



3. K. Experimentation versus Interpretation: Exploring New Paths in Music Performance in the 21st Century

MusicExperiment21

Transformations of concepts and practices in music performance.

Orpheus Research Centre in Music, Ghent, Belgium

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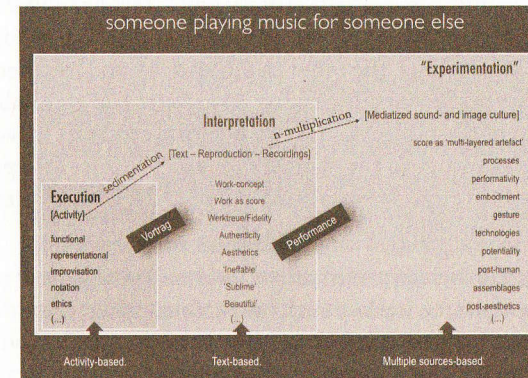
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By clinging to an outmoded paradigm of interpretation, musical performance practices are becoming isolated from the wider fields of artistic research. By extension, musicians risk becoming less intellectually engaged within contemporary culture. Taking Gilles Deleuze's invitation not to interpret but to 'experiment' with the materials of our domain, this research project aims to develop a different and original model for musical performance – a model that takes into account older modes of performance (execution, *Vortrag*, interpretation, performance and others) but which is crucially based upon 'experimentation' (Fig. 1).

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Fig. 1: Execution – Interpretation – Experimentation



The main goal of MusicExperiment21 is to propose and generate new modes of performance and exposition of research. Integrating material that goes beyond the score (such as sketches, texts, concepts, images, videos) into performances, this project offers a broader contextualisation of the works within a transdisciplinary horizon. In order to achieve this, the project has a multidisciplinary structure, with specific research strands on artistic practice, musicology, philosophy and epistemology, generating a network of aesthetic-epistemic references, which emerge at different professional stages (including doctoral and postdoctoral researchers), as well as in the context of leading international projects and ensembles (in Austria, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Norway, Sweden, and the USA, among others).

Combining theoretical investigations with the concrete practice of music, this project presents a case for change in the field of musical performance, proposing alternatives to traditional understandings of 'interpretation'.

Whereas traditional models are based on static conceptions of the score, this project proposes a dynamic conception, in which innumerable layers of notational practices and editions of musical works throughout time generate an intricate multi-layered set of inscriptions. If the source text is seen as dynamic, rather than fixed, and if the performative moment is – in its essential nature – also dynamic and ever-changing, it follows that every performance is more of an 'event' than a reiteration of the given 'form' of a piece. In place of a heuristic approach, there is an exploration of potentialities contained within a given score. The performer wanders creatively through such a landscape, using and training the imagination with the goal of breaking free from the past and constructing new assemblages.

The research team is comprised of the Principal Investigator (a trained concert pianist and musicologist with strong interests in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Epistemology), two senior artist-researchers (one with expertise in Musicology, the other in Philosophy and Aesthetics), two postdoctoral students (focussing on artistic and technological enhancement of the projects) and two doctoral students (developing and giving continuity to the project's ideas). The docs and post-docs are hired through international open calls, contributing to the investigations while creating work.

The outcomes will include presentations, peer-reviewed journal articles, three monographs, as well as musical performances, recordings, CDs and DVDs. Moreover, the *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR)* will serve as a first-instance vehicle for peer-reviewed practical publications, supporting the development of a community and creating impact for the work. One International Conference on the topic of 'Experimentation in Music Performance' will be organised, and a Website (www.musicexperiment21.eu) will give continuous notice of the project's developments.

Hosted at the Orpheus Institute (specifically the Orpheus Research Centre in Music — ORCiM), this project will benefit from, and contribute to, the wider discourse on Artistic Experimentation, the Centre's current research focus. ORCiM's significant international links to music institutions devising advanced Artistic Research programmes will both contribute to the dissemination of findings and provide vital developmental material for these arts institutions; the centres include: the Sibelius Academy Helsinki (Finland), the Kunst Universität Graz (Austria), the University of York (UK), the Griffith University (Australia), the McGill University (Canada), the Royal Conservatory The Hague (Holland), and the Norwegian Academy of Music (Norway). Moreover, ORCiM's facilities, its musical lab and its community of artist-researchers offer an ideal and unique resource base for this project.

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Example

Deleuzabelli Variations [On Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* op. 120]

This artistic project involves Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* op. 120 (1821–1824). Inspired by readings of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, William Kinderman's book *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations* (1987) and Michel Butor's *Dialogue avec 33 variations de Ludwig van Beethoven sur une valse de Diabelli* (1971), it aims to expose Beethoven's original piece to several musical 'encounters', letting other times and styles 'interfere' with Beethoven, and making 'unconnected connections' happen. In the timeframe of the original piece, and preserving the original sequence of the Variations, diverse techniques of elimination, suppression, substitution and replacement are used. A new score is written for every performance, including interruptions and interventions from others times and styles, not only including Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Cramer (which are implicit in Beethoven's original) but also Brahms, Webern, Berg, Feldman and others. This complex articulation of (unexpected) encounters allows for the emergence of new relations between its constitutive parts, thus contributing to a permanent 'non-closure' of artistic things and objects.