



WHERE EAST AND WEST MEET
JAAN ROSS

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Tout se passait comme si, sur une route ne menant nulle part en particulier, on recontrait successivement des groupes de voyageurs eux aussi ignorants de leur but et croisés seulement l'espace d'un clin d'œil. D'autres, au contraire, vous accompagnaient un petit bout de chemin, pour disparaître sans raison au prochain tournant, volatilisés comme des ombres. On ne comprenait pas pourquoi ces gens s'imposaient à votre esprit, occupaient votre imagination, parfois même vous dévoraient le cœur, avant de s'avouer pour ce qu'ils étaient: des fantômes.

Marguerite Yourcenar: *Un Homme Obscur*

In Summer 2004, I was visiting a renowned (and somewhat controversial) composer of Estonian origin, Arvo Pärt, in his Berlin home in Lichtenfelde district. Arvo and his wife Nora were generous enough to offer me a whole day of their time. We talked, ate and watched a recent Russian movie after Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Heart of A Dog*, on my personal computer. I think it was Nora who suddenly came up with the idea that I should seek an opportunity to stay for a couple of months in the not too distant future near them in Berlin, both of us perhaps having in mind that I might write a book about Arvo's work as a result of my prospective stay. About the same time, I found a message from the Estonian Academy of Sciences in my mailbox, which turned attention of the Academy members to the existence of a number of so-called Institutes of Advanced Studies in several European countries. The message seemed to contain a default hint that the opportunities offered by these Institutes remain so far largely unexplored by the Estonian academics. I inspected the list of institutes and found one in Berlin, the Wissenschaftskolleg. I decided to apply for a scholarship to the Wissenschaftskolleg and was happy to receive one. As the application procedure took time and I had to deal with my teaching and administrative responsibilities at home, I could eventually schedule to come to Berlin for three months not earlier than the late winter and spring of 2006.

In the meantime, however, Nora and Arvo had bought a nice cottage in Estonia, near Tallinn, and instead of Berlin they preferred to stay mostly there now. I had to reorient my working schedule completely. Should I abandon my scholarship in Berlin and to work at home instead? A decision like this seemed somewhat silly. After all, Berlin with its three state-sponsored operas and five symphony orchestras is a cultural venue something like a dream for a musicologist, which I consider myself. I started to look for an alternative way to productively fill enough the three months of free time I had generously been offered by

the Mellon Foundation. Since 1988, I had been teaching a music psychology course at the Estonian Academy of Music and later also at the University of Tartu. I had discovered that my students had started to post their lecture notes from my classes on the web, in order to make them available for their fellows missing the classes. I felt that I should have this process somehow under my own control, and I came to the conclusion that I should write a book on music psychology and publish it in Estonian. To write a book in a tiny language while staying in Berlin on American private money – a bit odd, isn't it? I wrote to the authorities at the Wissenschaftskolleg about the necessity to change my working plans and, to my pleasure, they agreed to accept this nevertheless.

I had the structure and contents of the book practically ready in my head. So I knew that the most important thing I had to do in Berlin was to write. One of my teachers had once told me that an academic may be satisfied with his/her productivity if (s)he is able to write at least two pages of text a day. (It was in the old pre-computer era and my teacher had in mind typewritten pages, which, as we all remember, contain 30 lines of 60 characters each – altogether 1800 characters per page.) I decided I had to write three, and so I did. I had to make an extra decision about holidays. As a Christian, should I write also on Sundays (and on Saturdays)? It somehow happened that all my days turned out to be workdays (maybe because of the impact of the Protestant ethic).

I worked according to this pattern for about a month and a half. Then my health started to give signs of resistance. My ability to concentrate declined. I felt I needed to look for a general practitioner in Berlin, found one and visited her. She had my blood pressure measured and it was disturbingly higher than the norm. I realized that I cannot continue my life as before. During my stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I had gotten to know Vadim Volkov, a sociologist from St. Petersburg; the two of us shared our experience of the (sometimes traumatic) Soviet past. Vadim was experienced in many different kinds of sports, which unfortunately is not my case. Still, one day he proposed that I join him for a short trip to an Austrian ski resort. I considered his proposal and concluded that it would be a good opportunity to change my life habits in Berlin. So one morning we boarded Vadim's car (a BMW) and travelled to Innsbruck.

Since this is supposed to be a report about my research work at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I won't bother the reader with description of our skiing experience in the Alps. I only can say: I had done this never before, but I hope to be able to do it again and again in the future. After three days near Innsbruck, I departed from Vadim's company and took a train to the other end of Austria, Graz, where Richard Parncutt, Professor of Musicology at the uni-

versity there, had invited me to present a paper. Then I returned to Berlin and reconsidered all the material I had for the book I was writing. I came to the conclusion that, if I restricted the book to twelve chapters, including some material from my earlier papers, and correspondingly titled the book *Twelve lectures in psychology of music* (not without the influence of the famous *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie: Zwölf theoretische Vorlesungen* by Theodor Adorno), then the book would be almost ready.

Since then, I started to get out of my room on the top floor of the Wissenschaftskolleg's main building at Wallotstraße 19 more often and to look for opportunities to socialize with other Fellows from the Kolleg. Apparently this could not remain unnoticed by them. One day Scheherazade Hassan, an exiled musicologist from Iraq now living in Paris, invited me to join her for a visit to the famous Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv, which currently is kept at the Ethnographic Museum in Dahlem. There I asked for sound recordings related to Estonia in their collections and, to my surprise, was able to locate some phonographic wax cylinders with folksongs. Although I have worked with Estonian sound archives earlier and I am supposed to be familiar with them, I had never heard that such folksong recordings were kept in a Berlin collection. I consulted my Estonian colleagues by electronic mail and they were surprised about these recordings no less than myself. The Estonian recordings in Dahlem turned out to have been resulted from a larger project accomplished during the First World War at the initiative of a linguist, Wilhelm Doegen, and a musicologist, Carl Stumpf. They undertook recording sessions of war prisoners of many different ethnic origins, who were kept in prisoner camps throughout Germany during the World War One. Doegen (as a linguist) was more interested in spoken language, Stumpf (as a musicologist) in music. Moreover, the two researchers had different views about the technology that should be used for making recordings. Doegen preferred gramophone records on shellac disks, Stumpf – phonograph records on wax rolls. The phonograph records, which mostly contain music, both vocal and instrumental, are now kept in the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in Dahlem, the shellac disk records, which mostly contain speech, in the Lautarchiv, a part of the Department of Musicology at the Humboldt University next to Museumsinsel.

I consider discovering of the Estonian material in two sound archives of Berlin, the Phonogramm-Archiv and the Lautarchiv, as the most important outcome of my three-month stay in Germany. (Paradoxically, this outcome could of course in no way have been predicted in advance.) Currently, the first sound recordings in Estonia are dated back to 1905. The Stumpf and Doegen recordings are from the period between 1915 and 1918 and, con-

sequently, they are among the first ones of speech and music performed in Estonian. Further, the Berlin recordings are interesting because, almost without exception, they contain examples of the so-called newer layer of Estonian folksongs. Estonian folklorists have always more valued the older layer of folksongs, the so-called Kalevala songs with plenty of alliteration and with no end rhyme, and during the early recording sessions in Estonia, mostly the Kalevala songs were favoured and the informants were asked to perform accordingly. In German war prison conditions, nobody could of course tell prisoners in detail what kind of song repertoire they were expected to perform and the prisoners made their own choice – that is to say, they performed the songs they liked, not the songs their contemporary scholars valued. And the prisoners, as bearers of the popular culture of their time, liked the repertoire we now call the new folksongs, of which there are relatively few sound examples kept in archives.

The Estonian recordings in Berlin archives are now waiting to be thoroughly described. I do not know yet whether I will be able to do it myself or whether I need to rely on help from some of my students. The coordinators of both historic sound archives, Jürgen Mahrenholz from the Humboldt University and Albrecht Wiedmann from the Ethnographic Museum, have been very helpful during my research and I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to them. Thanks are also extended to everybody on the very cooperative staff of the Wissenschaftskolleg, in particular to Katharina Biegger and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, who in many ways helped to make my stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg both more productive and more pleasant. Last but not least, during my stay in Berlin I had an opportunity to socialize extensively with many Fellows at the Wissenschaftskolleg, which, their academic background mostly being different from my own, was a rare but stimulating experience. I appreciated this opportunity a lot.