The Topos of Gestures

Summary. This is the third[1] part of *The Topos of Music* and deals with gestures. We summarize the trajectory gestures took from the first edition of *The Topos of Music* to the present second edition.

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As already mentioned in the preface to the second edition of this book, work on the first edition in 2002 had ended when its author discovered (in the context of a talk he gave on the 18th of May at IRCAM about his improvisational technique and its relationship to mathematical music theory) that gestures were as essential if not more prominent than abstract formulas for his improvisational practice.

At first this was a considerable shock in view of the imminent publication of *The Topos of Music*. But it soon turned out to define the very power of Mazzola's research in future years. The third part of this book in its second edition, fifteen years after the first edition, is the present state of the art, an art that is far from completed, to be clear.

The role of gesture theory can be understood from its ontological status. We refer to Section 57.1 for a more detailed discussion of musical ontology with gestures. Ontology of music answers the questions "Where?" (realities), "Why?" (semiotics), and "How?" (communication). This was discussed in Chapter 2.

With gestures, we add the answer to the question: "how does music *come into* being?" It is in fact not true that music is just a collection of facts (done things), but it is strongly focused on the action of making, be it the performance of a score, the improvisation in jazz or the free setting in contemporary creative musicking.

The topos of gestures is not thought of as a topos in Grothendieck's understanding, although the study of gestures involves a number of mathematical topoi. The title, above all, focuses on the second understanding of "topos", namely the Kantian conceptual localization[2] of music in its gestural unfolding. It is a substantial extension of the concept of music from facts to gestures, from its static ontology to an ontology of the making. In this sense, we are far from a terminal theory of gestures, and this is good: otherwise the ontology of making would be contradicting itself.

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[1] The first part is theory, while the second is performance.

[2] See our catchword on page ix.