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By Howard Slater

Howard Slater on Walter Marchetti's *De Musicorum Infelicitate*.

Several pianos play at once. Or. A piano is recorded several times on several channels. The outcome: ten variations, that could be the same variegated variation, play at a similar tempo to add up to an object of music, a prism of discontinuity. Of course the ear plays tricks that build an auricular drive from this source of several variegated pianos. Their acentric disjointedness – a clumsy collapsing piano making mad meaning – can be rationalised by searching out the high and the low notes, and separating the blurring low end from the too brittle high end, the muffled from the pristine. We are mocked, especially when we look for rhythms, for the anchor of repetition or for the classical classifications of jazz, by our low self-esteem. Music could be more than the customary words, phrases, syntax and hierarchical knowledge of any reviewer. It could be less; it could no longer be music anymore, it could be coruscating self-criticism, anti-composition, tomfoolery. As a matter of course the trade in objects, even immaterial ones like sounds, requires its mediators, its value-addedness. But here, music, a commodity pure and simple, implies the fall from its own institutional pedestal, its econometric ruse, its habitualness. What listening to it results in, aside from an auricular drive that can gladly inhabit this layered and loping form until it reveals its spaces and light, is that any object is soluble. Music either de-professionalises, and we play it from 'scratch', or it moves further and further away from us to communicate back at us as dollars and pence, reviews and needs.

Howard Slater's recent text 'Towards Situation' is available from 89 Vernon Road, Stratford, London E15 4DQ.