

SEBASTIAN KLOTZ

Beyond Mimesis: Intelligent Musical Signs and the Production of Variants in the Enlightenment

The transition from the Jesuit *mundus combinatus* to the mid-eighteenth century display of nature and the discovery of the expressive self had manifold repercussions in the field of music. These repercussions played themselves out not only in the realm of musical aesthetics, but also in the way musical signs were applied for the purpose of musical communication. In fact, musical writing systems then generated their own *modus operandi* that borrowed prestige from the *ars combinatoria*, but provoked major changes in the deep time of musical knowledge concepts, its respective habits of thinking, of notating, and of playing. These changes envisaged a new dexterity of signs capable of competing with the speed of human thought processes. This essay will explore pseudo-combinatoric musical devices and learning aids against the background of knowledge technologies that could no longer be framed along the lines of the rhetorical *varietas* of late Renaissance humanism. Rather, they foreshadow present-day praxes of music generated by eloquent technologies and of a highly individualistic yet prophetic kind of *composer*—if we trust Jacques Attali's inspiring diagnosis of the interplay of power and regimes of noise, of social and acoustic worlds.¹

Towards the Perfect Sign

Johann Heinrich Lambert, born in 1728 in Mulhouse, Alsace, which was then under Swiss protection, was a self-taught mathematician and natural scientist whose principal philosophical works are the *Kosmologische Briefe* (Cosmological Letters), the *Neues Organon* (New Organon), and the *Architectonic*. We owe him important insights into map projections and non-Euclidean geometry. Lambert developed a full systematology and is regarded as the most important precursor of Kant. In his optical studies on light intensity, he defined the physical unit for brightness, which is named after him and is still in use today.

¹ Jacques Attali, *Bruits. Essai sur l'économie politique de la musique* (Paris, 2001).