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### Reflective nostalgia and diasporic memory

**Citation for published version:**

Kelly, E 2013, Reflective nostalgia and diasporic memory: Composing East Germany after 1989. in A Saunders & D Pinfold (eds), *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 116-131.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Early version, also known as pre-print

**Published In:**

Remembering and Rethinking the GDR

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**Reflective nostalgia and diasporic memory:  
Composing East Germany after 1989**

**Elaine Kelly**

The redrawing of borders in post-communist Europe led to a significant transformation of the continent's diasporic landscape. The migration that followed the collapse of the Iron Curtain resulted in the reintegration of certain long-established diasporas into their ethno-cultural homelands. 25 per cent of Bulgarian Turks, for example, were repatriated to Turkey in 1989 (Stewart, 2003: 30), while the following decade saw an influx of 1,630,000 Russian Germans to Germany (Pohl, 2009: 280). At the same time, entirely new diasporas were created, not by the movement of people across borders, as has traditionally been the case, but by the movement of borders across people. With the fragmentation of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union into smaller nationalising states, various ethnic communities were separated from their national homelands and subjected to processes of othering. Rogers Brubaker (2000: 2) describes this type of diasporic formation as 'accidental'. 'Accidental diasporas', he observes, 'crystallize suddenly following a dramatic – and often traumatic – reconfiguration of political space'.

The fate of East Germans following the fall of the Berlin Wall was initially cast as one of reintegration. German unification was framed as the bringing together of a single ethno-cultural community, and the reclassification of East Germans as citizens of the Federal Republic as the closing of a historic rift. Characteristic was the significance placed on Willy Brandt's alleged declaration on 10 November 1989 to a demonstration in West Berlin: 'Now that which belongs together can grow together.'<sup>1</sup> As the socio-cultural differences between eastern and western Germany became apparent, however, this narrative of reunification lost some of its resonance. With unemployment rife and

perceptions of otherness in the new federal states increasingly acute, a consciousness emerged among east Germans that was distinctly diasporic in nature. East Germany, it must be said, does not fall neatly into Brubacker's concept of an accidental diaspora. East Germans are neither an ethno-cultural minority in the Federal Republic nor stranded far from an ethnic homeland. Moreover, given the steady flow of emigration to the West prior to 1989 and the fact that East Germans themselves actively participated in their state's downfall, the GDR represents a nebulous concept of *Heimat* at best. Yet, in the wake of its sudden demise, its citizens encountered circumstances that were replicated across Europe's newly-created minority groups. In particular, the removal of agency that accompanied the rapid absorption of the GDR into the Federal Republic has echoes of the impotence that Brubaker (2000: 2) ascribes to other accidental diasporas. The rhetoric of colonisation that emerged from certain east German quarters in the 1990s might well be considered in this light.

Paradigms of diaspora and exile resonated strongly with east Germany's compositional elite in the 1990s. Georg Katzer notably remarked in 1992 that many of them felt like 'emigrants in their own country' (cit. in Nauck, 1993: 37). Born either before or during the Second World War, this generation of composers, which includes Reiner Bredemeyer (1929-95), Paul-Heinz Dittrich (b. 1930), Friedrich Goldmann (1941-2009), Katzer (b. 1935), Günter Kochan (1930-2009), Siegfried Matthus (b. 1934) and Friedrich Schenker (b. 1942), had begun their careers in the GDR and were beginning by the late 1980s to assume the mantle of senior statesmen. In the wake of unification their status changed considerably. From a position at the centre of a small musical scene, they found themselves demoted to the peripheries of a much larger one. Music was spared the acrimonious debates that played out in other spheres of German culture in the 1990s; unlike visual artists and writers, composers were not subject to public accusations of complicity with the SED regime by their west German counterparts. Instead their reception in western Germany was one of silence. With the exception of the seminal *Musik in Deutschland 1950-1990* compact-disc series, which presents composers from East and West side by

side,<sup>2</sup> few attempts were made to incorporate GDR artists into narratives of contemporary German music. Faced with this silence, many east German composers assumed an exilic identity, loosely assembling as a group united by experiences of exclusion and a shared past.

### **Composing from the Sidelines**

The experience of exile is rarely negative in all respects. Hamid Naficy (1993: 6) counters monolithic interpretations of it as a ‘dystopic and dysphoric experience stemming from deprivation,’ and ventures that ‘exile must also be defined by its utopian and euphoric possibilities’. In a 1990 interview, the musicologist Frank Schneider notably described the pervading atmosphere among East German composers as one of ‘great hope as well as great fear’ (cit. in Oelschlägel, 1990: 35). In terms of creative stimulus, the opening of the German border brought with it promises of increased freedom and the opportunity to regenerate the insular and often stagnant compositional scene of the GDR. Schneider recalled the envy with which East Germans had viewed the vibrant new-music scene of the Federal Republic (*ibid*: 39), and heralded the possibility that a freer exchange between East and West might result in a ‘synthesis’ or ‘third way’ for German composition as a whole (*ibid*: 43). This optimism was tempered, however, by no small degree of trepidation. The compositional world of the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s had been a comfortable one, all things considered. Following the relaxation of cultural policy by the Honecker regime in the early 1970s, composers had enjoyed a relatively free aesthetic reign, avoiding, for the most part, the attention of the censor.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the well-subsidised cultural system had provided ample opportunities for performances and commissions. While East German composition was by no means synonymous with the GDR state, it did exist predominantly within the

realms of the state's cultural infrastructure. As such, the question of whether it could survive in the state's absence was a very real one.

As the practicalities of unification unfolded, Schneider's fears found a more concrete realisation than his hopes. Certain composers flourished in the freer climate. Friedrich Goldmann, for example, who was appointed professor of the Hochschule der Künste (now Universität der Künste) in what was formerly West Berlin in 1991, embraced the wealth of opportunities available. In an interview in 1995 he observed 'There are certain GDR-specific obstacles that I don't encounter in the West. And I find it wonderful that these are not there' (cit. in Danneberg, 1995a: 108). Goldmann, however, was in the minority amongst east Germany's compositional elite. For many of his compatriots unification brought with it both a loss of status and economic hardship. The rapid privatisation of the east German economy had significant implications for the dissemination of new music. The transformation in 1990 of the state-owned record company VEB Deutsche Schallplatten into the short-lived Deutsche Schallplatten GmbH Berlin resulted in the discontinuation of the GDR's contemporary-music label, Nova. Similarly, composers found themselves without publishers as state-run publishing houses were closed, sold, or, in the case of historic companies, restored to their pre-war status and reunited with their western counterparts.<sup>4</sup> The fate of C.F. Peters Musikverlag is typical in this regard; the absorption of the Leipzig house into the Frankfurt office entailed a curtailing of the eastern end of the business and a subsequent orientation away from the company's support for east German music (Links, 2009: 226-31). Bredemeyer provided a bitter summation of the situation in 1994, remarking that 'the publishing houses have shaken us off as dogs shake off fleas' (cit. in Danneberg, 1995d: 42).

The difficulties engendered by the depressed economy were compounded as east Germany's leading musical institutions adopted an increasingly western profile. The Semperoper in Dresden and the Berlin Staatsoper both appointed west German directors at the start of the 1990s,<sup>5</sup> while a host of international conductors were drafted in to lead east Germany's orchestras: the Danish conductor

Michel Schönwandt was appointed to the Berlin Sinfonieorchester, the Italian Giuseppe Sinopli to the Dresden Staatskapelle and Daniel Barenboim to the Staatsoper all in 1992, while the Spanish conductor, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, who had trained in Munich, took over the Rundfunk Sinfonie two years later. This shift of personnel, which was endemic across the upper echelons of east German society, led among other things to the dissolution of the professional and personal networks upon which artists depend for performances and commissions. In the absence of patrons or advocates, composers were confronted with the prospect of reinventing themselves for the west German contemporary-arts scene. This was an issue even for those who had enjoyed some prominence in the Federal Republic prior to 1989. No longer deemed 'exotic' (Amzoll and Katzer, 2002: 648-9), they were compelled to explore new performance avenues as invitations from traditional routes dried up. The process of starting anew was one on which few of the GDR's senior figures embarked with enthusiasm. As Katzer explained in 1994:

The situation is such that with the switch of the artistic elite in the new federal states, opportunities for performances have become more remote. To put it precisely: many of the directorships have changed. The new directors have naturally brought their own clientele with them. And I cannot be bothered to hawk my pieces around and advertise myself (it would also certainly have little point). (cit. in Danneberg, 1995b: 285)

The practical experience of exclusion prompted a series of common internal tensions that emerge prominently in interviews conducted with east German composers in the 1990s. As is frequently the case with diasporas, the question of what it meant to be east German appears to have assumed greater significance in the 1990s than it had ever done prior to the *Wende*. For those who had remained in the GDR until the end, the past unleashed conflicting and often irreconcilable emotions. Composers reminisce about an environment that was supportive and culturally stimulating but simultaneously corrupt and invalid. There is guilt and resentment towards the GDR – Katzer (1999:

454) speaks of the ‘stigma of complicity’ that east Germans must bear – but also a desire to retain ownership of this past. Kochan, for example, railed bitterly against an identity being imposed on east Germans by the west: ‘You are supposed to have the decency to be ashamed that you were a citizen of the GDR und must now finally be proud and happy to be allowed to live as a free, authentic German in a free, authentic, great German state.’ (cit. in Nauck, 1993: 41)

Underpinning concerns of national identity were those of aesthetic identity. In his study of German exiles in Los Angeles during the Second World War, Ehrhard Bahr (2007: 20) discusses the crisis of continuity experienced by figures such as Brecht and Schoenberg as they struggled to reconcile an aesthetic in which they had believed with the failure of the society that had spawned it. A similar crisis of identity can be observed in the case of east German composers; in particular, the impact of the *Wende* on the continuity of compositional aesthetics was a fraught topic. While certain individuals, notably Matthus and Dittrich, argue that 1989 should not be considered to be a creative landmark (Danneberg, 1995c: 337; 1995e: 169), a claim that in Dittrich’s case can be read as a declaration of aesthetic independence from the GDR, others allude to the sense of loss prompted by the demise of the state. Frequent references are made, in particular, to an aesthetic of resistance that was rendered defunct after 1989 (Ullmann, 1999: 497; Nauck, 1993: 39-40). Katzer describes how the defiant conclusions that had once characterised his compositions became obsolete after the *Wende* (Amzoll and Katzer, 2002: 659). Bredemeyer goes a step further and associates the collapse of the GDR with the failure of an entire genre of political art: ‘If music is an instrument of intervention, in the sense of Eisler [...] then I have to say, very well then. Eisler lost, I too, it doesn’t work any more’ (cit. in Nauck, 1993: 38). From Bredemeyer’s perspective, the *Wende* had removed not only his oppositional force but also his audience: ‘The listeners don’t need it any more, this type of comfort. They have completely new concerns too’ (*ibid*: 39).

## **Diasporic Memory and Memories of East Germany**

James Clifford (1994: 307) distinguishes diasporic from immigrant communities by their relationship with the past. Immigrant communities he argues, 'may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place'. For diasporas, however, the past casts a far lengthier shadow. The collective history of displacement and accompanying nostalgia that defines such diasporic communities significantly delays assimilation into the new nation state. The centrality of nostalgia to diasporic identity has rendered it problematic for scholars in the field of memory studies. Andreas Huyssen (2003: 312) suggests that 'diasporic memory remains seriously understudied, perhaps because it often falls prey to nostalgia, and nostalgia by and large remains a negative category, something to be shunned'. Once a medical term for the physical symptoms of home sickness, nostalgia has come to be perceived as a 'social disease' (Stewart, 1993: 23). It is dismissed by its critics as an escapist and uncritical engagement with the past. Michael Kammen (1993: 688) describes nostalgia as 'essentially history without guilt', while David Lowenthal (1985: 6) classes it as populist and indiscriminate. 'The remembrance of times past', he observes, 'is a burgeoning business in almost every country, and any epoch will do.' Nostalgia is frequently portrayed as the antithesis to rational modernity; it obstructs the narrative of progress, is unironic and sentimental. Charles Maier relates it to memory, 'as kitsch is to art' (cit. in Boym, 2001: xiv). Nadine Attewell (2004: 23) elaborates: 'like kitsch [...] nostalgia is problematic because it is perceived both as insufficiently mediated (that is nostalgia doesn't know enough to be ironic about itself) and altogether too mediated (it's false, a lie, a forgery of desire).'

Such readings of nostalgia, which assume a fixed idealisation of the past, are not particularly helpful in the context of diasporic memory. The diasporic existence is a double-sided one, shaped not only by a shared affinity with the lost homeland but also by a continuously evolving relationship with



the new home. This suspension between two conflicting temporal and cultural spaces results in a fractured and ambiguous diasporic consciousness, a consciousness that reflects the tensions arising not only from the continuous juxtaposition of old and new, but also from the social and emotional ruptures, both positive and negative, that characterise the exilic condition. As Clifford (1994: 312) observes, ‘diasporic consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension’. In contrast to traditional readings of nostalgia, which tend to focus on the phenomenon of *nostos* or returning home, diasporic memory is arguably more concerned with *algia* or longing. Pertinent here is Svetlana Boym’s separation of nostalgic tendencies into two categories, restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia, she argues, ‘evokes national past’ (2001: 49). It ‘stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home.’ Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, is an inherently individual process. It ‘thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately’ (*ibid*: xviii). Restorative nostalgia, like national memory, is concerned with reconstruction, authenticity and tradition. Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, ‘does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home’. Instead it ‘dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity.’ It is ‘ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary’ (*ibid*: 49).

Boym’s distinctions are particularly useful for interpreting the status of the GDR in the post-*Wende* music of east German composers. Nostalgia looms large in this body of work. Bredemeyer and Katzer, in particular, deal repeatedly with themes of loss and longing. Their preoccupation with the past is, however, far removed from the reconstructive conceptions of *Ostalgie*. Allusions to the GDR are neither escapist nor sentimental. Extra-musical metaphors are laden with irony, and while the styles and genres that had characterised East German composition before 1989 continue to dominate, they now betray a cynicism and absence of closure. Ultimately, this is a reflective nostalgia that centres on dislocation rather than any desire to return to a past age. It is a nostalgia that seeks to critique rather than transcend the present.

An early example of this phenomenon can be observed in Katzer's electroacoustic tribute to the end of the GDR, *Mein 1989* (*My 1989*, 1990). One of a number of works commissioned by the Bourges International Festival of Experimental Music in 1990 to commemorate the various revolutions of 1989, *Mein 1989* positions the fall of the Wall not as a unique and radical event. Instead, Katzer's use of the past to contextualise it renders it as simply another stage in a cyclical historical process. The work builds on two of Katzer's earlier compositions, *Mon 1789* (*My 1789*, 1989), ostensibly a commemoration of the French Revolution but also a sharp critique of the revolutionary principles that underpinned the GDR, and *Aide mémoire* of 1983, which charts the course of the Third Reich through a series of sonic nightmares. Drawing on source sounds from the former, and a sizeable excerpt from the latter, *Mein 1989* offers a similarly unheroic narrative of German history. Katzer mourns not for the passing of the GDR, but for the accompanying loss of idealism.

The piece starts, like *Mon 1789*, with a recording of Katzer reading Anaximander's fatalistic comment on the ephemeral order of things: 'The things that are perish into the things from which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time.'<sup>6</sup> This text serves as a précis of the compositional events, which reduce Germany's recent past to a series of interrelated beginnings and ends. Katzer alludes first to the Third Reich, quoting the section from *Aide mémoire* that deals with the final years of the Second World War. Depicted first is the exhilaration of war; rousing speeches by Goebbels and the strains of Liszt's *Les préludes*, which served as the theme to the daily wartime radio bulletin, the *Wehrmachtbericht*, are accompanied by the cheering of crowds. This gives way to sonic portrayals of destruction, loss, and ultimately silence, a *tabula rasa* characterised by sounds of fire crackling, the wind whistling, and a lone, ominous raven. Katzer's imagining of the GDR, which emerges from this abyss, follows a similar trajectory of ascent and decline. Its birth is heralded by a dawn call of blackbirds and Katzer reciting 'all men are equal' from the Declaration of Human Rights. The state's

innocence is undermined almost immediately, however, by a recording of Katzer singing a frail, unaccompanied rendition of the popular nineteenth-century paean to freedom, 'Freiheit, die ich meine'. His voice is interrupted repeatedly by construction noises – an allusion perhaps to the erection of the Wall – and becomes increasingly strangled as the song progresses. It is finally cut short by sounds of confinement and oppression, manifest here through the sonic events of keys jangling and a door slamming shut. The return of the raven and the whistling wind marks the end of the hopes that were invested in the GDR.

Katzer's depiction of the demise of the GDR itself is comical rather than momentous. The juxtaposition of unsynchronised carnival bands in the spirit of Charles Ives captures the undirectional nature of the dissent that characterised 1989. The delusion of the GDR's leaders, meanwhile, is evoked through the inclusion of the recordings of Honecker's ill-fated prophecy that the Wall would still be standing in fifty or even a hundred years, and Mielke's plaintive claim to the East German public in November 1989 that 'I love, I love all [people].' Katzer loops and distorts both statements, reducing their owners to cartoon-like figures of ridicule. The actual fall of the Wall is presented in a similarly unceremonious fashion. The euphoria that accompanied the build-up to the event is palpable in the sounds of jubilant crowds, which are combined with the ominous fate motif from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. This cuts sharply, however, to a far more subdued recording of Katzer whistling the chorus of the spiritual 'Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho'. Notably, the song's revolutionary significance – both in the context of nineteenth-century slavery and the civil rights movement – is undermined by Katzer's low-key performance. He switches from whistling to song for the final line – 'and the walls came tumbling down' – and for the last word of the phrase, substitutes his voice with the unclimactic sounds of bricks falling. The GDR is laid to rest by a chorus of hammering wall peckers or *Mauerspechte* and, subsequently, a return of the windswept *tabula rasa* soundscape. A solitary blackbird tentatively signifies the start of a new era, the uncertainty of which is underlined in Katzer's

final gesture, a play on the word 'liberté'. He stutters over the word as if encountering it for the first time, constructing it gradually from its phonetic components like a child learning to read. His final questioning statement of it suggests a degree of hope but no great confidence in what the future might hold.

### **Blooming Landscapes**

The expectations, however mild, that conclude *Mein 1989* dissipated in the years following unification. A diasporic aesthetic is increasingly pronounced in the early 1990s, colouring not only compositions that deal explicitly with the German situation such as Bredemeyer's *Wendepunkt (Turning Point, 1992)*, but also more oblique explorations of exile. Friedrich Schenker, for example, remarked of his 1992 orchestral piece *... ins Endlose ... (... to infinity ...)*, which was inspired by Kafka's emigration novel *America*: 'images of abrupt change, new beginnings and unrest [...] of people as masses and/or individuals accompanied me and motivated me in my compositional work' (cit. in Mayer, 2010). Perhaps the strongest expressions of a diasporic consciousness can be found in a group of works that use as a reference point Helmut Kohl's notorious proclamation on the occasion of the currency union on 1 June 1990 that 'through our joint efforts, we will soon succeed in restoring Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Saxony, and Thuringia into blooming landscapes where it is worthwhile to live and work' (Kohl, 1990). As this prophecy failed to materialise, the notion of 'blooming landscapes' was seized upon as a metaphor of loss, symbolising not only the defunct GDR, but perhaps more importantly the promised utopias that had failed to materialise both before and after the *Wende*.

These disjunctions are paramount in Reiner Bredemeyer's *Aufschwung OST (Soaring East, 1993)*, a four-movement work for piano and a trio of oboe, percussion and tuba that was premiered at

the Musik-Biennale Berlin in 1993. The work's title functions on two levels. In its literal sense it alludes to Kohl's vision, translating as a soaring or upswing of the east, a sentiment that is countered by Bredemeyer's opening performance direction, 'Leider nicht...' ('Unfortunately not...'). From a musical perspective, it describes the two starkly contrasting sound worlds that are juxtaposed throughout: 'Aufschwung' refers to Robert Schumann's piano piece of the same name from the *Fantasiestücke* op. 12, composed in 1837, which Bredemeyer subjects to 'faithful misuse' to serve as the piano part for the composition; 'OST' is an acronym of the trio of instruments – percussion translating as *Schlagzeug* – , which provide an atonal and often jarring counterpart to Schumann's romanticism. The conflicts implicit in the title are augmented in the cryptic preface to the score. Highlighting Schumann's move from East to West and subsequent madness, Bredemeyer underpins his contemporary relevance in the score with wordplays on Endenich, where Schumann was incarcerated at the end of his life, and on the Federal Republic's claims to sole representation of Germany during the Cold War (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*):

The Zwickauer who went to the West, went, as is well known, insane there (that the proximity of Bonn may have played a role in this is surely speculation). The final, eighth work from his op. 12 is called 'End of the Song' and it should be played 'with good humour'. This presupposes the minor but rare capability for self irony and great artistry; the pianist in the '4 Quartet Pieces' shall also have this requirement. He starts self-governing [*souverän*] but 'Endenich' [ends] claiming sole representation [*alleinvertretungsansprüchig*].

In the score itself, the polarisation of *souverän* and *alleinvertretungsansprüchig* translates into modes of conflict and indifference. Bredemeyer overrides the sonata rondo form of Schumann's original, dividing 'Aufschwung' instead into a repeated binary format that contrasts the stormy rondo theme (A) and the lyrical first episode (B), as illustrated in figure 1. This division of thematic material

results in two distinct levels of engagement between the piano and the trio. In the first and third movements, in which the irascible rondo theme sets the tone, there is constant tension between the two sound worlds. The OST trio contradicts, parodies, and makes various unsuccessful attempts to synchronise with Schumann’s piano part. In the third movement in particular, the oboe and tuba frequently imitate the piano’s gestures and contours. The resulting effect, however, is one of caricature rather than reconciliation, highlighting the chasm between the musical languages of past and present. In the second and fourth movements, this chasm is heightened through a portrayal of indifference. Both movements open with a pensive oboe passage, punctuated by percussion and tuba. Against this, the piano enters unobtrusively with Schumann’s introspective B episode. Its interaction with the trio is minimal; each sphere appears all but oblivious to the other’s existence.

**Figure 1**

Schumann, ‘Aufschwung’, *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12, No. 2

Exposition			Developmen t	Recapitulation		
A	B	A	C	A	B	A
b./1-16	b./17-40	b./41-52	b.53-114	b./115-22	b./123-46	b. /147-54
Mov. 1	Mov. 2	Mov. 3			Mov. 4	

Reiner Bredemeyer, *Aufschwung Ost* – piano part

Like Katzer’s *Mein 1989*, *Aufschwung OST* belongs to a critical aesthetic that long predates the *Wende*. Bredemeyer similarly drew on the canon as a vehicle for registering discontent in works such as *Bagatellen für B.* (*Bagatelles for B.*, 1970) and *Einmischung in unserer Angelegenheit* (*Meddling in our Affairs*, 1985), which quote excerpts by Beethoven and Schubert respectively. *Einmischung*, for example, involves a Perestroika speech by Gorbachev, which is framed by excerpts from ‘Muth!’ from

Schubert's *Die Winterreise*, triumphantly orchestrated to reflect the 'moments of the "Marseillaise"' that Bredemeyer (Bredemeyer and Wollny, 1983: 488) claimed to have discovered in Schubert's piano accompaniment. Any such revolutionary impetus is strikingly absent from *Aufschwung OST*. Following the final statement of Schumann's rondo theme at the end of the fourth movement and the failure of any synthesis to emerge between the piano and the trio, the pervading atmosphere is one of despondence. Günter Olias (1995: 85) notably describes the final series of questioning sustained notes and lengthy intermittent pauses, in which the trio ultimately subsumes the piano, as an expression of 'defiant pained resignation'.

The changing dimensions of Kohl's 'blooming landscapes' emerge particularly clearly in three compositions by Katzer: *Offene Landschaft mit obligatem Ton e*, (*Open Landscape with an Obligato Pitch e*, 1990) for chamber orchestra; *Landschaft mit steigender Flut* (*Landscape with Rising Tide*, 1992), for orchestra and tape; and *Les paysages fleurissants* (*Blooming Landscapes*, 2001) for four-channel tape. The first of these, like *Mein 1989*, captures the equivocal emotions that dominated in the immediate aftermath of the *Wende*. Katzer explained that the pervasive E pitch, which acts as a leitmotif throughout the piece, could be interpreted variously 'as expectation [Erwartung], as unity [Einheit], as termination (of the GDR) [Ende (der DDR)]' (Fuhrmann, 2005). The second piece is equally ambiguous but deals with nostalgia and disappointment rather than hope. It opens with natural water sounds, which evoke the sinking of the Atlantis of the Baltic Sea, Vineta, the demise of which, according to legend, was brought about by the depravity of its citizens. The water references allude not only to the failures of the past. Katzer (Amzoll and Katzer, 2002: 659-60) asserts a second impetus for the piece in the wave or 'flood' of right-wing radicalism that overwhelmed East Germany in 1992.

The most provocative of Katzer's works in this vein is *Les paysages fleurissants*, which is dedicated to 'all shareholders'. A sardonic response to Kohl's economic predictions for the East, the programme note delineates the trajectory of the piece as follows:

The labours of the beginning, the continual frustrations, the relapse to beautiful melancholy, resignation, silence – . But then the redeeming bell, a rise in the stock exchange, progress is booming, greedily devouring itself, accompanied by a triumphant, resounding, 16-foot Laudate! Laudate! (Katzner, 2001)

The composition is constructed from two source sounds: a recording of an aging truck engine, which Katzner wryly describes in the programme note as a ‘modern symbol of trade and prosperity’; and a synthetic 16-foot organ pipe, which sounds a three-note phrase emulating the contours of the word ‘Laudate’. The work opens to the strains of the truck engine trying and repeatedly failing to start. For the first four minutes, as this source is subjected to various transformations, the soundscape is one of tension, rupture, and ultimately lackadaisical surrender as the choking gestures become increasingly intermittent. The second section of the piece opens similarly. This time, however, the engine stutters into action, its laborious success accompanied by repeated statements of ‘Laudate’. Notably, the low resonant pitch of the latter produces an effect that is far from triumphant; the chugging and disjointed sounds arising from the engine do not warrant any such elation. In the final moments of the piece the engine cuts out entirely giving way to a silence that is broken only by two final ‘Laudate’ statements. Distorted and descending in pitch, these speak of ironic failure.

Boym has observed that ‘at its best, reflective nostalgia can present an ethical and creative challenge’ (2001: xviii). Certainly, the shadow cast by the GDR in post-*Wende* compositions makes for uncomfortable listening. The defunct state exists not in the evocative and universalising symbols that have come to be associated with the variants of the past narrated by *Ostalgie* and totalitarianism, but in modes of loss and irony. The works share not the unifying tendencies of collective memory but the more fractured tropes of individual remembering that are borne of the diasporic experience. For disenfranchised and alienated East German composers, reflective nostalgia represents a means of engaging critically with their political environment; compositional memories of the GDR mediate the



often stark chasm that exists between individual experience and the undifferentiated nationalizing narratives of past and present that have dominated in post-unification Germany. Ultimately, the irreconcilability of these spheres has resulted in an aesthetic that is characterised by displacement and disillusion. As Katzer recently observed, even ‘if there naturally can be no return – the hopes that I, as an artist and composer, placed in the *Wende* have been disappointed’ (Königsdorf, 2009).

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## 1Notes

There is no evidence that Brandt ever actually made this statement. See Rother (2000).

2 Issued by Deutsche Musikrat in conjunction with Red Seal SONY/BMG Music Entertainment.

3 Katzer (Amzoll and Katzer, 2002: 655) recalls that except in cases where controversial texts were used, 'composing in the GDR was never really dangerous'.

4 In contrast to East German writers, few composers had established links with West German publishing houses prior to 1989.

5 Christoph Albrecht was appointed to the Semperoper in 1991 and Georg Quander to the Berliner Staatsoper in 1992. The Leipzig Oper was unique in its decision to appoint the east German composer Udo Zimmerman as director in 1991. The musical director, appointed in 1990, however, was the west German Lothar Zagrosek.

6 Translated in Cohen *et al* (2011:13). Katzer reads from Nietzsche's German translation.