

Eisler Residency Experience Report

I began my residence delayed in June due the pandemic situation in spring 2020. It was very stressful to live one day at a time waiting for travelling restrictions to dissolve, as I had already remained on a leave from my university lecturer position in Finland since April to travel to Leipzig. When I finally arrived to Eisler Haus, the pandemic situation seemed very calm, although many concerts and events were naturally cancelled, and I never quite got to know the new music scene in the city.

I find it important for a young composer – especially for someone coming from a geographically isolated country such as Finland – to travel and gain experience from different cultural environments and diverse trends internationally. Artists residencies are a great way to do this, and I find Eisler Residency Program one of the best residency programs I've ever participated in. However, it takes a lot of resources to support culture and music (performances, residencies, education etc.) in such an extent, and it is a valid question to ask, why should we keep on doing so especially in these globally challenging times: Practicing music, performing, and listening to music is an activity, that deepens the emotional life and requires sensitivity. Music and arts in general relate to understanding others, encountering otherness, and feeling empathy. Educating a holistic humanity requires effort and resources and in all this, music and arts play a very important role. In this time of global distress, we need empathy and unity more than ever. I hope that when we finally overcome this universal lockdown, culture and arts will recover again as well.

During my stay in Leipzig, I got very sick, which naturally affected my working. I was forced to travel back to Finland before the premiere of my new work for Ensemble Avantgarde and I never got to participate in rehearsals and make final adjustments to balance or details. Obviously getting sick together with the pandemic, my stay in Leipzig fell short in some sense. However, it did help me to redefine myself as a composer and as an artist: Eisler felt that modern music was elitist and difficult for the listener to appreciate and understand, so he had an inner conflict with this ideology and his musical aesthetics (being at least in parts complex, atonal and serialist). He wanted 'high art' to be also useful, so composing for film and documentary in serialist style made his more difficult musical ideas also accessible for wider audiences. My music has no premises of being for mass audiences and I'm not so concerned whether I'm in marginal or not, but this shouldn't translate as to superiority over and condescendence towards the audience and being immune to feedback, criticism and learning new ways to express oneself. A failure to compose a polished piece for one of the most appreciated ensembles in Europe is evidently frustrating for any composer, let alone for someone only in the

beginning of their career – a missed opportunity, at the very least. It made me want to take a step back and look at my working methods in new perspective. My way of working needs a lot of iterations, first iteration being intuitive and having a very little to do with precision, for example in notation. The second iteration is concerned with aesthetics, as I challenge my intuitive ideas and treat them with a lot of criticism in the sense of being able to communicate ideas and emotions and forming a believable dramaturgic development. In the third iteration I translate my ideas to others via notation and other performance notes. When any of these doesn't come to be, the result is not a complete finalized piece of art, but merely an idea of something that "could be". What happens when one fails to go through their creative process as whole for whatever reason; Should premieres be delayed? Maybe edit out all that is not polished? Bury the piece after one performance and pretend it never happened? After returning to Finland, I decided to keep on working with my piece that got premiered in Leipzig. I hope to result something more relatable to audience without being banal: Something that has relevance even after the premiere.

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