the group debate the reasons for playing or not playing on a particular occasion. More than one engagement has been turned down after longer or shorter discussion.
Once a week we work on the specifically musical problems of an entirely new repertoire, without referring to other people's opinions. For example: notation. A jazz musician will play a certain notation differently from a classical musician. The same goes for rhythm. *The Creation** is filled with passages where the two ways of playing have influenced each other in the course of many rehearsals. But in other places, such as the opening of the fugue, the timing is left up to the player himself.
In that respect we are just starting. Investigating the link connecting musical material and the way it is played with an audience of a certain kind, and how to change that link, can only be done on an experimental basis since, as I have already said, we have no models from which to proceed. We no longer consider musical research, or rather esthetic research to be experimental. The quality of pure esthetic research can, we believe, be gauged only through social application.
In any case, that is how it is with *De Volharding*.

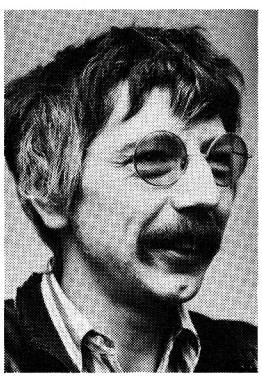
*The reference is to Andriessen's arrangement of Milhaud's *La création du monde* for *De Volharding*.

De Volharding.

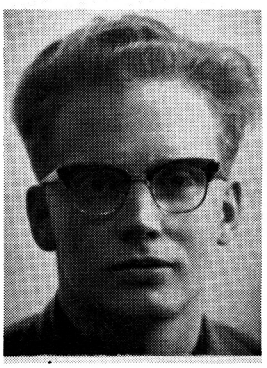
Interviews

Louis Andriessen

Jan van Vlijmen



Reinbert de Leeuw



Peter Schat

Misha Mengelberg

Keeping Things Moving

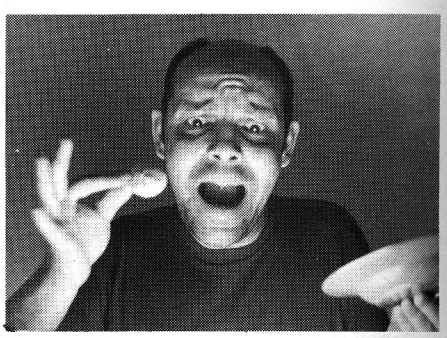
Interview with Misha Mengelberg
Questions: What did Van Baaren mean to you? Since you left the Hague Conservatory what events in music have had the most impact on you? How do you think those questions will be answered by Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Peter Schat and Jan van Vlijmen? Just start off, Misha, and if you think of anything else that needs to be said, go right ahead and say it.

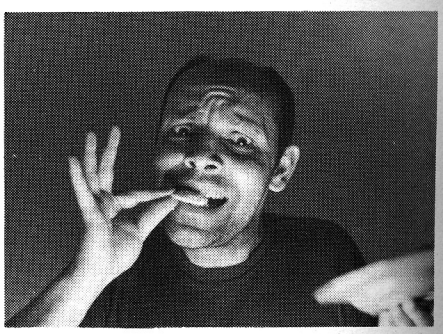
When I was seventeen, Van Baaren did a four-part setting for me of 'All the Monkeys Love it in the Water' after I showed up one day with my own setting of the song. Two visits: one to bring it, one to fetch it. The second time we talked about it for a while. That's a lovely memory. It was the beginning of a kind of master-pupil relationship that has survived to this day. I know, he's dead. But even now I still ask myself what Van Baaren would have thought of this or that – sometimes I take the answer to heart and sometimes I don't. I recall that he was a past master of the art of making pupils stand on their own two feet. One way was simply to stop answering their questions. That moment arrived for me around 1960. I came to the famous Monday-morning composition class with three piano pieces. They had quite a few . . . pauses,

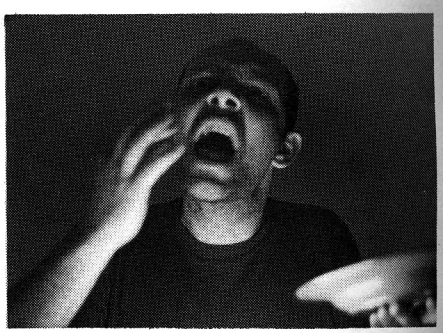
you could say. He raced through the pieces in one-sixth of the time they were meant to take and announced 'Well, that's that!'
And it was. I never went to Van Baaren with a composition again. But that doesn't mean that he was of no help to me after that. I still play the 'What would Van Baaren say . . .' game with myself. He had a remarkably pleasant and down-to-earth way of getting on with people, and that had its effect, its use . . . maybe not on my composing but on my everyday life. The kind of jokes – the jokes I laughed at Van Baaren had to laugh at too. The business with the Nocturnes. Louis Andriessen had a new girlfriend. He was feeling great . . . for months. That euphoria produced a hefty score that he brought to composition class. It was labelled 'Nocturnes – for Juanita'. Van Baaren said 'Nocturnes – nightly turns.' And that's how we all thought of it from then on.
I don't feel like talking about this any more. One relationship in my day-to-day life, lifted out of context – I can't deal with that.
The second question, about the most important events . . . well, there were a lot of those, but you can fill them in yourself. As for the answers of the others, oh well . . . everyone answers in his own way. I think we'll say a lot of the same things. But look, if it wasn't such a warm day I might give completely different answers, and maybe bigger differences would have come to light. It's very possible that my views will be closest to those of Jan van Vlijmen and . . . Reinbert de Leeuw, and that Louis Andriessen and Peter Schat will touch upon completely different points. I sometimes discussed politics with Van Baaren, but what I remember about it isn't all that special. He thought of himself as an anarchist. In any case he certainly despised the Communists – the real party members. I don't feel that way, I think it's a lot of nonsense. Some of them I despise, some I don't. In that respect, it seems to me, there were big differences between him and his pupils. He certainly wasn't a Cold War type – no, with him it went back much further than that. A difference between one generation and another. It showed in his conduct in other ways too. I can tell you about that without doing the least damage to my pleasant memories. There are so many of those. That's the way I am – people I feel warmly about can get away with a hell of a lot. They can have the wrong opinions, make the wrong music, behave like swine – it hardly matters at all. Now don't ask me who writes the wrong music. It's like this: there are people who make music and there are people who listen. When the music-makers are making music, they can't or don't want to listen. You can't do both things at once. That only happens when you're improvising together – then you react to each other. It's an active listening situation and it's a big help. I talk to other people who make music, but if they ask me what I think of something, I'm sorry to say that I can't tell them, I can only say 'I'll talk to you, but unfortunately I can't listen to your music because I'm writing something myself.' There's a certain ambivalence to this, but it means that there's no point in my taking swipes at other people for making the wrong music.

Q: It wasn't me who used the term 'wrong music'. But I assume that when someone else makes good music, it's the kind of music you make too.

If they're going to make good music, hen it's a lot more serious than that. It means that I'm superfluous. Which is all right with me – then I can sit in the chess café all day long instead of just half the day. It will happen yet. One fine day a bunch of wise-guy kids will show up who are so hip to it all that I can retire with an easy conscience. I can see the first signs already. Out of the clear blue a certain Guus Janssen turns up (an improvising pianist). I can only wait and see whether it really happens. But to be honest, I'd love it. What I really like to do is just hang around. I've been improvising for years with the percussionist Han Bennink. And now we're starting to get audiences here and there that you can't pull a fast one on. A lot of times (fortunately not always) they laugh when I think something's funny. That means that we're getting somewhere in this business. But that's what I have against our Instant Composers Duo performances of the past year and a half. We're not far enough ahead any more; I have the idea that people are starting to understand our language. My only worry is that we're going to have to look for another language. Because all of this has just one purpose: to keep things moving. It works better with the Instant Composers Pool Tentet. At the Moers Festival in West Germany, for instance, we actually kind of flopped. The audience found it on the boring side. There we are, the ten of us, and only one is playing, endless solos. The full

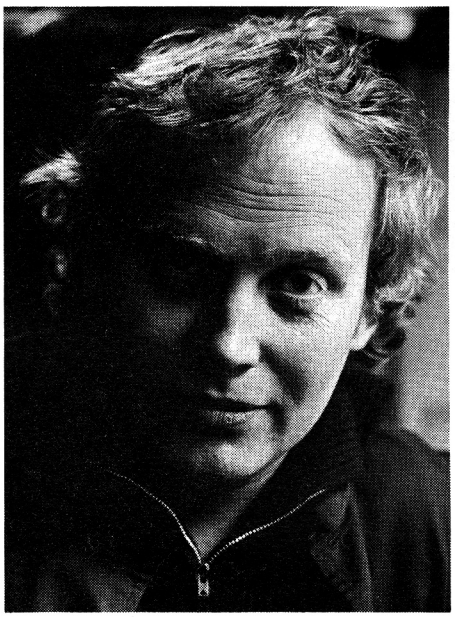

The poor chap


nothing in life


gives him any pleasure

ensemble was absolutely rotten: out of tune, out of rhythm, just bad. Look, the reasons why we can't play as well as the local farmboys band are interesting and worthwhile. I'm really doing my best to get up to the level of a very mediocre brass band. When we play together we should at least be that good, I feel. But even that level is beyond our grasp. Every once in a while we suddenly make it, perhaps in rehearsals. Every one of the ten is a good, solid musician, who could keep an audience happy for a whole evening all by himself. But the problem is how do you get them to work together? We all know that in that strange collaboration situation, with ten of us, things happen that never happen to us individually. The pressure, like in the earth's surface, suddenly creates a gem amid the cinders. But how, and when? I happened to be talking about it the other day with Willem Breuker. I was complimenting him on the discipline in his Willem Breuker Collective. I think he keeps it all beautifully under control. That collective really plays a lot better than a brass band. And they do good pieces too. But apart from Willem

Breuker himself the improvising is pretty thin. Once upon a time they also started out to improvise. But they don't get around to it any more, hardly ever. Willem Breuker is good at getting his own way. That's one solution. But I'm not that interested in myself – or rather, I'm much more interested in myself than just in that way. I'm also interested in my environment, in the reactions I get. I still get a kick out of it when I can get Mr Bennink onto a particular track in a concert without anyone noticing it. But I try to do it as little as possible, to use my tentacles as little as possible. When we wrote the opera *Reconstruction* with The Five, it wasn't much more than collaborating on paper. We sat around a table and talked about what to put down on paper. The collaboration was about paper, music, which was then performed by all kinds of singers, actors and musicians.
In the Instant Composers Tentet the collaboration is a lot more complex. All right, we do have something on paper. But that isn't what we play. It's so complex – you figure it out. I haven't been able to.



SCENARIO

After two full centuries,
touring Russia, China, Cuba, Africa,
the Revolution now returns
to its native soil: Europe.

Its name then is Historical Compromise,
its content democratic communism.
America and Russia will engage in a mésalliance,
Europe and China in a mariage de raison –
and the world maybe just not
in its last big war.

Then the southern continents will join forces,
upset this yin-yang equilibrium
and after three over-full centuries
complete the World Revolution.

Peter Schat

The Revolution has Returned to Europe

Interview with Peter Schat

Questions: What did Van Baaren mean to you? Since you left the Hague Conservatory what events in music have had the most impact on you? I hope you understand that these questions are just a way of getting you talking. You may have more important things to say. There's a lot of ground we could cover; let me give you an example, even if it isn't chosen at random: does your political commitment have anything to do with Van Baaren?

Not directly. But Van Baaren once made a very striking remark. He said to me, it must have been around 1958/59: 'Watch out for the Chinese'. He was really afraid of the Chinese. I thought it very strange. He said something even more striking about *Reconstruction*. He said: 'It's much more difficult nowadays to stay out of politics. There's no way around it, not as a musician and not as a composer.' In the 1950s I didn't talk to him about it very much. I wasn't so concerned about politics myself at the time.
With me it really got started with the Eichmann trial in 1960. If you were to assume that our commitment might also have something to do with the fact that we're confronted with the politics of subsidies so often, with the state, I don't think you'd be far from the truth. You don't protest against a private Maecenas. I've been subsidised since I was a student. I actually applied once for a five-hundred guilder subsidy to buy the paper I needed to apply for a subsidy for my music.
Our first action was a spinoff of Provo. The second one came right after what happened in Paris in May. The second time we were a little more conscious of what we were doing. For that matter, so was everyone. That's why we were so quick the second time to seize upon the action-possibilities of a remark made by one of our prominent capitalists, Sidney van den Berg, who said that the Concertgebouw Orchestra was so good for the business world and for our exports, and was loudly applauded by the Chamber of Commerce. We mimeographed it and threw two thousand copies off the Concertgebouw balcony. But let's start the interview. I haven't forgotten the two questions. What Van Baaren meant to me? You might as well ask me what my father meant to me. You have a lot going with your father too. I met Van Baaren in Utrecht. I was studying at the Conservatory there and I was unhappy about the classes. Van Baaren was about to become director. He asked me to come and talk to him some time.

Meanwhile, an organ piece of mine had been performed at Gaudeamus in 1954. He was against that: he didn't think that students' work should be performed in public as long as they were still studying. For the responsibility was the teacher's. I was practising in one of the rooms when I saw a shadow on the glass door. Van Baaren in his listening pose, his head slightly to one side. Of course I did my very best. He came into the room and said he would like to give me lessons.
Jan van Vlijmen and Jan Wisse were also at the Conservatory. A reporter came by, and right away there was a 'Utrecht School'. You know, I don't feel like dredging up memories any more. Regurgitating past events. I don't want to do that. I want to talk about what Van Baaren meant. I had a fantastic rapport with him as a composer. We were in a choir, in a work that he wrote especially for students: *The Hollow Men,* the poem by T.S. Eliot. Tremendous, pitiless . . . we'd never experienced anything like it. He had a lot of authority, he stimulated your critical powers. He also had definite ideas, and in that he was an heir to the Vienna School. He explained them in a series of lectures. I don't think anyone understood them except Jan van Vlijmen and myself, and Hein Kien. He saw very plainly that what matters in music are the basic structures. Like tonality – which was over and done with. The tonic had collapsed. (He may have seen it a bit too deterministically.) The composer's big nightmare, F sharp or A, didn't matter any more. Schoenberg had arrived at a solution of sorts. But Van Baaren saw it as a stepping stone. All those years, right up to his death, he maintained that it was a primitive solution. What mattered, what he was hoping for, was a new tonality, or rather a completely different approach to tonality. I'm just starting to get a glimmer of what he meant. I once had a wild musical outburst, a kind of breakthrough – *Thema,* partly inspired by James Brown. He heard the pounding on the door, but didn't hear it open. If he could have heard my recent opera *Houdini,* especially the Song of Liberation, he would have known that the door was open. I'm convinced of it. Because he was concerned in the first place with constituent elements. He would have recognised those elements, those cornerstones, in *Houdini.* He was a first-rate pronouncer of musical law. If he had been in politics he would have had a seat in the Senate. That's what he did for music in Holland. He had more scope and also more insight than Vermeulen. Van Baaren gave me the basic principles, the constitution. But he wasn't in the least senatorial, he stayed boyish. I have to admit that it wasn't easy to establish personal contact with him, to come to him with your problems. I know that's always difficult in a master-pupil relationship. And it was the deepest point of the Cold War. It just didn't come out in those days. It was a very impersonal period. I recall that he once told me he thought the answer lay in the direction of anarchism. He was a little contrary, a little independent. He detested official protocol. He was always angry when the Conservatory wasted money. Really angry: wasting people's money. I thought that was a good standpoint. So in effect he did make political statements. But not analyses. Try to imagine what he was going through. He was worried – not that he lost sleep over it – about the collapse of tonality. And it was precisely in that field that there were no limits to what he could do. But it had collapsed. He took that very seriously. He couldn't stand the people who more or less ignored the problem, throwing out a discord once in a while, like the Badingses*. No, he took it all on his shoulders. And then all those classes, that whole Conservatory. Running a marriage. And more besides – he had all of that hanging round his neck. For the performance of his works he always used the expression 'te vondeling leggen' (abandoning a child). And Rilke's advice, 'Spät ankommen'. I thought it was good advice.

Q: I can well imagine. I dislike advertisements for one's own work. But once it's there you do have to do something with it. What happens in fifty years' time doesn't interest me. I can't grasp it. Maybe I'll want something very different by then. And he was very different from you and the others in that way as well. He wouldn't have taken part in a sit-in in the Concertgebouw to push through his demands for programming.

He certainly wanted to hear his works performed. He wasn't asking for the fate of Vermeulen. But he was no career man. And don't forget that things were very different in the fifties. You couldn't get through; it was an aquarium, with no sound. Now you can hardly imagine what it was like. As composers we responded by following Debussy's dictum: retreat into the esoteric. That's what we did to find a way out of the crisis of tonality. So did Van Baaren. And Darmstadt. The public didn't count. First we had to figure things out for ourselves. *Spät ankommen.* Van Baaren loathed exhibitionism. I learned a lot from that. I also think the first performance is very important; you learn from it, listen, improve. But that's all. A week before his death Van Baaren gave me a book by Chomsky on the structure of language, structural linguistics. He thought it offered a solution. A mighty constitution had expired, a composing millennium. I think Van Baaren was wrong. I can't follow that book, but what's more important is that Chomsky is science, and music isn't. It isn't a question of constructs but of constitutions. Constitution, not chaos – that's the first prerequisite for freedom. That's why he was a follower of Schoenberg, even though he thought his work was a preliminary, primitive solution. He was open to all the other preliminary solutions too – Xenakis and the rest. Phil Glass he never heard. I never believed in it, from Terry Riley's first album on. I feel that all mechanistic principles should be out-lawed. There are enough conveyor belts in the world. Now they're running them on the rails of tonality, with a dash of mysticism . . . I could talk about Van Baaren all day, but I'd rather go on to something else. Question 1, question 2 – they give me a lever.

Q: In the programme notes to the political-demonstrative concert in 1968 you referred to a 'growing disgust' (see *Documents*). Could that have had anything to do with Van Baaren's remark that politics are unavoidable? And you talk about 'fundamental changes'. Do you think anything fundamental has changed? Hasn't there been a pre-empting (of your goals by the establishment)? Sorry, that's a lot of questions, but they're all connected.

We haven't been pre-empted, we haven't been turned into an adornment. By 'we' I mean the Vietnam demonstrators. In Saigon there was a tremendous victory. And it brought about vast changes. All those collaborators, those naval officer-prime ministers, that De Jong we had (Dutch prime minister in the sixties, former submarine captain), all that is changed. Perhaps we didn't change all that much in this part of the world. But whatever else has happened or not, Saigon is now Ho Chi Minh City.

*Henk Badings, Dutch composer.

Q: I was talking about Holland.

Yes, I know – so was I. Saigon has changed to Ho Chi Minh City in Holland too. It was not till fifteen years after the Second World War that the full extent of the collaboration was revealed. It finally got started with the Eichmann trial. Now it's going to happen again, only it probably won't take fifteen years this time. The people who supported the American war against Vietnam are going to find themselves stranded – morally, intellectually and artistically. Vietnam is a definite watershed. The people who did something – even if it was only yelling 'Johnson-Murderer' in public and going to jail for three months or paying a fine – now have in them the seeds of further development. Yes, it's definitely a watershed, even if the powers that be do all they can to obscure it.
The people and the animals in Vietnam have survived. It's incredible. After all those years of an increasingly unbearable war, after all those years of the unbearable things that went on there. And mass collaboration. That it ended the way it did is a fact with endless implications. It touches everything. Vietnam was the central theme of our concerts, of our consciousness. An entire political orientation was engendered by it. The people of Vietnam are the heroes of history, as far as I'm concerned. Just think about what happened there, how that victory took place! They'll be talking about it for a thousand years. It will have its effect on everything. And then think about what Rockefeller, the capitalist Mafia, said to a journalist who asked him about Vietnam after the 1973 Paris agreements: 'Vietnam is over – next question please'.
There's something else that ought to be said. Have you ever heard Stockhausen open his mouth about Vietnam? Of course 'he was against it' . . . Ever seen Boulez at a Vietnam march, like Sartre? No, they're Cold War musicians. But the whole *Reconstruction* group was on the streets, all the time. That should be said emphatically. And I want to stress something else, even if it is no more than a so-called minor issue in that vast whole. At the trial after the Concertgebouw sit-in, the prosecutor shouted at me 'But those are Fascist methods'. His boss gave it to him for that, and I got his apology. But Boulez picked it up, and through him it got into the world press. Konrad Boehmer went to Boulez to tell him what was going on. For he obviously just didn't know. Afterwards he changed his tone, but he never actually took back what he had said . . . But naturally a follow-up like that doesn't make the papers. That was a bitter disappointment, after his great attitude at the time of the Algerian war. He was one of the 120 signatories to the protest against the French 'policy' in Algeria. But by May 1968 it had already gone wrong. He thought the events of May were romantic idiocy. He has a typically French Napoleon complex, like so many French musicians. I can't understand that. Weren't they brought up as musicians to love Beethoven? What can you see in Napoleon after that? Originally we were going to give that political-demonstrative experimental concert of May 1968 in Paris too. But things got started in the Carré Theatre in Amsterdam, where there were approximately as many police as in a university or factory in Paris at the time. They'd lost their nerves.

The revolution comes to Carré, May 1968.

Q: When I asked about fundamental changes I was thinking of something else, something more limited – the campaigns you conducted in Holland. Has a lot changed in musical praxis? A lot of new things are going on, but hasn't the old hierarchy survived? What I mean by 'the hierarchy has survived' is that the Concertgebouw still sponges up most of the subsidies, while the Electric Circus, the Instant Composers Pool and *De Volharding* get the leftovers. (At this point the discussion is interrupted by the first TV reports of the outbreak of the revolt by the blacks of South Africa against the Vorster regime).

. . . Nothing is the same any more, and nothing will stay the same. I think that one of the greatest mistakes made by the left is that they don't celebrate their victories. An example. One of the actions in that period was for progressive training programme at the Teacher Training School in Beverwijk (a town in the industrial belt around Amsterdam). The police arrested one of the demonstrators and the public prosecutor issued a flat statement that he would be held for 31 days without a hearing and without sentencing. That was a major juridical scandal. They got a new action going: 'Release Loek Zonneveld.' And they did release him, within six days. Do you know what I missed? Big posters on the walls inscribed 'Loek Zonneveld *Is* Free!' Mistakes like that are very important. They're not just tactical errors – they're an indication that in the leftist movement there's a fundamentally mistaken element. We should pay more attention to that. That political-demonstrative experimental concert – for heaven's sake, what a mouthful! Political *and* demonstrative *and* experimental! That's really telling them! – was the beginning of something that has kept right on growing: the Vietnam concerts, the Inclusive Concerts, Willem Breuker, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble and so forth and so on. That

whole development tapped off the last remnants of life from the established Institutions. Those are the concerts and groups that set the tone today. That's a success, and we don't intend to let them steal it from us! Even the established Institutions are not what they used to be. They've made concessions, they've been forced to make concessions. It's the same with the actions in the city neighbourhoods. The left has undeniably booked major successes there. By writing them off you demonstrate a lack of seriousness. They came about because a lot of people made a tremendous effort. It *was* an effort and always will be. Things like that are going to count for a great deal. What's more, you have to take all the little things into account as well.
The little things . . . I'm not talking about front-page news, a wide sweep. In the end it works its way in, though, I'm not worried about that. Even the Concertgebouw Orchestra audience has changed, and the leadership has to watch its step a lot more. You don't find them giving concerts for the bourgeoisie of Brazil any more. That's all changed. The aim is not to deliver the Great Coup de Grace to the bourgeoisie. Because that would finish us al off. The bourgeoisie is absolutely ready to let the whole world be destroyed if they're attacked that way. The whole world – don't doubt it for a second. That's why the Historical Compromise worked out by the Italian Communist Party is an idea of genius.

Now I'm going to stick my neck out. Van Baaren was the founder of the Sixth Dutch School. By Schools I mean groups that gave form to the development of world music.
Van Baaren was the founder of the Sixth School in the Netherlands, nothing more and nothing less. Just imagine, in the Millennium of written music there were two Viennese and five Netherlands schools. And he founded the sixth.
I don't think I've told you yet exactly when I first saw the relation between music and politics. On 14 July 1966 the workers' riot broke out in Amsterdam. In the basement of my house was the headquarters of Provo. We were rehearsing for a performance of *Labyrint* with Bruno Maderna. The attendant came rushing in with tales of how many people had been killed. The barricades were ablaze in front of my house. We were stunned.
A year later I was in Berkeley; the battle for People's Park was going on. That great poster was hanging there with a photo of Provo-Amsterdam: 'The Sublime Beginning'. That was no small beer for me, seeing that poster.
It's not slowing down, either. Provo was there before People's Park. Now there's Berlinguer. Who or what is he preceding? The revolution has returned to Europe, after two centuries. It started with Provo, but only with seven or eight people. It was repeated in Paris, and how! Thousands of people talking to each other in the streets. An awe-inspiring communication. In Paris at a certain moment half a million Gaullists came out to demonstrate against it, and since then it's been a city of careerists again. That didn't happen in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam the awe-inspiring communication is still going on.

A Warning to Begin With
Interview with Jan van Vlijmen
A warning to begin with: the article you're writing could create the false impression that the five of us were very active politically, like a bunch of Rudi Dutschkes. And we weren't. None of us started out with strong political motivation, let alone a 'leftist orientation'. It came bit by bit, although I have my reservations about that. Of course *Reconstruction* had political implications, but don't forget that the most stimulating thing for us was to be working on the music together. Che Guevara happened to become the main figure, but Misha (Mengelberg) was against that development from the start, and I wasn't too happy about it either. Misha always called him 'Chi Qibarra'. There was a very real danger of introducing mythogenic elements that didn't belong there. As a matter of fact, the idea of using Guevara as the hero wasn't even ours. It came from the then director of the Netherlands Opera, Maurice Huismans. We each had our own views on politics, and for each of us they were shaded differently.
You have to be equally careful with a remark like 'Van Baaren had a certain interest in anarchism'. That can be completely misunderstood. It suggests that he had some kind of connection with an anarchistic organisation, which he didn't. Nor was there anything anarchistic about his character, or for that matter about his composing – if anything that was highly disciplined and organised. It was more the way he related to people, specifically to his students. It's hard to find words to describe it: undominating, simple, in any case non-authoritarian, nonconformist without being demonstrative about it. In saying that, I certainly do not mean that I associate anarchism with disorganisation. We know enough about anarchism in the Spanish Civil War to realise that it can be splendidly organised.
We talked a lot about politics, especially in connection with *Reconstruction,* and he mostly chuckled about it. I remember him saying, almost literally in these very words: 'If I had to feel at home somewhere in politics, then it would be in anarchism'. But he wasn't really interested in politics. Van Baaren was preoccupied with very different matters: Wittgenstein, Chomsky. He didn't object to taking political standpoints, he just let it happen. He made us pretty insecure that way – me at least. But he was a forceful personality.
For Peter (Schat) the Eichmann trial was a colossal eye-opener. For me too. Weinreb's *Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1945,* is, or was, tremendously important to me*. I'm not in the least concerned about whether Weinreb's account of what he did in the war is true or not – what I'm interested in is the strategy he outlines for action and resistance. The Maderna Campaign wasn't political at all. Moreover, the methods were wrong. Van Baaren said at the time: if you want to ensure that Maderna will never get a foot in the door of the Concertgebouw, then by all means go on as you have started. Our approach was incredibly naive. Van Baaren knew very well that the structure we were attacking was deeply rooted in the social system. And all we were bothering about was the outermost layer.

Q: Peter Schat has said that you learned from the (failure of the) first action, and that you applied the lesson in the more political second phase, that of the Nutcracker campaign.

There were certain things about the Nutcracker campaign that I disagreed with. In fact, I never wanted to go along with it, even though that bothered me too, lacking solidarity with my friends. I thought it a poor action and the method apolitical. I didn't see how you could change anything that way. Besides, I thought they chose an irrelevant target. For me, the Concertgebouw was a museum. A museum can also have a function, like the Rijksmuseum with Rembrandt.

*In that book Weinreb described his one-man guerilla against the persecution of the Dutch Jews by the Nazis and their bureaucratic collaborators. The book has become highly controversial.

Acting on the urge to create a disturbance at a concert released an incredible amount of latent aggression in the audience, and I thought that was a positive point, that releasing, showing it was there. But it was the only one. The methods were borrowed from Provo. Provo also uncovered structures, which was revealing in itself, but that's as far as it went. Provo didn't really set out to change society as such. They had no contact whatsoever with the workers' struggle, with the factories and offices, with strikes. Their actions were something to laugh about – perhaps more negatively than positively. Because they diverted attention from many more fundamental problems and contradictions. And in fact Provo didn't achieve a thing, any more than our Maderna actions or Nutcracker did. The Concertgebouw is still run the way it was in the twenties.
Let me put it as plainly as I can. If you want to bring about basic changes in this society, you don't begin with the Concertgebouw or the Rijksmuseum. Institutions like that are no more than symptoms, derivatives.

Q: Louis Andriessen says the same thing: nothing basic has been changed. But Peter Schat says the exact opposite: 'Nothing is the same any more, and nothing will stay the same'.

What's changed the most, I think, is Peter. And Louis is the most consistent of the five of us. He took our pathetic political stance – and by now you'll understand that I don't consider it a political stance at all – and made the most of it, in a more consistently radical manner than any of us. It isn't my way, and I have my doubts about it, but I also respect it. He did something with his profession, in his field. I agree that you have to take a political stance – what choice do you have? But for a musician, the only entry into politics is via the world of music. For he's part of that sector of society and that's where he's on home ground. That's why I took part in *Reconstruction*. This may seem to contradict what I just said: 'if you want to bring about basic changes in society, you don't begin with the Concertgebouw'. But then we were talking about political activities. *Reconstruction* was about something entirely different – the social and political struggle in Latin America. As I recall, we were unanimous in feeling that the best way for us to present our political views was through our work. In very simple terms, we thought

Reconstruction, 1969.

it pointless, if not impossible, for us to participate in the struggle in Latin America as guerillas. We're no guerillas, we're musicians. We were deeply convinced that we could be more effective as musicians than in any other role.
But at the time we were often told,'You and your fairy tales! There you are, in your garrets – working on an opera commissioned by the Netherlands Opera. Chic opening night, with the Minister in his box seat. Why don't you go into the factories?' Louis, in a way, did go into the factories – with his music.

Q: By saying that Louis Andriessen was the most consistent in what he did are you implying that you regard yourself as less consistent?

Two preliminary remarks. First of all, I was the only one with a job. That means that you come across differently, like it or not.

Q: But it's also likely that you were the only one with a job for that very reason that you came across differently.

All right, but that doesn't mean that I was less committed or less radical. And that's my second preliminary remark. Peter's motivation springs mainly from his tremendous sense of pity. For me, though, adopting a political attitude involves a lot more than emotionality: reason, analysis, strategy. I think you have to reffect upon your methods very seriously and precisely. For example, you have to be very careful that your methods are not associated with those of your worst enemies. That's a very slippery area. Older people especially were reminded by the Nutcrackers (clicking with those little click toys) of Fascist methods. In the thirties, they used to turn mice loose at meetings of their adversaries. Those older people didn't have such associations because they were so right-wing, but because they experienced those things at the time.
In my own way I tried, and am still trying, to free music training from its set pattern, which hasn't changed basically since Mendelssohn's Leipzig Conservatory. We tried to give music training in its totality another dimension. I say 'we' because that isn't something you do all by yourself. You do it together with a lot of different groups. Working together is essential. Where we failed completely was in the matter of democratisation. When I came here that was my main concern, democratisation. At first I thought we were getting somewhere, but we weren't. This Conservatory is not a democratised institution. Professor Freudenthal, a mathematics professor and a fantastic man, said in his valedictory speech that one of the main reasons for the failure of democratisation in educational institutions is that they are not true communities. I have become very deeply aware of the truth of that remark. This is a big institution. A lot of the staff does nothing more than rent a room from us for a few hours a week, as it were, and that's the extent of our relationship with them. The students, especially towards the time of graduation, are concerned with the pragmatic matter of finding a job. My own opinion is that in non-democratised society it's impossible to set up little democratised islands (educational institutions, factories or

offices). You can't form islands in this society. The Conservatory is bound hand and foot to larger structures – final exam regulations, statutory, regulations, the responsible minister, constituted authority, the whole bureaucracy. You have no idea.
In the educational process itself we've made more headway, and that's more important than all that business with administrative structures. What is of essential importance is the appointment policy, which is really the crux of the matter. (No, the appointment policy isn't democratised either.) Another very basic change is the relation between theory and practice. The teaching of theory was off in a corner by itself, a situation that nobody was happy with. We have integrated theory with practice. We've replaced the old isolated subjects with *themes* chosen by the students and staff. The former subjects are grouped around the themes, and a number of students with an instructor are also grouped around each theme. This amounts to a certain decentralisation of the whole organisation: decentralisation is an important part of democratisation. It may not be democratisation in the strict sense of the word, but it is a prerequisite for it. Each of the groups fixes its own curriculum, and there are joint performances by students and staff. In the book just published on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the conservatory the changes are described like this: 'Classes have assumed the character of project groups, and each falls under the responsibility of a single teacher. Thus the new method is not intended to prepare the student for some specific future achievement but more to further the development of his personal capacities in relation to his main interest or field of study. That made it possible for each nucleus to choose its own study material. A work is chosen as the point of departure for bringing together what to date have been the isolated elements of theory.'
Besides that we've also broadened the territory we cover. The Old Music department has been activated, and New Music too. Van Baaren did a great deal here. Then we give a lot of attention to electronic music. I wouldn't know another conservatory in the world that devotes as much attention as we do to electronic music. The existence of that department is of great importance. It radiates an intense effect that changes all your thinking about music, your attitude towards music. The presence of Dick Raaymakers here is what tipped the balance. (Appointment policy again!) Dick is not at all an extrovert type. Quite the opposite, he's very modest. But that gives his little pushes, his modest proposals all the more effect, in addition to his thorough-going professionalism in his field. He's exceptionally lucid and has a very personal and very surprising approach to things.
We're still a long way from achieving all our goals, but I think we've accomplished some major changes in an important area, that of music training. The results are discernible, which is more than can be said of the Nutcracker campaign.

Q: I've heard it said that the 'group of five' is a fiction, or that in any case it went out of existence a long time ago.

Here you'd better watch out! It may very well seem that out mutual differences have increased. But that's a matter of appearances, attributable to the fact that each of us now has more opportunity to speak in public. The differences were no less sharp in the *Reconstruction* period. We were always diametrically opposed to each other. Misha was the most obvious example. (Van Baaren would have immensely enjoyed his manoeuvres and theses). But it was absolutely essential – for the others – that you took up your own position. I'm sure we all felt that way. It was the differences that made it all so active and productive. Despite it all, and precisely because of it all, we worked together and made something together. Misha's opposition – that *was* Misha, through and through. That's the way he is, and it worked. At the same time, I must say that neither Misha nor I really won those arguments with, say, Peter Schat. But he didn't back down – nor did Peter, who must have been irritated now and again at Misha's eternal seeming contrariness. He was the gadfly of the group. He undermined more than one of our unquestioned assumptions, and I think they needed to be undermined. In general I went along with his remarks and tactics.
We were active together, together we made something. Nothing of that solidarity has gone. To put it less emotionally, we still like each other. And we're still at work. Right now, for example, I'm working with Reinbert de Leeuw and Harry Mulisch on a new opera. Don't forget, everything that's said about whether the group of five exists or not springs from some sort of political and social conviction. I can assure you that not only each of us individually, but also the group as such, is just as alive as ever.

We Don't Mess Around With Minor Details

Interviews with Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw and Misha Mengelberg on the occasion of a concert tour by Phil Glass

Louis Andriessen gave the first performance of his composition *De Volharding* (Perseverance) on 12 May 1972, at an Inclusive Concert in Amsterdam, a music marathon that lasted until the small hours of the morning. The work, which employed formal procedures related to those of minimal music, also lent its name to the socialistic collective of musicians that performed it. In the mid-sixties Misha Mengelberg wrote a piano piece in memory of *Hans van Zweden* that is marked by minimal motifs and shifts and by a continuous pulse. The piece is related in form to the classic American train blues played by boogie-woogie pianists. Reinbert de Leeuw's repertoire includes Reich's *Piano Phase,* but he by no means confines himself to this kind of music.
The reactions of the composer-musicians were gathered in individual talks, which are rearranged here systematically rather than chronologically. The first piece is Mengelberg's analysis of how Duke Ellington's drummer Sonny Greer ends the Jubilee Stomp. The last piece is Louis Andriessen's comments on the remarks of the others.

Mengelberg: With a short last beat you have to do something – pinch it. One hand plays the beat and the other pinches it off. Of course you shouldn't pinch before you play the beat. You have to be aware that you just heard a beat. In a big hall you have to pinch a moment later than in a small one, because in a big hall it takes a little longer for the back rows to realise that they've heard a beat. What it adds up to is that a short last beat takes a lot of precision.
Now for the long last beat. That is much more difficult. Because how do you know what's long? I mean, what's the difference between an average long short last beat and a short long last beat? You can't begin to answer that question unless you know, for instance, how long the whole piece lasts. If the piece lasts an hour, then the long last beat can take

half an hour. But *Jubilee Stomp* is barely three minutes long. The last beat doesn't take longer than one or at the most one-and-a-half seconds. But it's a *long* last beat. Except that the beat is pinched at the end. So actually it's a *long short* last beat. Practically unknown. And why? Because the *long short* last beat is so difficult. The longer you wait before you pinch, the bigger the chance that you'll muff it. It's as simple as that. Don't forget, we're talking only about the last beat in thirties music. Then they hit the cymbals before pinching. But you can always delay the pinch.

Q: So that's the sign of the master – the moment of pinching?

Mengelberg: Yes, exactly.

Q: But what can you do with a long last beat?

Mengelberg: You can wait. Wait until the right moment, until everyone knows that it's not a short last beat any more.

Q: So long last beats in the thirties were also pinched, only it took longer?

Mengelberg: Yes, it took longer, as I said, which means that there's a bigger chance of bungling it. The music of Reich and others like him, that's long music; even if it doesn't last as long as a Mahler number; it's still pretty long. Even a minute of that music is long. And when it lasts for an hour you go through a gamut of emotions, which are sometimes even specified in the score, and you think, 'this is really taking a little too long'. The same material is always being repeated or reapproached from a slightly different angle. It doesn't take long before you know the material itself. Duration is related to the nature of the material, but even more to the assumed emotional state of the listener. They say sometimes that the listeners help create the music. At least that's what Reich said, in this very room. He was talking about a piece by LaMonte Young which consisted entirely of beating a gong. The audience in Darmstadt wasn't used to it. They got restless and started walking around. And that's how the audience is supposed to have helped create the music.

Q: The listener as co-composer, wasn't that more characteristic of Fluxus than of minimal music?

Mengelberg: As I told you yesterday, I invented that kind of music too. In fact I am the inventor of it. But it isn't impossible for the same thing to be invented at about the same time by different people working completely independently of each other. Nor is it impossible that the rest of them were just imitating me – no, that piece by LaMonte Young was earlier. I heard it in Darmstadt, and my piece *In Memory of Hans van Zweden* came a little later. I recall that I was full of criticism of LaMonte Young. The way I see it, either you make something or you don't. Whether or not the audience makes part of it too is purely theoretical. That's not my concern. What the audience does is for itself to decide. What I wanted was the following nagging thought. Hans van Zweden was well-loved. Now he's dead. Why did he do that? Such a pity. Think of all he could have . . . you see what I mean? Nagging, pestering. Dead is dead, you can complain about it all you like. The composition paralleled that nagging. But that's a complete different story from the one about the audience making its own compositions.

Q: The way Reich and cohorts nag is a lot more abstract than that. It has more to do with the arrangement of time and so forth than with personal relations and the like.

Mengelberg: Those reflections about abstractions like the arrangement of time are a lot of nonsense. What do I care about that? It reminds me of history lessons at primary school – epochs, periodisation. Pretty old-fashioned stuff. What they say about it is less interesting than what they do. They turn out a kind of wallpaper. Great music for a pop radio station. It saves you the trouble of putting together a top-ten, top-twenty, tip-parade and all the rest. If you don't listen really closely, there's no difference between the music Reich makes and what you hear on the radio. You can turn it on in the morning and turn it of in the evening. It stimulates production: 'music while you work'.

De Leeuw: Let me set a few things straight. That relation between minimal music and Fluxus is a misunderstanding. It's all because of LaMonte Young. Reich and Glass had nothing to do with it, and Riley only partially. The contrary strain in Fluxus is completely missing in the Glass crowd. What strikes you is that it's all so purely esthetic. Despite the links claimed for it with mind-expansion, it's all purely musical invention. In that sense it has its limitations. It belongs in the art galleries. Those repetitions and little shifts produce a fascinating effect of disorientation on your sense of time, but it all takes place in the realm of esthetics. That fascinates me: music that lasts for three minutes and makes them seem like twenty. What kind of information do you get? When we played Reich I had some astounding experiences. But I expected all along that Misha Mengelberg would be rather scornful of it. Louis Andriessen's piece *De Volharing* sounds altogether different from the music of Reich et al., although he used similar techniques. But the difference in sound is not the most significant one.

There's a much more total, more absolute difference – the difference between an art gallery and the popular Amsterdam Carré Theatre. Louis Andriessen isn't interested in writing music for the people who go to art galleries, whose world is that of modern art.

He knows that he has to answer for where the music is made, for whom, how and why. Louis, along with Misha and Willem Breuker, reacts to a situation and against a situation. That was true of Fluxus too. But minimal music has almost nothing to do with Fluxus.

Reich and the others are mainly interested in sound development and that kind of thing. I know that it's very limited, but it holds a tremendous fascination for me. Performing it is a hell of a job, and therefore a kick. I absolutely disagree with the theory that it's an authoritarian brand of music. I have never felt like a slave when I played anything, with the possible exception of some twentieth-century serial music. As the gap between composers and performers widened, composers increased the directions in their scores. The demands keep getting heavier. When we started working on Reich's *Piano Phase* I was filled with despair. But when it began to work out it was an insane experience. We played seven notes for hours on end and went right on the next day. You're not forced to bring up that kind of concentration, you find it in yourself. It's so sensitive and subtle that the smallest difference at the start can have a decisive effect on the final result. It's fascinating how the process is related to the outcome of the process, the head to the physical attributes – relations and experiences like that were

entirely new to me. You can call it an expansion of experience. But I have the greatest reservations about all those stories of drugs and consciousness-expansion. We had a very precise, musical experience. The Americans – and you had it as early as Cage – have an approach to music that is different from that of Europeans. They're influenced by oriental attitudes towards music. A piece of music is never a compact unit of emotional development. There's a constant search for objective structures. Louis Andriessen and Misha Mengelberg are always striving to get away from the European tradition. But for those American composers that's no problem. And please note that Misha Mengelberg is wrong when he says that minimal music would go over well on a pop station.

Louis Andriessen: My own thinking on the subject is a bit more subtle than Misha Mengelberg's, though I must admit that a man like Glass radiates a Ramses Shaffy-like luxuriousness that I don't care for – but which I somehow like at the same time. There's a lot of unsuccessful music that I quite like. For instance, I think Michel LeGrand is very good, and the Swingle Singers. The sound of a glossy women's magazine. But it does prick the pretensions of the avant-garde. There's a fundamental difference between that and the sound of *De Volharding* (the piece and the group). And I'm not even talking about working relationships, how the musicians relate to each other, matters of production, who you play for and where. Things like that never enter the head of an American. In a way, they're 19th-century esthetes of the material. You can see it in their over-indulgence in electronics.
Speaking of affinity – at the moment I'm interested in getting to the heart of one subject. *De Volharding, Workers' Union,* and in fact all my compositions deal with a limited subject which is turned completely inside out. *Workers' Union* doesn't sound like any American's kind of minimal music, but it is related in the sense that it turns a single subject radically inside out. The sound, though, is very chromatic, while they work with modal diatonics. Parallel to that dissecting of one idea is my current interest in unison playing. The piece I'm working on now, *De Staat* (The State), is almost entirely in unison, with a lot of rhythmic 'unison' as well. Everyone plays loud and together, as if a large door were slowly falling on you. The scoring matches it, with four trumpets, for instance, four French horns and four trombones. Four women recite passages from Plato's State, where he talks about the place of music in the ideal society. He had pretty weird ideas. Some instruments would be abolished, and certain scales. I've also written another piece. One morning I woke up and heard music coming from next door. I heard a sound that I couldn't place at first. Then I realised what it was: the son was practising the recorder and Ma was playing along on the piano in unison. So I wrote that piece for piano and recorder – fortunately there aren't many refinements to worry about with a recorder. *The State* is richly shaded, but in a very different way from Berio's *Sinfonia*. That work also has a lot of unison passages, but they're drawn very subtly. I prefer using a fine pencil for a fine line and another pencil for another kind of line. I don't mess around with minor details.
Dutch compositions, you see, all tend towards jazz a little – they're physical, they're harder. The bridging of the gap between composer and performer is something you have in jazz, you have it with all of us, and in minimal music too. That's an important point. That's the way it should be and the way it always used to be, until at a certain moment in history you got those ridiculous giant symphony orchestras, put together like factories. You still have them, and they swallow a lot more than 90% of all the money that goes into music (subsidies, admission receipts, music training, and so on): they swallow an enormous potential of good musicians as well. It's time we did something about it. Don't misunderstand me: I'm all for symphony orchestras; they're a major cultural amenity and they should be cherished. But for Holland one or two of them is quite enough.

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FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW

Elmer Schönberger

It's strange, but of the musical productions of Van Baaren's students I still remember exactly my first confrontations with them. Only that with Louis Andriessen's music is a blank in my memory.
Misha Mengelberg was the first. It was the 17th of March, 1966. I was still at school; it was in the gymnasium. The memory is a well-documented one, because I wrote my first review of music about him, for the school magazine. On that occasion Mengelberg played with Piet Noordijk on sax, Jacques Schols on bass, and Han Bennink on drums. Mengelberg still plays with Bennink; their music, which I last heard as the entr'acte at a Xenakis festival last summer in Middelburg, is still just as unpredictable, disarranging and, in a way that is difficult to analyse, inspiring as it ever was. Like so many other jazz musicians Noordijk and Schols have become increasingly entangled in the web of commercial music.
On the said 17 March 1966 the music was 'in the main extremely modern'. According to the reviewer, the audience – no doubt an anonymous royal plural – applauded 'especially the inspiring music of Piet Noordijk, which was richly varied. Unfortunately,' continued the as yet unsophisticated critic, 'he met with little support from the pianist, Micha (sic) Mengelberg, who definitely lacks the ability to accompany such music'. And admittedly, Mengelberg's accompaniment was indeed very different from the familiar sounds of Dave Brubeck, Erroll Garner and John Lewis.

Three years later it was Peter Schat's turn: three years during which the terrain of my musical experience had been multiplied several times by the factor 9, that mystical number from Josquin's *Illibata Dei virgo nutrix*, up to and including the factor 12 from the New Vienna School. If I am not mistaken, Schat's *Dances* from *Labyrint* were used to illustrate an exposition of chromatic density at a lecture on twentieth-century music. But Schat had been preceded by Reinbert de Leeuw and Jan van Vlijmen. In 1968 I taped two radio performances of their music: *Drei Positionen* for violin and *Interpolations* for orchestra, respectively. *Interpolations* caused a scandal at the first performance in Rotterdam, but it filled me, as a first-year student of musicology, with the same euphoric amazement I felt on first hearing Perotinus' *Viderunt*, the mass by Machaut, Falla's harpsichord concerto and acquainting the rules (rules!) of the theory of functional harmony. An even more impressive experience was the opera *Reconstruction,* one year later, a morality play in the form of a large-scale, 'total theatre' production. (*Reconstruction* was probably less total in this sense than *Labyrint*. Of the latter I have seen only a few film fragments. At the time of its tumultuous first performance, in 1966, I read everything about it that I could lay hands on, but because the church music of Hendrik Andriessen and the chamber music of Badings were at that time the limits of what I considered acceptable 'musical modernism', I could not bring myself to see this spectacle which, with its music consisting of 'several layers', *threatened* to become a 'unique Dutch venture'.)
So *Reconstruction*, too, was total theatre. At the time I didn't really know what that meant, and to be quite honest I still don't. There is no doubt of the fact that the term, as Hans Keller wrote in *The New Review* of the magic words *mixed media,* has 'a magical effect, that of an omnipotent crutch'. I indeed don't remember the term 'total theatre' being used in connection with *Reconstruction*: that was simply what it *was*, and I can only describe my recollections of it in a banal and pathetic way, as a *total experience.*
The threads of music, theatre, ideology (a threadbare word for so much vitality), came together in a miraculous nerve-centre.
I do not doubt for a moment that I would *now* find the opera rather pompous, uneven in its musical substance and, as theatre, dated. The final chord, or rather final note, a crescendo of some minutes on D, would now immediately remind me of Berg. But other moments are unalienably *Reconstruction*. A short while ago I switched on the radio to find myself in the middle of a programme of what turned out to be Dutch music. It had something familiar, and four or five measures were enough to fit the pieces of memory together again. The burping sounds of a double-bass recorder and the inarticulate staccato of a singer's voice evoked anew the image of Quetzalcoatl. *Reconstruction,* Act Two, Scene Q. *Imix, ic, akbal, kan, chicchan, cimi, manik* . . ., names of days of the Mayan religious year. And later on, the scanned boys' chorus: *V is for Vision, which sometimes is clear / But cloudy and muddled when based on fear* (laughter again).
One memory evokes another: the mini opera à la Mozart in which the murder of Che Guevara is reconstructed. The heart of *Reconstruction*. The miniature opera was, I think, one of the best lessons in Mozartian styling that was ever learnt: it related to the real Mozart like the summary of a thesis to the full text.
Reconstruction became the symbol of Dutch music in the sixties, and thus too exemplary for the decade in which it originated not to have become dated with its expiring. Dated out of *choice,* deliberately, an unrepeatable specimen of politicized art in which ideology and musico-dramatic means of expression entered into a rare and successful alliance.
But all that is a personal memory, distorted by the perspective lent by nearly ten years that have meanwhile elapsed.

Since 1969, or rather since 1971, the year of the Holland Festival concert of 'the Five', the composers of the *Reconstruction* team have each gone their own separate ways. Do Van Baaren's students really form a group? Peter Schat, seldom inhibited by excessive modesty in public, and again in a state of excitement brought on by one of his rather chaotic bursts of enthusiasm, stuck his neck out on p. 32: 'Van Baaren was the founder of the Sixth Dutch School. By Schools I mean groups that gave form to the development of world music. (. . .) Think of that: in the millennium of composed music there were two Viennese and five Netherlands Schools. And now he's founded the sixth.' (I know what it is, or I think I know: it's a way of putting things, the hyperbolic-provocative way, so to speak. It's a trick of behaviour which never fails to irritate a lot of people. I can well imagine that Schat is frequently accused of megalomania, all the more because of his humourless – or often ostensibly humourless – apodiction. The only real objection to such a way of saying things in articles and interviews is that you barricade yourself against your readers. You emasculate your own arguments, and another thing: one simply cannot polemize against literary prose and poetry, or whatever counts as such. This is only by the way, but it's time it was said.)
So the question is: Is there a school or not?
There is not. Certainly not in the sense of a group which 'gave form to the development of world music'. Apart from the unwarranted presumption of the term 'world music' (I agree with Steve Reich, who considers Western music to be another form of ethnic music), it is absurd to even *talk* of any influence of 'the Five' on European music. (Which does not mean to say that, in my opinion, Schat doesn't compose music on a European level. If he had worked in Germany, for instance, instead of in Holland, he would certainly have a much greater international reputation by now.)
No school, then, in the sense that Schat uses the term. In any other sense, perhaps?
If you take a school to mean a group whose members stand out from their surroundings because of the characteristics they have in common (Pijper and the Pijperians for instance), then in that sense 'the Five' were, perhaps, a kind of school. Van Baaren set the example with the introduction of dodecaphony in Holland, and his 'class' went ahead with the serial building operations. Only Mengelberg, relatively insensitive from the outset to problems of 'the evolution of musical material', did not join in. He'll probably go on watching from the side-lines, smiling, for the rest of his life.
But after Van Baaren his students were certainly not the only serial-minded composers in Holland: Otto Ketting, a student of Karl Amadeus Hartmann, wrote his *Due canzoni* in 1957 in a strictly serial style, as did Ton de Leeuw his first string quartet in 1958.
Are there any other stylistic parallels in the music of Van Baaren's students? Undoubtedly there are, but not to the

same degree as in the music of Pijper's students. Fortunately not, I might add: the emergence of schools in the Pijperian sense inevitably leads to stagnation and frustration.

Nonsense, then, all that talk about schools. *Group* is a better word for five people who all composed differently but were bound together by two common ideals: the innovation of Dutch music and the innovation of musical life in the Netherlands. And the way in which the group manifested itself was totally unique, as Rudy Koopmans clearly shows in his article. For such basically different individuals to form such a tight group, and to take such direct action, there had to be a crisis in Dutch music and Dutch musical life. Ten years later, in the indolent contentment of our own day and age, of fading musical and political dichotomies, it is inconceivable that such totally different personalities should band together to form a united front.

Now, in 1976, the role of Van Baaren's students *as a group* is ended. Likewise the musico-political role of each of these composers individually appears to have come to an end, with the exception of that of Louis Andriessen, who has taken an even more explicit stand in recent years with his orchestra *De Volharding* (which means, roughly, Persistence). For Andriessen, who has turned his back on 'official' music for good, aesthetic problems such as those pertinent to the development of musical language (so essential for Peter Schat, for instance) seem to have lost their last remnants of meaning. That he composes minimal music for his group (a highly authentic, tough variant of American minimal music) is, to my mind, hardly attributable to aesthetic considerations. (Andriessen on his piece *On Jimmy Yancey* – which is not minimal music, by the way: 'The circumstances under which music is produced influences that music. A composer who counts on an audience of respectfully silent listeners produces different music to the pianist in a café who hears the subway rattling past every three minutes.' And 'What kind of music you like depends to some extent on the environment, or rather, the class you were born into. *De Volharding* tries to break that link by seeking a different kind of audience and by adapting its repertoire accordingly.')
Some people – it is not difficult to guess who – deplore Andriessen's musical development. I remember an older composer expressing his amazement at Andriessen's statement that he had dissociated himself from his best pieces 'because they were much too aesthetic and refined'. The aforesaid composer found this all the more deplorable because in his opinion Louis Andriessen was one of those rare people who are born a composer. I believe Andriessen is indeed one of those divinely favoured composers who are basically 'capable of anything', just like his former teacher Berio. And then instead of becoming a Dutch Henze or a Burt Bacharach, he is present at strike meetings and poorly attended demonstrations in local clubs and neighbourhood centres with his political orchestra, and that is something that demands a lot of courage and a lot of conviction.

Perhaps they still feel like a group, 'The composers of the sixties who put Dutch music back on its feet', as they were once described. Understandably so: a common past and a shared present at the conservatory in The Hague, this time as teachers (except Misha Mengelberg of course, who has given only occasional improvisation lessons at this institution). But they have long since ceased to *function* as a group. For the generation of 1955, the budding musicians and composers of today and the prospective audiences for new music, there are simply five individual composer-musicians – the rest is just history, articles in *Key Notes* and nostalgic memories of the revolutionary days of old in cultural magazines.
For the slightly older generation, the five composers have a topical as well as an historical significance: the first exists for them only in relation to the second. What the writers Hermans, Van het Reve, Mulisch and Claus (the latter two wrote the libretto for *Reconstruction*) are to post-war literature, Andriessen, De Leeuw, Mengelberg, Schat and Van Vlijmen are to post-war music: a symbol. The generation of around 1935 yielded other composers of the level of Van Baaren's students. That *they* did not become the symbol of an age has less to do with the intrinsic value of their music than with the way in which they manifested themselves.
Anyone who writes about historical symbols runs the risk of myth-making. And you cannot be careful enough with a subject like Van Baaren and his students – apart from which the subject is interesting enough without epic elaborations. A measure of the myths that have developed around the *Reconstruction* team will be the number of irritated and angry letters-to-the-editor called forth by this issue of *Key Notes*.
We should not forget that the existence of these myths cannot very well be blamed on Van Baaren's students themselves. Quite another thing of course is the way they have exploited them. I have long pondered this point and my conclusion is that it isn't as bad as it may seem.
Louis Andriessen operates in the margin of musical life.
Misha Mengelberg has become the anti-myth personified.
Reinbert de Leeuw does such a lot of things at once that he has no time to rest on old laurels. (When I was writing my article about him for *Key Notes I*, I asked him if he would let me have a look at his files. Diffidently and with reluctance he complied. He opened a cupboard and piles of totally haphazard cuttings crashed to the floor: bygones are bygones, and that's that.)
Jan van Vlijmen holds the hardly spectacular but – for the future of musical life very important – job of director of the conservatory. In what little spare time he has he is collaborating with De Leeuw on an opera *(Axel)*.
Peter Schat has not altogether managed to resist the siren call of the myth, as witnessed by his remarks about the sixth Netherlands School. Perhaps this is because he feels he has an historical mission to fulfil – but this is mere conjecture. In May 1976 a new chapter opened in the history of that mission: the historical compromise with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, which he boycotted for years, with a performance of the *Song of Love* and *May '75, a Song of Liberation* from Schat's opera-in-the-making *Houdini*.
A loud awaking from the *Dream of Reason*.
And for those who never quite fell asleep, a curious reveille.