WZ: The experience I had, listening to the gamelan evening, even if it wasn't the best played gamelan, was again this music wiped out all these composer souls sitting around, because it had this power, and I thought about what this power is, and maybe it was that these people who played this music together, showed us a collective experience, which is the most opposite form of creativity to what we do. We all felt wiped out. So maybe a question I might ask would be what, facing these beautiful sounds on this earth, played by non-virtuoso groups, what DO we have to do as these damn individualistically minded people, still hanging around here in Darmstadt? Everybody showing his own theory and ...
This was the thing with that gamelan music, proved that music goes much better with more people participating. It's an end to the western mind.

KV: Is this something you'd like to achieve, then?

WZ: It's paradise. At the same time, I'm a damned individual myself.

KV: This is the old problem that I talked about before - the European composer's sense of himself as Meister, having to be in control ...

WZ: Also you have to form schools in order to be reachable ... not to be reached just through yourself, but having a lot of students to fake you, or mimic you. There's this kind of left over ... It worked in a time where the individual didn't ask himself to be original, be different from others. He worked in a time when cultures were bound, when this question was not asked. When having students and people around oneself meant to deliver a tradition to younger generations. So he didn't deliver himself, he just delivered what was given to him, so he just handed it over.
Now it's become so krampfhaft.
You know, like some cases here. People so full of tension. You don't have to listen to their music, just look at their faces. They're victims, I would say. An epitome of the Western mind. A kind of mannerism of notation is all that's left with them, because their ears left them years ago.

KV: I must say I didn't expect this strong conservative and competitive element here.

WZ: Yes, as John Rea said this morning, Darmstadt was always like South Cologne, now people tend to say it's North Freiburg.

Maybe it has to be like that to provoke all the other activities. Maybe one fool has to stand there and read all the scores and try to get their aesthetics to as many corners of the Darmstadt schoolroom. But I would rather ... [indicates the scores of Feldman's string quartet laid out on the floor of his studio, analysed with many coloured markers] ... look at this colourful piece. The co-existence of many colours, I think these are the schools of the future. To let different aesthetics exist next to each other and don't try to fight for a school which dominates and build in reverse a ghetto. Here's the power and there's the ghetto. Both work together like hand in hand. I think this is not necessary. It takes more courage I would say from an organiser to let things just happen ...

KV: I think that was the idea this year, to have as many different people as possible.

WZ: But still there's a control. 'Cause all the scores are selected by ONE composer. One of the many. But there is a counter-current which at least tries to get heard.
Or those who have the courage to do the non-academic. Like Tom Johnson, he had a certain courage to do these kind of predictables, these obvious things he presented - sequences or logical sequences, I don't know what he called them - but exactly with that obvious thing that he did, he killed the nerve of criticism of most of the composers sitting there. Because there're composers who just wait to listen to every piece and find something where they can ... like a little niche for their criticism, they couldn't find it there because it was all ... just there. It just hit them. Because in that moment he was very original and very much himself, because he didn't pay any attention to these expectations of the ghost of Darmstadt.

KV: I think Chris Newman's work functions in a similar way.

WZ: Yes, but some of it I still find aggressive, which indicates a dependance ...

KV: Having completed the LOKALE MUSIK project, where have you moved on to?

WZ: Right now, I'm just finishing another cycle called STERNWANDERUNG. I don't know if it's a good title. It has two sub-cycles, FLECHTWERK and SPIELWERK which again consist of three pieces each. There, where LOCAL MUSIC concentrated on a place and tried to compose the ... spiritual going away ... I mean, a sublimation of the space, using techniques to go more and more into the distance from these melodies, in this new piece, I try out a ... nomadic technique ...

wandering, you know, and so I developed a kind of harmonic ... changes. (I would never say "system"). It's very flexible. I would call it non-centred tonality, where I try to wander between tonalities and keep all the tonalities in balance to each other, so that no tonality is really ... too much grounded. There's no preference [given] to any of the tonalities. But at the same time, it avoids to be atonal. It has a certain centredness, but it's not really modal. It shifts. And these shifts are done with some techniques which I don't want to explain. They're a little too complicated on the one hand, and it's superfluous, I would say ...
I also try to re-create a music which is beyond my individual will-power, so to speak. Which you find in some baroque music, or in this gamelan music, where you have this feeling there is some logic to the music which really gives you good vibrations, so I work with a certain logic, but I'm avoiding at the same time to be Messianic about it, to say to other people: this is a system. I think this was the mistake, starting with Schoenberg, people always wanted to create mysteries and convince the whole world that they've found the truth. In fact it works, in a Christian society, everything works which is Messianic, because Jesus already said to his twelve men, go to the whole world and tell the truth. And so in a Christian society, this kind of thinking is very ... affecting, er, contagious. So I am avoiding to talk about what I've found. Some people have already said I should write it down and they want to know, but ... then they read the article and then they throw it in the waste basket. They read it and they say, "Oh another theory." chuck. So that's why I don't want to to to to to open up there. I also think it points the listener in a wrong direction, because it's not important how I made it, it's only important how it sounds. This is the Darmstadt syndrome: to know how it's made, and then throw it in the waste basket. It's not a real experience of the sound. Of what the sound tells you. So when I refuse to say anything about it, the people have to deal with the sound, they have to understand the sound. And if I say something they only try to understand the theory. This is why Darmstadt in this concept that people draw something on the blackboard and then you have listen to the piece, is old-fashioned.

KV: This represents a change from your earlier approach ...

WZ: I was a little, ja, pushy in that way, yeah. The ideal is Christian Wolfe who FORGETS while he composes what he wanted to do in the beginning. He never could tell anybody how he ... I think he's more concerned with the actual doing of it, than with trying to defend himself with the actual system ...

KV: On the way here, Ernst-Albrecht Stiebler was talking about Deutsche Unsicherheit [German insecurity], especially after the Second World War, how everything has to be justified, that there must be a rule, system, a logic to justify what one does. I think, though, this tiefe Unsicherheit [deep insecurity] is more general ...

WZ: Everybody does it, somehow, without exception. Even Wolfgang Rihm, who says in his remark in Musiktexte that only Ich-schwache Personen gehen nach Darmstadt [only I-weak (ego-weak) people go to Darmstadt]. That's probably the reason I didn't see him the last five days ... All justifications of being in Darmstadt or not being in Darmstadt, or why being in Darmstadt and not liking it, you know, it all has to do with personality or looking for something ... It's natural. It includes me and you, too. We all try to ...be originals. I mean, this is a certain force, this is the force of individualism. That's why I think this gamelan was so out of place here, because in this circus of individualism, it showed this beauty maybe only arises when more people work together and surrender ...
I think that one has to try to surrender with each technique he finds which is not ego ... which he finds that is GIVEN to him. One has to go, probably more ... deal with paradoxes. (I don't know if I said that clear enough). If you compose, maybe you should find techniques which liberate you as a composer, rather than reinforce that individualism. Cage did that in the extreme, but ... I think maybe these overdoses of doing this may be, after the war, a reaction to German academicism.
But we don't need this any more. We don't need this overdose of originality or overdose of reaction or idiosyncracy. Because beauty comes from somewhere else. It's this fatal thing, that beauty arises if there's no ... will, and no tension and no ... if exactly these things are away, then maybe there's coming beauty. It's like if I forget something and try to find it. If I TRY to find it, I never will.

KV: This links up with the whole problem of technique, the delicate balance that is needed between having technique and becoming a victim of it. You don't want to talk about technique, yet the younger composers here are thirsty for some technique, to make a beginning ...

WZ: Yes, you have to work with it, and then from a certain time, work against it. At a certain point, free yourself from it and forget it. I do think fantasy comes in the most when you have limitations, when you have a ground to refer to. And it's not a limitation, it's ... some sort of ground, where don't just sit, you try to fly, of course, and try to get independant of it. But you need it to jump off from, and

if you don't have anything to jump off, you'll never experience flying. [Laughter]

KV: But I think there are more subtle pressures, for example, the feeling that you must exploit all your possibilities, that you must complete the cycle. Those lurking assumptions about what distinguishes a professional composer from an amateur ...

WZ: But I do the opposite, I try not to let the listener close the cycle. I like to have it open. I like to not show the secrects - not have it too obvious. I try to play with a certain anonymity of techniques I'm working with.

KV: Why?

WZ: Why ... ha. To guarantee that the attention focusses more on the sound than the structure.

KV: This is the opposite in intent to Tom Johnson, who would like you to focus on the structure.

WZ: He said yesterday, he avoids the prime numbers, because their logic does not seem to be too obvious. I'm using the prime numbers and only the prime numbers, because of that. It's not true there's no order in prime numbers. There's a computer graph of millions of prime numbers that are reduced to a small picture and ordered in a spiral around the middle, and you see there's a strict order in the way they unfold, but you can't perceive it, because as a human being you don't have the mind to grasp that. And this is exactly why I'm using prime numbers. (Now we're talking about what I'm using). Something which also fascinates me are magic squares. Actually I found a magic square which consists of the first 144 prime numbers, and which fits exactly in the twelve by twelve field of tones that I'm working with. The field of tones is very ordered, the Pythagorean and the Chinese cycle of fifths, and so you have a field of tone relations of order, against a maximum disorder like in the magic squares. This gives me ways, the ways I jump between the tonal fields. And so I have the jumps which I have to work with. This is the kind of nomadic situation where I go from on place to the other, but I have to work with this. There's a tension, a polarity, and with this polarity ... there comes fantasy, in that moment. You work with it.

KV: So the technique formalises the compositional problem, and you have to ...

WZ: Solve it, yes.

It's very simple. It's like a craft, without making it into a law. That's the mistake Hindemith made. He made himself laws, and he followed them, and then his music started to freeze - become rigid. This is the problem with a lot of composers, they think if they've found a system, they've found themselves.
The pity is with the Darmstadt school, nobody ever provided a real listening ... listening in that sense. They all were satisfied if they found out the row, or any system, then they were satisfied. Aha!... then they went to the next room. This is stupid.

KV: I think earlier on, although there was a lot of talk about technique, the sound was still very exciting for composers, but this does seem to have been lost sight of.

ZM: But I think this is more a problem of the self--understanding of the composer. His ego is always in the way. Because he thinks if he doesn't express his theories, he will get drowned in that mass of composers around. But exactly this decision forbids his success - his success with himself. But at the same time, we have to live with these paradoxes, because everybody asks us, please, write a short programme note, and write this, and try and explain the piece. Hommel asked me five minutes ago to write a short programme note for Sunday. Maybe I made a mistake again.
Because I delivered something I'd already decided not to deliver. I thought because this was Darmstadt, I could give a quote from Handke, or whatever. So I did another mistake.
What I read yesterday was very interesting, in Musiktexte there was a translation of a talk between Cage and Feldman - excerpts. And the mediator said at one point that Feldman's talking around, trying to go around and not really pinpointing it, he says is very Talmudic. It's a meditation, a meditation of non-focussing. To provide as much space to go beyond language. Cage is more Zen in that sense that he discovers always new objects. So he's like the inventive person who just looks at it, then leaves it. And not trying to make something of what he discovered. These are both very essential meditative techniques of how to perceive music.
I think Feldman knows very much what he's doing, but he's clever enough not to tell anything. 'Cause he knows exactly when he tells a word too much, they would pinpoint him down. Of course, it's also clever, because he mystifies it. That's why I'm demystifying his score here. But I'm not doing an analysis here.

KV: Of course, if he told what he did, it's apparently so simple, someone else would try and do the same thing and .... it wouldn't work.
[WZ] it wouldn't work. [in chorus]

WZ: It can't work because his decisions as he composes ... I'm sure they're so minute, they can't be spoken about. You can't just write them down as AABB. Even if you discover that he inverts certain things, it's not everything. We can say it from a very simple point of view, and say, oh, he just inverts this and puts that two hours later again ...

KV: I think it's a question of intent. I was at the big de Kooning retrospective in Paris, and I think there must be a similarity in the way they work. It's clear that he lived with the material inside him and he tries things out. Particularly as the paintings got later and later, it was more like: I try this, and I try that. And if Feldman said he did ABBA or something, it would look like a structure, and this would be misleading. It's rather that he tries this again, then he tries that. There's a gentleness about it. There's an inconclusiveness about it. There's an inconclusiveness, so that if you tried to formalise or categorise it, it would be a complete lie.

WZ: Feldman has the word "metaphor". He builds "metaphors". Like in that piece PIANO by Feldman, he talks even that this piece is a metaphor of a fugue. This is also funny, but it tells that he dissolves things that he found. His technique, if you want to call it [a name] is like disintegration. It's destruction, or let's say ...

KV: ... dissolution.

WZ: Yeah, it exactly goes against what a composer wants to do normally.

KV: In what direction do you see your own music tending? Earlier on you were very concerned with ... say, in Beginner's Mind, with going from one island to another, like going from one state through a second ... to another state. It was ...

WZ: ... very idealistic.

KV: ... and cathartic.

WZ: ... and very old-fashioned.

KV: You don't seem to be working in that way these days.

WZ: I still ... try to ... connect ... many things in me. I'm not at a point where ... change ... discover ... Feldman helps me, let's say, to get a little strength in my own thinking, because it seems to be so opposed to what is around me. Like Beckmann. We have a lot of Beckmanns -

German expressionist paintings and German expressionist music. If there's anything German then it's that. At the same time, I find it's disgusting. Feldman said a very nice thing about that, he said, for Beckmann it's enough to paint a man without a leg. [Laughter] At the same time, I like Matisse, you know, especially the late ones. The greatest art, almost. And I read recently in a catalogue about Matisse, that Beckmann really didn't like Matisse. He said this was almost like cigarette advertisements. And so through that I understand that this is two cultural ... two ways of expression. So I don't know, I'm sitting here in the midst of these Beckmaenner, this Beckmann music ... these scores painted almost black, these dense ugly sounds ... I feel so alienated to these people, and I yet talk the same language. That's why Feldman in his extreme helps me. It's such another world. It comes basically from that fact that composition has more to do with leaving things out. So that's still what I try to learn.
At the same time there're forces in me, of course - one wants to be a musician, and play, you see, and then write music for other people to play, and so then this aspect of virtuosity comes in - That's why Ferneyhough is so played here, because it's like the Olympics. If one jumps two metres high, the next day he wants to jump two metres and five high, and the only composer who allows the performer to do that is Ferneyhough. Where I allow the performer to run under the ... er ...

KV: ...under the bar. [Laughter]
This is an attitude which reminds me of Feldman's grandmother, who apparently told him that his aim in life should be to: know everything, do nothing!
I would call this a very lyrical philosophy ...
Would you say that your interest lies in restoring the lyrical side of German culture? That seems to have got lost on the way, somehow ...

WZ: Yes, I don't find it. I mean , this is the problem. I either have to listen to Debussy or Ravel or ... or then go back to the nineteenth century. I think Wagner destroyed a lot ...

KV: Perhaps the decline of lyricism is connected with the rise of professionalism in performance. Liszt had a lot to do with that. I'm also inclined to associate Liszt with the birth of modernism. Composition for composition's sake. The late pieces, where technical innovation takes on a life of it's own - is self-perpetuating ... THIS is why we have some of the problems we have here today ... The emphasis has shifted, so it's more a question of finding the next technical innovation, rather than the next spiritual innovation.

But do you feel optimistic about music, despite what you feel about your isolation?

WZ: I am by nature an optimist, I can't think otherwise. I can't allow myself to be a pessimist.

KV: You see, in a sense, I've found that the isolation I've experienced in South Africa - not being performed there very much - and having no other composers I can talk with, has made it easier to be optimistic about music, today. There's nothing to interfere with what you're doing. It may be a fool's paradise. I find the idea of just being a composer who simply writes music, very attractive.

WZ: This is a very complicated problem, because, of course, I would also like to live on an island, with nobody around, and just be competely inspired by the waves and all that, but at the same time it wouldn't take long before I feel completely isolated. I think a composer needs a certain ... group. Only a few people are strong enough. Even Harry Partch, who lived so far away from Europe was dependant on it. He always bitched about the European historical ... but then he could live there because he really built up a kind of a counterculture ... with his instruments and ...
But at the same time, it sounds strange, but I also feel a certain social responsibility. I had a time about ten years ago when I thought of emigrating, but ... I can't explain it. I still feel rooted here. This is something where I'm really helpless, because I can't change that fact. That I grew up in a village with a very kind of arcadian situation, especially after the war, there was this kind of strange optimism and also not too rich yet. You know the first five years of my life were very basic, in that sense. Maybe this is one ... that I have a really arcadian illusion about my early youth, and there was a big rupture when I went to highschool in the city. Maybe this is why I fight such a lot ... and this is a little dangerous, because it almost could look like I'm fighting for something which was finally destroyed through the war, never to come back.
Whereas the Beckmaenner here, express their rage or ... what do they express? I don't know.

KV: [Laugh] Maybe also their alienation.

WZ: But you had courage when a few years ago when you started this project with your ethnological research and composition. What was the resonance on that?

KV: Oh fantastic. There're two kinds of response. One is ... we had a national conference of music, and the most prominent composer locally, stood up and denounced me by

name for a solid five minutes, for my lack of integrity, technique, said I was a cultural bandit, and so on. I've never known that happen anywhere to anyone. And on the other hand, the audience response we've had in concerts has been wonderful.

WZ: Did you have the feeling it changed anything in the relation of black people to white? On a small level, I mean.

KV: Possibly on a small level. Certainly it seems to strengthen the optimism of the white people who want to see change. I think (or I hope, at least) that some people see it as symbolic of a situation we hope to achieve. A new culture. So the response is very emotional. Quite a few people told me they were in tears.

WZ: Do you have black listeners also?

KV: A couple only. I haven't managed to get to the black communities yet. I think I have a responsibility to take this music to black states. But it's difficult even to get a performance together in my own town.

WZ: But the official opinion on composers, you're like an outsider, too ... ? They hold to this kind of ...

KV: Oh yes. The radio station has just offered me a commission for a piece (for orchestra, even) but less than two minutes long. That was the condition. [Laughter]
I wrote a piece - Leaping Dance - but that turned out to be eight minutes, so I didn't submit it. [Laughter]

WZ: I don't know this yet. We must get it performed here.

KV: It's being done on Monday. It's being broadcast by the Hessische Rundfunk.

WZ: Can you in a way, conclude your experiences you had with African music, in a sense of structural ... inventions. I mean, features like hocketting ... this is obvious, but but hocketting is the result of social playing, right? Playing together.

KV: Well, that's also a basic principle of the music. That each player plays as different, as complementary a part to the next player as possible. But it must make sense. It must work together, of course. So if you played:

I would play:

WZ: Working together in being different. Without anybody giving a rule. The rule is unspoken - just inherent in the people. That's where we could go back to Darmstadt. If everyone invited here could be left completely equal ... there could grow here fantastic things. But this is like allowing the revolution to happen for two weeks.
Because in these pieces the voices are completely independant of each other and at the same time they're dependant. Just the identity of social process and musical structure. I don't know, can one say that? Or is this too simplified?

KV: Oh, according to John Blacking at least, some groups definitely see the musical structure as representative of their social structure. It's very important. It's important for the well-being of the society that they do the music - as an expression of the unity of the society. You see, the important thing in African society seems to be to make bonds, and to retain bonds in the society. The desire to be different, to stand out from society, or the desire for personal wealth is looked upon in some groups as a sign of a weak character. So the music is the same. It's bonded, interdependant.
It's also wonderfully extravagant. For example, in Nyanga panpipe music, each player only has a few notes - three or four - and each player plays a note, sings a note, and breathes (on a rest). And these all combine to make up a fast moving and rich chordal music, of voices and instruments. In some other panpipe groups, each player has only one note.

WZ: And how many people play together?

KV: Oh, up to fifty people, with the women singers. You can imagine what it must sound like in the open in the country. A great living pipe-organ. And playing in the middle, each person has a different experience of the music. You can't make a decent recording of it.
I thought it would be nice to try and extend this principle to an orchestra. But the problem is the orchestra players ...

WZ: Yes, you will face immense problems there. I had the experience with LAENDLER TOPOGRAPHIEN - the first part,

especially, where they only had to play simple notes, and then wait. But an extreme example is John Cage's QUARTETS. You know that piece? Where always only four people play together and it's always different. And they always only play one sound, and this sound has silence before and afterward. So this means it's completely naked. And they played HORRIBLE. The intonation was ... painful.
And this is very interesting with orchestra musicians who, in a certain way, represent Western society ...

KV: They represent more the factory.

WZ: But ... and they want to play out, and they can't play out ... and instead they have to contribute little mosiac stones ... they FAIL. Because they don't see any value in that.
This fantastic feeling one has from gamelan music, where everyone contributes ... THIS is something that musicians have to be trained in ... and not playing like crazy for twelve hours - this showing-off music. This concept of virtuosity is like ... acid rain, you know, the rain that kills trees.

KV: Yes, of course in this panpipe music, everyone has to be a virtuoso, because they dance fairly complex rhythms over those they are playing. It's a very different kind of virtuosity. A lot of African music is far more difficult for the individual performers than Western ensemble music. And it requires years of rehearsals.
Actually it's interesting to discover amongst new music players, that they can't play repeat patterns, or even regular beats.

WZ: [Laughs] Maybe one can conclude that a virtuoso is not necessarily a good musician. That they hide a lack of basic musicianship ...

KV: I've found early music specialists the best for rhythmic precision. In fact, it's happened that I'm the one who was shouted at for not being precise enough. They also have much better ears than new musicians, on the whole. Their instruments demand it. And a better sense of pulse.

WZ: I know. There's this new music fallacy of progress. Like the emperor's clothes. This illusion of enriching the notation to the point of ... this is the <u>cul de sac</u>. This is the end. It doesn't go further. This is the problem, if you stop [doing this], it's NOT turning back. That's the problem they always have - this illusion of turning back. They're always afraid they miss something in the progress of society if their music becomes transparent again, and if their

notation becomes simple pulses again. This Western concept of time, you know, is rotten.
If the notation is transparent, the musician is asked for different things. Their musicality has to come into play again, which means ... a lot of minor things which can't be notated. Which only can arise from a score which doesn't pinpoint every fragment of a second, what to do. The musician becomes a slave of the score.

KV: Yes, I agree. And there are many new things to explore. I think the precision with which, say, Musica Antiqua Koeln play even straight crotchets, is very new. We haven't heard anything quite like this before. The incredibly strict control of tempo, to elicit a very precise dramatic or structural or emotional effect. Where a tempo change - it can be very small - is used to such great effect ... In new music we've been so saturated with tempo changes, so they have no meaning any more, it becomes impotent.

WZ: It becomes ornament. As soon as the connotation of the language breaks down, what is left is a kind of ornamental sound. It's the same with tempo. If the tempo loses its meaning, it becomes just a thing to play with. I like tempo changes where you feel the proportion, you know, where you sit like on a new niveau, on a new level. And it means something and it's so rich. What is this jumping up and down like a wild monkey, anyway?

KV: In many ways, the invention of the metronome was unfortunate.

WZ: Yes, it's the same with the clock - you lose your ability to sense time. When the metronome came in, the tempo was already losing its connotations. It became a moment of control. Intellectual control rather than judgement.
That's why baroque music is interesting in this ... the musician has to find the right tempo.

KV: And the instrument plays such a big role. In this way, it's similar to African music. The instrument has such a strong influence on the style of performance. (That is, if you're a serious baroque musician). So it's a materialist approach to music, rather than conceptualist.

WZ: Also the composer is present in the music and at the same time he's not present. There's a certain anonymity on the side of the composer, who delivers this piece of music. That's the refreshing part of it. That you never feel pushed by anybody. You can enter the score freely.

KV: Yes, and there's a wonderful balance between passion and design.

WZ: Craft. A carefulness and respect. This is the difference between Bach and some of the music you hear here. He was devoted to the material he worked with. And he wrote for God, not for Darmstadt. No wonder his work is so good. [Laughter]
I think we're touching a ground where we should stop talking. Maybe we should stop ... because this is a space where everybody should have his ... space of privacy ... that ... perhaps he should not be too clear about.
I like music where the composer saves me for the time of the piece from himself. Where I have the feeling that he's stepped back from the piece to let other people enter. And I think this is a real art. And it's not easy. I think I'm not succeeding yet. It's one of the most difficult things. It needs time.