

count continues by representing, here on the brink of the abyss of modernity, an untroubled human subject, seeing and seen in classical perspective, in a world where things were as they appeared, God in His place and man in his. These perspectives have, of course, changed irrevocably. As his contribution to the great destabilization, Saussure began to ask not just what, but how, things mean. With Charles Peirce's work on the interpretation and classification of signs, linguists and philosophers began to apply Saussure's innovations to all arenas of communication, or, in Peirce's phrase, to all "sign systems."⁶³

The result of these investigations was to call forever into question the idea that language and languages are innocent, our servants, that things are necessarily the way they appear. In both direct and indirect ways, the people we have been discussing grappled with these issues, particularly as they related to the sign systems of music.

In the first chapter we discussed how, up to the present, musical discourse has stayed somewhat clear of these semiotic currents. Questions about musical identity have taken precedence over thinking of music in social spheres, and in social communication. And although attention to technology, microtonal composition, chance operations, and the problems of inaccessibility are all very important issues, their priorities reflect a real resistance to semiotic inquiry.⁶⁴

This is not mere stubborn reaction, however; as with the *Deserter* example, we have seen some of the complications that have arisen in relation to music and meaning. The fact is that music resists semiotic elaboration more than most modes of communication. In music the link between signifier and signified is not direct or causal, as in many other systems. *T-a-b-l-e* may be a completely arbitrary sign for the object it represents, but long usage and the immemorial naming functions of human language make the sign comprehensible. But the image, the kind of table these letters bring to mind suddenly opens up a great space. This being the case with such a concrete concept, the vastness of, say, a C-major triad, becomes quite daunting. This is not to say that music is not a signifying system. Western musical notation is a rational, comprehensible system of signs, whether one can read the music or not. But grafted onto this denotative plane