

# The Other Marxism: Georg Knepler and the Anthropology of Music

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## Abstract

The Viennese-born musicologist Georg Knepler (1906-2003) was one of the most important music scholars of the twentieth-century. Being both Jewish and a Communist, he emigrated to London in 1934 and returned to continental Europe after World War II. He was active for many years as a pianist and conductor, and, for a short while, as cultural secretary of the post-war Austrian Communist Party. His most enduring contribution to music history, however, was as a musical thinker. He produced a series of significant musicological studies in the years following his move to the German Democratic Republic in 1949. Inspired by the work of East German philosophers and scientists, he developed a paradigm of historical-materialist musicology and music anthropology that combined the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels with modern interdisciplinary research fields such as cybernetics, semiotics and bioacoustics. The essay resituates Knepler's work and ideas in the context of twentieth-century debates about the aims and assumptions of Marxist and critical aesthetics and revisits previous interpretations of his relationship to New Musicology. At the center of the discussion is Knepler's notion of music as an evolving system of communication linked on the one hand with social and material conditions, and on the other with biological and anthropological universals. In developing my argument, I explore Knepler's critique of several intellectual threads of his time, including the Soviet doctrine of socialist realism, the critical theory of Theodor W. Adorno, and post-structuralism.

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## Introduction

[1] Following the death of Joseph Stalin, the reforms initiated by Nikita Khrushchev affected political and cultural life not only in Soviet Russia, but also in its satellite country, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), led by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED).<sup>[1]</sup> Without a doubt, the teachings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin still served as an indispensable basis for scholarly endeavours in the German communist state, not least in music scholarship. However, the process of de-Stalinization of the 1960s allowed for new (and partially Western) intellectual influences to form symbiotic relations with the principles of Marxism and, so-called, Marxism-Leninism.<sup>[2]</sup> The person who did the most to develop the potential of such a synthesis in the field of musicology was the Austrian musicologist Georg Knepler. In what follows, I explore Knepler's musicological work, focusing on his theories about the origin and development of music in light of Marxist debates on the relationship between nature and culture.

The essay builds on the work of previous authors on Knepler and East German musicology and revisits widespread approaches to East German culture. One of the main points of contention among scholars of the GDR is the extent to which its musical production and thinking were committed to the politics of the ruling party.<sup>[3]</sup> In this study, I argue that Knepler's work, at least from the late 1960s on, drew on Marxism primarily as a philosophy and social science rather than as a political program and ideology. As a result, his views on music aesthetics and historiography were characterized, at least implicitly, by a rejection of the postulates associated with Andrei Zhdanov's aesthetics and cultural politics. In his writings, Knepler put forward a broad materialist theory of musical development and meaning that, directly and indirectly, undermined some of the assumptions underlying the Soviet doctrine of socialist realism. Yet his vision of a materialist musicology was also distinct from the models of music aesthetics and historiography developed in the West. In this regard, Anne C. Shreffler's essay "Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus, Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History" offers highly fruitful approach, as it also points out connections with the New Musicology of the 1990s.<sup>[4]</sup> However, in making these connections, her discussion of Knepler stresses the sociological aspect of his thought at the expense of his broader understanding of the materialist history of music. Here, I will concentrate on the scientific aspects of his musicological approach.

The aim of the essay is to introduce Knepler's vision of a materialist musicology and its relation to various threads of Marxist aesthetics and anthropological thinking. By focusing on his ideas about the origin and development of music, I wish to highlight his use of the analytical tools of Marxism in an attempt to bridge the divide between historical and systematic approaches to music. In doing so, he engaged a wide range of scientific disciplines such as psychology, cybernetics, and semiotics. Although his vigorous interdisciplinary perspective was unique in music scholarship of his time, I will show that his approach was firmly anchored in a wider trend in East German cultural theory in the 1960s and 1970s. In developing my argument, I discuss various writings by Knepler while focusing on his book *Geschichte als Weg zum Musikverständnis. Zur Theorie, Methode und Geschichte der Musikgeschichtsschreibung* (Music as a Means of Understanding: On the Theory, Method, and History of Musicology, 1977, henceforth *Geschichte*).<sup>[5]</sup> My reading of this text challenges the notion that Knepler anticipated tenets of the

Anglophone New Musicology; rather, his program of a new kind of musicology is better understood as a special case of systematic musicology, one that sought to expand and modernizes the scientific aspects of historical materialism. From this perspective, his work may prove newly relevant to present-day cultural and systematic musicology.



**Figure 1: Georg Knepler in the 1950s,  
© Knepler private family collection.**

## Marxist Philosophy and Anthropology

[2] Knepler's biography is closely intertwined with the political events and cultural developments that shaped the twentieth century. Like many Jewish intellectuals of his generation and background, his life and work were strongly influenced by the experiences of persecution, exile and new beginnings.<sup>[6]</sup> Born in 1906 in Vienna, he served as a piano accompanist for Karl Kraus in his Jacques Offenbach recitations. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Vienna with a dissertation on musical forms in Johannes Brahms's instrumental music in 1931.<sup>[7]</sup> Among his distinguished teachers were Guido Adler, Robert Lach, Egon Wellesz and Hans Gál. He also studied piano with Eduard Steuermann. During the early 1930s, Knepler collaborated with Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel in Berlin. It was at this time that he got to know Hanns Eisler, with whom he maintained professional relations for many years to come. He was forced to leave continental Europe following the rise of Nazism. He spent the years between 1934 and 1945 in London where he helped establishing the Austrian Centre and took part in organizing its cultural

events.<sup>[8]</sup> He returned to Vienna in 1946 and served as Cultural Secretary of the Austrian Communist Party. In 1949, he emigrated to the GDR. He served as Rector of the Deutsche Hochschule für Musik in Berlin (from 1964 on, "Hochschule für Musik 'Hanns Eisler' Berlin") and was appointed Professor at the Humboldt University in 1965. He was a member of the Akademie der Künste and the Akademie der Wissenschaften in East Berlin. He died in 2003 at the age of 96.<sup>[9]</sup>

In spite of his prominence in academic life in East Germany—or perhaps precisely because of it—Knepler's work and ideas lost much of their visibility in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall. In part, this is because the cultural and intellectual life of the GDR—and indeed that of the whole Soviet Union—was regarded by many during and after the Cold War as politically suspicious and historically obsolete.<sup>[10]</sup> But this judgment is anything but justified in Knepler's case. While the precautions towards the East German and Soviet culture are certainly understood in view of the dictatorial nature of the Communist regime, Knepler's work as a musicologist moved beyond the "official" party line in matters of aesthetics and music historiography. To be sure, his earliest major works in musicology—such as his 2-volume study of nineteenth-century music<sup>[11]</sup>—were still committed to orthodox Marxist music historiography, but he explored new paths during the era of Erich Honecker, leader of the GDR from 1971 to 1989.<sup>[12]</sup>

As a Marxist thinker, Knepler was particularly interested in Marx's and Engels' views about the arts, culture, and human nature. His theories of the development and meaning of music certainly moved beyond the modest amount that the founders of Marxism had to say about music and aesthetics, but Marx's anthropological perspective is essential to the understanding of Knepler's musicological work. As Thomas C. Patterson explained, according to Marx, the nature of the human being is defined by the dialectical interplay between "biological substrate, which endows all members of the species with certain potentials, and the ensemble of social relations that shape everyday life".<sup>[13]</sup> But not all Marxist or, for that matter, neo-Marxist thinkers in the twentieth century endorsed this view. Interestingly, it was precisely this notion of human ontology that was disconcerting to members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. As Theodor W. Adorno noted in an exchange with Max Horkheimer, "[Marx] did not concern himself with subjectivity [...]. He would have dismissed as a milieu theory the idea that people are the products of society down to the innermost fibre of their being."<sup>[14]</sup> Siding with Marx on this issue, Knepler formulated his vision of a materialist musicology and music aesthetics partially in response to the view of music as purely a product of social milieu and ideology.

It follows from this that the study of music must engage not only the humanities but also the natural sciences. An exceptionally broad-ranging scholar, Knepler's interests overlapped with those of present-day music historians, cognitive psychologists, and cultural theorists. He saw these fields as complementary and protested against overspecialization in research. Marxism, he believed, was especially suited to bridge the gaps between different fields of inquiry. Addressing Charles Percy Snow's famous distinction between the "two cultures" of the natural sciences and the humanities he maintained that "such a hiatus [between the two cultures] has no place in the Marxist theory."<sup>[15]</sup> From Knepler's perspective, Marxism was not just a theory of society and a program of political action but a universal science potentially encompassing all natural and human phenomena.<sup>[16]</sup>

I will return to this point below, but it is important to mention that Knepler's approach yielded also to non-Marxist philosophical and anthropological models. In contemplating the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings, he situated himself in the tradition of

philosophical anthropology, tradition that dates back to Immanuel Kant and eighteenth-century materialism. In the twentieth century, philosophical anthropology came to be associated with the names of Max Scheler and Helmut Plessner.<sup>[17]</sup> Admittedly, the two philosophers were often castigated in the GDR as bourgeois thinkers as were other philosophers who were critical of Marxism.<sup>[18]</sup> However, if philosophical anthropology is defined more broadly, we may count Marx himself as a representative of philosophical anthropology. For our present purposes, the significance of this connection lies in the understanding of anthropology as the study of human nature, behavior, and communication. In the glossary of his *Geschichte*, Knepler notes that some modes of anthropological research run the risk of not taking—or not taking sufficient—notice of the boundaries between biologically and socially contingent processes.<sup>[19]</sup>

Knepler's comment suggests that a proper anthropological approach should not reduce music and culture to sociological phenomena such as class interest and ideology. Especially among thinkers of Marxist and neo-Marxist leanings, a historical-materialist interpretation of music came to be associated primarily with sociological perspectives. In this context, Adorno's contribution has been particularly influential, including in East Germany during the 1970s and 1980s. Although Knepler was sympathetic towards some of Adorno's critical insights, the objectives he assigned to materialist music aesthetics and historiography were quite different. This can be demonstrated by means of the notion of origin.

[3] Crucial to Knepler's anthropological perspective is the search for the origin(s) of music, which Adorno considered to be a dubious task, in spite of his occasional generalizations about the beginnings of music.<sup>[20]</sup> In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno maintains that "any invocation of the concept of origin that is divested of its temporal element transgresses against the simple meaning of the word, to which the philosophers of origin claim to be privy."<sup>[21]</sup> He further argues that "to reduce art historically to its prehistorical or early origins is prohibited by its character, which is the result of historical development."<sup>[22]</sup> Adorno, who died in 1969, never engaged in dialogue with Knepler, but the latter commented frequently on the aesthetic and political issues raised by the former. In his essay "Die Rolle des Ästhetischen in der Menschwerdung" (The Role of Aesthetic Activity in the Process of Hominization, 1988), Knepler claims that Adorno's reticence about the notion of origin was a symptom of his rejection of the Marxist materialist conception of history, with its theory of revolution.<sup>[23]</sup> On a more political level, he blames Adorno for the misguided belief that the attempt to change the world had failed. This position, Knepler clarifies, "would have been true if [this failure] would have coincided with the end of humanity. At present, this end is possible but has not become a fact."<sup>[24]</sup>

In Knepler's conception of history, denying the validity of the category of origin, and the attendant concepts of progress and development, would mean that no objective and goal-directed changes ever took place in human evolution and human society. In *Geschichte*, he notes that "Adorno's concept of progress is confusingly similar to the petit-bourgeois wish to keep evil away from one's own door, behind which one lives more or less happily. Adorno turned away from a universal conception of progress just like others who argued with a less laborious conceptual apparatus."<sup>[25]</sup> Indeed, Adorno's contention that art has a purely historical character would have appeared to East German thinkers—and not only to Knepler—as too contextual and pessimist, lacking an understanding of the deep-structure of the historical progress and its aesthetic and political imperatives.<sup>[26]</sup> Knepler argues that by turning away from the (orthodox) theory of class struggle, Adorno, in fact, exposed the bourgeois nature of his philosophy and its uselessness to the objectives of the emerging communist society.<sup>[27]</sup> One such objective was the abolishment of the class-contingent chasm ("klassenbedingte Kluft") between great art and the



masses which Adorno's advocacy of the musical avant-garde eschewed.<sup>[28]</sup> Thus, Adorno's seeming failure to grasp the origin of aesthetic behaviour also resulted—from Knepler's perspective—in his misunderstanding of the progress of music and its meaning for musical life in the present. Knepler, however, did not insist on a single origin for music; biological drives, communal labour, material conditions and finally ideologies—all, in his view, have left their mark even on the most recent musical works.<sup>[29]</sup> The essential point for Knepler is that musical developments and activities cannot be reduced to political ideologies and economic mechanisms. Music, he argued, "is a material-ideological product and its analysis requires an elucidation of both these aspects and their relationships."<sup>[30]</sup>

## Historical Materialism and the Theory of Evolution

From the viewpoint of recent models critical musicology, the novelty of Knepler's approach lies less in acknowledging the ideological aspects of music than in recognizing its relation to nature and human evolution. Related to this is the idea that Marxism is not only a theory of politics and culture but also of nature. This view of Marxism goes back to Marx and especially Engels who, in writings such as *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and the unfinished manuscript *Dialektik der Natur* (published posthumously), developed a philosophy of science and nature.<sup>[31]</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the relationship between Marxism and the scientific achievements of Charles Darwin are of particular interest. Marx and Engels were both convinced that Darwin's findings and theories affirmed their materialist conception of history.<sup>[32]</sup> Some Marxist authors of the generation of the Second International were also fascinated by the parallels between Marxism and Darwin's materialist view. As Georgi Plekhanov (also Plechanow), founder of Russian Marxism, explained around 1900, "Darwin studied the human being as *zoological species*. The followers of the materialist worldview are interested in clarifying the *historical* fate of this species."<sup>[33]</sup> Surprisingly perhaps, it was Darwin rather than the social scientists Marx and Engels who was the first to propose a materialist theory of the origin of music. Referring to the sexual behavior of birds, Darwin maintained that the beauty of their songs serve as a mechanism of attraction.<sup>[34]</sup> In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), he went on to argue that this mechanism was not unfamiliar to primitive man and that it left a lasting mark on our emotional response to music: "Music has a wonderful power [...] of recalling in a vague and indefinite manner, those strong emotions which were felt during long-past ages, when, as is probable, our early progenitors courted each other by the aid of vocal tones."<sup>[35]</sup>

Engels, in particular, was interested in the connection between evolutionary theory and Marxism, proposing that dialectical laws govern both nature and human history. However, this synthesis, which was controversial even among some orthodox Marxist thinkers, has made little impact on musicology and other fields of the humanities. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that already Plekhanov tried to integrate Darwin's theories into a historical-materialist conception of art. According to Plekhanov,

The sense of beauty is inherent to human beings as much as to many animals. That means that they are capable of feeling a special kind of pleasure (an “aesthetic” [pleasure]) as a result of the influence of certain things or phenomena. But [the question] of which things and phenomena create this pleasure depends on the conditions under which they [i.e. humans] grow up, live and act. The human nature is such that it can possess aesthetic feelings and concepts. The surrounding conditions bring in its wake the transition from this possibility to reality; this explains why a certain social human being (i.e. a certain society, people or a class) possesses these and not other aesthetic preferences and concepts.

[Den Menschen ist, wie auch vielen Tieren, der Schönheitssinn eigen, d.h., sie sind fähig, unter dem Einfluß gewisser Dinge oder Erscheinungen einen Genuß besonderer Art (einen „ästhetischen“) zu empfinden. Aber welche Dinge und Erscheinungen ihnen denn nun diesen Genuß verschaffen, hängt von den Bedingungen ab, unter deren Einfluß sie aufwachsen, leben und handeln. Die Natur des Menschen bewirkt, daß er ästhetische Gefühle und Begriffe haben kann. Die ihn umgebenden Bedingungen bringen den Übergang von dieser Möglichkeit zur Wirklichkeit mit sich; durch sie erklärt sich, daß ein bestimmter gesellschaftlicher Mensch (d.h. eine bestimmte Gesellschaft, ein bestimmte Volk, eine bestimmte Klasse) gerade diese ästhetischen Geschmacksrichtungen und Begriffe besitzt und keine anderen.][<sup>36]</sup>

[4] Darwin’s ideas about the expression of emotions were nothing new to music scholars in the twentieth century. Already in 1885, Friedrich von Hausegger developed in his study *Die Musik als Ausdruck* (Music as Expression) an evolutionary theory of musical communication that sought to undermine Eduard Hanslick’s formalist aesthetics.<sup>[37]</sup> However, it was not until Knepler that an explicit attempt has been made to bring together Marxism and the evolutionary theory of musical expression. In *Geschichte*, Knepler highlights the contribution of historical-materialism to a proper musicological application of the theory of evolution. In this context, he opposes the uncritical appropriation of biological concepts typical of positivist musicology for dissociating music from its real social and natural sources:

Music is indeed not a product of nature but a social [product]. However, one of its roots reaches back to the natural history of man and it [also] possesses biological components. The evolutionary history of music has not been written yet, but the evolutionary theories of the last century contributed some partial results to it.

[Musik ist zwar kein Naturprodukt, sondern ein gesellschaftliches, aber sie reicht mit einer ihrer Wurzeln in die Naturgeschichte des Menschen zurück, und sie hat biologische Komponenten. Sie hat eine Entwicklungsgeschichte, die zwar sicher bisher noch nicht geschrieben wurde, zu der aber die Evolutionstheorien des vorigen Jahrhunderts Teilergebnisse beizusteuern haben.][<sup>38]</sup>

With the aid of historical-materialism Knepler sought to retain the proper scientific context of Darwin’s theories and their potential contribution to music scholarship. He was strongly committed to the attempt to relate music to prehistoric stages and to the animal world, but he pointed out that a more dialectical framework was necessary in order to explain the development of music throughout human history.<sup>[39]</sup> In this sense, he followed, deliberately or not, Plekhanov’s ruminations about the basic disposition of humans to seek pleasure and enjoyment in aesthetic activities as well as the latter’s claim that this may take various forms, as a result of different historical and material conditions.

But Knepler was much more specific in making his related argument and sought to point out the exact working of this process. In *Geschichte*, as well as in other essays he completed over the



years, he aimed to discriminate, both generally and in relation to specific examples, between different elements of musical meaning and their origins. The different sources of music, in his view, build a complex whole that enables us to observe the influence of historically-differentiated strata of “codification” and “semanticization.” In distinguishing between these different strata, Knepler used the concepts and terminology of cybernetics that dominated various fields of research in East Germany during the 1960s and 1970s.

## Cybernetics and Interdisciplinarity

During the twentieth century, the scientific aspect of Marxism known as dialectical materialism was considered controversial even among intellectuals active in the Soviet Bloc, but several prominent East German scholars have contributed to its resurrection in a new and modern guise. The political and academic endorsement of cybernetics as an auxiliary discipline to “scientific socialism” is particularly important in this context.<sup>[40]</sup> Established by the American scientist Norbert Wiener, cybernetics was conceived as a cross-disciplinary research field dedicated to the study of purposeful systems, whether mechanical, biological, or social. The curious history of cybernetics in the GDR lies outside the scope of this essay, but it must be mentioned that its introduction to East German academia and public discourse was not only the result of the efforts of individual scholars; some political and economic developments were also conducive to its scientific impact and prestige in the GDR.

Following Stalin’s death and especially after the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956), intellectual life in the GDR witnessed a greater sense of freedom in experimenting with new philosophical ideas and models. Against this background, the East German philosopher Georg Klaus, who had life-long passion for both Marxism and mathematic models, integrated cybernetics into Marxist philosophy.<sup>[41]</sup> Klaus also expanded the scope of cybernetics to fields such as epistemology and semiotics. In *Kybernetik in philosophischer Sicht* (Cybernetics in a Philosophical View, 1961), he explains the significance of the new science of regulation:

The new science of cybernetics, with all its social, scientific and philosophical consequences is, alongside the scientific and technical mastery of nuclear energy and the beginning of space travel, the most important scientific event of today. Cybernetics has a profound influence on our physical and spiritual being. As for its revolutionary impact, it can be compared with the discoveries of Copernicus, Darwin and Marx.

[Die neue Wissenschaft der Kybernetik mit all ihren sozialen, einzelwissenschaftlichen und weltanschaulichen Konsequenzen ist neben der wissenschaftlichen und technischen Bewältigung der Atomenergie und der beginnenden Weltraumschiffahrt das wichtigste wissenschaftliche Ereignis der Gegenwart. Die Kybernetik greift tief in unser materielles und geistiges Sein ein. Was ihre revolutionäre Wirkung anbetrifft, kann sie in Parallele zu den Entdeckungen eines Kopernikus, eines Darwin und Marx gesetzt werden.]<sup>[42]</sup>

[5] Klaus’ cybernetic theories became particularly influential in the GDR during the 1960s as a result of internal political and economic developments. Instructed by the head of the state Walter Ulbricht, East German officials looked for new ways to organize the deteriorating state economy (the reform as a whole was termed Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung der

Volkswirtschaft, or NÖS). Partially as a result of Klaus' connections in political circles, cybernetics was temporarily adopted by East German political functionaries as a universal framework of science that could offer new insights into economic planning.<sup>[43]</sup>

The interdisciplinary approach advocated by Klaus, which combined classical Marxism with modern disciplines, strongly appealed to Knepler. Although Klaus did not write about music, anyone knowledgeable about his writings on philosophy and semiotics will immediately recognize the wider contours of Knepler's musicological project. Even more concretely, cybernetics, at least in Klaus' variant, offered a theory of information that could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, in analyzing musical processes.<sup>[44]</sup> In *Geschichte*, Knepler uses Klaus' theory of signs as a point of departure for his own deliberations on music as a system of communication.<sup>[45]</sup> This connection is particularly apparent in his adoption of Klaus' semiotic terminology and his use of graphic illustrations in describing musical systems and processes. However, as Knepler points out in the exposition of his methodology, music has its unique character and it is only in cooperation with other research fields that one could lay the basis for a theory of musical communication.<sup>[46]</sup>

Knepler's ideas were affected by the work of other scientists who subscribed to cybernetics and various other systematic theories of semiotics and communication. In particular, he was indebted to Friedhart Klix who was active at Humboldt University and the University of Jena. Klix's cybernetic psychology dealt with the relationship between perception and behaviour among humans and animals as well as with processes of concept formation.<sup>[47]</sup> At the same time, Knepler was impressed by the work of the East German zoologist Günter Tembrock and those of the American semiotician Thomas Sebeok. Through his study of the findings and theories of these thinkers, Knepler developed his own ideas about the natural sources of acoustic communication.<sup>[48]</sup> According to Knepler, even such sounds produced by animals contain basic musical elements that can be seen as signifiers of such internal states as fear, pain and joy.<sup>[49]</sup> Tellingly, Knepler refers to the prehistoric sources of music in his biography of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1991):

Behavioural psychologists [...] distinguish between two kinds of utterances: 'attractors' and 'detractors'. The former are friendly and beckoning (e.g. mating calls), the latter hostile and defensive (cries of warning or terror). Not only animals are startled by acoustical events that reach a loud volume after a rapid increase in amplitude. Conversely: sounds which are soft, sustained, and rich in overtones are also attractive to humans.<sup>[50]</sup>

[In der Verhaltensforschung unterscheidet man zwischen *affinen* und *diffusen* Lautäußerungen – freundlich einladenden und feindlichen abwehrenden, Lockrufen und Schreckens- oder Warnlauten. Schallereignisse, die mit rasch ansteigender Amplitude große Lautstärke erreichen, erschrecken nicht nur Tiere. Umgekehrt, leise, lang anhaltende und obertonreiche Klänge sind auch für Menschen anziehend.]<sup>[51]</sup>

The most salient musical feature that has its origin in biology is probably repetition, which according to Victor Zuckerkandl, another Viennese-born music theorist, is the cornerstone of all music: "[M]usic," he says, "can never have enough of saying over again what has already been said, not once or twice, but dozens of times; hardly does a section, which consists largely of repetitions, come to an end before the whole story is happily told over again."<sup>[52]</sup> For Knepler, rituals, in particular, represent an important case for the study of the early stages of the interplay between nature and culture through the phenomenon of repetition.<sup>[53]</sup> The universality of repetition in music and in rituals suggested to him an evolutionary link between humans and

other living creatures: “The element of repetition of acoustic shapes is probably the most archaic and the most basic method to turn short utterances into long and lasting ones and to attain greater impact in such a way. Higher forms of animals command a repertoire of different acoustic shapes.”<sup>[54]</sup> Even recent forms of music, Knepler argued, may still reflect features of a prehuman system of communication. A typical form of “rhythmic sound” can be found in the “division of labour” between the role of a solo singer, or a group of singers, and a repetitive accompaniment, whether by instrument or by singing. This structure underlines indigenous musical traditions and is also reflected in classical music in the form of homophonic texture, which gives rise to its identification as an almost universal phenomenon.<sup>[55]</sup>

But Knepler is not satisfied with these simple examples. In his analysis of Zerlina’s second aria in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* he notes not only the mimetic replication of heartbeats (mainly by way of repetition), but also reflects on the natural foundations of consonance and dissonance, by which he means not its acoustical basis but its biological one: the resolution of consonance into dissonance is analogous to that of physical tension or pain, and Mozart, Knepler points out, demonstrates this in a particularly poignant way towards the end of the aria:

Nothing in eighteenth-century music could capture the inevitable release from pain, the ‘blissful calm’ of lamentation, more perfectly than the ever-recurring and familiar tonic resolution of the dominant, with its relatively mild dissonance (at times distinctly stressed by Mozart in this piece). Toward the end of the number the “biogenic” methods [...] begin to accumulate, including an increase in volume and a rise in tessitura. For the first and only time the voice reach a high G with a concomitant increase in intensity. This increase is, as Mozart would have put it, “expressed by means of a crescendo”, likewise the first and only one in the piece. With this high G Zerlina leads us triumphantly—and, of course, again by way of the resolution of the dominant—into the ritornello, this time *forte*, again for the first and only time in the piece.<sup>[56]</sup>

[Nichts in der Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts könnte die zuverlässige Auflösung des Schmerzes, die seligste Beruhigung der Klage eindringlicher formulieren als die immer wiederkehrende, die wohlvertraute Auflösung der Dominante mit ihrer nicht sehr harschen Dissonanz – die Mozart jedoch in diesem Stück stellenweise deutlich herausstellt – in die Tonika. Gegen Schluß des Stückes häufen sich die biogenen Verfahrenweisen; Steigerung der Lautstärke und der Tonhöhe gehören zu deren Arsenal. Mit dem zum ersten – und einzigen – Mal berührten hohen G in der Singstimme, in gesteigerter Intensität – „welche durch ein Crescendo exprimiert ist“, hätte Mozart sagen können, dem ersten und einzigen des Stückes – führt Zerlina triumphierend und natürlich wiederum über die Auflösung der Dominante in die Tonika der Haupttonart zum – gleichfalls ersten und einzigen – Forte des Ritornells.]<sup>[57]</sup>

[6] For Knepler, biological-driven musical elements (and, indeed, any musical element whatsoever) are less important as notated stylistic characteristics of a musical text, than as pointers to the influence of external processes on music in shaping its communicative meaning and function. He uses the terms “attunement” (*Einstimmung*) and “biogenic” to describe biologically-conditioned musical properties that allow for an exchange of information about internal states. He hypothesized that these elements belong to the very first layer of the codification of musical meaning, being shaped by processes of prehuman and pre-linguistic communication. To the second level of musical codification, according to Knepler, belong elements that emerged in connection with the formation of spoken and written language.<sup>[58]</sup>

# Music and Language

From a historical perspective, Knepler's ideas resonate with the speculative tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that ruminated on the relationship between music and language. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, music and language originate in a primordial "language of passions."<sup>[59]</sup> Later in the eighteenth century, Johann Nikolaus Forkel expanded on this idea in his comprehensive theory of musical development.<sup>[60]</sup> In the lengthy Introduction to his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788, 1801), he argues that the origin of language and music is one and the same, namely the human soul. However, the two evolved into distinctive modes of expression and communication: language gives expression to the soul in a state of action while music springs from a state of sympathy.<sup>[61]</sup> Unlike some of his predecessors, Knepler did not feel compelled to decide whether music or language came first on the stage of history.<sup>[62]</sup> Rather, he seems to have preferred the possibility that both originated in a common communication system that is neither music nor a fully developed spoken language but an intermediary vehicle closer in its acoustic character to poetry.<sup>[63]</sup> In due course, music and language developed in different directions but never separate from the dialectical operation and influence of other elements. The language-like character of western tonal music, with its phrases, periods and cadences, provides for Knepler a proof of the common past of music and language, but he maintains that other musical cultures have developed other means to create analogous structural and syntactical distinctions.<sup>[64]</sup>

For Knepler, both language and music contain cognitive and emotive elements but each places greater weight on one of these two elements. Even if music communicates primarily by means of emotive sign systems, Knepler insists that its development and meaning is intrinsically connected with the external world and with rational thinking. It is possible, he maintains, to grasp the one and the same event by two distinct modes of thinking and action: a cognitive-rational and emotional-aesthetic. This is shown, for instance, in ancient poems that celebrate a successful hunting. Knepler hypothesized that the very act of writing such poems—under primitive conditions—must have necessitated a great effort and time investment and therefore had its rational justification. The willingness to make this sacrifice in order to accomplish an aesthetic achievement (instead of actually pursuing the act of hunting) is not to be explained by a naïve belief in magic, but by a deep-seated need to come to terms with the world by emotional-aesthetic means.<sup>[65]</sup>

In comparison with the biogenic element of music (the first layer of musical codification), the language-like (or "logogenic") element is of a more recent origin.<sup>[66]</sup> Leaving the animal kingdom behind him, Knepler explained, man has entered a reality of growing complexity. This reality was shaped not only by the forces of nature, but also by his own actions. The new experiences and challenges necessitated, in turn, new forms of articulation. In this historical stage, language evolved as a medium for the communication of complex cognitive processes. In order to achieve this aim, it had to shed itself of the unnecessary repetitions and lavish movements of musical expression. Simultaneously, music had evolved in the opposite direction, becoming a means for what Knepler called the "emotive appropriation of the world," a term that refers to psychic adaptations to newly emerging realities.<sup>[67]</sup> Although music has retained the quasi-linguistic element of syntax, it has placed it in the service of a completely different goal; yet, in its own way, a developed musical expression is also capable of communicating messages: "Whatever music has in common with other acoustic systems, it is the integration of attunement and message (*Aussage*) that gives it that new quality that we call aesthetic [quality]."<sup>[68]</sup> Knepler goes on to explain that "Only through the integration of attunement and message, is an acoustic

communication system being formed as a means of artistic expression, namely music.”<sup>[69]</sup> From the viewpoint of Knepler’s anthropology, every system of musical communication consists of a combination of musical means deriving from the first and second layer of codification. At the same time, both the biogenic and the logogenic elements can function as carriers of different sorts of meanings; occasionally, they may undergo a process of “semanticization” by which they will acquire new (additional) meanings, mostly as a result of historical and cultural influences, including the emergence of various forms of labour and the invention of tools.

## Music and Labour

The concept of labour was bound to have special meaning for materialist thinkers such as Knepler. Labour is a central category in the writings of Marx and Engels and the key, in their view, for the understanding of human history. In his essay “Anteil der Arbeit an der Menschwerdung des Affen” (The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man, 1876), Engels maintains that labour, which manifests itself primarily through the use of the hands, had a decisive influence on the evolutionary path leading from the ape to primitive man. The hand, he says, “is not only the organ of work, but also its product.”<sup>[70]</sup> Thus, it was not only that labour had shaped the natural surroundings of man; labour has created man in the first place(!). Tellingly, one of Engels’ examples for a high level human development that evolved through the training of the hand was musical virtuosity as demonstrated by Niccolò Paganini:

Only by labour, by adaptation to ever new operations, through the inheritance of muscles, ligaments, and, over longer periods of time, bones that had undergone special development and the ever-renewed employment of this inherited finesse in new, more and more complicated operations, have given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to conjure into being the pictures of a Raphael, the statues of a Thorwaldsen, the music of a Paganini.<sup>[71]</sup>

[7] Later in the nineteenth century, the relationship between music and labour were explored by the German economist Karl Bücher in his study *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (Labour and Rhythm), first published in 1896 and followed by several subsequent editions.<sup>[72]</sup> Bücher reasoned that music originates in organized work.<sup>[73]</sup> Rhythm, which is integral to poetic language, he claimed, was not created by language itself but came to it through the bodily movements of physical labour.<sup>[74]</sup> Nowhere does Bücher cite Marx or Engels to this effect in his text, but his theory represents an important contribution to a historical-materialist understanding of music history as several Marxist thinkers, including Plekhanov duly acknowledged.<sup>[75]</sup>

Knepler, too, was very familiar with Bücher’s essay on music as well as with his other economic studies.<sup>[76]</sup> In Knepler’s mind, Bücher’s suggestion that the beginning of music dates back to organized work situates the beginning of music too late in the timeline of the evolutionary history of music. Some form of acoustic communication, he argued, existed before the *Homo sapiens* had walked the earth and therefore preceded human labour. In that prehistoric era, music existed only in the form of what Knepler called “animal communication system” and “emotive-cognitive communication system.” The impact of labour on music belongs, in this view, to a later stage of human development. Knepler stressed the importance of physical work and cooperation in generating new social formations through the use of tools. In the dialectical scenario he sketched, acoustic communication was connected with new psychological needs resulting from changes in

society and in material conditions through human activities. In this context, he reintroduces his notion of “emotional appropriation”:

The production of tools and ultimately of tools for the production of [other] tools as well as man's superiority over other animals by virtue of his growing mental capabilities, heightened his awareness of new actions and objects—not the least of those that were the result of his own activities. In the animal ACS [acoustic communication system] and in the early stages of the ECCS [emotive-cognitive communication system] no vocabulary and no system of codification for [the communication of] these actions and objects existed. The continuous expansion of the human field of action and the resulting complication of social relations also made psychic adaptation to new circumstances necessary. This is what we tried to capture with the concept of “emotional appropriation.”

[Die Herstellung von Werkzeugen und schließlich von Werkzeugen zur Herstellung von Werkzeugen, seine Überlegenheit über andere Tiere durch Anwachsen seiner gedanklichen Fähigkeiten rückte Handlungen und Gegenstände – nicht zuletzt solche, die das Resultat seiner eigenen Tätigkeit waren – ins Bewusstsein, für die es in tierischen AKS und in den Frühstadien der EKKS weder Vokabeln noch ein Codierungssystem gegeben hatte. Es müssen neue Situationen, Relationen, die Notwendigkeit zu Entscheidungen neuer Art ergeben haben. [...]. Die ständige Erweiterung des menschlichen Aktionsfeldes und die durch sie bedingte Komplizierung der sozialen Beziehungen machte aber auch psychische Anpassungen, Adaptionen an die neue Verhältnisse nötig, die wir im Begriff der „emotionalen Aneignung“ zu fassen suchten.]<sup>[77]</sup>

The importance Knepler placed on the category of labour discloses another dimension that distinguishes his Marxism from neo-Marxist cultural analyses, a dimension that is connected with his understanding of realism in music. Adorno, as is well known, was openly hostile towards music reminiscent of physical activity such as jazz. This antagonism was extended to any form of incidental music whose real function, he believed, was to provide a conforming distraction in the wake of late capitalism and the cultural industry.<sup>[78]</sup> As Max Paddison explained in connection with the concept of spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*), “autonomous art,” according to Adorno, “is different from and stands apart from empirical reality because it is not obviously functional; at the same time it is different from ‘nature’ in that it is ‘artificial’ and highly contrived.”<sup>[79]</sup> To be sure, Knepler was anything but an advocate of bourgeois entertainment but like other East German musical thinkers he would have found the separation postulated by Adorno between autonomous art, on the one hand, and empirical reality and functionality, on the other, to be highly questionable. His understanding of music as a form of communication enunciates, by definition, its functionality within the context of objective social and economic relations. Knepler believed the distinction between entertainment and serious music (“U-Musik” and “E-Musik” in German parlance) to be a “symptom of theoretical failure.”<sup>[80]</sup>

Viewed from this perspective, one may argue that detaching music from the reality of concrete social function, as Adorno does, is tantamount to denying that music responds to the need of man as a species.<sup>[81]</sup> Even critics of socialist realism in its dogmatic form, such as Knepler, acknowledged that Adorno's aesthetic paradigm of an abstract avant-garde music devoid of any reminiscence of social function (in contradistinction to social critique) is a rather unique and recent historical phenomenon. Since acting in the world, ideally in a beneficial way, is not a matter of choice but a necessity, Knepler was interested in revealing the primordial conditions that made aesthetic distinctions possible in the first place. There is, he argued, a specifically human need that allows for specifically human forms of satisfaction. Aesthetic values (beautiful versus ugly), he insists in the posthumously published text *Macht ohne Herrschaft*, grew out of,



and in tandem with, survival values along the lines of “useful” versus “harmful.”<sup>[82]</sup> Thus, the beautiful in the realm of aesthetics is also connected with positive values in terms of action and rational thinking.

[8] Knepler was not the first dialectical thinker to conceptualize art in terms of human needs. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had done so already in his lectures and writings on aesthetics. We need not take issue with the philosopher’s famous verdict that the present “no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs” to see his point in maintaining that the universality of art stems from the “rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self.”<sup>[83]</sup> Later on in the nineteenth century, this notion was picked up by Karl Marx. As a materialist dialectician, the concept of need could hardly have been more central to Marx’s view of the nature of man, but his emphasis on material needs rather than spiritual ones relegated the arts to a secondary place in his philosophical oeuvre. It is striking, however, that one of his very few references to music in a philosophical text concerns not its ideological character but rather its anthropogenic significance. For Marx, music is a form of objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) that transforms auditory perception into human listening by endowing it with meaning and aesthetic value:

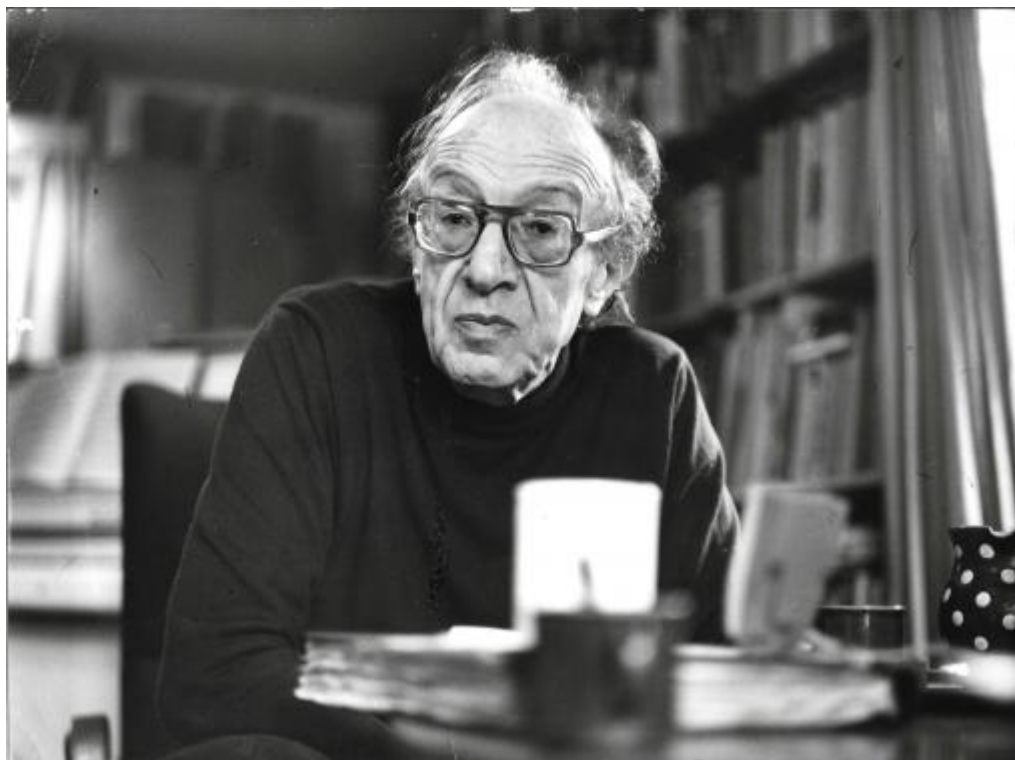
Only music can awaken the musical sense in man and the most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers, i.e. can only be for me in so far as my essential power exists for me as a subjective attribute (this is because the sense of an object for me extend only as far as my senses extend, only has sense for a sense that corresponds to that object). In the same way, and for the same reason, the senses of social man are different from those of non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature can the wealth of subjective human sensitivity—a musical ear, an eye for the beauty of form, in short, senses capable of human gratification—be either cultivated or created. For not only the five senses, but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, the human sense, the humanity of the senses—all these come into being only through the existence of their objects, through humanized nature.<sup>[84]</sup>

[Wie erst die Musik den musikalischen Sinn des Menschen erweckt, wie für das unmusikalische Ohr die schönste Musik keinen Sinn hat, [kein] Gegenstand ist, weil mein Gegenstand nur die Bestätigung einer meiner Wesenskräfte sein kann, also nur so für mich sein kann, wie meine Wesenskraft als subjektive Fähigkeit für sich ist, weil der Sinn eines Gegenstandes für mich (nur Sinn für einen ihm entsprechenden Sinn hat) grade so weit geht, als mein Sinn geht, darum sind die Sinne des gesellschaftlichen Menschen andre Sinne wie die des ungesellschaftlichen; erst durch den gegenständlich entfalteten Reichtum des menschlichen Wesens wird der Reichtum der subjektiven menschlichen Sinnlichkeit, wird ein musikalisches Ohr, ein Auge für die Schönheit der Form, kurz, werden erst menschlicher Genüsse fähige Sinne, Sinne, welche als menschliche Wesenskräfte sich bestätigen, teils erst ausgebildet, teils erst erzeugt.]<sup>[85]</sup>

Musical listening, in this view, is a specifically human mode of perception that evolved, together with the rest of the senses, in the process of becoming human. “The forming of the five senses”, Marx summarizes, “is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.”<sup>[86]</sup>

The universal human sense of musical expression is the core notion of Knepler’s music anthropology but he was, of course, more specific in describing its peculiarities as a mode of communication. He endorsed the notion that the ability of a musical system to function as a medium of collective experience depends on a system of signifier-signified relations, which, in turn, are also products of social circumstances; certain forms of music are considered appropriate for some occasions (such as festive events), while other forms are excluded as inappropriate.

Such a distinction is not based on specific musical parameters, but on what Knepler called a “complex of meaning” (*Bedeutungskomplex*) that may include a variety of musical elements as well as the choice of musical instruments.<sup>[87]</sup> Additionally, the meaning of specific forms of music (or musical element) very often assumes a tacit cultural knowledge. Knepler’s example is the “modi” or “harmonia” of classical Greece as described by philosophers of the Hellenic Age. The character or “ethos” attached to these scales is probably better understood when we remember that their names derived from the names of Greek and foreign tribes. The Phrygian mode, for instance, is associated with “orgiastic frenzy” (as described by Aristotle) probably because of its use in orgiastic rituals for which the Phrygians were known.<sup>[88]</sup> Such a meaning is the result of a living musical praxis, which then may or may not become institutionalized and formalized in a written form.



**Figure 2: Georg Knepler around 1990,  
© Knepler private family collection.**

## Between New Musicology and Socialist Realism

[9] Knepler’s vision of a materialist musicology and music anthropology is one that is sensitive to the cultural and sociological aspects of music. On this general level, his program of a new kind of music scholarship resembles the assumptions underlying the work of New Musicologists during the 1990s. But Knepler, as we saw, was quite critical of the attempt to deal with music in purely historical terms. Moreover, as an advocate of a historical-materialist conception of progress, he objected to the relativist ideas and philosophies associated with postmodernism. The latter were fundamental to the development of more recent models of critical musicology. As Anne C. Shreffler noted, New Musicology was informed by the critical theories coming from France rather than Germany.<sup>[89]</sup> Being conversant with at least some of these, Knepler rejected them not in spite, but because of his Marxism.<sup>[90]</sup> It is not clear to what extent he was versed in New Musicology but we know that he was acquainted with the work of Jacques Derrida and had a

sense of the up-and-coming application of post-structuralism to music:

Music scholars that adhere to the most problematic side of post-structuralism and adopt Jacques Derrida's term "textuality" and want to "read" or hear the ability of music to "represent" on the basis of merely musical categories serve the argument that music is indeed the most likely [art form] to support the theory of the worldlessness [Weltlosigkeit] of the aesthetic field. These scholars are doing a disservice to the elaboration of music theory.

[Musikforscher [...], die sich an die problematischste Seite des Poststrukturalismus halten, die den Begriff "Textualität" von Jacques Derrida übernehmen und der Musik jede Fähigkeit zur „Repräsentation“, d.h. bloß in Bezug auf musikalische Kategorien, „lesen“ oder hören wollen – sich dabei des Arguments bedienend, Musik sei ja am ehesten geeignet, eine Theorie der Weltlosigkeit des Ästhetischen zu unterschützen –, diese Musikforscher leisten einer zu erarbeitenden Theorie der Musik einen schlechten Dienst.]<sup>[91]</sup>

From Knepler's perspective, Derrida's notion of textuality—that is, the free interplay of interpretations—is untenable because it deprives music of its function as a form of communication. In Knepler's theory, the meaning of music is not fixed once and for all, but it is also more than the sum of individual "readings." Furthermore, Knepler's interest in the cultural and social history of music was less concerned with the issue of particularistic national and cultural identities in music (the hallmark of present-day critical musicology) but rather with the deep structures of the overall historical process as shaped by the musicality of broad collectives.<sup>[92]</sup> But the scientific and essentialist tendencies of Knepler's musicology are not the only factors to set his work apart from more recent and better-familiar models of critical musicology; the supra-historical significance he assigned to the composers of the German and Austrian musical canon can be seen as another dated aspect of his music historiography.<sup>[93]</sup> Situated in the proper context, however, Knepler's reverence for these composers and his choice of the biographical genre when writing his Mozart monograph were part and parcel of East German music aesthetics and historiography.

As several scholars have noted, classical music was appropriated in the GDR as an element of the German humanist heritage.<sup>[94]</sup> Consequently, the classical composers were treated not only as representatives of the great achievements of their own age, but also as agents of a universal message equally vital for the present day. Knepler not only endorsed this line of thought but in fact enhanced it. He was perhaps more careful than other East German authors to avoid the high-sounding language of communist propaganda, but his choice of musical "heroes" and his evaluation of them present no remarkable deviations. More often than not, his aesthetic judgment of composers in terms of "progress" or "regression" had less to do with the music itself than with such "external" factors as subject matter (in programme and vocal music), genre, and composers' documented political and social positions. A good example of this is his high opinion of Gustav Mahler for his apparent sympathy for the proletariat or, alternatively, his positive appraisal of the early revolutionary Richard Wagner.<sup>[95]</sup> This approach, which may seem deficient from present-day perspective, was intrinsically connected with the definition of Marxist aesthetics in the GDR as an aesthetics of content as opposed to formalism. In his studies of music history and aesthetics, Knepler both followed and modified this thread.

Of all the writers in the Soviet bloc, it was probably György Lukács who was the most influential theorist to be associated with the aesthetics of content. His ideas, which resonated with the language of Soviet cultural functionaries, were almost indispensable for anyone in East Germany

writing on the arts and aesthetics, including Knepler.<sup>[96]</sup> Referring to the relationship between form and content in literature, Lukács' maintained that "It is the view of the world, the ideology or *Weltanschauung* underlying a writer's work that counts. And it is the writer's attempt to reproduce this view of the world which constitutes his 'intention' and is the formative principle underlying the style of a given piece of writing."<sup>[97]</sup> To avoid possible misunderstanding, Lukács was anything but indifferent regarding which view of the world a writer must follow. But an author, according to Lukács, need not give literal expression to his political and sociological positions; rather, they must emerge from within the literary situation and the narrative itself, as the great realist authors of the nineteenth century did.<sup>[98]</sup> From this follows Lukács' definition of socialist realism as a representation of reality under the condition of the emerging socialist society. Obviously, Lukács' theory had much in common with the aesthetic postulates of Zhdanov and other Soviet cultural functionaries, though the exact nature of the relationship between the two is a somewhat complicated topic.<sup>[99]</sup> In the early 1950s, Lukács' ideas were adopted by East German authors on music whose theoretical positions were quite representative of official Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. A long-time colleague of Knepler in London and Berlin, Ernst Hermann Meyer advocated socialist realism in music in his 1952 book *Musik im Zeitgeschehen*, drawing on Lukácsian principles. The following passage from the book resonates with Lukács' subordination of form to content in the creative process:

[T]he artist is by no means "neutral" towards his material; this process [of artistic creation] is [...] not a mechanical one; rather, this process of realization is guided by the worldview of the musician, [a worldview] that, in turn, arises from the bottom of social reality. [...]. In this act of creativity, the artist continuously takes sides in social struggles and very often he does so very passionately.<sup>[100]</sup>

Meyer's statement highlights the political commitment involved in musical composition in the GDR. Translated into the practice of musical composition, this meant two things: first, broad accessibility and, second, the writing of program and vocal music with socialist revolutionary content.<sup>[101]</sup> Needless to say, this form of "realism" in music was hardly commensurable with the "advanced" compositional methods of modern music.

[10] Knepler's use of the category of realism takes on a broader meaning. In his relatively few published statements on New Music such as Arnold Schoenberg's, he sounds somewhat more sympathetic—or at least more tolerant—than other East German critics.<sup>[102]</sup> However, he did not fail to mention that the social isolation of this music made it, at least temporarily, irrelevant to a large segment of society and especially the working class.<sup>[103]</sup> Whether or not he considered this to be an expression of anti-realism is not entirely clear, but he was certainly not an uncritical supporter of socialist realism, as Meyer was. In a joint essay with Günter Meyer, Knepler mentions Hanns Eisler as an exponent of a truly critical and socially-adequate approach to the musical tradition of the classics. In this context, he notes that, in contrast to Eisler, Lukács tends to an "idealized fetishization of the classical tradition" that arises from the "unsatisfactory analysis of the overall process of the artistic culture and its real contradictions and possibilities in relation to the working class and the arts."<sup>[104]</sup> Writing during the mid 1970s, Knepler responded in part to new developments that took place in aesthetic thought in the Soviet bloc. By then, Lukács himself expanded and modified his ideas as evident in his late work *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (The Peculiarity of the Aesthetic; published initially in Hungarian in 1965), a monumental study that exceeds the scope of everything he previously wrote on the philosophy of art. Primarily a writer on literature, Lukács discusses in this study also the aesthetic nature of music, leaving no doubt that he considered it, in some sense, an imitative art:

The homogeneous medium of music can give expression to the feelings and sentiments of the people in a completely untarnished [and] pure way because in this [form of] mimesis of reality, which often takes place spontaneously, they are liberated above all from the ambivalent object bondage through a [process] of double mimesis.

[Das homogene Medium der Musik kann die Gefühle und Empfindungen der Menschen gerade darum in durch nichts gehemmter Erfüllung, in völlig ungetrübter Reinheit zum Ausdruck bringen, weil sie sie in dieser oft spontan stattfindenden Mimesis der Wirklichkeit durch eine gedoppelte Mimesis vor allem von ihrer zwiespältigen Objekgebundenheit radikal befreit.]<sup>[105]</sup>

By “homogenous medium,” Lukács refers to the reliance of music on the sense of hearing as opposed to the heterogeneity of the experience of everyday life. Music, in his theory, is not directly connected with external reality; rather, it represents an imitation of imitation (or “double imitation”) resulting in the transformation of “the inner life” into musical form.<sup>[106]</sup>

Knepler’s did not reject this notion, which in fact was partially adopted from Adorno, but argued that Lukács’ concepts of reflection and imitation are insufficient.<sup>[107]</sup> As with the concept of labour, he proposed that mimesis is not the ultimate origin and motivation of aesthetic experience, reiterating his theory about the manifold sources of music and musical meaning. From this perspective, mimesis can be better understood as a specific moment in the evolutionary history of music and certainly not the earliest one: “The mimetic imitation of the processes of everyday life and work that are rendered in ceremonial or ritual events,” Knepler maintained, “is not the oldest reconstructable form in which people communicate with each other about those things that unite them.”<sup>[108]</sup> Proceeding along these lines, Knepler sought to modify the theory of realism in a way that could accommodate music without resorting to the categories of imitation and reflection. Since mimesis is only one element among others in shaping forces of music and acoustic communication, music cannot be entirely realistic in Lukács’ sense. In his essay “Musikalischer Realismus. Neue Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem” (Musical Realism: New Reflections on an Old Problem, 1988), he thus proposes a functional definition for realism in art and music: “Art is realistic,” he maintains, “when it helps the people who produce and reproduce it to act realistically.”<sup>[109]</sup>

Knepler’s materialist and interdisciplinary perspective on the aesthetics and history of music also informed his critique of musicologists active in the West, in particular Carl Dahlhaus. Knepler was critical of Dahlhaus’ seemingly denial of social content in music as well as of his formalist definition of music as an art form devoid of concepts (*begriffslose Kunst*).<sup>[110]</sup> At the same time, he was quite sympathetic towards Joseph Kerman’s critique in *Contemplating Music* (1985) of positivism in musicology and the division of music scholarship into the subfields of music history, theory and ethnomusicology.<sup>[111]</sup> In spite of this, Knepler’s work is most likely to disappoint anyone looking in his essays and books for cultural interpretations of music in terms of class interests and ideologies. His disapproval of capitalism did not translate into “deconstructive” readings of musical works and his analyses place equal importance on questions of social function and biological conditioning.<sup>[112]</sup> If he showed a greater awareness of the methodological problems and challenges involved in writing history, this is largely because of his programmatic attempt to transgress the limiting compartmentalism that he identified in the modern scientific life. It was for this reason that he took issue with Dahlhaus’ suggestion that the avoidance of judgement (*Urteilsverzicht*) in the historiography of music stands for a move “from philosophy of history to history.”<sup>[113]</sup> Such a position, in Knepler’s assessment, denied the possibility of a global



perspective on the historical course of music. This goal was important to Knepler not only as a music scholar but also as an exponent of Marxism as a universal science.

## Conclusion

[11] Knepler put forward a unique vision of a historical-materialist music aesthetics and historiography. Proceeding from Marx's philosophical anthropology, he rejected the simplistic theories of mimesis and reflection advocated by Soviet and East German authors on the arts and aesthetics. At the same time, he was equally critical of the neo-Marxist and post-structuralist models that later exerted their influence on New Musicology. His ideas are best understood in view of nineteenth-century historical materialism and some of the threads of cybernetics and modernized Marxism of the GDR. For Knepler, Marxism meant, in the first place, a scientific worldview that involved recognizing the evolutionary and anthropological foundations that made music an effective system of aesthetic communication. On this basis, he hoped to attain a holistic viewpoint on the overall development of music that would match his definition of art as a composite of biological, aesthetic and historical factors.<sup>[114]</sup> In spite of occasional reservations, his interest was never to modify the teachings of Marx, especially if this involved a relapse to subjectivism and historical relativism, but to supplement classical Marxism with new and complementary ideas and findings.

This by no means renders his basic approach obsolete. As a matter of fact, the time has never been more appropriate for reconsideration of his work, and not only because of the growing interest in the music history of the GDR. Already during the late 1970s and early 1980s, several young East German musicologists such as Christian Kaden and Günter Mayer drew on Knepler in developing new approaches to the history, aesthetics and sociology of music.<sup>[115]</sup> Moreover, contemporary scholars in various fields of music psychology and semiotics may find in his writings a useful gateway to a synthesis of historical and systematic approaches. His concern with anthropology and anthropogenesis resonates with some recent projects and new fields of inquiry within cultural musicology. Without claiming any particular methodological relation to dialectical materialism, Gary Tomlinson's recent study of Wagnerism reflected an analogous interest in the integration of evolutionary, semiotic and cultural perspectives on music, even drawing on thinkers such as Jakob von Uexküll whose work strongly influenced twentieth-century philosophical anthropology.<sup>[116]</sup> Finally, Knepler's emphasis on the social use of music and its communicative functionally as the locus of musical meaning appear surprisingly up-to-date in light of the current increasing focus on relational musicology which, according to Nicholas Cook, displaced the authority on an originary text in favour of an interactive model of musical meaning.<sup>[117]</sup> While inevitably dated in many respects, Knepler's work has much to offer these lines of inquiry.

## References

1. The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union signified the turning point in the cultural politics of the Soviet Union and East Germany. See Wolfram Schlenker, *Das "Kulturelle Erbe" in der DDR. Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Kulturpolitik 1945-1965* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), 138-140. [↑](#)



2. Marxism-Leninist was the official state ideology of the GDR and other communist countries. As the name implies, Marxism-Leninist is indebted also to the ideas of Lenin. In practice, state and party officials as well as cultural functionaries invoked Marxism-Leninism in support of various ideological and political aims. See Stefan Wolle, *DDR: Eine kurze Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), 125. ↑
3. Lars Klingberg explored in numerous studies the relationship between music and state apparatus in the GDR. See, in particular, Lars Klingberg, "Politisch fest in unseren Händen". *Musikalische und musikwissenschaftliche Gesellschaften in der DDR. Dokumente und Analysen*, Musiksoziologie 3 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997); "IMS 'John' und Schostakowitsch. Zur Stasi-Karriere von Heinz Alfred Brockhaus," in *Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa* 7 (2000): 82-116, and "Georg Knepler und die gescheiterten musikwissenschaftlichen Publikationsprojekte in der DDR in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren," in *Musikwissenschaft und Vergangenheitspolitik. Forschung und Lehre im frühen Nachkriegsdeutschland, Kontinuitäten und Brüche im Musikleben der Nachkriegszeit*, ed. Jörg Rothkamm, Thomas Schipperges et al. (Munich: Richard Boorberg, 2015), 417-433. ↑
4. Anne C. Shreffler, "Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus, Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History," in *Journal of Musicology* 20.4 (2003): 498-525. ↑
5. Georg Knepler, *Geschichte als Weg zum Musikverständnis. Zur Theorie, Methode und Geschichte der Musikgeschichtsschreibung* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1977). ↑
6. For a comprehensive biography of Knepler, see Gerhard Oberkofler and Manfred Mugrauer, *Georg Knepler. Musikwissenschaftler und marxistischer Denker aus Wien* (Vienna: Studienverlag, 2014). ↑
7. For further information about Knepler's studies at the University of Vienna, see Gerhard Oberkofler, "Über das musikwissenschaftliche Studium von Georg Knepler an der Wiener Universität," Website of the Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.klahrgesellschaft.at/Mitteilungen/Oberkofler\\_3\\_06.html](http://www.klahrgesellschaft.at/Mitteilungen/Oberkofler_3_06.html). ↑
8. On the history of the Austrian Centre, see Marietta Bearman, Charmian Brinson, Richard Dove et al., *Out of Austria: the Austrian Centre in London in World War II* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008). ↑
9. An obituary by Nicholas Jacobs was published in *The Guardian*, February 21, 2003, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/feb/21/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries>. ↑
10. Toby Thacker rightly observed that this neglect led to a depreciation of the cultural variety of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music. Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler, 1945-1955* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 4. ↑
11. Georg Knepler, *Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Henschel, 1961). ↑
12. It is not clear to what extent Knepler's intellectual reorientation affected his standing in the GDR. We know that he fell out of favour with the East German regime during the last decades of the GDR but the reason for this may have little to do with the content of his musicological studies. According to Lars Fischer, "Knepler had successfully carved out for himself a niche, albeit one that was neither private nor quietist in nature and from which he was able to present a far-reaching critique of mainstream Marxist musicology hidden in plain sight." Lars Fischer, "Positioning Georg Knepler in the Musicological Discourse of the GDR," in *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic: Production and Reception*, ed. Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell (Rochester: Camden House, 2015), 71. ↑
13. Thomas C. Patterson, *Karl Marx, Anthropologist* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), 41. Similarly, Erich Fromm maintained that according to Marx, there was no contradiction between ontology and history; the essential nature of man realizes itself, each time in different guises, in tandem with local historical and social conditions. Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2003), 23-35. ↑
14. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Towards a New Manifesto*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2011), 111-112. ↑
15. Georg Knepler, "Die Rolle des Ästhetischen in der Menschwerdung. Überlegungen zu einem vernachlässigten Problem," in *Weimarer Beiträge* 34 (1988): 377. For Charles Percy Snow's text, see C.

P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and a Second Look* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). ↑

16. Knepler expressed this thought also in the “Foreword” of his *Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 7. ↑
17. Arnold Gehlen is another philosopher to be associated with this school. On twentieth-century philosophical anthropology, see Gerhard Arlt, *Philosophische Anthropologie* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2001), and Joachim Fischer, *Philosophische Anthropologie. Eine Denkrichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Alber, 2008). ↑
18. The East German philosopher Alfred Kosing critized members of the philosophical anthropology school for their failure to take notice of the importance of labour in defining the “unique mode of human existence.” See *Marxistische Philosophie. Lehrbuch* (Berlin: Dietz, 1967), 21. Alfred Kosing was the main editor and the author of the first part of this collaboratively-authored text book on Marxist philosophy. ↑
19. “Doch gibt es Richtungen innerhalb der A[nthropologie], die auch Fragen der Kultur und der gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge der Menschen behandeln. Sie unterliegen leicht der Gefahr, die Grenzen zwischen biolog[isch] und gesellschaftlich bedingten Prozessen nicht oder nicht genügend zu beachten.” Knepler, *Geschichte*, 581. ↑
20. Knepler preferred to speak about the “beginnings” of music (*Anfänge*) instead of using the more value-laden notion of “origin” (*Ursprung*). ↑
21. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 325. ↑
22. Ibid. Elsewhere, Adorno admits the source of music in “the collective practice of cult and dance” and maintains that “this historical source remains the unique sensory subjective impulse of music [...].” However, he also suggests that the ideal of collectivity contained by music “lost its relationship to the empirical collectivity.” Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Continuum, 2007), 13. ↑
23. Knepler, “Die Rolle des Ästhetischen,” 373. ↑
24. Ibid. ↑
25. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 470. ↑
26. Interestingly, it was precisely the notion that every historical period must create its own characteristic artistic and musical style that was deemed “undialectical” by East German authors and especially by exponents of socialist realism. On Knepler’s notion of progress, see also Andreas Domann, “Musikhistoriographie unter dem Paradigma des Marxismus. Ein Relik der Vergangenheit?” in *Konstruktivität von Musikgeschichtsschreibung. Zur Formation musikbezogenen Wissens*, ed. Sandra Danielczyk, Christoph Dennerlein, Sylvia Freydank et al. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2012), 107-122. ↑
27. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 470. ↑
28. Georg Knepler, “Musikalischer Realismus. Neue Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem,” in *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 30 (1988): 244. Although Adorno did not engage in direct dialogue with Knepler, he expressed his reservations about the possibility of a universal history on several occasions. For a discussion of Adorno’s concepts of universal history and progress, see Brian O’Connor, *Theodor W. Adorno: Key Concepts*, ed. Deborah Cook (New York: Routledge, 2008), 179-196. ↑
29. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 198. ↑
30. Ibid., 128. ↑
31. Both of Friedrich Engels’ studies are available online. For his *Anti-Dühring*, see: [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20\\_001.htm](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20_001.htm). For *Dialektik der Natur*, see [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20\\_305.htm](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20_305.htm), both accessed March 19, 2016. ↑
32. This, however, is not to downplay Marx and Engels’ misgivings about the applications of evolutionary

concepts to human history. In *Capital*, Marx noted that “human history differs from natural history in [that] we have made the former, but not the latter [...]” Karl Marx, *Capital* (a new abridgement), ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 487. For a discussion of Marxism and the natural sciences, see Alan Woods and Ted Grant, *Reason in Revolt: Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science* (London: Wellred Publications, 1995), in particular pages 309-322. ↑

33. Italics in original. Georgi Walentinowitsch Plechanow, *Kunst und Literatur*, ed. N. F. Beltchikow, trans. Joseph Harhammer, with a Foreword by M. Rosental ([East] Berlin: Dietz, 1955), 53. ↑
34. By contrast, Charles Darwin’s opponent, Herbert Spencer, argued that music has its source in bodily movements and the extension of excited speech characteristic of extreme emotional states. On music and fin-de-siècle notions of origin, see Alexander Rehding, “The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900,” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53.2 (2000): 345-385. ↑
35. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, with an Introduction, Afterword, and commentaries by Paul Ekman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Cited in Peter Kivy, “Charles Darwin on Music,” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 12.1 (1959): 44. ↑
36. Plechanow, *Kunst und Literatur*, 52. Plekhanov did not go beyond writing a few paragraphs on this issue. ↑
37. For a reprint of the second edition of this study, see Friedrich von Hausegger, *Die Musik als Ausdruck*, Studien zur Wertforschung 50, ed. Elisabeth Kappel and Andreas Dorschel, (Vienna et al.: Universal Edition, 2010). ↑
38. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 462. ↑
39. Ibid., 54-56. ↑
40. Engels first used the term “scientific socialism” to describe the economic and political theories of Marx, as opposed to the utopian theories of earlier socialist thinkers. See Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), accessed March 19, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/index.htm>. ↑
41. On Georg Klaus and the field of philosophy in East Germany of the 1950s, see Heinz Liebscher, “Georg Klaus – Ein unbequemer Marxist,” in *Anfänge der DDR-Philosophie. Ansprüche, Ohnmacht, Scheitern*, ed. Volker Gerhardt and Hans-Christoph Rauh (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2001). On Georg Klaus and cybernetics, see Heiz Liebscher, “Systemtheorie und Kybernetik in der philosophischen Sicht von Georg Klaus,” in *Denkversuche. DDR-Philosophie in den 60er Jahre*, ed. Hans-Christoph Rauh and Peter Ruben (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2005), 157-175. ↑
42. Georg Klaus, *Kybernetik in philosophischer Sicht* (Berlin: Dietz, 1961), 5. Cited also in Heiz Liebscher, “Systemtheorie und Kybernetik,” 158. ↑
43. Heiz Liebscher, “Systemtheorie und Kybernetik,” 157-158. See also Klaus Dieter Wüstneck, “Der kybernetische Charakter des neuen ökonomischen Systems und die Modellstruktur der Perspektivplanung als zielstrebig, kybernetischer Prozeß,” in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13.1 (1965), 5-31. ↑
44. Christian Kaden discusses the significance of cybernetics and interdisciplinarity for music scholarship in the GDR in an unpublished paper “Music Sociology in the GDR: Under Conditions of Political Dictatorship, Despite of Political Dictatorship.” Email correspondence with the author, March 19, 2015. A recording of the paper, accessed June 23, 2016, is available at <http://www.mdw.ac.at/mdwMediathek/50YearsOfMusicSociology/>. ↑
45. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 24. ↑
46. Ibid., 31. ↑
47. For Knepler’s references to Klix’s work, see *ibid.*, 12, 28, 31-32, 57, 66, 93, 111. Knepler makes use of

Fridhart Klix's study *Information und Verhalten. Kybernetische Aspekte der organismischen Informationsverarbeitung*. (Berlin, Vienna et al.: Huber, 1971). [↑](#)

48. Knepler cites several of Tembrock studies. He also draws on conversations conducted with the zoologist in 1976. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 625-626. [↑](#)
49. Yielding to the Marxist assumption about the priority of external reality, Knepler does not fail to note that such internal states are often stimulated by external objects and events. *Ibid.*, 110. [↑](#)
50. Georg Knepler, *Wolfgang Amadé Mozart*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170. [↑](#)
51. Italics in original. Georg Knepler, *Wolfgang Amadé Mozart. Annäherung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993), 206. [↑](#)
52. Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol. Music and the External World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), 213. On Zuckerkandl's anthropological approach, see Gerhard Lipp, *Das musikanthropologische Denken von Viktor Zuckerkandl* (Tutzing: Schneider 2002). [↑](#)
53. The importance of repetition as a mediating experience between music and the life of a community was recently underlined by Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis in her study *On Repeat*. Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 59. Compare with Knepler, *Geschichte*, 78-80. [↑](#)
54. "Das Element der Wiederholung akustischer Gebilde ist vermutlich das archaische, das elementarste Verfahren, aus kurzen Äußerungen länger anhaltende zu machen und auf solche Weise größere Wirkung zu erzielen. Höhere Tiere verfügen über ein Repertoire verschiedener akustischer Gebilde." Knepler, *Geschichte*, 73. [↑](#)
55. *Ibid.*, 88-89. [↑](#)
56. Knepler, *Mozart* (English edition), 171. [↑](#)
57. Knepler, *Mozart* (German edition), 207. [↑](#)
58. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 126. [↑](#)
59. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Musik und Sprache. Ausgewählte Schriften*, trans. Dorothea Gülke and Peter Gülke. (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel, 2002). [↑](#)
60. On Rousseau and Forkel, see Wulf Arlt, "Natur und Geschichte der Musik in der Anschauung des 18. Jahrhunderts. J. J. Rousseau und J. N. Forkel," in *Melos/NZ für Musik* 2.5 (1976): 351-356. [↑](#)
61. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, vol. 1, (Leipzig: Schwikertschen 1788), 12. [↑](#)
62. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 122. [↑](#)
63. "Im TMÜ [Tier-Mensch-Übergangsfeld] waren, was später Sprache und was später Musik wurde, eins." *Ibid.* [↑](#)
64. *Ibid.*, 109-111. Ian Cross and Ghofur Eliot Woodruff suggested that music is related to language through the mechanisms of vocal production. These mechanisms "lend themselves to certain prosodic forms with communicative affordance that are equally suited to both music and language." Ian Cross and Ghofur Eliot Woodruff, "Music as Communicative Medium," in *The Prehistory of Language*, ed. Rudolf Botha and Chris Knight (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 89. [↑](#)
65. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 178-179. [↑](#)
66. On the "logogenic" elements, see *ibid.*, 108-109, 124-126, 129, 131, 151, 156, 160, 164, and 198. [↑](#)
67. *Ibid.*, 32 and 110. [↑](#)
68. *Ibid.*, 128. [↑](#)

69. Ibid., 128. ↑
70. Friedrich Engels, "Anteil der Arbeit an der Menschwerdung des Affen," Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Ausgewählte Schriften in zwei Bänden*, vol. 2 ([East] Berlin: Dietz, 1953), 72. English translation adopted from: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour/> (accessed August 15, 2015). ↑
71. Ibid., 72-73. ↑
72. Here I am using the 1909 edition of Bücher's *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner [1896]). ↑
73. Several composers and musical thinkers of socialist leanings expounded this position already during the 1930s and 1940s, including Hanns Eisler and Alan Bush. ↑
74. Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, 357. ↑
75. Plechanow, *Kunst und Literatur*, 37, 67-69, 79-82, 85, 86, 88-90, 93, 96, 99-101, 104-112 et al. ↑
76. Knepler, "Die Rolle des Ästhetischen," 375. ↑
77. I took some liberty in simplifying Knepler's formulation. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 110. See also *ibid.*, 128 and 189. ↑
78. Theodor W. Adorno, "Why is the New Art So Hard to Understand?" In *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 127-134, 131. ↑
79. Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58. ↑
80. Knepler, "Musikalischer Realismus," 244. ↑
81. Luciano Berio pointed the fact that Adorno's analysis of modern music culture lacks the concept of need: Luciano Berio, *Two Interviews, with Rossana Dalmonte and Bálint András Varga*, trans. and ed. David Osmond-Smith (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1985), 29. ↑
82. Georg Knepler, *Macht ohne Herrschaft. Realsisierung einer Möglichkeit*, ed. Stefan Huth (Berlin: Kai Homilius, 2004), 73. ↑
83. Cited in Ian Fraser, *Hegel and Marx: The Concept of Need* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 102. For the original context, see G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 31. ↑
84. Italics in original. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in *Early Writings*, ed. Lucio Colletti, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin 1975), 353. Interestingly, Knepler noted that the editors of Marx's writings were mistaken in naming his 1944 texts "Economic manuscripts." See Knepler, *Macht ohne Herrschaft*, 24. ↑
85. Italics in original. Karl Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844," accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me40/me40\\_533.htm](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me40/me40_533.htm). ↑
86. Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," 353. ↑
87. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 98-100. ↑
88. Ibid., 100-101. ↑
89. Shreffler, "Berlin Walls," 523. ↑
90. As Adam Krims noted, the intellectual sources that have informed critical musicology of recent decades "announced major breaks with Marxist theoretical tradition." See Adam Krims, "The Hip-Hop Sublime as a Form of Commodification," in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 63-64. ↑
91. Knepler, "Musikalischer Realismus," 236. ↑



92. According to the art historian Boris Groys, the current penchant for diversity and heterogeneity is the reason why the Communist world remains a blind spot for many western spectators. Boris Groys, "Beyond Diversity: Cultural Studies and its Post-Communist Other," in *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 149-163. [↑](#)
93. On GDR musicology and the classical canon, see Elaine Kelly, *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic: Narratives of Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). [↑](#)
94. See Albrecht von Massow, "Probleme einer humanistischen Legitimation von Kunst," in *Die unerträgliche Leichtigkeit der Kunst. Ästhetisches und politisches Handeln in der DDR*, ed. Michael Berg, Knut Holtsträter, and Albrecht von Massow (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 163-176. [↑](#)
95. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 490-491. [↑](#)
96. In spite of his tremendous influence on philosophical aesthetics, Lukács' name was sometimes ignored in publications in East Germany and elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. The reason for this seems to be his support of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 rather than any serious deviation from "official" philosophical and aesthetic positions. Nonetheless, it is also true that Lukács expressed sometimes nonconformist ideas. [↑](#)
97. György Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism," in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), 19. [↑](#)
98. On Lukács' aesthetics, see Béla Királyfalvi, *The Aesthetics of György Lukács* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1975). [↑](#)
99. This point is discussed briefly in Maynard Solomon (ed.), *Marxism and Art: Essays. Classic and Contemporary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 239. [↑](#)
100. "Sowohl bei der Auswahl dieser Faktoren als auch bei ihrer Schöpferischen Realisierung ist der Künstler keineswegs etwa seinem Material gegenüber „neutral“; dieser Vorgang ist [...] kein mechanischer, sondern dieser Realisierungsprozeß ist gelenkt durch die Weltanschauung des Musikers, die wiederum auf dem Boden der gesellschaftlichen Realität gewachsen ist. [...]. [D]er Künstler bei diesem Schöpfungsakt stets in den gesellschaftlichen Auseinandersetzungen Partei ergreift – und zwar meist sehr leidenschaftlich." Ernst Hermann Meyer, *Musik im Zeitgeschehen* ([East] Berlin: Bruno Henschel & Sohn, 1952), 51. [↑](#)
101. Meyer, who was a prolific composer, followed these guidelines also in his musical compositions. See my essay "Classicism as Anti-Fascist Heritage: Realism and Myth in Ernst Hermann Meyer's *Mansfelder Oratorium* (1950)," in *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic: Production and Reception*, ed. Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell (Rochester: Camden House, 2015), 34-57. [↑](#)
102. See, for instance, Georg Knepler, "The Second Viennese School in the Context of Austrian Intellectual History: An Essay-Memoir," in *Journal of Musicological Research* 17 (1998): 227-237. [↑](#)
103. Georg Knepler, "Der Komponist als Außenseiter," in *Gedanken über Musik* ([East] Berlin: Henschel, 1980), 122-126, in particular 126. [↑](#)
104. Günter Mayer and Georg Knepler, "Hätten sich Georg Lukács und Hanns Eisler in der Mitte des Tunnels getroffen?" In *Dialog und Kontroverse mit Georg Lukács* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1975), 370. [↑](#)
105. Georg Lukács, *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, vol. 2 ([East] Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1981), 348. For a secondary literature on Lukács and music aesthetics, see Albrecht Rietmüller, *Die Musik als Abbild der Realität. Zur dialektischen Widerspiegelungstheorie in der Ästhetik*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 15 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1976). [↑](#)
106. Királyfalvi, *The Aesthetics of György Lukács*, 61. [↑](#)
107. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 188. [↑](#)



108. "Die mimetische Nachahmung von alltäglichen Lebes- und Arbeitsprozessen, übertragen in zeremonielle oder rituelle Veranstaltungen, ist nicht die älteste rekonstruierbare Form, in der Menschen miteinander über das, was sie eint, kommunizierten." Knepler, *Geschichte*, 189. [↑](#)
109. "Kunst ist dann realistisch, wenn sie den Menschen, die sie produzieren und reproduzieren, sich in der Welt realistisch zu verhalten hilft." Knepler, "Musikalischer Realismus," 245. [↑](#)
110. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 50-51. [↑](#)
111. Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 123. For Knepler's view of this book, see Knepler "Musikalischer Realismus," 240-241. [↑](#)
112. In *Geschichte*, for instance, Knepler's discussion of the genre of the opera unfolds against the backdrop of his theory about the communicative and aesthetic function of mimetic ceremonies. Knepler, *Geschichte*, 262-264. [↑](#)
113. *Ibid.*, 492. [↑](#)
114. *Ibid.*, 198. [↑](#)
115. See Christian Kaden, *Musiksoziologie* (Berlin: Neue Musik, 1984); Günter Mayer, *Weltbild – Notenbild. Zur Dialektik des musikalischen Materials* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978). [↑](#)
116. See Gary Tomlinson, "Parahuman Wagnerism," in *Opera Quarterly* 29.4 (2013): 186-202. Tomlinson developed further this approach in his *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015). [↑](#)
117. See Nicholas Cook, "Anatomy of the Encounter: Intercultural Analysis as Relational Musicology," in *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott*, ed. Stan Hawkins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 193-208. See also Georgina Born, "For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn," in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135 (2010), 205-243. [↑](#)