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Rihards Delves



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## INTRODUCTION

The collection of articles has been created on the basis of the papers presented at the conference “Artistic research. Various areas, approaches, and experiences”, which was held in Latvia on 5–7 May 2022, at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. The conference took place within the framework of the national research programme “Cultural capital as a sustainable development resource of Latvia (CARD)”. The programme was implemented by a consortium that consisted of five institutions, namely Latvian Academy of Culture as the leading partner, together with Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Art Academy of Latvia, National Library of Latvia, and Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art of the University of Latvia. The aim of the research programme was to create an interdisciplinary knowledge base on the diversity and value of cultural capital as a resource for Latvia’s sustainable development. The unifying concept of the studies of the national research programme was the cultural and creative ecosystem, that is conceptualized as a set of interdependent elements – organizations, groups, and creative personalities – whose activities are aimed at balanced and productive existence of the entire society. It was important for the researchers of the programme to look at culture in a modern way and properly assess the economic, political, and social potential of culture in all three dimensions – past, present, and future – identifying cultural resources in music, visual arts and design, audiovisual, theatre, and performing arts. Not without satisfaction, and with reference to the assessment of international experts, we have concluded that the goals have been successfully achieved and, in some cases, exceeded thanks to the purposeful and systematic work of the researchers involved in the programme. A large number of researchers – 70 in total, including 30 university students of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral levels – have been involved in the research activity, creating new forms of cooperation among different institutions, sub-sectors, and generations. The scientific realization of the programme resulted in research articles, thematic conferences, academic monographs, collections of conference papers, glossaries of terms, exhibitions and digital collections, methodological instructions, and primary data acquisition, which ensured the approval of research results for a wide academic community. The conference “Artistic research: Various fields, approaches, and experiences” was also a great contribution to the achievement of the goals of the research programme, as well as to the growth of cultural capital in particular and the development of the international art research discourse in general.

The focal concept of the conference “artistic research” is an approach that essentially rejects the dichotomism of art and science. It is based on transdisciplinarity, inviting us to capture and analyze reality, using not only the tools of rationality and pragmatism, but also the techniques of impulse, emotion, intuition and, most importantly, techniques of unmediated, personal aesthetic experience. The format of the conference made it possible to share fresh ideas and obtain information about the best international practices, thus developing conceptual and methodological framework of artistic research, which is

necessary for the improvement of academic discourse. The authors of the reports perfectly revealed the diversity of artistic research at all levels – theoretical, methodological and practical. This collection of articles continues the discussions started within the framework of the conference and allows for a deeper understanding of the role of artistic research not only for researchers and university students, but also for higher education policymakers and society in general. Such communication of scientific results is very important, as it confirms the necessity and perspective of artistic research in the academic environment. As a result, new interdisciplinary knowledge is created, a multifaceted and deep understanding of art processes is promoted, and creativity as such is developed. It also creates the groundwork for the process of educating art professionals – outstanding charismatic personalities and smart and responsible artists. In a broader perspective, artistic research is becoming more and more important in the job market saturated with innovations and information technologies.

As a unique quality of the volume, I would like to emphasize the reflexive aspects of its content. Artists' reflections, i.e. the documentation and analysis of their own practice and experience, and the communication of the creation process on two levels – personal and epistemological – is typically regarded as the basis of artistic research. The ability to understand one's own artistic experiences objectively is referred to as the personal dimension. On the other hand, "epistemological" refers to new theories and methods developed and applied by the author, as well as contextual characteristics of the newly generated artwork in terms of its style, succession, and influence aspects.

My personal experience of participating in the accreditation and research processes of professional art doctoral programmes has shown that students specifically cite these reflexivity-related features as the most challenging ones they must deal with when working on their academic and creative projects. And it is completely understandable, because it can be difficult to explain to others the motivations, contextual, theoretical, and methodological components of a new artistic project. In this way, the authors of the volume encourage and perfectly demonstrate that academic reflection can also be very interesting, exciting and, above all, not only intuitive, but also clearly articulate. It provides a glimpse into the artist's unique experience and discoveries, highlighting the importance of artistic competences based on specific practice in the academic environment.

Thus, the value of the volume is both theoretical and empirical, general and quite specialized. Epistemological and methodological searches are general, whereas accounts of artists' practice-based experiences are specific. These seeing, and appreciating the diversity of research, inviting, encouraging and inspiring every interested person to search and find their unique approach in an unimaginably broad field of artistic research opportunities.

On behalf of the Latvian Academy of Culture and the state research programme "Cultural capital as a sustainable development resource of Latvia (CARD)," I would like to express my great appreciation and gratitude to the organizers of the conference, especially *PhD* Diāna Zandberga and *PhD* Andris Teikmanis. Many thanks to the editorial board, led by *Dr.sc.soc.* Anda Laķe, as well as editor-in-chief *Dr.sc.soc.* Ilona Kunda and editor assistant *Mg.sc.soc.* Ance Kristāla for their selfless work during the summer time. Our appreciation and recognition goes to all the authors who shared their valuable ideas and findings. Special thanks to all anonymous reviewers of the articles, whose responsible work and important contributions are often not highlighted and properly evaluated.

*PhD Rūta Muktupāvela*  
Rector of the Latvian Academy of Culture

## INTRODUCTION

In the 22<sup>nd</sup> volume of the journal *Culture Crossroads* are presented the outcomes of the International Conference in Artistic Research: *Various Fields, Approaches, Experiences* organised by the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Culture, the Art Academy of Latvia, the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Arts of the University of Latvia and the National Library of Latvia on 5–7 May 2022.<sup>1</sup>

A total of 70 presentations took place at the conference, which was attended by 96 artists from various fields in person and online, including representatives from 25 countries, both EU Member States and the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Mexico, India and China, including faculty members and doctoral students of the Joint Professional Doctoral Study Programme in Arts, established in 2020 by the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, the Latvian Academy of Culture and the Art Academy of Latvia, who wish to develop their creativity by exploring and raising awareness of a wide interdisciplinary context and potential.

At the centre of artistic research is practice, experience, imagination, and knowledge that create new understanding, discourse, and vision. Therefore, both objective analysis and subjective observation are relevant. Moreover, the dialogue between seeming contradictions and oppositions – intellectual and intuitive, conservative, and spontaneous, fixed and flowing, persistent and transient – becomes actual. Artistic research deliberately transcends boundaries that were previously considered strong and is determined to create new collaborations and synergies.

The thirteen papers in this volume present a diverse and heterogeneous body of work falling into three thematic strands:

- creating interdisciplinary synergies,
- music and research,
- visual and performance art research.

The first paper in the volume, by **Vittoria Ecclesia** – “Art and Rigour: creating methodologies for Artistic Research in music” focuses on the construction of a methodology for artistic researchers, in particular practising musicians. In meta-research terms there

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was part of the project “Cultural Capital as a Resource for Sustainable Development of Latvia” /CARD (No. VPP-KM-LKRVA-2020/1-0003), implemented within the framework of the National Research Programme “Latvian Culture – a Resource for National Development 2020-2022”. This project was funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. The National Research Programme was administered by the Latvian Council of Science and ESF project “Ensuring good governance in Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music” (8.2.3.0/18/A/013).

are presented the personal adaptation of three qualitative methods: autobiographical design, borrowed from human computer interaction; thematic analysis, borrowed from psychology; and autoethnography, borrowed from social sciences.

**Dominique Lämmli** discusses transformative research conducted from 2016 to 2021 that aimed to establish an alternative art practitioner paradigm in his article “Art in Action Research (AiAR) and the Glocal Rootings of Art: Methodological Considerations”.

The research of **Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen, Anne Bryhn, Randi Veiteberg Kvellestad** formed on three performance papers, which started as a cocreated performance project based on a Greek myth in the autumn of 2021 and continued in 2022. A transdisciplinary artistic collective consisting of an oral storyteller, a choreographer/director, and a textile artist take a closer look at their experiences named as “Coming together – the extended artistic dialogue”.

The fourth paper of methodological section of the volume – “Towards a Methodology for Interpreting Visual Images as Cybernetic System: Lacan and Deleuze” by **Cecilia Inkol** endeavors to outline a theoretical framework for a methodology to interpret visual images that draws on cybernetics, semiotics, psychoanalysis and philosophical ideas.

The section of artistic research in music starts with the paper of **Diāna Zandberga** “The Pianist’s Perception of Figurative Texture in Piano Works by Latvian Composers”, which examines the development of texture in Latvian piano music from the performer’s point of view, including historical and stylistic aspects.

The sphere of piano music continued in the article of **Julian Hellaby** “Interpreting John Ireland’s Ballade”, where are presented a richly-endowed vehicle for both conventional and hermeneutic analysis, raising a number of research questions: how do structural and hermeneutic analyses interrelate? What role do topics and the composer’s biography play in the musical narrative? How do the foregoing questions relate to a performance of the work?

**Manuel Domínguez Salas** in his paper “Abductive Reasoning as a Model for Musical Creation in Julio Estrada’s Musical Works” deals with the abductive reasoning by Charles Sanders Pierce, focusing on the problem related with abduction and scientific imagination, graphicacy or the ability to represent ideas through images, and synthetic topology responsible for studying the qualitative relations of any 3-D geometrical structure. In this context, the author presents the philosophical postulates of the *Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum* by Julio Estrada, where reality and imagination play an important role in the process of musical creation.

The method of paper “An attempt at a new analysis and reconstruction of Richard Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman* (1843)” by **Dominique Porebska-Quasnik** lies in total freedom of interpretation and complete reconstruction of this Wagner’s masterpiece.

In the article “Exploring the Concept of Freedom in a Strictly Notated Score Through the Autoethnographic Research Method: Case Study–Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück I*” by **Helga Karen** the autoethnographic research method is used, applied to the rather technical research question of how to understand and practice a strictly notated score, connected with the meaning of freedom in musical interpretation.

**Juan Vassallo** in his paper “Symbolic Musical Resynthesis as an Ekphrastic Compositional Practice Using Computational Methods” explores the affordances of computational methods from the discipline of artificial intelligence for music composition.

The chapter of the visual and performance art research starts with paper of **Anda Boluža** “Researchers, Curators and Designers: The Exhibitions as the Space for Collaborations” about thematic exhibitions that explore certain cultural and historical processes

and examines the specifics of the exhibition as a collaborative process between three actors: academic researchers, curators and designers.

The glossary presented at the article by **Bart Geerts** “Undrawing: A Glossary of Daily Drawing” is an ongoing project that aims to build an understanding of a drawing practice and of drawing in general by interacting with the Daily Drawings in a word-based language.

The paper of **Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen** “To remember is a risk of forgetting – mimesis and chronotope in artistic process” is based on a musical storytelling performance. Through using the research question: what possibilities does the chronotope and mimesis provide in an artistic working process towards an oral storytelling performance? the author looks at the concept of mimesis as a process and chronotope as a clarifying term.

The aim of this volume is to share achievements in various fields of artistic research and to expand one’s knowledge base with innovative methodological approaches. This is important among artists of all kinds who wish to develop their practice by thinking, working, exploring and self-realizing through its consequences, context, and potential.

*PhD* **Diāna Zandberga**

Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music

# **CREATING SYNERGIES**

# ART AND RIGOUR: CREATING METHODOLOGIES FOR ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the construction of a methodology for artistic researchers, in particular practising musicians. Artistic research is a steadily growing field, gaining increasing relevance in academic discourse and flourishing in universities and music academies. Due to its relatively recent history there is still a lack of standardized widespread research methods, and the advice to be creative and borrow from other disciplines, though reasonable, can be confusing for young researchers. The adaptation process can be problematic, with the need to mediate between the rigour of academic research and the openness and creativity of the artistic side.

How can methods from different disciplines be adapted to the needs of artistic research, without hindering creative practice? In this paper I will present, in meta-research terms, the personal adaptation of three qualitative methods: autobiographical design, borrowed from human computer interaction; thematic analysis, borrowed from psychology; and autoethnography, borrowed from social sciences. These were used to design an accountable research process to investigate differences and similarities in the musical affordances of the 13-keyed period clarinet and the modern clarinet. The three methods intertwine to form a complete methodology that could be applied by other researchers investigating similar topics. Adapting methods proved to be a fruitful process, bearing in mind that the goal is not objectivity, unreachable in the arts, but accountability and organization.

**Keywords:** *artistic research, methodology, qualitative methods, artistic practice.*

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## Introduction

Artistic Research has been gaining more and more relevance in the international academic context, coming a long way since its first steps [Busch 2009, Mäkelä et al. 2011]. Nowadays an increasing number of higher education institutions open doctoral programmes or incorporate artistic research in their master's programmes, and artistic research seems to have found its place in the academic context as a "self-reflective and self-critical process to produce new knowledge" [Hannula et al. 2005: 10] in the arts. To conduct such a research process accountably and meaningfully, differentiating it from artistic practice, it is necessary to have a solid methodology.

Owing to the brief history of Artistic Research, the discipline still lacks a standardized set of methods. It relies on what Hannula defines as "methodological anarchy" [2005: 14] or "methodological pluralism" [2005: 67], where different and sometimes even conflicting approaches, methods, and paradigms can coexist. This may entail borrowing and adapting qualitative methods from other disciplines. Maggi Savin-Baden and Katherine Wimpenny made a remarkable effort to give a practical guide to arts-related methods [Savin-Baden & Wimpenny 2014], with the openly stated aim of supporting those new to artistic research to develop an appropriate methodology. The anthology curated by Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore also represents a valuable resource of different approaches to artistic research, framing the specific experience of the Orpheus Institute for Research in Music without marking it as archetypal of the field [Crispin & Gilmore 2014], as does another anthology edited by Jonathan Impett concerning different experiences with artistic research in music [2017], while Paulo De Assis, in his "Logics of Experimentation", explores paths of redefinition of music performance and performers [2018].

This paper aims to provide an example of how these theorizations and guidelines can be put into practice in an actual research project, tailoring a methodology that supports equally the two aspects of artistic research: on the one hand, the academic, experimental, rigorous approach; and, on the other, the creative and artistic side. In the first section I will briefly outline my doctoral project, based on my own clarinet practice, to show what is the practical scope of the designed methodology, in particular in the initial phases of a research project. In the second part I will present the three methodologies that I borrowed and adapted, with their specific challenges and advantages: autobiographical design, thematic analysis, and autoethnography. In the concluding remarks I will discuss the balancing of research and art in the case of my own artistic research project. Despite the temptation to follow a strictly dualistic subdivision, I will explain how I overcame the binary vision to integrate the two sides, giving rigour to my art and creativity to my research.

### **My research**

The project for which the methodology was built consists of practice-based research designed to compare the musical affordances of modern and period clarinets. My research aims to answer the question of how period clarinet affordances differ from those of the modern instrument, and how period clarinet practice influences my playing and performance.

The concept of affordance was first formulated in ecological psychology by James J. Gibson [1979/1986] as a means to overcome the three-way theorization of perception: subject, external object, internal representation of the object. Gibson argued for a direct relationship between the subject and its surrounding environment, where affordances represent what the environment offers to the (human) animal experiencing it. Musical instruments offer affordances to the player who approaches them, and these vary with the player: a clarinet will offer different affordances to a jazz artist, for example, than to a classically trained musician. The application of this concept to musical research is not new: from Folkstead [1996] to the more recent Tullberg [2021] the use of affordances as a concept to investigate musical instruments has proved fruitful.

In my research I argue that the use of a period clarinet as an integrated practice tool, with its own particular musical affordances, can strengthen the flexibility of the musician, break stale performance patterns, and help to reframe the musician's approach to repertoire, virtuosity and technical difficulties. The period clarinet that I use is the thirteen-keyed Müller system instrument, developed by Iwan Müller in 1812 in Paris. This clarinet had many technical improvements in the keys, the pads and the tone holes in comparison with its predecessor, the classical clarinet, and it represented a crucial milestone in the history and development of the instrument. Specifically, I use an east-European period clarinet from the 1870s, when the new Boehm system clarinets already existed but previous models were still being produced for amateur players, military bands, and in general for less affluent customers. The modern clarinet that I use is a French system Yamaha instrument.

When Müller's instrument started to spread through Europe it indeed afforded new possibilities to performers and composers alike in a historical moment when stretching the boundaries of instruments through technical virtuosity was the norm [Harlow 2006]. Scholars such as Albert Rice [Rice 2003a, Rice 2003b], Nicholas Shackleton [Shackleton & Rice 1999], Pamela Weston [1971], and David Charlton [1988] have studied the development of the clarinet and the contributions of Iwan Müller extensively. Renowned performers including Jack Brymer [1984] and Eric Hoeprich [2008] also made important contributions to the literature on the history of the instrument, paired with their perspectives as active clarinetists.

Starting from the historical background, I took the period clarinet from its time and brought it here to the present, in my practice room, to investigate what it can do for me now. I was initially not formally trained as a period instrument performer, but when I started practising on the Müller clarinet to conduct this research I found that it afforded me different possibilities from the modern instrument. My relationship with it was very particular, less structured, with fewer boundaries than I had with the modern instrument. It was not *my* instrument; it was *an* instrument to explore. And by exploring its affordances, I began to find new ones on the modern clarinet too, expanding my palette of musical skills.

The connection between practice on period instruments and beneficial effects on modern playing is not an entirely new concept, but it is one that has been spreading through the clarinet community: Charles Neidich<sup>1</sup> and Tommaso Lonquich<sup>2</sup> are the two most notable players advocating for this approach in their lectures and masterclasses. Their understanding of this relationship comes “from the field”, from their day-to-day artistic practice. My own project differentiates itself from the artistic practice of Neidich and Lonquich owing to its academic nature: my observations come from the same source of practical experience as those of the other artists, but they are placed in a theoretical framework and ongoing academic discourse, documented, and organized, with the aim of producing new knowledge through accountable means, building a bridge between the animated but conservative world of clarinet players and the deep but distant academic world.

There has been an ongoing, fertile debate about the boundaries of artistic research, around questions such as whether a practising musician is already doing artistic research through their normal activities, and what distinguishes the artistic researcher from the practising artist. Delving deeply into this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, but more information can be found in De Assis [2018: 19–37], Hannula et al. [2005: 9–22], and Mäkelä et al. [2011].

### Methodology construction

In this section I will present the three methods I adapted, in the order I encountered them and applied them in my research. The process can be a loose model for other research, bearing in mind that the very individual nature of artistic research requires that each artist-researcher devises their specific *modus operandi* from any model.

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<sup>1</sup> Internationally renowned artist, faculty member at the The Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Mannes College of Music. For more information visit: <https://www.charlesneidich.net/> (last accessed 31/05/2022.)

<sup>2</sup> Solo Clarinetist with Ensemble MidtVest, the international full-time chamber ensemble based in Denmark, and Artist of the Chamber Music Society of the Lincoln Center in New York. For more information visit: <https://www.lonquich.com/> (last accessed 31/05/2022.)

The first method is autobiographical design, born in the field of human computer interaction. This method, informally used by designers, has been codified and framed by Carman Neustaedter and Phoebe Sengers [2012], who defined it as “design research drawing on extensive, genuine usage by those creating or building the system” [2012: 514]. In its field of origin, the method is used to design systems and software for virtual assistance, navigation, chat, or media space, with the designer using the system themselves over a prolonged period of time, learning from their own genuine user experience.

In my case, the “object” that I wanted to design was an organized practice process to document my playing on two different instruments. In the initial phases of my doctoral research having a reliable structure was crucial: so many aspects of the work were not yet stable, the methodology was under construction, the focus of the work under question. Although I was not new to journaling and practice planning for other purposes (e. g., auditions, exams, concerts), I felt that my regular skills alone were not sufficient. I thus realized that I would benefit from the support of an external framework such as autobiographical design. Through this method I was able to give the necessary boundaries and systematization to my practice, without constraining the unexpected and the flexibility fundamental for an artist: I designed a practice schedule for the following two months, establishing the days, times, repertoire to be practised and musical parameters to focus on in each session, but always having the chance to evolve the design over the course of its use, improving its efficacy. The five characteristics of autobiographical design [Neustaedter & Sengers 2012: 516–518] are suitable for these requirements:

1) Fast tinkering: it was possible to modify the design of the practice sessions immediately if I found any issue or critical point without compromising the validity of the process. One example was the duration of the use of each instrument: in the first three sessions I kept very strictly to the schedule of half time with the period instrument and the other half with the modern instrument. But I realized that this mode of practice was hindering the direct comparison of affordances such as articulation and intonation, and therefore I allowed switching between the instruments at need in the following sessions.

2) Real systems for immediate usage: autobiographical design allowed me to start using the designed system rapidly, test it, and perfect it through use, as described in the previous point.

3) Genuine need: the necessity to create a practice process was genuinely crucial for me at that stage of research so as to avoid wasting time in undocumented and purposeless practice.

4) Long-term use: in the HCI field, this translates to more than one year. My doctoral studies will take four years.

5) Unusual data collection methods: the data was collected through journal entries and audio recordings of my playing. Occasionally I refer also to WhatsApp and Messenger chats with colleagues to whom I sent recordings and impressions.

The method is not meant for theorizing generalization [Neustaedter & Sengers 2012: 518] and presents some critical aspects, in particular in terms of how to define a “genuine” need, the inclusion of other users during the “self” usage time, and ethical matters of privacy and intimacy [Desjardins & Ball 2018]. These issues arise because autobiographical design is used mainly in intimate and private spheres such as the home, therefore touching the lives of family members [Desjardins & Ball 2018: 753]. These potentially problematic aspects were obviated in the artistic research context of my experience: practice being a solitary process, I did not encounter issues of ethically including other users or of privacy. In actual fact, researching by means of “intimate, long-term, and personal relations between computers and humans” [ibid.] – when rather than computers we have a practice system and musical instruments – is the daily life of a practising musician.

The application of autobiographical design was crucial in the starting phases of the research. It provided me with a solid framework to formulate my research question and obtain data and preliminary results, without depriving me of the chance to improvise and adapt my practice as it seemed appropriate. It remains a valid tool for organization and grounding throughout the research process.

The second method involved, which I used to extract meaning from the data gathered in the practice sessions, is thematic analysis, borrowed from the field of psychology. It is defined by Braun and Clarke as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” [Braun & Clarke 2006: 79]. The attractiveness of thematic analysis for artistic research lies in its inherent flexibility: Braun and Clarke themselves acknowledge and value this characteristic of the method while striving for more defined guidelines for the method in their field [Braun & Clarke 2006: 78].

In its conventional use, thematic analysis is applied to a set of data gathered from external sources by a researcher (or a group of researchers). In the case of my data, however, I both produce and code it myself, which could be problematic in terms of reliability: how do I know, for example, that I see a theme because it is actually there in the data rather than because I know what I was thinking while typing that entry? This issue can be tackled from different angles:

1) Time and memory: the four years of doctoral studies afford me the possibility to let time pass between the collection of the data and its categorization. With this approach, I am able to “forget” about the data, gain distance from it, and approach it with new eyes when the moment of coding arrives. This was confirmed for the 2020/2021 data that I coded in 2022.

2) Inspiration: thematic analysis can be used as an inspiration, a conceptual tool to organize data, as Boyatzis [Boyatzis 1988] does, for example. This approach does not negate the principles and qualities of thematic analysis. The researcher can present the method in its original form, and subsequently present their application and interpretation clearly in the specific context.

Thematic analysis thus becomes a valuable tool for organizing data, obtaining results and formulating a preliminary theory from the practice on the clarinets, without claiming to use the method in its purest and truest form, but as a functional means to an end. It should be noted that themes are not pre-existing entities embedded in the data waiting passively for a palaeontology-scholar to dig them out, but are the result of the choices and perspective of the researcher [Braun & Clarke 2006: 80; Wolcott 1994: 12–17]. Through colour-coded categorization I pinpointed eight main preliminary themes, each referring to a musical affordance or a musical aspect that was influenced by my double practice regime: trills, technique, sound production, articulation, intonation, mental imagery, interpretation, period clarinet specificity.

Once again, the themes do not speak for themselves. Another layer of interpretation is required in order to create a discourse that could integrate the research with my life as a clarinetist, my cultural and educational background, and my artistic and professional journey. Moreover, I wanted to take the chance to reflect on, and possibly problematize, some aspects of the classical music culture I grew up in. My way of approaching period instruments, clarinet practice and music in general was not generated from a void but came from my personal background. Observing myself could be a way to consequently reflect on the culture and subcultures I originated from and still live in.

The third method I employed enabled me to achieve these goals. Autoethnography is a method borrowed from sociology and cultural anthropology that considers the researcher as an integral part of the research rather than merely as an external observer; it allows researchers to take into account their own experiences, and in particular their cultural background; and it supports the use of storytelling techniques in writing, creating a narrative from the data [Chang 2008, Ellis 2004, Holman-Jones et al. 2013]. The value of this method in the musical field is undeniable, as can be seen in the different research experiences reported in “Music Autoethnographies” [Bartlett & Ellis 2009], which range from composition to performance, from pedagogy to ethnomusicology.

I was drawn to autoethnography because in this enquiry **I myself** am one of the examined objects: the two clarinets cannot function without me holding them, using my lungs, my fingers, my tongue, my thoughts. Regarding this last element, the way I approach the practice and the instruments is deeply related to the subculture



of classical music and clarinet playing, my “specific, perspectival and limited vantage point” [Holman Jones 2005]. This is not a weakness in art-based research. Autoethnography uses individual experience not to generalize, but rather to place one’s identity in a wider cultural context and reflect on it. My personal experience cannot – and should not – be turned off. Instead of unrealistic objectivity, I strive for accountability, presenting my journaling, reflections, and observations transparently in my research accounts. Having biases or preconceptions is not necessarily a negative occurrence that should be removed. They usually come from our culture, our education, our upbringing, and if we succeed in acknowledging some of them it can add more layers of depth to the interpretation of the research experience.

An example of acknowledged bias in this research is the evaluation of the period clarinet: in the very first draft of the project, the premiss from which everything started was that the modern clarinet was much “better” than the period clarinet. The research aimed to investigate where and how. After a few practice sessions, however, I had to face the fact that this premiss was not born from an “objective” inferiority of the period instrument, but simply from instilled assumptions [Haynes 2007]. Instead of clinging to those assumptions, I decided to expose and question them, re-wiring the project and exploring my artistic identity through the unique affordances of a period clarinet.

### **Conclusion**

The combination of the three methods here described formed the methodology for the designing of a practice-based artistic research project into clarinet affordances. All three play their own significant role: autobiographical design was fundamental to starting the project and making the practice sessions efficient. Thematic analysis shaped my way of dealing with the data, providing me with a framework to categorize my journal notes. Finally, autoethnography allowed me to use my own emotions, background, and experiences accountably, reflect on my cultural context, and occasionally exploit narrative techniques in my research accounts. The framework they create mirrors to some extent Wolcott’s “research formula” of Description – in this case the raw data obtained through autobiographically designed practice sessions –, Analysis, or the thematic analysis informed categorization, and Interpretation, carried out through autoethnographic lenses [Wolcott 1994: 48–51].

Artistic practice in general benefits from organization. Any music student is (or should be) encouraged to learn how to design their practice with structure, sets of goals, or the help of a journal. The point where standard artistic practice becomes research is when the main overall goal is not just self-improvement, but the production of new knowledge, which cannot happen without a method that harnesses the data collection, analysis and reporting. The method, on the other hand,

must accommodate the special needs of the field of art, where every research project is a unique experience [Hannula et al. 2005: 19]. The loan of qualitative methods from other disciplines or projects should not be a mindless calque, in much the same way as the movie adaptation of a book should not simply copy the original. Different media, or here different disciplines, call for different solutions using creativity and critical thinking. At the end of the process, art and rigour can melt into each other to overcome the apparent binary nature of artistic research in favour of a diversity of intertwined artistic and academic experiences.

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# ART IN ACTION RESEARCH (AiAR) AND THE GLOCAL ROOTINGS OF ART: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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## Abstract

This paper discusses transformative research conducted from 2016 to 2021 that aimed to establish an alternative art practitioner paradigm: Art in Action Research (AiAR). This paradigm seeks to guide methodology creation for working *on* and *through* art in socio-cultural settings while considering the *global turn*. The 2021 study configures four *baseline discourses* (BD) that are needed to perform the global turn: The first BD concerns the diversity of art and the consequences of acknowledging that all art is related to traditions and histories (thus accepting the *glocal rootings of art* and thus the need to integrate diverse art notions). The second BD constructs an ideal-type model of canonization. The third BD addresses artistic research as a supranational, worldwide phenomenon and shows that increased awareness of the glocal rootings of art is essential for further developing artistic research. The fourth BD discusses the literature on practitioner research across disciplines. Finally, the study derives the principles for AiAR from the four BDs and further substantiates these principles. The study performs the global turn. It introduces an alternative paradigm, AiAR, which excludes limiting, paradigmatic assumptions about art from its research base, and issues a call to elicit project-relevant understandings of art. AiAR enables creating a methodology that serves reality-oriented, setting-specific, and people-centered art practitioner research aimed at co-creating livable futures.

**Keywords:** *Art in Action Research (AiAR), socially engaged art, global turn, philosophy of artistic research, practitioner research.*

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## Introduction

This paper discusses transformative research in global studies that I conducted from 2016 to 2021.<sup>1</sup> Overall, transformative research contributes to radically changing the understandings and doings of a research field, in this case fine arts.<sup>2</sup> The resulting study (completed in 2021) was motivated by three empirical observations: (1) Working with art in socio-cultural settings is rapidly increasing worldwide. Accordingly, (2) practical knowledge and know-how in the field are immense. What has been lacking, however, (3) are research methodologies that enable art practitioners to explore the issues emerging from their work environment in the context of the *global turn*. Though much has been written about socially engaged art [e. g., Ferguson et al. 1990; Felshin 1995; Kent 2016], art practitioner methodologies relating to local *and* global thoughtscales and allowing the integration of diverse understandings of art have been missing. I have addressed this shortcoming in several articles [e. g., Lämmli 2014, 2017].

Aiming to close this gap, I set out to develop a practice-fitting and robust methodology through the global studies paradigm. My 2021 study therefore started from the empirically informed hypothesis that a paradigm shift in the fine arts is needed to surmount its limited understanding of art, and that achieving this paradigm shift requires a five-step process: (1) analyze the paradigmatic assumptions about art and the previous attempts to overcome these dominant notions; (2) specify the critical features of the canonization of art; (3) contextualize and assess the limits of existing approaches within art research; (4) determine the discussed specifics of practitioner research across disciplines; (5) define the principles of art practitioner research, that is, Art in Action Research (AiAR), which constitutes an alternative approach to working *on* and *through* art in socio-cultural settings.

It is not unproblematic to postulate a paradigm shift regarding the basic assumptions of a discipline – here fine arts –, while building on another disciplinary approach (and its modes of investigation) – here global studies. The global studies perspective, however, explicitly aims to rethink and “*reexamine our taken-for-granted assumptions*” and serves the “*need to rethink mainstream scholarship*” [Darian-Smith & McCarty 2017]. I discuss the general need for retooling disciplinary analysis below.

In the literature on research methodology, basic terms such as paradigm and methodology are not used uniformly [Kivunja & Kuyini 2017]. I applied them as follows in my 2021 study: as researchers we approach reality through a paradigm,

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<sup>1</sup> The study, supervised by Professor Boike Rehbein, was submitted as a doctoral thesis in Global and Area Studies at Humboldt University of Berlin in 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The study did not consider whether the proposed Art in Action Research (AiAR) might be useful for other art practitioner research.

which is a lens through which we access reality. The principles of the paradigm guide methodology creation. We use theories and concepts that provide orientation points and help us to work on, configure, analyze, discuss and understand the reality we see. A research design includes the type of research, the research paradigm, the conceptual framework (i. e., theories and concepts), the methods, research layers, and procedures used to explore a question or hypothesis and to attain the research goal.

What follows first clarifies the terms *Art in Action* and *global turn*. Second, I describe the research design before considering the baseline discourses central to this study. Finally, I introduce the principles of AiAR.

### Contextual Remarks

The literature on working with art in socio-cultural settings has largely been written by scholars based in the US and UK. They have used various terms to describe art that addresses real-life issues and that seeks real-life change. Apart from *socially engaged art*, these terms include *dialogic art* and *participatory art*. However, my many conversations with colleagues across the world have revealed that these terms are not necessarily productive. Rather, they spark lengthy discussions about Western conceptions and their limited views. Thus, these protracted theoretical discussions move(d) conversations away from the real-world activities being explored. Realizing the limitations of the existing terms, I began looking for alternatives. I finally settled on *Art in Action*, which proved helpful in practice and enabled discussing practical issues with those involved on the ground. Art in Action has probably proven effective for two reasons. First, the term is self-explanatory. And second, it is not informed by a preexisting concept of which activities are included or excluded. Art in Action is now used increasingly in wider circles.

Artists working with art in socio-cultural settings engage in highly diverse activities. Some initiatives adopt an interventionist approach, whereas others work within their living environments and follow long-term perspectives. The activities of both approaches are very broad, ranging from complaints choirs [Cheung 2015], where people come together to sing or hum complaints to their government, to nurturing communal farming and collective forestry and self-organization, thus drawing attention to regional development plans by governments and investors [Jatiwangi art factory, n. d.]. Some collectives establish “Do it with Others” cultures by setting up labs for bio- and other forms of hacking [hackteria.org n. d.]. Equally popular is the re-enactment of historical events, such as the Pitt Street Riot in Hong Kong [Lee 2015].

However, reflecting on this growing field of artistic production showed that the existing artistic frameworks did not really enable researching such developments

from an art practitioner perspective. Needed was an approach that serves to elicit the diverse notions of art informing particular settings instead of working with paradigmatic assumptions about art that claim to be universal, and thereby disguise their rootedness and limited scope [Brzysky 2007]. Inquiring into these shortcomings revealed that the need to retool paradigmatic assumptions is not limited to artistic research. Rather, the need to retool disciplinary analysis is a general problem, one rooted in recent globalization processes.

Globalization processes have been ongoing for centuries [Rehbein & Schwengel 2008]. However, since the 1970s we have witnessed exponentially accelerating interconnectedness and interdependencies [Albrow 1996]. Correspondingly, since the 1980s, scholarly work has increasingly dealt with such phenomena, leading to several waves of global theories [Martell 2007]. Among others, the insight has prevailed that varieties of globalizations exist [Rehbein & Schwengel 2008]. Moreover, the effects of globalization processes on the assumptions underpinning disciplinary analyses have been widely discussed [e. g., Beck 1997]. Importantly, reassessing and retooling basic assumptions are not limited to expanding conceptual apparatuses and research frameworks, but rather affect the paradigmatic assumptions of disciplinary perspectives. Ulrich Beck [1997] called the corresponding pressure on existing reference systems to change a *mega-change*, while Darian-Smith and McCarty [2017] have termed it a *global turn*. The need to question existing research paradigms is thus rooted in the challenges of today's world: a globalizing world, one that alters realities and thus affects the assumptions underlying disciplinary thinking.

Accordingly, research has gradually shifted from globalization studies to global studies. Nederveen Pieterse [2013] describes this shift as a methodological one. Whereas globalization studies are anchored in disciplinary theories and protocols, global studies apply interdisciplinary research frameworks and combine diverse databases. Global studies call for keeping sight of the big picture, of global dispositions, when dealing with specific issues, that is, to position inquiries in the "*local-global continuum*" [Darian-Smith & McCarty 2017].

In artistic research, transdisciplinary research designs are not uncommon. However, scholars must consider the presumptions guiding and structuring their research. In artistic research, and particularly in art practitioner research *on* and *through* working with art in socio-cultural settings, such considerations first and foremost concern one's assumptions about art. I therefore decided to investigate these paradigmatic assumptions about art through the lens of global studies and to develop an alternative art practitioner paradigm. This paradigm seeks to guide methodology creation for working *on* and *through* art in socio-cultural settings while considering the *global turn*.

### The Research Design

My 2021 study applied the global studies paradigm and a fourfold conceptual apparatus: (1) the kaleidoscopic dialectic, (2) transdisciplinarity, (3) meta-narrative synthesis, and (4) the concept of glocalization. The concept of glocalization emphasizes the relational dynamics between the local and the global. Transdisciplinarity highlights the need to break down disciplinary boundaries and supports integrative, real-world, and problem-oriented research. The kaleidoscopic dialectic and meta-narrative synthesis are probably less well known in artistic research.

Boike Rehbein's critical theory, the kaleidoscopic dialectic [Rehbein 2015], critiques epistemological work that rests solely on, and therefore is confined to, the dichotomy of universalism versus relativism. Instead, he proposes a global hermeneutics that grounds generalizations in particularities. Consequently, both the research *and* the researched are understood as informed by historical knowledge formations. Moreover, both are part of contextual and historical dynamics, and thus are positioned within relational webs of various particularities. The kaleidoscopic dialectic explicitly accepts our world's factual pluralistic disposition and its implications for research. Accordingly, this dialectic allows for generalizations by grounding such claims in a relational web of the particularities being studied.

Meta-narrative synthesis involves purposively collating information from different research traditions to understand how research on a particular issue has emerged and evolved. Its methodologies have been developed, among others, in health and AI studies [e. g., Grant & Booth 2009]. Meta-narrative synthesis is a subtype of meta-synthesis, whose status as a valuable review and configuring method correlates with the exponential growth of data, with today's manifold real-world challenges, and with the pressure on research reference systems to change. Meta-synthesis aims to point out problematized research dispositions and theories, and to substantiate new interpretations of existing research fields. In my 2021 study, meta-narrative synthesis thus guided the literature sampling and configuring the baseline discourses needed to develop the principles of AiAR. It provided the critical features needing to be considered, including defining the sampling purpose, the relevant research traditions, the search strategy, and eliciting the orientation points for the subsequent configuration. Refuting the findings of a meta-narrative synthesis would require establishing which orientation points are missing and to what extent discussing these additional orientation points would change the findings.

Guided by the conceptual apparatus, my 2021 study followed a stringent five-step process, as set out in the hypothesis (see Introduction). Each of the five sub-hypotheses corresponded to a research objective (each dealt with in a separate chapter). The table below summarizes the research aims and objectives of the original study (Chapters 3 to 7).



## Research Aim and Objectives

Sub-Hypotheses	Objectives	Chap.	Chapter title
1	Analyze the paradigmatic assumptions about art and the attempts made so far to overcome these.	3	The Diversity of Art
2	Specify the critical features of the canonization of art.	4	The Canonization of Art
3	Contextualize and assess the limitations of existing approaches within art research.	5	Art Research
4	Determine the discussed specifics of practitioner research across disciplines.	6	Practitioner Research
5	Define the principles of Art in Action Research (AiAR).	7	Art in Action Research

## Baseline Discourses

Baseline discourses are densely configured narratives. The study configured such baseline discourses for each chapter and its specific objectives. The structure of these narratives follows the orientation points determined by configuring the meta-narrative synthesis. For instance, Chapter 3 (“The Diversity of Art”) contains fifteen such orientation points, each visible as a corresponding subtitle. These orientation points stake out the field relevant to achieving the objectives of that chapter. These range from *The Diversity of Art in Global Contexts* through *Narrow Versus Broad Notions of Art* to *Pseudo-Diversification and Universal Claims*.

Chapter 3 discusses the paradigmatic assumptions about art. The selected literature, including Brzysky [2007] and Onians [2008], is little known among artistic research scholars, but best addresses the orientation points that emerged from configuration. The chapter also considers the differentiation between narrow and broad notions of art – as seen through the lenses of global studies and other disciplines. Importantly, this differentiation is not evident from an art studies point of view, which holds that “This is art – in the narrow sense of the term – and everything else is not art.” My research, however, showed that the problem of limited art notions hinders developing an alternative research paradigm capable of making the global turn. I therefore discussed and exemplified narrow and broad notions of art by juxtaposing them.

The baseline discourse for Chapter 3 thus also reflects to what extent art history scholars have discussed the limited, and hence problematic, reach of a narrow notion of art. Among other scholars, my study draws on Anna Brzyski [2007], who discussed

in detail the key problems of art historical discourse. First and foremost, these shortcomings include not adapting to the globalizing world and not reframing the foundational assumptions of its discourses. The narrow concept of art does not cover all the art that is produced across the world at any given time. Rather, that concept has its own socio-cultural histories, works with a hierarchical, pyramid scheme, and lacks methodological self-reflectivity.

The meta-narrative synthesis in Chapter 3 further discusses several more or less successful attempts to overcome the limitedness of art history – in view of the globalizing world. The synthesis reveals that the notions of art must be removed from the paradigmatic level of research. I discuss this in reference to Onians' *Art Atlas* [2008] and his postulate to remove "*categories that depend on assumptions that are cultural.*" Chapter 3 also shows that art history's attempt to develop possible solutions so as to adapt its reference system to the globalizing world does not offer productive paths for an art practitioner research perspective.

Chapter 4 explores the canonization of art. While Chapter 3 suggested that notions of art should be removed from the paradigmatic level, it left unanswered the question which orientation points are needed to elicit notions of art that are relevant to a particular setting. To answer this question, I developed an ideal-type model of canonization based on Brzyski [2007], Westphal [1993], Morphy and Perkins [2006], among others. The ideal-type model suggests six orientation points: wisdom, authority, narratives, corpus, fluid dynamics, and pluriperspectivity. Wisdom, for instance, is the grand narrative of a community and of the belief systems that are active within that community. Belief systems can be informed by rational, cosmological, spiritual, religious, and other forces. Since diverse and wide-ranging possibilities inform a community, wisdom, in this ideal-type model, is an abstract variable for undercurrent positionings rather than a preestablished concept. Furthermore, due to the pluriverse disposition of communities, several wisdoms often coexist and inform a particular setting.

Chapter 5 discusses the literature on art research and investigates the historical, local-global conditions and emergence of art research. Artistic research *gained currency* in the 1990s, when visual arts departments began integrating into Higher Education Institutions. The transformation of art studies, from vocational studies to university studies, and the introduction of artistic research has also been influenced by supranational efforts to establish standards for measuring and reporting R&D projects, in order to support knowledge societies.

However, Chapter 5 shows that while artistic research is conducted all over the world, the literature on art research has not yet sufficiently embraced the assumptions of art underlying that research. Accordingly, glocal art rootings have so far not been sufficiently addressed either. Thus, although art research delineates modes of artistic



research, it does not clarify its paradigm (e. g., name its basic assumptions), nor does it offer guidance in establishing the methodology of art practitioner research needed to research Art in Action.

Chapter 6 thus turns to practitioner research in other disciplines to delineate the features needed for art practitioner research that performs the global turn. It shows that art practitioner methodologies are advised to best organize research as grounded research. Grounded, that is, in issues emerging from the work environment [Drake & Heath 2011]. Such issues include refraining from top-down conceptual approaches. Rather, the theories and methods needed are brought about through the research process, similarly to the procedure described above as the kaleidoscopic dialectic. Such research produces results that are setting-specific, hence particular and nongeneralizable. Practitioner researchers must negotiate multifaceted dispositions, as they are part of professional and academic communities. They also have to interrelate different modes of knowledges, are themselves often part of what they are researching, and so on. In short, heightened self-awareness and self-reflection are essential requirements for practitioner researchers.

### **The Principles of AiAR**

Chapter 7 (“Art in Action Research”) derives the principles of AiAR from the previous chapters and further substantiates and supplements them as needed. The study first adopted a transformative stance to delineate and substantiate the AiAR principles. Accordingly, and to reiterate this point, the study postulated that art studies and artistic research need to change their mindset, and to examine and further develop Art in Action from an art practitioner perspective considering the global turn. The study concludes by introducing the AiAR principles designed to initiate such a paradigm shift in the arts, and to make the global turn.

The study established the three main features of AiAR: first, paradigmatic assumptions about art should not inform the research basis. Second, the orientation points for eliciting the notions of art should be defined as part of the research process. Third, the issue emerging from the work environment should be placed center stage. Consequently, the research design and components ought to be developed and continuously adjusted in relation to the given settings.

In Chapter 7, I divided these three features into 16 principles. Section 7.3.4 (“The Principles of AiAR”) provides step-by-step instructions on how AiAR enables creating a methodology capable of integrating diverse notions of art (as well as knowledge bases). At first glance, the 16 principles might seem to overlap. Nevertheless, they offer different perspectives on the issue researched, for example, in an exploratory undertaking or a case study. Most likely these perspectives will correspond with the respective research layers.

The 16 AiAR principles (each substantiated in Chapter 7) are:

- (1) Approach the research from an art practitioner perspective.
- (2) Focus on issues that emerge from the work environment.
- (3) Place the issue centre stage.
- (4) Do not include any notions of art in the research bases.
- (5) Remain aware of the glocal rootedness and pluralism of art.
- (6) Elicit the notions of art through the research process.
- (7) Embrace pluriperspectivity in regard to how the research is conducted and configured.
- (8) Explicitly state the thought traditions informing the research.
- (9) Configure particulars in relation to other particularities, positionalities, and histories.
- (10) Ground theories, methods, and configurations in setting specificities and in the research process.
- (11) Aim to achieve practice-relevant and setting-specific research results.
- (12) Distinguish the art practitioner research stance and arts-based methods.
- (13) Choose the theories and methods from various disciplines and for their fitness-for-purpose.
- (14) State the forms and sites of transdisciplinarity.
- (15) Construct the validity of the outcomes in relation to the research issue, goal(s), and procedures.
- (16) Address the glocal positionality of the research perspective, setting, procedure, and outcomes.

These 16 principles constitute the AiAR paradigm. A paradigm, as observed, is the lens through which the research is approached. The principles of the AiAR paradigm guide project-fitting and setting-responsive methodology creation. To do justice to the global turn, the AiAR paradigm enables pursuing an issue-centered approach aware of the glocal rootings of art and of the global-local dynamics. Correspondingly, AiAR does not allow existing conceptions of art to underpin art (practitioner) research, but instead elicits these conceptions through the research process. AiAR thus enables integrating diverse understandings of art and, in addition, various knowledge bases (I discuss this elsewhere). AiAR emphasizes diversity and pluriperspectivity, as well as glocal specificities. It thus adheres to grounded methodology and embraces increased self-reflection on the research standpoint, perspective, and procedures. Thereupon, AiAR grounds methodology creation in the research process, which centers on an issue emerging from the work environment and the relevant web of particulars, as well as their positionalities and histories.

In sum, my 2021 study (*Art in Action Research*) shows that a paradigm shift in art practitioner research on working *on* and *through* art in socio-cultural settings is

inevitable. It configures the necessary baseline discourses, from which it derives the principles of a research perspective able to accomplish a much-needed paradigm shift in art research. As such, the AiAR paradigm stands in contrast to artistic research approaches informed by Euro-American art-historical understandings of art, which adhere to and apply universal, ungrounded assumptions about art. Instead, AiAR mirrors the procedures of art practice and applies these to research. Finally, AiAR integrates the results of art practitioner research conducted across disciplines.

My 2021 study contributes to advancing art practitioner research *on* and *through* working with art in socio-cultural settings. It does so by formulating a paradigm for creating a methodology that enables carrying out reality-oriented, setting-specific, and people-centered art practitioner research that helps to co-create livable futures. As such, this theoretical venture meets an empirically grounded practical need and provides a workable solution.

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## COMING TOGETHER – EXTENDED ARTISTIC DIALOGUE

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### Abstract

This article is based on three performance papers, which started as a cocreated performance project based on a Greek myth in the autumn of 2021 and continued in 2022. A transdisciplinary artistic collective consisting of an oral storyteller, a choreographer/director, and a textile artist take a closer look at our experiences and what we named as “the extended artistic dialogue”. With the research question: what can recognize an extended artistic dialogue? the article discusses what is needed in an extended artistic dialogue. The collaboration created a togetherness at the same time embracing the specialty from each artform. The artistic process was vibrant and dynamic as it continuously changed along the way, developing the scenarios in the performance and one’s own poetic. Listening opens the participatory process and was an experiencing for new knowledge and interpreting the experience. Our experience is that the extended artistic dialogue through the artistic processes creates relational places where the artforms flourish through respectful, inclusive, and equitable treatment of others sharing professional information, knowledge, and ideas.

**Keywords:** *performance, dialogue, listening, artistic research.*

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### Strangers?

“Once we were stranger in a myth, trying to rearticulate who we were and where we are” [Dahlsveen, Bryhn, & Kvellestad 2022]. This quote is from a performance paper, we, the authors, carried out in the spring of 2022. The paper was an extended and transformed version of a performance in November 2021 (see Figure 1). We were strangers to each other when the process began in June 2021, while now we know each other privately and professionally.

The project that forms the basis of this article, was part of a European project called OnLife. The aim of the project was to create an online performance and tried out a temporary transdisciplinary artistic collective consisting of an oral storyteller, a textile artist, and a choreographer/director, who are also the authors of this article.

Talking and discussing was consistent throughout the project and created the groundwork for scenarios in the performance. The conversations in our process were extended by including movements, scenarios, stories, embroideries as well as the audience. In this article, we aim to take a closer look at the research question: *what can recognize an extended artistic dialogue?*



Figure 1. Photo from the performance, taken by Anne Bryhn.



We try to locate elements that were present to make the artistic process propulsion, while at the same time preserving the integrity of the individual. The article is based on both the work with and implementation of the online performance, as well as performance papers carried out after the performance.

### The method – talking

We started working six months before the performance, exploring the Greek myth about the Minotaur in the maze and the connection between us as creative partners. Turning our practice into a digitized version was something we had not done before. We lacked both knowledge and expertise in the process and had to remedy this by constant trials and discussions.

Nicolas Bourriaud argues that the reality of the contemporary is montages, where one understands temporary versions of reality. The aesthetics is about editing this into works of art [Bourriaud 2009: 35]. Our performance is built around the montage principle, which we experience as dialogical; it gives room for different artistic voices to express themselves in one common process and work. The fundamental in all art is the dialogue, argues the philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965) [Buber 2002: 30].

According to the Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), every utterance is dialogic as it is part of a context [Mørch 2003: 13]. Furthermore, Bakhtin writes that a verbal event is a social phenomenon [Bakhtin 1981: 271] like in this process, where we had to talk to get to know each other both privately and professionally. The dialogue is linked to the human potential of creating meaning [Dysthe 2006: 457] and thus the dialogue is a basic condition for the human [Dysthe 2006: 463].

In its being, a dialogue can be unfinished and unpredictable and seeking [Åsvoll 2006: 449]. In our case, we came from different artistic fields and thus we had different positions and horizons of understanding. A dialogue interacts these positions into a new composition [Åsvoll 2006: 449].

One of the concepts of Bakhtin is *addressivity*, an utterance contains two voices and the meeting between the two creates meaning [Bakhtin 1981]. Furthermore, Bakhtin argues that the meaning is not the direct meaning of the word, but the meaning depends on the position of the speakers, the way it is said and the context in which utterance resides [Bakhtin 1981: 401]. Through the ongoing dialogue we were able to sort out what was important in the process towards a performance. We were aware of each other's positions and respected the artistic background and the competence everyone brought into the concept.

Bakhtin also introduced the term *heteroglossia*, that covers the multifaceted: “the simultaneous use of different kinds of speech or other signs, the tension between them, and their conflicting relationship within one text” [Ivanov 2000: 100].

As we came from different disciplines, we carried different professional languages. Heteroglossia is the opposite of the dominant use of one language and considers the different points of view in a dialogue where every word brings a potential of conciliators and contradictions [Ivanov 2000: 101].

Buber claims that the fundamental movement in a dialogue is to turn towards the other: “If you look at someone and address him you turn to him, of course with the body, but also in the requisite measure with the soul, in that you direct your attention to him” [Buber 2002: 22]. Moreover, a dialogue is not only the verbal and vocal communication, but dialogue also involves being able to interact in silence [Härkönen & Stöckell 2019: 640] where listening is a key competence. Listening to others is listening to oneself [Härkönen & Stöckell 2019: 643]. Through movement, signs and listening, dialogue can be extended to include aesthetic elements as we see it.

### **Listening as the foundation for progress**

Listening is a central part of the dialogue, it takes place both on the emotional level and on the level of reason and is characterized by a mixture of subjectivism and objectivism, closeness, and distance [Roe & Hertzberg 1999: 161]. For us, listening became a reference, as things said in a practice session would be discussed in another session. This strengthens the interpretation part of listening. Listening requires processing but is also an instrument to be able to improvise in a here and now moment. Listening opens the participatory process in which each participant is “operating as a key contributor in the meaning-making” [Grehan 2020: 54]. When our process began by talking to each other, we gradually switched to improvising scenarios that would build the performance. This gave a reassurance in the improvised as we carried references due to the listening. Helena Grehan promotes slow listening: “It is an act in which the listener is attuned to the speaker in a way that makes room for a range of responses – the possibility of deep understanding and agreement, for partial acceptance, for dissonance or disagreement as well as for misunderstanding” [Grehan 2020: 55]. This is supported by our experience, listening provides a space with many possibilities. This perspective includes flexibility and fluidity – a collaboration in motion [Anderson 2012; Kvellestad 2018].

Listening made the textile artist becoming a performing artist in this project. It gave her the confidence to perform the art of embroidery as a scenic act. Furthermore, through the sound of a needle passing through a thick fabric, a rhythm is created that gave the storyteller a focus “to lean” the verbal words towards. Through listening, the individual performer is given a room for interpretation where there are contradictions and contrasts present [Grehan 2020: 56] that can serve as scenic suggestions.

According to David Wills, listening is “the technology that transforms the sound we hear and mediates its contact with the body and, so to speak, the mind”



[Wills 2015: 74]. Listening is a bodily presence in the room, a movement where one is aware of the other performers.

Movement and listening were two different layers around and between us, the performers, it changed the performance and thus the atmosphere in the room.

It can be a challenge and it takes time to find a common pulse on stage. Through the process we trained our ability to sense the others in the room; we learned to listen through the body. Listening with the whole body, builds a good collaboration on stage. Temporalities become sharpened and the associations for the performers widened:

*Text, body and space produce a musical, architectonic and dramaturgical constellation that results from predefined as well as “unplannable” moments: everyone present senses their presence, sounds, noises, position in space, the resonance of steps and of words. It induces them to be careful, circumspect and considerate with respect to the whole of the situation, paying attention to silence, rhythm and movement [Lehman 2021: 137].*

In this way, listening expands the possibilities of creating a common artistic work.



Figure 2. Photo from rehearsal, taken by Anne Bryhn.

### The three voices

In the process, each artist had their distinctive voice, we will say something about the process from different points of view:

#### *The storyteller*

In the performance, the Greek myth is combined with autobiographical material. The myth about the Minotaur in maze or the labyrinth is, in short, about Crete and Minos, the king, breaking a promise he has made to the gods to sacrifice a white bull born out of the sea. A curse is cast over Minos and this causes his queen to mate with the white bull and then give birth to a boy who is half human and half bull. The architect Daedalus builds a maze in which the boy is placed. Finally, the monster is killed by Theseus, a young hero.

In the story we perform, we look at the good life where the material floods and that the good life also disregards something, something must be sacrificed. It is present in the myth, an experience of a culture in a heyday, at the expense of what is different. We used the myth to express something about the present time. By comparing the myth with the present, a dialogue is created, a talk between the traditional material and the contemporary time.

When I tell traditional stories in the present, I use my own experiences to understand both the story and the present:

*Minos walked the bull through the streets of Knossos to show it off. He locked it in his own garden. There he was standing and looking at the bull. As he stood like this, he thought, "What a beautiful creature. It would be a shame to sacrifice such a bull. I think I will sacrifice my own bulls!" As said so done, Minos sacrificed seven of his own bulls, the sacrificial smoke rose to heaven and the people partied after the sacrifice.*

*Gods cannot be fooled. That night, the sea god Poseidon rose furiously out of the sea, with his fierce fork. His shadow lay all over Crete, and only with his gaze did Poseidon send a curse to Minos.*

*Once I was in Athens, I was there on a job and the commissioners wanted me to see some of Athens. It was January, it was raining. We went up to the Acropolis and all the way, the commissioners told the bit of Greek history. I was both tired and lightheaded by all the talk, what was the point of dragging me up that way for me to see a ruin in grey weather, rain, and fog? [Dahlsveen 2021]*

The quote from the performance shows how I combine the myth with an autobiographical episode, the transition between these two stories is abrupt. Such abrupt breaks between fictional and own experience were used in several places throughout the performance and represent the unknown that may arise in a dialogue.

In the quote, there is a personal event, a desire to create a connection to the myth so that it relates to others and me, the motives in the narrative are not only action-bound by a narrative structure but can account for something outside the specific storytelling world that is formulated through the myth.

The transitions between concrete experiences of lived life and what I choose to call fictional experiences is something I often use as a storyteller to highlight the current aspect of a traditional narrative. In this move, I reveal myself as a storyteller, I take a position that one can be critical of, the danger is that I interpret the material for the listener.

My own experiences create a relationship with the Greek myth I tell. I choose the traditional material based on my own experience – the traditional material gives me more memories from my own experiences – and the narrative becomes a dialogical place over this reflection. This cyclic process between my experience and the fictional experience creates a wealth of opportunities that is visible through telling the traditional and autobiographical in combination. In this way, a foundation for the performance is created and, in the mixing, and abrupt meetings, I open the material for other expressions.

### ***The textile artist***

When the needle sticks through, there are scars, but rather small scars. “Craftsmanship is about telling a story with your hands” [Hayes 2018: 3] reflects not only a mark of quality, but it also represents a set of standards that embody skill, functionality, and sustainability. I analyzed the craft and the technic to get into the core of the embroidery activity. There is a symbiosis between needle, thread, fabric, and hands, where each part is dependent on the others. For what is a needle without thread or thread without a needle? What is the needle and thread without hands; who take the lead, the command, and the responsibility? With these questions to the audience, I wanted a break, an abrupt, to stimulate reflection about the craft. The embroidery created a voice through big panels and small pictures.

Furthermore, the sewing fabric is creative crucial for the stitches and the threads. Through the movement of the needle, the stitch, whether small or long, is fundamental. The whole embroidery depends on the little stitches. If the little stitch disappears, the embroidery disappears.

The red synthetic leather panels with silk embroidery used in the performance, is not an obvious combination, but this increases the novelty of the materials. Exploration continued in dialogue with the simple stitch and material and combinations with different stitch densities, lengths, and directions. The embroideries, both the long and the small ones, were included as non-human participants in the performance and the performance papers to achieve an extended dialogue with the audience (see Figure 2).

The material's dull surface provided resistance to the needle, and when the stitches tightened, a relief arose rising from a two-dimensional surface. Applying only one-color inspired creativity and innovation with new expressions in the material. The panels are individual narratives where the material creates ethereal associations to animal's anatomy, veins and tendons, the things we cannot see. That narrative is a thread of truth. The embroidery is associated with the mythical narrative with the veins unfolding and surfaces billowing and thus has a dialogical association arose when you listen with the eyes and gently touching the surface.

Richard Sennet highlights the curiosity of the material, which is crucial for making quality, creating a work with great respect that derives meaning from the work [Sennett 2008]. Targeted craftsmanship is an important part of the creation; something that is not presumed but achieved.

For quality is a likely outcome when you spend time and have patience with the embroidery in the design process. There is a binding working relationship between the artist and the material. Questions are asked, tests are evaluated, new test must be made, new questions must be asked and, thus, the work and research are established [Kvellestad 2018]. The material-based creation is slow, and courage and patience are important factors. To embroider takes time and time is visible, this visibility gives the embroidery respect [Robach 2013].

### ***The choreographer/director***

The movements of a dialogue were extended in the online performance. The performance in November 2021 was on the video platform zoom. The logged in audience then entered a window divided in three screens in front of them. In the online performance, the storyteller, the textile artist, and the textile were moving in the actual room we were in and at the same time the three cameras/iPads were also moving, as if the audience entered in the middle of an ongoing dialogue.

Our talk together in the process was to get to know each other both privately and professionally. A safe environment was built through these dialogues and the necessity of making a safe environment among all of us, the participants, involving in a performance is always crucial for me to reach natural embodied movements on stage. When the participants relax, they let go of some of their own awareness and start to listen to each other's words and movements. At this point the dialogue between everybody and everything in the performance room starts to work and the dialogue with the audience through the camera gives an extra nerve and excitement in the participants' presentation.

The consciousness of focus, space and movement dynamics is important. Using three visual screens where the performers, textile and the three cameras in movement, creates a lot of visuality going on at the same time. Making sure that the orality of the



story did not disappear in all the visuals, was important. Using our process to practise the participants' presence on stage made an embodied awareness and listening to each other in the room also created a focus. When moving to another space, the temporality in both the movement and the vocals indicated where the focus on camera would be. Getting that consciousness to highlight the abrupt breaks both visually and orally strengthen the dialogue with the audience.

The movements in the textile artist sewing do not illustrate the text from the storyteller, or vice versa, but the connection between them will be created by the audience [Leirvåg 2016: 46]. Raising awareness of both the textile artist's and the storyteller's presence in the room makes a visual balance between them that amplifies the dialogue with the audience through the cameras: "Strategies of space and spacing may disperse signs and symbols, allowing the spectators to construct their own stories" [Lehman & Primavesi 2009: 5].

Dynamic differences are unique in each body. To search and develop your own uniqueness demands practice. Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) said that it is the birthright of every man to dance. Deep down all human has a desire to just let go and dance, just for the sheer joy of it [Newlove & Dalby 2004: 10]. My task as a choreographer/director is to trigger the participants to find this joy. The effect will be a connection in between the participants and between the participants and the audience communicating a silent bodily dialogue.



Figure 3. Still-photo from video of performance paper.

By using iPads as camera, we could play and explore distances in between the participants. Moving through closeups and further distances, different speed, and angles we were able to give the audience an experience of closeness to the story, the storyteller, the stiches, the embroidery in addition to the textile artist and her needles.

### **The dialogue with the audience**

The performance's meeting with the audience took place in an online room, and this could seemingly lower the dialogical work we had during the process. We live in a time when digital practices are considered performative cultures and it is difficult to avoid being influenced by the technology in our work [Leeker, Schipper, & Beyes 2017: 10]. Digital technology is no longer just a tool but forms its own culture. The advantages of the technology are that it itself does not carry feelings and intended actions, but in our situation the online space depends on us filling it up with meaning – making experiences that one can reflect on. It was thus our task to create a digital space that provided both an experience and a reflection.

If we follow Bakhtin's thoughts on addressivity, there will be an indirect dialogue present if we consider the performance as an utterance. During the performance, we took advantage of this, by addressing "a you" directly as in the following quote from the performance: "Maybe you have even been there. An airflight, slept under the sun with a newly purchased bikini, been to a restaurant, filled up your plate and ate half. After all, we have Oil" [Dahlsveen, Kvellestad, & Bryhn, Broderi og fortelling 2021]. Through the use of "a you", the purpose was to give the audience a sense of being directly involved.

During the performance there were small dialogues between the storyteller and the textile artist, here the textile artist could represent the voice of the addressivity, where the storyteller verbally carried the main story. The textile artist's voice and point of view represented the one that reflected on what was told. At one point the textile artist looked straight into the video camera as a comment on the presence of both the performers and the audience. The textile artist's presence through the physical movements associated with the embroidery was also a form of response to the narrative. These responses were to prolong a line of thought in an ever searching for meaning. The textile artist's verbal and non-verbal responses represented an addressee and thus helped to create meaning in the performance.

We asked the online audience to drink tea, bring spices and something to write with and on. During the performance we instructed them to for instance smell the spice etc. This was both to give a feeling of community despite the distance, and to connect the myth to experiences, but also to create a form of dialogue with listeners.

During the performance, we asked the audience to write down some words based on what they experienced: "power, invisibility, anger, peace, dedication,

wonder, curious, different, courage, grief, strength, life” [Dahlsveen, Kvellestad, & Bryhn, Broderi og fortelling 2021]. These words are interpreted as expressions of addressivity and provide space for the audience to express themselves. But we do not know what has triggered the words, whether it was the use of the space, an embroidery, a movement, the autobiographical narratives, or the like. What it tells us is that there is a large room for interpretation present in a dialogue between the individual and the performance and this provides many opportunities to spin on, as the paper performances did.

The paper performances had elements of the performance (see Figure 3), but expanded to include three performers in the room, as well as bringing theory in to discuss our findings. Here a new space arose where the theory became a new dialogical partner or perhaps one can say that the theory became a structuring factor in the dialogue. The theory helped us sort our findings and gave us ideas we could discuss.

Furthermore, into the paper performances, we took with us elements that extended the dialogue. We gave photos from the process to the audience, which they could choose whether to take or give back to us. The textile artist asked the audience direct questions and commented on the embroidery to open the audience’s room of interpretation. After the paper performances, we felt that the audience had a need to come and discuss what they had experienced, whether it was the expression or the content. We believe this is due to our dialogical form of working.

### **The extended artistic dialogue**

We consider extended artistic dialogue to be both artistically method-developing and a relational place to be. We ask at the beginning of this article, *what can recognize an extended artistic dialogue?* Heteroglossia is central as it allows many voices that are both visual, verbal, and vocal. Buber emphasizes the movement in a dialogue as both bodily and spiritual. Thus, the extended artistic dialogue is not bound by the verbal word but accommodates many artistic expressions that are nuances and shadows and hints of interpretations.

Our experience is that the expanded artistic dialogue through the artistic processes creates relational places. In the relational places the artistic and creative expression arose, both in words and actions.

This preserves the unique and artistic voice, while at the same time creating a collective expression. The key is to be able to listen through a common bodily pulse.

The voice in an extended artistic dialogue speaks through the even rhythm of a needle and the desire to move in a room. The extended artistic dialogue contains artistic uniqueness and a collective’s need to communicate in a presence with others. The dialogue enriches the different artforms focus and presence on stage. The challenge can be the balance in between them. We used the benefit of our different

voices to build a performance using methods to create an aesthetic balance between these unique voices. These heuristic methods involve discovery, “instead of merely being told what to do” [McCaw 2018: 41]. We believe that these discoveries through the artistic dialogues give the performers a better understanding of the dynamics that will benefit the performance.

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# TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR INTERPRETING VISUAL IMAGES AS CYBERNETIC SYSTEM: LACAN AND DELEUZE

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## **Abstract**

This exposition endeavors to outline a theoretical framework for a methodology to interpret visual images that draws on cybernetics, semiotics, psychoanalysis and philosophical ideas. Using images, aesthetics and artistic practices as a means of generating new understanding requires translating, deciphering and interpreting those artistic products and/or processes. How can one decipher the system of visual language that underlies artistic productions? I suggest that cybernetics is requisite for such an endeavor. Cybernetic theory is the science of relations within a system, taking as its problematic the relation between a system and its productions or output; in some instances, it studies how the productions of a system influence the system itself. This exposition endeavors to articulate aesthetics or artistic works in terms of a visual language and as a cybernetic enterprise in the context of art-based research by drawing on the ideas of Lacan and Deleuze. For Lacan, aesthetics exists as a primary mode of discourse for the articulations of the unconscious, as evidenced in images in dreams, art and fantasy. Lacan is renowned for his dictum that the unconscious and its productions are structured like a language, but the kind of structure of meaning at work in the unconscious is less related to the structural grammar of a natural language than the syntax of mathematics and cybernetics. Drawing on Lacanian dream analysis, I evince how such an approach could be applied to aesthetic phenomena. Deleuze presents a semiotic theory, a theory of signs which evinces the generation of novel

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meaning in the unconscious; it can be said to be cybernetic in the way that it exists in a state of continual evolution, the output produced by the system engendering transformation in the system itself. Deleuze offers a framework for how the work of art or aesthetic phenomenon can be translated into new knowledge through the process of entrainment with signs.

**Keywords:** *cybernetics, art-based research, visual language.*

Art-based research is a new paradigm of epistemological inquiry steadily gaining recognition in the academic sphere as a legitimate form of knowledge production. It is predicated on the notion that images, aesthetics and artistic practices can be employed as a mode of thinking, with the possibility to garner novel insight in the domains of its investigations [Marshall 2007: 23]. As a newly emerging research methodology, some of its tensions remain unresolved, particularly as concerns the interpretation and exegesis of artistic productions. Using images, aesthetics and artistic practices as a means of generating new understanding requires translating, deciphering and interpreting those artistic products and/or processes. How can one decipher the system of visual language that underlies artistic productions?

In the sense of interpreting aesthetics and artistic productions as a system of visual language, aesthetic research enters the domain of cybernetics. Cybernetic theory is the science of relations within a system, taking as its problematic the relation between a system and its productions or output. In its genesis, cybernetics was conceived as a discipline of control. Wiener characterized cybernetics as concerned with the construction of self-regulating systems such that the feedback generated between the system and its output can maintain a certain homeostasis and systemic integrity [95]. He conceived of cybernetics as founded on the principles of the generation of feedback and maintenance of homeostasis and equilibrium [Wiener 1961: 114]. However, the understanding of cybernetics has since evolved from its starting point as a mechanism of control.

N. Kathleen Hayles relates the history of cybernetics as operating in stages. In the first wave, cybernetics was conceived as a mechanism of control, and maintenance of homogeneity predicated on a liberal humanist subject. But the notion of cybernetics as mechanism of control would erode to reveal a self-reflective and self-creating cybernetic system, autopoietic in its capacities [Hayles 1999: 8, 10], blurring the boundaries between world and the understanding of it. In the third wave which would encompass AI, the cybernetic system was not only self-aware but self-evolving and emergent in the sense of overcoming the constraints of its initial program [Ibid., 16].

This exposition endeavors to understand art as a visual language and as a cybernetic enterprise for the purposes of advancing knowledge and praxis in the context of art-based research; more specifically, I am undertaking to investigate art as a visual language and as a cybernetic system in the context of art-based research through the ideas of French philosophers Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) and Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995).

### **Cybernetics and Psychoanalysis**

For Lacan, aesthetics exists as a primary mode of discourse for the articulations of the unconscious, as evidenced in images in dreams, art and fantasy [Lacan 1999: 425]. Lacan is renowned for his dictum that the unconscious and its productions are structured like a language [Ibid., 413], but the kind of structure of meaning at work in the unconscious is less related to the structural grammar of a natural language than the syntax of mathematics and cybernetics. Lacan makes this explicit in his 1955 lecture “Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics, or on the Nature of Language” where he expounds that the productions of the unconscious are always in the process of generating feedback, negotiating with the structure of signification at work in the unconscious processes of the generation of meaning [295]. The structure of signification in the unconscious acts as a homeostat, adapting to the new valences of meaning introduced by the unconscious productions [Ibid., 298]. This structure of signification is relational in nature; with the introduction of new valences, the system is altered but still maintained.

I elucidate how this works in practice with the example of dream analysis, however I would venture that this understanding is also applicable to the exegesis of the work of art and aesthetic productions. Through the dream, the unconscious is trying to communicate a message to the conscious mind; this communication takes place through a renegotiation of the valences of meaning at work in the dreamer’s unconscious.

### **Dreams and Language**

Dreams are conceived by Lacan as signifiers, as texts which can be decrypted. In dreams, the unconscious attempts to render thoughts into the form of images, plays on words that compose the thought that will allow for an ease of visual representation, plays with homonyms, anagrams. Lacan describes dreams as a game of charades: in their spectacle of imagery, they solicit an invitation to the audience to guess their meaning [Lacan 1999: 425].

Given that metaphor and metonym articulate their message by veiling it, the images perceived in a dream necessarily do not correspond to a prefigured meaning that can be referenced in a catalogue of dream images or archetypes; there does not

exist a 1:1 correspondence of meaning between the signifier image and its meaning [Ibid., 426]. Through its deployment of metaphor and metonym, the meaning behind the images of unconscious productions is a riddle that requires deciphering.

Language is interposed within a matrix that exceeds language; in this sense, language exceeds itself. This is why the meanings of the messages from the unconscious are fundamentally slippery, the motion of the signifier a “sliding” [Ibid., 419], why there does not exist a 1:1 correspondence between signifier and signified. There are no fixed meanings in language, etched into stone. Language is an evolving entity, always reformulating itself in new ways, signifiers always extending their range of meaning and opening out beyond their perimeters.

For Lacan, the unconscious comprises a system of meaning which is trans-individual, and this transindividual symbolic structure exerts an effect on the subject. With the dream, or any unconscious production, the system of meaning at work in the unconscious undergoes a shift such that the valences or ratios of meaning undergo a translation or transformation. The subject is then tasked to decipher how the ratios of meaning have undergone a transformation with the introduction of a change of signification. The meaning of the work of art has special significance for the artist as the crystallization of a message, but also has import for the interpreter, who in the interpretation of the work of art, may also derive a message for herself in the work of art, who is tasked to reconcile the system of meaning at work in the work of art with the valences at work in her own subjectivity.

### **Lacanian Dream Analysis**

The practice of Lacanian dream analysis can be encapsulated in two primary principles. Firstly, what Lacan termed “imagining the symbol”, an analysis of the transmutation of symbolic idea into image, which is the work of dreaming, the dream as final output. Secondly, “symbolizing the image”, the transformation of the image into symbol, which comprises the work of dream interpretation. This is to say that the interpretation of the dream is an act of translation of previously translated material. And with any translation, some shards of meaning are lost in the process; this is why Lacan emphasized Freud’s notion that dreams can never be fully analyzed for there is always material which escapes recollection upon awakening [Kovacevic 2013: 80].

Prior to speech and signification, the subject is enmeshed or, as Lacan puts it, “in-mixed” with objects and things, existing as images of her ego. Only with the crystallization of the symbolic order in speech and language that “neutral” ground appears for her resolution of her imaginary rivalries enabling intersubjective truth. Language is requisite for dreams; dreams comprise a language that can be deciphered

if one interprets the literal text of the dream [Ibid., 82]. There is a sense in which dream analysis ought to bear structural similarity to logic and grammar, hence Lacan's reliance on the notions of metonym and metaphor [Ibid., 83]; however, the syntax of the unconscious can be understood as closely akin to combinatorial rationality of 0's and 1's than to natural grammar. The cybernetic language of the unconscious is also connected with time and chance [Liu 2010: 320].

### Lacan and Deleuze

Although Deleuze with coauthor Guattari authored a polemical critique of Lacanian ideas in *Anti-Oedipus*, there exists a structural similarity between the ontological edifices of Deleuze and Lacan. Whilst *Anti-Oedipus* was published in 1972, its effects were not fully felt until the 1980 release of *A Thousand Plateaus*. By this time, Lacan's health had declined, and he would pass away the year following. Roudinesco [1997] recounts that Lacan "grumbled" to a former student who reported it in her journal that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "desiring machine" had been pilfered from him [Jagodzinski 2012: 5]. Other structural resemblances have been noted as well [Ibid., 7]. While a thorough exposition of the congruences between the ontologies of Deleuze, Guattari and Lacan is beyond the scope of this paper, suffice to say that the structural contiguity between their edifices of thought makes for a productive comparison, and there exists a congruence in the realm of cybernetics which is a focus of this paper's exploration.

### Deleuze and Cybernetics

At this juncture, I would like to import the philosopher Deleuze into the discussion. I want to say that Deleuze's ideas are relevant and fruitful in this context of investigation as Deleuze can be conceived of as both a philosopher of aesthetics as well as cybernetics. Akin to Lacan's understanding of the unconscious as cybernetic, Deleuze invokes the notion that the unconscious functions and is organized as a machine, and like Lacan, Deleuze presents a semiotic theory of the unconscious which can be described in cybernetic terms. In the cybernetic sphere, Deleuze alongside coauthor Guattari have been heralded as prophets of cyberspace with their concept of the rhizome as disseminating multiplicity bereft of organizing center as structural analog to the internet [Marks 2006: 194]. Deleuze's thought presents the architecture of an evolving system, and thereby can be said to construct a cybernetic feedback loop that is continually in the process of revision and self-reimagining, the output produced by the system engendering transformation in the system itself. In the way that it is concerned with the generation of novel meaning and the instantiation of difference, Deleuze's philosophy has been described as an open system that supports continuous new conceptual development [Dawkins

2020: 3]. For Deleuze, the unconscious comprises a network of signs, a genetic structure of meaning that reassembles with every novel synthesis of meaning.

### Signs and Learning

Deleuze conceives that life is fundamentally an encounter with signs, signs as object of the encounter, and the encounter itself comprises a sign. Signs are not static constellations of meaning but comprise communication systems which engender new meaning [Ibid., 20]. The genetic register is constituted by signs. Beyond the material domain, there exists a genetic structure; it is a relay system between sign-events which interact, resonate with one another, and generate movement [Ibid., 126]. Deleuze elucidates learning as a process of entraining with signs, intimating a fundamental complicity between life and mind [Deleuze 1994: 165]. Deleuze gives the example of the swimmer. The swimmer learns by understanding movements in practice through signs. Learning through entraining with signs is a creative process; it is a creative process of designating meaning as well as value to one's experience [Semetsky 2011: 70].

Communication between signs produces novelty. Deleuze's semiotics understands novelty as a violent irruption that reconfigures the ratios of pre-constituted meaning. Semiotics and its meanings are not fixed; sense has to be continually fabricated anew, and this is what veritable thinking as questioning or problematizing is concerned with: the novel creation of sense. The production of sense is an event [Deleuze 1994: 191], its effects reverberating to the ontological level.

### Ideas, Sense and Meaning

The generation of sense maps a landscape of meaning for the Idea to traverse, constellating zones of enquiry Deleuze refers to as "problems" [Ibid., 164]. In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze relates that the Idea does not make reference to essence. Essence does not pertain to an object, rather it enjoins two disparate objects [Deleuze 1972: 47]. Essence is the quality common to two disparate terms, evincing "individualizing difference in itself" [Ibid., 48]. Essence is sameness, yet simultaneously expresses difference, difference affirmed by autorepetition. Difference and repetition can thereby be understood as two correlating and inextricable powers of essence [Ibid., 48].

In *Proust and Signs*, Ideas are defined as already existing within the sign; Ideas constitute the logic or laws underlying a series, the theme that underpins it [Ibid., 72]. This is what Deleuze means in *Difference and Repetition* when he says that Ideas constitute virtual maps of meaning, the objective territory of problems. Ideas indwell the sign [Ibid., 163], comprising its terrain of meaning.



Sense must emerge from the surface of nonsense for its disclosure. Nonsense is a lack of sense, although its barrenness is what enables it to bestow sense. It is bereft of sense of its own, but also possesses excess sense [Deleuze 1990: 71]. Nonsense is the realm wherein all potentialities of sense reside. Sense is engendered on the surface of nonsense, a surface which is conceived by Deleuze as “quasi-cause” in the way the significations it engenders are effectuations of a kind that supersede material conceptions of causality. The surface comprises the frontier between bodies and propositions, enabling a certain distribution of language onto bodies [Ibid., 125]. This frontier is the dimension of time pertaining to event-effects, the Aion.

### **Sense as Force**

Sense is determined by the forces which inhere within a phenomenon, says Deleuze in his commentary on Nietzsche [1983a: 3]. Given that different forces can inhabit a phenomenon, its meaning or sense is necessarily multiple [Ibid., 4]. Forces refer to a spiritual dimension, implying the implorations of the unconscious that compel one to act in ways that supersede one’s conscious awareness. Forces exist in terms of quantity and quality. The qualitative dimension of force in the way it relates to all other forces [Ibid., 42]. In the quantitative sense, force is the will-to-power as the indwelling will encrypted in force [Ibid., 49]. Invoking chance, the will-to-power brings forces into relations with another, determining that relation, and determines the qualities of those forces through interpretation of them. To interpret means for Deleuze to decide the forces which comprise the sense of a phenomenon. To interpret is to interpret difference, the qualities which constitute forces [Ibid., 53].

### **The Work of Art in *Proust and Signs***

The work of art renders substance into spiritual form, “spiritualizes” it; the work of art engenders transmutation [Deleuze 1972: 46], creating an identity between sign and meaning, the essence and transmuted substance attaining perfect adequation [Ibid., 40]. Art renders matter spiritual in the way that it renders visible the qualities or essences of difference, with each essence pertaining to a unique world [Ibid., 47]. Deleuze understands art as the “splendid final unity of an immaterial sign and spiritual meaning” [Ibid., 85]; the perception of the essences of things can be achieved through “pure thought” [Ibid., 46]. Given the continuity between the way Deleuze defines the work of art and the way he defines Ideas in *Difference and Repetition*, one can conceive of a system of relationships that understands aesthetic construction as “the unconscious destination of thinking” [Jasper 2017: 38].

### Deleuze's Late Thought on Art

In Deleuze's late thought, he renders aesthetics into "a kind of master discipline of philosophy" that supersedes the ontology of repetition and sense of his earlier work [Due 2007: 164]. Understanding thought as not just a mental practice but as existing equally in artistic praxis and other forms, Deleuze's later thought can be understood as the endeavor to conceive of a logic of thinking embodied within sensory relations. In this period, he envisages art as thought which is instantiated within a material medium, seeing philosophy as praxis of formal construction akin to art [Ibid., 154]. Deleuze's aesthetic theory of thought incorporates the previous project of semiotics of sense, conceiving that anything that can be expressed or thought through signification or ordering, is based on ordering principles that can be articulated philosophically through concepts, or through a sensory medium in terms of light and lines. Deleuze's earlier semiotic project was predicated on language, whereas Deleuze's aesthetics of thinking in the 1980s seeks to find ordering principles beyond language. The interface between philosophy and art is therefore favorable for a problematization of representation conceived in more radical terms. If philosophy is akin to a work of art, thought is not concerned with a representation of reality, but with generating configurations on an abstract plane. For philosophy to be understood as immanent discipline, the bond uniting thought and representation requires severing; art evinces how such is possible [Ibid., 155].

### Cinema

Deleuze also takes inspiration from Bergson, conceiving life in terms of images, and this notion is elaborated in Deleuze's *Cinema I* text in which Deleuze applies Peirce's theory of signs to a semiotics of material life understood as comprised of moving images [1983: 69]. Film for Deleuze is understood as an aesthetic medium and a cognitive art in the ways that it orders visual elements through time, performing a function akin to the mind. His cinematic theory renders a qualitative semiotics that concerns itself with how signifying and aesthetic qualities of film are organized independently of its narrative. Deleuze thereby endeavors to conceive of the film image in terms of an autonomous signifying reality which supersedes representation of life [Due 2007: 159–160].

### The Diagram

If we understand learning as a process of entraining with signs, I want to say that exegesis of the aesthetic work can be conceived along similar lines. I would venture to say that there is always a new meaning, insight or knowledge to be gleaned from the work, however to glean the novel meaning requires bypassing the psychic cliché, the habits of thinking that preconceive the meaning of something, and the illusion

of representation. This genetic structure is evinced for Deleuze aesthetically in the diagram or Figure. Deleuze develops the notion of the Figure to talk about the process which underlies the aesthetic production of novel meaning. The Figure is conceived as a diagram generated by spontaneous marks [Deleuze 2005: 82] and for it to arise, the subject must bypass the seduction of the psychic cliché [Ibid., 77]. Whilst the diagram initially appears chaotic and asignifying, structure and meaning emerges from out of it. The reasoning capacity of the diagram is to depict the movement of thought itself as a process. Diagrammatic logic necessitates logic of multiplicities [Semetsky 2007: 199]. The diagram suggests, hints at, or introduces “possibilities of fact” [Deleuze 2005: 101]. A diagram is a map that instead of representing, engenders the territory it refers to [Semetsky 2007: 206].

### ***What is Philosophy?***

Deleuze in *What Is Philosophy?* develops the notion that philosophy comprises a practice of conceptual invention [1994: 2] instigated upon a groundwork, or plane that orients those concepts, and enables its concepts to partake in the production of sense and meaning. Concepts are rooted in a territory, and that rootedness bestows the possibility for movement and flight from that territorial orientation [Ibid., 41]. Deleuze understands philosophy in terms of an immanent creation, the creation or construction of a plane rather than an intuition or description of reality. If it endeavors to measure philosophy against an ideal of truth, such a philosophy is dogmatic [Due 2007: 149–150]. Conceptual invention is strictly the work of philosophy, yet the Figures in art and aesthetics bestow one with affects and percepts that open us onto becomings [Deleuze 1994: 66]. Yet the signifying conceptual aspect of art is not distinct from its affective aspect, for both are entrained in a circular causality [O’Sullivan 2006: 67].

### **Conclusion**

If works of art comprise a riddle, frame a problem, compose a message to one’s unconscious that solicits decipherment, what is the message of the artwork and how do we know it? What can we say about it? From Deleuze and Lacan, one can glean that within the work of art and aesthetic productions, there is always a system of meaning at work, a system of meaning can be understood as cybernetic. In the way that dreams impart a riddle that solicits decipherment, so too, the work of art solicits exegesis. The work of art and aesthetic productions comprise a text that can be read, and such an understanding is relevant for the endeavor of arts-based research, for the purposes of translating aesthetic productions as well as their processes of production into new knowledge. I suggest that Lacanian psychoanalysis with its application in dream analysis is relevant for such an exegesis, and that Deleuze’s notion of learning

through entrainment with signs, can also be harnessed to such an end, or is applicable in this context.

In both cases, from Lacanian dream analysis and Deleuzian concept of learning, there imparted the insight that one must look deeper than the specters of representation, that there exists a clandestine meaning that one can attain if one perceives beyond the obvious interpretation; to glean novel meaning one must think both creatively, yet in accordance with life and reality. When one dreams, there is a particular message the unconscious is seeking to transmit; when one learns, one must sync with the nodes of the genetic structure embedded. How can one access the meanings that lie beyond representation, beyond the 1:1 correspondence between a sign and what it purports to represent, and beyond the psychic cliché? This is the work of creativity; through associations, tuning into transversal connections, searching for hidden meanings, trying on different cloaks of meaning through experimentation, word play, puns, through divination and chance encounters, by identifying and thinking what one unconsciously fears to think. This is intended as an outline for a theoretical framework for approaching the translation of aesthetic productions into language and knowledge. Much work is yet to be done in this respect; I have endeavored to create a framework for future inquiry.

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# **MUSIC AND RESEARCH**

# THE PIANIST'S PERCEPTION OF FIGURATIVE TEXTURE IN PIANO WORKS BY LATVIAN COMPOSERS

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## Abstract

Tracing the development of texture in Latvian piano music from the performer's point of view, including historical and stylistic aspects, it becomes apparent that figuration is one of its most prominent specific elements which demonstrates the uniqueness of texture as well as reflects stylistic transformations. The aim of this paper is to highlight the different types of interpretation of the instrument – colourful illusionary and real motoric pianism as well as their synthesis in the context of several compositional techniques of the musical language of Latvian composers. All of these aspects are particularly important for the performer.

**Keywords:** *texture of piano music, figuration, Latvian piano music, artistic research.*

## Introduction

It is interesting to investigate how Latvian piano music was formed and developed, and how it was influenced by the functioning of historical models of textures. The roots of professional music in Latvia had already appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century – this is mentioned in research by musicologists Maruta Sīle [Sīle 2003: 6] and Zane Gailīte [Gailīte 2003: 18]. However, starting with the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the first keyboard instruments appeared in the Baltics and the first international performers arrived, – Vita Vēriņa [Вериня 1991: 1] and Ilze Šarkovska–Liepiņa [Šarkovska–Liepiņa 1997: 22] have written about this – one can also begin to discuss piano music.

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Even though keyboard music in the territory of Latvia was composed and performed beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, one could only receive a professional music education in Latvia starting at the end of 1919, when the Latvian Conservatory was founded.

The origins of Latvian professional music coincided with the awakening of national consciousness and the blooming of the national school in the music of other European cultures. Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1948) wrote the following about this period: *“At the time, when Russia was consumed by the arguments between the genius Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, when Grieg was already being performed in Norway, in Denmark – Svendsen’s darkly sweet sounds, when Sibelius was growing in stature in Finland, then Czechia was praising Smetana – during this time, we Latvians were still musically illiterate, and our only excuse was that our culture was forcefully repressed and choked, and our only hope was the completely untouched virgin soil in the field of art. (..) Our folk song rescued the music of our nation; if we had forgotten our folk songs during these dark days, the Latvian nation would be non-musical – those five decades that we needed to achieve any kind of European cultural level would have been drawn out to maybe as many centuries”* [Vītols 1964: 218].

Technically sophisticated works were only written (in all genres except musical theatre) in the 1880s and 1890s, when academically educated Latvian musicians began their work. The first Latvian composers’ amateur piano works were mostly salon music. For example, dances by Pēteris Šancberģis (1841–1923) used conventional texture formulas, quadratic structures, and elementary harmonies.

When researching the historical and stylistic development of Latvian piano music from the performer’s point of view, it becomes clear that **figuration**<sup>1</sup> is one of the most specific elements which reveals the uniqueness of the layout and reflects stylistic transformations. For this reason, the aspect of Latvian piano music is the focus of this paper.

### Textural Features of the Romantic Period

Until World War II and the Soviet Occupation, Latvian piano music was more or less dominated by the trend of romanticism – for example, works by Jāzeps Vītols

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<sup>1</sup> Figuration is one of the most significant elements of piano virtuosity. A figurative drawing reflects the phonic, coloristic, and dynamic characteristics of the texture, and reveal their belonging to a specific genre and style. Additionally, there are specific features in it, including those that determine the artistic interpretation. That is why it is often the uniqueness of the figuration drawing that is the centre of attention for the performer [Zandberga 2015: 63]. It is possible to define figuration as a component of texture, which ornaments or embellishes the sound fabric with small figures, enriches the elements of the layout or creates the entire texture from motor, melodic, chord or rhythmic elements (figures), which, in certain cases, periodically repeat or enrich the coloristic of the texture with sonoric combinations.

(1863–1948), Emilis Melngailis (1874–1954), Alfrēds Kalniņš (1879–1951), Jānis Zālītis (1884–1943), Jēkabs Graubiņš (1886–1961), Harijs Ore (1885–1971), later Jānis Mediņš (1890–1966), Lūcija Garūta (1902–1977), Arvīds Žilinskis (1905–1993), Jānis Ķepītis (1908–1989), Ādolfs Skulte (1909–2000), and others. However, in a few of the works one can sense an interaction with a refined impressionistic colouring, for example, in Jāzeps Vītols' *Sonatina b moll* (1926) or Lūcija Garūta's *Etudes for the Sostenuto Pedal of a Steinway Piano* (1936). However, even though the obligatory trend of national romanticism among Soviet composers in the 1950s was followed by techniques that were still new in Latvian music in the 1960s and 1970s – dodecaphony, aleatory, sonorism, and others, and then in the 1970s and 1980s with the *new folklore wave* and searches for new melodic and simplicities – the romanticism and its features in piano texture were preserved and are still relevant today.

Latvian piano music was already a part of the European national pianism school in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it developed in the frame of the pianism traditions of that era. The fusion of melodic and harmonic figuration and its varieties relate to the unique characteristics of the harmonic language in the era of romanticism, and it was broadly and with great variety used by Latvian composers up until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, a broad Rachmaninov-like figurative layout can often be encountered in *Daina* No. 7 *Fis dur* (1931) by Jānis Mediņš, where the agitation is achieved with extensive figurations in the left-hand part (in some episodes the range reaches more than three octaves), as well as the *endless* melody in the right hand ornamented with refined triplet figurations.

Even in 21<sup>st</sup> century music, the figurative texture based on harmony in works with romantic imagery (at times one can see even impressionistic or sonoristic traits), relating to instrumental specifics is relevant. For example – Romualds Jermaks' (1931) *The Waterfall of Pērse* from *Vidzeme Notebook by Watercolours* (2002).



Figure 1. Romualds Jermaks *The Waterfall of Pērse* (mm. 2).

In this way, romantic pianism approaches (figured doubled voice or layer, polyphonised figuration, polyfigure textures, vibrato, tremolo and genre figuration) organically fit with the characteristic genres of the era of romanticism – variations and miniatures, hence this texture is often encountered in the piano works of Latvian composers from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> till contemporary piano music.

### Figurative Elements of Impressionism

The figurative texture of Latvian piano music in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is notable for impressionism trends with a different concept of movement, which is mainly associated with the style aesthetic with an emphasis on contemplative illustrative colourfulness and new timbral searches:

- **vibrating background figurations**, which vividly appear in Jānis Mediņš' *Daina* No. 17 *cis moll* (1947), where in the background of the *più mosso* section are heard fast five note figurations in a *pp* dynamic. An example of the usage of the impressionistic texture tradition at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Juris Karlsons' (1948) miniature *On a Foggy Morning* (1992), from the cycle *Three Preludes for Piano*. Throughout the entire work, the characteristic layer is heard – a tremolo of thirds, upon which the melody is applied, gradually covering all registers, as well as the bass line, which, via its doubled fifths, is reminiscent of the piano works of Debussy and Ravel;
- **rhythmically clear ostinato figurations** are encountered in the multi-layered and timbrally rich *Etudes for the Sostenuto Pedal of a Steinway Piano* by Lūcija Garūta. For example, the third etude *Bells* is dominated by a multi-layered texture with many levels: the tonic organ-point in the bass, the melody in the middle voice (over the course of the work, it periodically can be heard in an even higher register) and a rhythmic ostinato figuration in the upper voice, which gradually becomes richer;

Figure 2. Lūcija Garūta *Bells* from *Etudes for the Sostenuto Pedal of a Steinway Piano* (mm. 23–24).

- **illustrative figurations**, which imitate specific sources of sound, for example, the flow of water in Dace Aperāne's (1953) *Water Patterns* (2018).

### The Real Motoric Figurative Texture

Around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, motoric figurative texture appeared in Latvian piano music. A **linear figurative texture** was a trademark style of many of the piano works of Latvian composers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Jānis Ivanovs (1906–1983) [Ivanovs 1980: 121–122].

A similar construction of positional scale-like passages can be encountered in the creative work of other composers; however, they can also possess other semantic nuances. For example, Tālivaldis Ķeniņš (1919–2008), the Latvian born composer who resided in Canada, in his *Sonata Fantasy* (1981), unites four sound positional passages with both long, unbroken lines, which function as a release of tension, while rhythmically separately form a rhythmically pulsating background for the episodes that are full of tension.

A linear figurative texture is often associated with **polyrhythm** – a relatively simple example is the hémioles in Pēteris Plakidis' (1947–2017) *Toccata d moll* (1964). A more complex example is the *Allegro espressivo* in the final section of Pauls Dambis' (1936) *Etude No. 6* (from *Ten Etudes for Piano*, 1983), where quadruplets and sextuplets are stacked on the quintuplets in the left-hand part. A notably more complex scope can be seen in Gundega Šmite's (1977) piano work *Mercurium* (2004), where in one measure at least three different rhythm groups are combined: three eighth notes against five sixteenth notes, three sixteenth notes against five thirty-second notes, and four sixteenth notes against three sixteenth notes.

Figure 3. Gundega Šmite *Mercurium* (mm. 48).

The **percussive motoric texture**, characteristic of pianism, is particularly vividly revealed in works of the toccata or dance genre. For example, while still a student, Pēteris Plakidis composed *Tocatta d moll* (1964) and typical characteristics of the use of (this) genre typical characteristics of genre treatment can be felt in the linear figurative layout developed in Tālvāldis Ķeniņš' *Tocatta – Dance* (1971).

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Compositional Techniques of Latvian Piano Music

Due to historical reasons, new compositional technique innovations at the beginning and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only appeared as clear trends in the works of composers living in Latvia in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, Latvian piano music of the final quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is renowned for novelties in varied textures relating to new stylistic tendencies which, to a certain degree, are still relevant today:

- textures with features of dodecaphony and pointillism;
- textures with elements of sonorism (cluster technique, sonic effects);
- texture with aleatoric elements;
- textures of minimalism and repetitive techniques.

It would be risky to conclude that the mentioned trends are equally expressed in Latvian piano music. With regards to the characteristics of the instrument, some of them are revealed as diverse and colourful, but other innovative features occur minimally.

#### 1. Texture with Elements of Dodecaphony and Pointillism

In most of the piano works by composers living in Latvia in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a consistently used series technique is rarely encountered, however, other forms of dodecaphony are represented more often. Additionally, the features of **serialism** were used very rarely – there are only a few examples by composers living outside of Latvia – for example *Con forza*, the sixth of Tālvāldis Ķeniņš' *12 Studies in Contemporary Styles for Young Pianists* (1961), written for teaching purposes, and Gundaris Pone's (1932–1994) *Piano Work I* (1963).

An example of **12-tone harmony** usage in the piano works of Latvian composers is Romualds Kalsons' (1936) *Variations* (1960). Pianist and musicologist Maija Sīpola notes the work is created on a characteristic descending sad (tritone) intonation in varied repetition, seeing a similarity with the *soprano ostinato* variation form [Сипола 1990: 252]. Disregarding the music's clear tonal foundation – *b moll*, already in the first measure of the theme all 12 chromatic sounds can be heard, creating a 12-tone harmony.

In the first book of *Watercolours* (1966), Romualds Jermaks used not only the 12-tone field technique, but also 12-tone rows and 12-tone chords [Jermaka 2003:

12–16]. For example, in *Latgale Landscape* (No. 2), the 12-tone rows are heard seven times in the right-hand part, but only once in the left-hand part. A similar approach is used in the brightly lyrical *Ežezers* (No. 8), where the 12-tone rows with small changes are heard a whole 18 times in the refined magnificent figurative texture.

A bright example of the **pointillistic texture**, using the 12-tone field principle, is *Dripping icicles* (No. 6). It is formed with an interpolation approach – sounds, freely repeating, gradually attach themselves to one another, as a result the *number of dripping icicles* constantly increases, additionally, every sound remains in the same octave where it is heard the first time<sup>1</sup>.

**Ruvidamente** (♩ = 66)

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system contains a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked *pp* and *(Senza Ped.)*. The music is characterized by a sparse, pointillistic texture, with individual notes and small groups of notes (trios) that gradually build up. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Figure 4. Romualds Jermaks *Dripping icicles* (beginning).

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, composers turned their attention to a stylistic aspect to the **serialism texture**. A vivid example of that is Gundaris Pone's *Webern from Vainode* – the sixth section of *Postcards from Kurzeme* (1992), where the composer used not only a modified 12-tone series from Anton Webern's Variations op. 27 [Kurpniece 1995: 18–19], but also Webern's characteristic pointillism texture, additionally, as a stylistic contrast between the reversed and mirror like exposition of the 12-tone series, fragments of the Latvian folk song *Kur tu skriesi, vanadzini* are dispersed in the contrasting tonality (*Des dur*) of the chorale texture.

<sup>1</sup> With regards to compositional technique, it is possible to see parallels with Olivier Messiaen's second rhythm etude (*Quatre Études de Rythme Nr. 2 Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, 1947).

## 2. Texture of Sonorism

Continuing the late romanticism and impressionism traditions, notable features of sonorism can be observed in Latvian piano music on the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sonoric effects (such as **clusters**) as a trend in Latvian piano music appeared in the 1960s. One of the first examples were works by Pauls Dambis – *Third Piano Sonata* (1968), the cycle *Small Guide to Geometry* (1974).

In Violeta Przech's research of sonorism in the piano music of Polish composers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many innovative approaches of piano technique are noted [Przech 2004: 98–107]. These can also be applied to Latvian piano music:

- **using the piano keys** – striking the keys (clusters with the palm, fist or forearm). For example, the noise effect, which is achieved with a string of palm clusters and concludes with a forearm cluster in the concluding section of Pauls Dambis' *Etude No. 9*, or a traditional approach in development – a glissando in the upper register in Ģederts Ramans' (1927 – 1999) *Allegro cariccioso*, or the impressive broad range of the glissando in the culmination section of Rihards Dubra's *Etude* (1996);
- **playing the strings** – striking a key and, with a finger, fixing the corresponding string, throwing varied objects onto the strings, scraping the strings – pizzicato approach, sliding along the string with a hand or with various objects (also with a *glissando* movement), a tremolo technique on the strings, damping the string with the hand or with various objects, etc. Many Latvian composers have used this kind of playing directly on the strings – for example, Santa Ratniece's (1977) *muqarnas* (2009), Santa Buš's (1978) *Transparent* (2010), Asija Ahmetzanova's (1992) *Ortus* (2012), Dace Apeŗāne's (1953) *Cimbala* (2013);
- **resonance effects** – both with the sostenuto pedal, as well as with the help of the damper pedal – the conclusion of Selga Mence's (1953) *Impressions of Salvador Dali* (2011), where a particularly colourful approach is seen – the left hand presses the keys *d*, *A*, *D*<sub>1</sub> without sound, and with the help of an aleatorically free, maximally quick passage, the concluding chord, created from overtones in D Major, becomes illuminated.

\* Press keys without sound.

Figure 5. Selga Mence *Impressions of Salvador Dali* (the end).



### 3. Texture with Aleatory Features

Aleatoric elements appeared in Latvian composers' piano music in the 1960s and 1970s. This compositional technique was inspired by a certain level of performance freedom, as well as the creating of unique textures – this is also emphasised by American musicologist Steven Stucky: “The goal is twofold: to accommodate the performer by restoring his interpretative role, and to realize specific textures of enormous microrhythmic complexity and variety” [Stucky 1981: 110].

One of the first examples of the **aleatoric texture** is in the outer sections of Imants Zemzaris' diptych *Play Time* (1974). With the freely interpreted sound duration notation, whose notes and their groups, fermata and rest length are dependent on the performer's choices, and due to the slow tempo and uniqueness of the sound of the piano (after pressing a key, the sound slowly dissipates), the texture of the work distantly resembles pointillism. The lengths of a sound group indicated by seconds is also a characteristic element in several Pēteris Vasks' piano works – for example, *A Little Night Music* (1978) and *The Landscapes of Burned-out Land* (1992).

Aleatoric features can be encountered in piano works that include playing on the strings (*pizzicato*, microtonal *glissandi*, clusters in the extreme registers), or other sections of the body of the piano, or using additional items, which, as a result, inevitably create coincidental elements of performance.

### 4. Texture with Features of Minimalism and Repetitive Technique

However, when the repetitive technique united with minimalism, a new stylistic trend appeared in the 1970s – *a new simplicity* (a consonance based on linear thinking and harmonic beauty). The neoromantic orientation, or, as it was called by Jānis Torgāns, *the new wave of romanticism* was in opposition to the one-sided *harsh style* in the 1960s, as it strived for the pure, beautiful, and ideal [Torgāns 2010: 266].

One of the first examples of the **new simplicity** trend is Imants Zemzaris' miniature *Early in the Morning* (1975) – a bright, meditative continuity is reached in it, thanks to the figuration that is held for almost the entire work in the left-hand part, upon which is layered an expressive melody in the upper register. Imagery without conflict and a repetitive texture, characteristic of *new simplicity*, dominates many of Georgs Pelēcis' piano works, beginning with *New Year's Music* (1977) to *Autumn Music* (2011), as well as six suites for piano (1980–2008).

Features of repetitive technique can often be encountered in many other 21<sup>st</sup> century Latvian piano works: Pēteris Vasks' *White Scenery* (1980), Ēriks Ešenvalds' *Seascape* (2000), Santa Ratniece's *muqarnas* (2008), Indra Riše's (1961) *Path Signs* (2011), and others.

A completely different – an energetic and joyous imagery – overwhelms the elements of minimalism and repetition techniques that saturate the works of composers of the youngest generation. They are dominated by the previously mentioned tendency

towards a different stylistic (Paul Griffith calls this *unholy minimalism*)<sup>1</sup> [Griffith 2010: 348] and a **motoric pedal-less** layout. Vivid examples are Svens Renemanis' (1983) etude *Bells* (2002) and Edgars Raginskis' (1984) *A Little Electronic Music* (2012) – a reflection on the electronic dance music genres – *drum'n'bass*, *techno* and *dubstep*, where rhythm is often more important than other forms of musical expression. Energetic and lively rhythms are slowly layered on top of each other in a phased approach of development, characteristic of minimalism, and the range gradually expands, but the layout slowly becomes even more rhythmically complex. The third phase of development is based on fast, palm on strings dampened rhythmic chord figurations in the lower register, whose sound creates interesting sonoric effects and imitate a synthetic, electronic sound. The rhythms slowly become simpler, and all the voices of the textures synchronize in the fourth and final episode – *House music*<sup>2</sup>.

The contemporary Latvian piano music panorama would be incomplete without the unique stylistic opposition to minimalism and *new simplicity*, in other words, the *new complexity*. For example, Andris Dzenītis' piano works *Dorada* (2010) and *Octagon* (2015), which astound with their vivid register and rhythm contrasts, richness of timbres and usage of the extreme dynamic grades. In Gundega Šmite's *Hungarian Pianoscapes* (2013) the features of *new complexity* appear both in the

The image shows a musical score for five staves, likely representing the right and left hands of a piano. The score is numbered 47 at the beginning. It features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *sfz* (sforzando). The notation includes various articulations like accents and slurs. The score is divided into measures, with time signatures changing from 7/16 to 6/16, 8/16, 5/16, 7/16, and 5/16. There are also some markings like *8va* and *8va* with dashed lines, indicating octave transpositions.

Figure 6. Gundega Šmite *Hungarian Pianoscapes I* (mm. 47–51).

<sup>1</sup> The English musicologist Paul Griffiths, in his research of 20<sup>th</sup> century music styles, when considering the direction of a work's programmatic direction, identifies multiple stylistic trends relating to the repetition technique and minimalism: *holy minimalism* [Griffiths 2010: 257–264], *new romanticism* [Griffiths 2010: 265–284], *new simplicity* [Griffiths 2010: 285–297] and *unholy minimalism*, where movement and kinetic energy are in the foreground [Griffiths 2010: 348–353].

<sup>2</sup> *House music* is an electronic dance music genre which originated in the 1980s in Chicago.

complex rhythm (the maximally fast rhythmic pulsation – metronome 440 bpm), which creates metrically irregular and changing structures in varied registers, as well as the polyphony of the second section, a metrically different five-layer texture that covers almost the entire diapason.

### Conclusions

The piano pieces of Latvian composers until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were closely related to aesthetics of romanticism and conventional types of musical texture of the time. Tāivaldis Ķeniņš also emphasised the significance of the tradition of romanticism: “*Latvian music is, with regards to tradition, new music (though I am not speaking about our rich folklore heritage), enriched the most by romanticism, and it is simply not possible to discuss Latvian music and not discuss romanticism*” [Zemzare 1994: 221].

As to the relevance of the romantic tradition, it is also essential to emphasize the influence of folklore and a developed choir culture, which comparatively often manifests itself as a usage of *singing* linearity and choral textures in Latvian piano music.

Beginning in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the broadly represented varied figurative approaches relate to many compositional techniques (piano textures with elements of dodecaphony, polystylistic, and *new complexity*) often over the course of one work.

When analysing piano music of Latvian composers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from the performer’s point of view, it is obvious that modern composers in their musical language, use different elements of compositional techniques and, as a result, it is difficult to identify the types of textures or figurations that are used most often. This can be applied to many captivating piano works created in the past few years and premiered by pianist Diāna Zandberga, for example, Pauls Dambis *Bells of the Wind* (2016), Mārīte Dombrovska (1977) *Impressions for Piano and Electronics* (2018), Imants Zemzaris *From Springtime* (2019), Selga Mence’ *Summer Visions* (2020), whose priority is richness of timbres, along with searches for new features of figurative piano texture. That is why the imagination and originality of performer comes to foreground as well as emotional content of every work – the disciplines to be examined through the methods of the artistic research [Doğanton-Dack 2015: 32]. It depends also on pianist’s perception and experience. Finnish pianist and researcher Eveliina Sumelius-Lindblom has written:

*“I consider that in this context the perception analytically focuses our attention, while experience is by nature more immediate and more communicable. Experience is also inextricably linked to emotion and to the free*

*mental associations that occur somewhat on the margins of intentional self-consciousness or self-control. That is to say that both sides of perceptual experience (phenomenology and interpretation) are present when playing the piano and we cannot “switch off” the one part, while using the other”* [Sumelius-Lindblom 2019: 89].

Thus, it is possible to conclude, that the figurative texture in piano works by Latvian contemporary composers also can be linked to both – analytic and holistic perception of pianist.

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## INTERPRETING JOHN IRELAND'S BALLADE

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### **Abstract**

A handful of John Ireland's works have become relatively popular and these have tended to attract the label "English pastoral", a stereotype which does not reflect the range of genres, styles and emotions that can be found in the composer's oeuvre. The Ballade of 1929 is a case in point exploring, as it does, an array of moods, topics and emotions that are a long way from pastoralism, and it also features a structural economy and directional intensity which place the work in the tradition of 19<sup>th</sup>-century musical narration. It thus presents itself as a richly-endowed vehicle for both conventional and hermeneutic analysis, raising a number of research questions: how do structural and hermeneutic analyses interrelate? What role do topics and the composer's biography play in the musical narrative? How do the foregoing questions relate to a performance of the work? Answers to these questions form the substance of the article which concludes by offering thoughts on how the various strands may be projected in performance. The article is illustrated with extracts from the author's own video recording.

**Keywords:** *structural analysis, hermeneutics, interpretation, topics, performance.*

### **Introduction**

John Ireland (1879–1962) made a significant contribution to British piano repertoire, although his style is most often associated with English pastoralism, probably because of the relative popularity of pieces such as the Minuet from

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*A Downland Suite*,<sup>1</sup> and whilst there are plenty of piano pieces that fall within this category, there are others that do not, and which reveal a far broader imaginative and emotional world than that of country miniatures. One such is the composer's Ballade of 1929, a work of some substance and one which will be explored on four inter-related levels: structural, hermeneutic, biographical and performative.

The Ballade can be seen to follow on from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of ballade composition, perhaps showing more affinity with Liszt than with Chopin. In all instances there is a strong narrative quality, although no specific programme is ever stated. In the case of Liszt, narrativity is often brought about by, amongst other strategies, the technique of thematic transformation, his Ballade No. 2 in B minor being a striking example of such practice.<sup>2</sup> Ireland follows Liszt in that his Ballade's opening presents a theme, in this case, more cell than theme, which generates much of the subsequent material.

### Structural analysis

In terms of the Ballade's macro-structure, there is an evident ternary design: A (bars 14<sup>3</sup>–56); B (bars 57–122); A (bars 122<sup>3</sup>–141); with an introduction (bars 1–14) and coda (bars 142–186). The macro-structure, however, tells us very little about the effect of the music as heard and is too universal to have any particularity. Regarding the music as sound, Kofi Agawu writes tellingly of a work's high points as providing "some of the most memorable experiences for listeners" [Agawu 2009: 61]. Their opposites, low points, can, by extension, also be taken as musical signifiers since high and low points in opposition generate mutual markedness, and if this concept is applied to the Ballade, a better idea of its emotional trajectory can be perceived (Figure 1).

The Figure 1 graph draws on Ireland's dynamic markings but also on textural and registral considerations. The lower axis shows bar numbers, the upper shows dynamics but these are also a shorthand for degrees of intensity, not just for volume. Inevitably, subtleties and localised peaks and troughs are overlooked in favour of main blocks. It will be seen that low and middle points are offset by two high points, the first one built up to gradually, the second more rapidly. The graph thus gives a broad representation of the musical journey that a listener can expect.

<sup>1</sup> *A Downland Suite* (1932) was originally written for brass band but has subsequently been arranged for string orchestra and for wind band.

<sup>2</sup> Pianist Claudio Arrau believed that Liszt's Ballade No. 2 in B minor is a musical depiction of the legend of Hero and Leander, claiming that this interpretation was "well known in Liszt's circle" [Horowitz 1992 [1982]: 143]. One assumes that Arrau heard of this from his teacher, Liszt's pupil, Martin Krause.



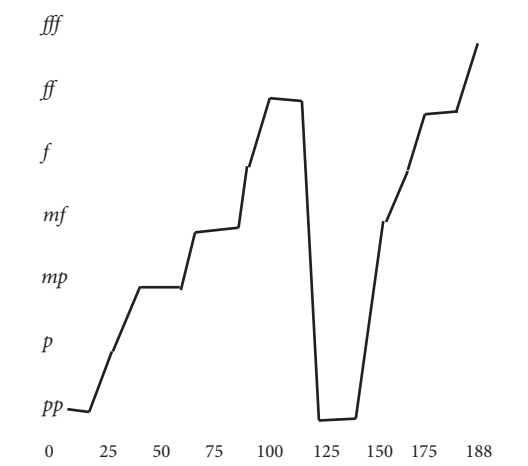


Figure 1. John Ireland, Ballade, high and low points.

There is, nevertheless, one immanent aspect that is worth examining in some detail given its vital role in the work's narrativity. Earlier I mentioned the music's cellular structure, and the first three bass-register notes that are sounded present the Ballade's principal generative feature (Example 1):

**Molto lento**

*pp* *misterioso una corda*

Example 1. John Ireland, Ballade, Bar 1.

(All extracts from Ballade by John Ireland © 1931 by Schott Music Ltd.  
All rights reserved.)

After the introduction, the work's first main theme (A) expands on this cell (Example 2):

**Lento non troppo**

*p poco marc.*

Example 2. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 14–17.

The second theme (B) offers contrast but is presented over a persistent ostinato which is a diminution of the cell. Where the original featured a descending tone and a rising 5th, the ostinato figure collapses this to a descending semitone and a rising minor 3rd, thus both intervals are effectively halved in span (Example 3).



Example 3. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 54–56.

Ireland introduces new material to go above this ostinato, but there are times when it combines with the generative cell, meaning that the original formation is placed over its ostinato diminution, as here (cells played by the right hand are indicated by red brackets) (Example 4). Even in the final pages of the radiant coda,

Example 4. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 87–92.

although there is a significant change of affect, the cellular derivation can still be found. The 5th, instead of rising, falls (bar 155) and a little later the falling 2nd becomes a falling semitone followed by a rising 4th (Example 5), thus, in its diminution, showing methodological affinity with the ostinato adaptation described earlier. The Ballade is filled throughout with such cellular references of which the foregoing are just a few examples.

Example 5. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 155–157.

A word or two about tonality is pertinent before leaving the structural field. The Ballade is not “in” any key but tonal forces can nonetheless be detected. The opening material is cast in a G-based tonality and the end of the A section even provides the listener with something very close to a regular perfect cadence (Example 6).

Example 6. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 46–49.

The middle section if anything adopts G minor, although this is constantly disguised by wandering chromaticism. Nevertheless, the regular pedal Gs and B-flats which punctuate this ostinato-based passage indicate a rooting in G minor. The passage through tonal space is complex, not to say tortuous, but when the second climax of the work arrives, the music adopts C-sharp major, the key in which the work more-or-less unequivocally ends (Example 7). The music has thus travelled as far as possible through tonal space: from G major (minor) to its tritonal opposite C-sharp major. The hermeneutic implications of this will be discussed below.

Example 7. John Ireland, *Ballade*, bars 186–188.

### Hermeneutic analysis

This constant repetition and evolution of the cell structure, and the polarizing movement through tonal space yields a strong sense of journeying and certainly matches one of Michael Klein’s four twentieth-century narrative discourse types [Klein 2013: 5] (Figure 2). The one he calls simply “narrative” is the best match:

#### *Map of Narrative Discourse*

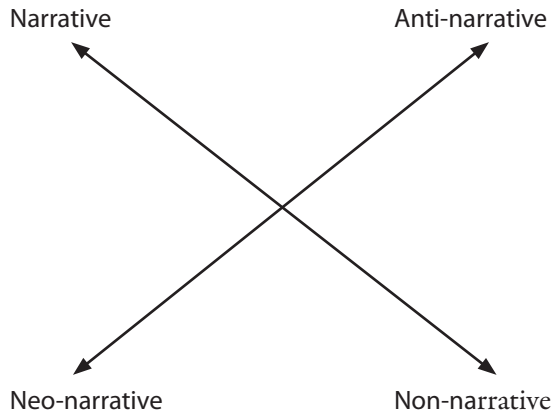


Figure 2. Michael Klein [2013], *Map of Narrative Discourse*.  
(Reproduced by permission)

“music that largely accepts the tonal, topical, and thematic premises of the nineteenth century, including moments of thematic transformation, crisis and catastrophe, transcendence and apotheosis” [Klein 2013: 4]. However, there are also elements of Klein’s third narrative type which he dubs “neo-narrative” in which “sometimes

the rhythmic drive is enough to give us a sense of musical plot” – one thinks of the Ballade’s insistent ostinato – “or the gradual motion through register” (5) – and here the work’s opening in the bass register and subsequent unfolding into high and low registers at both main climax points (seen in the graph above) indicate such motion. Klein later describes the left-hand side of his adapted semiotic square (or “western hemisphere” to use his exact terminology) as confirming rather than denying narrative, and, given that Ireland’s Ballade is not in any way a product of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century avant-garde, it is not surprising that it can be identified as a descendant of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century narrative tradition.

A narrative trajectory has so far been shown to encompass two high points (one in the B section and one in the coda), and oppositional low points at various places, as well as a journey through tonal space which is as far as possible to travel. These are in themselves emotional signifiers, but they are only such in terms of immanent musical features as opposed to extra-musical ones. A certain amount of detective work is needed when searching for indices to the extra-musical in that no programme is specified by the composer beyond the use of the title “Ballade” which itself has narrative implications. To aid in a hermeneutic discovery, I would now like to introduce the subject of topics. Before doing this however, it would be as well to pause briefly and explain how I intend to apply topic theory to Ireland’s Ballade because the substance of what follows might otherwise appear as hopelessly subjective. However, by drawing on a number of strands within topic theory, it is possible to offer a plausible rationale.

Topic theory as originated by Leonard Ratner [1980] was exclusively concerned with music from the Classical period, and it is evident that the “types” (marches, minuets, sarabandes *et al*) and “styles” (recitative, *sturm und drang*, singing *et al*) of which he wrote had universal currency in 18<sup>th</sup>- and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe and would be recognised by any informed listener in the music of a broad range of composers. In other words, they operated horizontally, as it were, across the vertical axis of an individual composer’s chronological output. Raymond Monelle requires topics to have “signification by association (the indexicality of the object)” and “a level of conventionality” [Monelle 2000: 80], what semiotician Charles Peirce referred to as “habit” [Peirce 1998 [1894]: 9], both of which requirements are obviously met by the relatively modest list of 18<sup>th</sup>-century topics originally drawn up by Ratner. However, with the passage of time and a greater stress on composer individuality and originality, this common language has tended to fragment and figures that “bear the marks of individual composerly idiolects” [Agawu 2009: 42–43] have to be taken into consideration. Elements have persisted, for example the march or the pastoral style, but others have been created and discovered, and Monelle is certainly open

to the idea that new topics, providing they meet his criteria, may be added to the topical “universe” [Agawu 1991: 43]. Janice Dickensheets [2012], in her lexicon of 19<sup>th</sup>-century topics, presented what may be regarded as European universals, but on reaching the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the picture has diversified and, for example, Melanie Plesch [2017] has written about Latin American topics in the music of South American composers and, even more specifically, Márta Grabócz [2002] has identified topics that are particular to Bartók.

Returning to the music of John Ireland, universal topics such as march, pastoral, even minuet, can be found, but there are also examples which are idiosyncratic, and these may be determined primarily by intertextual investigation: In what contexts do these composerly fingerprints occur? Can they comfortably be tied to an extra-musical signification? If the answer to these questions is “yes”, then one can, perhaps tentatively, establish a topical presence. An objection may be raised here that, whilst such topics may be thought to possess indexicality, Monelle’s other requirement of conventionality is not being met; how can it be in a newly discovered (or constructed) topic? Ratner described topics as “characteristic figures” and “subjects for musical discourse” [Ratner 1980: 9] and so, if a composer’s personal characteristic figures occur in a range of works and contribute to a musical discourse, then there is no reason to deny them topical status. Indexicality can be shown via an intertextual approach and, with the passage of time, idiolects may well acquire conventionality as well.

The heroic topic, discussed below, according to Ratner’s taxonomy, bespeaks a style rather than a type, and the other three topics that I shall consider also fit Ratner’s style category in that they reference emotional states rather than metres and rhythms. Eric Clarke has commented that in discourses concerning 20<sup>th</sup>-century music, the notion of topics as cultural units has been replaced by the idea that “specific emotions are conveyed, or triggered, by particular musical procedures” [Clarke 2005: 175]. As Michael Spitzer [2012] has so ably demonstrated, however, there is a long history of emotionally-endowed topics, and whilst Spitzer focuses in particular on the topic of anger in Mozart’s music, the Classical *amoroso*, *Empfindsamkeit* and tragic styles as well as the Romantic *appassionato* and *lamentoso* styles furnish other examples of pre-20<sup>th</sup> century emotional topics. So it is within this tradition that I will be placing the yearning, frustration and anger topics that I have identified in Ireland’s Ballade.

Firstly, there is what pianist Alan Rowlands calls “the passion motif” [Rowlands 2011: 174], but what I have elsewhere [2020] called the topic of yearning. A good example of it can be found in an earlier work called *On a Birthday Morning* [1922]. In an otherwise rather jolly piece, quite suddenly this phrase appears (Example 8):

**Poco largamente**

Example 8. John Ireland, *On a Birthday Morning*, bars 116–118.

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The birthday in question was Arthur Miller's, a one-time object of Ireland's affections, and this phrase, or similar, can be found in several of Ireland's songs and other piano pieces, for example "In a May Morning" from his piano suite *Sarnia*, which was dedicated to Michael Rayson with whom Ireland had been infatuated at the time. Since neither relationship reached any kind of satisfactory fulfilment, the topic of yearning seems an appropriate nomenclature.<sup>1</sup> Typical of the motive is quaver (or sometimes crotchet) motion that descends then rises and ends with a dropping interval in a dotted rhythm over chromatically-related harmonies. One of its manifestation in the *Ballade* occurs as follows (Example 9):

Example 9. John Ireland, *Ballade*, bars 23–26.

<sup>1</sup> In my article "Topicality in the Piano Music of John Ireland" (*iMPAR Online Journal for Artistic Research*, 2020), through an inductive process of intertextuality between Ireland's own and other composer's works, "yearning" presented itself as the best topical associate for the motive under discussion.



It is, however, more than just a motive, because in the case of both “In a May Morning” and the Ballade its use creates a musical discourse which forms the fabric of much of the A section of both pieces. The fact that this topic is invoked extensively in the A section of the Ballade as well as in later references to the A section material suggests that to regard these passages as indices to yearning, desire without fulfilment, is a valid interpretation.

The second topic I would like to discuss is not particular to Ireland but his use of it as a signifier is more personal than universal. Ostinatos are not an uncommon feature of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century music (one thinks of the *Rite of Spring*) and, as mentioned before in connection with Klyne’s neo-narrative type, they offer an alternative structural paradigm to more conventional sonata principles. But what about their hermeneutic significance? The ostinato’s relatively slow, insistent repetitiveness yields a sense of obsession and frustration, which, as dynamics increase and textures thicken, intensify as the music progresses through the B section leading inevitably to the first climax. A similar strategy has been identified by Raymond Knapp in Lerner and Loewe’s music for *Camelot* wherein the musical’s climactic number “Guenevere” “uses ostinato ... as an emblem of the obsessions that have generated this tragedy, as the carrier of the number’s sense of inevitable fate, and as the means for shaping its climax” [Knapp 2009: 179]. These are words that could equally be applied to the role of the device in Ireland’s work. So, the ostinato topic may be associated with obsession.

A third topic may be identified as anger, and here we can turn to intertextual considerations for evidence. The text of a song can helpfully provide clues to a topical association and for “In My Sage Moments” from *Five Poems by Thomas Hardy* dating from 1926, just three years before the Ballade, Ireland chose this text:

In my sage moments I can say,  
 Come not near  
 But far in foreign regions stay,  
 So that here  
 A mind may grow again serene and clear.

But the thought withers. Why should I  
 Have fear to earn me  
 Fame from your nearness, though thereby  
 Old fires new burn me,  
 And lastly, maybe, tear and overturn me!

So I say, Come: deign again shine  
 Upon this place

Even if unslackened smart be mine  
 From that sweet face  
 And I faint to a phantom past all trace.<sup>1</sup>

At the climax, where the poet self-woundingly but inescapably invites his lover-torturer back into his life (“Come”), the piano part presents a rising sequence of harmonised major 7ths, suggesting a correlation between the strident harmony and the discordant emotion of anguish. In the first climax of the Ballade, there is an even starker passage of rising major 7ths uncushioned by 3rds or 5ths which erupts out of the foregoing long drawn-out accumulative ostinato of obsession, providing a tortuous moment of dissonance and polytonality (Example 10).

**In tempo**

The musical score for Example 10 shows two systems of piano and vocal staves. The piano part is written in 9/8 time and features a complex texture of harmonized major 7ths and triplets. The dynamic marking is *ff sempre*. The vocal part has lyrics written below it. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is marked **In tempo**.

Example 10. John Ireland, Ballade, bars 101–107.

Mozart’s music may seem a long way from Ireland’s at this point, but it is interesting to read what the former wrote to his father on the subject of representing rage in music: “For just as a man in such a towering rage oversteps the bounds of order ... and completely forgets himself, so must the music too forget itself”; however he moderated this by continuing: “in music, even the most terrible situations, must never offend the ear ... must never cease to be *music*” [Spitzer 2012: 216].<sup>2</sup> For

<sup>1</sup> First published in 1925 in a collection of Hardy’s poems called *Human Shows, Far Fancies, Songs and Trifles*.

<sup>2</sup> Mozart is referring to an aria that he wrote for the character Osmin (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) who at one point loses his temper.

Mozart, Ireland's expression of anger would probably have offended the ear and no longer been music but, by extension of the principle which motivated Mozart and within the context of Ireland's own period and style, his musical parameters are pushed to their limit though not actually broken, and the music remains coherent. The emotional nuances and ambiguities afforded to "In My Sage Moments" via its text are nevertheless removed and the referent of anguish, by pushing the stylistic boundaries to the utmost, now seems uncompromisingly linked to anger. It is also experienced as a necessary outcome of the obsession (ostinato) topic, itself a consequence of the yearning topic.

As mentioned earlier, the yearning music is based in a tonality of G, the music of the radiant coda in C-sharp and this maximal tonal distance is matched by maximal topical contrast. The C-sharp based material is introduced thus (Example 11):

Example 11. John Ireland, *Ballade*, bars 150–152.

As early as 1915 Ireland had linked this motive to the concept of heroism in his *Rhapsody*, a war-time composition which polarises heroism and pastoralism producing a hybrid topic of conflict in the process [Hellaby 2020]. In the case of the *Rhapsody*, unstable tonality modifies the 19<sup>th</sup>-century topic of heroism (as heard for example in the finale of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> symphony) to something much more nuanced. Here, however, the C-sharp major tonality is unequivocal, providing a rare moment of stability in an otherwise highly unstable work. The topic reappears at the end, suggesting a heroically positive outcome to an emotional struggle.

These four topics represent progression and polarity: three of them are obviously related, forming progressive stages on a journey from yearning to anger, heroism being a contradiction. This can be shown diagrammatically, as in Figure 3.

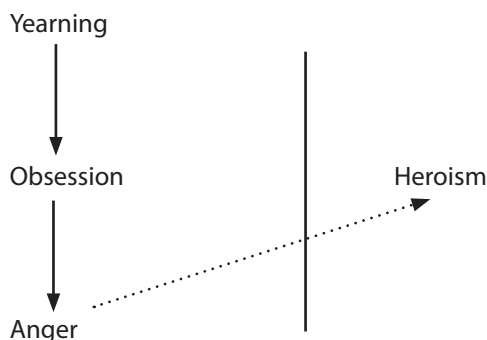


Figure 3. John Ireland, *Ballade*, topical progression.

### Brief biographical analysis

Attempts to establish an affective link between a piece of music and a composer's biographical context have sometimes been greeted with mistrust. One thinks of Stravinsky's sceptical views [1998 [1936]] on linking Beethoven's *Eroica* to his immediate historical and personal situation. On the other hand, Hans-Heinrich Eggebrecht [1993] interpreted the B-A-C-H motif used in *The Art of Fugue* as symbolic of the composer's need for salvation. By comparison, reading aspects of Ireland's inner life into the music of the *Ballade* seems almost like stating the obvious. Certainly, in the case of the *Ballade*, elements of the composer's biography seem especially relevant.

During the years immediately preceding the composition of the *Ballade*, Ireland had suffered two personal blows: firstly, in 1927, the marriage of Arthur Miller, a long-standing object of the composer's affections, and secondly the dissolution of his own brief, disastrous, marriage in March 1928. In the diary entry of his friend Sylvia Townsend Warner concerning an evening spent with him at the end of the same month, she recalled that Ireland "went off into what a devil of a time he'd had" [Richards 2000: 158]. It is therefore easy to regard the *Ballade*'s grim opening and subsequent tortuous progression through yearning, obsession and anger as indicative of Ireland's inner turmoils and the furious climax as an expression of his once-expressed desire to strangle his wife [159]. As noted earlier, however, the music ends heroically as if the struggle to overcome despair has been won, and it may not be too much of a stretch of the imagination to link this to Ireland's blossoming friendship with pianist Helen Perkin, who stated that between 1928 and 1930 "they were inseparable" [160]. Ireland's biographer, John Longmire, described Perkin as the composer's "muse" and "inspiration" [Longmire 1969: 27] and given that Ireland was later to dedicate works to her, one can postulate that this positive force in Ireland's life is invoked in the final radiant pages of the *Ballade*.

Whilst the above scenario is plausible and of contextual interest, it is important to stress that, when interpreting a work, biographical circumstances attached to that work's composition can at most be regarded as starting points and not as in any way interpretative sealants. That would be to limit a work to time, place and personality, and as Hans-Georg Gadamer has explained:

“the hermeneutically enlightened consciousness ... allows the foreign to become one's own, not by destroying it critically or reproducing it uncritically, but by explicating it within one's own horizons with one's own concepts” [Gadamer 1976 [1972]: 94].

Nevertheless, knowledge of the circumstances of the work's composition helpfully interface with the hermeneutic interpretation offered above.

### **Performing the Ballade**

Robert Hatten writes that “a performer's agency embodies the virtual agencies implied in a work. When virtual agency seems indeterminate or there are multiple possible agencies, a performer's choices guide a listener's interpretation” [Hatten 2018: 219]. In making the music my own, all the analyses so far discussed have indicated a personal hermeneutic quest with its preferences and inevitable subjectivities, and thus when it comes to performing the Ballade, I am not presenting my own understandings and emphases as in any way definitive but am offering them as one viable course of action amongst others.

When playing the Ballade, it is helpful to understand its emotional trajectory with its programmatic topics of yearning, frustration, anger and heroism. In the yearning passages which remind the listener of Ireland's lyrical music, perhaps descending from Brahms's late lyrical style, I feel it is important to preserve a singing tone but equally important to give the astringent harmonisations due weight given that these provide an important moderation of the yearning topic as it appears in this work, where it is presented in a more disturbed and restless manner than in other of the composer's compositions. This requires a fine balance between the upper notes and the accompanying harmony, the former needing a gentle emphasis from the outer fingers of the right hand, the latter requiring slightly less arm-weight and finger pressure (Video Example 1, bars 33–49, <https://youtu.be/TywG1d3odpM>).

At the two climax points (anger and heroism) I adopt different approaches. Force and incision of attack with, dare I say it, even a suggestion of tension in the forearm, seem appropriate for the dissonant outburst of bar 101 *etc.* if the full impact

of the anger topic is to be conveyed (Video Example 2, bars 99–105, <https://youtu.be/JCvpRiwo-pg>). For the heroic climax however, starting at bar 150, a more relaxed arm-drop into the keys to produce a full rather than a harsh tone can be felt to match the mood of the moment. At bar 153 *etc.* (and later equivalents), balance is again an issue, in that the exultant right-hand transformation of the yearning cell should not be overshadowed by the multiple thick chords played by the left hand. Here the secret lies, to some extent, in allowing the layout of the material to speak for itself: treble sonorities easily cut across those in the bass, so there is no particular need to project the right-hand material because a more-or-less equal amount of weight in both arms and hands will yield an appropriate balance in which the bass notes audibly support those played by the right hand but without domination. Naturally, aural monitoring is constantly called for with adjustments being made if the piano and the acoustic demand it.

Tempo is another important consideration. Ireland does not provide metronome marks but the instruction for the first main (cell-based) theme has “*Lento*” moderated by “*non troppo*”, suggesting that the music should not be too static and that a sense of line and forward momentum are necessary for the narrative quality to come across convincingly. The B section which leads to the first climax is marked “*accel. un poco ... Con moto moderato*” and the faster tempo needs to be evident to the listener, or the sense of mounting frustration (via the ostinatos) and ultimate anger will be weakened. This is particularly true of the octatonic passage starting at bar 93 where the score indicates “*poco a poco piu agitato*”, in which the frustration of the ostinato-based music begins its final escalation (Video Example 3, bars 91–100, <https://youtu.be/Qp-MiCaKPCK>).

Ireland marks very little pedalling into the score but the more harmonic passages seem to me to benefit from generous support though not to the extent of harmonic blurring. There is perhaps some irony here in that the “smeared” (chromatically driven) harmonic progressions, an interior aspect of the music, have to be heard with clarity to be at their most telling. Exteriority needs to reflect interiority. The longest stretches of unchanged pedal complement the heroic passages in which the same harmony sometimes lasts for several bars and here I aim for maximal resonance, desirable if the message is to be fully conveyed (Video Example 4, bars 149–154, <https://youtu.be/E0uXFAa4of0>).

## Conclusion

John Ireland's Ballade has proven to be a rich source for interpretative discovery, lending itself to analysis on several levels. Structural analysis has its place, but the days when authors such as Edward Cone [1968] and Eugene Narmour

[1988]<sup>1</sup> could more-or-less unquestioningly give primacy to the insights of the analyst over the insights of the performer have long been left behind. Hermeneutics, semiotics and topic theory have, in recent decades, opened up the field of analysis into much broader and richer pastures but insights thus yielded have relatively rarely been applied to performance. For the performer tackling the work under discussion, or indeed many another work, there are plentiful sources of interpretative information on which to draw: motivic and tonal structure, topical presence, scored performance directions and performance traditions, amongst others.

Here a final cautionary note is pertinent, lest any reader should think I am suggesting that a combination of the above factors in a performance will necessarily generate a great one. There is no doubt that many of us will have been thrilled by performances given by artists who do not apply the sort of analytical thought here presented to their interpretations, preferring to rely on intuition and instinct. A solution to the mystery of that “X factor” which marks out a great performance from the merely good thankfully remains as elusive as ever.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Cone regards it as a “danger” that “at some point ... we are no longer achieving a performance growing out of a musical structure, but an ‘interpretation’ more or less arbitrarily applied to it” [Cone 1968: 49]; and Narmour writes of a performance by Julius Katchen of a Brahms Intermezzo that “it lacks analytical insight ... which ramifies negatively throughout” [Narmour 1988: 321].



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# ABDUCTIVE REASONING AS A MODEL FOR MUSICAL CREATION IN JULIO ESTRADA'S MUSICAL WORKS

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## Abstract

The paper deals with two philosophical postulates that although at first sight both do not have a direct link, it is my hypothesis that there may be a connection between them since in each one imagination plays an important role in the process of scientific discovery. On the one hand, it deals with the abductive reasoning by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), focusing on the problem related with abduction and scientific imagination, *graphicacy* or the ability to represent ideas through images, *beelddenken* or “pictorial thinking” as a form of communicating ideas without the use of any verbal form, and *synthetic* topology responsible for studying the qualitative relations of any 3-D geometrical structure. On the other hand, the author presents the philosophical postulates of the *Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum* by Julio Estrada (\*1941), where reality and imagination play an important role in the process of musical creation, presenting a two-fold methodology of creation, (1) the *macro timbre* where the homogenization of the components of the rhythm-sound takes place, and (2) the *chronography*, a graphic representation of the rhythm-sound in movement. The latter is exemplified in this paper with the three examples of Estrada's musical compositions, (1) the graphical score of *eua'on* UPIC (1980), (2) graphical recording for the series *yuunohui* (1983–2020), and (3) the topological variations included in the *ishini'ioni* String Quartet (1984–1990).

**Keywords:** *abductive reasoning, scientific discovery, macro timbre, chronography.*

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## Abduction

In Charles S. Peirce's pragmatic philosophy, abductive thinking is essential because it serves to explain the process by which the mind leads to the formulation of a new theory. Peirce generally described this type of reasoning as follows: *Abduction is about examining a mass of facts and allowing the facts to suggest a theory* [CP 4, 4875, 1903]. In Peirce's theory, the concept of imagination is semantically close to the concept of intuition, which is why he emphasized the need to study both spheres of brain activity: imagination and rational thinking, arguing it as follows:

*Pragmatism is the doctrine that every conception is a conception of conceivable practical effects, it makes conception reach far beyond the practical. It allows any flight of imagination, provided this imagination ultimately alights upon a possible practical effect; and this many hypotheses may seem at first glance to be excluded by the pragmatistical maxim that are not really so excluded* [CP 5, 3798, 1903].

In the fifty years that Peirce has devoted to analyzing this philosophical archetype, he has not formulated a single general definition of abductive reasoning, but has offered various interpretations of it. In the philosopher's essays, we find several analytical definitions and terms used to define this type of inference, as mentioned by C. A. Pechlivandinis in the article "What is Behind the Logic of Scientific Discovery? Aristotle and Charles S. Peirce on Imagination": *Abduction, retroduction, hypothesis, hypothetic inference, presumption are the terms used by Peirce for abduction* [Pechlivandinis 2017].

Charles S. Peirce studied the phenomenon of abductive reasoning not only in terms of philosophy. He noticed its usefulness in pedagogy, he used this form of reasoning to explain the processes taking place in chemical compounds and physical, also to solve math problems by experimenting with diagrams, which he classified as an exercise of the imagination to access abductive reasoning. Graphical experiments carried out with this method turned out to be very useful in school teaching at the primary level of education. Seymour Simmons III in the article "C. S. Pierce and the Teaching of Drawing" emphasized this issue by distinguishing between two spheres of influence of Peirce's pedagogy: *First, Peirce's own use of drawing remind us that drawing is a cognitive matter, involving the full range of thinking skills while integrating thought with perception and feeling – in short, a whole brain, holistic experience with applications across the full range of disciplines. Second, Peirce's experimentation with perception and interpretation urges teacher to focus students; attention on the way drawings are read and the mechanism in which they are accurately, inaccurately, and diversely understood* [Simmons III 2017]. The author claims that the implications for Teaching drawing Under Peirce's approach into abductive reasoning could lead to

*re-establish its role, as an essential aspect of graphicacy, in general education* [Simmons 2017]. In this last envelope the author highlights the term **Graphicacy**, which refers to (...) *the ability to convey or interpret spatial information not easily communicated in words or numbers* [Simmons III 2017]. Peirce's considerations on the functioning of the imagination, vision and instinct as elements of the reasoning process, which are included in his notes kept since 1890, are, according to Pechlivanidis, characterized by greater maturity in explaining the essence of abductive reasoning. The American philosopher defines in them the imagination, intuition, and experimentation as tools of reason used to formulate new theories. It also explains the differences between abductive reasoning and deductive and inductive reasoning. In his notes Peirce claimed that: *Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis* [CP 5.171, 1903].

### **Abduction and scientific imagination**

Peirce focuses on abductive reasoning as part of his scientific discoveries in his notes entitled "The nature of inference" (1888). In them, he distinguishes between two methods of reasoning that justify the use of imagination, vision and intuition. *Leading principles are of two classes: those whose pretension it is to lead always to the truth unless from the false, and never astray; and those which only profess to lead toward the truth in the long run. This distinction separates two great branches of reasoning, the one bringing to light the dark things of the hidden recesses of the soul, the other those hidden in nature. We may, for the present, call them Imaginative and Experiential reasoning; or reasoning by diagrams and reasoning by experiments* [CP 4.74, 1893].

Other arguments showing the advantages of abduction reasoning are considered in the notes entitled "Abduction" (CP 7.218). Peirce describes the exercises of the imagination in them and intellect as mediators used in scientific research. When used in the tests, they allow the researcher to choose the most satisfactory result. This way, a hypothesis is formulated that provides an explanation of the phenomenon under study. Another situation in which the two mentioned mediators show their usefulness is a method of questioning everything that you want to create. It forces your imagination and intuition to be active. By means of an imagination, non-conventionally based reasoning, a human being is able to perceive all possibilities that may relate to an event that has taken place. *I have already pointed out that it is a primary hypothesis underlying all abduction that the human mind is akin to the truth in the sense that in a finite number of guesses it will light upon the correct hypothesis.* [CP 4, 4544, 1903] *Now the only way to discover the principles upon which anything*

*ought to be constructed is to consider what is to be done with the constructed thing after it is constructed* [CP 4, 4543, 1903].

All the previously mentioned aspects of abductive reasoning focus on exercising imagination, intuition and creativity as determinants of the ability to formulate logical, factual questions. Peirce's arguments regarding the advantages of abductive reasoning therefore relate to exercising the imagination, while always focusing on the situations observed in reality. The absence of either of these two components of reasoning prevents us from achieving objective results.

### **Julio Estrada's philosophy of musical creation**

In Estrada's doctoral dissertation: *Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum* [1994], Julio Estrada presented his philosophical postulates concerning musical creation taking as one of the main fundamentals the relation between reality and imagination in the process of creation. Imagination manifests everything that appears to the creator, is a product of his individuality, it manifests itself through dreams, fantasies, memories, memory, etc., acts and states. In musical creation, it is rather a mnemonic process. Estrada explains that in order to experience a musical imagination, you need certain conditions that are only available in space and in solitude, similar to those we find in sleep. At the same time, the material that appears in the state of imagination will not always be identical to the material that appears in musical reality: (*.. the inner experience of the imaginary occurs in states of solitude* (*.. Objects of the imagination are in some cases not identical to how they are concrete, because they often disappear from the control of those who perceive them* [Estrada 1994].

### **Musical irrationality and rationality**

Estrada emphasizes the importance of a dialogue between two factors: musical irrationality, the source of which is imagination and auditory perception, and musical rationality – its source is the acoustic reality. Musical creativity becomes more authentic when the following areas are combined in the act of creation: imagination and musical reality. The study of these processes makes it possible to base a new musical language on the relationships that develop between auditory perception and empirical reasoning, which is why Estrada proposes the subject of the study to make three components: (1) Mental atmosphere – it defines this aspect of the imagination with the help of the human instinct recognizing phonetic structures with different levels of expression and the associated sense of the height of a musical object. (2) Perceptual tendencies – Music is created by combining imaginary musical content with the process of rational organization of musical material. Given that each composer makes use of the above possibilities in different ways, the results are endless. (3) Movement – *The impressions related to the perception of movement coming*

*from the musical imagination allow us to obtain a bit more objective descriptions [of these processes] thanks to the similarity with reality [Estrada in print].*

Julio Estrada treats the philosophy of the *Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum* as a starting point for interpreting the products of his imagination. Searching for the philosophical foundations of his theory, he notices that the process of creation is characterized by an intrinsically united dualism; it takes into account: on the one hand, the analysis of real phenomena and abstract structures involved in the mathematical and physical organization of musical material, and on the other hand, the need to understand everything that is represented in the imagination (what the composer calls a figment of the imagination). For as he wrote: *The process we are going to follow will have to meet two conditions necessary to interpret the products of our imagination: one will take into account the physics and mathematics approach to the phenomena of reality or to abstract structures, the other – to include methods for understanding the mechanisms of internal representation [Estrada 1994].* Thus, Estrada distinguishes two views that require consideration in the philosophical foundations of his theory. The first is aimed at examining all musical material that can be organized and structured based on empirical reasoning (involving deductive and inductive reasoning). The second – it examines everything that is a figment of the imagination and that can be explained by abduction. The combination of these two types of reasoning forms the basis on which he establishes his philosophy of *Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum*.

### **Dynamic interaction**

Estrada's philosophy challenges the existing methods of teaching composition and existing in musicology theories of a musical work, the principles of counterpoint, harmony and others. His proposal includes a three-sided view of the process of creating music, taking into account theory, system and style. He argues this as follows: *My work will not be limited to researching the technique or system of teaching composition, understood as a set of methods of organizing and recording musical works, [methods] aimed at materializing previous ideas. I will also depart from purely theoretical approaches to musicology and will not be interested in their usefulness in creating compositions, nor with the idea of composition as an exclusive field of work. My approach requires considering a slightly broader understanding of the theory of composition, proposing to study the objective and subjective aspects of musical creativity. In the theory of composition, I propose to distinguish three different areas of problems: (1) Theory – that is, the study of the physical or abstract organization of musical structures. (2) System – as an area of application of theory to develop models based on selectively selected individual or collective trends. (3) Style – the subject of creativity and individual approach to perception and imagination is characteristic for each system [Estrada 1994].*



According to Estrada, composing a musical work without critically addressing each of these areas leads to the failure to realize the intention taken from his imagination. Without questioning the first or the second distinguished element of the process of creating music, the artist – according to Estrada – cannot make a real contribution to the work being created. In this case, it is possible only in the third phase of its formation, during which you can shape the sound, organize it, but without realizing that the organization system is based on the *a priori* adopted theory. Such a model is insufficient for Estrada himself, because it keeps him unaware of the ongoing process of concretizing his musical vision and forces him to write down musical ideas in accordance with a set of instructions, contradicting his own creative impulses, it does not allow to establish a personal relationship between objective and subjective aspects of his musical creativity. That is why Julio Estrada's philosophy proposes a dynamic interaction between three separate areas of the creative process, during which the real (objective) and what is imaginary (subjective) are integrated in musical creativity. As Estrada declares: *My philosophy of composition proposes a dynamic interaction in which all the motor functions of musical thought are effectively involved. Their synthetic manifestation will allow us to observe the pluralism of connections to which our interactive model aspires. Thanks to this, it is possible to balance the objective and subjective factors participating in the three-area division proposed by us* [Estrada 1994]:

- **reality**: composed of two basic elements of musical matter, rhythm and sound;
- **theory**: the study of the basic physico-acoustic, mathematical or other organization of musical matter;
- **system**: designing representative models of individual or collective choices from a theoretical base;
- **style**: characteristics determined by individual creativity in the use of each system;
- **imagination**: it marks the field of intuition, fantasies, perceptions, memories or the construction of a creative and phenomenal universe of music.

See Figure 1. *Dynamic interaction.*

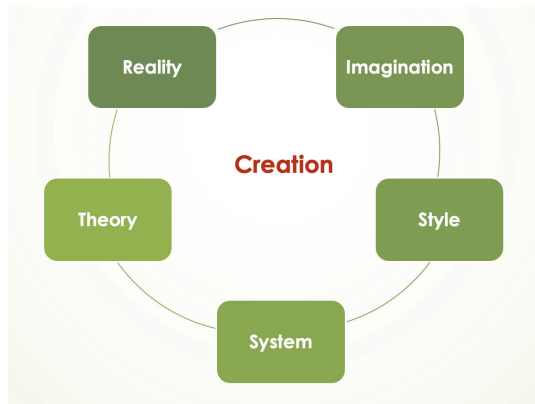


Figure 1. Dynamic interaction.



Based on this dynamic interaction Estrada developed a two-fold methodology which integrates imagination and reality. (1) The first one referring to reality, the so-called *macro timbre*, (2) the second one referring to the imaginary corresponds to a **chrono-graphical** methodology base on drawing the movements of the sound.

### **Chronoacoustic – macro timbre**

The article *Escuela del continuo en México* writing by the pianist and musicologist Velia Nieto presents the relation of Estrada to chrono-acoustics as follows: *Estrada generalizes the physical-acoustic concept of the continuum and proposes the perceptual concept of macro timbre, a synthesis of rhythm and sound that leads to a chrono-acoustic fusion of musical matter* [Nieto 2002]. The chrono-acoustic synthesis of all the components of rhythm and sound creates a physical-acoustic unit which is the rhythm-sound. Its components are sound, rhythm and sound generated by frequency, amplitude and harmonic content. They define quite a complex musical matter, the acoustic spectrum of which is defined by the composer with the term *macro timbre*. He suggests that the sound (vocal or instrumental) is the result of the homogenization of three main generators: frequency, amplitude, and harmonic content, among which six components can be distinguished – three corresponding to the rhythm and three sounds. They are constituted by the following factors: • in terms of **frequency** – by the rhythm, its duration, and by the sound itself, its pitch; • in terms of **amplitude** – by the rhythm, its global intensity (in which the attack is the most important) and by the global intensity of the sound itself (envelope); • in terms of the **harmonic content** – by the rhythm, the microstructure of the duration (*vibrato*) and by the timbre of the sound (in the sense of the tonal color).

### **Chrono-graphical transcription**

Drawing as a graphic form of what has been generated by creative fantasy is one of the main pillars of the representation of the continuum of rhythm-sound. The composer declares the need to draw these original musical ideas as follows: *Everything I hear must first be drawn and then transformed into a musical notation* [Estrada and Domínguez Salas 2020]. This key moment – the act of drawing revolutionized the whole approach to musical creation in the continuum. It allowed for a spontaneous and less rigorous consolidation of the movement of rhythm-sound-noise components in a *macro timbre*. This procedure helped him to obtain more sophisticated data of the musical material, as the composer explains: *The practice of graphically recording three-dimensional trajectories requires a highly developed ear in order to capture the immense amount of data inherent in musical materials. A multi-dimensional chrono-acoustic graphical trajectory can allow one to obtain a variety of inflections simultaneously occurring on several layers* [Estrada 2002]. The method of

conversion is explained in four steps as follows: I. *A chrono-graphical recording – an accurate copy – of any musical material.* II. *The assigning of a series of reference scales to chosen parameters in order to obtain the conversion of chrono-graphical data.* III. *A series of alternatives for transcribing data into a multidimensional musical score.* IV. *A musical performance that is a new version of the original material (I) based on the resulting score* [Estrada 2002]. See Figure 2. **Cronographical transcription.**

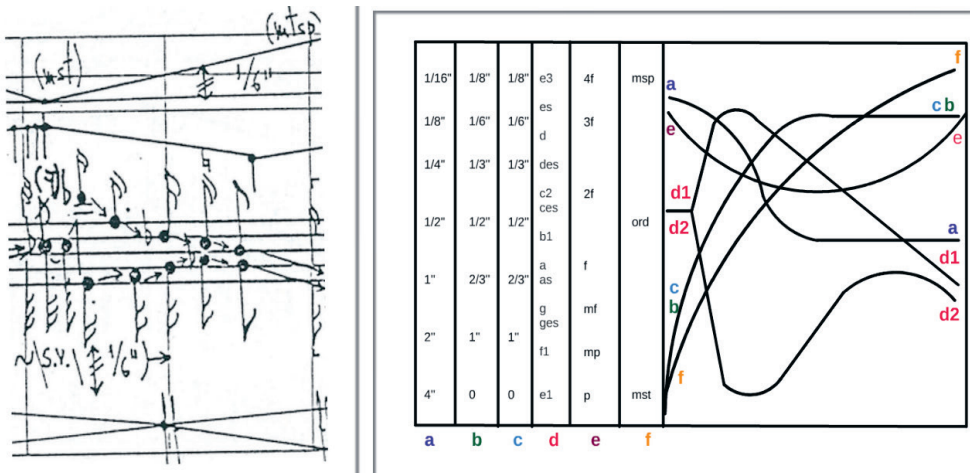


Figure 2. Cronographical transcription.

**Visual thinking**

*I do not think I ever reflect in words: I employ visual diagrams, firstly, because this way of thinking is my natural language of self-communication, and secondly, because I am convinced that it is the best system for the purpose* [R 619, 1909]. For Peirce, visual thinking was perhaps one of the most basic and clear ways to represent ideas, since the philosopher assumes that the reasoning process in the mind is not composed of distinct parts corresponding to the argument of the logical representation of it, each requiring a distinct effort of thought since thought is continuous and begins at percepts, which cannot be fully represented in words. Language cannot represent the movements of thought [CP 2.27, 1902]. As for what concerns musical creation the way of representing sounds in a traditional score obliges the composer to involve some form of musical writing, which is based on a limited code of symbols that hinder the immediate representation of the fantasy (musical idea). Following Peirce's ideas in a musical context, it can be assumed that traditional musical notation cannot represent the movements of sound in the imaginary due to the fact that the notation process needs to rely on the literalness of the language with stereotyped verbal indications, as can be observed in much of the traditional European music – *espressivo, con fuoco, molto*

*cantabile, lamentoso, or others* [Estrada in print]. On the contrary, by applying visual thinking with a graphical methodology of notation the musical creator can be able to achieve a higher resolution of the movement of sound in the imaginary and with the help of an analog representation, in this case with graphicacy, it reveals textures and shapes which express deeper understanding of the emotional intensity in the composition as well as the need to create a more personal method of converting the sound material represented in the graphic design into the final musical score. This idea can be exemplified with Estrada's following statement: *Processes of an analogical order, such as executing, recording, narrating or drawing musical fantasies, give immediate access to their objective register and open up a new space for the methods of musical creation. These processes question the idea of direct writing as an appropriate formula to represent the imaginary and place it among the concrete methods derived from transcription – or from the conversion of a type of writing* [Estrada in print]. The practice of drawing directly influenced the process of creating music, activating both auditory perception as well as visual. Creating a draw can be compared with the creation of a graphic representation of music created in the composer's imagination. This peculiar fact directly indicates the need to use drawing as one of the fundamental ontological figures of a musical work, indispensable in Estrada's musical practice. It is worth noting that this problem is addressed by the philosopher Kathleen A. Hull in the article entitled "The Iconic Peirce", in which she writes that a group of scientists from the Netherlands calls this phenomenon *beelddenken* [*pictorial thinking*]. Hull explains them as follows: (...) *researcher Maria J. Krabbe notices that people who think in images do not use language and see answers to [given] problems in an intuitive way* [Hull 2017]. In case of Estrada's drawing practice, it must be stated, however, that it has no connection with the linguistic cognitive problems presented by Krabe and Hull. In Estrada's process of creation, thinking with pictures is related with the musical *language*, in which the sounds preserved graphically are the product of the relationship between the imagined and the visualized sound, they are a derivative of cognitive activities that work simultaneously without the need to use any verbal expressions. The composer explains it as follows: *Drawing allows me to stimulate my musical creativity through the intuition of the rhythmic-sound movement in the continuum without involving any verbal form* [Estrada and Domínguez Salas 2020]. As was explained above, Peirce's observations regarding visual thinking do not concern sound as a form of visualizing a structure in a 3-D space. However, as Kathleen A. Hull explains [Peirce] *came to understand, appreciate, and, finally, to exploit the riches of visual perceptions as used in geometry for the sake of a deeper understanding of all human reasoning* (...) [Hull 2017]. Considering Peirce hypothesis for what visual thinking and imagination concerns, is possible to seek a connection between visual thinking within sound thinking applying topological variations. Here abductive

reasoning involves simultaneously an imaginary 3-D image of a sound structure and a graphical structure of the sound in movement.

Looking back during the second half of the XX century, Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001) proposed perhaps the first and most innovative method for electroacoustic musical creation using drawing as a form of immediate representation of continuous musical fantasies: the UPIC system. From a pedagogical perspective, UPIC allows not only professional musicians but anyone who wishes to experience the spontaneous creation of a musical structure simply by freely drawing any design that arises from their intuition. Consistent with Peirce's assumptions regarding drawing as part of abductive reasoning, Xenakis's approach to musical creation provides similar results when he discovered (...) *that not only architecture, but also music can emerge from precisely recorded designs: lines on the drawing surface as pictures of sustained or moving tones in the tonal space* [Frisus 2020]. In this way abductive reasoning is activated through drawing, making possible to connect intuition with musical creativity, and as a result the musical structures which emerged from this specific type of creation would be impossible to obtain if taken in consideration only from a traditional graphic representation methodology (strictly musical writing). In the following statement Xenakis provides a clear explanation for what concerns graphicacy in musical creation and how by this method a new way of communication can be approached: *If you draw lines on a blackboard, you can (...) create sounds and music (...). Not just sounds, but also developments of rather complex sounds, that is to say, of music. (...) And drawing is an ability of every human with a hand and a brain; the hand is the organ closest to the brain. (...) Giving everyone the opportunity to compose music leads to a double result: on the one hand, you make the creative activity available to everyone, and on the other hand, there is no longer this abyss between any avant-garde (there are always avant-gardes) and the rest of the audience. Rather, it's about building bridges and being able to think music, meaning creating music with everything that comes with it. (...) For everyone. From the age when the child can hold a pencil and listen, to adulthood and until death* [Frisus 2020]. Xenakis's methodology confirms – without this being the foundation of his thesis – that abductive reasoning in the process of musical composition can be increased through drawing resulting in a new form of communication between the creator and the receptor of any musical work.

Back in the year 1980 Julio Estrada got in contact with the UPIC System. Estrada's intention to approach and compose his first and only electroacoustic musical work *euo-on* (1980), was entirely an experimental form using drawing as the medium for spontaneously linking the musical reasoning within the imagination. In his own words he describes his experience as follows: *My intention was to observe the link between the dynamic and psychic potentials through the inflections given to the*

*drawing within the continuous medium and to create, with massive transformations, a texture that evokes the mental environment of the imaginary. See Figure 3. eua'on UPIC (1980).*

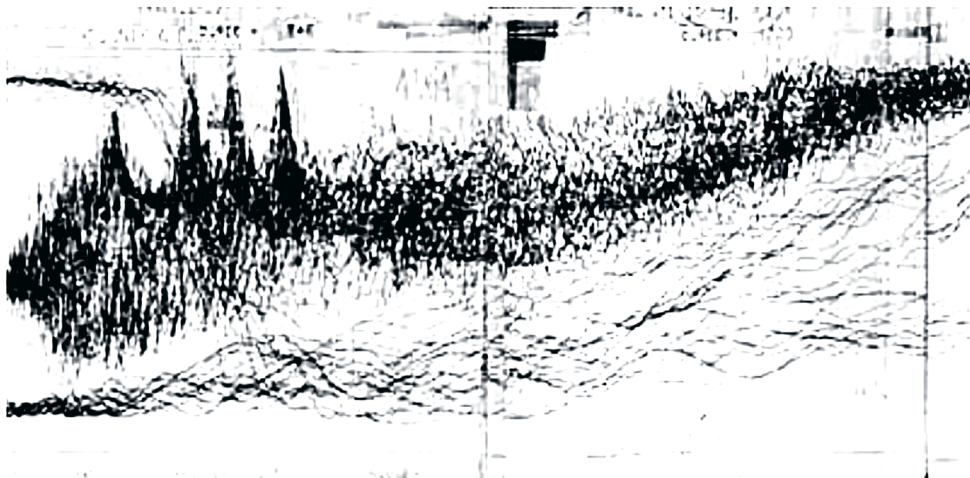


Figure 3. *eua'on* UPIC (1980).

Once his experience with the UPIC system was concluded, in 1983 Estrada began to elaborate his own chrono-graphical recording methodology – the chrono-graphical transcription based on his own theory of chrono-acoustics – *macro timbre* – already mentioned above. The conjunction of both methodologies proposes to establish a new technique for transcribing the rhythm-sound components by means of drawings. The musical material perceived intuitively by the composer is presented in a graphic design, made by hand or using a computerized transcription system, the so-called *eua'oólin* system (from Nahuatl: *eua* – flying; *oolin* – movement) created by Estrada himself at The Instituto de Matemáticas, UNAM, México. The first design created by the mentioned system is entitled the *yuunohui'* cycle (from the Zapotec language: *yuunohui* – fresh clay), which currently consists of eight series of compositions for solo instruments and two series for chamber music, all based on the same graphical composition. The total set of ten *yuunohui* series composed for solo instruments or chamber ensemble and vocal parts is as follows: • *yuunohui'yei* (1983) for solo cello, • *yuunohui'nahui* (1985) for double bass solo, *yuunohui'ome* (1989) for solo viola, • *yuunohui'se* (1990) for solo violin, • *yuunohui'se'ome'yei'nahui* (1994) for string quartet, • *yuunohui'tlapoa* (1999) for any keyboard instrument, e. g. piano, organ, harpsichord, • *yuunohui'wah* (2008) for noisemaker, • *yuunohui'ehecatl* (2010–2012) for solo or ensemble of any woodwind or brass instruments, • *yuunohui'sa* (2017–2020) for solo voice, and • *yuunohui concertante*, integrates each of the series



created in the years 1983–2020. This last series can function as a chamber orchestra piece with any number of performers without requiring a conductor, as the piece is arranged so that each instrumentalist function as a soloist. See **Figure 4. *yuunohui'* (1983) original chrono-graphical notation.**

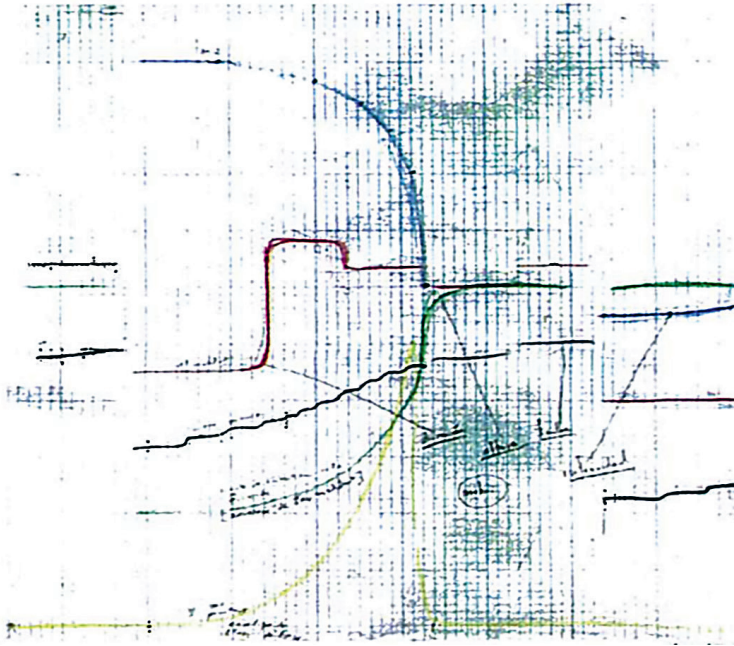


Figure 4. *yuunohui'* (1983) original chrono-graphical notation.

### Topological variations

In Peircean terms topological variations are most studied in the field of mathematics. Kathleen A. Hull explains that Peirce's classification of topology is understood (..) *as the foundation of all geometry (..) topology may be described as the study of properties of geometric objects that do not change when continuous stretching and bending of the object into a new space is performed* [Hull 2017]. *In modern synthetic topology is characterized by studying the geometry shapes in a continuous transformation regardless of the distances and measurements between the points that correspond to the structure of those objects. For that reason topological geometry does not study the forms of each object, but the transformation that are obtained through the topological variations. In order to understand the estradian topology, the dynamic identities must be treated in the same way as in the topological geometry, the content of the dynamic identities – pitch and rhythm – are not circumstantial elements that define the aesthetics value of the variation* [Domínguez Salas 2018].

### **Topological exploration**

Estrada's topological variations are accomplished by the imaginative representation of an acoustical-visual structure which provides a full range of information in reference with the internal relation of the components of the rhythm-sound. Kathleen A. Hull refers to this process as *topological exploration* where (..) *the visual method engages the geometer's assumption of true continuity, using imagery, and treats of qualitative spatial relations, rather than precise numerical values or quantitative relations* [Hull 2017]. Topological exploration serves as a point of reference to determine the value in Estrada's topological variations, where analogically to Hull's definition, the visual method provides precise information of true continuum of the musical material treating the components of rhythm-sound according to their *qualitative* relations rather than precise interval relationship or *quantitative* relations. Topology, then, is marked by its *synthetic* method: the study of flexible objects moving in 3-D sound-space involving bodily interaction with sound imagination.

### **ishini'ioni string quartet (1984–1990)**

The form of topological variations in the *ishini'ioni* string quartet indicates that they constitute another step in the development of the polyparametric counterpoint technique as well as the dynamic identity of the continuum. Characteristics of the functions entrusted to the polyparametric counterpoint and topological variations in the micropolyphonic texture can be summarized as follows: (1) The movement of the rhythm-sound components determines the quality of the micropolyphonic texture in the macro timbre. As in microorganisms, movement enables cells to transform their internal structure and prepares a new stage for the formation of the biological body, so entities of dynamic identities maintain a state of constant change of the sound spectrum in macro timbre. (2) The structural independence of the components in a given dynamic identity is manifested in the fact that each of them is independent. This makes it possible to distinguish in the auditory perception the color of sound manifested simultaneously in different areas: through upward and downward movement, trajectory acceleration-delay. (3) The rhythm-sound density is produced by the different combinatorial levels of the rhythm-sound components. The Chronograph charts corresponding to segment H of the *ishini'ioni* string quartet, where *the flexibility with which variations are rotated in space-time in different instrumental combinations. Each one is different, and the flexibility of the continuum movement ensures that they are not identical to the one that leads them, while emphasizing the continuous evolution of time. To highlight the trajectories of each voice form the original score, colors have been assigned to each instrument: first violin – red; second violin – green; viola – blue; and cello – purple* [Domínguez Salas 2018]. See **Figure 5. Topological variations**, and **Figure 6. Facsimile *ishini'ioni* String Quartet, bars 363–375.**



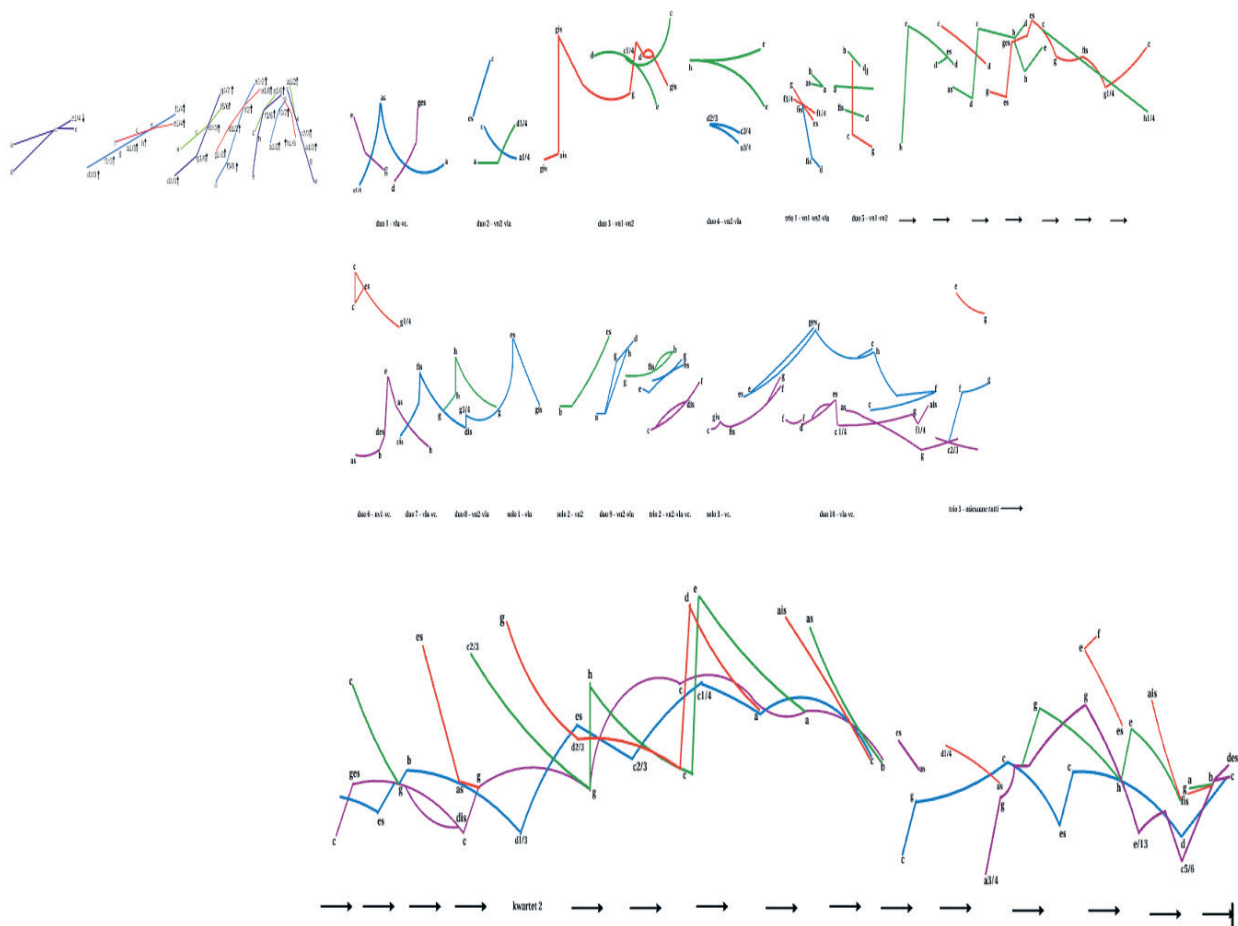


Figure 5. Topological variations [Domínguez Salas 2021].

p=56 (H) crine (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) (s.p.) (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) 365

p=56 (H) crine (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) (s.p.) (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) 370

crine p=56 (H) (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) (s.p.) (s.p.) (m.) (III, II) 375

\* In (a), difference between legato and glissando articulations should be explicit.

365 370 375

Figure 6. Facsimile *ishini'ioni* String Quartet, bars 363–375.

### Conclusion

The type of reasoning presented in Estrada's musical works shows connections with abductive reasoning, the essence of which was explained in Charles S. Peirce's writings. Although the Mexican composer was unfamiliar with the American philosopher's theory, he used the same type of reasoning. In his statements, he emphasized the importance of the creative role of the mind as an important element of creativity, which can be stimulated by both subjective (inspiration) and objective (influence) factors. My thesis related to the philosophical foundations of the Theory of Composition: discontinuum-continuum in the method of reasoning called abductive requires additional support. One of them concerns

the achieved results. As you know, the purpose of abductive reasoning is to search for explanations for surprising information. In relation to the process of creating music, Estrada tries to find arguments and logical connections between what takes place in the act of creating music and the final result, i. e., a musical work. Regarding graphicacy and visual thinking, the examples presented above show that this type of reasoning began to be applied in musical creation from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Iannis Xenakis and continuing (not only) with Julio Estrada, who included the notion of the *macro timbre*. The result of this valuable conjunction of methodologies allows to enrich the scientific discovery regarding musical creation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although Peirce has never used the abduction procedure to explain the complex and hardly empirically verifiable processes of creating music, the arguments presented above confirm the value of the philosophical presuppositions of Estrada's composition theory, highlighting the importance of visual thinking in conjunction with the creation of drawings in order to access a more creative world where imagination and the reality of sound merge in the act of music creation. In the words of Julio Estrada himself, the intention and resonance of the creation a musical work under the introspection of imagination and reality, two essential components of the creative process are expressed as follows: *Located halfway between the ear and the rational, musical perception requires an adjustment to understand the data provided by physical reality based on the awareness of the limits of human hearing. (...) The high resolution of the continuous medium leads to the greatest clarification of the phantasies. By fixing the spatio-temporal evolution of all data to the maximum, matter achieves an appearance as fortuitous and, at the same time, as precise as that of reality...* [Estrada in print].

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# AN ATTEMPT AT A NEW ANALYSIS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF RICHARD WAGNER'S *FLYING DUTCHMAN* (1843)

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## Abstract

To progress in the field of lyrical art, one must draw strength from origin. As water flows inevitably from source to sea. The legend of “The Flying Dutchman” (*Der Fliegende Holländer*) came to Wagner’s mind during the violent storm that broke as he left Riga for France. At the genesis of this opera, stands the sovereign power of nature, carrying within it the secret destiny of man. As an enigma. The main theme of the cursed captain would be today differently understood. Because romanticism, limitless love and supreme sacrifice, redemption, are gone over. But face from the sea in fury, man’s heart stays with fundamental interrogation about meaning of life and existence. One could read this raging ocean as the mirror of a tormented, wandering, unstable conscience. That’s why “The Flying Dutchman” is ever contemporary. We propose to extract (to save) from these upset waters the true *Leitmotif*, unperishable, that leads to the dawn of Future. Our method lies in total freedom of interpretation and complete reconstruction of this Wagner’s masterpiece.

**Keywords:** *contemporaneity, interpretation, signification form, total art.*

## Thematic: purpose and method

This essay of analysis and new reconstruction of the “Flying Dutchman” by Richard Wagner, is a personal, original vision, aiming to highlight the essential and the non-perishable through time (fashions, aesthetics, theories and interpretations).

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The method consists in seizing the crucial point where the whole composition is revealed and towards which its smallest details converge. That is to say the key to opening the work, to the secret of its meaning, even to its technical composition. In this opera, “The Flying Dutchman”, the key is given from the *Overture* – which itself sums up all the dramatic action, embodied by the *Leitmotifs*<sup>1</sup> (essentially, the *Leitmotiv* of the captain, of the ghost ship, of Senta).

### **Problematic: hypothesis**

This idea (this hypothesis) of a global design revolving around a central point, makes it possible to go beyond structural analysis to reach the primary, generative and creative thought of the work. The one that sets the work in motion and constantly nourishes its content, because it is its source of inspiration. Returning to this source and rediscovering its original flow, one can measure the primary force and power of the idea, intact, without ever weakening it in its subsequent interpretation or transposition. So, in its past (in 1843) as in its future, today. Hypothetically, this method makes it possible to dominate the text and to reconstruct it, in its entirety, but not necessarily in its first logical temporal succession and according to its initial aesthetics and technique. Freely redesigned, upsetting its compositional structure, one can recreate the work by bringing its meaning to the top. Whatever the new form given: abstract, symbolic, metaphorical, modern, futuristic. Moreover, like Wagnerian conceptions, to make it a total art. However, the subject must lend itself to an indivisible osmosis of image and sound. As is the case here, because it is about the sea and the legend of the sea. The setting here is dreamy. You have to be able to enter the author’s brain at the moment of fertilization of the idea. To capture that first spark, the most important, which is the main idea put into art.

### **Application. The ultimate meaning of the work and its composition**

Our hypothesis is that at a precise moment in the composition, all of its content and its ultimate meaning are revealed. (Ex. No 1: the captain’s call, Senta’s response. The osmosis of two beings. The anticipated victory of Senta and her *Leitmotif*). From this moment, it seems obvious that the *Leitmotifs* of the captain and Senta have common links, from the beginning. They are of the same nature and inevitably had to be called and tied together. On the other hand, Senta’s final victory is realized in death, which she accepts to join and be united, definitively, to the captain. By her love, her abnegation, she broke the curse that weighed on the captain and freed his soul from its sufferings. The legend’s prediction has come true. The composition thus

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<sup>1</sup> *Leitmotiv*.

revealed reads with certainty and, without a doubt, it was whole in the main idea preceding its composition. The common elements of the *Leitmotif* of the captain and the *Leitmotif* of Senta are then perfectly perceptible. (Ex. No 2 presentation of the two main *Leitmotivs* (the captain and Senta), Ex. No 2/a/b/c, and Ex. No 3: the common elements of the captain's and Senta's *Leitmotiv*). Presentation and demonstration of links.

### Research results. Originality and becoming

We claim that this semantic *Form*, where the master thought, the ultimate meaning of the work, dominates, is absolutely present in the composer's brain even before he begins to write. And that it is necessary to grasp it before analyzing or interpreting. Because a succession of logical elements will never form a Whole. It is necessary to find the Form to analyze the structure well. And it is this form that allows us to go further, into the future, and to recreate the work in a modern, current, futuristic way. By putting at the top, or in the center, the essential.

### Conclusion: consequences on the semantic analysis of the work. *hidden spiritual Form*

To grasp, today, universal **signification**, we must operate an **abstraction**. Considering only the Idea of the sea and of the curse. Because the real action is played out in the consciousness, rather in the subconsciousness, of the Captain. Above dramatic action (progressing in acts and scenes), above the abyss of the sea, the *Leitmotif* of the captain damned and of his ghost vessel, sounds as a desperate call, tormented, to which, like an echo, responds the calm *Leitmotif*, full of self-sacrificing of Senta. The tonal relationship is obvious and classic. Minor tonality (D minor) for the Captain, facing major tonality (F major) for Senta. But the two *Leitmotivs* come from each other, they are from the same nature, compatible. They possess common musical motifs and cells which bond them above the fury of the sea. This secret conception (*hidden spiritual Form*) precedes musical composition. The real signification is outside the framework and the structure of the drama and beyond its romantic connotation. (Ex. No 1: *Der Fliegende Holländer*. *Leitmotive* of damned Captain's ghost vessel and of Senta, in response).

### Signification

The limitlessness of the sea reflects the Captain's troubled conscience. The separation between Life and Death. Faith and Doubt. His revolt before Nature, his will to dominate it, his challenge before God, are provoked by hidden fear and brutal pride. The seven years of wandering on the madly turbulent sea have a symbolic meaning. Like the stopover at the port, each seven years, that gives him the chance to



finding true love that breaks the damnation. All of this symbolize the temporal space of thought and repentance, accorded to Captain for defeat his own revolt. The Sea is an impenetrable, dangerous and dark abyss, which limits the living from the dead. Against which the Captain must struggle by braving the furious, enemy and contrary winds. In fact, he is fighting against his own conscience. In contrast, Senta does not defy the sea and she throws herself into it, with faith, at the end of opera. She believes in love and salvation.

### Impact on interpretation

Sea as a dark boundary between Life and Death. Life = own will, pleasure, physical and carnal power. Death = nothingness of non-life. Senta's *Leitmotif* brings a subtle nuance, a new quivering and unknown vibration. The secret threshold between earthly life and eternal existence. The passage. The light in the immoral chasm that sees the eye of salvation. The true meaning of struggles and destinies. The sign of belonging between the *Leitmotif* of the Captain and that of Senta is in the *fluidity* of the instrumental color (English Horn and Horn-symbol of Captain), a mysterious new life, that of Water. (Ex. No 2/a/b: *Der Fliegende Holländer*, the subtle nuance into Senta's *Leitmotif*). The image, the notion, of the sea, can be stylized by a black bar that separates life from death, a zone of danger, requiring a constant struggle to stay above the abyss, on the violently agitated waves by storms. In the instrumental voice of Senta's *Leitmotif* slips the supernatural presence of the water, imbued with soul, understanding, hope and forgiveness. It is this new element that penetrates the *Leitmotif* of damnation and will cause its overturning, the face to the sky, by a victorious motif in major tonality. The dark and unfathomable abyss of the sea becomes consciousness illuminated by faith. Then it finds its bottom, the limit of torments and doubts.

### Technical and analytical foundation

Two *Leitmotivs*, of the Captain and of Senta, are musically linked (intertwined) from the start. One comes from other and they have common musical fragments and cells. But the *Leitmotif* of Senta, by its depth, surpasses that of the Captain, it dominates and overcomes the fury of the raging sea. The force of abnegation and intelligence penetrates the secret of the capricious and ungovernable sea and opens to the Captain damned the vision of a higher order. The key to listening and understanding, of the real dramatic strength, is found in Senta's *Leitmotif*. The logic of harmonic structure is very clear: Captain's *Leitmotif* in D minor face Senta's *Leitmotif* in F major. At the end, Senta's victorious *Leitmotif* in D major (minor tonality of Captain became major). Senta overturns the damnation, its face towards the sky. The stronger the despair and fury of the sea, the stronger Senta's inner conviction. The

key to balance and meaning lies in this powerful challenge. Combat of two elements which make only one.

(Ex. No 3: common musical motifs and cells between the Captain's *Leitmotif* and Senta's one. Osmosis).

### **Stylization, Abstraction, Total Art**

There are no pathological features in this legend and this opera. If so, the cursed captain would not be saved. Senta's power of love and self-sacrifice wouldn't be victorious. It is therefore a miracle of the redemption. The captain does not fall into the impenetrable, dark and satanic, abyss of the sea, but rises, freed, to the sky. Union of two soulmates above distress. This is why Senta's song (*Leitmotif*) triumphs, so powerful and so pure, at the end of the overture (in the major tonality of the Captain's *Leitmotif* = D Major). We therefore propose as visual abstraction, scenic stylization and ultimate signification, the black bar of the raging ocean where the spark of pure love falls, illuminating the universe created by God. The human soul piercing all riddles and dominating all fear, by grace to be guided and carried by its first, divine nature. All of Nature is the mirror of the soul, which the only true choice, and only rudder, is true Love.

### **Consequences in research and analysis**

The first step is the definition of the main theme, because its authenticity gives to drama its accurate contrast color. More sincere is the love of Senta, deeper is the abyss of the Sea. More evident is the light of her last triumphal *Leitmotif*, in D major: the major tonality of Captain's *Leitmotif*. The sincerity of the Captain's desperation is essential to the challenge and struggle between two antagonistic forces. Because on the one side, lie would not lead to ultimate deliverance. And on the other, this kind of love requires an absolute commitment of souls, and a complete abnegation. Perhaps it is today an outmoded romantic vision? Which was, in the Past, truth and ideal. However, we can conclude that matter is nothing, and spirit everything. By seeking the presence, the color, the vibration of the spirit, one could suddenly pierce the mysteries of the world and solve enigma of this opera: pure love and faith into limitless power of human love, face the Nature (ocean) in demon hand.

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## ***Appendices***

### *Musical examples*

- Ex. No 1. *Der Fliegende Holländer*. *Leitmotif* of damned Captain's ghost vessel and of Senta, in response).
- Ex. No 2 and 2/a/b/c. *Der Fliegende Holländer*, the subtle nuance into Senta's *Leitmotif*.
- Ex. No 3. *Der Fliegende Holländer* common musical motifs and cells between the Captain's *Leitmotif* and Senta's one. Osmosis.

Fl. a tempo

ob.

cl.

Fag.

Corn. in F.

Corn. in Bb

Senta's Leitmotif

D. minor

subtle nuance Senta's Leitmotif

modulation in d minor

V (d. minor)

Ex. nr 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  c/d : Der Fliegende Holländer, The subtle nuance into Senta's Leitmotif (English Horn and Horn = common musical elements between Captain's Leitmotif and Senta's Leitmotif). Fluidity of Water into Senta's Leitmotif. Harmonic modulation in d minor. Response of Senta to Captain. Sensitive reaction from the Captain.

Example No 1.

Allegro  
coda fno

fff

Hr.

(Damned Captain's ghost vessel Leitmotif)

D. minor (Captain's Leitmotif)

molto marcata (D. minor)

musical figure

common motif with Senta's Leitmotif

Andante  
(Engl. Horn) / solo

Senta's Leitmotif in F. Major

musical figure

common musical elements

(Captain and Senta's Leitmotif)

(F. Major)

Ex. n° 2

Der fliegende Holländer.

Captain's Leitmotif and Senta's Leitmotif.

(D. minor / F. Major)

Example No 2.



veclp + cb. Captain's leitmotif (fragment allusion) pizz. (silence)

Flauti Andante

Clas.

Corno inglese Senta's leitmotif (F Major)

Corno in F.

Corn in A.

Fag. &

F. Dur

dominant seventh chord

dominant F Major

ritard.

Ex. n° 2/a : Der Fliegende Holländer  
 Senta's leitmotif, English Horn, oboi, flauti (in echo)

Example No 2a.

*a tempo*

Fl.

ob. 1

Sinfonia Leitmotiv

F. Dur

Cl.

C. ingl.

F

T

*a tempo*

Ex. nr 2/b. : Der Fliegende Holländer (dominante-  
 F dur)  
 Sinfonia Leitmotiv : (English Horn), oboi (and flauti  
 in echo).

Example No 2b.



Fl.

Cl.

Corn.

Tr.

Tromb.

Horn

Tromb.

Annotations: Senta's Leitmotif, Captain's Leitmotif, animato un poco, poco cresc., Trombone

Ex. nr 2/d.  
 Der Fliegende  
 Holländer.  
 Captain's reaction.

like a torpedo,  
 slides trombones,  
 Animato a poco then crescendo.

Return of the Captain's Leitmotif in force.

below Senta's Leitmotif  
 fragment of Captain's  
 Leitmotif

Example No 2c.

The image shows a handwritten musical score with several staves. The top staff is labeled 'Horn' and 'Allegro con forza'. Below it is the 'Captain's Leitmotif' in a lower register. The middle section is marked 'Andante' and features 'Engl Horn' and 'Fl.' parts. The bottom section includes 'nuance' and 'minor' markings. Red annotations highlight specific musical elements: 'Fourth interval' is circled in red; 'appoggiatura' is written in red in several places; 'nuance' is written above a note; 'minor' is written below a note; and 'return of Captain's Leitmotif' is written at the bottom right. Other annotations include 'Senta's Leitmotif', 'moltissimo', 'molto crescendo', 'diver', 'answer', and 'power'.

Nr 3: Der Fliegende Holländer, common musical elements between Captain and Senta 's Leitmotive.

Example No 3.

# EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN A STRICTLY NOTATED SCORE THROUGH THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHOD: CASE STUDY – KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN'S *KLAVIERSTÜCK I*

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## Abstract

Autoethnography is a research method that focuses on the researcher's personal experiences and, through the analysis of experiences, can contribute to a fuller understanding of a phenomenon on a wider cultural level. In music, personal experience, whilst unique, can be a relatable and reliable source for the community. I am researching the individual – myself – to show my perspectives and share my experiences with others. In this article, I aim to show how the autoethnographic research method, applied to the rather technical research question of how to understand and practice a strictly notated score, can lead to an attempt to understand the meaning of freedom in musical interpretation. The article presents my own research project, with the methodology and analytical process of the data, and describes one example of the practical work conducted in my research with the piano pieces of Karlheinz Stockhausen. I aim to examine the understanding of freedom in musical interpretation and discuss why precise notation that at first might not give an impression of free interpretation possibilities can in fact be an interesting way of finding oneself and one's personal approach.

**Keywords:** *autoethnographic research, Stockhausen, interpretation, freedom, strictly notated score.*

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## Introduction

The concept of freedom in the interpretation of a notated score will have as many definitions as there are people in a room. It is beyond the scope of this article to include the variety of philosophical understandings of the concept of freedom, even when limiting these to the context of music the concept can have many definitions. However, freedom is something we talk about in music on a daily basis and is a difficult concept that a musician has to embody and understand already from a young age. When turning to literature sources on piano playing, the word “freedom” is used without much definition, with the expectation that the reader will understand it automatically within the context. Heinrich Neuhaus, in his monumental work *The Art of Piano Playing*, uses the same word “freedom” both to describe the physical aspects of piano playing, such as relaxing stiff muscles [Neuhaus 1973: 98] or freedom of the arm and wrist [Neuhaus 1973: 69], and to characterize the connection between the musical confidence and the freedom of interpretation [Neuhaus 1973: 88]. Pianists form their own understanding of “freedom” through years of practicing their instruments and work on it with every new piece. The danger is that they tend to find a comfortable understanding of the concept of freedom that stays with them throughout their musical journey, while at the same time being intimidated by the philosophical weight of the concept. In this article, I want to show how my own understanding of freedom has shifted from literal *rubato* and the concept of interpretation to being a feeling of having control of my own mind, my decisions and the end result of a piece. I will discuss how autoethnographic research and being able to look at my practice as a research tool have liberated me to see freedom even in a score whose notation can at first seem limiting and even to require a literal, mathematical and almost scientific approach to the practice methods.

In order to get into the mind of a musician who applies autoethnographic research, and since the research is heavily structured around this musician, I will describe my artistic research project and explain the ways that autoethnography and the analysis of autoethnographic data are reflected in my research process. I will define some of the main concepts and methods of my research, focusing specifically on autoethnography as a research method and phenomenology as an analytical tool. In this article, I will also include one very specific example of a practice approach that I came across in my work and look at it not from the perspective of a practice process but from the point of view of a pianist who has to execute this method on a daily basis. The example will be taken from *Klavierstück I* (1953) by Karlheinz Stockhausen and will lead to the exploration of the concept of interpretation and the analysis of the possibility of interpretation within a precisely notated score. Finally, I will share my conclusions and the discoveries that I made when going through this unusual process and show how I ended up seeing musical freedom from a new perspective.

I am a pianist dedicated to the performance of post-tonal and contemporary music. My current artistic research project consists of the artistic component of a concert series and a monograph that focuses on the specific problems presented in the concert series. The series includes five thematical concerts focusing on the artistical and technical realization of the pianist's many roles in contemporary music. The concerts explore the development of the pianist's role from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and follow the change in the understanding of the piano, piano playing and the pianist as a person and an interpreter during the past 70 years through the works of Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007), Pierre Boulez (1925–2016) and Morton Feldman (1926–1987), all three of whom, while belonging to different aesthetic compositional schools, were commonly inspired by one composer – Anton Webern [Griffiths 2005: 152, 186]. They widened the demands of piano playing in their own ways, while at the same time expanding the pianist's roles and abilities – for example, the precise mathematical counting of rhythms, reading graphic scores, adding theatrical elements to the performance and simply expanding the understanding of listening to silence.

The goal of this monograph is to write a practical guide for pianists, introducing them to the practice methods of Karlheinz Stockhausen's piano music, focusing on the *Klavierstücke* written for the acoustic piano, totaling 14 piano pieces. I want to offer possibilities for the first steps of learning to help navigate these complicated scores. With that, my goal is not only to help with the music of Stockhausen but, through those methods and techniques, to present pianists with the tools they can use to learn more contemporary and even more complex repertoire.

I divided my research process into two stages: gaining background knowledge and autoethnographic reflection. Even though I want to research interpretation possibilities and performance practices through my own practice, I need the background material to make sure that the musical decisions I make are informed. I am relying on archive materials, Stockhausen's books and articles, lectures and conversations with musicians who worked with Stockhausen personally. In my practical guide for pianists, I am also aiming to give a certain level of background information of the pieces, but in my own words and not overpowering readers with technical or analytical information.

The main phase of my research is autoethnographic research. My autoethnographic data consist of practice diaries, recordings of practicing, markings in my score, creative writing, memories and recollections. I am focusing on the process of practice, the experience gained through it and the guidance of my own emotions, trials and errors throughout the process.



## Autoethnography

There is no overall definition for autoethnography, but *Autoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research* by Adams, Jones and Ellis [2015] put together several definitions that can be used as an approach to this research method. The definitions that I tend to lean into when defining autoethnography are the ones that state that it is a research method that “uses the researcher’s personal experiences to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences” and that “uses deep and careful self-reflection – typically referred to as “reflectivity” – to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political” [Adams et al. 2015: 2]. What I particularly like about these definitions is the emphasis on using personal experience to examine wider cultural issues, which is also a part of an inductive qualitative research method, which autoethnography is. The term “inductive research method” here is very important – I produce a research result that is applicable on a larger scale [Lodico et al. 2010: 10]. In my case, I identify a problem in a piece of music that becomes relatable to the wider audience. Thus, my problem and the solution become a phenomenon. In my journey to understand autoethnography and the ways of exploring my own experience, I rely on the works of Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner. Just as they stated in their work about the researcher as a subject, what I am doing is “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” [Ellis, Bochner 2000: 739]. I write “a story about the past, not the past itself” [Ellis, Bochner 2000: 745] – I do not just analyse what I have done but recollect how it felt, how it affected me, my playing, my understanding of the piece and of the experience the music brings me. I focus on my own transformation in the hope that it will help others to transform and gain power over their playing experiences.

I found a small poem or rather an autoethnographic diary entry in a chapter in *Autoethnography Handbook* written by Kitrina Douglas and David Carless, and in my opinion, it is a poetic yet extremely precise and concrete description of autoethnography as a research method.

*So you read my words  
 Sketched on the page  
 And learned of entanglement  
 Well, here now is my flesh  
 What say you, as I sing my song?  
 Where do you belong? [Douglas, Carless 2013: 93]*

*So you read my words sketched on the page* – here, we have a verbalization of the experience written down; *And learnt of entanglement* – we learn through the detailed analysis and understanding of the experience; *Well, here is my flesh* – autoethnography

sometimes digs into deep places and reaches the most vulnerable moments, leaving the researcher rather open to the public; *What say you, as I sing my song* – the authors call to the reader to self-reflect, to relate and to resonate; and finally, *Where do you belong* – positioning a personal experience and the analysis of such as a part of the cultural phenomenon within a larger understanding of the world (in my case, the world of contemporary music).

### Phenomenology as an analytical tool

Phenomenology is a tool to analyse my autoethnographic data. As I am a pianist focusing primarily on physical awareness during the practice process of pieces, the notions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his focus on the body as a source of knowing the world are the primary source of my inspiration. While in his writings Merleau-Ponty focuses on the senses, body and perception in the literal manner, I find it inspiring to think of these concepts from the perspective of my own research. Merleau-Ponty states that “*I consider my body, which is my point of view upon the world, as one of the objects of that world*” [Merleau-Ponty 2012: 73], which when practically applied to my own research can suggest that when I practice piano pieces, I should not look at the music from the point of view of an outsider but, on the contrary, I experience them as a member of the piano playing world, seeing myself as one with the traditions of piano playing and the pianist community and using those past experiences to bounce off when creating practice methods and suggestions for problem solving in music. By clearly identifying myself as part of the classical piano world, I can better “infiltrate” and see the issues in the piano pieces from the perception of a classically trained pianist and not only from the perception of a pianist who is experienced in post-tonal and contemporary music practice, which might easily make the research data analysis alienating. For me, the most important point from Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is the notion of the **me** being influenced by time and surroundings – by experiences – thus, navigating the discovery through the prism of the experienced moulding [Merleau-Ponty 2012: 228] – in my case, within the community of classical pianists. His elegant expression about being “*unmade and remade with time*” is how I think about myself in the piano tradition [Merleau-Ponty 2012: 228]. My knowledge, my skills and my abilities were shaped and developed within the classical piano culture, which is also a background for most of my future readers. By acknowledging that, I can focus on the challenges in the pieces that would be the challenges unique to only contemporary music performance practice or what I call universal challenges. Additionally, I have to consider the fact that, as much as I was shaped by the classical piano culture, I have now had years of diversion into contemporary music, making me different from my target audience. This thought serves as a second filter for the challenges. For example, I consider whether the problem is due to my own physical limitations, such as smaller hands; if I did not notice some



issues in the piece due to my experience with contemporary music; if I learned the piece quickly, because I had just learnt a similar piece; or if this issue could be solved with traditional piano playing skills or is unique to new music performance practice.

### Case study – *Klavierstück I* (1952)

Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück I* is one of his four piano pieces composed between 1952 and 1953. These pieces can be seen as the composer's journey and an example of creativity within point and group composition [Harvey 1975: 21]. *Klavierstück I* is a mathematically calculated piece that was composed with measurements and relationships, not around the instrument [Stockhausen 1963: 74]. These measurements create a complex score, where the pitches define their relationships with dynamics, rhythms, chordal arrangements and durations [Harvey 1975: 23]. This is reflected in the strictness of the notation. The score gives an overwhelming amount of information, which is detailed and fills each moment of the piece (Figure 1). Almost each pitch has a determined dynamic and exact length. To me, strict notation like this can be approached in a reversed way: as the pianist Ian Pace simply yet elegantly put in his article, it is not necessary for the composer to focus on expressing what to do but "telling the performer what *not* to do" [Pace 2009: 155]. As much as the score here dictates the instructions for almost every pitch, it is indeed easier to determine what not to do in the piece – to me, this was to not be free and to try to calculate, precisely execute and endlessly count.

Figure 1. Example of the strict notation in *Klavierstück I* [Stockhausen 1954].

I determined the two types of practice issues: the issues that are only characteristic for this piece and the more traditional pianistic issues that the pianist would face in practicing traditional classical music. The issues unique to the piece, from the point of view of a traditional classical music performer, would be the complex polyrhythms, sudden dynamic changes and the precision of note lengths. More traditional issues would be fast jumps between pitches – something that pianists face in many classical pieces – and colouring chords with different dynamics (perhaps in traditional music, dynamical colouration is not as extreme, but it is one of the tools the pianist would possess anyway, with each finger playing a slightly different dynamic within one chord). The polyrhythmic proportions in the score are marked either with dashed brackets or traditional straight-line brackets. In the short introduction in the score, Stockhausen writes that the time proportions marked under the dashed brackets can be seen as tempo changes [Stockhausen 1954], meaning that the pianist must calculate the tempos for each section under the brackets.

I had to learn to tackle the issue of the calculated tempo ratios. I got the information on how to do the calculations from the work of such pianists as Ellen Corver [2018] and Jürg Henneberger [2021]. In order to execute the polyrhythms, I have to calculate a tempo for each ratio block, making sure that I execute the note lengths and tempo changes as precisely as possible. I will show the calculation process that I followed with the first bar as an example (Figure 2). I calculate the speed of each eighth-note depending on the ratio mentioned in the bracket above the bar. In this piece, the pianist chooses their own basic tempo based on the possibility of the execution of the faster passages. My basic tempo is 80 for an eighth note. In a bar, we have 11 eighth notes that need to be played in the time of 10, meaning that the speed of eighth notes with this ratio is  $80:10 \times 11 = 88$ . This gives us the tempo for the first six eighth notes. Since there is another bracket of 7:5, we calculate the speed of the following 7 eighth notes by dividing 88 by 5 and multiplying it by 7, resulting in 123. Within a bar, we go from 88 to 123, starting with fewer notes and ending in more pitches; thus, we have a written-out accelerando.



Figure 2. First line including the first bar of the *Klavierstück I* [Stockhausen 1954].

I had to do this with every single bar that had polyrhythm bracket indications, which was most of the bars. In order to be able to practice these tempo changes as precisely as possible, I had to create my own metronome in the Click Tracker app, which made it possible to change tempos easily and practice in slower or faster tempos if needed; however, keeping the original tempo ratios.

This was just an example of the process of practicing, but it can be seen that it was very technical, mathematical, straight-forward and in the end very mechanical. I had to count and practice dynamic changes by training my muscles to do so; since the tempos were so fast, I had no time to listen, and so I just had to train my muscles to execute. I had to constantly count in order to ensure the precision of the note lengths and tempo changes. I was counting in my head, subdividing each beat into smaller values in order to make sure that a note was exactly as long as notated. As the tempos were quick, my goal in this aspect as well was to train my fingers and arms to lift at the exact time, not overlapping with the notes, and to make sure that no pitch was too long or too short. I had no freedom in tempo, dynamics or specifically in phrasing since, due to the compositional method of the piece, there was no such thing. I was constantly striving for execution and perfection. This led me to become a machine – an automatized player, who had to perform hundreds of repeats of each bar every day, constantly striving for precision and a religious approach to the score. Additionally, whenever I listened to the recordings of other pianists, such as David Tudor [1994], who worked closely with Stockhausen for decades, I would realize that my playing still sounded very different – I wasn't as fast, I couldn't hear his tempo ratios clearly, and thus I was constantly doubting myself.

### **Autoethnography as self-reflection and self-approval**

I always thought of myself as a soulful pianist. I loved listening to silences, to dynamics and to the resonances of the instrument. I strive to hear music where others do not necessarily hear it, and I enjoy playing just because I enjoy being around the piano. However, this time, I realized that I didn't experience any of those things. Here is a note from my practice diary that appeared at the peak of my learning process of the piece.

*I feel as I am drowning in the numbers, the self-criticism and the constant aim for precision. Someone asked me today how I interpret this music, and I couldn't understand the question. I literally forgot that I too exist within the piece. All I am doing is focusing on the precision, aiming for perfection, analysing, recording, listening, comparing myself to David Tudor. My brain doesn't feel anything, my ears feel useless. I don't listen, I only execute [Karen 2022].*

After writing that and seeing it on the page, I realized that my issue was that the score, the pitches and the music had taken power over my mind. I was empty and numb. I was unlearning all the aspects of music I used to enjoy and becoming only focused on the technique. At the same time, I knew that the approach that I had taken with the calculations and striving for precision was the right one. **I didn't want** to do anything freely in the piece – **I didn't want** to not calculate, not count and not automatize. Suddenly, with the conscious thought of understanding my choices, I achieved the feeling of “I have done enough”. I realized that my interpretation of the piece is in fact **my** interpretation. I chose to be precise, I chose to be pedantic, I chose to count and, in the end, I chose to be a machine. Even aside from the compositional technique of the piece leading to that method of practice, more importantly, **I wanted** to do it this way. I didn't want to cheat and use approximations in the tempo relations. My willingness and my obedience to the score became in fact a form of interpretation because it was a choice made with an aware and conscious mind.

Interestingly, I still played in the same way. Musically, my playing didn't change, as I still gladly followed the metronome, practiced the precision of the dynamic execution and took control over the note lengths. I still didn't sound exactly like any other recording; however, now just seeing myself working on the precision and seeing the striving for precision that I had never experienced before with quite that intensity as a way of interpreting and a way of making the piece my own made my practice process relaxed, accepting and joyful. The sounding result might not have changed, but my goals when practicing the piece had a deeper meaning: the practice process of counting, calculating and sticking to the score became an interpretation in itself. I saw interpretation as a choice, and I made those choices; thus, I was indeed interpreting. Interestingly, I returned to Neuhaus and the basic concepts of freedom and found another understanding of the word, which was tied exactly to what I was experiencing – executing the rhythmical elements as strictly as possible with great discipline leading to such freedom, where the smallest shift in disciplined rhythmical execution has the most powerful effect. [Neuhaus 1973: 32].

To me, freedom always meant *rubato* and often had to do with tempo or articulation or the way I would read *urtexts* of the pieces. However, through my experience with Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke*, freedom showed itself as a state of mind – the strength to make decisions and the state of awareness. Today, to me, musical freedom is gaining control and discipline over my own way of thinking and understanding something and most importantly validating it for myself.

At the same time, I was thinking why this understanding of freedom manifested itself in such a strong way in my mind. Why was I so relieved to see that freedom, to experience that feeling and for the first time not to be **afraid** to be free and to make choices? I instinctively made a connection with my own self as a classically trained

pianist – did I like being free in traditional classical music? Did I enjoy playing Bach from the *urtext*? Did I like playing *rubato* in Chopin? I did not. Because all these “freedoms” would mean that, no matter what freedom I took or decision I made, it was open for the widest range of criticism, and I would immediately feel the heaviness of tradition. Was it the fear of criticism from my traditional classical music performance days that lead me to have an anxiety-like reaction to the concept of “freedom”? After all, it takes a lot of bravery to interpret and present your own version of a piece, especially as a young pianist. Aiming to play the piece as closely to the notated score as possible means that, when I succeed in doing that, I have built an armour against the critics. I take away the pressure of interpretation and put it fully on the score and the composer’s expressions notated in the score. This is another conscious choice that I make, which yet again gives me an empowering feeling of freedom of choice and decision making. Interestingly, I can still be criticised for making that choice, but psychologically, I feel protected against the criticism towards my interpretation. Inside, I know that I have done everything I could and what was asked of me, because my choices were informed and literally calculated.

Even though every pianist is different, we travel a similar path when becoming professional musicians. We do similar exercises, work on the same standard repertoire and indeed all face the same problems of interpreting *urtexts*, playing *rubatos* and adding our own flavour in our pedaling. This made me think that perhaps it could be healthy and even somewhat therapeutic for all classical musicians to step outside the conventional impressions of what freedom is in music and try to redefine it and search for it in the most unconventional places, such as a precisely notated score that at first glance does not give much freedom at all. This view of freedom and seeing interpretation as a choice or state of awareness were my epiphanies in this process. As an autoethnographic researcher, my goal is to share these epiphanies [Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2010: 4]. I experience and write about my experience in order to create relatable content for other pianists and musicians, which makes me a process and a product of research in one [Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2010: 1].

### Conclusion

It is impossible to redefine the concept of freedom without first actually defining the concept of freedom for oneself. Freedom will mean something slightly different to each classical pianist, but due to their similar backgrounds in training, repertoire and education structure, we all will have something similar uniting our common understanding of musical freedom. That is one of the reasons why autoethnography as a research method is valuable for music research. Opening up more personal and unique meanings of deep musical concepts will help us to find a common ground for difficult definitions. At the same time, those whose experiences are different or those



who have found new ways of looking at the traditional understandings can bring something new to think about for the community. At the same time, open discussion about freedom, interpretation, execution, control and other daunting philosophical questions can help to release the stigma and heaviness around those concepts and open up a light and lively discussion amongst the musicians, sharing the good and the bad when embodying these concepts in practice.

As an autoethnographic researcher, my writing aims to engage a wider audience through accessible descriptions of my working process to ensure the connectivity between the personal and cultural domains [Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2010: 5]. I want my work to resonate and to support. When reading my story, did you know what I am talking about when I said I feel like a machine – numb, empty or even bored? Did you feel my desperation? Did you feel seen? Are you a young pianist demanding 101% of yourself and who has forgotten what music means to you? This might not even be slightly related to the topic of tempo relation calculations or the desperation around a lack of freedom in anything; it can be any other challenge around the keyboard that numbs your brain and puts you in a trance of constant repeats. What I want to show is perhaps not how to just deal with the issue and move forward but how, when facing a wall, to see a problem not as a problem but as an opportunity to let go of the known and find a new angle and a new approach. The idea of awareness of choice, the willingness to choose to be a machine, to calculate and to be as close to the score as possible in the end is of course not a new definition of freedom, but it is **a new view of a possibility of approaching** freedom, to be in control, to be empowered by that new possibility and to see freedom from a different angle – freedom not as “I can do anything”, but freedom as “I know what I am doing and where I am going”.

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# SYMBOLIC MUSICAL RESYNTHESIS AS AN EKPHRASTIC COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICE USING COMPUTATIONAL METHODS

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## **Abstract**

In my artistic work, I explore the affordances of computational methods from the discipline of artificial intelligence for music composition. Grounded in philosophical perspectives that revolve around the notions of trans- and post-humanism and cybernetics, I understand the mediating role of computers in music composition as having the potential to expand a composer's creative process by providing him with novel ways of exploring relationships between musical material and structure. Under this premise, music composition becomes a process that occurs through the assemblage between human actors and technological artifacts, and this association should result in new, interesting, and valuable artistic works. In this text, I will discuss a personal compositional practice that I understand as ekphrastic, based on the notion of symbolic resynthesis of musical symbolic information employing computational methods, as means for composing an original piece in response to the madrigal "Io Mi Son Giovietta" by Claudio Monteverdi.

**Keywords:** *computer-assisted composition, symbolic resynthesis, constraint algorithms, Markov chains.*

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## Introduction

### Transhumanism and extended cognition

Since the beginning of documented history, humans have desired to enhance instrumental and mental capacities, seeking to expand the boundaries of physical existence. The term *transhumanism*<sup>1</sup> was used for the first time by the English biologist and philosopher Julian Huxley in 1957 to inaugurate a current of thought that refuses to accept traditional human physical and cognitive limitations. The seed of transhumanism, however, can be traced back to thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant, among others. While slowly overcoming the notion of *hubris*<sup>2</sup> during the Renaissance, after the Enlightenment, empirical science and critical reason were empowered over magical thinking, which contributed to developing the idea that people's living conditions could be significantly improved by developing scientific knowledge and technological advancements. After the Second World War, many thinkers found hope for overcoming the limits of human nature in scientific and technical progress, particularly those related to biomedical advancements that ultimately would yield human-enhanced cognitive and sensory capacities and extended lifespans<sup>3</sup>.

The idea of extending human cognitive capacities via means of technology has been connected to the philosophy of transhumanism. One of the more relevant theories in this regard is *post-humanism*, a concept that has been extensively developed by Katherine Hayles<sup>4</sup>. Post-humanism, in essence, is strongly connected to the notion *intelligence*<sup>5</sup> as a property of the formal manipulation of symbols and

<sup>1</sup> For a historical perspective on transhumanist thought, see Bostrom [2005].

<sup>2</sup> *Hubris*, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is defined as an overweening presumption that leads a person to disregard the divinely fixed limits on human action in an ordered cosmos. The religious interpretation of the idea of a natural order given by God that couldn't be challenged was the dominant way of thought in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of a human being whose physiological functions are enhanced artificially via biochemical or electronic modifications to the body was first proposed in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline under the term *cyborg*, which combines the words *cybernetic* and *organism*. See Clynes & Kline [1960].

<sup>4</sup> N. K. Hayles [1999].

<sup>5</sup> The concept of intelligence has been largely debated. According to Wechsler [1939], it can be defined as "the capacity of a person to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment." (p. 229). Wechsler believed that intelligence is composed of various specific and interrelated functions that can be individually measured. More recently, this claim has been refined proposing that intelligence involves several capacities such as abstraction, logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, reasoning, planning, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. From the post-humanist perspective, intelligence is seen mainly as the ability to perceive or infer patterns of information, as originally discussed by Alan Turing in his very influential paper "Computing Machinery and

patterns of information rather than embodied enactment in human life. Hayles defines *cognition* [2016] as a process of interpreting information in contexts that connect it with meaning and discusses the potential extension for this process using assemblages between human and *technical cognizers* that can progress to higher levels of cognition and, consequently, improve performance in extended areas of knowledge. Other theorists have also discussed the idea of an extended mind by means of technology. The cognitive scientist and philosopher Andy Clark, for example, has long advocated for a type of active *external cognition*<sup>1</sup> distributed across humans and computers instead of internalized within the boundaries of *skin and skull*<sup>2</sup>.

### Computers and art creation

Digital computers are the most transcendental technological advancement of modern human history. Without a doubt, they represent the best example of a technical *cognizer*, as discussed by K. Hayles, or an extension of the human mind, as proposed by Andy Clark. From its initial form as large pieces of electric machinery that fitted a whole room in the 1950s until our current personal laptops, computational processing power has increased exponentially<sup>3</sup>. As digital computers began to spread and become more accessible, in addition to solving complex mathematical problems and many other functionalities that they facilitated, the question of whether they could be used for art creation started to arise. Writers such as Aldous Huxley and George Orwell speculated in their dystopian novels on automated technology for art generation. Particularly fascinating is the case of the *versificator* in Orwell's "1984"<sup>4</sup>, an obscure machine responsible for generating cultural content, media, and entertainment, through an automated process without human intervention. In the book, this device is described mainly as a generator of popular songs and has an essential role as an instrument of social alienation.

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Intelligence" [1950] where he basically claims that the question of whether or not machines can think will end up being irrelevant since computers will be able to mimic human behavior so well that it will be impossible to distinguish them from its creators.

<sup>1</sup> The notion of the *extended mind* was proposed initially by Clark & Chalmers [1998]. A. Clark has further developed this idea in his posterior writings such as Clark [2004], [2008] and [2017].

<sup>2</sup> A. Clark [2004], p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> According to a theorem known as Moore's law, computers duplicate their processing capacity every two years. Following Moore's law, authors such as H. Moravec [1988] and R. Kurzweil [2000] have predicted that computers will achieve the processing capacity of a human brain in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and largely outperform human intelligence by the end of the century.

<sup>4</sup> G. Orwell (1949).

In 1956, a piece of music entirely created using a computer saw the light. The Illiac suite, composed and programmed by Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson, is considered to be the first composition written entirely using a computer program running on the ILLIAC computer at the University of Illinois. The piece consists of four movements that Hiller and Isaacson describe and entitle as *experiments*. In each, diverse algorithmic and stochastic processes are employed mainly to accept or reject randomly generated pitch and rhythmic sequences based on predefined rules<sup>1</sup>. Some of these algorithms were conceived as computational formalization from a counterpoint rules existing in a treatise written by Johann Joseph Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum*, written in 1725. Hiller and Isaacson claimed that musical parameters such as pitch and duration were quantitative entities feasible for rational and mathematical analysis, and the process of music composition could be studied – at least *semi-quantitatively*<sup>2</sup> – as a series of choices from an essentially limitless pool of musical elements. Therefore, it should be possible to describe and formalize this process using computational methods.

By providing greater processing power, speed, and more sophisticated search methods to solve specific musical problems, computers have had an expansive effect on music composition. Along with the developments of modern affordable computers and a large number of programs that can process and generate music, more composers have accepted them as valid means for composing, even when this involves the least possible direct human intervention<sup>3</sup>. However, the broad public's reaction to this new type of art has usually been quite critical. Furthermore, recent psychological research has empirically shown evidence for the claim of a strong bias against computer-generated music that historically has persisted<sup>4</sup>. The causes of this bias are not totally understood, but Colton & Wiggins<sup>5</sup> suggest that one reason could be that creativity is one of the abilities that define us as an intelligent species. Societies see and defend creativity as an exclusively human capacity, and creative people and

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<sup>1</sup> The technical description of the compositional methods used for the Illiac Suite are described in detail by Hiller and Isaacson in their paper "Musical Composition with a High-speed Digital Computer" (1958 in 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> The various roles and possibilities of interaction between humans and computers for music creation have taken different levels of agency. In order to better delimitate the scope of this reflection, I will focus on the mediation of a computer in the process of generation of symbolic musical information in the form of a score. In this type of creative process, the degree of automation can vary, but it mainly functions as a dialectical flow between a computer and a human being, a composer (see Bown, 2021). I will refer to this as computer-assisted composition.

<sup>4</sup> Moffat & Kelly [2006].

<sup>5</sup> Colton & Wiggins [2012], p. 12.

their contributions to cultural development are highly valued<sup>1</sup>. In the same line, K. Essl has suggested that using computational means that yield automatizations in the creative processes is often seen as a *weakness of subjective autonomy*<sup>2</sup>.

### Artistic research using computational methods for music composition

In my artistic research project, I aim to divert the historical bias against computer-assisted composition from the idea of an alienating workflow and an artistically precarious outcome into a method that can widely expand the process of music composition. My primary production of artistic work is rooted in contemporary experimental score-based music composition, encompassing points of intersection between computer-assisted composition, electroacoustic music, algorithmic poetry, and generative visuals. Some of my primary artistic inquiries revolve around how the use of a computer can function as an extension of my compositional thinking, how computational processes offer the artist the opportunity to expand their creative process, and how human creativity can co-exist with computational methods or be a disturbing element as a *ghost in the machine*<sup>3</sup>. Composing, thus, becomes a technologically mediated action<sup>4</sup> where its outcome can only be conceived holistically as the sum of the roles of the actants. The creative agency of computational methods manifests as the possibility of exploring new relations within a complex and multidimensional network of musical structures, opening the door to expanding a piece's conceptual, material, and formal architecture. In the act of technologically mediated composition, humans and technological means associate in the process of affording one another new possibilities and blurring the limits between the creative responsibility of the two agents<sup>5</sup>. In the words of Latour, two entities with different

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of *creativity* has been discussed by many authors. However, I find fascinating the model of creativity proposed by Margaret Boden in her book *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanism* [2003].

<sup>2</sup> K. Essl [2007], p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> The *dogma of the Ghost in the Machine* was proposed by the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle in his book *The Concept of Mind* [1949] as a criticism of René Descartes' mind-body dualism. In recent science fiction films and series, the title "Ghost in the Machine" has been used several times to tell a story of a human consciousness that is somehow transferred to a computer. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost\\_in\\_the\\_Machine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_in_the_Machine) for a detailed summary of these titles.

<sup>4</sup> The notion of technological mediation was proposed by B. Latour [1994] as a derivation of Actor-Network Theory, aimed at understanding the role of techniques and technical means and their place in society.

<sup>5</sup> Other researchers have proposed a similar claim, such as H. Rutz [2021]. The issue of computational creative agency has also been a central issue for the project "Algorithms that matter" (2017–2020) <https://almat.iem.at/> by David Pirro and H. Rutz (U. of Graz, Austria), and it is also an important topic for the research group ARIGA (U. of Graz, Austria) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1318686/1318687>

timing, different properties, and different ontologies fuse into a new *actant*<sup>1</sup>. As I understand it, this fusion yields an expanded creative potential for music composition.

## Methodology

### Musical ekphrasis

In the last few years, I have developed a growing interest in composing musical pieces that respond to preexisting compositions<sup>2</sup>, an artistic approach that I understand as ekphrastic. The word *ekphrasis* originates in Ancient Greek. Most of the classic examples of ekphrasis were described in the works of classical poets or historians, such as Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides. A widely discussed example of it is the description of the decorations in the Shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>3</sup> The modern usage<sup>4</sup> of the word "ekphrasis" essentially refers to a literary representation of a work of visual art. The notion of a *musical ekphrasis*<sup>5</sup> puts in question the conventional interpretation of ekphrasis as existing only when employing words; under this premise, ekphrasis can be reinterpreted in more general terms as an artistic practice that aims to bring other artworks to aesthetic presence. Ekphrasis, thus, comes to existence as a form of representing information from source models such as preexisting artistic works, regardless of their original medium.

My methodology for composing response pieces is oriented towards developing a compositional grammar that translates symbolic information from an existing work into a new musical representation as a form of musical ekphrasis. This process entails a highly formalistic approach where symbolic musical parameters existing in a piece are translated into numeric representations to allow their processing, analysis, and resynthesis employing computational methods. For this, I use a software

<sup>1</sup> Latour [1994], p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Other contemporary composers have also written pieces that respond to preexisting works. Examples are H. Zender's "Winterreise", H. Hellstenius' "Dichterliebe", Daniel Biro's "To remember and forget" in response to Schubert's quartet in G Major D. 997, and Luciano Berio, who wrote his piece "Ekphrasis" (1996) in response to one of his own compositions, "Continuo II" (1990).

<sup>3</sup> See Zanker's (1981) footnote no. 15, where he provides a detailed account of examples and sources for ekphrasis in the works of these classic authors.

<sup>4</sup> Recent authors have proposed that the meaning of the word *ekphrasis* has gone through a process of transformation from its classical in Ancient Greece, where it referred to the language used to make an audience imagine a scene, into its modern version, now exclusively referred to the description of works of art and aimed at causing some impact on the listener. For a deeper discussion on the issue of ekphrasis, see Davidson [1983], Heffernan [1991], Krieger [1967], and Webb [2013].

<sup>5</sup> The concept of musical ekphrasis has been discussed extensively by Goehr [2010] and Bruhn [2001].



platform consisting of diverse computer-assisted tools for music composition that I will discuss later. In order to describe my compositional processes better and explain the connection between those and the specific computational methods I employ, I have coined the terms *symbolic sonification*, *symbolic resynthesis*, and *parametrical remapping*. In this text, I will discuss the concept of symbolic resynthesis and its practical implementation for the composition of the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare” for vocal octet.

### Symbolic resynthesis

Resynthesis is defined as the *act of synthesizing something again: a second or subsequent synthesis, as the combination of components or elements to form a connected whole*<sup>1</sup>. As a compositional process, symbolic resynthesis mainly considers the problem of recreating something musically, given a descriptive model constructed from analyzing a source. In the case of composing a response piece, a source for a model for symbolic resynthesis will be some previously existing musical work. I employ mainly two computational methods to generate my symbolic resynthesis models. On the one hand, I use Markov chains to create generative systems informed by probabilistic descriptive models of elements existing in a given set of musical elements and generate new versions of the analyzed group. These elements can be musical pitches, durations, or dynamics. On the other hand, I am interested in constraint satisfaction programming as a method for generating musical structures based on observable rules or formalizations of a determined musical style or compositional practice. These two methods are considered to be encompassed within the spectrum of Artificial Intelligence techniques, according to a taxonomy devised by Fernández & Vico<sup>2</sup>.

### Computational methods

A Markov chain is a stochastic model describing a sequence of possible events in which the probability of each event depends only on the state attained in the previous event. Markov chains are based on the analysis of consecutive events or *states*: the more successive states I consider for the analysis, the more similar the resynthesis will be to its source. The number of states analyzed for a Markov model is known as its *order*. For example, a Markov chain of order 0 predicts the fixed probability of an element on a set, while a Markov chain of order 3 will analyze the probability for three consecutive events to appear. Figure 1 shows an example of a Markov chain of

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Resynthesis. In: Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved December 27, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resynthesis>

<sup>2</sup> According to Fernández & Vico [2013], Markov chains are a member of the family of *Machine Learning* techniques, and Constraint programming is considered a type of *knowledge or rule-based* system.

order 1. The nature of Markov chains can be defined as dual: on the one hand, they provide a descriptive analysis of the probabilities of a set of elements and, on the other hand, facilitate a simple generative process relying on this model. Recently, Markov chains have been used for extracting patterns in different symbolic musical domains and generating, for example, jazz improvisations or identification and recreation of the musical style of a composer<sup>1</sup>.

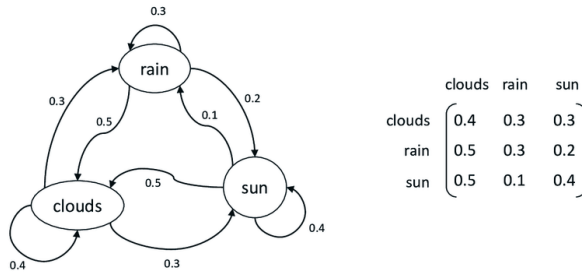


Figure 1. An example of a Markov chain of order 1 showing the probabilities of going from a weather condition to another. On the left, it is displayed as a state diagram. On the right, as a matrix with transition probabilities [Seyr & Muskulus 2019].

Another method that facilitates musical symbolic resynthesis deals with the determination of musical rules, such as harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic, and organizing musical elements by enforcing this rule or set of rules using *constraint algorithms*<sup>2</sup>. A constraint algorithm iteratively seeks for certain combinations of variables within a specified search space – consisting of musical information sets, such as pitches, durations, etc. – so that a specific rule or number of rules is satisfied, either entirely, using a deterministic solver, or at least partially, through a heuristic solver. The rules are usually expressed as logical statements and each candidate solution will be evaluated as *true* or *false*. Those evaluated as true are accepted and returned to the user, and those evaluated as false are rejected. In case of heuristic rules, each candidate solution is assigned a weight expressed as a numeric value. The higher the weight, the better the candidate solution fulfils the rule.

Figure 2 shows an example of how a simple constraint algorithm works. The domain – or search space – is a series of musical pitches, expressed as MIDI notes. Two deterministic rules are defined; the first one states that the first note should be 62, and the second rule states that each note should be higher than its predecessor. The result of passing an input through the search engine are several – as many as desired or as existing – sequences of values sorted according to the given rules.

<sup>1</sup> See Wang et al. [2016], Lui [2006] and Volchenkov & Dawin [2012].

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction on constraint algorithms in music composition, see Sandred [2017].

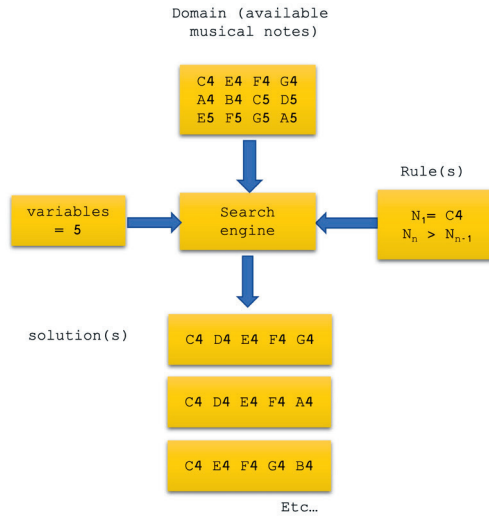


Figure 2. Example of a deterministic constraint satisfaction algorithm.

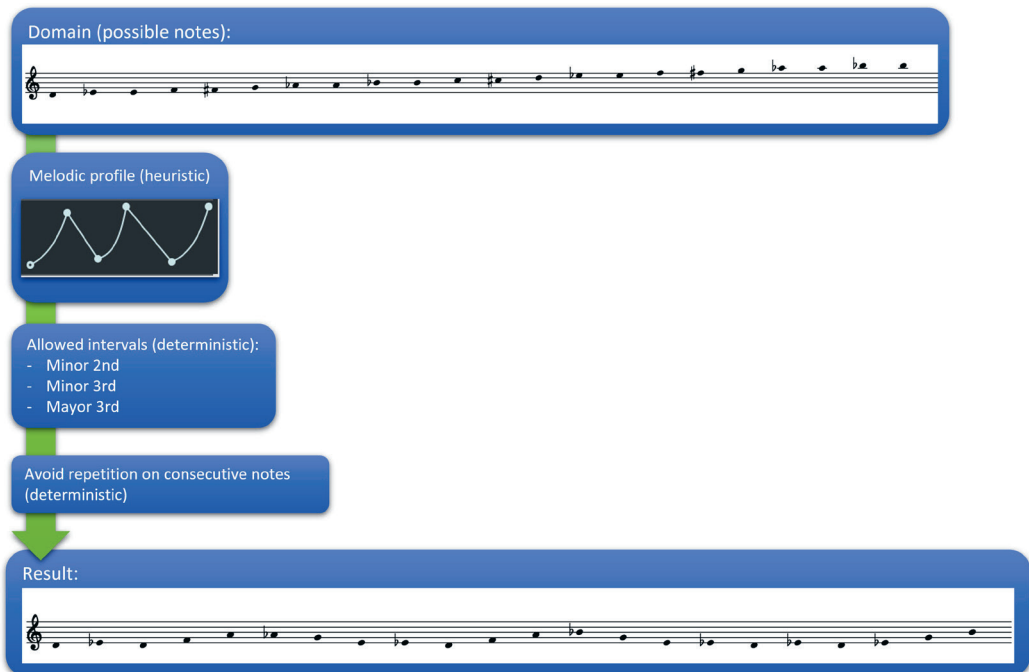


Figure 3. In this example, a given profile is applied as a heuristic rule, and two chained rules determine allowed intervals and repetitions<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This type of rule chain was originally implemented by the composer Jacopo Baboni Schilingi. For further discussion on heuristic rules see Sandred [2017].

A more complex example of this is shown in Figure 3, where a set of musical notes is sorted heuristically according to a particular melodic profile, and a deterministic rule that will restrict the allowed melodic intervals that can occur between notes.

### Compositional workflow

My platform for composing consists mainly of a large patch composed of several subpatches inside the computer program Max<sup>1</sup>. Max is open to external third-party objects and libraries, such as the “Bach”<sup>2</sup> package – composed of the libraries “Bach”, “Cage” and “Dada” –, and “MOZ’lib”<sup>3</sup>. Bach is a free and open-source library that provides multiple tools for computer-aided composition to the Max environment. More importantly, Bach provides a well-developed music notation interface. MOZ’lib has as its primary purpose to reintroduce compositional techniques and research developed previously in LISP-based<sup>4</sup> computer-assisted composition programs such as PatchWork, Open Music, and PWGL into Max. It contains an implementation of PatchWorks for Max, a constraints-solving engine designed by Mikael Laursen<sup>5</sup>, originally for the software PWGL and ported to Max by Örjan Sandred and Julien Vincenot. MOZ’lib also contains the library Cluster-Engine<sup>6</sup> developed by Örjan Sandred. Cluster-Engine allows to determining rules constraining simultaneously rhythm and pitch for polyphonic music, making possible for example to constrain the utilization of certain melodic or harmonic intervals depending on rhythmic figures or vice versa, among other possibilities involving the relation between musical parameters occurring in two or more simultaneous voices<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Max is a visual programming language for music and multimedia that allows the connection and combination of pre-designed building blocks called “objects” through cables through which different types of data flow, such as numbers, characters, text strings, lists, audio signals, among others. For more information visit <https://cycling74.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bachproject.net/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://github.com/JulienVincenot/MOZLib>

<sup>4</sup> LISP is a family of programming languages that became widely used in Artificial Intelligence research. Due to its syntax and its employment of a characteristic datatype that facilitated the work with nested hierarchies similarly as they occur in a music score, it became very popular in the world of computer-assisted composition.

<sup>5</sup> M. Laurson [1996].

<sup>6</sup> Cluster-Engine was designed by Örjan Sandred originally for the PWGL environment and ported to Max MSP by Örjan Sandred and Julien Vincenot. For more information on Cluster-Engine, see Sandred [2009] and [2021].

<sup>7</sup> A more advanced implementation of Cluster-Engine inside MOZ’lib known as *Multi-domains* allows the determination of rules involving less conventional musical parameters such as articulation, dynamics or even lyrics.

Within my compositional workflow, the generation of musical material is not fully automated. Instead, it occurs in an *iterative*<sup>1</sup> fashion, where each module produces an output in the form of a musical phrase in a roll-type of notated score, and these phrases can be concatenated, joined, merged, and finally quantized into proportional notation. If the output of a module is non-satisfactory, some input parameters can be modified, yielding different outcomes.

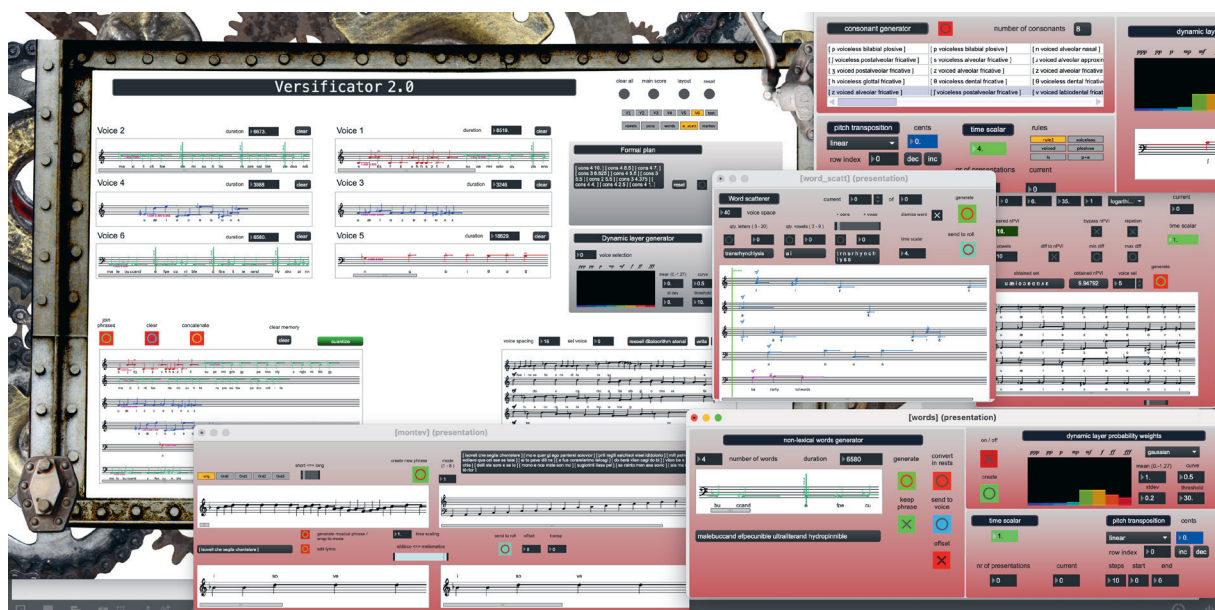


Figure 4. User interface for the Max patch employed to compose the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare”, consisting of a main screen and several subpatches.

### Composition of the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare”

This piece is a response to the madrigal “Io Mi Son Giovinnetta” by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), with text by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), and the compositional idea has been driven by the notion of symbolic resynthesis at different levels of musical parameters and linguistic elements. I have defined two main approaches to resynthesizing the madrigal into an original response piece. Firstly, the use of Markov chains to generate an alternative version of the original Italian text as non-sense words or fragments of meaningful words. As explained earlier, it is possible to use different Markov orders for the process of resynthesis, which will yield more or less deviation from the source. In the case of a text, using a Markov order 0

<sup>1</sup> O. Bown [2021], p. 2.

will generate a completely random combination between letters and spaces, while a Markov chain of order 3 will analyze the probabilities for the occurrence of three consecutive letters, including spaces, therefore, yielding a result somewhat close to the original text and the original language. The vocalized text in the piece transits from lower to higher Markov orders, arriving at the end of the last phrase of the poem in its original form.

**Table 1. Examples of alternative text snippets from the madrigal “Io mi son giovinetta” generated using Markov resynthesis in the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare”.**

Resynthesis of the text from the madrigal <i>Io mi son giovinetta</i> (C. Monteverdi – G. Boccaccio) in the piece <i>Isovell Che Segila Chentelare</i> (J. Vassallo)				
Original text	Markov order 0 (as an illustrative example, but not used for this piece)	Markov order 1 (the first phrase gives the title for the piece)	Markov order 2	Markov order 3
Io mi son giovinetta E rido e canto alla stagion novella; Cantava la mia dolce pastorella; Quanto subitamente a quel canto il cor mio cantó; (etc...)	se nslirmfni n aereoaeiriog ed oeiidellege e d l gomnluongraoic t (etc...)	isovell che segila chentelare mo e quer gi ago panterei soiovior prili ragli salchisol eisei addolorato (etc...)	se inettaggi rimaver mavella lagio el chi ridento che canche son giovin netto e che alla (etc...)	rido e canto sei begli occhi tuoi fiorisce ed ellin quel cor mio cantava la (etc...)

Secondly, an analytic deconstruction and posterior reconstruction of the concept of modality as a set of rules enforced by a constraint satisfaction engine that will drive the generation of polyphonic musical textures. The piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare” uses the idea of modality as a linear-combinatorial process constrained by rules regarding melodic movements and harmonic intervals between voices. The method for employing constraint satisfaction algorithms in the piece will be explained in detail later. But, first, it is important to understand some basic notions on how the concept of modality works in the music of Claudio Monteverdi and in a contemporary musical style, the *cool jazz*<sup>1</sup>.

In a modal system, the melodic construction is conceived as a linear process. Any vertical combination of notes is accidental, except for some specific points, such as the cadences. This idea of linearity has long existed and developed in western music. Examples of this practice can be observed in most of the polyphonic works from the Parisian Gothic period until the Early Baroque, after which the tonal system emerged as a new form of harmonic and melodic organization. Monteverdi’s madrigals are agreed to represent the old style of modal organization<sup>2</sup>. After the dissolution of

<sup>1</sup> The *cool jazz* is a genre that develops during the 1950s; chronologically, it follows the *bebop* and is contemporary with *hard bop*. For a deeper discussion on cool jazz and other jazz styles see Brendt [2002].

<sup>2</sup> McClary [1976].



tonality in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, the idea of linearity and independence of voices was mainly advocated by Schoenberg and the composers of the Second Viennese Second and posteriorly in the post-war period, by serial composers such as P. Boulez, K. Stockhausen, L. Nono, and others.

Jazz musicians specially developed the notion of modality and linearity for improvisation. Particularly interesting is the use of modality in the *cool jazz*, from the 1950s and on, by composers and performers such as Miles Davies, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans, among others. Within the aesthetics of cool jazz, modality is used as a counterpunctual procedure, less strict in combinatorial possibilities between the voices. Each mode is defined by the intervallic structure of its corresponding scale. Ron Miller<sup>2</sup> proposes a categorization for the modes derived from major and melodic minor scales as being *darker* or *brighter*, depending on the position of the semitone within the intervallic structure, moving from the leftmost side of the tetrachords. The piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare” employs several modes organized according to Miller’s categorization, appearing consecutively and moving from *darker* to *brighter*.



Figure 5. A modal transition from darkness to brightness, as described by Ron Miller, based on the succession of modes where the position of the semitone moves from right to left within the tetrachords.

Structurally, the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare” is constructed as a succession of melodic phrases from the madrigal appearing in one of the voices in each SATB, and the rest of the voices forming a polyphonic texture. These original melodic fragments of the madrigal are labeled as *cantus* and are reconstituted in their modal structure according to a new choice of modes derived from Miller’s categorization. For each *cantus* within a polyphonic texture, a different mode is used. Formally, the piece is divided into three sections. In each, the different duration proportions for simultaneously occurring voices in the polyphonic texture

<sup>1</sup> I take as a timepoint for the dissolution of tonality the composition of Schoenberg’s 2<sup>nd</sup> string quartet, in 1908.

<sup>2</sup> R. Miller [1996].

resemble three types of medieval and renaissance textures: *cantus firmus* (a voice with longer-held rhythmic figures carries the cantus against a more rhythmic flow in the other voices), *discantus* (one voice has the cantus and a second voice draws a countermelody), and *contrapunctus floridus* (one voice carries the cantus and the rest of the voices draw ornamental and melismatic lines).

The image displays two musical staves. The upper staff is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, showing a melodic line with lyrics: "Lo mi son gio-vi-net-ta E ri". The lower staff is in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time, showing a reconfigured melodic line with lyrics: "i-zo-vel-ke-se-dji-la-ken-te-la-re". The lower staff includes dynamic markings: *p*, *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *mp*, and *pp*.

Figure 6. The upper line shows the original cantus of the madrigal, the second line shows a modal reconfiguration of it together with a rhythmic augmentation.

Rhythmically, the three textures are created by determining constraint rules that only allow specific rhythmic figures in the other voices than the *cantus*. Smaller values result in more ornamental and melismatic lines. The melismatic/syllabic quality of each voice, particularly for the *discantus* and *cantus firmus* textures, is determined by a constraint rule that checks the time scaling factor of each voice. The smaller the scaling value, the more melismatic; in other words, voices with smaller durations have few syllables and vice versa, and voices with longer durations have more syllables. Another rule is used that constrains certain voice onsets not to occur simultaneously, giving the texture more fluid linearity in particular when the voices are more ornamental. Harmonically, a constraint rule checks for certain types of resulting vertical intervallic combinations between voices on specific beats. For example, on beats 1 and 3 in a time measurement of 4/4, only harmonic intervals of minor/major third, perfect fourth/fifth, and octave can occur. Another rule prevents certain consecutive harmonic intervals between voices, such as parallel fifths and octaves. Melodically, a heuristic rule favors smaller melodic intervals for shorter rhythmic values.

It is possible to apply certain rules only to specific groups of voices. In the piece, the vocal octet has been conceived as a double choir composed of two SATB group, and the scope of the rules, in general, is restricted to each one of the two SATB groups. For example, one rule might apply to a pair of voices for generating canons to a variable interval (in general, a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> or  $\pm 7$  semitones) or variable time interval (whole-note, half-note, or quarter-note).

The screenshot displays a software interface for generating musical phrases using a set of chained rules. The interface is organized into several panels, each representing a different rule:

- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-canon**: Parameters include rule parameter (offset: >1/2, interval: >-7), voices (23), and a BYPASS button.
- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-rhythm-rhythm**: Parameters include format (d1\_offs\_d2), input filter (at-durations-v1), rule input (norm), voices ([12][34]), mode? (heur-switch), and weight (1). A note: "discourages same onset (heuristic)".
- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-one-engine**: Parameters include rule parameter (pitches), rule input (pitches), voices (0), and mode? (true/false). A note: "pitch rule no repetition of consecutive notes".
- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-mel-interval one-voice**: Parameters include gracenotes? (normal), segments? (normal), if duration (=), durations (1/4), then interval (=), intervals (5), voices (0), and mode? (true/false). A note: "defines melodic intervals for all voices".
- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-pitch-pitch** (top): Parameters include rule input (beat), format (pitch), gracenotes? (normal), voices ([12][34][13]), and mode? (true/false). A note: "r-pitch-pitch rule forbids parallel fifths".
- CLUSTER<sup>r</sup>-pitch-pitch** (bottom): Parameters include rule input (beat), format (pitch), gracenotes? (normal), voices (012), mode? (heur-switch), and weight (1). A note: "r-pitch-pitch rule forbids parallel octaves".
- chained CLUSTER engine**: A central panel with "no. of variables" set to >10 and buttons for RAND and DEBUG.

At the bottom of the interface, a musical score is displayed, showing a two-voice setting of a phrase in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves with notes and rests.

Figure 7. View of a set of chained rules that determine the generation of a musical phrase in two voices.

After the process of generation and evaluation of the outcome for each phrase, concatenation of phrases and sections, it is still necessary to export the final score into a professional music notation software and fine-tune several notation issues. Even though the notation interface offered by the “Bach” library is powerful and versatile, it is meant for something other than professional score editing and engraving. In addition, the piece must necessarily go through a phase of further compositional development *by hand* since some musical parameters still fall outside the scope of the process of symbolic resynthesis. This concerns mainly the election of tempi and vocal articulations, the addition of slurs and breathing points, and the development of a layer of dynamics for each voice.

37 *rall.* *f* *p* *pp*  $\text{♩} = 95$  5

S1 ki i a d3o vi ne.

A1 be ki i a d3o vi ne.

T1 vi ton be ka ve la vi ki a d3o vi

B1 bi vi ton be ka ve la vi ki a d3o vi

S2 ka ldo bi d3o vi ne to c ke la

A2 la (n) ka ldo bi d3o

T2 la (n) ka ldo bi d3o

B2 la (n) ka ldo bi d3o

Figure 8. Fragment of the piece “Isovell Che Segila Chentelare” for double-choir SATB.

## Conclusion

In my current artistic practice, the possibility of using computer-assisted composition tools from the field of artificial intelligence provides me with greater flexibility to find solutions in a vast space of possibilities. In terms of musical symbolic information formalization and processing, computers have a central role in my compositional practice as *technical cognizers* that facilitate the exploration of new musical structural relations between a response piece and its preexisting source. Computational methods such as Markov chains and constraint algorithms can be powerful tools to carry out a process of symbolic resynthesis of musical information as a way of composing original response pieces. Historically, these methods have proven effective in the generation of interesting musical narrative.

In my compositional practice, these methods allow some flexibility to move between certain resemblance between an original response piece with its source or into more abstract generative processes that yield less recognizability. For this reason,

they are well-suited for a type of artistic practice that aims to bring preexisting works of art into aesthetic presence in the form of response pieces, an approach that I understand as ekphrastic. In the current state of development of my workflow, however, these methods only allow me to work with the three central symbolic musical representations (pitch, rhythm and dynamics). Other musical parameters need to be still composed *outside* the system. I expect to develop my workflow further to include formalizations related to harmonic spectrum and timbre, to operate compositionally on them employing the aforementioned computational methods or others.

As a final remark, I consider that computational methods are effective tools for defining novel compositional strategies that facilitate an innovative exploration of musical possibilities, something that I see as an expansion of my compositional thinking.

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**VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART  
AND RESEARCH**

# RESEARCHERS, CURATORS AND DESIGNERS: THE EXHIBITIONS AS THE SPACE FOR COLLABORATIONS

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## Abstract

The article looks at thematic exhibitions that explore certain cultural and historical processes and examines the specifics of the exhibition as a collaborative process between three actors: academic researchers, curators and designers. Such exhibitions, grounded in cultural aspects and built on academic research outcomes, differ from classic art displays in the sense that they lack artworks that “speak for themselves”. Moreover, the research often is based on the written word and original documents or artefacts that are visually uninteresting/non-appealing or monotonous. On this account, the exhibition’s story and visual form is put in the hands of the curator and designer. Does this vital role give designers and curators the authority to rework the research that underlies the narrative? Is the design applied as the exhibit itself? To answer these questions and to explore artistic research in the context of exhibitions, this article discusses the exhibitions carried out at the National Library of Latvia. The article looks behind the exhibition production process to examine the collaboration methods employed by the creative teams consisting of researchers, curators and designers.

**Keywords:** *curator, exhibition, design, research, exhibition design.*

## Introduction

For the National Library of Latvia, exhibitions are a strategic instrument in the representation of culture and various cultural activities carried out there. Not only historians and researchers working here explore different time periods in the

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history of the written word, but also a special section, the exhibition centre with curators and designers, is formed to bring the research to the public in the form of exhibitions, publications, posters and other design products. At the National Library of Latvia, there are also a number of exhibition halls and galleries and the exhibition's scale can be adapted to the nature and extent of the related research. Thus, the institution's infrastructure is professionally organised and the exhibitions produced by the National Library of Latvia are a significant contribution to the cultural scene in Latvia. In this regard, the exhibition production process carried out at the National Library of Latvia provides a basis for the analysis to identify the collaboration methods between researchers, curators and designers and examine their specific roles within academic and artistic research. The analysis provided here is based on her work at the library working on the exhibitions from positions of the co-curator and the project manager.

### The role of curators

It might seem that the term "curator" is ubiquitous and thus well-defined and clear, yet it still carries various interpretations. The authors of the Curatorial Conundrum identify the tension between *curating-as-display-making* (the exhibitionary) and *curating-as-expanded-practice* (the curatorial) [O'Neill, Wilson, Steeds 2016: 7]. They add that the first notion was more typical of the 1990s, while nowadays the latter is more widespread. However, at the National Library of Latvia, the function of curator is still often attributed to project managers limiting their role to practical matters of exhibition production. Moreover, the curatorial concept is not fully grasped or evaluated by researchers and thus in some cases the exhibition production process loses the much-needed guidance the curator could have provided. In fact, the dominant position of curator is still much discussed also within the art scene. If the curator as a public figure representing the institution gains its recognition, fosters visibility and raises the funding opportunities and thus is regarded as an important, even decisive element of the institution's successful development, then the collaboration between curators and artists is much more uncertain in terms of benefits and outcomes. Curators have often been criticised for misinterpreting artists' work or even accused of diminishing the artists' authority by highlighting the curatorial concept while the art works serve merely as its illustration. *This discomfort is perhaps connected to the perception that the visibility of the curator has become something of a distraction from the subject matter*, writes critic Deyan Sudjic [Sudjic 2021: 8].

Interestingly, a similar tension could be observed also between curators and researchers, not only artists. For example, London based critics Maya and Reuben Fowkes characterize problematic overlaps between the work of the curator and that

of art historians. According to them, *References to art history on conference panels organized by curators are often couched in a conspiratorial snigger, as if to say that art historians belong in the archives while curators bring a uniquely contemporary perspective to the past. In their turn, art historians are irked by what they see as the superficial approach to art history taken by curators, who have a tendency to ransack the past for examples to illustrate their concepts while deselecting artists and phenomena that do not* [Fowkes 2015: 53]. While working at the library, the author has observed similar disagreements or even conflict situations between curators and academic researchers. This tension leaves a negative impact on the process of exhibition making if the academic researchers decline to narrow the selection of exhibits or refuse to adapt their texts to the specifics of exposition by shortening descriptions or using simpler language. In fact, such situations lead to the question *what is the role of the curator? and is the curator really needed?*

The answer can be found in the words by Deyan Sudjic, the former director of Design Museum in London: *For museums, which live and die by the size of their audiences, the reality is that an audience is not easily persuaded to come to see a permanent design collection* [Sudjic 2021: 11]. Moreover, the audience is uninterested not only in permanent expositions, but also in thematic shows that demand an involved, educated and patient visitor. How could the audience be attracted if the recent researches have proved that the collective global attention span has dropped to eight seconds and marketing is driven by a well-known marketing rule 3-30-3: 3 seconds to attract the reader's attention, 30 seconds to hold his interest and 3 minutes to tell the story. In this context, the curator's main role is to be a mediator between academic research and the audience by producing an attractive narrative. The curator encourages designers to produce a visual and spatial interpretation of knowledge that could be easily grasped and experienced by visitors. While the researchers are often orientated towards encyclopaedic knowledge and narrow understanding of the subject, *the curator is "tuned to" the relationship with the outside world – to environmental, cultural, political and social context*, writes Fleur Watson [Watson 2021: 13]. As if illustrating this perspective, Deyan Sudjic compares the design exhibition titles. In 1982, the first design exposition, the forerunner of Design Museum, was titled *Art and Industry*. In 1989, when the Design Museum opened, its inaugural exhibition was titled *Culture and Commerce*. Finally, in 2016, when the museum moved to a new building in South Kensington, they opened with the exhibition *Fear and Love. It's a sequence that clearly shows the evolution of curating from a historical study based on historic artefacts to a provocation*, concludes Deyan Sudjic [Sudjic 2021: 11]. One way communication does not count anymore in the museum sector, and such a provocative and original approach towards the research subjects serves for maintaining a responsive and meaningful dialogue with the audience.

What is most important, the concept of curatorial practice has been expanding recently, moving away from the traditional, yet outdated definition of the curator as the central, authoritative figure towards a more experimental, open-ended approach where the curator is a part of a collaborative team working closely together with artists, researchers and designers. The distinct shift in curatorial thinking is summed up by Fleur Watson, *From a curator as a mediating authority to a curator as space-maker who supports and enables a series of experiments and speculations* [Watson 2021: 47].

### The role of design

Only a decade ago design was seen merely as a tool to achieve marketing goals and generate profit, yet currently design tackles social issues, serves as a political statement and is carried out as investigative and speculative projects without practical or functional outcome. *When people think of design, most believe it is about problem solving. Faced with huge challenges such as overpopulation, water shortages, and climate change, designers feel an overpowering urge to work together to fix them, as though they can be broken down, quantified, and solved. Design's inherent optimism leaves no alternative but it is becoming clear that many of the challenges we face today are unfixable and that the only way to overcome them is by changing our values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour*, write designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby [Dunne & Raby 2016: 2].

One of such innovative approaches towards design is practised by FormaFantasma, design duo from the Netherlands. In 2020, their design research project *Cambio* was exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Designers investigated the timber industry by conducting numerous interviews, researching archives, selecting exhibits and creating their own design objects for the show. The resulting exposition drew visitors' attention to the interaction between a man and a tree and the deep historic roots of this coexistence. Rebecca Lewin explains the duo's research position as follows, *Design can learn from art: the space of the art gallery is above all one of experimentation, of dreaming, of shifting expectations and perceptions in presentations that do not always need to be applied or mass-manufactured* [Lewin 2020: 18]. In FormaFantasma's view, design is practised as a learning and experimentation method rather than a production process: *Experimentation is an integral part of our work. When we begin a project, we don't necessarily have an idea of where we will end up. For us, to experiment is to follow a specific process or form of research which produces unexpected results and allows us to develop a new and original position with respect to our initial ideas* [Obrist Korek 2020: 9]. Thus, they define as the purpose of their work the new knowledge brought to the audience through the prism of design. In this regard, the exhibition was accompanied by an online platform with vast research



materials in written and audiovisual form. To sum up, the practice represented by FormaFantasma can be regarded as a perfect model of the potential that artistic research brings to the design field.

### **The specifics of exhibition design**

Exhibiting visual art generally involves a direct manifestation of the work, which, so to say, “speaks for itself”. However, when the research being represented is based on the written word and original documents such as archive materials and books, there is a strong need for a visual language that interweaves these seemingly unremarkable and discreet exhibits into a vivid story. In this regard, the role of exhibition design is not only to aesthetically please the visitors with an attractive arrangement of the display, but also to develop the thought provoking visual and spatial interpretation of the academic narrative and, ideally, to link academic knowledge and the challenges faced by society today. To achieve such immersion, artistic research is carried out as the collaboration between the curator, researcher and designer from the early stage of the concept development. If academic research is often considered to be complex and specific, artistic research, on the contrary, results in a visual form accessible to a wide range of audiences, however, both these methods of research coexist and, in fact, might be seen as inseparable and interconnected. To look more closely on the combination of these two research methods, four exhibitions as the case studies at the National Library of Latvia have been selected for this article.

### **Sisyphus and Columbine**

The first exhibition to discuss here, is the *Sisyphus and Columbine* featuring art works by Jelena Antimonova (1945–2002), a well-known Latvian graphic artist who passed away twenty years ago. The exhibition was opened in February 2022 at the National Library of Latvia. For the exhibition, Dmitrijs Zinovjevs, the keeper of the library’s graphic art collection, had selected as a starting point the artist’s etchings and other graphic prints. Further work on the exhibition was continued by the author of this article as the co-curator and Andrejs Lavrinovičs as the designer. In the co-curator’s view, the library is a place where one can look for new knowledge and develop a broader perspective of culture and art, thus she put the focus on the artist’s personality and explored it more thoroughly. The co-curator met the artist’s family to acquire more detailed information about her and accessed other interesting artefacts that could be displayed in the exhibition. As a result, the exhibition showed not only traditional graphic art prints, but also surprising, little-known materials about Jelena Antimonova’s creative work, revealing the versatility of her talent. Video footage documented the author’s 1996 self-published *samizdat* with illustrations, created by means of the then little-used and innovative computer. Similarly, the artist’s diaries



Figure 1. *Sisyphus and Columbine*. Photo: Kristians Luhaers.

were a new discovery (Figure 1). The exhibition featured a 1983 planner with the artist's notes, extracts from which were recorded for the exhibition's purpose in order to make them available to the public. The planner notes revealed personal details behind some artworks, such as the fact that the artist suffered from toothache while working on the *Odyssey* series. On display, there were also beautiful bindings Jelena Antimonova created in the early 1980s at the *Plastika* leather crafting studio inspired by mediaeval manuscripts. Video and audio recordings and extraordinary artefacts such as bindings not only held the visitor's interest, but also discreetly shed light on the artist's life. It would not be possible without artistic research carried out for the exhibition. In that way it confirmed the observation by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, as follows: *Given the widely accepted role of research within curatorial practices, it is interesting to note that, while there has been a lively discussion around research in-and-through art practice – research has not been sufficiently problematised in relation to the curatorial field. This would seem to indicate that the constructs curatorial research, curatorial knowledge and curatorial enquiry already have some tacit standing, even for the champions of more conservative understandings of professional roles and norms* [O'Neill & Wilson 2015: 15]. If artistic research resulted in the elaborated exhibition content, the design this time was traditional displaying the art works in the classic gallery manner.

### The Return

The next exhibition to discuss is *The Return. The Oldest Surviving Book in Latvian* that was on view in 2021 at the National Library of Latvia. As the title suggests, the focus of this exhibition was on the oldest surviving book published in Latvian – the Catechism of Dutch Jesuit Petrus Canisius, published in 1585. Although this book is a key testament of Latvian national cultural heritage, it is not permanently located in Latvia. The only complete copy of this publication is held by the Uppsala University Library. Swedish troops took it across the Baltic Sea in 1621 as a spoil of war, along with other Jesuit books. However, thanks to cooperation with the Uppsala University Library, the Canisius Catechism was brought to Riga to be displayed in this unique exhibition.

The team working on the concept of the exhibition took a radical approach from the start. The list of exhibits was reduced to the minimum leaving one book on display, the original Canisius Catechism. This means that the exhibition's narrative had to be unfolded and brought to the public by means of design. What distinguishes these two exhibitions – *The Return* and *Sisyphus and Columbine*, is the role of the designer. If the designer worked with the given list of art works for the *Sisyphus and Columbine* and merely arranged the art works into the well-designed display, then in case of *The Return* the designer was involved in the process from the very first moment. Moreover, the designer was given the central task, that of finding the visual form of the narrative. The researcher and curator in one person, historian Gustavs Strenga was open to experimental and innovative use of design in order to achieve an extraordinary visual interpretation of the legacy of the Jesuits Order. Together with designers Anete Krūmiņa and Madara Lesīte, they looked for elements that could symbolically embody the Jesuits and their activities. Furthermore, the designers decided to use the contrast between light and dark to interpret the book as enlightenment as well as to create associations with religious practices (Figure 2). The exposition texts were put on the floor, thus visitors had to look down as if they bowed their heads in humility typical of Christian tradition. Such a conceptual and contemporary scenography would not be possible without artistic research done by designers in collaboration with the researcher. As a result of their input and risk-taking approach, the exhibition was well received and brought to the public the discussion of important questions associated with the unique exhibit – the book.

The starting point of artistic research lies in collaboration where designers are granted an experimental and leading role from the beginning. *In many museum and gallery contexts, the design is developed in isolation from the early stages of the curatorial process and then responds to a fixed object list or the collection of works, developing an aesthetic form or “wrapping” for the exhibition. By contrast, the design as an exhibit is mostly conceived, designed and developed well before the final material on display has*



Figure 2. *The Return. The Oldest Surviving Book in Latvian*. Photo: Madara Gritāne.

*been completely researched and established, let alone finalised* [Watson 2021: 34]. To illustrate these two different approaches towards the exhibition design, the author of the article has chosen for the analysis two other exhibitions that have been on view at the National Library of Latvia recently.

### **Beethoven. Orbits**

One of these two exhibitions is the *Beethoven. Orbits* that marked the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great German composer Ludwig van Beethoven. It was based on a vast amount of academic research conducted by the Professor of the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Lolita Fūrmane. Her thorough review of the history of the local music scene was supported by many historical documents and artefacts such as books, leaflets and letters. There were approximately 200 exhibits in the display. Thus, the designers were given the complicated task of creating an attractive visual form of the display consisting mainly of monochrome and flat sheets of documents. However, designers Anete Krūmiņa and Tatjana Raičiņeca managed to encapsulate such classic and academic narrative into a contemporary display with attractive details. Not only were design elements such as the interactive system of vertical and horizontal drawers functional, but also innovative through giving a playful visual appearance to otherwise invisible cultural connections. For example, the element



that links together musicians, doctors and librarians is Beethoven's sculptural portrayal. While exploring visual elements associated with the composer's music and personality, the designers stumbled on small statuettes and busts portraying the genius. Such sculptural elements were common interior objects people loved to place on pianos or on shelves among the books. By bringing them together in the display, Beethoven's typical image was formed with his impressive, wild hair waves and dramatic facial expressions (Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Beethoven. Orbits*. Photo: Kristians Luhaers.

There are many legends and unproved stories about the composer's life that academic research ignores because of the lack of credibility, yet they constitute a worthwhile material for designers to engage with. The designers are able to transform such tales into visual stories that do not need to be grounded in academic research. In this case, the designers employed the legend by Carl Czerny, Beethoven's pupil claiming that the Symphony No 5 motif had come to Beethoven from a bird's song in the park. This story served the designers as grounds to form a playful scene. Conceptually imitating the park, Beethoven's granite sculpture was accompanied by green plants and birdsong. As a result, the exposition gained an original and unexpected twist. However, apart from these small interventions based on artistic research, the display was classic and academic as the written texts and historic artefacts dominated.

### B for Baroque

The exhibition *B for Baroque* was conceived differently from the *Beethoven. Orbits* since the concept of the show was in the hands of the designer from the very beginning. Moreover, the approach towards the subject was grasped in an experimental way grounded in the idea that *our knowledge about the Baroque will always remain fragmented. No one has yet returned from the Baroque era to substantiate details about how it really was* [Exhibition texts]. Although the initial starting point were the graphic prints of the period from the collection of the National Library of Latvia and thus the exposition could result in a traditional, classic art display, the concept was developed through the broader perspective of the Baroque exploring it as a cultural construct. Furthermore, the key motif of the narrative taken from Gilles Deleuze in the form of the line *The Baroque continually folds in on itself*, not only encapsulates the era's essence, but also empowers the designer to develop transforming and fluid aesthetics. By adapting the idea that *the Baroque looks like a mirage, bubbles that, like soap bubbles, burst on touch* [Exhibition texts], the exhibition was turned into a wonderland where the public was invited to experience the splendour and misery of the era themselves. Artistic research carried out by the designer Tatjana Raičiņeca in collaboration with the researcher Deniss Hanovs and the co-curator Kristīne Liniņa resulted in the exposition that transported the visitor to the Baroque era with all its contradictions, visual ecstasy, bold rhythms and theatrical performance (Figure 4).



Figure 4. *B for Baroque*. Photo: Reinis Hofmanis.



Although the historic exhibits such as prints and books were interpreted within the academic narrative brought by the Professor of the Riga Stradiņš University Deniss Hanovs, the exhibition itself unfolds as a spatial and sensual experience of the era through the means of contemporary design. If the academic knowledge and written narrative dominated at the *Beethoven. Orbits*, then the *B for Baroque* stands for the design as an exhibit itself balancing on the edge of self-centred approach.

### Conclusion

Each of the exhibitions examined in this article is different and unique as their authors have their own distinct views, artistic tastes and preferences. However, if the team is open to the experimentation, integrates the design thinking from the initial phase and acknowledges the importance of the academic facts as well as artistic research, the exhibition develops as an exciting journey both for the team as well as the public. It is important to acknowledge the role of curator since it works as the element between the research and the design, yet the researchers often decline to accept the authority of curator. As a compromise, the position of co-curator is introduced at the National Library of Latvia where the researcher is considered as the author of texts and the co-curator as the translator working with the conception of exhibition. On the whole, the exhibitions carried out at the National Library of Latvia prove that the success of exhibition lies in the teamwork with researchers providing facts, curators – stories, and designers – language.

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# UNDRAWING: A GLOSSARY OF DAILY DRAWING

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## Abstract

Since June 2021 I have been working on the Daily Drawing project. I draw on a daily basis and make one drawing public every day. Although I have always been drawing in (private) sketchbooks, the public format of the Daily Drawings has revitalised my practice. It forces me to reach out and to let go of control. It is the drawings that are in control and that guide me through their visual tracings. The glossary presented here is an ongoing project that aims to build an understanding of a drawing practice and of drawing in general by interacting with the Daily Drawings in a word-based language. The glossary will not analyse the drawings, but interact with them, learn from them and reach out to them. It is a speech act of undrawing in the double meaning of that word: rendering something visible (as in the undrawing of a curtain), and erasing or undoing what one has just drawn. Drawing, thus, not only as a process of learning and knowing, but also as a process of unlearning and unknowing. The glossary will engage in dialectical research of drawing as an exploratory research method complementary to writing and thinking.

**Keywords:** *drawing, glossary, daily practice, exploratory research.*

## Introduction

This glossary consists of an alphabetically ordered list of terms and their explanations that are closely related to the Daily Drawing project that I started in June 2021. In this introduction I will briefly introduce the Daily Drawing project.

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The main text of this article consists of the glossary itself. The concluding remarks will first discuss the revised and tentative nature of the glossary and how it relates to the actual drawings. Secondly it will frame both the drawings and the glossary as tools for reflection and ponder ideas of drawing and writing practices as valuable explorative research methods in artistic research and dissemination.

The Daily Drawing project did not specifically start as a research project. In fact, it was deliberately not a research project as its conception was in every way opposed to most of the research projects that I have been involved in during the last years. These projects mostly came with funding and hence they were written out in project applications before the actual research started. The Daily Drawings, on the contrary, started without such a design, without clear questions and objectives, without predefined methods and without predictable outcomes. There was no overall plan, except to draw on a daily basis and to publish one drawing a day on my personal website. Everything was allowed and ideally that still holds true, despite the fact that, for practical reasons all the drawings have been made on A4-sized drawing paper. The A4 size feels familiar, is easy to handle when I travel, and is big enough to ensure that what I do does not immediately turn into a kind of miniature like thing. Additionally, it's the maximum size my digital scanner at home can handle and scanning the drawings is a fast and reliable way to create a digital copy of the original drawing. A copy that I can consequently share and archive on my website.

The glossary was started when the Daily Drawing project had already been going on for five months. Like the drawings, the glossary is ongoing. Terms are added or deleted, explanations are refined, references are added.

## GLOSSARY

### Archive

*A productive storage capacity that invites one to wonder/wander.*

The best way to navigate the archive is to get lost as described by the French writer and language virtuoso Georges Perec (who could definitely not be accused of lacking a methodological, meticulous, and rigorous approach) in his "Brief Notes on the Art and Manner of Arranging One's Books". When trying to arrange his books he always discovered books he had somehow forgotten, which led him to acts of re-reading instead of re-arranging and classifying. *This [trying to order one's books] is a trying, depressing operation, but one liable to produce pleasant surprises, such as coming upon a book you had forgotten because you could no longer see it and which, putting off until tomorrow what you will not do today, you finally re-devour lying face down on your bed* [Perec 1978: 152].

On my website the Daily Drawings are ordered chronologically. A new drawing is added every day on top of the others. I do, however, also have a backup archive

on my computer which is ordered alphabetically on the file's titles. Every day the scanned image is downloaded as a JPEG file with a title consisting of DD (Daily Drawing), followed by the date. So, the file for the drawing of 14 June 2021 reads DD140621. This means that my computer orders the files in a different way as the website. DD140621 is followed by DD140721, DD140821, etc. Of course, I could change my computer's settings, but it is nice to see the drawings appear in a different kind of chronology. It allows one to see different patterns of a specific colour use on different 14<sup>th-s</sup> of the month.

Getting lost in drawing is a good thing. It is one of its most appealing assets. Realising you have no idea where the drawing is taking you and then either finding some kind of way out, or realising that this strange place might be a good place to stay for a while.

### Articulation

*The intention to describe in some way (in a different language, by different means, in another medium) what one is doing.*

In his discussion of the term expositiveness, which holds a central place in the *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR), Michael Schwab used the phrase *to practice practice as research* [Schwab 2019: 31]. Practice first as a verb and then a noun. To articulate in order to offer multiple perspectives on an artistic practice. Perspectives that might help others to engage with the work, but equally true and interesting, perspectives that allow the artist to get a grip on the material s/he is working with. *Moreover, it means accepting difference in practice and the differentiation of practice as epistemically productive* (..) [ibid.]. Articulation is always a kind of re-articulation. An attempt to rephrase something in the best way possible and even when you stick to the same language articulating always entails minor acts of translation. Saying out loud what you have written, describing what you see, drawing what the body tells you, ... All these articulations double the experience and, as Schwab claims, might become epistemically productive and meaningful.

### Background

*Indispensable ground for a drawing to exist.*

If there is no background, there is no drawing. Walter Benjamin said that much when discussing the graphic line: *the graphic line is defined by its contrast with area. This contrast has a metaphysical dimension, as well as a visual one; the background is conjoined with the line. The graphic line marks out the area and so defines it by attaching itself to it as its background. Conversely, the graphic line can exist only against this background, so that a drawing that completely covered its background would cease to be a drawing* [Benjamin 1917: 83].

In painting, there is no background [Benjamin 1917: 85]. Painting creates a universe, a fictional object that functions within its own boundaries. Drawing, on the contrary, is not concerned with unity, it is limitless, does not adhere to any boundaries. It is always relational with and against its own background.

### Common

(1) (*adj.*) *said of things we can and (therefore) should share, adopt and adapt;*

(2) (*noun*) *resources of any kind that can be either be freely used as source material, or that are made available for others to use.*

Some of my daily drawings start by wondering about something read, seen or experienced during the day. Something from my perspective. Sometimes there's a word or a concept for it. Often there is not. That experience is only rarely directly recorded in a drawing. More often it acts as the starting point for an image search in *The Commons*<sup>1</sup>, Flickr's gateway to photographic archives that have no known copyright restrictions. *The Commons* always lead you somewhere else and my initial starting point is more than often nothing more than a starting point that triggers a chain of events (scrolling through photographs) that make me wander further and further away in a common territory made up of visual landmarks. Sometimes one of these becomes a reference point for a drawing: a specific shape, a colour or a frame that suddenly triggers the drawing of the day.

Last year in an exhibition at *Wiels*, the centre for contemporary art in Brussels, there was a beautiful silkscreen print by the French (living in Belgium) artist Lise Duclaux. On magenta-coloured paper, Duclaux had printed *le commun n'a pas de verbe*, to be translated as *the common has no verb*. The common is indeed an adjective or a noun, but it is not too difficult to imagine a verb associated to its often complex and wide-ranging semantics. *To common: to share, adopt and adapt what we already have in common, and to do so in diverse ways*. Drawing is something quite common that has a verb associated to it.

### Digital twin

*The digital counterpart of a handmade drawing.*

The daily drawings are scanned so as to create a digital twin that can be published online. Through this process of translation there is always a reduction of the material traces of the original drawing. And although "reduction" sounds rather negative, there is in fact nothing wrong with that. Twins (even identical ones) are never identical. There may be a clear physical resemblance that can be cultivated, controlled, or denied. But there is only rarely (to my belief/experience) an explicit

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.flickr.com/commons>



wish from the twins themselves to be identical in all respects. Likewise, the digital twin can lead its own life and soon after the scanning procedure the hierarchy of “the original” and “the copy” is no longer relevant. Both can do their own thing and as the handmade version will always reveal material traces that remain hidden in the digital code, the digital twin can allow for data that are not accessible in the “original”. Next to that the digital twin is a first step to establish connections beyond drawing as such. The drawing becomes linked to a digital file. The digital file acts not as a trace of the drawing, but as an equal representation leaving its own virtual traces. Creating the digital twin as a first step in unfolding the drawing, a machine-driven articulation of the act of drawing.

Digital scanning is actually an interesting procedure in which the machine takes over. The only thing I do is a basic (automated) colour check in Photoshop and a slight adjustment of the file’s exposure to make sure that the whiteness of the page does not blend with the white background of my online archive. Photographing the drawings might also work, but I lack the patience and knowhow to translate the drawings into photographs. The hand and the eye for pushing the button and framing the image have already been involved in the creation of the drawing in the first place. They do not need to interfere with the creation of the digital twin.

### **Drawer**

*A drawer can refer to a person who draws (and hence also undraws) or to the place where drawings are stored.*

A drawer (as a person) always tries to gain access to an imaginary drawer (as a place) that contains all potential drawings. The drawer’s drawer as the visual counterpart of the *Library of Babel* that was described by Jorge Luis Borges.

### **Epistemic object**

*An object that contains a specific, yet difficult to articulate, type of knowledge.*

A drawing is imbued with a type of knowledge that is diffuse and ambiguous. It touches upon the boundaries of knowledge itself when knowledge is considered as something stable and definitive. Sharing that knowledge calls for acts of articulation, mediation and questioning. The drawing can be very clearly and specifically delineated in terms of scale, lines, and colours. Yet at the same time, the drawing is never finished and points to endless change, flux and potential alternatives.

### **Fumble**

*A disinterest in virtuosity (in drawing).*

I do not believe in virtuosity in drawing. Rather, I believe in the moment that you no longer understand what you are actually drawing. The state of wonder about

what you do not know while thinking that you know exactly what it is you are doing. Mika Hannula has talked about artistic research as an act of fumbling (of a sort). The irony of fumbling is that no matter how hard you try, how systematically, rigorously, methodically you practice it, you are not supposed to ever fully master it. Mastering it would be the end of fumbling altogether. *The point of calling artistic research an act of fumbling of a sort is that this fumbling is not the aim; it is just a means for us to get going and get going somewhere else. Fumbling as an act of focusing on the various misunderstandings, discrepancies, luring wishing wells as well as the nasty operators that we are surrounded with, going with full attention and force into the act, but then, letting the act to lead you to another place, another site – a site that you can't get to via the shortest route, not with the help of a manual and not only intentionally. You need to move slowly, out of the light and into the semi-hazy quarter of a darkness of asking things differently. It is about learning to see, feel and be with* [Hannula 2013: 91].

### **Hand**

*Part of the body that is crucial to execute a drawing. Sometimes the sensation arises that it takes over control.*

Drawing is a learning process that prioritises the hand (and the eye) over the mind. A process in which doing leads to visual and tactile wondering. If you are open to let the drawing guide you, to give the drawing the chance to reveal something you did not think about beforehand, or something you do not even understand while it is happening, you might actually start to undraw the drawing.

### **Horizontal**

*The lying position of the drawing while it is created as opposed to a vertical position of hanging a drawing (or painting) against a wall.*

All the drawings are made lying flat on a horizontal surface. This position might be a factor that differentiates the drawings from more painterly work that may be executed vertically, horizontally, or through a combination of both. The horizontal position of the paper on a working table creates a firm surface that can easily support the hand and arm when drawing. So, drawing uses a specific scale and technology of the hand (as opposed to that of the body).

### **Imaginary migration**

*The exploratory process of looking for a new place to stay for a while.*

Imaginary migration is nothing compared to actual processes of forced migration (due to geo-political, economic, or social factors).

### Nearby

*Close at hand, within reach, intimate.*

My drawing practice does not aim to represent, visualise, or illustrate reality, concepts, or projects, but on the other hand starts from or tries to keep to what is close at hand and uses that to start a conversation. Sometimes I start a drawing by tracing the outline of whatever it is that is lying on my table: a box, a glass, a sheet of paper, ... So, drawing not in the sense of to draw *something* or to make a drawing *about something*. Rather, drawing as an attempt to get to know what is happening right in front of you through the process of drawing itself. To realize how you are shaping the drawing and how it shapes you. Drawing that is not predefined, but that defines the drawer. Of course, I am indebted here to Trinh Minh-Ha's notion of *speaking nearby*, a cinematic speech act *that does not objectify topics and subjects but reflects upon itself and is capable of approaching topics and subjects from up close* [Migration: Speaking Nearby 2019].

Drawing as a specific practice to explore, to take notes, and to imagine in constant relation to a background, a notion, a glimpse, something unnoticed before. To draw what is under your wallpaper.<sup>1</sup>

### Recording

*Capturing something in a different medium.*

Perhaps drawing can be considered as a way of recording something that is not clear yet. Recording without knowing what it is that you are recording. Along the way you may evidently lose track of what you are actually recording. John Cage's 4 minutes and 33 seconds is actually a drawing.

### Score

*An invitation to interact.*

Every drawing, however chaotic it may be, contains some kind of structure that functions as a score: both a trace of something that has happened and a starting point to re-trace, re-create, or re-construct that happening and to go beyond it. The act of drawing is a performance, the drawing its document in the form of a productive score. In relation to the drawings of Cy Twombly, Roland Barthes talked about "production" and describes how Twombly's works become an invitation to do something similar, not as a copy or an imitation, but as a production in its own right.

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from Georges Perec's essay *Approaches to What?* in which he introduced his thinking on *l'infra-ordinaire* [the infra-ordinary]. *It matters little to me that these questions should be fragmentary, barely indicative of a method, at most of a project. It matters a lot to me that they should seem trivial and futile: that's exactly what makes them just as essential, if not more so, as all the other questions by which we've tried in vain to lay hold on our truth* [Perec 1973, 211].

*je ne copie pas le produit, mais la production. Je me mets, si l'on peut dire: dans les pas de la main*<sup>1</sup> [Barthes 1979: 58].

### **Selection**

*The process of selecting a number of drawings for an exhibition.*

When there is an opportunity to show the actual drawings in an exhibition context, I invite someone to make a selection from the drawings. That someone, the curator, or president of the selection committee, can also reflect on the space that is available and align it with the selection process (how many drawings? which drawings? how to group them or not?). The invitation to select is also an invitation to become part of the Daily Drawing project, a way to activate the drawings. The curator is invited to the studio/exhibition space to go through the archive of drawings in order to make the actual selection. The whole process and conversation are audio recorded. The recordings will be used as input for a separate work, a side project, called *The Selection*. Eva Cardon (Ephameron), who made the first selection, is a young colleague of mine that I did not know that well in advance. After the selection she said she had the feeling that she got to know me quite well through the drawings.

### **Sous rature**

*The practice of partially hiding a trace.*

You cannot make mistakes in drawing. Hiding or erasing a trace might highlight it.

### **Translation**

*Going from one state to another. Deliberate act of displacement.*

Can you translate something that is not yet given, something that you do not yet know, or that you are not aware of knowing? Translation, articulation, and mediation are closely related. Writing a glossary about a drawing practice is a translation of sorts. *Translation is its own undoing. A feedback loop. A Möbius strip or trip. An unwriting of the original, which is never the same as itself anyway. A writing of the unoriginal translation* [Antena 2013].

### **Undrawing**

(1) *to draw open or aside; to pull back a layer of fabric. A curtain, for example, that you undraw to see what is behind it;* (2) *to clear or erase part of a drawing.*

To un-draw in the second sense is not a typical use of the word. But it makes

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<sup>1</sup> *I do not copy the product, but the production. I put myself, so to speak, in the steps of the hand.* (translation mine)

sense. If drawing a curtain means to close the curtain and undrawing refers to the act of opening the curtain, one could infer a similar relation between drawing in the straightforward sense of sketching and un-drawing. If the act of drawing results in something like a picture, a pattern, a diagram, or in general, a trace; then undrawing refers to the process of erasing, deleting, or hiding. Undrawing as a dialectical way of drawing that un-does the drawing in order to be able to draw again.

It is this interaction that often makes drawing (and art in general) so interesting. To show what is hidden and to hide what you want to show. Showing and hiding how something can be shown and hidden, and that again and again, but never completely new. In ancient Greece, this dialectic was already made visible by the legendary painter's battle between Parrhasius and Zeuxis. As is well known, Zeuxis had created a painting depicting grapes. They were painted so convincingly that, as soon as the painting was uncovered, the birds immediately came to pick at them. The painting made by Parrhasius, on the other hand, was still waiting behind the curtain. Zeuxis wanted to see the work of his rival and immediately wanted to undraw the curtain to see what was on the painting behind it. He was fooled of course, because Parrhasius' painting was the curtain itself. In all its apparent disguise it had been plainly visible all the time. Undrawing of the highest order.

### **Unpower**

*The opposite of power.*

The delicate process of keeping track, being in charge, and losing control of the drawing. Allowing for proliferation and digression. Undoing the power relation the drawer might hold over the drawing. Confronting the drawer with his or her disability to draw. Undrawing the drawer's doubt, hesitation, fear, longing, and failure. Establishing a relationship of true reciprocity.

### **Conclusion**

The glossary presented here is ongoing research that aims to build an understanding of a specific drawing practice and of drawing as such by interacting with the Daily Drawings in a word-based language. It aims to establish a meeting ground, a place and invitation to interact with the drawings, to learn from them and to reach out to them and (potentially) to others as well. This version of the glossary is based upon a speech performance I presented at *Various Fields, Approaches, Experiences*, the International Conference of Artistic Research organised in Riga, Latvia in May 2022.<sup>1</sup> During that presentation I recited the terms of the glossary

<sup>1</sup> The conference was jointly organised by the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Culture, the Art Academy of Latvia, the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Arts of the University of Latvia and the National Library of Latvia.

while in the background a slide show of a selection of 200 of the Daily Drawings was shown to the audience. In between the speech performance and the editing of this article some revisions have been made, and that process of revision will go on after its publication. Like any project with encyclopaedic ambitions the glossary will never be finished. Each edition presents the current state of affairs. Of course, the speech performance is fundamentally different from the glossary that is presented here. The graphical potential of the written words does not capture my intonation while reading and the visual information contained in the drawings is absent from the scene in this article. That difference is intended as yet another way to establish connections beyond the visual and the verbal that might disclose, or rather undraw, the kind of tacit knowledge artistic research is always looking for, or rather is always trying to grasp. So, this glossary is not intended as a description, guideline or summary to the Daily Drawing project. I hope it will function as a kind of research method of translation (see glossary) and what I, in previous work, have characterized as mediated redescriptions. *By combining different media, modes, genres, and voices artistic research could provoke different protagonists to talk to each other in different languages hoping to open a conversation that might in the future function as a tool to think things differently* [Geerts 2015: 126].

The glossary builds on that line of thought and explores how drawing and writing are not only tools in artistic research projects, but how combining them works as an explorative and reflective research method. Their outcomes are not easily predictable, but practicing them as practice does force one to continuously reassess what one thinks to know and to reposition oneself in relation to visual material and the words we use to talk about that. It points to a humble position in which the artist-researcher is searching again and again for a voice and image in relation to record what the world has to offer.

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# TO REMEMBER IS A RISK OF FORGETTING – MIMESIS AND CHRONOTOPE IN ARTISTIC PROCESS

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## **Abstract**

A performing storyteller is completely depending on the memory. In the process of making a performance the storyteller must make some choices regarding the memory. This article is based on a musical storytelling performance. Through using the research question: what possibilities does the chronotope and mimesis provide in an artistic working process towards an oral storytelling performance? the author looks at the concept of mimesis as a process and chronotope as a clarifying term. According to Catherine Heinemeyer, a chronotope is applicable because it is not only about the artistic experience, but the metaphor places the artistic work in contemporary political, economic, and social tendencies. This helps identify ways of behaving in a practice [Heinemeyer 2020]. Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) relates Aristotle's mimesis to poesis, which means art, and it is therefore only within the art that mimesis is effective [Ricoeur 1991].

The author has used examples from the storytelling performance to understand the concept of mimesis and the metaphor chronotope better.

**Keywords:** *oral storytelling, performance, artistic research, chronotope, mimesis.*

## **As I remember it**

As a performing storyteller I am depending on the memory. I find stories in my own life, I need to remember the structures of the stories I am telling, and I am using traditional stories like folktales and myths – meaning the cultural memory. This article explores the use of the metaphor chronotope and the concept of mimesis as a

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wedge in artistic research, based on a musical storytelling performance. The musical storytelling performance *Vår*<sup>1</sup> combined source material from Norse mythology, fornalder saga<sup>2</sup> and the autobiographical meaning episodes of my own life, with field recordings of Norwegian landscapes, song, and percussive music, mixed and manipulated by a composer/musician. Whilst the music was essential in the effect/affect of the performance, in this article I will focus on the work done by me as a storyteller. Oral storytelling is described as a vivid, contextualized and situated event influenced by those present [Lwin 2010] in a storytelling situation.

*Vår* evolved between 2017–19, and after several studio performances in 2019, the 2020 pandemic moved the production online. In 2021 and 2022, the performance was live streamed from a Norwegian Laftehus in Oslo, Norway, to a global audience assumed to be in their own domestic settings.

The stories in a storytelling performance are very often traditional material (such as folk tales and the like), autobiographical material or a combination of this, as it was in this performance. The main story in the performance is about the female warrior Hervor taken from an old Norse saga with the title: *sagaen om Hervarer og Kong Heidrek* [Thorarensen 1847]. Hervor is a woman who becomes a warrior and travels to retrieve the magic sword Tyrping in her father's grave.

In addition to this main story, autobiographical episodes and Norse mythology were used, as mentioned, and the performance also included a small lecture. Working with material from vastly different sources requires an artistic attitude that can embrace these sources. I believe the key to this may lie in the metaphor chronotope and the concept of mimesis. Therefore, the research question is:

*What possibilities does the chronotope and mimesis provide in an artistic working process towards an oral storytelling performance?*

### The first memory

*My very first memory. I am sitting in a turquoise kitchen. I am sitting in a drawer, a big one. I am probably playing that the drawer is a boat. We have been on the island where I later grew up, we have been rowing in a boat. But right now, I am sitting with my eyes closed. I am holding my hands over my ears. It is dark around me. Through the darkness, I hear the thumping sounds. I hear the sounds of him hitting her [Dahlsveen 2021].*

In the quote above, there is a memory told from childhood. That is how I remember it, and this is important, because what really happened may have been

<sup>1</sup> *Vår* means in Norwegian both spring and our, both meanings was part of the performance.

<sup>2</sup> Fornalder saga is Norse material and is described as stories that deal with the period before Iceland was inhabited, these stories combine the historical with the magical.

something slightly different. When I am telling this memory, the memory has been through a process to make it “tellable”. In other words, there is a process between an experience or a memory, and what is told. This, I believe, is illuminated through the chronotope and mimesis.

The excerpt – the personal memory – above was used in the performance. My personal memories were told episodic, framed by the story of Hervor. The story of Hervor influences my perspective on the memory and how I tell it. Something is emphasized over other choices I could have made in the telling of the memory: Boat (Hervor travels by ship) and a father’s presence (Hervor grows up without father and still decides to follow his footsteps). The memory is not alone but it is framed by models of thought. The models of thought are created by the way I interpret the saga.

There is sensitivity present that affects the artistic process and expression. On the one hand, the episodic memory is helped by the Norse material, on the other hand, the memory is also processed with a regard to the present. The episode mentions other people (he and her), the memory was surrounded by a shame I as a storyteller had to pay attention to. There are also others who “own” this memory, and I must balance between an artistic need to convey what for me is an important narrative and pay attention to others who do not want to remember.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) claims that human is fundamentally chronotopic [Bakhtin 1981: 95], because we experience through place and time. Like in the memory above, the time is indicated through “me sitting in a drawer” – I am a child, and the place is the kitchen. Time is also visible through the actions mentioned in the quote like closing my eyes. A chronotope was initially associated with the fictional novel and should serve as a generic analysis tool on artistic choices a writer made. Bakhtin took the idea from the theory of relativity [Gaasland 2000: 91]. Furthermore, Bakhtin indirectly mentions that a chronotope is also applicable to other cultural areas than the novel [Bakhtin 1981: 84]. For example, Catherine Heinemeyer uses the metaphor to describe various practices in oral storytelling with adolescents [Heinemeyer 2020].

A chronotope refers to the simultaneous occurring in historical periods [Bakhtin 1981: 84], i. e., that a set of artistic expressions from the same period will have similarities when it comes to the construction of place and time. According to Heinemeyer, a chronotope is applicable because it is not only about the artistic experience, but the metaphor places the artistic work in contemporary political, economic, and social tendencies. This helps identify ways of behaving in a practice [Heinemeyer 2020: 60].

A chronotope is based on how a human experiences her reality and how this is transferred to a literary work [Bemong & Borghart 2008: 3]. There is then a connection between the social situation one is situated in and the artistic expression

that arises in this situation. The memory in the quote is surrounded by another story in the performance, a story from the saga, this context makes me focus on something in the memory. The reason for why I remember this memory, is based on the saga.

The chronotope can provide access to human actions in their own biotopes [Bemong et al. 2010: IV] as I can reflect on why the memory has received the construction it has in the quote above. A chronotope acts as a bridge between the artistic and the real world [Lawson 2011: 385] and exists in interaction with the historical time [Steinby 2013: 117] I experience. The memory above is based on an experience, but how to bring this memory into something tellable – into a chronotope? Here, the concept of mimesis can be of help.

Mimesis is often associated with the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC), and mimesis is understood as imitation or representation [Halliwell 2012], this is a challenge, as representation is time-dependent and will appear different at different times [Nyrnes 2002: 256]. For example, elements of the saga represent a reality that is not applicable today.

According to Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) Aristotle's mimesis relates to poesis, which means art, and it is therefore only within the art that mimesis is effective [Ricoeur 1991]. Mimesis is an artistic process and clarifies the work towards a performance [Willbergh 2008: 12]. Mimesis is, to me, a concept that deals with choices and means of creating closeness and dynamics in a narrative. Mimesis is also a process consisting of phases that temporally follow each other. Ricoeur's triple mimesis can be used as a methodical tool that moves an experience into a narrative; and finally, an artistic experience for the listener through three phases, here called mimesis phase one, two and three.

### **To not let go**

By focusing on the chronotope, I discover challenges that I have to solve. This, for example, applies to place. As a storyteller, I do not memorize a script, I learn a structure that often builds on the places mentioned in a story. Working with Norse material, as most of the performance was based on, was for me locating the places in the story. There is sparse information that is conveyed in the sources, but the location of the characters is enough to create an image of the historical time in which the Norse story has its reference. Considering the chronotope, it is conceivable that time is taking place in the topological. Topology or places are central in the Norse material, places help to give meaning to the message [Schneeberger 2018]. It is the architectural places that take precedence in the Norse texts. The social ranking is placed in seating, it helps the memory to place the characters [Hermann 2018].

Time is another challenge when it comes to the Norse material. A memory itself does not come as a structured event, in transition from remembering to narrative,

choices must be made. Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) argued that the selection of memories and structuring of them is influenced by society’s preferences [Halbwachs 1992]. In this project, I discovered that time also has an ethical function. The transfer of the saga of Hervor has already been through a process of selection, I do not know what the anonymous writers have omitted or extended and amplified in their written versions of the saga, but the structuring of the saga must have been influenced by the time in which it was written down – supporting the idea of the chronotope. Temporality has an ethical dimension because one stands between the safeguarding of tradition and addressing the contemporary. Time has omitted or changed information in the story. Furthermore, I tell the story into a new contemporary and change the narrative accordingly:

*One day when Hervor was out walking in the woods, a group of slaves came walking towards her. They surrounded her, pushed, and pulled her. She pushed back, one of them fell to the ground.*

*He got up and said, “You, daughter of a whore. You are no better than us. You do not know who you are, but we will tell you ... You are the daughter of a whore, your mother lured a slave and slept with him, you are the daughter of a whore and a slave.”*

*Who am I? I who grew up without a father.*

*The very first memory I have is that I am sitting in a turquoise kitchen ...(..)...<sup>1</sup>*

*Who am I? Hervor stood before her grandfather. The Earl sat in the high seat, now an old man. Hervor’s voice rumbled in the hall: “Who am I. If I do not know where I am from, how am I supposed to know where I am going?” [Dahlsveen 2021]*

In the quote from the performance, I am telling about how Hervor got the first impulse to become a warrior. When she was born, her familial story was hidden from her.

I show that I use both the collective/cultural and the autobiographical memory. The quote also shows a parallelism – “who am I” is a question that both I as a character in the story and the character Hervor asks, and the scene shows some violence towards women. Regarding the chronotope, the main story locates the scene in a forest, on one specific day, the other scene – my memory, is also “one day”, located to a kitchen, the melting of the two scenes is in the question: “Who am I?” before I transport the story to scene in a hall. In the process of these memories, the typological presence in the material became important. The typological presence is

<sup>1</sup> See the previous page for the memory from the kitchen.



about decoding a text by placing motifs next to each other [Wellendorf 2011]. In this performance, it was to compile motifs from the Norse material with motifs from the autobiographical material. That is, I picked topics from one story and compared them to topics in the other material.

One motif is that Hervor is being subjected to violence. She is also violent: she is born with a “jotun’s/giant’s anger” [Gjessing 1899], the story tells us. I thus had a protagonist who was both exposed to and who herself was violent. This made me look at my own memories of violence and I found several episodes where I was subjected to and was violent or observed violence. I had to select. I chose to focus on my lack of relationship with a father, as this was something mirrored in Hervor’s upbringing without a father. I then had these pieces of text that came from different times and places – different chronotopes. But these different chronotopes are merged in my telling, as a storyteller I am located in a specific time and a place and I as storyteller situated in place and time manage to structure these chronotopes into one performance.

### The triple mimesis

The work of finding material for a storytelling performance is located in **mimesis phase one**. Piet Verhesschen claims that an understanding of Ricoeur’s triple mimesis could help one in understanding the process between experience and a narrative [Verhesschen 2003]. The first phase – **mimesis one** – is lived life [Willbergh 2008: 87]. This is where one discovers the potential in an event, one discovers a structure the narrative can have, recognizes elements that make up a narrative, such as temporality [Verhesschen 2003: 453].

Over in the next phase, **mimesis two**, the semantic is shifted and negotiated into something that becomes applicable [Østern & Angelo 2016]. I create a narrative out of the experiences. When composing a text or in my situation a performance, one understands how actions are interconnected, one sees meaningful structures, symbolism, and the temporal essence [Ricoeur 1984: 56]. Based on this, I can create a plot where the events have been given motivations, the events will be filled with how, why, who and the like [Ricoeur 1984: 54]. In this phase, operational actions are taken to “bring about a synthesis between heterogeneous components like actors, means, purposes, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results and so on” [Verhesschen 2003: 453].

In the final phase of mimesis – **mimesis three**, the past must be made present in the moment of now [Ricoeur 1984: 55] in the listener. I must bring the material to life, tell it in a way, that allows listeners to envision it. Through mimesis, the material opens to “as if” – the fiction [Ricoeur 1984: 64]. In this way, mimesis is located in the pace between memory and the world of listeners [Ricoeur 1984: 71].

I had to create an order in the material for the performance, which does not necessarily need a time chronology in which one begins with childhood and ends with death, even if these two events are present. A key element here, is to distinguish I as a storyteller from I as a character in a memory. This also because there are several “I” characters I had to tell about in the material, the I in a character of a child and a youth, were among them.

Even if memories are fragmented, it can still appear as an unbroken text through an I as a storyteller [Morris & Maclaren 2015]. The storyteller’s I, is the one that connects it all. As long as this I keep an order in the leaps, the listeners will potentially be able to create a timeline for themselves. In the beginning of the performance, I as a storyteller, established a firm chronotope in a here and now situation, together with the audience. This I did by speaking about where we were, what time we were in. Such a process also leads to the cultural memory being influenced by the personal memory and amplifying the past as something that is being perspective through the present.

### **The storyteller and the memory**

For me as a storyteller, the memory is considered from two perspectives. One is about extracting “raw material” from my own life as the basis for a story, then it is about reworking this into an expression, and I must remember this reworked story.

Remembering is something that is deep within us, we use it all the time, often subconsciously and without questioning it. It is such a smooth part of our lives, that we do not notice it [Casey 2000]. Edward Casey argues that remembering appears as a quasi – narrative, in the sense that the memory resembles a narrative, but lacks some essentials to make it a story. One of the elements missing, might be a clear narrative voice [Casey 2000: 43].

The starting process with this performance, started with entering an empty room with the landscapes of the memories and the stories. Working from memory to a story is not a linear process but entering a landscape and sort the way to what should be the building blocks for, for example, a performance. For the storyteller, loci are also about treating a text as a landscape and start working in the place that gives a sense of something. In *Vår*, I did not start the working process with the beginning of a story, as I did not know what the beginning would be. I began with the place in the story of Hervor that I considered to be a turning point, the scene I remembered best from the first encounter with the story, the place where Hervor calls out to her dead father, asking him to raise from the dead. Based on this, I improvised words, movements, and sounds:

The grave

Suddenly, a bright light rose, as if the sun had fallen down and threw the sun’s rays up into the sky.

She followed the light until she came to a pile covered in grass.

It was a burial mound.

“Father wake up

You who are buried

with the sword by your side

Wake up and give me your sword”

Father

is dead

*My father died alone in his apartment.*

“Father wake up

I, your only child, want to wake you up.

Give me the sword that divides the wind in half,

the sword forged for blessing and curse” [Dahlsveen 2021].

In this quote from the performance, you can see that the scene in the story is at the burial mound. In the performance, I must deal with two places: the imaginary world of the story and the physical space I find myself in. I add a description to help the listener see a burial mound: *covered in grass*. This is mimesis phase three, the story should become alive in the listener. In the perspective of the chronotope, how can I make this place and time come alive?

In a storytelling performance, there is a performative relationship between storyteller and listener [Aadland 2016]. The listener’s ability to imagine what is happening in a story is helped by the storyteller’s use of a diverse language, using both the body, the vocal and the verbal. The listener is present with an inner participation [Nagel & Hovik 2016].

The bodily is important for Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, he connects it to the concept of “presence” which is about having a spatial relationship with the world and its objects [Gumbrecht 2004: 130]. For Gumbrecht, the presence is a sensuous, bodily, and spatial state [Gumbrecht 2004: 116]. Presence is being in touch, whether literally or figuratively, with people, things, events. Presence is thus the place that creates experiences, and you are in a material contact with the outside world [Kleinberg 2013].

Josette Féral also believes that presence is based on the presence of the body, but that the bodily presence is not enough, there must also be a quality present [Féral 2012]. This essence of quality is that those present have a presence. At the same time, it is also about a perception. Thus, presence is not only about the physical, but also about the intellectual: “Making experiences depends on thought and memory. It is about creating a resonance in the one who experiences; subject locates something in itself, recognizes and associates with own memories” [Féral 2012: 32].

The body becomes a place of space, and this forms a repertoire of movements and gestures. In a performance, this repertoire is finely tuned. To make the listener enter “my chronotope”, I use my body and vocal to give an imaginative sense of time and place.

In the quote above you can see that there is a brief violation, which disturbs the imaginary feeling of being by the grave “My father died alone in an apartment” [Dahlsveen 2021]. This is an attempt to disrupt the listener’s room of experience, perhaps to annoy, so that they become aware of their own presence and the moment of now: where they are at what time.

### Conclusion

Initially, I asked the question. What possibilities does the chronotope and mimesis provide in an artistic working process towards an oral storytelling performance? I think I am only at the beginning of investigating this further. Mimesis, for me, becomes a clarification of phases in a process, and by being aware of the process, the goal is to be able to create a chronotope that gives the listener both something to reflect on and to imagine.

Through mimesis, I become aware of how memory is working without it becoming less true than the experience on which it is based. The chronotope gives me artistic clues to use, while at the same time wanting to break with stuck patterns to construct an artistic work.

Oral storytelling is a poorly articulated area when it comes to the artistic methodology. By using already existing philosophical concepts, the storyteller can further develop her artwork and the performative art scene.

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