

**ESSAY****Electric Bass Improvisations on Engels***İlker İsabetli*

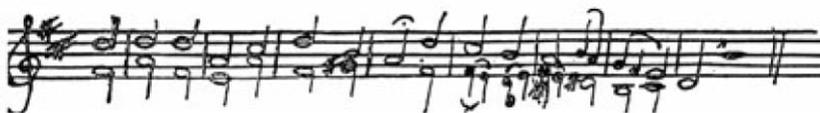
**M**USICOLOGIST MARK LINDLEY (2010) TRIES to answer the question “If Marx and Engels had written a comprehensive article about aesthetics, what would it have said about music?” mainly on the basis of letters of Engels. Engels often writes about his interest in music, his curiosity and even his amateur composition exercises in his letters especially written during his youth.

In my musical work, I focused on one of Engels' composition exercises which is based on the first two lines of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”<sup>1</sup> (*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*) (see Figure 1), in my musical work. The composition is quite sincere and in line both with the spirit of its time and the basic standards of classical Western music. The tonal structure and tensions are at an acceptable level, rhythmically it arouses a 'marching' feeling and the harmony of the dyads used with this rhythmic feeling are all reasonable. On the other hand, Engels sincerely confesses that he could write only dyads, and thus the polyphony is still quite difficult for him. Nevertheless, his enthusiasm for music is obvious. him to analyze the composition of these musical pieces. In another letter he also tells his younger brother Herman Engels that he still regularly works on compositions and songs (ibid.).

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1. “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” is one of the hymns written and composed by Martin Luther and used also by composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach Felix Mendelssohn in their works.

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**Figure 1.** First two lines of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” composed by Engels (Engels quoted in Lindley 2010).

I thought for a while about this musical material and decided to consider it as an achievement of Engels' sincerity. The shadow of Engels never left me alone while working on his composition exercise which belongs to one of the two most influential figures that have changed the world. I should confess that I have tried to follow the same kind of sincerity.

First, I have tried to follow the harmonic progress at the beginning of the composition based on a free rhythm, as I completely feel it. The rest comprises of disrupting ‘marching’ snare drums corresponding to the spirit of the streets today, rhythmic distortions tending to rebel and finally the resolve of the healing pentatonic scales in this carnival in a coherent way with respect to the harmony of the piece.

I am not sure how my work would be evaluated in terms of musical quality but at least I hope that I could follow the sincere path Engels pawed.

## REFERENCES

- Lindley, Mark. 2010. “Marx and Engels on Music.” *MR Online*. August 18.  
<https://mronline.org/2010/08/18/marx-and-engels-on-music/>



### AUDIO

Audio recording of the *Electric Bass Improvisations on Engels* performed by İlker İsaletli is available at:

[https://soundcloud.com/marxism-and-sciences/ilker-isabetli-electric-bass-improvisations-on-engels?si=bf85972d4b764c73a89648fb06a67847&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/marxism-and-sciences/ilker-isabetli-electric-bass-improvisations-on-engels?si=bf85972d4b764c73a89648fb06a67847&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)