

## THE IDEA OF “HARMONIC COSMOS” IN THE MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF “*MUSICA SPECULATIVA*”

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*Annotation.* The article discusses some modern versions of the ancient tradition of speculative music and its philosophical and theoretical features.

*Keywords:* harmonic cosmos, cosmic music, speculative music, sound.

Modern researchers note the revival of the medieval ideas of “*Musica Speculativa*”. In this tradition cosmos is seen as music, and music is seen as cosmos. The difference between the ancient and now restored worldview position from the intellectual habits of Western person is discussed. For the majority, the treatment of music as a thought aimed at understanding the cosmos seems chimera, if not absurd. Today the majority share the point of view that has existed since Newton's time, that music and the universe are of a different nature. They believe that musical language is essentially connected with emotions, and that the universe is a mathematical machine: two things between which there is no common link. This is the legacy of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which formulated music as the art of affects and at the same time celebrated the triumph of the mechanical model of the universe, arriving at the Cartesian principle of separation between thought and thing, subject and object. In this worldview, speculative music does not have a place. However, it seems that the modern era is seeing a resurgence in speculative music at the same time that physicists questioned the assumptions of their predecessors about cosmos.

In contrast to our concepts, the word “*kosmos*” originally suggested to the Greeks something orderly, decorative, and neatly arranged. Like many ancient root words, it opens a window onto a very different view of the cosmos: one that revealed it as a divine ornament. The heavens appeared to ancient civilizations as artistically arranged, regular and predictable, pleasing to eye and mind. In Latin the corresponding word “*mundus*” also carries overtones of cleanliness and elegance, suggesting a state of affairs far different from that of our dirty and disorderly planet. Not only is the universe exactly as it is designed to be, but so beautiful and ingenious a phenomenon can only be the handiwork of a supreme artist.

The display of a fixed world number is seen in one of the first instruments on which the pitch did not depend on the person playing it – in the ancient Greek monochord. The spacing ratios on the monochord never change. In cultures that didn't know writing or mathematically precise notation, the monochord was the only way to experience number as an unchanging entity. And later, the system of tuning instruments reproduce the structure of the Universe and the mind that gave birth to it [3, P. 67].

In medieval time, Jacques de Liege (Jacobus Leodiensis) (1260-after 1330) claimed that “music extends itself to all things”, comprising not only the Boethian categories of “*musica mundana*” and “*musica humana*”, but one higher still, “*musica coelestis* or *divina*”: an addition necessitated by the Christian cosmology, with its intelligible heavens beyond the visible ones. Actually, Jacques regards all of these divisions of music as intelligible rather than sensible. His exposition of them stands unequalled as a monument of the medieval achievement in speculative music [2, P. 102].

What is now demanded is that the ear again be given precedence over the usurping eye: that tone, not diagrams or words, be acknowledged again as the truest reflection of reality, and hearing honored as the sense through which we can best learn of its nature.

Every music lover knows intuitively that music embodies a certain truth, but few go so far as to obey this intuition and search for truth by way of music. Most people accept that truth belongs by rights to science, religion, or philosophy, while the arts, vital as they are to a fully human life, are still only matters of opinion and taste. But deeper insight says that to penetrate the mysteries of music means to prepare for initiation into mysteries of man and cosmos. One's discoveries will be fraught with implications for all areas of life.

The first postulate of "Musica Speculativa" is that *sound* (or tone, or music) *is ontologically prior to material existence*. One way to agree with this is to recognize that the basis of the apparent solidity of matter is nothing but a network of vibrations, which can be allegorically designated - as, no doubt, from time immemorial - as "sound", the name given to vibrations in the human audible frequency range. However, according to this view none but sound vibrations are actually perceived as sound. Speculative music often goes further and asserts that the whole cosmos is audible in its superior modes of existence, just as heaven and its inhabitants are visible to some mystics, even when there are no light vibrations that strike the eye. This principle is easy to understand if we take into account the existence of a world of images and sounds, devoid of a material substratum, which everyone knows in a dream.

Several thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are concerned with reviving the ancient discipline of "Musica Speculativa", of music as a mirror (Latin: *speculum*) held up to reality. The German musicologist Marius Schneider's (1903–1982) approach is based on re-creating the musical cosmogony of archaic civilizations. Rudolf Haase (1920–2013) from Austria demonstrates that harmonic principles are empirically present throughout the universe. The thinker Hans Erhard Lauer (1899-1979) from Switzerland uses music to illuminate and explain the changes that have taken place in the evolution of human consciousness.

"Harmonic Cosmic Music" is their theme, but it can mean different things. For Schneider it is the song with which the gods and primordial man greet the emergence of a new world: a song that resounds through all of creation, planets, animals, plants, and stones, and forms the musical instruments with which individual man responds to it. For Haase, cosmic music is the law of harmonics that prints its signature on all things, recognized in the past by philosopher-scientists such as Pythagoras and Kepler, but needing a veritable new science to recast it for the modern mind. For Lauer, it is the song of the gods in their starry spheres, heard there by archaic man before his descent into the physical body: it is the wellspring of all human music, its expression varying as man journeys through the cycles of world history.

This priority of the sounding cosmos over the visible or material may be related to the fact that this was its first form of existence, or it may have less to do with precedence in time as with the omnipresent hierarchical superiority. Marius Schneider and Hans Erhard Lauer have similar ways of putting it. "The world first created," writes Schneider, "is a pure sound world" [1, P. 40]. He explains that it may contain sounds as of rushing of water, animal cries, etc., but that these are not the sounds of those things, since things do not yet exist. Lauer adheres to the same concept of the world

of sounds as an independent world that has nothing to do with matter, although he views it from the opposite side, saying that the natural sounds of water, wind, animals, etc., are “only a closer or more distant echo of this tone world” [1, P. 172].

Schneider does not hesitate to trace the hierarchy of being still further back, or upward. “In the beginning there was nothing but an absolute stillness” – by which he meant both the state of God before creation, and its eternal unmanifested self-containment irrespective of whether there is a cosmos or not. In this silence, says Schneider, “the first thoughts, inaudible rhythms arose. Such rhythms were the model for the coming concrete creation ... Then the first act took place; and this act was the utterance of the thought in the form of rhythmical sound... Rhythm is the creator and upholder of the world” [1, P. 58]. These stages of creation correspond to the successive “worlds” of every emanational doctrine.

Speculatively renewed musicology adheres to the idea of “Harmonic Cosmos”, “intelligent spiritual universe”, and considers the laws of music, the art of sounds, to be the direct form in which this harmony is revealed. The very stability of the pitch position of the tones relative to each other acts as a “mirror” of an unchanging structure of the underlying being.

### **Literature**

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