SOUND STAGE SCREEN

1 / 1

Spring 2021

Sound Stage Screen (*SSS*) is a biannual peer-reviewed journal devoted to historical and theoretical research into the relations between music, performance, and media. An open-access journal published in English by the University of Milan (Italy), *SSS* addresses a wide range of phenomena, practices, and objects pertaining to sound and music in light of the interconnections between performing traditions and media archaeologies.

Cover: A moment from the performance of Christopher Cerrone's *Invisible Cities* (The Industry, Los Angeles Union Station, October 2013) - Photo credit: Dana Ross.

https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/sss/

Contents

INTERVIEW

REVIEWS

Books

Performances

EDITORIAL

Five Keywords and a Welcome

IDENTITY • The proliferation of new methodologies and areas of research has opened up enormous opportunities for the study of music and increasingly also sound. We participate in this movement towards expansion as it reflects music's gregarious nature and fluid identity. As its disciplinary boundaries expand, music also seemingly dissolves. *SSS* seizes upon this moment to rethink and align musical scholarship with a wide range of theoretical reflections, historical reconstructions, and practical interventions from across the humanities and social sciences.

SOUND STAGE SCREEN • Sound not only expands but also seeps through various media and environments, giving rise to multifaceted situations that call for a redefinition of musical expertise. We propose the "stage" and the "screen" as both literal and metaphorical loci where such an effort may begin and eventually flourish.

HETEROGLOSSIA • Koreans and Filipinos communicate in English, as do Indians from different states, Thais with Australians, or Swedes with Brazilians. We welcome the role of English not only as a global but also a trans-local language, notwithstanding its status as a legacy of the former British Empire or the reach of American military, commercial, and cultural influence. The choice of the English language will, we trust, encourage the participation from scholars and practitioners from around the globe, irrespective of their native language: *in uno, plures*.

THEORY/PRACTICE • As artists seek to share their experiences and knowledge in an academic setting, scholars continue to explore opportunities to take part in the curatorial and creative process in a variety of contexts—the concert hall, gallery, theater, film, and all manner of newly emerging platforms. To buttress this convergence, *SSS* will function as a forum where people of different persuasions can meet and work together.Through the multimedia apparatus on its website, the journal will also provide a record of their encounters.

FUTURE • Our project is borne out of a desire to embrace new branches of knowledge but also a concern over the viability of musicology as an academic discipline. Is an institutional reset in order? Can we apply our knowledge to a new range of tasks and pair up with new professional figures? Rather than reimagining the study of music solely across disciplinary lines, then, we wish to open up a space in which people with different interests and specialities meet and over time give way to new protocols of collaboration. We champion the rapprochement between historians, theorists, and practitioners because we believe this to be the foundation of *new musicological practices*.

***

We are delighted to welcome you to the first issue of *SSS*. We owe a big "thank you" to our authors, anonymous reviewers, and board members for making this publication possible and helping us formulate the motives underpinning this enterprise (as expressed in the five keywords above). If this journal is to function as an open space for new practices, it goes without saying that we need to nurture critical perspectives but also encourage practical interventions. Though we now live suspended in time, as soon as this incredible pandemic ends we will organize meetings, performances, and workshops that will bring to fruition some of the principles that inform this editorial. *Se son rose fioriranno* (If it's meant to be, it will be).

Hong Kong-Milan, March 2021
Giorgio Biancorosso and Emilio Sala, editors

ARTICLES

Excavating French Melodrama of the First Empire

Katherine Astbury, Sarah Burdett, Diane Tisdall

French melodrama of the Napoleonic era was a form of total theater with text, music, and gesture inextricably linked in the creation of effect for the post-Revolutionary audience. Theater scholarship in France has long been dominated by textual analysis and, as a result, the interconnections between these elements of melodrama performance have been underexplored, although attempts "to 'sonorize' the study of melodrama" are becoming more widespread.[1] Even the groundbreaking volumes of René-Charles Guilbert de Pixerécourt's theater being produced currently perpetuate the subservience of music to text in that the play texts receive full critical apparatus whereas the scores do not.[2]

The creative possibilities of practice as research as a way of moving beyond the study of words on the page is well established in the UK but has only recently begun to gather pace in France and this is leading to an important rapprochement between theory and practice with *conférences-spectacles*, *séminaires-ateliers* and historically informed performances by com-

[1] Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, "The Melodramatic Moment," in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*, ed. Hambridge and Hicks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 1, a volume that challenges "the binaries that have come to characterize melodrama scholarship," 13. For years, Emilio Sala was a lone voice in examining the scores of early nineteenth-century French melodrama, most notably in *L'opera senza canto: il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), but now there are a number of musicologists studying French melodrama scores, most notably Jens Hesselager, Sarah Hibberd, and Jacqueline Waeber. Nevertheless, scholarly interest in melodrama has not seen the level of interest that characterizes the field of English melodrama. See for instance *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[2] René-Charles Guilbert de Pixerécourt, *Mélodrames*, ed. Roxane Martin, 4 vols. (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013–).

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 7–46.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss14179.

panies such as Théâtre à la Source.[3] This article offers a case study of how public performances of two early nineteenth-century French melodramas can further interdisciplinary dialogue and question conventionally assumed beliefs about melodrama of the period.

The blending of scholarship and practice is labelled in a variety of ways depending, in part, on the discipline. Historically informed performance has been claimed above all for musical performance but is often discredited, not least for a "tendency to use the evidence in several different ways simultaneously, according to what suits the project at hand" rather than seeing it as providing "a starting point for experimentation."[4] Practice as research, or practice-led research, are phrases more often associated with Theater Studies and denote a process whereby insightful practice is a substantial part of the evidence of the articulation and evidencing of a research inquiry.[5] Recapturing elements of melodrama through collaborative "working historically through practice" was at the heart of Jacky Bratton and Gilli Bush-Bailey's Jane Scott project in 2002, which had as one of its research questions the issue of non-textual gaps in melodrama.[6] Their work, which also fed into a 2014 workshop on melodrama in France and England directed by Bush-Bailey and led by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and King's College London,[7] has done much to underline Baz Kershaw's view that "performance knowledge is most likely to be produced by creative processes."[8] Our contribution to this landscape has been to go beyond the confines of an academic workshop to public performance, something which allows greater space for an exploration of "then and now" as the per-

[3] See www.alexandrin.org.

[4] John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 200, 196.

[5] See Robin Nelson, "Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of 'Practice as Research,'" in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, ed. Robin Nelson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3–22.

[6] Gilli Bush-Bailey, "Still Working It Out. An Account of the Practical Workshop Re-Discovery of Company Practice and Romantic Performance Styles via Jane Scott's Plays," *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 7.

[7] See the video-article by Katherine Astbury, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, "Researching Early French and English Melodrama through Performance" at https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre/performingmelodrama/.

[8] Baz Kershaw, "Performance as Research: Live Events and Documents," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 36.

formance needs to resonate with the public. The two plays performed in 2017 and discussed here might best be seen as research-informed performances, blending approaches with a view, to use Robert Sarlós's words, to "bring all participants, including spectators, closer to a sensory realization of the style and atmosphere, the physical and emotional dynamics of a bygone era, than can mere reading".[9]

After all, the written play text is just one aspect of performance—the score is an integral part of melodrama, as are the non-verbal gestures of the actors, and bringing those three elements together through performance allows us to gain a much better understanding of their interaction. In addition to the play text and score (where it has survived), traces in reviews, memoires, illustrations, institutional registers and other documents allow us to piece together information about the play as a performance, even if what has survived is fragmentary. It is a task similar to that of an archaeologist reassembling an old pot from a handful of pieces. While Kate Newey reminds us of the dangers that some will see archaeology as dry, dusty, "dead,"[10] we use this metaphor of archaeology in the sense in which it is found in Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' seminal text *Theatre/Archaeology* and James Mathieu's *Experimental Archaeology*.[11] Shanks and Pearson in particular highlight the centrality of interpretation in both archaeology and performance and see both spheres as connected by a common aim to retrieve and reconstruct ephemeral events and understand the textures of the social and cultural experience of the object in the past. For them, archaeology is a means of mediating with the past where it is imagination and "contemporary interest which takes the archaeologist to the material past".[12] The absence of a performance tradition, patchy survival rates of musical scores or visual sources for gestures, pose considerable practical issues when attempting performance of early nineteenth-century French melodrama. This article explores how the idea

[9] Robert K. Sarlós, "Performance Reconstruction: The Vital Link between Past and Future," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 201.

[10] Katherine Newey, "Embodied History: Reflections on the Jane Scott Project," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 67.

[11] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology: Disciplinary Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 2001); *Experimental Archaeology: Replicating Past Objects, Behaviors, and Processes*, ed. James R. Mathieu (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2002).

[12] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 11.

of archaeology as a metaphor for our work helped us reach a clearer understanding of how text, music, and genre intertwine.

Theater was an important tool for Napoleon Bonaparte but it has been neglected by scholars who have focused instead on French Revolutionary theater.[13] Opera has benefited from monograph-length works from a range of scholars, but other genres are restricted to isolated studies.[14] And yet the First Empire is a period when theater flourished, and when its foremost dramatic form, melodrama, was exported around the world. To redress the imbalance in scholarship, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded two projects at the University of Warwick between 2013 and 2017. The first, "French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era," revitalized the study of texts and expanded our knowledge of the period by exploring issues of genre, repertoire, censorship, and intercultural exchange.[15] It also made an important contribution to practice-based research on melodrama with the aforementioned workshop comparing the music for the English adaptation of Pixerécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* with one of the surviving French scores, directed by Gilli Bush-Bailey and benefitting from methodological approaches tested in Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton's Jane Scott project and by Jens Hesselager's work on Pixerécourt.[16] The second project, "Staging Napoleonic Theatre," focused on performance, with productions of two early nineteenth-century

[13] For an état présent see the introduction to Clare Siviter, *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

[14] On opera, see for instance David Chaillou, *Napoléon et l'Opéra. La politique sur la scène, 1810–1815* (Paris: Fayard, 2004) and Annelies Andries, "Modernizing Spectacle: The Opéra in Napoléon's Paris" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2018).

[15] Principal outputs include Katherine Astbury, "Présentation de *La forteresse du Danube*," in Pixerécourt, *Mélodrames*, vol. 3, *1804–1808*, 263–289; Katherine Astbury and Devon Cox, "Re-Examining the Sources for the Prisoner-of-War Theatre at Portchester Castle", in *Ser prisionero de guerra entre la Ilustración y Napoleón. Una aproximación por casos particulares*, ed. Evaristo C. Martínez-Radío (Madrid: Sílex, forthcoming); Devon Cox, "Stages of Captivity: Napoleonic Prisoners of War & their Theatricals, 1808–1814" (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2017); Vincenzo De Santis, "La tragédie à Paris en 1809. Débats esthétiques et répertoire théâtral," in *Fièvre et vie du théâtre sous la Révolution française et l'Empire*, ed. Thibaut Julian and Vincenzo De Santis (Paris: Garnier, 2019), 179–193; Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment*; Siviter, *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon*.

[16] Jens Hesselager, "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions: The 'Reflexive Performance' as a Way of Approaching Nineteenth-Century French Melodrama," *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 23 (2011): 20–30.

French melodramas for the public.[17] The first was a three-act melodrama, *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance*, written and performed by French prisoners of war at Portchester Castle in 1810, the second a community "performance in a week" (the cast was in fact together for just six days) of one of the most successful melodramas of the early nineteenth century, Pixerécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* (1804) at the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond, North Yorkshire.

These projects were rooted in a desire to recontextualize the plays, particularly in the case of the site-specific prisoner-of-war play;[18] like Pearson and Shanks, we are interested in the "connections between cultural production and its contexts" and the "ramifications of social, cultural, political and historical context upon the nature, form and function of performance."[19] The notion of archaeology as a process of "making something of what is left of the past" has therefore provided a way of approaching theater of the Napoleonic era.[20] In building on Bratton, Bush-Bailey, and Hesselager we acknowledge our debt to their methods—built, as Hesselager puts it, around "trying out ideas, analytically"—but also go beyond their model of experimental workshops to performance-events in front of a non-specialist general public.[21] In so doing, we had to move from hypotheses to decisions, a process which involved above all the professional directors of the two plays, Kate Howard of the company Past Pleasures for *Roseliska* and Sarah Wynne Kordas for *The Fortress on the Danube* who had the difficult task of taking the audience on an unfamiliar journey through early melodrama.

[17] In addition to the two performances, principal outputs include Katherine Astbury and Diane Tisdall, "Une exploration du mélodrame parisien à travers la représentation d'une pièce des prisonniers de guerre du château de Portchester en 1810: *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance*," in *Musique de scène dans le théâtre parlé de Diderot à Hugo*, ed. Patrick Taïeb and Olivier Bara (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming); Katherine Astbury and Diane Tisdall, "Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*: Functions of Music in Parisian and Provincial Melodrama of the Early Nineteenth Century," *Studi francesi* 191 (2020): 348–360.

[18] It lies outside the scope of this article to explore in full the nature of early French prisoner-of-war or the particular context of the theater at Portchester and how it enabled the prisoners to "reconnect with a sense of home, preserving a French identity under threat from prolonged captivity" (Cox, "Stages of Captivity," 240). See also Astbury and Tisdall, "Une exploration du mélodrame parisien."

[19] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, xviii, xiv.

[20] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 50.

[21] Hesselager, "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions," 23.

Text

Excavating a forgotten period in theater history (there is no calendar of performances for the Napoleonic period for instance), forgotten plays (there are few modern editions), and a genre typically dismissed as staged morality for a post-Revolutionary nation is a challenge.[22] The starting point for our two performances was the two play text manuscripts which lend themselves to reflections on sources, intertextuality, the importance of music in the development of melodrama, the role of politics, as well as the layers that make up performance, and the research was shared with the professional directors. Reading from the manuscript of *La forteresse du Danube* allows us to see the process of writing the play and therefore unveil some of the practical and socio-political considerations with which the playwright was grappling, although the 1805 printed edition is also invaluable.[23]

Most notably the manuscript indicates that Pixerécourt originally intended to perform the play at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique and had allocated roles to the resident actors before changing his mind and taking the play to the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin.[24] The change of theater resulted in changes to the content of the play as Pixerécourt adapted his writing for the comic talents of the main actors at the new venue. The manuscript thus highlights the importance of the comic elements, which are the aspect of Pixerécourtian melodrama that modern critics tend to

[22] Scholars from Willie G. Hartog onwards have seen Pixerécourtian melodrama as "une sorte de propagande de la vertu;" Hartog, *Guilbert de Pixerécourt: sa vie, son mélodrame, sa technique et son influence* (Paris: Champion, 1913), 212. Recent scholarship on Pixerécourt in the Garnier critical edition, the chapters in *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*, ed. Sarah Hibberd (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), and Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment* have done much to embrace a more interdisciplinary approach which is leading to a new appreciation of the aesthetics of melodrama. This article has benefited from extensive conversations with a vast range of scholars in the field, especially through the workshop elements of the project, and we are grateful to all those who have supported our work in the last decade.

[23] Pixerécourt added stage directions to the published edition to give guidance to actors in the provinces on how to convey the character development as he intended. See Astbury's critical edition in Pixerécourt, *Mélodrames*, vol. 3, 291–411 for details. The final edition overseen by Pixerécourt, published in 1841, contains a number of changes reflecting the evolution of the genre over the decades.

[24] There is no documentary evidence for the belated change of theater. The directors of the Porte Saint-Martin were trying to restore its fortunes and a new Pixerécourt melodrama would be guaranteed to pull in an audience so it is likely that they made an offer he couldn't refuse.

play down the most, focusing instead on melodramas as morality plays for the masses.[25]

Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance, which was written and performed by Jean-Baptiste Louis Lafontaine and François Mouillefarine alongside other French prisoners of war at Portchester Castle in 1810, only survives in manuscript form. This meant that there were no issues with competing editions, but we did need to make use of other manuscript material held alongside it in the Victoria & Albert theatre collection to understand better the nature of the theater built at Portchester and therefore the parameters of the performance. The memoir writer Joseph Quantin, held at Portchester in 1810–1814 and involved in the theatricals, described the building as a "petit prodige," declaring that "le théâtre était aussi bien machiné que ceux de la capitale" (The theater was as well-equipped as those in the capital),[26] a statement seemingly corroborated by a contemporary account of the theater in the *Hampshire Telegraph* which reported that

> The French Prisoners at Portchester have fitted up a Theatre in the Castle, which they have decorated in a style far surpassing anything of the kind that could possibly be expected. … The Pantomimes which they have brought forward, are not excelled by those performed in London.[27]

The curtain resembled that of the Théâtre de la Cité with a view from the Pont-Neuf of key Parisian landmarks, including the Louvre and the Tuileries palace.[28] This meant that the theater became a space in which the prison-

[25] While recent French scholarship has remarked on the background in pantomime of leading melodrama actors such as Tautin—see the articles by Sylviane Robardey-Eppstein and Emmanuelle Delattre-Destemberg in "Le jeu de l'acteur de mélodrame," special issue, *Revue d'histoire du théâtre* 274, no. 2 (2017)—on the whole French scholarship does not make as much of the mix of the comic and the serious as scholars of British melodrama, as it often focuses on the genre's violence or its ideology instead. Jean-Marie Thomasseau's groundbreaking *Le Mélodrame sur les scènes parisiennes de Coelina (1800) à L'Auberge des Adrets (1827)* (Lille, Service de reproduction des theses de l'université de Lille III, 1974) and Julia Przybos's *L'Entreprise mélodramatique*, (Paris: Corti, 1987) are emblematic in this regard. Only with Frédéric Le Maître's interpretation of Robert Macaire in *L'Auberge des Adrets* in 1823 do French scholars focus on the comic in melodrama. See for instance Marie-Ève Therenty, "Un comique *trans*: Robert Macaire. Transmédialité et transgénéricité d'une figure nationale", *Insignis* numéro 1 (2010)**:** *Trans(e), 25-35.*

[26] Joseph Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour en Espagne, dans l'intérieur du pays, sur les pontons, à Cadix, et dans l'*île de Cabrera (Paris: J. Brianchon, 1823), II: 135.

[27] *Hampshire Telegraph*, January 7, 1811.

[28] See Louis François Gille, *Mémoires d'un conscrit de 1808*, ed. Philippe Gille (Paris: Vic-

ers could reaffirm their Frenchness, reinforced by performing Parisian hits in French, and mitigate the trauma of imprisonment, not least by exploring the theme of imprisonment and escape. The nostalgic recollections of home in the décor and on stage also reinforced the emotional ties binding the prisoners together.

The calendar of performances established by Devon Cox from playbills shows that the prisoners were performing twice a week and had a predilection for Pixerécourt melodramas.[29] The rhythm of performances offers an explanation for the rather rushed ending to the manuscript of *Roseliska* which overall seems reminiscent of Pixerécourt, although in fact the inspiration for the play comes from E. F. Varez and Armand Séville's *Métusko, ou les Polonais*, a melodrama based on the 1800 novel of the same name by Pigault-Lebrun and which premiered at the Théâtre de la Gaîté on July 23, 1808. As this premiere was eight months after those at Portchester had marched into Spain to fight in the Peninsular wars (they were captured at Bailén in July 1808), the assertion, in one of the prisoners' memoirs, that newly published texts were being sent to the prisoners from Paris, is corroborated.[30] The two plays open in a similar way, suggesting that the prisoners were not simply relying on a memory of the Pigault-Lebrun tale from a decade earlier. The two play texts do subsequently diverge significantly and *Roseliska* is only an adaptation in the very loosest sense. There are a small number of music cues listed in the manuscript, but there are also a significant number of lines indicating the arrival of a character on scene, such as this between two of the servants from act 1, scene 2.

> Fresca: Si fait je te parlais ben sérieusement d'ailleurs (*musique*) quelqu'un s'approche!
> Walko: C'est Mme La Comtesse.[31]

The repetition of this type of "identification" exchange seemed clunky, even amateurish when reading the text, but during rehearsals for the performance of *Roseliska* in the keep at Portchester Castle in 2017, it became clear that the acoustics of the stone walls meant that lines spoken on the stage would carry to the floor above. Indicating who is coming onto stage,

tor-Havard, 1892), 269; for details of the Théâtre de la Cité curtain, see Louis-Henry Lecomte, *Histoire des théâtres de Paris. Le Théâtre de la Cité 1792–1807* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1910), 3.

[29] Cox, "Stages of Captivity", 269-71.

[30] Joseph Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour*, II, 146.

[31] *Roseliska*, Victoria and Albert Museum archives, THM/415/1/3.

or who is talking helps an audience who can hear the performance—but not see it—to follow the plot. Considering sound in the context of performance in the original setting has allowed us to reconceptualize not just the play but also the day-to-day experiences of the French conscripts held at Portchester.

As Emilio Sala has shown, French melodrama of the early nineteenth century was "toujours fondé sur la rencontre entre musique et action dramatique."[32] Without reducing Pixerécourtian melodrama to its ubiquitous *tableaux*, which performance has shown are not as static as critics make out,[33] it is nevertheless essential to explore what the actor brings to the non-verbal spaces in the text in particular and before looking at how those non-verbal spaces and the script interact with the score.

Gesture

The importance of gestural expression to melodrama has been widely acknowledged in theater scholarship.[34] On the one hand, large and stylized gestures underscored the "stereotypical and morally defined" characterization, starkly distinguishing the hero from the villain, the good from the bad.[35] At the same time, elaborate bodily expressions have been shown to contribute to that which scholars such as Matthew Buckley and Jeffrey Cox, building on Peter Brooks, have identified as the genre's historically-condi-

[32] Emilio Sala, "Mélodrame: définitions et métamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique", *Revue de musicologie* 84.2 (1998), 235-246 (242).

[33] See Katherine Astbury, "Le tableau dans les premiers mélodrames de Pixerécourt" in the forthcoming *Mélanges en l'honneur de Pierre Frantz*, ed. by Sophie Marchand, Michel Delon and Renaud Bret-Vitoz (Paris: Garnier, 2021).

[34] See most recently the special issue "Le Jeu de l'acteur de mélodrame", *Revue d'histoire du théâtre* 274 (avril-juin 2017) but also Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995); Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 80-114; Burwick 'Georgian Theories of the Actor', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1732-1832,* ed. Julia Swindells and David Taylor (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 177-191; George Taylor, 'Melodramatic Acting', in *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama,* 112–125; Patricia Smyth, "Representing Authenticity: Attitude and Gesture in Delaroche and Melodrama," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 31–53; and Giannandrea Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 40–50.

[35] See David Mayer, "Encountering Melodrama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148–150.

tioned affective poignancy; its ability to leave audiences "emotionally … intoxicated."[36] After the trauma of the Revolution, melodrama, as Brooks has comprehensively argued, sought to make the unspeakable speakable by articulating emotions and meanings too powerful or bewildering for words. The confusion and anxiety provoked by the Revolution was unleashed through the intense gestural outpourings of emotion that worked to provide vicarious release to the audience's own pent-up feelings.[37]

That melodrama relied heavily on "non-verbal loci" of meaning, established not only through gestural spectacle, but also by powerful musical accompaniments (to which we shall turn shortly), adds fuel to the suggested inadequacy of centering melodrama scholarship around analyses of texts, and foregrounds the fruitfulness of Pearson's and Shanks' model of archaeological exploration as a framework for research-led performance. Pearson and Shanks ascribe to the archaeologist the role of working "with material traces, with evidence, in order to create something—a meaning, a narrative, an image—which stands for the past in the present."[38] When working with historical plays, Pearson and Shanks show the most profitable traces and evidence to survive "as a cluster of narratives. Those of the watchers and of the watched." Most commonly, these narratives are immortalized "in the writings of critics" because "their high rate of preservation in libraries and cutting agencies."[39] These sources must be interpreted in conjunction with the play as it is printed, as they go some way towards painting a picture that moves beyond the source *text,* to encapsulate the source *world* of which the text was but a part.

For the researcher of gesture in nineteenth-century melodrama, several such narratives exist. Recent theater scholarship has drawn attention to the influx of acting manuals addressing gesture that pervaded Europe in the late eighteenth century. These manuals reflect a number of social and cultural innovations, including nascent theories pertaining to science

[36] Matthew Buckley, "Early English Melodrama," in Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 13. See also Jeffrey N. Cox, "The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama," in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History,* ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 161–181.

[37] See Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination,* 4 and Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 11–24. Also on melodrama and trauma see Matthew Buckley, "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss," *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 175–190.

[38] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology,* 11.

[39] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology,* 57.

and physiognomy, growing theater sizes, and visual illustrations found in novels and journals.[40] Giannandrea Poesio has also highlighted the usefulness of contemporary European dance manuals, ballet and opera treatises, given their considerable indebtedness to Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte rappresentativa* (1699), the ultimate manual for the commedia dell'arte from which melodramatic gesture took much inspiration.[41] Aiming to acknowledge and exploit the wealth of narratives on offer to us, a comprehensive range of historical materials (reviews, eye-witness accounts, theatrical correspondence) were workshopped with our casts during rehearsals. Of our many sources, this article will pay particular attention to Johann Jakob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785), translated into French as *Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrale* (1788–1789) and adapted in English by Henry Siddons as *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (1807) as well as drawings of French performances of Pixerécourt's melodramas and those of his contemporaries, accessed via the Bibliothèque nationale de France.[42]

Melodramatic gesture was addressed and explored early on in our rehearsals for both *Roseliska* and *La forteresse*. Illustrations and extensive descriptions of gesture from Engel and Siddons were introduced to our casts on day one. With different character types being recognized in melodrama by a distinguishing set of gestural features, or, to use Taylor's phrase, by "legible emblems as formulaic as the black and white hats of classic Westerns," the manuals were used initially to grant our actors a sense of the gestural motifs defining the stock figure they had been asked to perform.[43] At our opening rehearsal of *Roseliska* for instance, the actor playing the villain, Polowitz, was tasked with consulting and embodying illustrations of emotions associated with villainy, including "Menace" and "Anger." In doing so, he was able to familiarize himself physically with the clenched fists, hunched shoulders, rounded back, taut muscles and strained facial features that typically characterize the melodramatic villain.[44]

[40] See Burwick, *Romantic Drama,* 80–114; Burwick, "Georgian Theories of the Actor"; and Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting."

[41] See Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance."

[42] *Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrale, par M. Engel … le tout traduit de l'Allemand*, 2 vols. (Paris: Barrois, 1788–1789); Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action, Adapted to the English Drama. From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engel* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807).

[43] Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting," 113.

[44] Alongside the works by Engel/Siddons, descriptions of gestural poses from *The Thes-*

We worked also on day one with early nineteenth-century prints capturing poses enacted by characters featured in performances of melodrama staged in Parisian theaters. Despite the frequency with which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century acting manuals were translated from one European language to another, scholars including David Mayer have emphasized that "different national cultures … imposed their preferences and priorities in terms of how gesture … might be employed."[45] Keen to pay homage to a gestural language specifically indicative of French theatrical traditions, we gave prints produced by engraver Aaron Martinet to our *forteresse* cast, so that they could see postures and bodily expressions depicted by actors who featured in productions of the very play we were re-staging.[46] These were equally profitable to our *Roseliska* cast, as they granted a template for melodramatic gesture that was both temporally and nationally informed.

Actors were given prints delineating characters of pertinence to the roles in which they had been cast. For example, the actors embodying our plays' protagonists (Olivier in *La forteresse* and Stanislas in *Roseliska*) were asked to study and enact illustrations of heroism exemplified by prints of Abelino from Pixerécourt's *L'homme à trois visages ou Le proscrit* (created 1801), at the moment that he promises to liberate Venice,[47] and of Judes from Frédéric Dupetit-Méré's *La forêt d'Edimbourg ou Les écossais* (created 1807), as he makes his magnanimous declaration "Je m'expose à la mort la plus terrible en protégeant votre fuite."[48] Presenting upright and open postures, and conveying noble attitudes, these figures contrasted overtly with the round-shouldered, defensive and guarded-looking villains presented by Martinet's print of Defrêne as Don Carlos in René Périn's *Héléonor de*

pian Preceptor (1810) and William Scott's *Lessons in Elocution* (1779) were also shared with our casts to grant further insight into the meticulousness of instruction around actors' bodily expressions.

[45] David Mayer, "Encountering Melodrama," 152.

[46] A print, for instance, of the actor Talon as the *Forteresse*'s *niais* Thomas was used to inform the postures and facial features that came to define our actor's interpretation and embodiment of the comic figure. "Talon dans *La forteresse du Danube*," costume print, [1805], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,33), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400069n.

[47] "Tautin dans *L'homme à trois visages*. Costume d'Abelino," costume print, [1801], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,56), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400415g.

[48] "Marty dans Judes de *La forêt d'Edimbourg ou Les écossais*," costume print, [1806], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,57), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400215s.

Portugal (created 1807).[49] These images allowed our casts to create clear gestural distinctions between the plays' heroes and villains in alliance with historical and national conventions.

While, at this early stage of the rehearsal process, we encouraged from our casts little more than a replication of the gestures, we soon progressed to exercises that demanded far greater physical and mental exertion. We were fully aware that the "material traces" with which we were working, while certainly surpassing the information about gesture available in play-texts, were not without limitation. As Pearson and Shanks identify, it is impossible to locate a single delineation or description of a past event which "appropriates singular authority," as "the same event is experienced, remembered, characterised in a multitude of different ways."[50] In the context of performance, where the same event is repeated night after night, images and accounts of events captured in print are going to differ based not only on the spectator's/author's preferences, but also on when and where the performance was viewed. This latter variable was of particular concern to us. Just as *Practical Illustrations* reflects the types of gestures witnessed and encouraged within the capacious arenas of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, so the drawings accessed via the Bibliothèque nationale depict stagings in large Parisian theaters, including the Théâtre de la Porte St Martin, the original venue of *La forteresse*. Contrastingly, our productions were to be staged in far smaller venues than those towards which nineteenth-century acting manuals were commonly geared. We thus had to encourage actors to see that while it was vital for them to uphold the illustrations' unambiguous depiction of emotion and characterization, such clarity could be achieved with less exaggerated gestures than those required in the commodious playhouses of London and Paris.

This was not the only challenge we had to address. In his reflections on the Jane Scott project, Poesio highlights two further restrictions attached to the types of visual sources we were using. First, he claims, images of stationary figures create a false impression of melodrama's motionlessness: "little can be derived," he argues, "from those printed sources in terms of dynamic, use of space, body weight, breathing process, effort and gestural accent."[51] Second, and perhaps the biggest hurdle to overcome, Poesio insists that as

[49] "Defrêne dans le role de don Carlos, d'*Héléonor de Portugal*," costume print, [1807], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,100), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400416w.

[50] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 57.

[51] Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance," 40–41.

"expressive fixed gestures and postures depicting emotions [and] feelings … are regarded today as part of a somewhat ridiculous and obsolete tradition" entirely averse to naturalism, a modern-day cast asked to model their gestures on such images is liable to present a "lifeless mimetic reproduction of the available illustrations or a slavish application of the given formulae," unable to relate to these in any meaningful way.[52] Each of these difficulties were meticulously grappled with throughout our rehearsal processes.

First, the idea of motionlessness. While gestural fluidity is indeed a defining feature of melodrama, the visual poignancy that the genre achieved through "held attitudes" should not be downplayed. As Taylor has shown, when acted well, these "would strike the audience with such power that they reward it with a round of applause."[53] The images therefore provided useful inspiration for our scenes of tableaux. Our conclusion to *La forteresse*, for instance, which sees Evrard freed from unjust imprisonment, was informed in part by Siddons' illustration of "Joy," which was used as a template for the actor playing Evrard's daughter, Célestine. Similarly, at the end of act 1 of *Roseliska*, when the eponymous heroine is captured by the villain Polowitz's men, Siddons' delineation of "Terror" was drawn upon to shape the statuesque communication of fear conveyed by the actor playing Stanislas, Roseliska's husband.

These examples of course by no means negate the challenges highlighted by Poesio: the need to achieve gestural flow, and the simultaneous need to ensure that the gestures produced by our casts didn't feel and appear "ridiculous" and "lifeless," were focal concerns of ours. As for putting poses into motion, on day one of rehearsals, after having our actors imitate the illustrations of gestures best befitting their characters by recreating the static pose, we then had them bring the image to life, transforming the drawing from static illustration into living breathing form. Actors were asked to walk around the rehearsal space, interact with fellow cast members, and respond to varying scenarios (running late for an appointment, receiving bad news, etc.), while upholding the fundamentals of the image. Exemplifying the results of such a task, for the actor playing Polowitz, the walk manifested itself as a type of stagger, in which the fists remained clenched, the shoulders remained hunched and muscles clenched; when interacting with fellow cast members, the actor glared with the lowered eyebrows and strict frown seen in the illustrations of "Menace" and "Anger," and with

[52] Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance", 40, 47.
[53] Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting," 118.

the folded arms and defensive posture seen in the drawing of Don Carlos; and when requested to react to a piece of good news, the smile produced was accompanied by a maintained narrowness of the eyes and only a slight relaxation of the fists, which resulted in a type of smirk entirely befitting a scheming melodramatic villain.

While this exercise helped actors to uphold consistent gestural characterization during the plays' more "straightforward" scenes of dialogue and action, more complex forms of gesture were demanded of our actors during the plays' moments of extended mime and dumb show. As will be explored in greater detail later, when rehearsing these scenes, the relationship between gesture and music became immediately apparent: in agreement with Poesio's insistence on the historical relationship between melodramatic gesture and dance, we found that music was crucial in facilitating the actor's fluidity of movement.[54] This did not mean, however, that it was fruitless for actors to rehearse these scenes when the orchestra was absent. It was clear that, in part at least, the gestural flow achieved by actors when moving to music resulted from the performers' ability to engage emotively with the score. And this precise capacity for emotional engagement—accompanied, somewhat paradoxically, by command and control—came to underpin the approach that we adopted when working with actors on bodily expression: both in tableaux, and scenes of mime and dumb show.

The potential for stylized gestures to appear "ridiculous" and "lifeless" is not unique to the twenty-first century, but was highlighted at the time of the plays' debuts. In his translation of Engel, Siddons uses the phrase "false gesture" to refer to bodily expressions that illustrate words spoken, rather than emotions felt. Such gestures, Siddons argues, convey an emptiness and mechanicalism that detracts from intended seriousness.[55] This theory was widely shared among nineteenth-century theater commentators: the *Thespian Preceptor* (1810) warned that when conveying an action as simple as "asking or replying to a common question, a majestic swing of the arm would appear a burlesque".[56] Nineteenth-century acting manuals recurrently instruct that the surest way to avoid such mechanical (and consequently farcical-looking) gestures is to allow bodily movements to emanate from authentic, deep-seated emotion. Leman Thomas Rede's *The Road to*

[54] See the "Music" section of this essay.

[55] See Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, 213–243.

[56] *The Thespian Preceptor; or, A Full Display of the Scenic Art* (London: Joshua Belcher, 1810), 16.

the Stage (1827) suggests that "if the actor cannot feel" the emotion, "it will be useless to attempt to make him run the gauntlet through a set of emotions by rule."[57] What can be identified here is a clear and perhaps surprising anticipation of that which we would recognize today as Stanislavski's technique of emotion memory. Indeed, this relationship between melodramatic gesture and naturalistic theater practice was acknowledged by Stanislavski himself: in 1924, while directing a performance of a melodrama, Stanislavski reportedly instructed his cast that "[in melodrama] the right movement and right external actions follow from the correct organic state." Without entering into this state, "you will have only the external form." Therefore, each time you externalize your characters' feelings, you must "think only of the personal equivalent that can generate this emotion in you."[58] As the quoted advice indicates, despite its deviance from contemporary understandings of naturalism, melodrama relies on similarly naturalistic methods for its production of appropriately affective gestures.

The relationship between melodrama and naturalism is of course an intricate one. An interrogation of this complex marriage has famously been offered by Eric Bentley who writes:

> I am arguing … that melodrama is actually more natural than Naturalism... It corresponds to an important aspect of reality. It is the spontaneous, uninhibited way of seeing things. … Melodramatic acting, with its large gestures and grimaces and its declamatory style of speech is not an exaggeration of our dreams but a duplication of them. In that respect, melodrama *is the Naturalism of the dream life*. … Melodrama is not so much exaggerated as uninhibited.[59]

As Bentley's hypothesis indicates, the key difference between modern notions of naturalism and the naturalism of melodrama lies in the version of reality that melodrama sought to depict. To use Cox's definition, it "is not a pictorial but an experiential realism."[60] By tapping into the repressed and raw emotion that each of us possess, what the actor of melodrama manages to reveal through gesture is a type of hyper-reality: it is the reality of the

[57] Leman Thomas Rede, *The Road to the Stage; or, The Performer's Preceptor* (London: Joseph Smith, 1827), 77.

[58] Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, trans. Miriam Goldina, ed. Virginia Stevens (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954), 292–293.

[59] Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 215–216, 205, 206.

[60] Cox, "Death of Tragedy", 170.

psyche, the uninhibited expression of commonly concealed emotions that are too powerful for words.

How then do you go about encouraging twenty-first-century actors to express themselves on stage in a way that, to quote Brooks, demands that their bodies "behave nearly hysterically, if by hysteria we understand a condition of bodily writing, a condition in which the repressed affect is represented on the body"?[61] The decisions we made about this were by no means instantaneous or fixed. Rather, we continually learned throughout the project which practices and terminologies proved most effective to our casts, before resolving eventually on a historically-informed acting method that seemed to provide an apt framework for bridging the gap between stylized gesture and unaffected emotion.

Despite the anticipation of Stanislavski's methods detected in nineteenth-century acting manuals, invocations of Stanislavski were used only sparingly throughout rehearsals, and his system was not encouraged as a framework on which to draw on performance nights. These decisions were encouraged and reinforced by scenarios that occurred during an early rehearsal of *Roseliska* and a pre-rehearsal workshop with our *Forteresse* cast. In the former instance, while one of our actors was rehearsing a gestural monologue, he proved at first unwilling to externalize his anxieties about the safety of the eponymous heroine without a copy of *Practical Illustrations* close by for reference. When the director encouraged the performer to allow the actions to spring from authentic emotion—like he would do, she said, if employing the methods of Stanislavski—the actor responded: "but this is not naturalism." Evidently, what we had here was a clash between the trained actor's understanding of modern notions of naturalism, and the stylized naturalism of melodrama. Though both forms of theater need to be rooted in emotion in order to become effective, the actor could not easily reconcile the two, as he considered the pictorial demands of melodrama to depart entirely from those of the naturalistic styles which he had been taught. Thus, the reference to Stanislavski served to confuse, rather than define, his gestural expression, and in fact brought his acting closer to that of divergent modern-day forms.

When working with our amateur cast for *La forteresse*, the allusion to and use of Stanislavski-esque techniques again proved somewhat problematic, though for entirely different reasons. While, interestingly, the *Forteresse* cast expressed far fewer reservations about externalizing emotion in the bold

[61] Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," 21.

manner required of melodrama than their professional *Roseliska* counterparts (a result that seems to have stemmed from the lesser tension apparent to untrained actors between modern-day naturalism and the hyper-naturalism we sought to encourage), the actors' willingness to delve unreservedly into deep emotional recesses while enacting scenes from the script proved at times unproductive. Exemplifying this, as part of a pre-rehearsal workshop/audition with our eventual *Forteresse* cast, during a run-through of the scene in which Alix, the faithful and loving servant of the imprisoned Evrard, is required to respond emotively through gesture to a letter seeming to confirm that all is lost for her master, the actor playing Alix was overcome with emotion, and was forced to cease the gestural display of grief that she had initiated, as, she informed us, "I tapped into too raw an emotion."

This highly emotive style of acting adopted by the actor had been encouraged by one of our warm-up exercises at the workshop/audition. Inspired by Dick McCaw's essay "Training for Melodrama", we initiated our workshop with a series of exercises based around mime.[62] Adapting McCaw's exercises to home in on the unreservedness of melodramatic gesture, we asked our performers to externalize their feelings about the forthcoming audition. We encouraged them physically to express these emotions not as they would do in the context of everyday conversation, but to allow these emotions to manifest themselves freely without repression or inhibition. The point of the task was to encourage actors to see that, in melodrama, one's deepest feelings and passions are to be engaged with wholeheartedly: nothing is to be held back. The actor playing Alix had used the technique to inform her performance, as we had intended, but her engagement with raw, spontaneously-derived emotion was a hindrance. This alerted us to the need to rehearse the gesture thoroughly and meticulously once it had been found so that by performance night it was derived from imitation of the original, emotionally-guided gesture, rather than manifesting from a fresh experience of the underlying passion.[63] No longer spontaneous and unaffected, the actors remain in full control of their acting, and are thereby able to replicate with command the

[62] See Dick McCaw, "Training for Melodrama," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 62–65.

[63] As Diderot advocated in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, which was a well-used treatise among nineteenth-century actors, and a useful source for us. On varying interpretations of the reception of the *Paradoxe* in the nineteenth century see Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 157–159; Graham Ley, "The Significance of Diderot," *New Theatre Quarterly* 11, no. 44 (1995): 352–353; Burwick, *Romantic Drama,* 80-114; and Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting," 112–125.

melodrama's stylized form, while simultaneously capturing the essence of raw, uninhibited passion that allows for the genre's intensity of affect.

Poesio emphasizes the need to see nineteenth-century acting manuals as descriptive, rather than prescriptive sources, and thus to be utilized by modern-day actors with "interpretative freedom."[64] Indeed, only through such freedom of appropriation are melodramatic gestures capable of being adorned with an appropriately affective function. While it is of course impossible to revive for twenty-first-century theatergoers an affective experience mirroring that of melodrama's original spectators, the convincing articulation of a feeling that "refuses repression, or, rather, repeatedly strives towards moments where repression is broken through," is accessible to a universal audience.[65] As Bentley puts it, melodrama depicts a psychological state that is common to us all: "what we all have are the magnified feelings of the child, the neurotic, the savage."[66] Consequently, by mastering gestural expressions of uninhibited passion, it becomes possible for melodrama to function in the present as a form which retains emotive appeal. Like Pearson's and Shanks's definition of archaeology, research-informed performance "is a practice of cultural production, a contemporary material practice which works on and with the traces of the past and within which the archaeologist is implicated as an active agent of interpretation."[67] Working with materials pertaining to gesture in a pictorial and experiential sense, we were able to create a version of a historical genre that maintained the key stylistic features of the original, while allowing for an affective impact that speaks to the repressed emotions of its new, contemporary interpreters. That affective impact was significantly enhanced by music and it is to the function of music in the two performances that we turn for our final section.

Music

Pixerécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* is unusual in that it has four extant scores. The Parisian manuscript is labelled "reprise", but it contains music cues found only in Pixerécourt's manuscript play text and so is probably

[64] Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance," 46.
[65] Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," 19.
[66] Bentley, *Life of the Drama*, 217.
[67] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology,* 11.

that of the Paris premiere, repurposed for the revival.[68] There are also three manuscripts from the regional theaters of Lille, Avignon and Montpellier.[69] We chose to work with the Lille score for two key reasons.[70] The first was that the Georgian Theatre Royal, where we were performing, was a provincial theater. The orchestration for the Lille score— string section, two oboes or clarinets, bassoon, two horns and timpani—fitted best, we felt, in terms of the theater's size and acoustics. Secondly, the Lille score marked many of the same dramatic moments as the Parisian score.[71] The music also was used similarly to shape stage movement, characterization, and emotional processes. This may suggest that the composer of the Lille score had a certain familiarity with Parisian conventions.

As musical director of the project, Diane Tisdall transcribed the Lille score of *La forteresse* and prepared it for performance. The opportunity to analyze the various functions of melodrama music through the transcription process proved an ideal preparation for her creation of the score for the project's second melodrama, *Roseliska*. Here lay the crux of our research project. While the Victoria & Albert archives contained a manuscript of the play text for *Roseliska*,[72] the musical score had not survived. But before we discuss the construction process in more detail, a little background detail is necessary.

Diane constructed a score and then went into a rehearsal period of nine days in London with the director Kate Howard and nine professional actors from the historical interpretation company Past Pleasures.[73] She played the music cues on her violin during the rehearsal; the actors used the audio of the score generated by Sibelius software for individual practice. Five profes-

[68] Musique Mat. TH (99), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

[69] *La forteresse du Danube* | *Mélodrame* | *de Guilbert Pixerécourt* | *Mis en Musique* […], M 5010, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille; *La forteresse du Danube*, Ms. M. 415, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale Ceccano, Avignon; *La forteresse du Danube*, Série R 2/8 (60), Archives municipales de Montepellier.

[70] The score is signed E. Marty who was the *chef d'orchestre* of the Théâtre de Lille from September 1808 until 1810 and again from April 1814 until at least 1816. See *Tableau de la troupe,* 1T 298 1, Archives du département du Nord, Lille. We are grateful to Cyril Triolaire for providing this information from material gathered for https://therepsicore.msh.uca.fr/.

[71] For a more detailed comparison of Parisian and provincial melodrama scores, see Astbury and Tisdall, "Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*."

[72] See note 31.

[73] With thanks to King's College London for providing rehearsal spaces. Cast list: Jeremy Barlow, Richard de Winter, Edward Elgood, Martin Hodgson, JP Lord, James MacLaren, Lachlan McCall, Ellis Pike, John Sandeman.

sional musicians joined rehearsals at Portchester Castle two days before the performance, which Diane again led from the violin.[74]

The score-construction process began with a series of questions: how do you go about identifying which passages of *Roseliska* required music? Was it possible to establish a typology of musical excerpts for these passages? How familiar would the prisoners of war who wrote and performed *Roseliska* have been with Parisian melodrama conventions? The enthusiasm of theater professor Jens Hesselager for an experimental archaeology framework (as described by James R. Mathieu) to test hypotheses about melodrama performance, chimed with our desire to find a way of creating a melodrama score that would allow us to both test our research questions and to perform the whole work for an invited audience.[75]

Hesselager worked with preexisting music in his experiment to sonorize a melodrama scene. In our recreation of the *Roseliska* score we constructed what Mathieu would call a "functional replica." Excerpts of melodrama music that the original composer and the other prisoners may have known were weaved together—more of this later—to give us the means to test one functional aspect of the score, that is, the relationship between text, gesture, and music and two phenomenological aspects: the choices that the writers and the composer may have made; the knowledge that the actors and musicians may have needed to perform the melodrama. The reconstructed score acted as a multimedia artefact. It started in the hands of Diane as the composer-arranger but as will become clear, the score was also moulded by the actors, director, and musicians during the rehearsal process. The animation of the score-as-artefact by contemporary practitioners (and their interaction with it) thus formed a crucial part of the practice-led research process.[76] This was both surprising and empowering for the actors, director and musicians, who were expecting to work with a finished product.

Early melodrama was vilified both for being musically formulaic and for its synthesis of features from multiple genres. This contradiction plays out in early nineteenth-century composer Anton Reicha's bipartite classifica-

[74] Second violin, Ed McCullagh; Viola, Chris Becket; Cello, Tom Wraith; French horns, Sam Pearce and David Horwich.

[75] Hesselager, "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions"; Mathieu, introduction to *Experimental Archaeology*.

[76] Gilli Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton, in collaboration with the musicologists Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, also evoke this "fruitful dialogue" in their practice-led research. See the special edition of *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002) and in particular Bush-Bailey, "Still Working It Out," 7.

tion of melodrama in his composition manual: 1) A one-act piece such as Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, where "the music is in conversation with the actor's monologue … the composer expresses what happens on stage or within the actor's soul" and 2) long pieces à grand spectacle, with dances, marches and pantomime. Here the music, according to Reicha, had no artistic function or value: "the composer is in charge of selecting what he needs from preexisting scores, for either lack of time or talent to invent it himself."[77]

Reicha's comments are important for two reasons. Firstly, he described the deep-rooted bifurcation of melodrama between Rousseau's philosophical experiment with music and text, from which the origins of early German-language monodrama can be drawn, and "mélodrames à grand spectacle", which, in the hands of Pixerécourt, dominated early nineteenth-century Parisian boulevard theater. But as Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks unpack in the introduction to their edited volume, the genealogy and form of melodrama is much more tangled than the high/low art binary evoked by Reicha. We find their *olla podrida* (Spanish stew) analogy invigorating, opening up the possibility of melodrama as both hybrid—including aspects of pantomime, farce, and historical drama—and conventional—using musical clichés such as low-register instruments and excerpts in a minor key to signal the arrival of the villain, for example.[78]

Reicha's second comment acknowledged how melodrama scores were often written quickly to meet demand and so sometimes recycled music cues. His dig at boulevard composers perhaps came from his perspective as a symphonic one, writing works that were viewed as an entity, with thematic and harmonic threads spinning through them. In forgoing Reicha's expectation of a unified musical work and instead embracing Jacqueline Waeber's concept of musical communication via "the associations of instruments, melodic figures and harmonic effects," we can consider the individual, transient moments of melodrama music.[79] Without an obligation

[77] "La musique dialogue avec le monologue de l'acteur … le compositeur exprime … ce qui se passe sur la scène, ou dans l'âme de l'acteur." "Le compositeur est le maître de choisir dans les partitions connues ce dont il a besoin, quand il n'a pas le loisir ou le talent d'inventer lui-même." Anton Reicha, *Art du compositeur dramatique ou Cours complet de composition vocale* (Paris: Farrenc, 1833), 107.

[78] Hambridge and Hicks, "Melodramatic Moment," 20.

[79] Hambridge and Hicks, "Melodramatic Moment," 21. The reference is to Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2005) and Waeber, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'unité de mélodie,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (2009): 79–144.

to build a fixed structure, we create the ideal experimental conditions in which to test our *Roseliska* score, or multimedia artefact. On the other side of the coin, the melodrama formulae, which worked in tension with the turn of the nineteenth-century aesthetic for transcendent rather than specific musical meaning, were a valuable starting point in the score construction process.

In his mention of compositional "talent" (or lack of it), Reicha leads us to a reflection on early nineteenth-century composers and their training. As Diane was a first-time melodrama score composer—she is a musicologist and professional violinist whose last formal composition training was in orchestration classes, as a first-year undergraduate—she was keen to find out about the original composer of *Roseliska*, Marc-Antoine Corret. What skills and knowledge were needed to compose a melodrama score? Corret was twenty-one years' old, from the Garde de Paris and former member of the Paris Conservatoire.[80] He was thus a military musician with perhaps a little training in harmony and counterpoint.[81] At Portchester, Corret was the musical director, or *chef d'orchestre*, as well as the composer. This was unusual as he was a horn player; it was usually a violinist who occupied the role. He must have been a more experienced musician than another prisoner of war who was a violinist and also listed as a military musician. While we do not know what class Corret took at the Conservatoire, or how long for—early records are tantalizingly patchy—the presence of one or possibly a family of Corret horn players in boulevard orchestras of the Théâtre de la Porte St Martin and the Théâtre de la Gaîté during this period is certain.[82] This would lead us to believe that the Corret who travelled to Portchester had some experience of melodrama scores as a professional musician.

A former prisoner, Joseph Quantin, provided a list of prisoner-musicians at Portchester in his memoirs.[83] Corret had a violinist, three clarinetists, two flutists, a horn player who doubled as the timpanist and a group of un-

[80] Frédéric de La Grandville, *Le Conservatoire de musique de Paris (1795–1815): Dictionnaire des élèves et aspirants* (Paris: Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France, 2014), 139, https://api.nakala.fr/data/11280%2Fcf10d906/2079fbb15e2a476bfe290f328f539761f9064711. Marc Antoine Jules Corret or Coret was admitted to the Conservatoire on the 16 Floréal year 8 (6 May 1800); there is no other mention of him.

[81] Corret enrolled at the Conservatoire before formal composition classes had started there.

[82] *Annuaire dramatique ou Étrennes théâtrales* (Paris: Mme Cavanagh, 1805–1822), s.vv. "Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin," "Théâtre de la Gaîté."

[83] See note 26.

named "four violins" at his disposal.[84] This set-up presented a methodological problem. What orchestration should we choose for *Roseliska*? We do not know how the size of orchestra listed by Quantin would have fitted in the performance space. If there had been an orchestra pit, it is long gone and we had to conform to modern health and safety measures, leaving emergency exits clear. It is possible that the "four violins" were a reference to the violin family of instruments (violin, viola, cello). If, however, we chose an orchestration with five violinists (and so no string quartet), should or could we produce a score for this less-than-conventional melodrama orchestra? This configuration might be representative of a group of military musicians that had been shipped around the Mediterranean—these instruments were all portable—but would this be an experimental step too far? By striving to be as historically informed as possible, would it still be possible to ask our larger questions about melodrama, including ones about Waeber's "associations of instruments?" The final decision was to write a score for a string quartet and two horns. Our choice was based on the common orchestral set-up in provincial theaters at the time, with a nod to Corret as a horn player, and was made in consideration of our future performance conditions.[85]

Our aim was to create a score that evoked a historically grounded sound world. In *Roseliska*'s case this was to be a firmly Parisian "cultural assemblage," to borrow a phrase from Pearson and Shanks.[86] The only melody that we know was performed in the play—"Au bas d'un fertile coteau"—was the *air* indicated for the prologue song. Its presence in nineteenth-century song manuals would suggest that it was regularly used in Parisian vaudeville plays during the Napoleonic period.[87] Although the play was translated into English, we decided to keep the song in French, as a reminder of the play's original language and sound world.[88] No other indications of

[84] Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour*, II: 153.

[85] The Montpellier score for *La forteresse du Danube*, for example, was written for strings and two horns: the Avignon orchestra contained a flute, a clarinet and a bassoon but they all played an auxiliary role. With thanks to David Charlton and Michael Fend for their thoughts on this subject. Thanks also go to Paul Cott, who generously gave his time to advise on composing for the French horn.

[86] Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 64.

[87] Pierre Capelle, *La clé du caveau à l'usage de tous les chansonniers français, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs du vaudeville et de tous les amis de la chanson* (Paris: Capelle et Renand, 1811), 338 (n. 794). With thanks to Benoît Louriou and Mark Tatlow for their harmonization and scansion suggestions.

[88] Translation by Dan Hall. A subsequent workshop with excerpts of *Roseliska* in French would suggest that the relationship between text, music, and gesture is significantly affected by

music are given in the *Roseliska* manuscript but Pixérecourt was the most performed playwright at Portchester, according to the play bills.[89] It therefore made sense to borrow and arrange excerpts from his melodramas. The scores for Pixerécourt's early melodramas have not survived so we extended the date range slightly and looked for cues that shared dramatic parallels with the *Roseliska* plot in *La femme à deux maris* (Gérardin-Lacour, 1802), *La forteresse du Danube* (Bianchi, 1805), *Robinson Crusoé* (Gérardin-Lacour et Piccinni, 1805), *L'ange tutélaire* (Piccinni, 1808) et *La citerne* (Piccinni, 1809).[90] The score also included excerpts of Corret's own compositions. After his liberation in 1814, Corret became principal horn at the Théâtre des Arts de Rouen. No melodrama scores of his remain but there are two collections of duos for horn.[91] Diane arranged a march, several romances and a *polonaise*—perfect for a play set in Poland.[92] Even though these works were composed later than *Roseliska* we felt it important to include the original composer's voice in the score.

From the first read-through, it was clear that the text of *Roseliska* had been written by amateur playwrights. The prisoners Lafontaine and Mouillefarine did not offer, like Pixérecourt, precise directions for the integration of text, music, and gesture. Places where music could foreground moral conflict and emotional changes were rare; spectacle and physical action featured strongly.[93] The work was created for actors that the authors knew well, which had an influence on the text. The prisoner playing the role of the villain Polowitz seems to have been the most gifted or charismatic actor, because his role dominates the work.

the rhythm and sound of different languages. English Heritage used the song as the soundtrack to its video about the theater—see *Portchester Castle: Recreating the Prisoners' Theatre*, English Heritage, YouTube, August 14, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2uL-h4svVg.

[89] See Cox, "Stages of Captivity," 269–271 for a list of performances given between September 1810 and January 1811.

[90] For the transcribed scores of *La femme à deux maris* and *L'ange tutélaire*, see Pixerécourt, *Mélodrames*. The Parisian scores of *La forteresse du Danube* and *Robinson Crusoé* have not survived: we used the Lille manuscripts of E. Marty for *La forteresse* (see note 71) and *Robinson Crusoé* (*Robinson | Crusoé*, M 5299, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille). With thanks to Fernando Morrison for sharing his transcription of *La citerne*.

[91] With thanks to Joann Élart for alerting us to the Corret horn music in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[92] *20 Duos pour deux cors*, composés et dédiés à E. Devieux par M.A. Corret jeune, premier cor du grand Théâtre de Rouen (Rouen: l'auteur, s.d. [before 1820]).

[93] See the conclusions of Katherine Astbury, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, "The Melodramatic Moment: Researching Early French and English Melodrama through Performance."

The text specifically mentions music twice in act 1. There is also a prologue in the form of a song, and at the end of act 1, scene 2, "music is heard" as the celebration party gathers. Following the analyses of melodrama scores by Emilio Sala and Michael Pisani, and the practice-based research of Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, we knew to mark moments such as the beginning and end of acts, entrances and exits of main characters, action such as dance, and the abduction of the heroine.[94] However, the key moment in the play, act 1 scene 5, is more nuanced. Polowitz's advances are rejected by Roseliska: he sets in motion his plan to abduct her. The stage direction explicitly calls for the actor's exteriorization of emotion: "Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts." We will return to this scene shortly.

Even Reicha acknowledged that the music required for this type of stage situation would need to be refined in dialogue with "le poète, le machiniste, les acteurs et le régisseur."[95]

NO.	DESCRIPTION	CUE	SOURCE
-	Air: "Au bas d'un fertile coteau"	Couplets d'annonce	*La clé du caveau*, no. 794
-	Overture and curtain rise	-	Corret, no. 20
1	Entrance of Roseliska	End Act 1/2; Fresca: I've just spoken to you about it in all seriousness. (Music).	*La femme à deux maris* (act 1, no. 3)
2	Roseliska evoking Stanislas	Act 1/3; Roseliska: … but an even greater duty to one's king.	Corret, no. 1 (first four bars)
3	Fresca & Walko leave	Act 1/3; Roseliska: Go, my friends, make sure everything in the castle is ready for his return. Corret, no. 1 (second section)	Corret, no. 1 (second section)

[94] Sala, *L'opera senza canto*; Michael V. Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London & New York* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014); Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, "Music in Melodrama: 'The Burden of Ineffable Expression'?" *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 30–39.

[95] Reicha, *Art du compositeur*, 107.

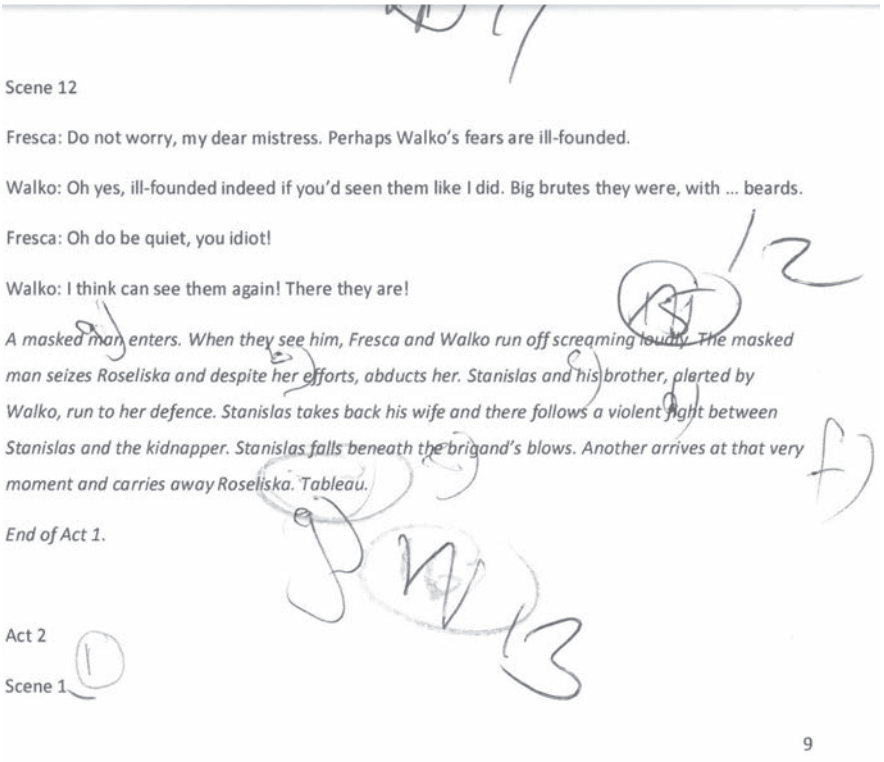
4	Polowitz entrance	Act 1/4; Roseliska: Someone's coming this way.	Corret, no. 13 (Polonaise, first section)
5	Roseliska tries to leave	Act 1/4; Roseliska: I know not why his presence is always so unwelcome (she goes to exit)	Corret, no. 8
6	Exteriorisation of emotion	Act 1/5; Roseliska: I will listen no longer (She goes to leave, Polowitz attempts to hold her back) … Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts)	*L'ange tutélaire* (overture, Flora entrance) *La citerne* (Act 1, no. 4)
7	Drama	Act 1/6; Polowitz: The only sentiments that shall fill it now are love—and vengeance!	*La forteresse* (Lille score; act 3, no. 9)
8	Musique champêtre	Act 1/7; Polowitz: Gullible husband.	Corret, no. 13 (Polonaise, second section)
9	Entrance of Stanislas	End Act 1/7; Polowitz: Let us move away and prepare to execute my plan!	End Act 1/7; Polowitz: Let us move away and prepare to execute my plan!
10	Ballet (interrupted by Walko)	Act 1/10; Walko: Come forward, he awaits you.	*La forteresse* (Paris score, act 2, no. 1)
11	All exit except Roseliska, Fresca & Walko	End Act 1/11; Stanislas: Walko … do not leave her side.	*La forteresse* (Paris score, act 1, no. 12)
12	Abduction of Roseliska SEGUE	Act 1/12; Walko: There they are!	*La citerne* (act 1, no. 4)
13	End of Act 1	Tableau	*La femme à deux maris* (act 1, no. 19)

Fig. 1 Cues and musical sources: *Roseliska,* act 1

The poets of course were not available to discuss the plan for act 1, but we were able to refine the score with the actors from Past Pleasures and the director, Kate Howard. To give an example of this, we will take the abduction of Roseliska at the end of act 1 (see figure 1). We selected the music in act 1 of *La citerne*, where the heroine Clara is in danger of drowning, as a dramatic parallel to the danger faced by Roseliska. But the extract from

La citerne occurs mid-act, and the end of act 1 in a Pixerécourtian melodrama is normally in a minor key and rhythmically nervous. We therefore followed the extract from *La citerne* with the end of act 1 from *La femme à deux maris*. Here the two husbands swear to do battle—an instant which mirrored the struggle between Roseliska's abductors and her husband. The music thus was chosen as it accompanied an analogous moment of high drama in the plot. It also had a suitable number of contrasting sections that roughly corresponded to the *Roseliska* stage directions at this moment. The overall piece of music for the end of act denouement and tableau was long (over fifty bars) but we decided to wait until rehearsals to see if any cuts needed to be made.

Diane split the stage directions into sections (see letters in figure 2) and together with the actors and the director, Kate Howard, came up with the following plan (figure 3).



Scene 12

Fresca: Do not worry, my dear mistress. Perhaps Walko's fears are ill-founded.

Walko: Oh yes, ill-founded indeed if you'd seen them like I did. Big brutes they were, with ... beards.

Fresca: Oh do be quiet, you idiot!

Walko: I think can see them again! There they are!

A masked man enters. When they see him, Fresca and Walko run off screaming loudly. The masked man seizes Roseliska and despite her efforts, abducts her. Stanislas and his brother, alerted by Walko, run to her defence. Stanislas takes back his wife and there follows a violent fight between Stanislas and the kidnapper. Stanislas falls beneath the brigand's blows. Another arrives at that very moment and carries away Roseliska. Tableau.

End of Act 1.

Act 2

Scene 1

9

Fig. 2 *Roseliska*, end of act 1. The musical director's script from the 2017 performances

Act 1, scene 12 (The kidnap)

Walko: There they are! (Bar 185/6)

NB: Each bar has the "rule of 3" notes in the top melody line (until 4 bar moment for end of phrase)

2 bars: D enters, caped, bearded and masked via aisle—"Aggression" pose halfway up (*When he poses is when Fresca and Walko exit screaming*)

2 bars: D mounts stage proper, poses facing audience and pulls Roseliska to him. (*Roseliska shock and fear*)

2 bars: Pulls Roseliska to him

2 bars: She pulls away

4 bars: Pulls her to and across him. She falls into Stanislas arms as he enters (stage left)

22 bars for the following:

E enters in "masked aggressor" style down aisle. While Stanislas is distracted by looking at him, D pulls Roseliska back to him (*by pulling on her stage right arm*).

E mounts stage between Roseliska/D and Stanislas. Pushes Stanislas to the ground by his chest. Stanislas lies prone on back, head raised.

Stylised stamping 3 times on Stanislas head. Stanislas head on ground after first stamp.

E and D circle Roseliska.

One on either side, all 3 facing audience. Each push one shoulder down.

D grabs hair (*Roseliska grabs wig/his hand to hold hair on*). Drags Roseliska off up Tower.

E walks in "aggressive mode" off stage following behind (also off up Tower).

Polinski runs on stage left, discovers Stanislas with horror, lifts Stanislas' head off ground, pointing to the exit of the kidnappers and Roseliska. Stanislas reaches forward to his vanished bride. Polinski raises non-supporting hand and eyes, appealing to heaven.

Hold Tableau as follow spot fades for 20 seconds (21 bars) over music.

Fig. 3 *Roseliska*, end of act 1. The director's plan (with thanks to Kate Howard)

Although this looks heavily choreographed, once we had rehearsed each section several times, and then put the action back together again, section-by-section, the actors felt comfortable to improvise within the frame-

work. As is evident in the video of the dress rehearsal, the plan was exactly that—a guideline—within which the actors were able to move freely yet with a sense of purpose and dynamism, maintaining the dramatic impetus towards the close of act 1.[96] No music was cut from this section in the end.

At other times in the play, the dialogue between the musical director and actors worked more organically. Take for instance the moment where Polowitz's amorous advances are rejected by Roseliska, the pivotal moment in the play (act 1, scene 5) where the villain exteriorizes his emotions. It was difficult to choose music for this. How long does it take for these emotions to unfold? No scenario in existing Pixerécourt plays seemed to fit. It was only after setting Roseliska's abduction at the end of act 1 to the storm music from *La citerne* that the choice crystallized. It is Polowitz's decision in scene 5 that then launches the abduction plan, so linking the two scenes musically made sense. Diane and the actor playing Polowitz discussed his journey from the emotion provoked when Roseliska leaves to when he makes his next speech, where he vows he will take his vengeance—a transition from emotional distress to anger.

We removed two sections of the draft score (see figure 4). The first reiterated block dynamics and a possible interpretation of emotional incertitude. The actor did not feel that Polowitz would be that indecisive. We removed the second section, a scalic flourish and block dynamics, as the actor felt it interrupted the feeling of anger that he wished to build. What we felt was important was to give the music to the actors and see what they did with it, to have their own spin on it, to inhabit it themselves. There is no director's plan for this section as there was a strong improvisational element. The actor said that the music gave him more of a sense of structure than sometimes the directorial notes. His comment offers ideas of the training that nineteenth-century melodrama actors may have had; he himself is an experienced musician and dancer. Expressing emotions through a series of linked gestures through the body is, we would suggest, a form of dance.[97]

[96] Roseliska, dress rehearsal of the July 2017 performances by Past Pleasures Heritage Theatre, video, 21:10–21:54, last revised March 26, 2019, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/stagingnapoleonictheatre/roseliska/.

[97] Future melodrama research within emerging choreomusicological frameworks could provide a fruitful way of interrogating the interaction of sound and motion. See, for example, Inger Damsholt, "Identifying Choreomusical Research," in *Music-Dance: Sound and Motion in Contemporary Discourse*, ed. Patrizia Veroli and Gianfranco Vinay (London: Routledge, 2018), 19–34.

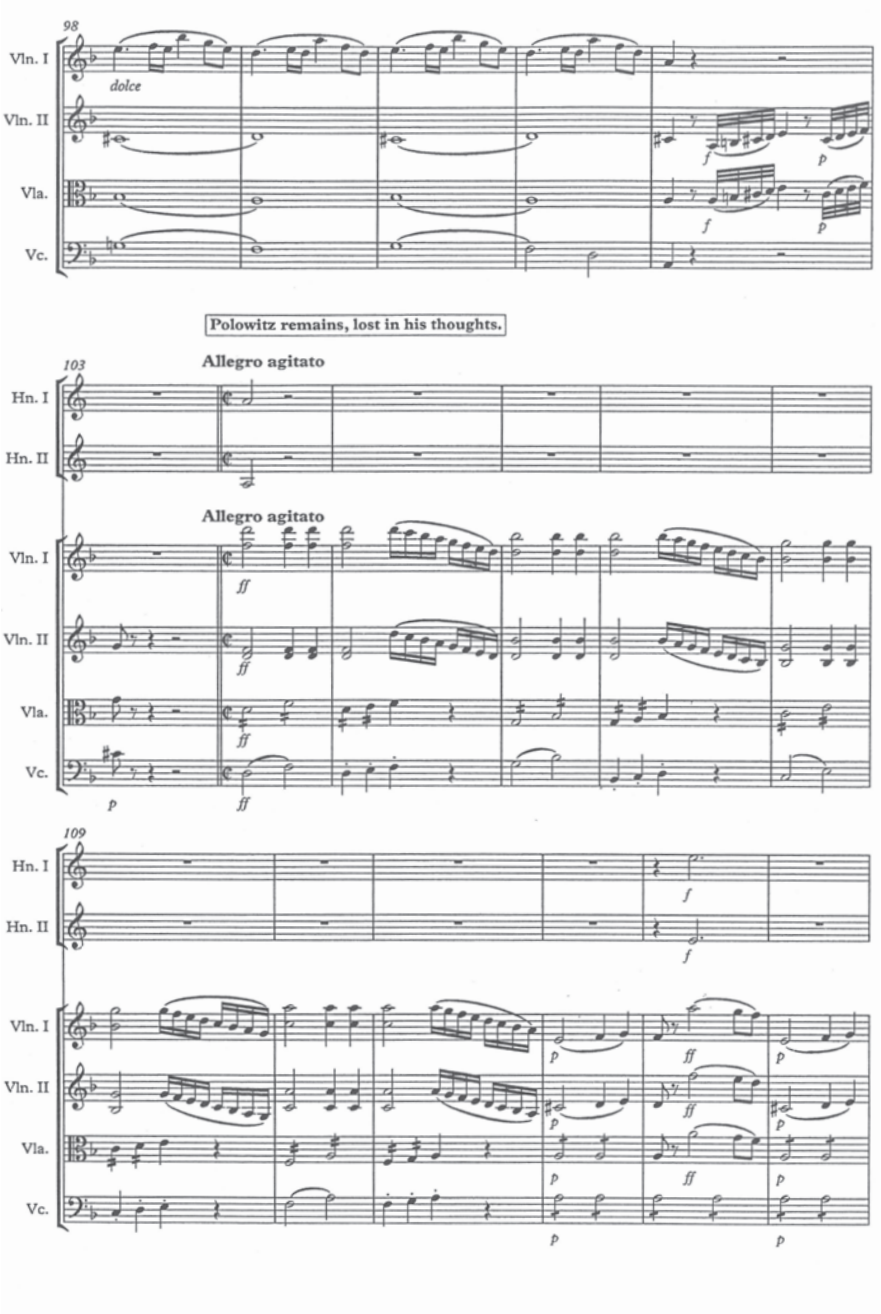


Fig. 4. Piccinni (arr. Tisdall), *Roseliska*, act 1, no. 6 (Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts)

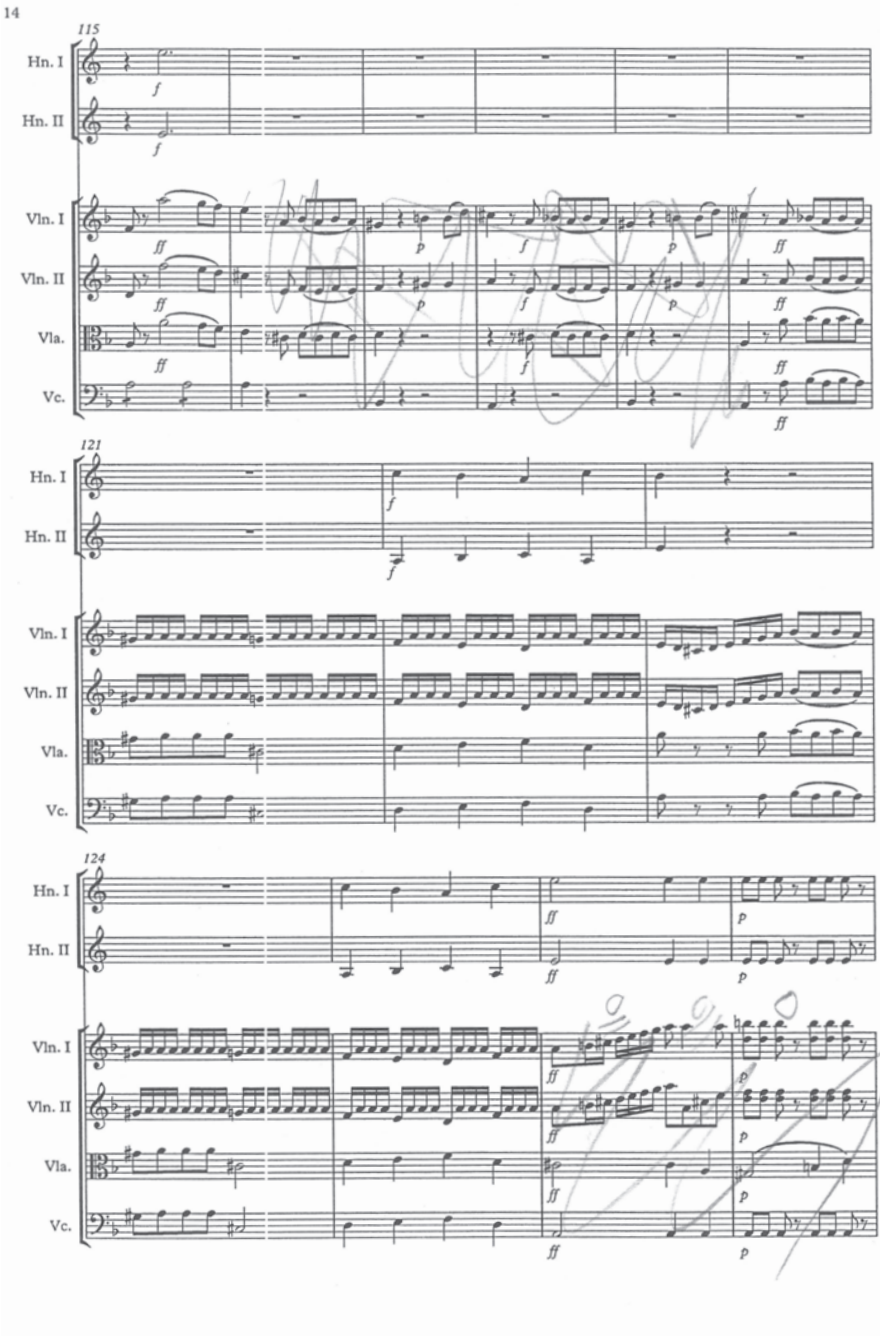


Fig. 4. (continued)

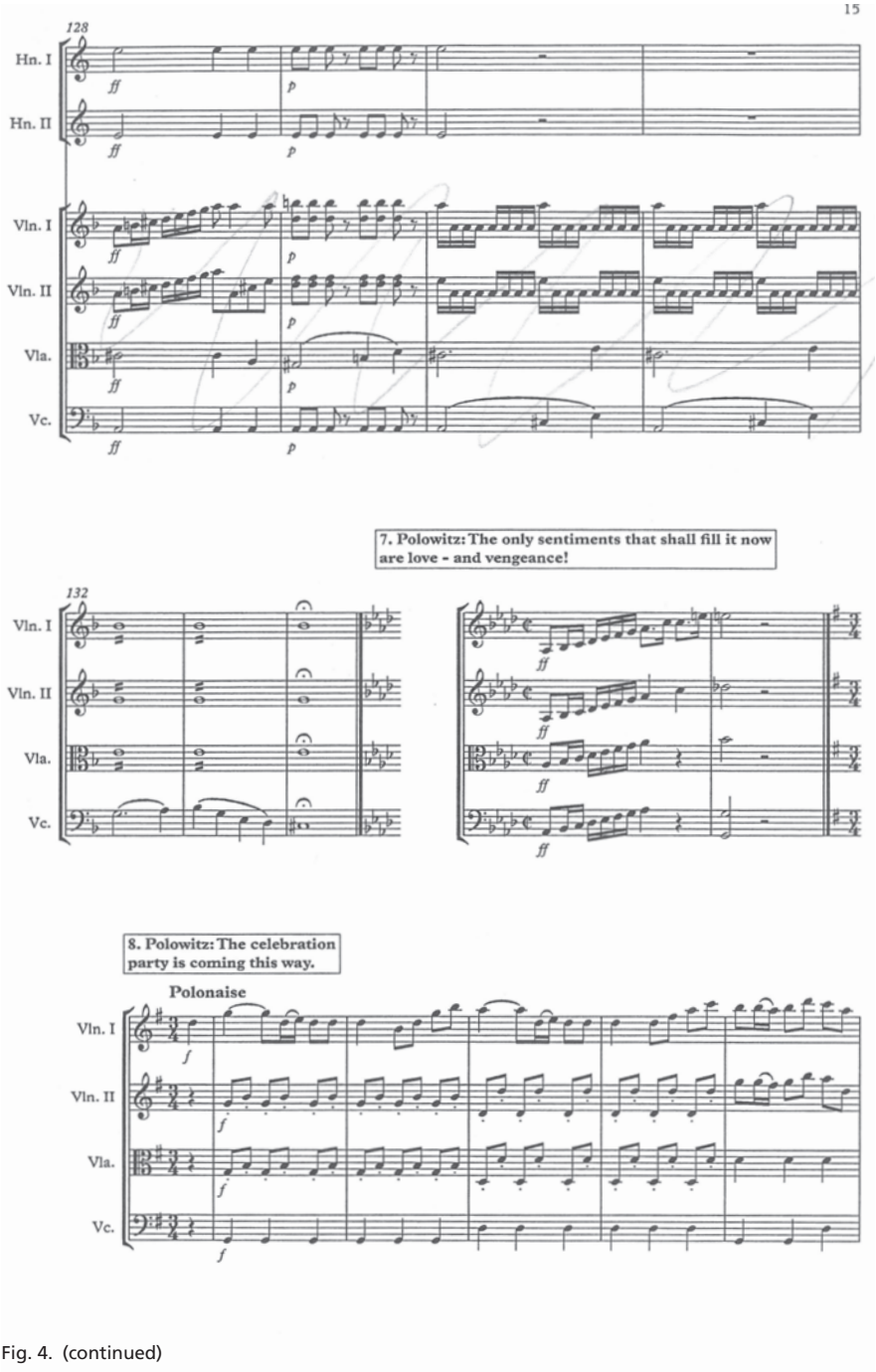


Fig. 4. (continued)

Rehearsals had begun in London before moving to the performance space in Portchester Castle. We had blocked out the castle performance space in the London rehearsal rooms and so *in situ* there was no need to add or cut any entrance or exit music. The arrival of the musicians, however, had a bigger impact on testing the score than the change in location. Diane's role as musical director now involved the direction of musicians as well as actors. Those actors with less musical training found it a big shift to move from hearing Diane on the violin to hearing the whole orchestra. The relationship between gesture, music, and text became destabilized. This showed itself in musical entries that were dependent on the actor establishing the speed of the next musical entry through their speech or gesture.[98] This idea was unfamiliar for the musicians and they asked for upbeats from Diane at first violin to indicate the speed they were going to play at. This is a normal practice in stage shows where the band accompany singers and in a chamber music setting. However, in the context of melodrama, setting the speed for the musicians proved incredibly difficult. Diane only had a split second to grasp the speed from the actor's speech and or gesture and communicate it to the other musicians before playing; initial attempts often resulted in a clunky entry by the musicians which was not satisfying for the actors because of the resultant loss of fluidity. The actors had reached a point where Diane no longer needed to prescribe a tempo but the musicians needed guidance from her while the score was unfamiliar. As the musicians became more familiar with the score and the actors became more used to the orchestral sound, the tensions eased.

The dress rehearsal was the first time we went through the whole melodrama without stopping for discussion, and it was being filmed for research purposes. The lighting choice—natural light, plus one artificial spotlight—meant that the performance space was very dark, save the musicians' stand lights. This reduction of visual connection with the actors combined with Diane's switch in role from composer-musical director to musical director-performer meant that she had to focus much more on aural and oral cues than she had in previous rehearsals. In scenes with a sole actor exteriorizing emotion she felt a heightened awareness of the speed and inflection of speech, which influenced her interpretation of the music cues in terms of speed and dynamics. More unexpected was her own physical response to the style, weight, and speed of the actor's gestures with her bowing style

[98] When we subsequently recorded the score in a studio at the University of Surrey, without the actors, we had a similar problem.

and body movements. The strongest moment of this blurring of lines between gesture and music was at the beginning of act 3, where Polowitz enters, having captured Roseliska's husband Stanislas. Watching the actor's movements intently, she molded the music to the actor's sinuous gestures and facial expressions. Who was directing whom? It was not always the first violin; it was not always the actor. Diane was surprised to be drawn into this dance, as she had expected her role to be more in deference to the actors (drawing on experience in bands for twentieth-century musicals) than as an equal or sometimes dominant role, despite her theoretical research knowledge about the relationship of text, music, and gesture.

It is the malleability of melodrama that lends itself so well to stimulating and enriching practical research and theater practice; these two performances at Richmond and Portchester required dynamic and collaborative work across a wide-range of disciplines and expertise—academics (in literature, history, theater studies, music), creatives, and the cultural heritage sector. Both performances benefited enormously from the expertise of the directors: Sarah Wynne Kordas brought her experience of silent films and pantomime to Richmond, and Kate Howard had previously directed a performance of the Victorian melodrama *Maria Marten, or Murder in the Red Barn* which inflected her approach to *Roseliska* at Portchester Castle. Performance reveals so much to researchers, particularly in a genre like melodrama where the emphasis is not always on words. Experimental archaeology has proved an invaluable approach to the task of restaging melodrama. It has informed our practice and our theory by encouraging us to test hypotheses and explore some of the choices facing actors and musicians and how they react and respond to an audience. The one-off performance of *Roseliska* can only imperfectly be imagined from the recording of the dress rehearsal in front of a handful of spectators; when the keep was packed to the rafters, the actors "fed" off the energy created by the audience to create an unforgettable evening, a creative union that gave voice to the past, albeit for a single evening. How melodrama shifts when an audience enters into the dance of gesture, music and text, and how a replica artefact takes on yet another form is another avenue of research—one we hope to have the opportunity to explore in the future.

Works cited

Archival Collections

Département des Arts du spectacle. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Performance and Theatre Collection. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Scores

La forteresse du Danube.
- Manuscript score and orchestral parts. M 5010. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale de Lille.
- Manuscript score and orchestral parts. Musique Mat. TH (99). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
- Orchestral parts. Ms. M. 415. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale Ceccano, Avignon.
- Orchestral parts. Série R 2/8 (60). Archives municipales de Montepellier.

Capelle, Pierre. *La clé du caveau à l'usage de tous les chansonniers français, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs du vaudeville et de tous les amis de la chanson*. Paris: Capelle et Renand, 1811.

Corret, Marc-Antoine. *20 Duos pour deux cors, composés et dédiés à E. Devieux par M.A. Corret jeune, premier cor du grand Théâtre de Rouen*. Rouen: l'auteur, s.d.

Robinson Crusoé
- Orchestral parts. M 5299. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale de Lille.

Printed Sources

Andries, Annelies. "Modernizing Spectacle: The Opéra in Napoléon's Paris." PhD diss., Yale University, 2018. ProQuest (10907727).

Annuaire dramatique ou Étrennes théâtrales. 18 vols. Paris: Mme Cavanagh, 1805–1822.

Astbury, Katherine. "Présentation de *La forteresse du Danube*." In Pixerécourt, *Mélodrames*. Vol. 3, *1804–1808*, 263–289.

Astbury, Katherine, and Devon Cox. "Re-Examining the Sources for the Prisoner-of-War Theatre at Portchester Castle." In *Ser prisionero de guerra entre la Ilustración y Napoleón. Una aproximación por casos particulares*, edited by Evaristo C. Martínez-Radío. Madrid: Sílex, forthcoming.

Astbury, Katherine, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks. "Researching Early French and English Melodrama Through Performance." Video-article. School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick. Posted December 2017. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre/performingmelodrama/.

Astbury, Katherine, and Diane Tisdall. "Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*: Functions of Music in Parisian and Provincial Melodrama of the Early Nineteenth Century." *Studi francesi* 191 (2020): 348–359.

———. "Une exploration du mélodrame parisien à travers la représentation d'une pièce des prisonniers de guerre du château de Portchester en 1810: *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance*." In *Musique de scène dans le théâtre parlé de Diderot à Hugo*, edited by Patrick Taïeb and Olivier Bara. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming.

Bentley, Eric. *The Life of the Drama*. New York: Atheneum, 1964.

Brooks, Peter. "Melodrama, Body, Revolution." In *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and

Christine Gledhill, 11–24. London: British Film Institute, 1994.

———. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. With a new preface. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Buckley, Matthew. "Early English Melodrama." In Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 13–30.

———. "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss." *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 175–190.

Burwick, Frederick. "Georgian Theories of the Actor." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1732–1832,* edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 177–191. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

———. *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Bush-Bailey, Gilli. "Still Working It Out. An Account of the Practical Workshop Re-Discovery of Company Practice and Romantic Performance Styles via Jane Scott's Plays." *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 6–21.

Butt, John. *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Chaillou, David. *Napoléon et l'Opéra. La politique sur la scène, 1810–1815*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.

Cox, Devon. "Stages of Captivity: Napoleonic Prisoners of War & their Theatricals, 1808–1814." PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2017. http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/103472/.

Cox, Jeffrey N. "The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama." In *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History,* edited by Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland, 161–181. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Damsholt, Inger. "Identifying Choreomusical Research." In *Music-Dance: Sound and Motion in Contemporary Discourse*, edited by Patrizia Veroli and Gianfranco Vinay, 19–34. London: Routledge, 2018.

De Santis, Vincenzo. "La tragédie à Paris en 1809. Débats esthétiques et répertoire théâtral." In *Fièvre et vie du théâtre sous la Révolution française et l'Empire*, edited by Thibaut Julian and Vincenzo De Santis, 179–193. Paris: Garnier, 2019.

Engel, Johann Jakob. *Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrale, par M. Engel … le tout traduit de l'Allemand*. 2 vols. Paris: Barrois, 1788–1789.

Gille, Louis François. *Mémoires d'un conscrit de 1808*. Edited by Philippe Gille. Paris: Victor-Havard, 1892.

Gorchakov, Nikolai M. *Stanislavsky Directs*. Translated by Miriam Goldina. Edited by Virginia Stevens. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954.

Hambridge, Katherine, and Jonathan Hicks. "The Melodramatic Moment." In Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment*, 1–24.

Hambridge, Katherine, and Jonathan Hicks, eds. *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Hartog, Willie G. *Guilbert de Pixerécourt: sa vie, son mélodrame, sa technique et son influence*. Paris: Champion, 1913.

Hesselager, Jens. "Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions: The 'Reflexive Performance' as a Way of Approaching Nineteenth-Century French Melodrama." *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 23 (2011): 20–30.

Hibberd, Sarah, ed. *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

Hibberd, Sarah, and Nanette Nielsen. "Music in Melodrama: 'The Burden of Ineffable

Expression'?" *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 30–39.

Kershaw, Baz. "Performance as Research: Live Events and Documents." In *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, edited by Tracy C. Davis, 23–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

La Grandville, Frédéric de. *Le Conservatoire de musique de Paris (1795–1815): Dictionnaire des élèves et aspirants*. Paris: Institut de recherche sur le patrimoine musical en France, 2014. https://api.nakala.fr/data/11280%2Fcf10d906/2079fbb15e2a476bfe290f328f539761f9064711.

Lecomte, Louis-Henry. *Histoire des théâtres de Paris. Le Théâtre de la Cité 1792–1807*. Paris: H. Daragon, 1910.

Ley, Graham, "The Significance of Diderot." *New Theatre Quarterly* 11, no. 44 (1995): 352–353.

Mathieu, James R., ed. *Experimental Archaeology: Replicating Past Objects, Behaviors, and Processes*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2002.

Mayer, David. "Encountering Melodrama." In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell, 145–163. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

McCaw, Dick. "Training for Melodrama." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 62–65.

Nelson, Robin. "Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of 'Practice as Research.'" In *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, edited by Robin Nelson, 3–22. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Newey, Katherine. "Embodied History: Reflections on the Jane Scott Project." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 66–70.

Pearson, Mike, and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Pisani, Michael V. *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London & New York*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014.

Pixerécourt, René-Charles Guilbert de. *Mélodrames*. Edited by Roxane Martin. 4 vols. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013–.

Poesio, Giannandrea. "The Gesture and the Dance." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 40–50.

Przybos, Julia. *L'entreprise mélodramatique*. Paris: Corti, 1987.

Quantin, Joseph. *Trois ans de séjour en Espagne, dans l'intérieur du pays, sur les pontons, à Cadix, et dans l'île de Cabrera*. 2 vols. Paris: J. Brianchon, 1823.

Rede, Leman Thomas. *The Road to the Stage; or, The Performer's Preceptor*. London: Joseph Smith, 1827.

Reicha, Anton. *Art du compositeur dramatique ou Cours complet de composition vocale*. Paris: Farrenc, 1833.

Roach, Joseph, *The Player's Passion*: *Studies in the Science of Acting*. USA: University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Sala, Emilio. "Mélodrame: définitions et métamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique." *Revue de musicologie* 84, no. 2 (1998): 235–246.

Sala, Emilio. *L'opera senza canto: il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora*. Venice: Marsilio, 1995.

Sarlós, Robert K. "Performance Reconstruction: The Vital Link between Past and Future." In *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, edited by Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, 198–229. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989.

Siddons, Henry. *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action, Adapted to the English Drama. From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engel*. London: Richard Phillips, 1807.

Siviter, Clare. *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Smyth, Patricia. "Representing Authenticity: Attitude and Gesture in Delaroche and Melodrama." *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 31–53.

Taylor, George. "Melodramatic Acting." In Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama,* 112–125.

Therenty, Marie-Ève. "Un comique *trans*: Robert Macaire. Transmédialité et transgénéricité d'une figure nationale." *Insignis* 1 (2010): 25–35.

The Thespian Preceptor; or, A Full Display of the Scenic Art. London: Joshua Belcher, 1810.

Thomasseau, Jean-Marie. *Le mélodrame sur les scènes parisiennes, de "Coelina" (1800) à "L'auberge des Adrets" (1827)*. Lille: Service de reproduction des theses de l'université, 1974.

Waeber, Jacqueline. *En musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg*. Paris: Van Dieren, 2005.

———. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'unité de mélodie.'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (2009): 79–144.

Williams, Carolyn, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Abstract

This article offers a case study of how new performances of two early nineteenth-century French melodramas have enabled interdisciplinary dialogue on the ways in which text, score, and acting interact in a genre that is seen as highly codified. Piecing together clues about the play as a performance in the process of preparing for twenty-first century staging for a non-specialist audience is a task similar to that of an archaeologist reassembling an old pot from a handful of pieces. This metaphor of archaeology comes from Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' seminal text *Theatre/Archaeology* and James Mathieu's *Experimental Archeology: replicating past objects, behaviors and processes*. Shanks and Pearson in particular highlight the centrality of interpretation in both archaeology and performance and see both spheres as connected by a common aim to retrieve and reconstruct ephemeral events and understand the textures of the social and cultural experience of the object in the past. Experimental archaeology has thereby provided invaluable in the task of restaging melodrama, informing our practice and our theory by encouraging us to test hypotheses and explore some of the choices facing actors and musicians and how they can feed off each other.

Keywords: France; melodrama; music; experimental archaeology; research-led performance.

Katherine Astbury is Professor of French Studies at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on how culture played an important part in shaping French debates about identity, nationhood, and political legitimacy during the French Revolution and First Empire. Publications include two monographs, *The Moral Tale in France and Germany 1750–1789* (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 7; 2002) and *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution* (Legenda, 2012), and a critical edition of Pixerécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* in *Mélodrames III (1804–1808)* (Classiques Garnier, 2016) as well as dozens of articles on writers of the period 1750–1815. As Principal Investigator of a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project on French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era (2103–17), she worked closely with English Heritage at Portchester Castle, advising on the reinterpretation of the keep, particularly the French prisoner-of-war theater housed there between 1810 and 1814. She is currently writing a monograph on theater during Napoleon's One Hundred Days in 1815.

Dr **Sarah Burdett** is Lecturer and Programme Lead in English at St Mary's University, Twickenham. After receiving her PhD from the University of York in 2016, she worked as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow on the AHRC-funded Staging Napoleonic Theatre Project at the University of Warwick, occupying the role of dramaturg. Sarah's research focuses on representations and receptions of arms-bearing women on the British stage during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. Tracing the figure's reputation in late eighteenth-century Britain as a striking symbol of extreme political and social disruption, her work interrogates the extent to which Britain's perpetually shifting relationship with home and European nations, and the importation of new dramatic genres from Europe, serve to furnish the female warrior with a plethora of multi-layered, often allegorical, and frequently surprising theatrical meanings. Sarah's debut monograph is in press with Palgrave Macmillan and will be published as part of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print series in 2022. Sarah has published research in journals including *Comparative Drama* and *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, and has held Visiting Fellowships at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, and at the Bodleian in Oxford.

Diane Tisdall is an educator, music historian, and violinist based in Clermont-Ferrand, France. Following her doctorate in musicology at King's College London ("Pierre Baillot and Violin Pedagogy in Paris, 1795–1815"), Diane joined the Staging Napoleonic Theatre team at Warwick. The performance of the Napoleonic melodrama *Roseliska* (1810)—for which Diane was composer, musical director, and performer—was awarded the Events and Activities Prize in the 2019 Discover Heritage Awards. Diane's interest in the relationship between text, music, and gesture, and what it can bring to our knowledge of early nineteenth-century theater, led to a postdoctoral research position at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Clermont-Ferrand. She was involved in preparing twenty-nine critical play editions (*Anthologie du théâtre révolutionnaire, 1789–1799*) with Françoise Le Borgne and Classiques Garnier (forthcoming). Diane has published articles on violin classes at the early nineteenth-century Paris Conservatoire, on representations of Amerindian women in early nineteenth-century Parisian opera (with Françoise Le Borgne) and on performance-based research of urban and provincial French melodrama (with Kate Astbury). She also draws on the creative and expressive potential of drama, music, and storytelling to teach English as a foreign language in higher education and professional development settings in Clermont-Ferrand.

ARTICLES

Translating Music: Dubbing and Musical Strategies in Italian Cinema of the Early Sound Period

Luca Battioni

Throughout the 1930s, the large majority of films distributed and eventually screened in Italy were dubbed. Dubbing practices inevitably had an impact not only on the way sound was experienced in film but also the configuration of the emerging Italian film industry following the introduction of synchronized sound on the one hand, and the consolidation of the Fascist regime on the other. In fact, drawing on the work of Andrew Higson, among others, I wish to argue that dubbing complicates the notion of national cinema in the Italian context of the 1930s. Higson was among the first scholars to theorize the concept of national cinema. In his work, he argues against production-centric conceptualizations, pointing out that a full understanding of national cinema begins from the assumption that it is a complex cultural aggregate, and that at its core lies the reception of films by popular audiences. Higson's approach "lay[s] much greater stress on the point of consumption, and on the *use* of films (sounds, images, narratives, fantasies), than on the point of production." This, in turn, encourages "an analysis of how actual audiences construct their cultural identity in relation to the various products of the national and international film and television industries, and the conditions under which this is achieved."[1]

The pervasiveness of dubbing in the 1930s needs to be addressed in these terms, and a film's dubbed soundtrack must be considered as a channel through which audiences construct their own identities—regardless of the geographical provenance of the film screened. Nevertheless, in the case of dubbed movies, the negotiation between the 'national' and the 'foreign' takes place in the film's soundtrack at the stage of production as well: for the original images of a movie are combined with voices, sounds, and often music that are conjugated in national, or at least nationally familiar, terms.

[1] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989): 45–46.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 47–76.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss14132.

For this reason, both the productive and receptive sides of dubbing ought to be considered when discussing its use in national cinema.

Martine Danan argues that "dubbed movies become, in a way, local productions,"[2] and Pierre Sorlin claims that, through the process of dubbing, a film becomes a different performance of the same text.[3] Considering that dubbed foreign movies accounted for the vast majority of cinematic screenings in Italy in the 1930s, it is no exaggeration to claim that these films significantly contributed to the shaping of Italian national cinema, even and indeed especially at a time when domestic productions were few and far between.

The way sound technologies were understood and used when cinema converted to sound indelibly oriented subsequent national filmmaking practices and aesthetics. For instance, in his foundational work on the introduction of sound in French and American film, Charles O'Brien contends that France's preference for direct sound since the 1930s has shaped the development of French national cinema and defined its stylistic signature.[4] In Italy, by the same token, the preference for dubbing for both imported and domestic films had a significant impact on later filmmaking practices. Grasping the role of dubbing in Italian cinema of the 1930s is fundamental if we are to better understand Neorealism as well as the cinema of such auteurs as Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. These filmmakers' style was defined by post-production sound techniques that crystallized during the first decade of sound cinema.

In recent years, dubbing has increasingly been approached as an audiovisual translation technique. In translation studies, a fair amount has been written on both dubbing and subtitling from the perspective of both cultural studies and linguistics.[5] Film scholarship on Italian dubbing has focused mainly on the leading personalities and their voices.[6] For her part, Antonella Sisto compiled a groundbreaking work on dubbing from the perspective

[2] Martine Danan, "Dubbing as an Expression of Nationalism," *Meta* 36, no. 4 (December 1991): 612.

[3] Pierre Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema, 1896–1996* (London: Routledge, 1996), 10.

[4] Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[5] See, for example, Irene Ranzato, *Translating Culture Specific References on Television: The Case of Dubbing* (London: Routledge, 2015); Maria Pavesi, Maicol Formentelli and Elisa Ghia, eds., *The Languages of Dubbing: Mainstream Audiovisual Translation in Italy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014).

[6] See, for example, Mario Guidorizzi, ed., *Voci d'autore. Storia e protagonisti del doppiaggio italiano* (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 1999); Gerardo Di Cola, *Le voci del tempo perduto. La storia del doppiaggio e dei suoi interpreti dal 1927 al 1970* (Chieti: Edicola, 2004).

of sound studies.[7] This latter contribution traces the cultural trajectories of dubbing from its establishment under the Fascist government to its artistic legacy as a postproduction technique used in Italian films of the postwar period. In Sisto's work, however, the 1930s are considered only with respect to censorship and the discrepancy between the voice and its putative anchor, namely the image of the actor's body. Further scholarly research has pointed out that the choice of dubbing, including its institutional implementation, was indeed a reflection of Fascist politics of foreign anesthetization.[8]

New Directions in the Study of Dubbing

The singular focus on the Fascist institutionalization of dubbing, however, overlooks the mechanics of the dubbing process itself. The political and ideological conditions that underpin the development of dubbing should be coupled with an understanding of it as a practical experience. Admittedly, the scarcity of relevant primary film sources—often no longer accessible or difficult to locate—hampers the study of the subject. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate, much archival material has survived, allowing for an investigation of dubbing that takes into account not only the final visual products but also the written documents that informed and accompanied their making.

The backbone of this research is an assortment of archival materials preserved at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin.[9] These documents are critical to the study of dubbing in the early sound era. They contain official instructions followed in the dubbing process of many early 1930s foreign movies released in Italy, and they illustrate that, as the dubbing process unfolded, the censors' choices were closely linked to technological constraints and artistic considerations.

In the following I illustrate my argument in three sections. In the first, I briefly chart the passage from so-called silent to sound cinema. The Fascist

[7] Antonella Sisto, *Film Sound in Italy: Listening to the Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[8] See Carla Mereu Keating, *The Politics of Dubbing. Film Censorship and State Intervention in the Translation of Foreign Cinema in Fascist Italy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016); Mereu Keating, "Censorial Interferences in the Dubbing of Foreign Films in Fascist Italy: 1927–1943," *Meta* 57, no. 2 (2012): 294–309; Mereu Keating, "'100% Italian': The Coming of Sound Cinema in Italy and State Regulation on Dubbing," *California Italian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1–24.

[9] Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin, Italy. A work-in-progress digital catalog is available at http://pittaluga.museocinema.it/home.

government did not take long to perceive foreign voices and sounds as threats to national identity. Film reviews of the time provide a rich taxonomy of the multifarious practices adopted in the transition to sound—multiple language versions of the same film, sound movies made silent again, movies with alternative Italian soundtracks, and films poorly dubbed abroad were in the forefront of Italian movie theaters before the arrival of dubbing around 1932. Sounds, like images, underwent all sorts of manipulations.

In the second section, I examine archival documents related to the earliest dubbed movies distributed by Cines-Pittaluga, the company which played a major role in the production and distribution of dubbed films during the early years of sound cinema in Italy. Here, I argue that since its origin, the dubbing process was an opportunity for experimentation with sound. In addition, the efforts revolving around dubbing made up for the lack of a robust domestic film industry and contributed to establish a technical and artistic framework that would inform Italian cinema's aesthetic outlook for decades to come. Fully aware of its impact on a film's narrative and consequently a film's reception, dubbing directors gave particular attention to every aspect of the soundtrack.

In the final section of the article, by foregrounding the collaboration of the Italian composer Romano Borsatti with the Cines-Pittaluga studio, I contend that music contributed to the 'domestication' of foreign movies dubbed in Italian. A close reading of letters sent by Cines-Pittaluga to Borsatti will also provide a framework to understand the role played by Italian composers in the dubbing process. As we shall see, dubbing not only shaped the minds of audiences and the modus operandi of composers but also public perceptions of language in its relation to the emergence of a national cinematic culture.

The Transition to Sound, and the Consolidation of Dubbing

> We do not find it far-fetched to state that, when attending the screening of a foreign film, a large part of the audience does not perceive, recall, or know that the lines or voices they hear are not the original ones uttered and delivered when the film was shot—in short, they do not realize or recall that the film has been dubbed.[10]

[10] "Non crediamo sia azzardato affermare che una buona parte del pubblico nell'assistere alla proiezione di un film straniero non avverta, non ricordi o non sappia che le battute e le

This passage by film critic Tell O'Darsa (pseudonym of Dario Sabatello) suggests that in 1937, just a few years after the emergence of dubbing, the practice went mostly unnoticed by Italian audiences. However hyperbolic it may seem, this writing testifies to the quality of Italian dubbing. Indeed, foreign dubbed films could pass as local productions. To try and account for this seeming oddity, this section traces the convoluted trajectory of film sound as experienced by Italian audiences in the early 1930s. This critical transition has been documented in the weekly magazine *Cinema illustrazione* and will be discussed here with examples from specific sections devoted to reviews curated by film critic Enrico Roma. Although very little is known about Roma, he appears to be the only critic who, as Italian cinema made the transition to sound, devoted a few weekly lines to the quality of dubbing. Though less frequently and systematically than Roma, other commentators also expressed informed opinions about dubbing; in 1931, for example, Ettore Maria Margadonna wrote an extensive and skeptical review about it, despite foreseeing the potential of such postproduction technique.[11]

While in the US the official narrative of the history of sound cinema begins in 1927 with the release of *The Jazz Singer*, in Italy any such history would have to begin two years later, when the same film was screened for the first time in Rome. However, since the Italian film industry revolved around silent cinema, the establishment was reluctant to adapt to the new technology.[12] In every major Italian city, movie houses had their own professional orchestras with renowned conductors and pianists who carefully studied the scores to synchronize with the films to be screened.[13] An entire industry, including musicians, composers, and editors, gravitated towards an art form that would soon phase out permanently.

Having screened foreign sound films for only a few months, Italy made a quick turnabout. On October 22, 1930, a ministerial decree prohibited the screening of films that included speech in other languages, imposing the removal of any scene involving dialogue spoken in languages other than

voci che sente non sono quelle originali, pronunciate ed emesse quando il film è stato girato, che in una parola non avverta o non ricordi che il film è stato 'doppiato." Tell O'Darsa, "Le voci del cinema," in *Cinema illustrazione*, September 22, 1937, 9. All translations from *Cinema illustrazione* and archival materials are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[11] Ettore M. Margadonna, "Parabola del 'parlato:' il 'dubbing,'" *Comoedia*, November 15–December 15, 1931, 17–18.

[12] Mario Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata: l'incredibile storia dei film stranieri in Italia nei primi anni del sonoro* (Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli, 1986), 1–3.

[13] Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata,* 1.

Italian.[14] The result was catastrophic. Of the original soundtracks of foreign films, only music and sound effects were left intact, while intertitles in Italian were interpolated, constantly interrupting the images' rhythm. Those movies were termed "100 percent read films" by the satirists of *Marc'Aurelio* by way of contrasting them to the "100 percent spoken films" featured in other parts of the world.[15] The subsequent adoption of dubbing, while silencing foreign utterances, at least gave the voice back to Italian audiences.[16]

"Silencing" movies was not the only option. Hollywood production companies were already experimenting with alternative solutions to exploit the European markets. Although dubbing technologies were already available by the early 1930s, film companies embarked on the production of multiple-language versions (MLV)—namely, movies that were shot simultaneously, or in a staggered fashion, in more than one language, with different actors, directors, and crews.[17] One of the most emblematic MLVs was *The Big Trail* (1930, US), which was produced in four versions—Italian, French, German, and Spanish—each starring different actors. In his 1931 review of the Italian version (*Il grande sentiero*, 1930), Roma commented on it with irony, and criticizing MLVs produced in the United States for featuring Italian-American actors who mainly spoke Italian dialects influenced by American accents. Furthermore, as Roma noted, the actors' lines were too poetic and literate, in jarring contrast with the characters' or the plot.[18]

The European hub of MLV films was Joinville Studios in Paris. In his review of *Televisione* (Television, 1931, US) Roma describes it in harsh tones:

> Joinville! That says it all. Only two days of programming, and the heckling resounds. It seems impossible. Anytime the Italian language is spoken in our cinemas, a storm quickly unleashes (aside from the Pittaluga company, which takes things quite seriously in this respect). And understandably so.

[14] Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata,* 13.

[15] Mario Quargnolo, *La censura ieri e oggi nel cinema e nel teatro* (Milan: Pan, 1982), 49–50.

[16] In Italy, the dubbing industry was inaugurated in 1932 by Cines-Pittaluga. For a short recollection of the early phases of the introduction of dubbing in Italy, see Mario Quargnolo, "Pionieri e esperienze del doppiato italiano," *Bianco e nero* 28, no. 5 (1967): 66–79; Paola Valentini, "La nascita del doppiaggio," in *Storia del cinema italiano*, vol. 4, *1924–1933*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Venice: Marsilio, 2014), 286–287.

[17] See Ginette Vincendeau, "Hollywood Babel: The Coming of Sound and the Multiple-Language Version," in "*Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920–1939*, ed. Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 212.

[18] Enrico Roma, "Le prime a Milano," *Cinema illustrazione*, March 25, 1931, 13.

> How could you expect a foreign *régisseur* to possibly judge the diction of our actors? I bet de Rochefort considers Orsini a great Italian actor, whereas his obvious Neapolitan accent (which at times is comical indeed) and his declamatory emphasis would make him a good addition to the Compagnia Scarpetta.[19] […] Is this the end of Joinville's mishaps? I don't believe so…. But we could truly do without…[20]

Italian audiences, as it turned out, did not appreciate these efforts produced abroad. The scripts were written in a language detached from everyday speech, and while the actors had an Italian background they were still complete strangers to Italian audiences, who instead laughed at the combination of southern Italian dialects and English spoken with a contrived Italian accent.

Mario Quargnolo has written about another Italian experience crucial to this period of transition to dubbing, namely the *sonorizzazioni*. The process involved either the accommodation of old silent films to suit modern taste or the adoption of imported sound films stripped of all foreign-language dialogue.[21] In his work, Quargnolo uses the words *sonorizzazione* and *ammutolimento* (muting, i.e. "the process of making a film speechless by deleting all the dialogue") interchangeably. However, in 1931 Roma seemed to have identified them as two distinct practices:

> Getting rid of *doublages* [dubbing]? Easier said than done! Which films could replace those with foreign speech, when experience suggests rejecting solutions like *ammutolimento* and *sonorizzazione*, which both strip a film of large sections of its footage, while the national industry is still in a swaddling blanket?[22]

[19] A Neapolitan theater company.

[20] "Joinville! È detto tutto. Due soli giorni di programmazione e fischi sonori. Pare impossibile. Quando, nei nostri cinema, si parli italiano, la tempesta non tarda a scatenarsi (la Pittaluga a parte, che da questo lato fa le cose sul serio). E si capisce. Come volete che un *régisseur* straniero possa giudicar la dizione di attori nostri? Scommetto che per il de Rochefort, l'Orsini è un ottimo attore italiano, mentre il suo spiccato accento napoletano (in certi momenti decisamente comico) e la sua enfasi declamatoria, ne farebbero un buon elemento per la Compagnia Scarpetta. […] Son finite le malefatte di Joinville? Non credo… Ma potremmo anche rinunziarvi…" Enrico Roma, "I nuovi film," *Cinema illustrazione*, September 9, 1931, 12.

[21] Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 30.

[22] "Farla finita con i *doublages*? È una parola! Con quali films sostituire i parlati stranieri, se l'esperienza induce a scartare altri ripieghi come l'ammutolimento e la sonorizzazione, che sottraggono a un film buona parte del metraggio più utile, mentre l'industria

Although Roma does not clearly explain the two different processes, I would argue that *ammutolimento* applies to those instances in which the whole soundtrack (including music, sound effects, and dialogue) was wiped out, thereby leaving the original film literally "silenced." On the other hand, *sonorizzazione*—in addition to the widespread practice of synchronizing afresh films from the silent era—could be understood to describe the process of rendering a sound film speechless, while retaining music and noises whenever possible (or remaking them for the occasion). Both systems relied on Italian intertitles to replace original dialogues. In 1930, Roma described the *sonorizzazione* process as follows:

> It must be noted that this time the transposition *from sound with full speech to sound only*—save for the handful of harmless French lines—has turned out better than it has in previous foreign works released since the start of the season. The cuts go almost unnoticed and the intertitles, inserted to substitute speech, are well written and suffice for comprehension and effects.[23]

Arguably, the decision to either silence a film (*ammutolire*) or maintain/remake it as a speechless sound film (*sonorizzare*) also depended upon the kind of production to be adapted. *Il principe consorte* (1929, *The Love Parade*, US), discussed in the review cited above, was a musical comedy. Silencing this production (*ammutolimento*) would have ruined the film and compromised its success; thus, the *sonorizzazione*—"from sound with full speech to sound only"—was deemed a better option.

In the early years of sound film other peculiar solutions were adopted in an attempt to overcome both political and national barriers:

> The film is spoken in Italian (i.e., *doublé* [dubbed]) in the same manner as *Morocco*. That is to say, there were insertions of footage shot in Paris with Italian actors. The trick, this time, worked out less badly. It is still annoying, though,

nazionale è ancora in fasce?" Enrico Roma, "I nuovi films," *Cinema illustrazione*, September 16, 1931, 12.

[23] "Si deve inoltre osservare che questa volta la riduzione da sonoro-parlato integrale a sonoro, salvo le poche battute di dialogo in francese, che non guastano, è riuscita meglio che nei precedenti lavori stranieri pubblicati dall'inizio della stagione. Le amputazioni quasi non s'avvertono e le didascalie, messe a sostituir la parola, sono scritte a dovere e bastano alla comprensione e agli effetti." Enrico Roma, "Le prime," *Cinema illustrazione*, October 29, 1930, 12. Emphasis mine.

> because we can tell that the actors are different, and the disconnect between the two parts is inevitable. Oh, well.[24]

Cutting scenes with English speech and replacing them with new footage of Italian actors speaking their own language was a practical (though not fully successful) solution adopted in films such as *Marocco* (1930, *Morocco*, US) and *Disonorata* (1931, *Dishonored*, US, the actual subject of the review). Interestingly enough, *Marocco*, dubbed and released in France as *Coeurs brûlés* in 1931, was well received by the critics and as such must be considered one of the first well-judged examples of dubbing.[25]

The convoluted cinematic jungle through which an Italian spectator had to move in the early thirties is aptly described by Roma in the following passage:

> The old production reluctantly engages with the new one, and the latter with the brand-new one. Every film undergoes modifications and adaptions depending on the market, the country, the screens where it is sent to by the distributors. We have killed the silent film, but we are now forced to mute the spoken ones because no one would understand them, and censorship would prohibit their distribution anyway. Of a "100-percent-talkie" film we are now offered a version in which voices have nearly disappeared.[26] Kilometers of intertitles replace these voices; yet amidst this silence, there suddenly appears a line in German or English, a song, a choir, or an insignificant noise. Of a scene featuring fifty people moving, silently, we hear but the single blow of a stick, the slamming of a door, or knuckles tapping on a wall. Puerility. Confusion.[27]

[24] "Il film è parlato italiano, intendo dire *doublé*, con lo stesso sistema di *Marocco*. Cioè vi sono stati intercalati pezzi girati a Parigi con attori italiani. Il trucco, questa volta, è riuscito meno male. Ma disturba lo stesso, poiché riconosciamo gli attori inseriti fuori testo, e lo stacco tra le due parti è inevitabile. Pazienza!" Enrico Roma, "I nuovi films," *Cinema illustrazione*, January 20, 1932, 12.

[25] Martin Barnier, "The Reception of Dubbing in France 1931–3: The Case of Paramount," in *The Translation of Films: 1900–1950*, ed. Carol O'Sullivan and Jean-François Cornu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 229–231.

[26] The label "100-percent talkie" identified movies with audible dialogue throughout, distinguishing them from the "synchronized" films and the "part-talkie" ones.

[27] "La vecchia produzione s'innesta suo malgrado alla nuova, e la nuova alla novissima. Ogni film subisce modificazioni e adattamenti, a seconda del mercato, del paese, delle sale cui è avviato dai produttori. Si sono uccise le 'mute,' ma poi si è costretti ad ammutolire le parlate, perché nessuno le capirebbe e la censura ne impedirebbe lo smercio. Di un'opera, originalmente parlata al cento per cento, ci si offre un'edizione in cui le voci sono quasi scomparse.

As Roma points out, the situation for film critics over this period was more difficult and frustrating than ever. The edited movies presented in Italy made it impossible for a critic to judge a piece of work impartially, and it is hardly surprising that films "received with shock in Milan or Rome had been completely successful in Berlin or New York."[28] It is also not surprising that in 1931, Roma—having already been exposed to a few years of spoken movies—wished for a kind of cinema with little to no room for spoken dialogue, resulting in what he called "the cinematic symphonic poem" (Il poema sinfonico cinematografico).[29] In Roma's nostalgic imaginary, music and images work together in perfect harmony, whereas speech is "a ball and chain" (Una palla al piede) to the music. This vision falls within a widely shared opinion at that time which considered the use of dialogue as unaesthetic (i.e., too similar to everyday conversation) and condemned the talkies for abolishing the difference between art and reality. In this view, "Silence and music were excellent vehicles for achieving the poetic prominence of pure form, understood as a sort of rhythm—visual, oral, or both."[30]

Although Roma's prediction did not materialize, his descriptions and responses offer a frame of reference for the understanding of the Italian situation at the time and reconstruct the *Zeitgeist* of the early sound period. Moreover, Roma's reviews represent a litmus test for the quality of sound technology from the dawn of sound cinema throughout the early thirties. The number of critical notices decrying the poor quality of Italian versions of foreign films would gradually decrease. For example, in the reviews published in 1933, almost no reference is made to dubbing, accents, quality of scripts, etc. This would seem to indicate that by that time dubbing techniques had improved and audiences had become habituated to the new status quo.

Chilometri di didascalie prendono il posto delle voci, senonché, tra tanto silenzio, ecco a un tratto una 'battuta' in tedesco o in inglese, una canzone, un coro o un rumore insignificante. Di una scena dove si muovono in cinquanta, silenziosamente, non ci giunge che un colpo di bastone su una tavola, lo sbattere di un uscio, un picchiar di nocche contro una parete. Puerilità, confusione." Enrico Roma, "Le prime a Milano," *Cinema illustrazione*, October 22, 1930, 6.

[28] "Non è raro il caso di leggere che un film, clamorosamente caduto a Milano o a Roma, ha trionfato a Berlino o a New York." Enrico Roma, "Le prime a Milano," *Cinema illustrazione*, December 9, 1930, 12.

[29] Enrico Roma, "Esperienze del sonoro e del parlato," *Cinema illustrazione*, April 15, 1931, 14.

[30] Giorgio Bertellini, "Dubbing *L'Arte Muta*: Poetic Layerings around Italian Cinema's Transition to Sound," in *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922–1943*, ed. Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 39.

Foreign experimentations came to an end as the process of dubbing found a permanent home in Italy. The earliest dubbing efforts made in Italy date back to late 1931 and involved primarily German films,[31] including, for instance, *Salto mortale* (1931) and *Fortunale sulla scogliera* (*Menschen im Käfig*, 1930). According to Roma, these movies—dubbed by Cines, an Italian film company founded in 1906—were technically well made. Roma also points out that director Ewald André Dupont shot them with dubbing in mind, allowing images to better fit would-be dubbed voices:

> Il *fortunale* is an Italian spoken film presented by Cines. And even from this angle, it is a good film. The voices are well chosen, and the acting is excellent. Dupont, in shooting the German edition, must have taken into account the needs of the other versions, thus minimizing the difficulties. But the main reason for the laudable result is that the actors are not known and are therefore credible even when speaking Italian. A *doublage* is therefore not a bad option as long as it does not involve celebrated film stars.[32]

According to this review, dubbing influenced filmmaking techniques to the point where certain angles, shots, or montages were preferred to others so as to accommodate future versions. Thus, cinematic aesthetics and techniques were often subordinated to a potential for dubbing. O'Brien analyzes the aesthetic consequences of dubbing on shot composition in Hollywood films, highlighting many of the techniques used to keep the viewer's gaze away from the actor's lips.[33] Additionally, Roma points to the practice of famous American stars speaking Italian as a cultural constraint that dictated the failure of several dubbed movies. According to Joseph Garncarz, however, the cultural acceptance of dubbing must be considered as a learn-

[31] Antonio Catolfi, "Censura e doppiaggio nelle forme narrative del cinema italiano, nel cruciale passaggio al sonoro degli anni Trenta," *Between* 5, no. 9 (2015): 11, https://doi.org/10.13125/2039-6597/1396.

[32] "*Il fortunale* è un parlato italiano, per opera della Cines. E anche da questo lato, è buono. Le voci sono ben scelte e la recitazione è ottima. Il Dupont, nel girare l'edizione tedesca, deve aver tenuto presente la necessità delle versioni, limitandone al minimo le difficoltà. Ma la ragione principale del lodevole esito è nel fatto che gli attori non hanno alcuna notorietà tra noi e perciò, anche parlando italiano, sono credibili. Non è quindi escluso un possibile *doublage*, purché non si tratti di star famosi." Enrico Roma, "I nuovi films," *Cinema illustrazione*, November 4, 1931, 12.

[33] See Charles O'Brien, "Dubbing in the Early 1930s: An Improbable Policy," in O'Sullivan and Cornu, *The translation of films*, 177–189.

ing process through which audiences began to embrace the discrepancy between bodies and voices that are out of sync with one another.[34]

Following these early experiments, the dubbing industry permanently settled in Italy in Spring of 1932, thus becoming the only avenue to screen foreign films. Not only was dubbing in Italy more in tune with the national taste than the imported films dubbed abroad, but its increasing frequency was also due to a 1933 measure by the Fascist regime which prohibited the screening of Italian versions produced abroad.[35] At that point, the Fascist government had become aware of the potential role dubbing could play in shaping, through cinema, the understanding of anything "foreign." Dubbing finally "provided an 'acoustic roof' over the native soil, a linguistic barricade whether against the encroaching Babel of generalized modernity or against regional political expansion."[36] Moreover, censorship could be smoothly disguised simply by adjusting the soundtrack over a cut sequence.[37] According to Sisto, the "clash of the ordinary sonic with the unfamiliar visuals" engenders a "psychic resistance in the reception of the moving/sounding image," and in so doing, "dubbing destroys any possibility and real empathic believability of the other into a fictitious domesticity that perceived as such becomes just an untrue and dismissible spectacle."[38]

This interpretation neatly applies to early audiovisual translation attempts, when the foreign and the national ("mock" national, in the case of productions made abroad for the Italian market) clashed visually and orally in the audiences' minds. However, and following O'Darsa, I would argue that dubbing became widely accepted. The general audience no longer questioned the national character of the cinematic body with the same urgency, and eventually accepted the films as genuine Italian products. Of course, these audio-visual dissonances were more difficult to accept when well-known foreign stars were involved. Nevertheless, the association of specific actors with their respective Italian voices throughout their career—aided by the fact that their original voices had never been

[34] Joseph Garncarz, "Made in Germany: Multiple-Language Versions and the Early German Sound Cinema," in Higson and Maltby, "*Film Europe" and "Film America*," 259.

[35] Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 36.

[36] Nataša Ďurovičová, "Vector, Flow, Zone: Towards a History of Cinematic *translatio*," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Ďurovičová and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 102.

[37] Sisto, *Film Sound in Italy*, 52.

[38] Sisto, *Film Sound in Italy*, 77.

heard—gradually eliminated the perception of them as "foreign-national others."

To summarize, the development of sound cinema in Italy unfolded, from its inception, under the rubric of nationalism. Unlike other European countries, the spectrum of different solutions adopted to accommodate increasingly stringent Fascist policies was very wide. The common denominator, however, was to wipe out possible 'threats' from abroad and within the country. Dubbing was recognized as the perfect formula for both carving a strong national identity and controlling the intrusion of the foreign into the native soil.

Cines-Pittaluga's Dubbing Process: Between Routine and Experimentation

Cines-Pittaluga was the main player in the transition from silent to sound cinema in Italy. Founded as Cines in Rome on March 31, 1906, the company was then acquired by SASP (Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga) in 1926. Cines-Pittaluga produced the first Italian sound film, *La canzone dell'amore* (1930), directed by Gennaro Righelli, and became one of the main distribution companies in the country. The group was also the first to experiment with dubbing in Italy, and it went on to establish the first Roman dubbing production in the Spring of 1932. The arrival of sound cinema in Italy is indeed intertwined with the figure of Stefano Pittaluga himself, who was also responsible for the first screening of *The Jazz Singer* in Italy.[39] The historical significance of Cines-Pittaluga in Italy is connected to the development of a state-owned cinema and its vertically integrated model. Importation, production, and pervasive distribution was the company's modus operandi, as described by Steven Ricci: "While Pittaluga built his position of strength by importing American films, his production studio (Cines) was supported by a chain of first-run theaters in every major Italian city."[40]

Drawing on archival documents related to a number of foreign-language movies dubbed by Cines-Pittaluga in 1931, this section examines the company's dubbing procedures in the 1930s. As I will demonstrate, dubbing

[39] Paola Valentini, *Presenze sonore: il passaggio al sonoro in Italia tra cinema e radio* (Florence: Le lettere, 2007), 30.

[40] Steven Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 66.

grew into more than just a technical chore in that it tied into sound design, the choice of voices, and the use of music. This state of affairs, in turn, impinges on the relationship between dubbing and censorship.

The idea of manipulation is often associated with censorship, dictatorship, power, or ideology. Within the field of Translation Studies, Jorge Díaz Cintas distinguishes two types of manipulation: technical ("changes and modifications to the original text are incorporated because of technical considerations") and ideological ("*unfair* changes that unbalance the relationship between source and target products take place on purpose and *unscrupulously*").[41] Under the Fascist regime, the suppression of a film's scene, song, or speech prior to it being dubbed—and after its examination by the censors—clearly falls in the second category. However, when considering the final product of dubbing, it is important to ponder the dialectic between these two forms of manipulation. In fact, the lack of a technologically-informed reading of dubbing might at times bolster the common assumption that any deviation from the original resulted from the ideological agenda or political climate of the era. For instance, a pioneer of dubbing studies in Italy, Mario Quargnolo, reported on the dubbed version of a 1930s French film with the following words:

> The main attraction of *Feux de joie*, made in 1938 but released in Italy only in 1942, was the popular band *Ray Ventura et ses collégiens*. Well, Ray Ventura's orchestra was completely dubbed over with an Italian orchestra which remained anonymous. … Probably they did not want to propagandize French music, which was carefully avoided even on the radio.[42]

Although censoring French music might well have been part of the Fascist regime's agenda at the time, a deeper understanding of French film sound technology helps us complicate such a reading. Over the first decade of the sound era, the tendency in France was to simultaneously record images and sounds (*son direct*), as opposed to the Hollywood practice of separating sound production from image production.[43] To retain the original music, the Italian version would have had to rerecord the original music, which was otherwise impossible to separate as a distinct track from the imag-

[41] Jorge Díaz Cintas, "Clearing the Smoke to See the Screen: Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation," *Meta* 57, no. 2 (2012): 284–285.

[42] Quargnolo, *La censura*, 52, quoted and translated in Sisto, *Film Sound in Italy*, 35.

[43] O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 111.

es and dialogue. Understanding sound technology provides the basis for a more accurate reading of censorship and its manifestations.

The first archival testimony for our survey of Cines-Pittaluga is a file on the dubbing of *Hôtel des étudiants* (*Student's Hotel*, 1932, France). The film, translated into Italian as *Vita goliardica*, was released in a dubbed version in 1933. The document "Notes related to the dubbing of the movie" features a list of instructions on how to dub the film.[44] Some of the guidelines—"dub all the dialogue"—are obvious enough. Instead, other annotations testify to how the technical and the ideological are intertwined.

At this early stage in the history of dubbing, the need to manipulate the original music was purely technical, since it was impossible to split the dialogue track from sound effects and music. Only the physical separation of the different elements of the mix would have allowed producers to mix noises and music with the newly dubbed Italian dialogue track. In its absence, an alternative kind of music had to be mixed with the dubbed dialogue. Sometimes the original music track was sent to the distribution company for use alongside the dubbed track. Occasionally there may have even been the opportunity to record the music again. Yet this was not the most common scenario. In most cases, the Italian dialogue was mixed either with newly recorded music similar to the original, or with a musical track taken from the dubbing company's library of pre-existing music.[45]

One possible reason for the removal of original songs or music from a film was that song lyrics were in a foreign language, or that the lyrical content had not been considered appropriate by the censors. It was therefore necessary to address these issues in the process of dubbing, as shown by the following excerpts taken from the aforementioned document:

> Having suppressed the *canzonetta* sung by Odessa as she cooks eggs, it would be useful to have a musical commentary on all the following scenes up until the end of the reel […].
>
> Dub the dialogue until the end—when the three teenagers go down the stairs singing, replace the singing with a simple vocal hint of the motif, i.e. a "trallalla, trallallera," etc. …

[44] "Note relative al doppiaggio del film *Vita goliardica*," undated, SASP0093, Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin.

[45] For a detailed discussion on the issue of mixing dialogues with music, see Ermanno Comuzio, "Quando le voci non appartengono ai volti," *Cineforum* 224, no. 5 (1983): 23–32.

> In the coffee scene, remove the French students' singing and leave only their vocal "trallalla, trallallera"—or, if possible, use any local goliardic chorus to these scenes and dub Gianni's lines.
>
> When Odetta and Massimo leave, replace the mocking French tune with the well-known goliardic chorus "È morto un bischero," or something of that nature.[46]

In each of the above scenarios, musical editing was a necessary technical expedient to accommodate the modifications requested by the censors, rather than an ideologically driven choice per se. Moreover, many changes in *Vita goliardica* were not due to technical constraints; rather, they reflected specific cultural and aesthetic values:

> Underscore with soft musical accompaniment those dialogue scenes that imply and thus call for it.
>
> Underscore dialogues with music, and fill the transitions with the original score, if available, or a new piece.
>
> All scenes after Odetta and Gianni hug until the end of the reel will require a musical comment, to be mixed with the dialogue but without overwhelming the lines spoken by the actors … and ending on the header "End of Part Two."[47]

[46] "Essendo stata soppressa la canzonetta che canta Odetta quando si cuoce le uova, converrà commentare musicalmente tutte le scene che seguono da questo punto sino alla fine del rullo […]

Doppiare il dialogo sino alla fine – quando i tre giovani scendono le scale cantando, sostituire il cantato con un semplice accenno vocale del motivo – cioè un trallalla, trallallara, ecc. ecc.

Nella scena del caffè, abolire il canto francese degli studenti limitandosi a riprodurre il 'trallalla, trallallera' vocale degli stessi – oppure, se è possibile, applicare a queste scene un qualunque coro goliardico nostrano, doppiando le battute di Gianni.

Quando Odetta e Massimo vanno via, al coro canzonatorio francese sostituire il famoso coro 'È morto un bischero' di carattere goliardico o qualche cosa del genere."

"Note relative al doppiaggio del film *Vita goliardica*."

[47] "Sottolineare con accompagnamento musicale in sordina le scene dialogate che lo comportino e lo richiedono.

Sottolineare con musica i dialoghi e commentare quei passaggi di tempo riproducendo la musica originale dove esiste o applicandone della nuova.

Si ritiene che tutte le scene che si svolgono dal momento in cui Odetta e Gianni si abbracciano sino alla fine del rullo comportino un commento musicale, prendendo in mixage le bat-

As these instructions make clear, the changes to the music are dictated by choices that have less to do with technological limitations than a purely aesthetic evaluation.

Another aspect worth exploring is the use of preexisting music. Following Tom Gunning and Martin Miller Marks, Emilio Sala distinguishes a "music of attractions" from a "music of narrative integration" to describe the different uses of music in the context of silent films. Sala cautions against strictly adhering to the assumption that "music of attractions = preexisting music, while music of narrative integration = music composed *ex novo*," and he opposes considering this dichotomy from a teleological perspective, that is to view the music of narrative integration as a step forward in film music history.[48] Both tendencies have coexisted and interacted with each other throughout the history of cinema. As dubbing instructions illustrate, preexisting music was extensively employed in the early years of dubbing. The sources point to two scenarios. The first, as mentioned earlier, is the use of well-known Italian goliardic songs such as "È morto un bischero", a method which operates dramaturgically by activating a musical memory and drawing on the collective imagination.[49] The second case is the use of preexisting repertoire drawn from musical libraries, as evidenced by another dubbing instruction:

> Replace the tune Massimo plays on the gramophone with an Italian record from the Pittaluga musical library suitable to that scene and to the scenes that will follow, overdubbing the Italian lines.[50]

In this case as well, the indications corroborate an attempt at narrative and aesthetic integration. The preexisting Pittaluga track must match the scene's mood but must also interact narratively with the scenes that fol-

tute, senza che per altro disturbi le battute… chiudendo sul titolo 'Fine della Parte Seconda.'"

"Note relative al doppiaggio del film *Vita goliardica*."

[48] Emilio Sala, "Dalla 'compilazione d'autore' al 'poema lirico-sinfonico,'" *Archivio d'Annunzio* 4, no. 10 (October 2017): 147–148. The reference is to Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (1986): 63–70, and Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 61.

[49] The song's melody is the same as "Qual mesto gemito" from the finale of act 1 in Gioachino Rossini's opera *Semiramide*.

[50] "Sostituire invece con un disco italiano di musica Pittaluga adatto alla scena e alle scene che poi seguiranno il disco che Massimo mette sul grammofono, eseguendo in mixage le battute italiane." "Note relative al doppiaggio del film *Vita goliardica*."

low. In Hollywood, the use of musical libraries and preexisting music at the time was typical of low-budget productions.[51] By contrast, the use of preexisting music in Italian cinema was often the result of an attempt to culturally adjust the original product for the local audience.

One last aspect emerging from the documentation on dubbing concerns the attention paid to sound design (I deliberately use an anachronistic term here to highlight the keen awareness of the filmic soundscape on the part of the practitioners of the time). Instructions such as "reproduce such sound effects as strictly necessary" (Riproducendo quei rumori che sono strettamente indispensabili,) for instance, raise a series of questions that are difficult to answer without having access to copies of these early dubbed films: Which sound effects were deemed necessary to a film scene, and which were not? Were they necessary for the sake of realism or narrative comprehension?

Dubbing instructions for several other films also showcase a similarly holistic understanding of the sound mix. The following example from the files on *Febbre di vivere* (1932, *A Bill of Divorcement*, US) testifies to the great care put into the construction of the mix:

> After the opening titles (with the original music), play an English waltz (on the header: "Christmas night in the old England") mixed with the buzz of the conversation. Continue with the waltz, in accordance with the appropriate sound perspective of the various settings, up until the moment when it joins the original.[52]

The original music was likely an English waltz that had to be substituted because it could not be blended in. The new musical track had to be adjusted according to space and sonic context, and had to fade back into the original one. These instructions demonstrate an already clear and innovative awareness of the sound's power to shape cinematic space.

[51] Ronald Rodman, "The Popular Song as Leitmotif in 1990s Film," in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 121.

[52] "Dopo il titolo di testa (sul quale rimane la musica originale) attaccare (sul titolo 'Notte di Natale nella vecchia Inghilterra') un waltzer inglese, mixato col brusio della conversazione. Continuare questo waltzer, nella debita prospettiva sonora a seconda del variare degli ambienti, fino al punto a cui esso giunge nell'originale." "Dispositivo per la sincronizzazione del film *Febbre di vivere*," 1934, SASP1363, Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin.

From the same file, we can see another example of "substitution of narrative integration" (i.e., a change that takes into account the film narrative):

> We cannot use the piano sonata composed by the protagonist included in the original [track].[53] It is therefore necessary to choose a sonata that we own, keeping in mind that:
> 1) This new sonata must have with a closing allegro movement which will start a few moments before Sydney's final line, when she talks about joyful music.
> 2) The sonata must be in D major because the dialogue explicitly refers to a D major sonata.
> For the ending, the theme developed by the piano during the last scene must transition to the full orchestra.[54]

It is unlikely that Italian audiences would have noticed the exact key of the sonata (beyond perhaps recognizing whether it was in major or minor). Nevertheless, such a method testifies to the meticulous, even fastidious care devoted to every aspect of the film during the dubbing process in order to strengthen the realistic quotient of dubbing itself.

In *Notte di fuoco* (1932, *Radio Patrol*, US), the dubbing director was given the freedom to silence the music to highlight a particularly salient moment:

> At the discretion of the dubbing director, for a few segments of the action it will be possible to use the original soundtrack, only without music—only noises and sounds. That is because the absence of music seems to enhance the meaning of those sounds intrinsic to the action—for instance, in the scene in which the two police officers chase Kloskey in the slaughterhouse, or when the baby emits his first wails.[55]

[53] This might suggest either a copyright/licensing issues or technical limitations in the replacement of the original track with dialogue and noises/sounds.

[54] "La sonata per pianoforte composta dal protagonista, non può essere utilizzata dall'originale. Bisognerà quindi prendere un'altra Sonata di nostra proprietà, badando soltanto:
1°) che questa Sonata termini con un movimento allegro che attacchi qualche momento prima dell'ultima battuta di Sydney, la quale parla d'una musica di carattere gaio.
2°) che essa sia nella tonalità di Re maggiore, perché nel corso dei dialoghi si parla esplicitamente di una Sonata in Re maggiore.
Per il finale, lo stesso tema sviluppato dal Pianoforte durante l'ultima scena deve passare in piena orchestra."
"Dispositivo per la sincronizzazione del film *Febbre di vivere*."

[55] "Per alcuni brani dell'azione potrà pure, a giudizio del Direttore di sincronizzazione, essere utilizzata la colonna originale composta di suoni e rumori, ma senza musica. E ciò

In this case, as against the original version, the subtraction of the music is a narratively motivated choice that enhances the soundscape while simultaneously drawing attention to a salient moment in the action. Such interventions testify to a keen awareness of the soundtrack's power to enhance a film's narrative as well as the acknowledgment of the audience's potential reception.

The following example, referring to *La pericolosa partita* (1932, *The Most Dangerous Game*, US), further supports this perspective:

> It is necessary to reproduce all the noises and voices which bear great importance in this film as they serve to create a particular atmosphere of fear and emotion—i.e., the screams of castaways, calls and screeches of birds, knocks on doors, a cup toppling over, the crashing of a piano, a vase falling, doors closing, dogs barking, water rushing, etc., etc., in accordance with the original.[56]

In conclusion, dubbing in the 1930s was not simply a routine operation, but rather a process involving artistic and culturally sensitive choices. In this connection, it is worth pointing out that between 1930 and 1935, out of 1,700 talkies distributed for release in Italy, only 128 were Italian—a mere 7 percent of the total.[57] The remaining mass of foreign-language films constituted a vast field of experimentation and crystallization as regards dubbing and other post-production techniques. Companies such as Cines-Pittaluga, which produced most of the early Italian-language movies, also acted as one of the major distribution companies. The same technical staff, then, would work on both fronts, allowing for interactions and innovations across the Italian-language / foreign-language divide. One could contend that dubbing in the 1930s represented a laboratory to test film sound techniques—a space

perché l'assenza della musica sembra in tali brani valorizzare maggiormente il significato dei suoni inerenti all'azione. Così, ad esempio, per la scena in cui i due poliziotti inseguono Kloskey nel mattatoio, e per il momento in cui il bimbo emette i primi vagiti." "Dispositivo per la sincronizzazione del film *Notte di fuoco*," 1932–1933, SASP1721, Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin.

[56] "È indispensabile riprodurre tutti i rumori e le voci che in questo film hanno una grande importanza in quanto servono a creare una particolare atmosfera di paura e di emozione. E cioè: grida di naufraghi, stridi e starnazzar di uccelli, colpi alle porte, tazza che si rovescia, fracasso del pianoforte, vaso che cade, porte che si chiudono, latrati di cani, fragore di acque, ecc. ecc. attenendosi all'originale." "Note relative al doppiaggio del film *La pericolosa partita*," 1933–1934, SASP1375, Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin.

[57] Sorlin, *Italian National Cinema*, 56.

to develop awareness of the role and potential of the soundtrack—which in turn influenced the production of domestic films. The post-production of the cinematic voice began in those very years. At the same time, work on accent, timbre, and interpretation—at first along the same lines as in the theater—was also precipitated by dubbing and its extensive use in the early years of sound cinema. It is certainly true that cinema developed through its constant interaction with radio and other media, too.[58] Yet, dubbing too played a primary role in shaping the cinematic landscape, as corroborated in its use in subsequent eras (e.g., Neorealism). Such an outsized role would be unthinkable had dubbing been limited to domestic productions. As Ricci points out, the mutual relationship between dubbing foreign films and the growth of a national cinema was due primarily to the sharing of the same infrastructure:

> To this day, this institutional regulation [i.e., dubbing instead of subtitling] affects the Italian mode of production. It supports a small dubbing industry and encourages film producers to take advantage of its technical infrastructure.[59]

By the same token, I would argue that the dubbing infrastructure enabled the Italian film industry to develop a repertoire of post-production, sound techniques which contributed to the emergence of a national sound-film style.

Cines-Pittaluga and the Composer Romano Borsatti

As shown by the dubbing instructions, music for dubbed films was often a mixture of both preexisting tracks available in musical libraries and original compositions. As dubbing was delegated to dedicated staff, in most cases composers played a rather marginal role. Yet it is still worth asking: what was the role of composers in the dubbing process? And how much new music, if any, was composed specifically for dubbed productions?

In the following pages, I explore the relationship between Cines-Pittaluga and the Italian composer Romano Borsatti. Drawing on letters sent by the company's musical department to the composer, I provide a more detailed picture of the world of dubbing. This includes the way Cines-Pittaluga built its own musical library, and how this happened. Due to a fire at the

[58] See Valentini, *Presenze sonore*.
[59] Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism*, 61.

Cines-Pittaluga headquarters in 1935, which destroyed all their documents, these surviving letters are of great value to understand the development of sound cinema in Italy in the early thirties.

Romano Borsatti (1892–1962), born in Trieste, began to study music at an early age. He studied both violin and piano, as well as counterpoint and composition. He taught violin at the Conservatory of Music in Trieste before deciding to focus exclusively on composition and performance. During the silent cinema era, he also worked as a piano accompanist, providing music for screenings of films. As a violinist, he participated in various opera and symphonic seasons at the Verdi and Rossetti theaters in Trieste. His work as a composer ranged from operas, operettas and several compositions for cinema, up to an array of popular songs interpreted by renowned local artists such as Mario Latilla, Nino Marra, Dina Evarist, and Gabré.[60]

This brief biography foregrounds aspects of Borsatti's career that might have been of interest to a film company like Cines-Pittaluga. First, Borsatti had a solid musical education and a strong background as an established performer, conductor, and composer. Second, Borsatti was a popular composer, and his songs were successful among Italian audiences, indicating his familiarity with the listeners' tastes and expectations. These aspects of Borsatti's career may well account for why Cines-Pittaluga decided to turn to him not only to take care of the music in its dubbed films but also build a musical library for the studio.

I have been able to locate six letters from the company addressed to Borsatti.[61] They were written between May 1932 and May 1933 (the same time frame of the documents presented in the second section of this article). As previously mentioned, film dubbing by Cines-Pittaluga began around the spring of 1932, but it is likely that some practices such as the *sonorizzazioni* continued for a while. In the first letter addressed to Borsatti (May 18, 1932), Cines-Pittaluga shows appreciation for the composer's choice to release his compositions with their own publishing company, in line with the typical synergy between cinema, editors, and record labels of the time.[62] The music featured in popular films was then distributed by Cines-Pittaluga as part of an effective commercial strategy, and had to follow specific requirements:

[60] These biographical notes draw on a brief biography written by Borsatti's daughter and various press articles collected in the personal archive the film critic Quargnolo (Fasc. 108, Fondo Mario Quargnolo, La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona).

[61] Fasc. 108, Fondo Mario Quargnolo, La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona.

[62] See Valentini, *Presenze sonore*, 189.

> We inform you that, for our immediate needs, we would like some pieces of joyful character, but not dances. Simple and graceful musical interludes, to be adopted for scenes featuring little movement, such as a living room conversation, an easy stroll, a house gathering, and the like. We would like to point out that these interludes should not be stylized, and they should preferably be in one tempo only.[63]

Recorded and stored in the company's musical libraries, these compositions were likely utilized as backing tracks for producing dubbed dialogues in several films. The company also requested Borsatti to limit himself to their list of instruments when orchestrating his compositions. This was likely due to the orchestral resources available at Cines-Pittaluga.

On September 10, Cines-Pittaluga informed Borsatti that one of his compositions had been used in the film *L'ultima squadriglia* (1932, *The Lost Squadron*, US), and asked the composer to arrange additional descriptive music for love scenes and dramatic scenes. In the letters from October 29 and November 9, respectively, Cines-Pittaluga notified Borsatti that his compositions *Momento erotico* ("Erotic Moment") and *Agitato drammatico* ("Dramatic Agitation") had been accepted. One of the letters included a royalty form to be filled out and signed by the composer. The compositions were thereafter stored by the company and registered at the Italian copyright collecting agency SIAE (Società Italiana degli Autori ed Editori) to allow Borsatti to receive the requisite royalty each time they were featured in dubbed films.

In the last two letters from the collection, Cines-Pittaluga informed the composer about the recording arrangements put in place in various dubbed movies. The first part of the letter (13 May 1933) is particularly relevant for our discussion:

> We have been informed by our Maestro Tamanini that you serve as musical conductor of several small orchestras in public venues, and that it would not be difficult for you to include our works for such ensembles in your programs. While we strongly recommend you make use of our repertoire, we kindly ask

[63] "Vi comunichiamo che per il n/ fabbisogno immediato ci sarebbero utili pezzi di genere gaio, ma non ballabili. Intermezzi semplici, graziosi da poter adottare a scene di poco movimento come conversazione da salotto, passeggiatina flemmatica, un ricevimento in casa ecc. Vi facciamo notare che tali intermezzi non debbono essere stilizzati e preferibilmente di tempo unico." Cines-Pittaluga to Romano Borsatti, 18 May 1932, Fasc. 108, Fondo Mario Quargnolo, La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona.

> you inform us if you are in possession of any of our publications, and that you kindly provide us with the names and addresses of those "chef d'orchestre" [conductors] who currently perform with small orchestras in public venues. [64]

Cines-Pittaluga, aware of Borsatti's activity as a conductor, openly suggested the use of its own musical repertoire published by the Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga. Furthermore, the composer was asked to provide the names of conductors performing in public venues. The company's goal was to enlarge its distribution network to music venues, outside the realm of movie theaters, by asking conductors to play Cines-Pittaluga's repertoire. The company was seemingly attempting to impose the pieces it featured in its dubbed or domestic productions on concerts and musical events all over the country, and to distribute them in its own editions. Emilio Audissino argues that the Fascist attempt to strictly control the sound of Italian cinema through dubbing was not only an effort to ban foreign voices, but also to help establish a homogeneous spoken language, analogous to standardized written Italian, in preference to the predominant regional dialects.[65] This offers tantalizing points of similarity with the way in which Cines-Pittaluga attempted to spread its repertoire onto the concert stage to develop a standard soundscape that would be recognizably Italian. The ramifications of this operation are significant, as the viewers' musical imagination was thus shaped by the very same body of music produced by Italian composers and which was heard both on the screen and in live concerts in public venues. In this sense, the early 1930s bear a continuity with the silent period, when many compiled scores featured in movie theaters were based on the *orchestrine* repertoire.[66] In the years of sound cinema, however, the *orchestrine* repertoire appears

[64] "Dal ns/maestro Tamanini veniamo informati che Voi dirigete orchestrine in pubblici ritrovi e che non vi riesce difficile poter inserire nei programmi di esecuzione la ns/produzione per orchestrina.

Mentre Vi raccomandiamo caldamente tale ns/repertorio, Vi preghiamo di volerci far sapere se siete in possesso delle ns/pubblicazioni e di volerci cortesemente fornire il nome e gli indirizzi di quei 'chefs d'orchestre' che attualmente dirigono orchestrine in pubblici ritrovi." Cines-Pittaluga to Romano Borsatti, 13 May 1933, Fasc. 108, Fondo Mario Quargnolo, La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona.

[65] Emilio Audissino, "Italian 'Doppiaggio' Dubbing in Italy: Some Notes and (In)famous Examples," *Italian Americana* 30, no. 1 (2012): 22–32.

[66] Marco Targa, "Reconstructing the Sound of Italian Silent Cinema: The 'Musica per Orchestrina' Repertoires," in *Film Music: Practices, Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. Studies around* Cabiria *Research Project*, ed. Annarita Colturato (Turin: Kaplan, 2014), 135–167.

to be shaped by film scores featured in both foreign and domestic films. Furthermore, the similarity of musical themes heard in concerts outside movie theaters raises the question of whether dubbed productions were truly perceived as foreign products, or whether they could have been experienced, to a certain extent, as domestic. The answer is not clear-cut, and additional factors such as the growing network of stars further complicate this perspective. To conclude, I would argue that the Italian practice of compiling scores for films—the main modus operandi in the silent period—survived to some extent into the sound era, when sound for dubbed films was produced by compiling pre-existing pieces and the composition of original scores was still limited to a few domestic productions.

Conclusion

Locating and gaining access to the original films is one of the major difficulties in the study of dubbing. In this article, I have attempted to make up for the lack of audiovisual sources by inspecting alternative documents that provide insights into the early practice of dubbing and open new paths of research on the subject, and coupling them with studies on fascism, censorship, and propaganda as well as considerations on technology, film aesthetic, local adaptation, and the domestic production system. Further complications to the study of conversion-era cinema springs from what O'Brien calls a "historiographical prejudice" in film history—a prejudice that privileges the international *film d'auteur* at the expense of other films that while commercially and technically significant were and continue to be viewed as lacking in historical resonance.[67] Because dubbing has traditionally been considered an anti-artistic practice that degrades an original product for the sake of profit, dubbed movies pay an even higher price in the history of cinema. However, as Jean-François Cornu contends, in many countries the practice of dubbing brought talking cinema to every social class, a phenomenon which "can also help us better understand the development and standardization of film-sound processes and practices."[68]

O'Brien points to two additional limitations of film historiography on dubbing. First, the supremacy attributed to the role of the visual over the

[67] O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 40.

[68] Jean-François Cornu, "The Significance of Dubbed Versions for Early Sound-film History," in O'Sullivan and Cornu, *The Translation of Films,* 191.

sonic in film studies. While image techniques experienced a standardization by the late 1930s, O'Brien argues that "the sound accompaniment may well vary substantially from one national cinema to the next to thus condition national approaches to mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing."[69] In other words, the uniqueness of a national cinema must be sought in the soundtrack, especially when discussing the first decade of sound cinema, and particularly, I would add, when considering dubbed movies. Second, the tendency of film historiography to associate stylistic changes in films with specific directors or movements does not apply to the conversion era because "when style seemed so obviously a function of technical constraints, explanations in terms of filmmakers' intentions seem applicable to only a small portion of the film industry's output."[70]

Although here I have focused mainly on the practical applications of dubbing, we are still left with a series of key questions concerning the way this technology made sense within the Italian cinematic industry. To grasp the effect of postproduction on film style, one must analyze the Italian national cinema in Higson's terms; that is, considering both filmic production and consumption. Within this larger framework, we can begin to answer questions such as why Italian domestic cinema wound up preferring the use of postproduction sound as opposed to direct-recorded sound. Furthermore, how did the transition from dubbing-as-a-mode-of-audiovisual-translation to dubbing-as-a-mode-of-domestic-production develop? Was it determined by sharing the same infrastructure, or was it driven by an aesthetic and stylistic outlook?

Further research might move along two lines. First, an investigation of the superseding of original music with music arranged by Italian composers for dubbed versions of films would be welcome. Although in many instances the companies drew on their own musical libraries, it was not unusual for new soundtracks to be composed with a specific production in mind.[71] The second research direction should involve an extensive inves-

[69] O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 42.

[70] O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 102–103.

[71] An interesting case I am currently working on is the Italian edition of Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934, US; it. *Accadde una notte*). While the original American talkie does not present much music aside from the opening and ending titles, the Italian version makes abundant use of a score composed by Amedeo Escobar. Such a clear scoring strategy posits the idea of a direct involvement of the composer in the making of the Italian edition. The result is two completely different movies, and two different ways of consuming films in Italy and America.

tigation into the reception of dubbing. Because the need for manipulation arose from a Fascist decree and left an indelible mark, the point of emphasis should ultimately be the *effect* of such manipulations on audiences, regardless of their producers' motivations. This is not a purely theoretical reservation, as this process had material consequences which become apparent when we recall the writings of Roma and O'Darsa: the increasing perfecting of dubbing techniques, the experimentation with sound design, and the construction of an Italian soundscape might have been necessary for Italian audiences to accept dubbing as such, and hence to an uncritical embrace of such an anesthetizing view of the foreign, which the Fascist government was so keen to promote.

Works cited

Archival Collections

Fondo Mario Quargnolo. La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona.

Fondo Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga. Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin.

Periodicals

Cinema illustrazione. Milan: 1926–1939. https://fondazionecsc.it/pubblicazione/cinema-illustrazione-1926-1939/

Secondary Literature

Audissino, Emilio. "Italian 'Doppiaggio' Dubbing in Italy: Some Notes and (In)famous Examples." *Italian Americana* 30, no. 1 (2012): 22–32.

Barnier, Martin. "The Reception of Dubbing in France 1931–3: The Case of Paramount." In *The Translation of Films: 1900–1950*, edited by Carol O'Sullivan and Jean-François Cornu, 221–238. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Brunetta, Gian Piero. *Il ruggito del Leone. Hollywood alla conquista dell'impero dei sogni nell'Italia di Mussolini*. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2013.

Bertellini, Giorgio. "Dubbing *L'Arte Muta*: Poetic Layerings around Italian Cinema's Transition to Sound." In *Re-viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922–1943*, edited by Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo, 30–82. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Catolfi, Antonio. "Censura e doppiaggio nelle forme narrative del cinema italiano, nel cruciale passaggio al sonoro degli anni Trenta." *Between* 5, no. 9 (2015). https://doi.org/10.13125/2039-6597/1396.

Comuzio, Ermanno. "Quando le voci non appartengono ai volti." *Cineforum* 224, no. 5 (1983): 23–32.

Cornu, Jean-François. "The Significance of Dubbed Versions for Early Sound-film History." In O'Sullivan and Cornu, *The Translation of Films*, 191–220.

Danan, Martine. "Dubbing as an Expression of Nationalism." *Meta* 36, no. 4 (1991): 606–614.

Díaz Cintas, Jorge. "Clearing the Smoke to See the Screen: Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation." *Meta* 57, no. 2 (2012): 279–293.

Di Cola, Gerardo. *Le voci del tempo perduto. La storia del doppiaggio e dei suoi interpreti dal 1927 al 1970*. Chieti: Edicola, 2004.

Ďurovičová, Nataša. "Vector, Flow, Zone: Towards a History of Cinematic *Translatio*." In *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Nataša Ďurovičová and Kathleen Newman, 90–120. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Garncarz, Joseph. "Made in Germany: Multiple-Language Versions and the Early German Sound Cinema." In Higson and Maltby, "*Film Europe" and "Film America*," 249–273.

Guidorizzi, Mario, ed. *Voci d'autore. Storia e protagonisti del doppiaggio italiano*. Sommacampagna: Cierre, 1999.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (1986): 63–70.

Higson, Andrew. "The Concept of National Cinema." *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989): 36-47.

Higson, Andrew and Richard Maltby, eds. "*Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920–39*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999.

Marks, Martin Miller. *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Mereu Keating, Carla. "'100% Italian': The Coming of Sound Cinema in Italy and State Regulation on Dubbing." *California Italian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1–24.

———. "Censorial Interferences in the Dubbing of Foreign Films in Fascist Italy: 1927–1943," *Meta* 57, no. 2 (2012): 294–309.

———. *The Politics of Dubbing. Film Censorship and State Intervention in the Translation of Foreign Cinema in Fascist Italy*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016.

O'Brien, Charles. *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

———. "Dubbing in the Early 1930s: An Improbable Policy." In O'Sullivan and Cornu, *The Translation of Films*, 177–189.

O'Sullivan, Carol and Jean-François Cornu, eds. *The Translation of Films: 1900–1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Pavesi, Maria, Maicol Formentelli and Elisa Ghia, eds. *The Languages of Dubbing: Mainstream Audiovisual Translation in Italy*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014.

Quargnolo, Mario. *La censura ieri e oggi nel cinema e nel teatro*. Milan: Pan, 1982.

———. *La parola ripudiata: l'incredibile storia dei film stranieri in Italia nei primi anni del sonoro*. Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli, 1986.

———. "Pionieri e esperienze del doppiato italiano." *Bianco e nero* 28, no. 5 (1967): 66–79.

Ranzato, Irene. *Translating Culture Specific References on Television: The Case of Dubbing*. London/New York: Routledge, 2015.

Ricci, Steven. *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Rodman, Ronald. "The Popular Song as Leitmotif in 1990s Film." In *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, edited by Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell, 119–136. Farnham: Ashgate, 2006.

Sala, Emilio. "Dalla 'compilazione d'autore' al 'poema lirico-sinfonico'. La musica per la versione sonorizzata di *Cabiria* (1931)," *Archivio d'Annunzio* 4, no. 10 (2017): 139–153.

Sisto, Antonella. *Film Sound in Italy: Listening to the Screen*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Sorlin, Pierre. *Italian National Cinema, 1896–1996*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Targa, Marco. "Reconstructing the Sound of Italian Silent Cinema: The 'Musica per Orchestrina' Repertoires." In *Film Music: Practices, Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. Studies around* Cabiria *Research Project*, edited by Annarita Colturato, 135–167. Turin: Kaplan, 2014.

Valentini, Paola. "La nascita del doppiaggio." In *Storia del cinema italiano,* vol. IV, *1924–1933*, edited by Leonardo Quaresima, 286–287. Venice: Marsilio, 2014.

Valentini, Paola. *Presenze sonore: il passaggio al sonoro in Italia tra cinema e radio*. Florence: Le lettere, 2007.

Vincendeau, Ginette. "Hollywood Babel: The Coming of Sound and the Multiple-Language Version." In Higson and Maltby, "*Film Europe" and "Film America*, 207–224.

Abstract

A few years after the arrival of sound cinema in Italy, the technology of dubbing emerged as an optimal solution to transfer films across national borders. This seemingly simple artifice had enormous cultural and political ramifications transnationally. For example, in the early 1930s, dubbing became the only way to screen foreign films in Italy, and the fascist government transformed the technology into a filter to bolster national identity and limit internal and external "threats" such as local dialects, foreign words, and music. Thus, under Mussolini's regime, a film's soundtrack (including music, sounds, and noises) underwent significant manipulation once it crossed the Italian border. This article examines Italian dubbing in the 1930s through the lenses of national cinema and local production. Additionally, it aims to explore early soundtrack manipulations before the establishment of dubbing as a practice, as well as the nationalist roots of dubbing itself. Finally, by analysing archival documents, this study posits that dubbing was not merely a matter of mechanical translation, but also a locus of sound experimentation in a time of stagnation for Italian cinema. Investigating dubbing, a phenomenon so profoundly ingrained in Italian society, opens up new interpretations of Italian culture, political history, and film production from the 1930s throughout the twentieth century.

Keywords: Early Sound Cinema, Dubbing, Italian National cinema, Archival Research, Censorship.

Luca Battioni is currently pursuing a PhD in Italian Studies at Brown University. His research interests include early sound films, music censorship, and music in totalitarian regimes. He graduated in classical guitar performance and studied musicology at the Università di Milano, the Université de Tours, the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and the Graduate Center (CUNY).

ARTICLES

Experiencing Notational Artifacts in Music-Making

Towards a Theoretical Framework

Giovanni Cestino

This article aims to lay the theoretical foundations to understand and analyze the multimodal relationship between artifacts incorporating music notation (score, parts, etc.) and their users over time. Although the framework I propose below could be suitable for all sorts of users (composers, performers, and even more "generic users"), the focus here is more on performers, for their relationship with "music books"—as I will point out below—has gone somewhat underappreciated within the musicological discourse. Based on specific theoretical stances, the structure of my interpretive model is articulated in four parts, each marked by complementary concepts usually coupled together: location and time, surface and space, sight and touch, ideology, function/use, and place—a last concept which brings the framework to a sort of circular ending. The case of a score of Arnold Schönberg's String Quartet no. 3 belonging to Austrian violinist Rudolf Kolisch (1896–1978) provides an example of how this model can be applied and allows for some further reflections on music reading in different music-making practices. Before delving into presenting the framework, it is worth contextualizing this approach in musicological discourse.

* This article stems from my doctoral research: Giovanni Cestino, "'Used Scores'. Linee teoriche e operative per l'indagine del rapporto tra esecutori e materiali performativi" (PhD diss., Milan, University of Milan, 2019). Translations are mine, when not otherwise specified.

I owe special thanks to Nicola Scaldaferri, Giulia Accornero, and Oliver Dubon, patient readers and always generous with stimulating tips. I am equally grateful to the two anonymous readers for contributing with precious suggestions that further refined my thinking. The last, special thanks is for Clara.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 77–117.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss14249.

Hurdles, Turns, and Traces

In musicology, an approach to sources that focuses on their relationship with users has not yet led to an autonomous field of study. If one looks at the way our discipline developed, it appears that a conjuncture of scholarly trends has inevitably prevented such a perspective to develop, because it would require rethinking disciplinary concepts and methods. To begin with, musicologists regarded the most traditional forms of music writing—from medieval codices to twentieth-century sketches—as sources of information. Just a century after musicology's first cry from the cradle of literary studies, Nino Pirrotta opened one of his essays with the vitriolic words: "Musicology is a recent word … It is modeled, as others are, after the old and glorious name of philology."[1] In more recent times, Nicholas Cook reiterated that "the primary sources [for musicologists] are documents, and the principal methods for working with them are archival research and close reading—the same techniques on which historical and literary studies are based."[2] In the triangle of music philology, analysis, and history, we interrogate written documents as records of something *other* than themselves: first and foremost sounds, but also events, ideas, and much else. Therefore, a traditional investigation of sources prioritizes content, or rather every meaning we can extract from it. Music philology investigates how musical texts were created and transmitted over time and considers sources as "steps" in that process. In this case, the material features of a source are functional to a better understanding of its content and tradition. Music analysis, for its part, aims to disclose a musical meaning to be first read on the page, rather than heard in the sound. All the materiality of scores, in this task, simply goes unnoticed. Lastly, music history exploits every kind of sources in order to understand the past. When sources regain their material condition, it is to elucidate their own history as objects, as happens in the cultural history of music publishing.

Source-based and content-oriented branches in musicology proliferated under a variety of historical conditions and disciplinary reasons, but ultimately resonated with the long-standing problem of music's ephemerality. Musicological emphasis on music writing as a primary tool for formalization, retrieval, and creativity reflected the effort to bring the understand-

[1] Nino Pirrotta, "Ars Nova and Stil Novo," in *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 26.

[2] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 249.

ing of music closer to that of the non-performing arts. Beyond the many merits, the most evident risk was the "textualist bias,"[3] namely the attitude for which "for generations musicologists have behaved as if scores were the only real thing about music."[4] In this respect, a consistent shift occurred in recent decades, when a turn in historical musicology shifted the emphasis from texts to performances and from composers to performers, thus "writing performance into the mainstream of musicology [considered as] the key to completing the job that the 'New' musicologists began."[5] Therefore, in many of the studies on performance, recordings replaced old scores and became the new texts to be scrutinized with the most sophisticated tools—the new bread and butter to produce written statements on music-making.[6] The overall direction of this new paradigm was perfectly summarized in the iconic title of Nicholas Cook's book—namely to go "beyond the score." Once the old proposal of an identification of "music as text" had been changed in the new "music as performance," scores were downgraded to quasi theatrical "scripts" for interactions among performers.[7] Despite some recent attempts

[3] The expression appears in Eric Alfred Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 123. In musicology, we can find an instance of it in an essay by Angela Ida De Benedictis, although in that context it is used to stigmatize the alleged superiority of the traditional forms of writing on other forms of textuality, such as magnetic tapes in twentieth-century music: see Angela Ida De Benedictis, "Scrittura e supporti nel Novecento: alcune riflessioni e un esempio (*Ausstrahlung* di Bruno Maderna)," in *La scrittura come rappresentazione del pensiero musicale*, ed. Gianmario Borio (Pisa: ETS, 2004), 242.

[4] Nicholas Kenyon, "Performance Today," in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10. Thirty years before Kenyon's statement, the tendency had already been acknowledged by ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl in his "I Can't Say a Thing Until I've Seen the Score," in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 65–81.

[5] Nicholas Cook, "Changing the Musical Object: Approaches to Performance Analysis," in *Music's Intellectual History: Founders, Followers and Fads*, ed. Zdravko Blažeković (New York: RILM, 2009), 790.

[6] "The most obvious way of studying music as performance is, quite simply, to study those traces or representations of past performances that make up the recorded heritage, thereby unlocking an archive of acoustical texts comparable in extent and significance to the notated texts around which musicology originally came into being." Nicholas Cook, "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance," *Music Theory Online* 7, no. 2 (2001): sec. 21, https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.php. For a recent, critical evaluation of the history of performance studies from a musicological perspective, see Ian Pace, "The New State of Play in Performance Studies," *Music and Letters* 98, no. 2 (2017): 281–292.

[7] See Cook, "Between Process and Product," sec. 15.

to reconsider them "as the means for channelling performers' creative imagination in otherwise unavailable directions,"[8] the evidence still goes unnoticed and is difficult to challenge. Scores are artifacts *in* performance, even if performance studies often overlooked their materiality in the discourses on performers.[9] Deprived of their *status as thing,* scores are like dusty relics of an old ideology of music—if not of an "old musicology"—where the risk of summoning such textualist bias always has the potential to creep in.

Performance studies in musicology would be the perfect place to shift the focus on written sources from content to use, from composers to performers, and from writing to reading, but this is not the way the field plays out. Scores belonging to prominent performers, even if available to scholars in many libraries, raised occasional and discontinuous interest.[10] Annotations and *Retuschen* (original alterations to the orchestration) attracted most attention,[11] especially when authored by conductors or com-

[8] Pace, "The New State of Play in Performance Studies," 285.

[9] Christopher Small, in his emphatic critique against the "literate mode" of performance in Western music, had already drawn attention to the use of written artifacts in performance practice, albeit seen as a proof of "the total dependence on notation of performers in the Western concert tradition … a curious and ambiguous practice, unique among the world's musical cultures." Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 110.

[10] Examples include: David Pickett, "Gustav Mahler as an Interpreter: A Study of His Textural Alterations and Performance Practice in the Symphonic Repertoire" (PhD diss., University of Surrey, 1988); Gabriele Dotto, "Opera, Four Hands: Collaborative Alterations in Puccini's *Fanciulla*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42, no. 3 (1989): 604–624; Robert Fink, "'Rigoroso (♪= 126)': *The Rite of Spring* and the Forging of a Modernist Performing Style," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 2 (1999): 299–362; John Bewley, "Marking the Way: The Significance of Eugene Ormandy's Score Annotations," *Notes* 59, no. 4 (2003): 828–853; Linda B. Fairtile, "Toscanini and the Myth of Textual Fidelity," *Journal of the Conductors Guild* 24, no. 1–2 (2003): 49–60; David Korevaar and Laurie J. Sampsel, "The Ricardo Viñes Piano Music Collection at the University of Colorado at Boulder," *Notes* 61, no. 2 (2004): 361–400; Oreste Bossini, "Il cammino del Wanderer. Appunti per una biografia artistica tra Beethoven, Rossini, Verdi, Brahms e Mahler," in *Claudio Abbado. Ascoltare il silenzio*, ed. Gastón Fournier-Facio (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2015), 220–251; Olga Manulkina, "Leonard Bernstein's 1959 Triumph in the Soviet Union," in *The Rite of Spring at 100*, ed. Severine Neff et al., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 219–236.

[11] Interestingly, annotations sparked interested also beyond musicology, namely in the field of information science: see Megan A. Winget, "Annotations on Musical Scores by Performing Musicians: Collaborative Models, Interactive Methods, and Music Digital Library Tool Development," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 12 (2008): 1878–1897; Linda T. Kaastra, "Annotation and the Coordination of Cognitive Processes in Western Art Music Performance," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Performance Science 2011*, ed. Aaron Williamon, Darryl Edwards, and Lee Bartel

poser-conductors such as Gustav Mahler.[12] The purposes of these studies mainly fall within the history of performance practice and reception studies—fields which deliberately acknowledged performers' materials as significant sources.[13] Nevertheless, the approach remained unaltered. Content-centered, grounded in philological tools and goals, the analyses of those sources did not establish a new methodology, nor a dialogue with other fields more used to dealing with similar objects, such as the literary studies on marginalia.[14]

It was not until recently that musicology paid attention to book history and the history of reading,[15] even if with a privileged focus on early repertoires. In fact, the first point of contact occurred in the cultural history of Renaissance music, where the studies on music publishing had already

(Utrecht: AEC, 2011), 675–80. Megan Winget's main result has been a systematic taxonomy of annotations which conveys a simplistic model of the performative process based on information theory—a model already proposed by A. Cutler Silliman, "The Score as Musical Object," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 3, no. 4 (1969): 97–108. Linda Kaastra, for her part, adopted a cognitivist perspective in which scores are understood specifically as "coordination device[s]" (Kaastra, "Annotation and the Coordination of Cognitive Processes," 676).

[12] See, for example, Peter Andraschke, "Die Retuschen Gustav Mahlers an der 7. Symphonie von Franz Schubert," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 32, no. 2 (1975): 106–116; Volker Kalisch, "Zu Mahlers Instrumentationsretuschen in den Sinfonien Beethovens," *Schweizer Musikzeitung/Revue Musicale Suisse* 121, no. 1 (1981): 17–22; David Pickett, "Arrangements and *Retuschen*: Mahler and *Werktreue*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, ed. Jeremy Barham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178–200; Anna Ficarella, "Mahler interprete 'wagneriano' di Beethoven: storia di una ricezione controversa," *Studi musicali*, Nuova serie, 2, no. 2 (2011): 375–412; Erich Wolfgang Partsch, "Completing, Instrumenting, Adapting, Retouching. Gustav Mahler as Arranger," *Nachrichten zur Mahler-Forschung* 62 (2011): 1–14; Anna Ficarella, *Non guardare nei miei Lieder! Mahler compositore orchestratore interprete* (Lucca: LIM, 2020).

[13] See Robin Stowell, "The Evidence," in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 83–85, and Michela Garda, "Introduzione. Teoria della ricezione e musicologia," in *L'esperienza musicale. Teoria e storia della ricezione*, ed. Michela Garda and Gianmario Borio (Torino: EDT, 1989), 30.

[14] On literary marginalia see Heather J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Robin Myers et al., eds., *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading* (New Castle: Oak Knoll, 2005); William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[15] A fundamental work on the cultural history of reading is Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); see also Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds. *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

paved the way to an interest in material culture. Book historian Roger Chartier's afterword in a seminal collection of essays edited by Kate van Orden was no accident.[16] Under the motto "every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices,"[17] some scholars focused on musicians' readership, music pedagogy, music amateurs, and collectors, all connected by the notion of the "music book" as carrier of social relationships.[18] Unfortunately, the sources on which all those studies are based belong to an era when performers, as far as we know, were not used to writing on their scores. Compared to Renaissance readers, for whom annotation was a frequent practice,[19] Renaissance performers left their pages mostly blank.[20] Therefore, readers' relationship with musical sources is mostly reduced to operations (such as making binder's volumes out of many partbooks) in which writing plays a marginal role.[21]

[16] Roger Chartier, "Afterword: Music in Print," in *Music and the Cultures of Print*, ed. Kate Van Orden (New York: Garland, 2000), 325–341.

[17] H. Aram Veeser, "Introduction," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (London: Routledge, 1989), xi; quoted in Richard Wistreich, "Introduction: Musical Materials and Cultural Spaces," *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 8.

[18] For a complete bibliography see Wistreich, "Introduction." Further bibliography includes Richard Wistreich, "Music Books and Sociability," *Il Saggiatore Musicale* 18, no. 1/2 (2011): 230–244; and Kate Van Orden, *Materialities: Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). A more recent and comprehensive contribution, as it also examines manuscript sources, is Thomas Christian Schmidt and Christian Thomas Leitmeir, eds., *The Production and Reading of Music Sources: Mise-En-Page in Manuscripts and Printed Books Containing Polyphonic Music, 1480–1530* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018). Beyond the Renaissance repertoire, similar perspectives are shared in recent studies by Glenda Goodman: *Cultivated by Hand: Amateur Musicians in the Early American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); "Bound Together: The Intimacies of Music-Book Collecting in the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 145, no. 1 (2020): 1–35. A useful material history of music sources is Carlo Fiore, ed., *Il libro di musica. Per una storia materiale delle fonti musicali in Europa* (Palermo: L'Epos, 2004).

[19] See Sherman, *Used Books*.

[20] A significant exception is reproduced in Van Orden, *Materialities*, 215, but it belongs to a pedagogical context. The birth of annotation practice in music-making is a fascinating topic, which still deserves a complete investigation. An interesting theory—which links the rise of annotations as standard practice with the spread of the graphite pencil at the beginning of the nineteenth century—has been proposed by violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved, "Answering Some Questions: Letter to a Journalist," *Peter Sheppard Skærved* (blog), June 9, 2016, http://www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com/2016/06/answering-some-questions-letter-to-a-journalist/.

[21] In a completely different historical context, binding practice has recently been investigated by Candace Bailey, "Binder's Volumes as Musical Commonplace Books: The Transmission of Cultural Codes in the Antebellum South," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 10, no. 4 (2016): 446–469.

That being said, the aim and the approach of this article do not fit precisely into any musicological field, but rather step foot in a patchwork of grey areas which, in turn, affect every other field. Since written artifacts are "integral to the forms of imagination, creativity, knowledge, interaction, and even improvisation that occur in music-making,"[22] they operate as unifying objects among all those processes, practices, and actors in the context of Western music. Therefore, an investigation into the relationship between "music pages" and their users must necessarily be interdisciplinary and even exceed the boundaries of musicology. Following William H. Sherman and Roger Stoddard in their seminal books on literary markings, "textual scholars must also be anthropologists and archaeologists, putting books alongside the other objects that can help us to reconstruct the material, mental and cultural worlds of our forebears."[23]

Because of these objects' inner complexities, my theoretical framework welcomes critical tools and concepts from different disciplines—from music philology to book studies, from archaeology to cultural anthropology. The first step is a preliminary survey of the terminology, to identify "what we need to learn, unlearn, and relearn"[24] in order to establish an effective but flexible framework. As a general principle, all words will retain their original meaning when borrowed from a specific field. In order to do so, some *ad hoc* terminology will be introduced to prevent concepts from blurring and to help thinking beyond the conceptual implications of the current glossary in musicology. Since "when we speak, we are humble hostages to the past,"[25] as stated by philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, we must begin by carefully choosing the various "pasts" to which to submit the objects of our research.

[22] Emily Payne and Floris Schuiling, "The Textility of Marking: Performers' Annotations as Indicators of the Creative Process in Performance," *Music and Letters* 98, no. 3 (2017): 464. I borrow such a powerful statement from this compelling essay on annotation, which frames the practice in the context of relevant positions in cultural anthropology. Nevertheless, "(an) notation" was the original subject of the sentence I quoted—a telling evidence of a widespread tendency to de-materialize notational content from its material repository.

[23] Sherman, *Used Books*, xiv, referring to and paraphrasing Roger E. Stoddard, *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 1.

[24] Sherman, *Used Books*, xiii.

[25] José Ortega y Gasset, "The Misery and the Splendor of Translation," trans. Elizabeth Gamble Miller, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 108.

Setting the Scene

There is no current expression in musicology which can encompass every material output of music writing— every historical period, semiographic code, layout, format or material, from plainchant books to musical sketches, from medieval scrolls to twentieth-century graphic scores. Common words like *score*, *text* or *source* are potentially ambiguous or polysemous, and the generic (or generalizing) meaning with which we often use them tends to overshadow their more specific significance. This is why I prefer to employ the term *score* in its meaning of a specific music layout, rather than as "a complete copy of a musical work,"[26] or even as a vernacular synonym for *text*.

Regarding the use of this powerful word over the following pages, a crucial distinction is to be made between text as "any collocation of phenomena that may be interpreted as a system of signs" through a semiotic operation,[27] and "*the* text" as the epistemic/methodologic construct *par excellence* in music philology—i.e., a written work transmitted by multiple sources, which "does not identify with its single sources"[28] and exceeds them all.

[26] David Charlton and Kathryn Whitney, "Score (i)," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

[27] Wendell V. Harris, *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 407. This is the main use of the word in musicological scholarship, which tends to refer to it as "networks or relational events": Kevin Korsyn, "Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56. From this perspective, the meaning of the word has even been extended to "all resources that may be imbued with musical meaning": Gordon Paul Broomhead, *What Is Music Literacy?* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 28.

[28] Maria Caraci Vela, "Testo, paratesto, contesto," in *La filologia musicale. Istituzioni, storia, strumenti critici*, vol. 2, *Approfondimenti* (Lucca: LIM, 2009), 63. Translation mine. The original Italian quotation reads "*testimoni*" [witnesses] instead of "sources" (which would be "*fonti*" in Italian). In the philological glossary of most European languages, the word *source* (*Quelle* in German, *fuente* in Spanish, etc.) has two meanings, referring to both "the source from which the author drew as he created his work" and "the source from which the philologist draws when he wants to ascertain the correct text of a specific written work": Georg Feder, *Music Philology. An Introduction to Musical Textual Criticism, Hermeneutics, and Editorial Technique*, trans. Bruce C. MacIntyre (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2011), 33. In Italian philology, "*fonte*" applies to the first meaning, while "*testimone*" to the second: see Maria Caraci Vela, *Musical Philology. Institutions, History, and Critical Approaches*, trans. Elizabeth MacDonald (Pisa: ETS, 2015), 13. The choice of this latter term—taken from the legal glossary—is telling, and emphasizes the circumstantial method used to aim at a "reconstructed [text] […] truer than the document": Gianfranco Contini, "Filologia," in *Breviario di ecdotica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), 22.

While both concepts will be equally useful in my framework, neither can be suitable for defining the wide range of material objects discussed here, one being too generic and the other too specific.

Lastly, I will avoid the word *source*, since its generic meaning tends to be applied to any sort of object (be it written or not) from which one can extract information. By calling something a "source," we implicitly posit an imaginary arrow going from the object-source to a "something else" *of which* it is a source (e.g., the text of a musical work), and whose relevance often overcomes the many "who" that made or used it over time. Rather, if we reposition the word from defining label to interpretive concept, sources are no longer sources *of something*, but they are instead *something* in themselves, to be understood *as source*—in this case, of the relationship with their users. The arrow no longer points to "something else" but instead to *someone*.

As an alternative, I introduce here the definition of *notational artifact*, meaning any material object which incorporates (or is designed to incorporate) music notation, thus making it visible. The adjective *notational* generically refers to the presence of any form of sign-based, visual inscription of a codified musical text—performed in any way (handwriting, printing, etc.), in any cultural or historical context, and regardless of the code features (be them commonly accepted, obsolete or personal). Moreover, artifacts must not necessarily *bear* notation to be "notational." Even if not marked with musical signs, artifacts such as sheets with blank staves, staff chalkboards, or even the erasable tablets used in the Renaissance are notational artifacts,[29] for they are designed to hold notation and can reveal significant information about music theory, historical contexts, (potential) use, and so on. On the contrary, when notation is introduced in an artifact not originally meant to hold it, it automatically turns the artifact into a notational one.[30]

The deliberate choice of the term *artifact* aims to stress the relevance of human involvement in creating or altering the product over time. Even if made out of natural materials, a parchment codex or an orchestral score on paper are by no means natural things, for human intervention and creativity are required to produce them. Favoring this term also allows us to set

[29] A groundbreaking study on this topic can be found in Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work. The Craft of Musical Composition, 1450–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 74–107.

[30] The case can also include today's assemblages of digital contents with material technological supports which transcode them in a visual message—as happens when we look at a score in PDF format on the screens of our electronic devices.

aside the word *object*, which has been generically used above as a synonym. The main reason lies in the implied subject/object dichotomy. If we define a score as an object, we automatically assign it a passive role in the relationship with a user, who will only perform actions *on* it. Users certainly perform lots of actions—from turning pages to introducing annotations, from ruining the artifact to then repairing it. But it is equally true that, from the opposite perspective, the artifact influences all those actions. According to anthropologist Tim Ingold, "if persons can act on objects in their vicinity, so, it is argued, can objects 'act back,' causing persons to do what they otherwise would not."[31] If we regard users and artifacts in terms of their agency (following the theoretical framework of Actor-Network Theory),[32] interaction is then etymologically (*inter-action*) the only kind of relationship they can have, parceled out in a mosaic of actions to be performed or undergone.

An alternative to this relational model comes from Ingold's concept of correspondence, which sees humans "in ongoing response … with the things around them."[33] Rather than accepting that "action can only be an effect, set in train by a causal agent that stands as subject to the verbal predicate," Ingold suggests not to "separate agency from action or the doer from the deed." And he continues:

> It is not, then, that things have agency; rather they are actively present in their doing—in their carrying on or perdurance. And as things carry on together, and answer to one another, they do not so much interact as *correspond*. Interaction is the dynamic of the assemblage, where things are joined *up*. But correspondence is a joining *with*; it is not additive but contrapuntal, not "and… and… and" but "with… with… with."[34]

Assuming such a way of thinking, we can identify a constant counterpoint between things and processes—in Ingold's words, of materials and forces—[35] in which both humans and things lose their supremacy over each

[31] Tim Ingold, "The Textility of Making," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (2010): 94.

[32] In musicology, a critical discussion of this approach can be found in Benjamin Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques," *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 191–215.

[33] Tim Ingold, "Toward an Ecology of Materials," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 437.

[34] Tim Ingold, *Correspondences* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2017), 13. These sentences are not found in his more recent book of the same title, published by Polity Press (2020).

[35] See Ingold, "The Textility of Making," 91–92. The author calls *textility* the way in which

other and engage in a flow *with* one another. If we accept that humans and things correspond, we can easily re-include notational artifacts in every music-related process (from composing to performing, from listening to analyzing), preventing the risk of sprinkling them with the "magical mind-dust"[36] of agency, or attributing them a social life on their own.[37]

On the contrary, correspondence calls humans for a "material engagement" with things—the key concept in another recent theory in the archeology of mind, which bears this name. The Material Engagement Theory promotes a deep reconceptualization of the relationship between mind and material culture, which resonates in many ways with Ingold's concept. According to Lambros Malafouris,

> in the human engagement with the material world, there are no fixed roles and clean ontological separations between agent entities and patient entities; rather, there is a constitutive intertwining between intentionality and affordance. […] The social universe is not human-centered but activity-centered, and activity is a hybrid state of affairs.[38]

Activities result from humans' intentions and from the operations which the physical properties of things invite to perform (i.e. the affordances).[39]

the two combine into a flow, aptly evoking the weft-warp relationship in weaving. (The opposite is what he defines as hylomorphic model, which sees a maker shaping the matter according to a pre-determined form or idea.) In musicology, the concept of textility has been recently applied to music notation by Payne and Schuiling, "The Textility of Marking." In my own research, I argued how textility might work as a powerful concept to understand every form of music-making: see Cestino, "'Used Scores,'" 23–32.

[36] Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), 28.

[37] The reference is to Arjun Appadurai's seminal book *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). A brilliant application of this perspective in musicology can be found in James Davies, "Julia's Gift: The Social Life of Scores, c.1830," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131, no. 2 (2006): 287–309.

[38] Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement*, foreword by Colin Renfrew (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 149.

[39] The concept of affordance has been introduced by psychologist James Gibson in his *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979) where it referred to the human-environment interaction. A later development of the concept can be found in Donald A. Norman, *The Psychology of Everyday Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). The term is used by Malafouris (as well as here) in this last sense. See also Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 10–11.

This double-sided view brings both humans and things in the spotlight, providing a frame for the analysis of the activities in which correspondence takes place. In this case, I will study how correspondence occurs between notational artifacts and users—i.e., all human beings who exploit and experience notational artifacts in the context of music-making, be them composers, performers, listeners, or more generic "readers."

According to Malafouris again, we must switch "from the micro level of semantics to the macro level of practice."[40] If we then posit a *continuum* between the semiotic dynamics of representation and the pragmatic dynamics of use, a notational artifact becomes a "temporal sequence of relationally constituted embodied processes encompassing reciprocal and culturally orchestrated interactions among humans, situated tool use, and space."[41] Therefore, an archeology of such processes regards notational artifacts as sources of the relationship with the humans to whom they corresponded. Construing the material evidence of the artifact *as a text*—i.e., as a complex of signs—we can thus interpret it as a witness of both human presence (or absence) in the artifact's history and of the artifact's role of in the user's life. On one hand, any knowledge about the user can help explain the material features of an artifact; on the other, the users' features, cultural context, and goals can be gathered by analyzing the artifact.

What follows is a framework to guide such an analysis.

A Framework

Back in 2003, ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice proposed an analytical framework for ethnographic inquiries on musical experience. His emphasis on what he called "a subject-centered perspective" aimed "to bring some order to [the] research in the crazy quilt of a world"[42] he described as "complex, mobile, [and] dynamic […] a system that at the least challenges, and in some cases seems nearly to obliterate, cultures and societies as 'traditionally understood.'"[43] Therefore, Rice argued that moving from an abstract concept of culture to the ethnography of a single subject, understood "as

[40] Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind*, 79.

[41] Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind*, 78.

[42] Timothy Rice, "Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography," *Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 2 (2003): 157.

[43] Rice, 151–152.

the locus of musical practice and experience,"[44] could provide a more systematic approach to describe musical experience. If the same perspective resonates in my framework, it is because I agree that the analysis of specific case studies—such as the one that will follow here—can challenge us to rethink our methodology and pave the way for a historical narrative which will eventually piece the puzzle together.

Since Rice's topic was musical experience, his focus was on human subjects. Given the theoretical background of my framework, a subject-centered approach would be inappropriate, and in this respect Rice's proposal cannot be followed here. In fact, this model instead describes a "binary system" where users and notational artifacts correspond to each other. For this reason, my framework will be activity-centered and process-oriented. Nevertheless, Rice's essay can still provide useful elements to be included in the present context.

1. Location and Time

Rice imagines an ideal "three-dimensional space of musical experience" which works as "an ideational space for thinking about musical experience," or as "an arena of analysis";[45] the three dimensions he identifies are time, location, and metaphor. Leaving aside the last dimension for now, the first two parameters can be applied to our object of study with no adjustments. Rice defines location through the words of geographer Edward Soja, as "a set of nested 'locales' that provide settings of interaction":

> These settings may be a room in a house … a hospital, a definable neighbourhood/town/city/region, the territorially demarcated areas occupied by nation-states, indeed the occupied earth as a whole. Locales are nested at many different scales and this multilayered hierarchy of locales is recognizable both as social construct and a vital part of being-in-the-world.[46]

In our case, location will equally define the multi-layered setting where artifacts and their users correspond, starting with a generic geographical

[44] Rice, 152.

[45] Rice, "Time, Place, and Metaphor," 158–159.

[46] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 148–49; quoted in Rice, "Time, Place, and Metaphor," 160. In turn, Soja is partially paraphrasing here from Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 118.

context where every correspondence unfolds. Further locations—following Soja's listing from smallest to largest—can include concert venues, practice rooms, or the cities and countries users have passed through carrying and exploiting their notational artifacts.

Time—the second of Rice's dimensions—enters the stage as a complementary coordinate to locate the experience, and to put it in a historical perspective. For this purpose, Rice stresses how there can be at least two notions of time: a chronological/historical time, which helps ordering events along a timeline, and an experiential/phenomenological time, which frames events in the perspective of a given subject. While chronology and periodization constitute an external narrative of the past based on a wider net of historical references, a subject's own perception of time is instead an inner counter-perspective. The notion of time gains a personal meaning unique to each individual.

In the user-artifact correspondence, phenomenological time can only be proper to the user, and it is secondary in understanding how it unfolds in time. Chronological time is crucial instead and affects both artifacts and users. Artifacts obviously have a history of their own that goes beyond a music-specific use (and even beyond any correspondence with users). Artifacts transform over time, improving or worsening their physical conditions. Their material transformations can constantly be caused by humans (restorers, librarians, etc.), non-humans (for instance mold or woodworms), and atmospheric agents (like humidity or heat). With regard to the user-artifact correspondence, a chronological approach allows us to distinguish between a micro-temporal and a macro-temporal level. The first represents the flow of time that embeds every single process of correspondence (for instance, a concert where a notational artifact is read); the other can be understood as a succession of periods of activity and inactivity (i.e., of use and disuse).

2. Surfaces and Space

It goes without saying that the user-artifact correspondence is a matter of perception. As I mentioned above, human perception of the artifact takes place because of an intertwine of user intentionality and artifact affordance. Let us begin with the latter. Whether a notational artifact is a single item (for instance, a single sheet) or an assemblage of similar, modular parts (such as the pages in a book), it always has a finite number of surfaces. According to James Gibson's ecology of visual perception, surfaces constitute one of

the three categories in which our environment can be divided, the other two being mediums and substances.[47] Substances are all materials which obstruct our sight, while mediums are materials which allow it. In our case, the air is the medium, while the paper (in most cases) is the substance. The page is then the surface, the place where air and paper collide, and "where most of the action is."[48] Nevertheless, pages are surfaces of a particular kind, since they do not hide or protect something from the outside. From a physical point of view, we will never experience the "inside" of the page. These surfaces rather expose something to our sight. As philosopher of media Sybille Krämer points out, pages (like paintings) are only theoretically three-dimensional, since we perceive them as two-dimensional when we look at them.[49]

But before discussing the process of visual perception, let us situate it. Let us imagine some fictitious users facing a notational artifact. If that score *occupied* a certain space on the shelf where it was previously stored, when opened, its surfaces would now *delimit* a physical space to perceive its content. Artifacts can affect this space thanks to their material features and to the features of their visual content—i.e., the finite number of visual elements which sight can distinguish. While a large plainchant choirbook, with its large neumes and letters, could be read from quite afar,[50] a pocket score deserves a closer inspection. Beyond dimensions, the way signs are arranged on surfaces also matters, since "the font alignment maintains a relationship to the physicality of the user."[51] In this regard, an interesting aspect of some notational artifacts is how their music layout can define a specific space for music-making, as it happened in the Renaissance when performers used to read from music books printed in the so-called table layout. In that case, parts were arranged on each opening of the music book so that players could gather all around it and play side by side (see figure 1). Their

[47] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach*, chap. 2.

[48] Gibson, 23.

[49] Sybille Krämer, "13. Schriftbildlichkeit," in *Bild: ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Stephan Günzel and Dieter Mersch (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2014), 355. On the epistemological impact of this feature, see Sybille Krämer, "Flattening as Cultural Technique: Epistemic and Aesthetic Functions of Inscribed Surfaces," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 1 (2017): 239–245.

[50] This does not mean, of course, that it was *meant* to be read from a distance. On this aspect, see Giacomo Baroffio, "I libri con musica: sono libri di musica?," in *Il canto piano nell'era della stampa. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi sul canto liturgico nei secoli XV–XVIII*, ed. Giulio Cattin, Danilo Curti, and Marco Gozzi (Trento: Provincia autonoma di Trento, 1999), 9–12.

[51] Krämer, "13. Schriftbildlichkeit," 355.

bodily arrangement was not spontaneous, but rather prompted by such layout and made possible by the specific positioning of the notational artifact. Only if open wide *on a table* can this layout work fully as its name tells. Otherwise—if the book is opened on a music stand—it could better afford a duo performance (voice and lute) of the song, since the other three voices would literally have no space for making music. Therefore, in this physical setting other artifacts can participate, too, and these might include chairs, churches' wooden choirs or conductor's podium— even other humans (for instance, page turners) as physical presences affecting perception.

Beyond the material features of the artifact, space is equally affected by users, according to the quality of their eyesight and, more generally, to their physical abilities. At least in theory, the better users can see, the larger the space will be, because they may move away from the artifact while still being able to decipher its contents. In any case, it is within this space—a potential space, yet not ideal—that users will perform every activity with their notational artifacts.

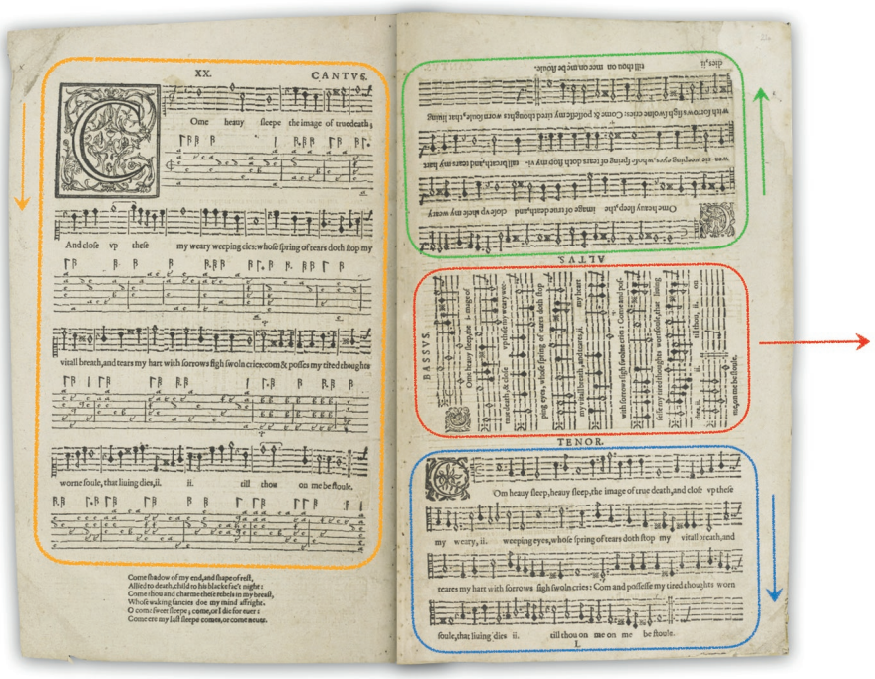


Fig. 1 John Dowland, "Come, heavy sleep" in *The First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (London: Peter Short, 1597), segn. L. The arrows shows the direction of reading for each part.

3. Sight and Touch

Our score is still wide open in front of our fictitious users. How can their sensorium engage with it in the physical space I described? Because of their own features, notational artifacts primarily afford vision, and vision is one of the conditions of possibility for such activities. Reading, as a skilled decoding process, is obviously based on it. The same applies to writing, as it is a practice embedded in reading, which cannot be performed without monitoring its process and outcomes. In turn, writing (as any form of inscription of symbolic signs) is the material precondition to afford reading (and therefore vision), and to lead the user towards *some* specific surfaces, where writing can be found.

Every surface of a notational artifact displays a complex of visual elements that I defined above as visual content. To be clearly perceivable, signs must be organized following the simple principle defined by Krämer as *Zwischenräumlichkeit* (Interspatiality), according to which there cannot be a correct identification of a sign and another without blank space in between.[52] But beyond the identification, signs must be perceived under certain conditions to be read. Reading is a localized process of decoding a given visual content, when understood as a culturally accepted code. (In this regard, it is worth remembering music notation is a hybrid code, for it "incorporates linguistic, symbolic, and visual display within the embodiment of the page-based text.")[53]

Delving here into music reading as a cognitive process would lead too far away from our topic.[54] Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that if users read

[52] Krämer, "13. Schriftbildlichkeit," 355–356.

[53] Jodie L. Martin, "Semiotic Resources of Music Notation: Towards a Multimodal Analysis of Musical Notation in Student Texts," *Semiotica* 2014, no. 200 (2014): 188.

[54] For a general overview of the topic, see John Brust, "Musical Reading and Writing," in *Neurology of Music*, ed. F. Clifford Rose (London: Imperial College Press, 2010), 143–49. A review of the experimental approaches to study music reading can be found in John Sloboda, *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), ch. 2 "Experimental Studies of Music Reading: A Review," 27–42. Further readings include: Eugene Narmour, "Hierarchical Expectation and Musical Style," in *The Psychology of Music*, ed. Diana Deutsch, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 441–472; Daniele Schön and Mireille Besson, "Processing Pitch and Duration in Music Reading: A RT-ERP Study," *Neuropsychologia* 40, no. 7 (2002): 868–878; Tony Souter, "Eye Movement, Memory and Tempo in the Sight Reading of Keyboard Music" (PhD diss., Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2001). Outside the realm of neuroscience, Kari Kurkela considers music reading from a semantic-cognitive perspective: see

a certain amount of visual content, they access a part of the textual content carried by the artifact. Textual content is a formalized expression of information about something *other* than what the artifact "tells" us about itself as a thing. As meaningful the material features of a notational artifact can be, the textual content refers to something beyond its materiality (but at the same time completely dependent on it). When users recognize textual content—or, in other words, text in a visual content—they perform a twofold abstraction thanks to their competence of the code. On one level, they abstract the content from how it visually appears, separating what Krämer calls "*Textur*" and "*Textualität*."[55] Looking beyond the visual features of a symbolic representation, they can focus on the information, or choose to alter the visual content without affecting the textual content (as performers often do as a performative strategy). On another level, abstraction (from Latin *abstrahĕre*, i.e. "to detach, "to drag away from") is performed in a more etymological way. Readers mentally isolate which part of the visual content of the page should be regarded as a text, separating it from what lies at its borders (page or plate numbers, scribbles and so on); or else, they distinguish the various textual contents that might find space within the same notational artifact (for example a songbook).

Introducing the concept of textual content makes it possible to differentiate without confusion the text (or texts) users regard as conveyed by a notational artifact, from *the* text as understood in the philological sense. The textual content can represent *a* text in the tradition of *the* text if users are aware of this construct. However, from the perspective of this framework, textual content must be considered both epistemologically and ontologically prioritized over the philological text, the former being the locus of a tangible relationship with an informational content. Seen this way, visual content, textual content, and philological text line up on a scale which goes from the most concrete thing to the most abstract concept. Bearing this in mind, we can better understand if users correspond with a notational artifact because of its visual appearance, its content, or its role in a textual tradition. Therefore, we can better understand *how* they read.

Turning now to reading as a material process embedded in different musical practices, it is worth noticing that a common feature is incompleteness. Even if reading depends very much on users' knowledge, interests, and skills, every time users read a notational artifact, they usually process/

Kari Kurkela, "Score, Vision, Action," *Contemporary Music Review* 4, no. 1 (1989): 417–435.

[55] See Krämer, "13. Schriftbildlichkeit," 366.

decode just a part of its visual content. As happens in literary reading, however integral the reading of a book may be, readers are always likely to leave some visual elements (such as page numbers) unprocessed. Reading is always a partial exploitation of what can be visually perceived. If vision can somehow embrace the whole "picture" of the visual content we have in front of us, reading will always focus on a specific percentage of it, often according to who is the reader (in a choral score a soprano and a conductor will read different areas of it). More generally, reading depends on 1) what the user already knows of the textual content; 2) what the user is looking for in a visual content; and 3) what the user is able to get to know from a visual content. The first point deals with memory, the second applies to the aim of reading and to the situation in which reading is performed, while the last is related to the user's interpretative skills—be them analytical, theoretical, or performative. Whether users are counting the total number of measures the piece has, rounding up a passage before a concert, or listening to a recording while following the score, they will not only use their sight in different ways, but they will also handle the notational artifact in a different way.

Touch is in fact the second sense used to experience a notational artifact.[56] Manipulation can occur in two main forms, and the principle to differentiate them is whether the user intentionally modifies the artifact or not, adding or subtracting materials from it. If yes, I will call it alteration; if not, I will instead call it handling. Again, intentionality is a key concept, for users often alter their artifacts while handling them. But they do not want to tear a page while turning it, or to leave fingerprints on fingerprints until the corners of the page become dirty. On the contrary, we can classify intentional alterations according to two parameters: the first is if materials are added to or removed from the artifact; the second, if materials blend into the surfaces of the artifact (when added) or vanish from them (when removed). If yes, I will call them traces, mostly perceived by sight since they merge into the artifact's substance; if not, I will call them elements instead, i.e. three-dimensional alterations which reshape the artifact as an assemblage, add/removing parts to/from it.

[56] And basically, the last one, if we exclude smell. Though the smell of an old score definitely affects its aura, this sense has no direct relationship with the principal affordance of the artifact, i.e. vision. For an intriguing study on books' smell which combines scientific analysis and cultural approach, see Cecilia Bembibre and Matija Strlič, "Smell of Heritage: A Framework for the Identification, Analysis and Archival of Historic Odours," *Heritage Science* 5, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-016-0114-1.

Seen this way, writing is a practice in which new materials like ink, pigments, graphite, etc. are added to the notational artifact, and blend with its surfaces, leaving more or less permanent traces. Even if we perceive written traces as bidimensional, when we write we still dig into the paper fibers, leaving a dry trace we usually acknowledge—when erasing—as a side effect of writing. (Erasing, for its part, is the counterpart of writing, because it consists in removing pigments from the artifact.)

Since the outcomes of this practice can result from exploiting many tools and symbolic codes, to introduce further sub-classifications would lead to an intricate and not so useful taxonomy. If it is clear that any writing event modifies the visual content of a notational artifact, a general distinction is nevertheless useful. We can distinguish between written traces that deal with the original *textual* content of an artifact—as conceived by its makers—and written traces that are independent from it. It goes without saying that any writing event which starts, establishes, or develops a textual content belongs to the first case. Similarly, further annotations or alterations to an original textual content—be they handwritten, printed, etc.—must equally be understood in the same way. On the contrary, the name of the artifact's owner jotted down on a corner falls in the second category, because it is unrelated with the original textual content. Traces like that—even if they can be regarded as establishing a new textual content on their own—rather deal with the artifact itself, and sometimes they simply find place on it (as happens with a pen trial or even a coffee stain).

The second category of alteration concerns the addition or removal of elements to/from a notational artifact. Visually perceived as three-dimensional, elements can be grouped in two sub-categories. Surfaces are all elements which afford vision, and consequently all the practices related to it (as we have seen, reading and writing). New surface-elements can be additional pages or covers, handwritten, printed, or photocopied inserts, taped- or glued-over sheets, and so on. Conversely, bindings or staples fall within the thing-element categories—as dog-ears do, although the addition of these elements is made by modifying a surface of the artifact which already exists. Thing-elements are often used as tools for adding new surfaces, as happens when some duct tape is used to fasten a loose sheet of paper on the margin of a page. In any case, all material alterations which transform the visual content of a notational artifact must be regarded as an extended form of writing. Rather than encoding a content in visual traces, they reorganize the appearance of the extant content, or assemble within the same artifact several textual contents—as is the case

with volumes that contain different scores or parts bound together. These alterations normally reside within the realm of visual or textual content, but within this new framework, they now step foot into the space of practice, changing the affordance and use of the artifact, as well as conveying the user's ideological approach to it.

4. Ideology, Function/Use, and Place

In Rice's analytical space, the third dimension for understanding musical experience was metaphor, a word the author used to refer to "beliefs about the fundamental nature of music expressed in metaphors."[57] Although I will not focus exclusively on metaphorical statements, I will still refer to ideology as the similar body of thoughts and ideas a user has, in this case, about a notational artifact. As stressed by anthropologist Daniel Miller, we must always keep in mind "that in a given time and place there [is] a link between the practical engagement with materiality and the beliefs or philosophy that emerged at that time."[58] It does not matter if these ideas are autonomous, aware, fuzzy, or derivative; nor it matter if users are highly trained or novices. In any case, it is thanks to their ideology that they could provide an answer—if asked—to a two-faced question: "what is a notational artifact (for)"? Assuming they ignore what this expression means, we could fragment it in a bundle of questions, addressing every single concept related to a notational artifact they might know. We could then rephrase our question in "what is a score / music notation / a musical text (for)?," and so on. When we can approach users directly, such a survey results in a sort of "ethnographic description" to be carried out through some collaborative methods (interviews, conversations, and so on).[59] The reverse applies to historical case studies—such as the one I present below—for which we should instead perform an "archeology" of the ideology.

In order to accomplish this task, we need to operate on two different levels. The first examines the material evidence of the artifacts, as products of a certain music culture. As we learn from the so-called "new philology," written artifacts are not only "vehicles of texts, but [also] texts in their own

[57] Rice, "Time, Place, and Metaphor," 163.

[58] Daniel Miller, "Materiality: An Introduction," in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 15.

[59] An example of this approach can be found in Cecilia Hultberg, "Approaches to Music Notation: The Printed Score as a Mediator of Meaning in Western Tonal Tradition," *Music Education Research* 4, no. 2 (2002): 185–197.

right, whose physical characteristics are the outcome of specific choices on the part of those who made them."[60] They act as a vehicle for information as much as they witness the cultural forms and the ideological background of *how* information is transmitted. Therefore, every notational artifact—with its physical, visual, and layout features—can be regarded as a performance in itself, a bundle of utterances about music, music theory, and music-making. In addition to the ideology as objectified by the artifact, all the possible alterations to the artifact performed by the users speak to the second level to reconstruct, i.e. user's ideology.

In general, user's ideology can be explicit when expressed in written records, musical recordings, and other sources, or implicit, when derived from cultural context. As for the artifact instead, ideology results in the presence as much in the absence of traces and elements. When not affecting the textual content, alterations or annotations testify the user's ideology about the notational artifact and its use. When the textual content is instead altered or commented (for instance by annotations), the artifact instead shows user's ideology about the information carried by the artifact, and more general utterances about music(-making), interpretation, and so on. In this respect, alterations to the musical text—e.g., Toscanini's ones, shrouded in the myth of his textual fidelity[61]—prove what Floris Schuiling has recently acknowledged as "entextualization," drawing the concept from linguistic anthropology. Entextualization refers to "the social processes by which people determine what is 'part of' or 'inside' a musical text," or "what is 'part of the music' and what is not."[62] Rather than the dichotomy "part of/ not part of ," I would rather say that entextualization is an ongoing process of focusing on certain notational elements while blurring others; using a visual metaphor, it is like determining color intensities, rather than choosing which hues to include in the palette.

The artifact's and user's ideologies, as witnessed by material evidences, lead to uncover another aspect of my theoretical framework, represented

[60] Vincenzo Borghetti, "The Listening Gaze: Alamire's Presentation Manuscripts and the Courtly Reader," *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 7, no. 1 (2015): 49, in reference to Emma Dillon, "Music Manuscripts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 317–318.

[61] See Fairtile, "Toscanini and the Myth of Textual Fidelity," and Matteo Quattrocchi, "Dalle chiose manoscritte alle scelte esecutive: *La traviata* di Toscanini" (Master Thesis, University of Milan, 2018).

[62] Floris Schuiling, "Notation Cultures: Towards an Ethnomusicology of Notation," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144, no. 2 (2019): 443, 445.

by the pairing function/use. Both imply one or more purposes, and they transpose intentionality and affordance—two concept I already mentioned above—onto a more practice-situated level. Function pertains to the artifacts and has been determined by their makers choosing specific material characteristics such as dimension, (semio)graphic features, and notational layout, according to a culturally situated ideology. Users, on their own, will correspond with the affordances they recognize in an artifact, according to their physical abilities, skills, memory, and of course ideology. If we consider the original functions of a set of Renaissance partbooks with the use a scholar can make of it, it goes without saying that functions and uses do not necessarily parallel. The original, consistent relationship between an informational content and a form of display, understood as inviting a specific use, can be of no avail in another cultural context. And even in the same cultural context, when the original functions clash with new uses, artifacts might undergo some material adaptation—as I will show in the next section of this article. Moreover, different functions can coexist within the same artifact, as happens for some illuminated manuscripts which questions the dichotomy "for performance/for display," and rather suggest a multimodal musical experience for their original users.[63] Therefore, the use of each notational artifact can be extremely varied, since notational artifacts can always work as "bundle of affordances,"[64] a precipitate of potential usage configurations with which users engage in different practices and contexts.

When practices reiterate over time, users not only reinforce "a relationship of a certain intimacy" with their notational artifacts,[65] but also exploit through their abilities a space of correspondence with such artifacts. The physical space of experience I identified above thus becomes an *espace vécu* (Experienced space),[66] in which "to dwell means to leave traces."[67] And by living this space, users turn artifacts into places, into "fields of care"

[63] See Borghetti, "The Listening Gaze."

[64] I borrow this expression from Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 193, where it is used in relation to music.

[65] Karol Głombiowski, *Problemy historii czytelnictwa* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im Ossolińskich, 1966), 36.

[66] Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957).

[67] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century (1935)," in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (New York: Belknap Press, 1999), 9.

where perception and use became a repeated means of familiarization.[68] As stressed by geographer Robert Sack,

> from the perspective of experience, place differs from space in terms of familiarity and time. A place requires human agency, is something that may take time to know, and a home especially so.[69]

The metaphor of the notational artifact as a home provides an explanation for this theoretical framework with a circular ending. We started from wide open pages, and we end with a more enclosed, familiar place of belonging—to highlight one more time how notational artifacts are not just repositories for contents, from which to extract what we need for our musical purposes; quite the contrary, they are places where users put something of themselves, where they cohabit the space of a text with their minds, their thoughts, and their histories. If through human engagement the artifact change "from commodity to singularity,"[70] analyzing this engagement leads us to reconsider artifacts from singularities to nodes in a wider web of correspondences which makes up our daily world of music-making practices.

The following section provides an example of how this engagement can be analyzed.

A Reader and his "Score"

The picture (figure 2) shows the first opening of a notational artifact belonged to Austrian violinist Rudolf Kolisch,[71] part of the Rudolf Kolisch Pa-

[68] Yu-Fi Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," in *Philosophy in Geography*, ed. Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 412.

[69] Robert David Sack, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 16.

[70] Arjun Appadurai, "The Thing Itself," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 15.

[71] As John W. Barker has stressed, "scandalously, [Kolisch] has yet to be given a full-scale biography": John W. Barker, *The Pro Arte Quartet: A Century of Musical Adventure on Two Continents* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 111. For the European period of his life, see Claudia Maurer Zenck, "'Was sonst kann ein Mensch denn machen, als Quartett zu spielen?' Rudolf Kolisch und seine Quartette. Versuch einer Chronik der Jahre 1921–1944," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 53, no. 11 (1998): 8–57; Claudia Maurer Zenck, "»Ein Sauberuf!!« Der Alltag des Kolisch-Quartetts auf Reisen in der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Annäherungen: Festschrift für Jürg Stenzl zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ulrich Mosch, Matthias Schmidt, and Silvia Wälli (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2007), 187–221. On his musical activity in Madison, Wis-

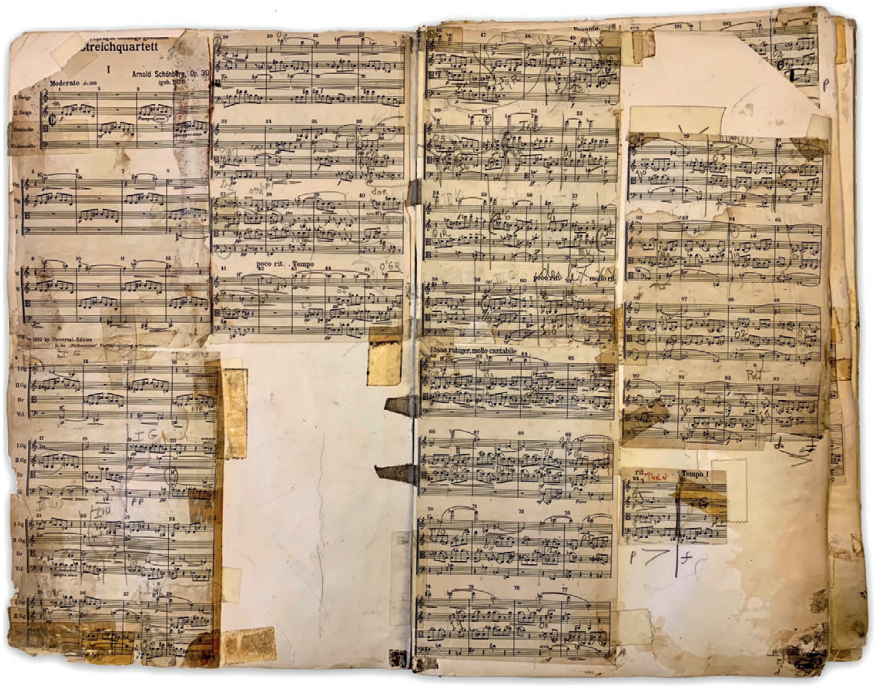


Fig. 2 Kolisch's part-score of Schönberg's String Quartet no. 3, op. 30. Rudolf Kolisch Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Mus 195 (1952), fol. 1v–2r.

pers collection at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. As a whole, the artifact has been made up with twelve sheets of cardboard, some duct paper, and two pocket scores of Schönberg's String Quartet no. 3, op. 30, published in Vienna by Universal Edition on November 14, 1927.[72] For Kolisch, this notational artifact was not his first "access point" to the work. As Kolisch was a

consin, see Susanna Watling, "Kolisch in Madison, Wisconsin: 1944–1967," in *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Aufführung in der Wiener Schule: Verhandlungen des internationalen Colloquiums Wien 1995*, ed. Markus Grassl and Reinhard Kapp (Wien: Böhlau, 2002), 179–190. A special issue of *MusikTheorie* focuses on his life in America, and offers the edition of some of his writings: see Anne Shreffler and David Trippett, eds., "Rudolf Kolisch in Amerika—Aufsätze und Dokumente," special issue, *MusikTheorie* 24, no. 3 (2009), hereafter cited as *RKinA*.

[72] Arnold Schönberg, *III. Streichquartett, op. 30* (Wien: Universal Edition, 1927). The publishing date is derived from "Streichquartett Nr. 3," Arnold Schönberg Center, http://archive.schoenberg.at/compositions/werke_einzelansicht.php?werke_id=412&herkunft=allewerke. The online catalogue of the Rudolf Kolisch Papers (https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/c/hou00066c01975/catalog) briefly describes it as "1 miniature score," and incorrectly gives 1954 as the copyright year.

pupil of Schönberg, the Quartet no. 3 ranks among the pieces from the Second Viennese School he premiered leading the Wiener Streichquartett—the quartet he founded in 1924 under the auspices of his teacher (and then renamed Kolisch Quartet from 1927 on). He first performed this piece in Vienna, on September 19, 1927, playing from a set of handwritten parts.[73] Then, from late 1927, the Kolisch Quartet began to memorize the repertoire and to play from memory both in performances and in rehearsals.[74] Therefore, the assemblage of this object came later, around the 1940s, when Kolisch developed his own theory on how chamber music should be performed.

According to what he wrote for the lectures he held at the New School for Social Research in New York (1939–1941), his idea was fairly simple.[75] Chamber music has to be rehearsed from scores rather than from parts,[76] and possibly played by memory.[77] Benefits are not only practical—e.g., to ease coordination—but also deeply ideological. As made explicit by the violinist, using scores has a transformative power on a performer's intellectual level: "By visualizing and thus imagining the totality of the music instead of only one part, the basic attitude of the performer is essentially altered and transferred to a higher spiritual level."[78] However, since the quartet repertoire was (and still is) usually played from parts, the full score existed only

[73] Arnold Schönberg, "III. Streichquartett, op. 30", manuscript parts (incomplete set), Wien, 1927, Rudolf Kolisch Papers, bMS Mus 195 (1675), Houghton Library, Harvard University. Curiously, this set of parts is wrongly reported as lost in the Arnold Schönberg Center database, but all information about it perfectly match the source evidence: see "Handschriftliche Stimmen aus dem ehemaligen Besitz von Rudolf Kolisch," Arnold Schönberg Center, http://archive.schoenberg.at/compositions/quellen_einzelansicht.php?id_quelle=1181&werke_id=412&id_gatt=&id_untergatt=&herkunft=allewerke. This set was copied from a photographic copy of the autograph score by three different hands (and in record time) during the first week of June 1927. As Kolisch recorded in his diary of the rehearsals, the *Probenjournal*, this set was then opened for the first time on the quartet's stands on June 7 at 6 o' clock, during the first rehearsal: see Rudolf Kolisch, "Probenjournal des Streichquartetts" 2 manuscript notebooks, 1921–27, bk. 2, nr. 36-37, Rudolf Kolisch Papers, bMS Mus 195 (2118), Houghton Library, Harvard University. Kolisch was later involved in the editorial process for the parts (Wien: Universal Edition, 8928a-d, published April 4, 1929). No printed parts survive in the Rudolf Kolisch Papers.

[74] A detailed account of the circumstances is in Barker, *The Pro Arte Quartet*, 112–113. The decisive impulse came from Schönberg himself on September 13, 1927. Therefore, it is likely that they premiered the String Quartet no. 3 while still reading from parts.

[75] See Anne Shreffler and David Trippett, "Introduction," in *RKinA*, 199–200.

[76] Rudolf Kolisch, "»Outline« des Buchprojektes: The String Quartets of Beethoven [194?]," in *RKinA*, 221.

[77] Rudolf Kolisch, "How to Rehearse and Play Chamber Music [1940]," in *RKinA*, 208.

[78] Kolisch, "»Outline«," 221.

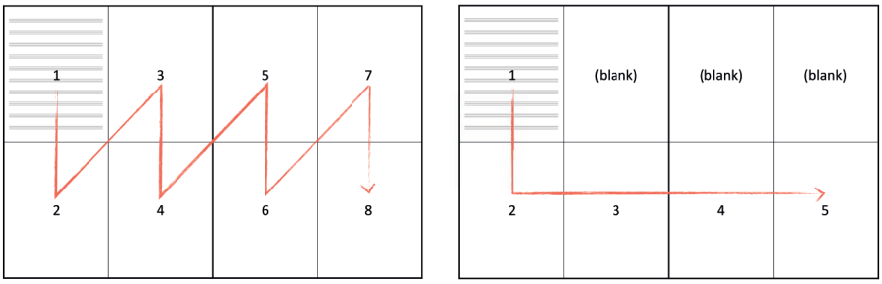


Fig. 3 Diagrams for reading directions in a part-score. On the left (figure 3.1) a general pattern, on the right (figure 3.2) the pattern used by Kolisch on fol. 4v-5r (showing pp. 24–28, mm. 1–43 of the third movement, the "Intermezzo").

in pocket format. As the layout for pocket scores was not optimized for *playing* from them, the violinist had to devise a strategy to overcome the clash between his ideology and the original function of such scores. The result is what he calls a *score-part*, namely a score "arranged from the player's point of view."[79]

As copy machines did not exist at that time, the only way to redistribute the visual content of the score into an artifact (that could work as efficiently as a part) was to use two pocket scores. At that moment, Kolisch was already using one of them for analytical purposes (annotations appear on *both* pages), while the other was brand new when it was torn apart. Kolisch assembled the even and uneven pages carefully, following a base pattern (see figure 3.1). When he altered it, he preferred to leave the upper half of the page blank (see figure 3.2), so as to maintain the reading direction as linear as possible. The point where to start reading is sometimes marked with an arrow—a telling example of annotations referring to the visual content of the notational artifact, but not to its textual one. Measures and page turning were optimized very scrupulously, with sometimes microscopic improvements. A closer look at the outer half of the right page (see figure 2) shows how the original page 8 (mm. 78–92) was taped to the bottom margin. In this way, the page turn fell on m. 93, while Kolisch (playing the first violin) still had to hold the note until the first half of m. 94. If he rearranged the pages there, it was not because of a memory issue, but likely to enhance his visual control on the other parts during the *ritenuto*. To do that, he re-taped page 8 higher, then

[79] Kolisch, "»Outline«," 221.

cut off mm. 93–94 from the following page. Lastly, he moved them to the previous opening, adding "TURN" in red ink.

Such an evident care for the effectiveness of this notational artifact in performance may appear bizarre, if we take into account how well Kolisch knew the piece before he had his part-score. Nevertheless, the number of annotations—mostly analytical—that we find on these pages suggests that he never quit delving into the piece even later in his career, especially when he took the leadership of the Pro Arte Quartet, and moved to Madison, Wisconsin. During "the Kolisch years" (1944–1967), the Austrian violinist required his fellow musicians to also rehearse from part-scores, and since "the performances by memory did not continue with the Pro Arte," the quartet performed from part-scores, too.[80] It is not surprising that this choice caused "recurrent discomforts" among his colleagues.[81] Adapting their reading habits to a new layout certainly took time, and even with some training the score-parts needed to be read more closely than individual parts, as reading surfaces were crowded and music fonts small. Moreover, a certain familiarity with reading a score was not (and is still not) necessarily taken for granted in a chamber musician, and even though reading a part-score is more complicated, the eye must get used to jumping correctly from one page to another within the same opening.

Nevertheless, part-scores were an absolutely essential tool in that context, for they complied with a systematic theory of performance,[82] deeply rooted in a longstanding aesthetic that had analysis as its fundamental tenet.[83]

[80] Watling, "Kolisch in Madison," 184. It is worth reminding that the String Quartet no. 3 was Schönberg's most performed quartet, with seventeen performances over the years. The first performance with the Pro Arte Quartet took place at the University of Chicago on December 14, 1944; see Barker, *The Pro Arte Quartet*, 116.

[81] Barker, *The Pro Arte Quartet*, 147.

[82] Kolisch, like his close friend Theodor W. Adorno, planned to write a systematic theory of performance, one with a strong emphasis on practical issues and from the perspective of the performers. Kolisch's writings on such matters were only partially edited in *RKinA*, while a long conversation on the subject had already appeared in Berthold Türcke and Rudolf Kolisch, *Rudolf Kolisch Zur Theorie der Aufführung. Ein Gespräch mit Berthold Türcke* (München: Text & Kritik, 1983). On the relationship between Adorno and Kolisch see Gianmario Borio, "Analisi ed esecuzione: note sulla teoria dell'interpretazione musicale di Theodor W. Adorno e Rudolf Kolisch," *Philomusica on-line* 2, no. 1 (2003), https://doi.org/10.6092/1826-9001.2.22; David Trippett, "The Composer's Rainbow. Rudolf Kolisch and the Limits of Rationalization," in *RKinA*, 228–237.

[83] A critical discussion which addresses the myth of analysis as basis for interpretation can be found in Mine Doğantan-Dack, "Artistic Research in Classical Music Performance: Truth and Politics," *PARSE* 1 (2015): 27–40.

According to Kolisch,"every detail of interpretation shall be determined by looking deeply into the construction of the work and the relationship between its elements. … Through analysis we shall gain all the necessary means to make our decisions."[84] Nevertheless, performers must keep in mind that music writing allows them to encode only the "*objective elements* of performance," while "the subjective elements [have] no quantitative indicati[ons in the score], which leaves them wide open to interpretation."[85] Kolisch's annotations in the part-score seem to correspond in full to his statements. On one hand, his interest in analyzing structures and compositional techniques is well confirmed by the wealth of analytical annotations, focusing particularly on dodecaphonic technique. On the other, no annotation trespasses the analytical level. The violinist never wrote down the character he wanted for a specific passage (nor would he ever have done so), as this was a subjective element of the interpretation and therefore non-codifiable.

With regard to analysis again, a detail reveals how Kolisch understood it as a means to "fix" the errors of the score, too, namely those notes that did not conform to the dodecaphonic row. Here, he corrected the viola part in the third movement, m. 126, changing the last C♭ in D♭ in compliance with the dodecaphonic row I_9. If he did not make a note in his part-score (as well as in other scores of his),[86] we would have never acknowledged this aspect of his ideology about musical texts, both because Kolisch never wrote about it explicitly and because detecting this kind of details while listening is practically impossible.[87] Despite his idea that the score is "the only source of information"[88] and "the only dictator,"[89] the musician actually understood it with a more critical attitude, as *a* text that may be wrong, and that must therefore be corrected in order to preserve or strengthen its coherence.

[84] Rudolf Kolisch, "Musical Performance: The Realization of Musical Meaning [1939]," in *RKinA*, 206.

[85] Kolisch, "How to Rehearse and Play Chamber Music," 208, emphasis in original. The last square brackets contain an editorial emendation, due to a tear in the original source (see 207n1).

[86] This attitude also recurs in his other Schönberg scores. See Kolisch, "Musical Performance," 206n26.

[87] The same approach can be found in another quartet leader, Walter Levin: see Dörte Schmidt, "»We must have a SCORE«. Kolisch, das LaSalle-Quartett und die Partitur zum Streichquartett von Witold Lutosławski," in *Arbeit an Musik. Reinhard Kapp zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Markus Grassl, Stefan Jena, and Andreas Vejvar (Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2017), 573–596; Cestino, "'Used Scores,'" 92–94.

[88] Kolisch, "Musical Performance," 206.

[89] Kolisch, "How to Rehearse and Play Chamber Music," 207.

Annotations, on this opening, show one last use of this notational artifact by Kolisch. Crosses appear at certain points in the score. In all likelihood, they indicate errors to be corrected, spotted during rehearsals or maybe during the two recordings made by the Pro Arte Quartet in 1950 and 1960 respectively.[90] In any case, they prove how the notational artifact was also used as a tool while listening—or better as an aid to inscribe auditory feedback—, thus completing the picture of the modes of correspondence with its user.

In sum, the analysis of the material evidence of this notational artifact highlights the following:

1. while assembling the original pocket scores into a part-score, Kolisch converted their previous function (analysis) and adapted them to his main use (rehearsal/performance);
2. he rearranged the visual content of these artifacts in a way that conformed to his explicit ideology, and established a custom space of correspondence ruled by a precise "reading path" that he devised for musical purposes;
3. on the base of such explicit ideology, he went on delving into the textual content with an analytical approach, eventually questioning its exactness and reliability (a telling element of his implicit ideology);
4. he sometimes used the part-score to record errors or performance issues he directly experienced.

In conclusion, this example highlights the centrality of music reading not only in the user-artifact correspondence, but also in relation to all other practices that occur in music-making. Interestingly, although reading as a visual process leaves no trace, its modes can be inferred by looking at the written and material evidence left. It seems to me that four different modes can be distinguished. Rather than indicating self-enclosed types of reading, the following can be understood as points on a *continuum* combined with each other and with other practices in order to fulfill different purposes:

1. *Reading in performance*—Here visual decoding combines with playing an instrument and works as an *aide-mémoire* of an informational content that is usually already known; it is linked to the temporality of music, and therefore its directionality is not reversible; the handling

[90] The first recording was made on January 24, 1950, at the WOR Studios in New York, and was released on LP (Dial Records 4, 1950). It is now available as compact disc: Pro Arte Quartet, *In Honor of Rudolf Kolisch, 1896–1978. Works by Schubert, Bartok, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern*, Music & Arts CD-1056, 2003, cd 3, tracks 1–4. The second is an unpublished studio recording made at the University of Wisconsin: see Watling, "Kolisch in Madison," 186.

of the notational artifact is relevant and affects playing; the practice of annotation is not involved.

2. *Reading to analyze*—In this case, visual decoding aims to unpack musical meanings through a specific competence of the code; it is not linked to the temporality of music as expressed by notation, and therefore it has no predetermined directionality; the handling of the notational artifact has no relevance; the practice of annotation is often involved.
3. *Reading in rehearsal*—Visual decoding combines with playing, and may process some new informational content, or focus on small portions of it; when content is already known, it works as an *aide-mémoire*; it may be linked to the temporality of music, but it can also be more independent; the handling of the notational artifact may be relevant and may affect playing; the practice of annotation is often involved.
4. *Reading while listening*—In this event, visual decoding seeks a match between auditory events and symbolic representation and follows the directionality of played (or recorded) music; the handling of the notational artifact may be relevant and may affect the simultaneity of reading and listening; the practice of annotation may be involved.

Conclusions

The framework I have proposed (see figure 4 for a visual schematization) and the accompanying example pave the way to a more systematic exploration of both historical and present-day case studies—a journey which will eventually lead to more comprehensive theories and more flexible analytical tools. Nevertheless, it already suggests possible benefits and developments, the first of which is what I would call a rematerialization of things usually referred to with dematerializing words such as source, text, or score. This rematerialization does not happen by calling in ready-made concepts such as agency, but through a simple renaming. The very notion of notational artifact aims to bring all things that incorporate and display music notation back to the material world—a world from which they are often detached because of their very affordance.

As products of an ocularcentric tradition in which sight has an epistemological supremacy,[91] all "music books" (a telling way of saying) are made to

[91] For a review of the history and discourses on the subject, see Brian Stonehill, "The Debate over 'Ocularcentrism,'" *Journal of Communication* 45, no. 1 (2006): 147–152.

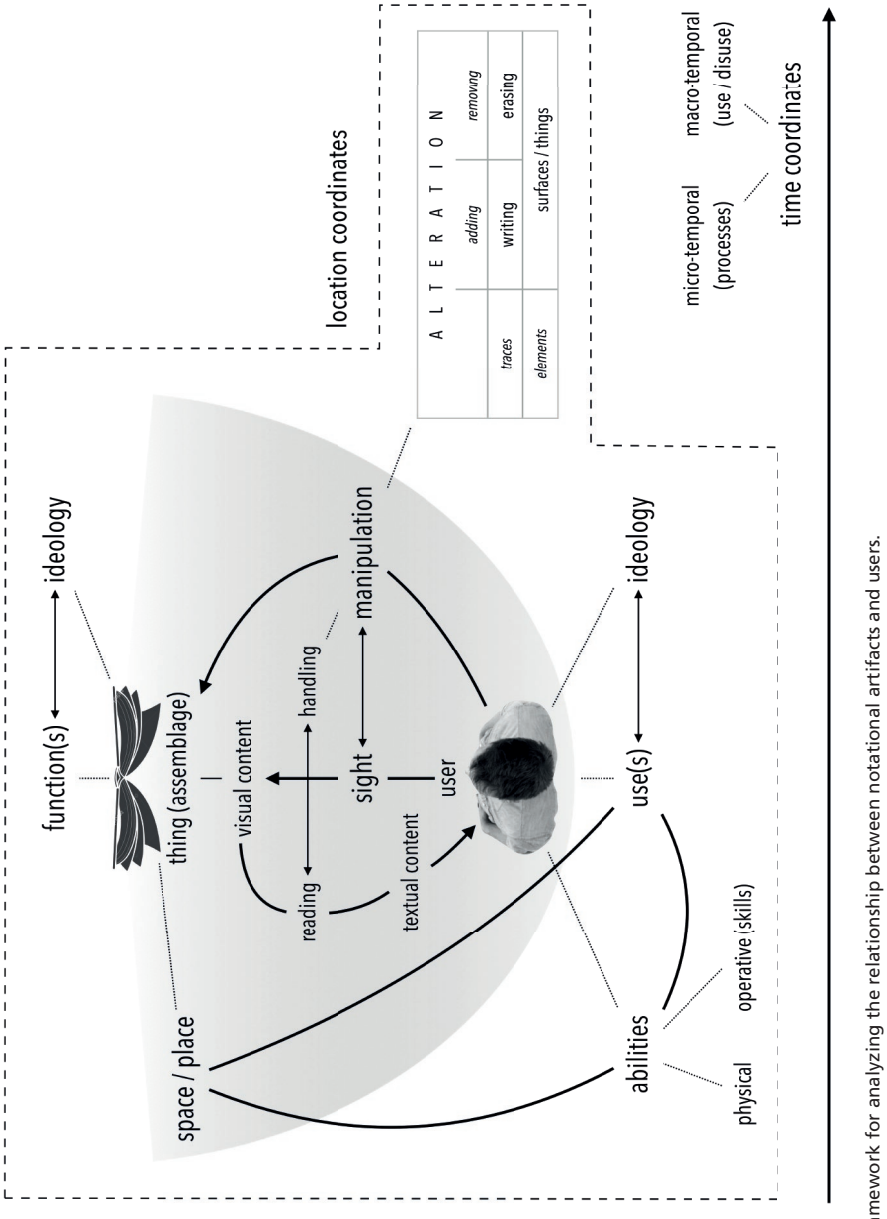


Fig. 4 A framework for analyzing the relationship between notational artifacts and users.

afford vision, a contemplative means to abstract contents from their material consistency. Vision works as a "filter that we insert daily between reality and our perception of this same reality," as a "precious ability we have to focus on one thing while excluding others."[92] And it makes no distinction between musicologists, composers, or performers, for they are all equally involved in often dematerialized notions of reading and writing—when not in a second-degree metonym, according to which scores are "the music." "We call it music, but that is not music: that is only paper" told Leopold Stokowski to Glenn Gould.[93] The purpose of these pages has been to show how true and false this sentence is at the same time. True, as long as we do not rematerialize that paper; and false, if we fail to acknowledge that is not *only* paper, but paper corresponding with users in music-making.

And yet, even if notational artifacts vanish behind more "musical" words, "objects are important not because they are evident … but often precisely because we do not 'see' them."[94] Therefore, we must describe their relationship with musical users even if the latter are not aware of such relationship. If the objects' relevance is hidden behind the "humility of things,"[95] then we have to uncover such humility to understand how "powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior."[96]

An investigation into explicit and implicit human relationships with notational artifacts is a interdisciplinary attempt, in which historical-analytical and philological skills match with anthropological and archaeological perspectives. On a conceptual level, this approach encourages a rethinking of some crucial practices in Western music-making. Firstly, writing is understood as a counterpoint of reading, and not the other way around, for it depends on an active process of visual decoding. Moreover, writing is regarded as a material practice encompassing all users from composers to performers, and not only as a technology of symbolic representation. Reading, for its part, is reconsidered as a localized, time-oriented, visual process and not only as an interpretative operation for extrapolating meanings.

On a more disciplinary level, this perspective paves the way for a new history of music reading and suggests reconsidering the role of notational

[92] Neil Harris, "Introduzione. La bibliografia e il palinsesto della storia," in George Thomas Tanselle, *Letteratura e manufatti*, trans. Luigi Crocetti (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004), xiii.

[93] Glenn Gould, *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Tim Page (New York: Knopf, 1984), 264.

[94] Miller, "Materiality: An Introduction," 5.

[95] Miller, 5.

[96] Miller, 5.

artifacts in performance studies as integral to the music-making processes. Moreover, it invites for a deeper investigation into the annotation practices and their relationship with music reading, thus broadening the aims of the history of performance practice. Lastly, this approach promotes the inclusion of notational artifacts into studies on music notation. Rather than an "ethnomusicology of notation," as recently proposed by Floris Schuiling,[97] I would rather advocate a musicology that brings notational artifacts, as human and cultural facts, at the center of their relationship with users in the context of music-making— an anthropology of notational artifacts, as it were. After all, if "a book is not an obvious place for music,"[98] why should someone reading from that book be any more obvious?

[97] Schuiling, "Notation Cultures."

[98] Thomas Forrest Kelly, *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation* (New York: Norton, 2015), xiv.

Works cited

Musical Recordings

Pro Arte Quartet. *In Honor of Rudolf Kolisch, 1896–1978. Works by Schubert, Bartok, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern*. Music & Arts CD-1056, 2003, 6 compact discs.

Manuscript Sources

Rudolf Kolisch Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Kolisch, Rudolf. "Probenjournal des Streichquartetts." 2 MS notebooks, 1921–27. bMS Mus 195 (2118).

Schönberg, Arnold. "III. Streichquartett, op. 30." Wien, 1927. MS parts (incomplete set). bMS Mus 195 (1675).

Printed Sources

Andraschke, Peter. "Die Retuschen Gustav Mahlers an der 7. Symphonie von Franz Schubert." *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 32, no. 2 (1975): 106–116.

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

———. "The Thing Itself." *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 15–21.

Bachelard, Gaston. *La poétique de l'espace*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957.

Bailey, Candace. "Binder's Volumes as Musical Commonplace Books: The Transmission of Cultural Codes in the Antebellum South." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 10, no. 4 (2016): 446–469.

Barker, John W. *The Pro Arte Quartet: A Century of Musical Adventure on Two Continents*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017.

Baroffio, Giacomo. "I libri con musica: sono libri di musica?" In *Il canto piano nell'era della stampa. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi sul canto liturgico nei secoli XV-XVIII*, edited by Giulio Cattin, Danilo Curti, and Marco Gozzi, 9–12. Trento: Provincia autonoma di Trento, 1999.

Bembibre, Cecilia, and Matija Strlič. "Smell of Heritage: A Framework for the Identification, Analysis and Archival of Historic Odours." *Heritage Science* 5, no. 2 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-016-0114-1.

Benjamin, Walter. "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century (1935)." In Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, 3–13. New York: Belknap Press, 1999.

Bewley, John. "Marking the Way: The Significance of Eugene Ormandy's Score Annotations." *Notes* 59, no. 4 (2003): 828–853.

Borghetti, Vincenzo. "The Listening Gaze: Alamire's Presentation Manuscripts and the Courtly Reader." *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 7, no. 1 (2015): 47–66.

Borio, Gianmario. "Analisi ed esecuzione: note sulla teoria dell'interpretazione musicale di Theodor W. Adorno e Rudolf Kolisch." *Philomusica on-line* 2, no. 1 (2003). https://doi.org/10.6092/1826-9001.2.22.

Bossini, Oreste. "Il cammino del Wanderer. Appunti per una biografia artistica tra Beethoven, Rossini, Verdi, Brahms e Mahler." In *Claudio Abbado. Ascoltare il silenzio*, edited by Gastón Fournier-Facio, 220–251. Milano: il Saggiatore, 2015.

Broomhead, Gordon Paul. *What Is Music Literacy?* New York: Routledge, 2019.

Brust, John. "Musical Reading and Writing." In *Neurology of Music*, edited by F. Clifford Rose, 143–149. London: Imperial College Press, 2010.

Caraci Vela, Maria. *Musical Philology. Institutions, History, and Critical Approaches*. Translated by Elizabeth MacDonald. Pisa: ETS, 2015.

———. "Testo, paratesto, contesto." In *La filologia musicale. Istituzioni, storia, strumenti critici*. Vol. 2, *Approfondimenti*, 61–70. Lucca: LIM, 2009.

Cavallo, Guglielmo, and Roger Chartier, eds. *A History of Reading in the West*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

Cestino, Giovanni. "'Used Scores.' Linee teoriche e operative per l'indagine del rapporto tra esecutori e materiali performativi." PhD diss., University of Milan, 2019.

Charlton, David, and Kathryn Whitney. "Score (i)." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, 2001. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

Chartier, Roger. "Afterword: Music in Print." In *Music and the Cultures of Print*, edited by Kate Van Orden, 325–341. New York: Garland, 2000.

———. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Contini, Gianfranco. "Filologia." In *Breviario di ecdotica*, 1–66. Torino: Einaudi, 1992.

Cook, Nicholas. "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance." *Music Theory Online* 7, no. 2 (2001). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.php.

———. *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

———. "Changing the Musical Object: Approaches to Performance Analysis." In *Music's Intellectual History: Founders, Followers and Fads*, edited by Zdravko Blažeković, 775–790. New York: RILM, 2009.

Davies, James. "Julia's Gift: The Social Life of Scores, c.1830." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131, no. 2 (2006): 287–309.

De Benedictis, Angela Ida. "Scrittura e supporti nel Novecento: alcune riflessioni e un esempio (*Ausstrahlung* di Bruno Maderna)." In *La scrittura come rappresentazione del pensiero musicale*, edited by Gianmario Borio, 237–291. Pisa: ETS, 2004.

Dillon, Emma. "Music Manuscripts." In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, edited by Mark Everist, 291–319. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Doğantan-Dack, Mine. "Artistic Research in Classical Music Performance: Truth and Politics." *PARSE* 1 (2015): 27–40.

Dotto, Gabriele. "Opera, Four Hands: Collaborative Alterations in Puccini's *Fanciulla*." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42, no. 3 (1989): 604–624.

Fairtile, Linda. "Toscanini and the Myth of Textual Fidelity." *Journal of the Conductors Guild* 24, no. 1–2 (2003): 49–60.

Feder, Georg. *Music Philology. An Introduction to Musical Textual Criticism, Hermeneutics, and Editorial Technique*. Translated by Bruce C. MacIntyre. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2011.

Ficarella, Anna. "Mahler interprete 'wagneriano' di Beethoven: storia di una ricezione controversa." *Studi musicali*, Nuova serie, 2, no. 2 (2011): 375–412.

———. *Non guardare nei miei Lieder! Mahler compositore orchestratore interprete*. Lucca: LIM, 2020.

Fink, Robert. "'Rigoroso (♪= 126)': *The Rite of Spring* and the Forging of a Modernist Performing Style." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 2 (1999): 299–362.

Fiore, Carlo, ed. *Il libro di musica. Per una storia materiale delle fonti musicali in Europa*. Palermo: L'Epos, 2004.

Garda, Michela. "Introduzione. Teoria della ricezione e musicologia." In *L'esperienza musicale. Teoria e storia della ricezione*, edited by Michela Garda and Gianmario Borio, 1–35. Torino: EDT, 1989.

Gibson, James J. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.

Głombiowski, Karol. *Problemy historii czytelnictwa*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im Ossolińskich, 1966.

Goodman, Glenda. "Bound Together: The Intimacies of Music-Book Collecting in the Early American Republic." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 145, no. 1 (2020): 1–35.

———. *Cultivated by Hand: Amateur Musicians in the Early American Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Gould, Glenn. *The Glenn Gould Reader*. Edited by Tim Page. New York: Knopf, 1984.

Harris, Neil. "Introduzione. La bibliografia e il palinsesto della storia." In George Thomas Tanselle, *Letteratura e manufatti*, translated by Luigi Crocetti, ix–lxviii. Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004.

Harris, Wendell V. *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.

Havelock, Eric Alfred. *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Hultberg, Cecilia. "Approaches to Music Notation: The Printed Score as a Mediator of Meaning in Western Tonal Tradition." *Music Education Research* 4, no. 2 (2002): 185–197.

Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge, 2011.

———. *Correspondences*. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2017.

———. "The Textility of Making." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (2010): 91–102.

———. "Toward an Ecology of Materials." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 427–442.

Jackson, Heather J. *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Kaastra, Linda T. "Annotation and the Coordination of Cognitive Processes in Western Art Music Performance." In *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Performance Science 2011*, edited by Aaron Williamon, Darryl Edwards, and Lee Bartel, 675–680. Utrecht: AEC, 2011.

Kalisch, Volker. "Zu Mahlers Instrumentationsretuschen in Den Sinfonien Beethovens." *Schweizer Musikzeitung/Revue Musicale Suisse* 121, no. 1 (1981): 17–22.

Kelly, Thomas Forrest. *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*. New York: Norton, 2015.

Kenyon, Nicholas. "Performance Today." In *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, edited by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, 1–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Kolisch, Rudolf. "How to Rehearse and Play Chamber Music [1940]." In *RKinA*, 207–209, 2009.

———. "Musical Performance: The Realization of Musical Meaning [1939]." In *RKinA*, 201–207, 2009.

———. "»Outline« des Buchprojektes: The String Quartets of Beethoven [194?]." In *RKinA*, 219–221, 2009.

Korevaar, David, and Laurie J. Sampsel. "The Ricardo Viñes Piano Music Collection at the University of Colorado at Boulder." *Notes* 61, no. 2 (2004): 361–400.

Korsyn, Kevin. "Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue." In *Rethinking Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, 55–72. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Krämer, Sybille. "13. Schriftbildlichkeit." In *Bild: ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, edited by Stephan Günzel and Dieter Mersch, 354–360. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2014.

———. "Flattening as Cultural Technique: Epistemic and Aesthetic Functions of Inscribed Surfaces." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 1 (2017): 239–245.

Kurkela, Kari. "Score, Vision, Action." *Contemporary Music Review* 4, no. 1 (1989): 417–435.

Malafouris, Lambros. *How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.

Manulkina, Olga. "Leonard Bernstein's 1959 Triumph in the Soviet Union." In *The Rite of Spring at 100*, edited by Severine Neff, Maureen Carr, Gretchen Grace Horlacher, and John S. Reef, 219–236. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Martin, Jodie L. "Semiotic Resources of Music Notation: Towards a Multimodal Analysis of Musical Notation in Student Texts." *Semiotica* 2014, no. 200 (2014): 185–201.

Maurer Zenck, Claudia. "»Ein Sauberuf!!« Der Alltag des Kolisch-Quartetts auf Reisen in der Zwischenkriegszeit." In *Annäherungen: Festschrift für Jürg Stenzl zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Ulrich Mosch, Matthias Schmidt, and Silvia Wälli, 187–221. Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2007.

———. "'Was sonst kann ein Mensch denn machen, als Quartett zu spielen?' Rudolf Kolisch und seine Quartette. Versuch einer Chronik der Jahre 1921–1944." *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 53, no. 11 (1998): 8–60.

Miller, Daniel. "Materiality: An Introduction." In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 1–50. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Myers, Robin, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote, eds. *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*. New Castle: Oak Knoll, 2005.

Narmour, Eugene. "Hierarchical Expectation and Musical Style." In *The Psychology of Music*, edited by Diana Deutsch, 2nd ed., 441–472. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998.

Nettl, Bruno. "I Can't Say a Thing Until I've Seen the Score." In *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts*, 65–81. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things*. Revised and Expanded edition. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

———. *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Ortega y Gasset, José. "The Misery and the Splendor of Translation." Translated by Elizabeth Gamble Miller. In *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, edited by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, 93–112. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Owens, Jessie Ann. *Composers at Work. The Craft of Musical Composition, 1450–1600*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Pace, Ian. "The New State of Play in Performance Studies." *Music and Letters* 98, no. 2 (2017): 281–292.

Partsch, Erich Wolfgang. "Completing, Instrumenting, Adapting, Retouching. Gustav Mahler as Arranger." *Nachrichten zur Mahler-Forschung* 62 (2011): 1–14.

Payne, Emily, and Floris Schuiling. "The Textility of Marking: Performers' Annotations as Indicators of the Creative Process in Performance." *Music and Letters* 98, no. 3 (2017): 438–464.

Piekut, Benjamin. "Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques." *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 191–215.

Pickett, David. "Arrangements and *Retuschen*: Mahler and *Werktreue*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler*, edited by Jeremy Barham, 178–200. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

———. "Gustav Mahler as an Interpreter: A Study of His Textural Alterations and Performance Practice in the Symphonic Repertoire." PhD diss., University of Surrey, 1988.

Pirrotta, Nino. "Ars Nova and Stil Novo." In *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque. A Collection of Essays*, 26–38. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Quattrocchi, Matteo. "Dalle chiose manoscritte alle scelte esecutive: *La traviata* di Toscanini." Master Thesis, University of Milan, 2018.

RKinA = Shreffler and Trippett, "Rudolf Kolisch in Amerika."

Rice, Timothy. "Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography." *Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 2 (2003): 151–179.

Sack, Robert David. *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Schmidt, Dörte. "»We must have a SCORE«. Kolisch, das LaSalle-Quartett und die Partitur zum Streichquartett von Witold Lutosławski." In *Arbeit an Musik. Reinhard Kapp zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Markus Grassl, Stefan Jena, and Andreas Vejvar, 573–596. Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2017.

Schmidt, Thomas Christian, and Christian Thomas Leitmeir, eds. *The Production and Reading of Music Sources: Mise-en-page in Manuscripts and Printed Books Containing Polyphonic Music, 1480–1530*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.

Schön, Daniele, and Mireille Besson. "Processing Pitch and Duration in Music Reading: A RT-ERP Study." *Neuropsychologia* 40, no. 7 (2002): 868–878.

Schönberg, Arnold. *III. Streichquartett, Op. 30*. Pocket score. Wien: Universal Edition, 1927.

Schuiling, Floris. "Notation Cultures: Towards an Ethnomusicology of Notation." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144, no. 2 (2019): 429–458.

Sherman, William H. *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Shreffler, Anne, and David Trippett, eds. "Rudolf Kolisch in Amerika—Aufsätze und Dokumente." Special issue, *MusikTheorie* 24, no. 3 (2009) [*RKinA*].

Silliman, A. Cutler. "The Score as Musical Object." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 3, no. 4 (1969): 97–108.

Sloboda, John A. *Exploring the Musical Mind: Cognition, Emotion, Ability, Function*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.

Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso, 1989.

Souter, Tony. "Eye Movement, Memory and Tempo in the Sight Reading of Keyboard Music." PhD diss., Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2001.

Sterne, Jonathan. *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Stoddard, Roger E. *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Stonehill, Brian. "The Debate over 'Ocularcentrism.'" *Journal of Communication* 45, no. 1 (2006): 147–152.

Stowell, Robin. "The Evidence." In *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, edited by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, 63–104. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Trippett, David. "The Composer's Rainbow. Rudolf Kolisch and the Limits of Rationalization." In *RKinA*, 228–237.

Tuan, Yu-Fi. "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective." In *Philosophy in Geography*, edited by Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson, 387–427. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979.

Türcke, Berthold, and Rudolf Kolisch. *Rudolf Kolisch zur Theorie der Aufführung. Ein Gespräch mit Berthold Türcke*. München: Text & Kritik, 1983.

Van Orden, Kate. *Materialities: Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Veeser, H. Aram. "Introduction." In *The New Historicism*, edited by H. Aram Veeser, ix–xvi. London: Routledge, 1989.

Watling, Susanna. "Kolisch in Madison, Wisconsin: 1944–1967." In *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Aufführung in der Wiener Schule: Verhandlungen des internationalen Colloquiums Wien 1995*, edited by Markus Grassl and Reinhard Kapp, 179–190. Wien: Böhlau, 2002.

Winget, Megan A. "Annotations on Musical Scores by Performing Musicians: Collaborative Models, Interactive Methods, and Music Digital Library Tool Development." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 12 (2008): 1878–1897.

Wistreich, Richard. "Introduction: Musical Materials and Cultural Spaces." *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 1–12.

———. "Music Books and Sociability." *Il Saggiatore Musicale* 18, no. 1/2 (2011): 230–244.

Abstract

Until today, the most traditional media for music notation—scores, parts, or "music books" in general—played an essential role in musicology, providing the essential core of information upon which historical and philological research are grounded. Even if more recent disciplinary turns attempted to undermine the textualist bias according to which "scores were the only real thing about music" (Kenyon), nevertheless the conceptual tools we use to identify, describe, and analyze such scores remained substantially unaltered. Score-like objects are still assigned the status of sources in a research-oriented perspective which prioritizes content forms over usage practices, compositional processes over performative ones, and music writing over music reading. Nevertheless, any material object that incorporates and displays music notation—i.e., a notational artifact—can work not merely as a witness of a musical

text, but also as a multi-faceted "bundle of affordances" (Sterne), according to its users and the practices they perform with it.

In this article I propose a theoretical framework for analyzing the relationship between user and artifact in music-making. By reframing textual critical tools within a cultural anthropological approach, notational artifacts can be understood as materials with specific physical and visual features; as triggers for a concrete space of human interaction and a symbolic place of belonging; and as repositories for intellectual and operative contents. By applying this framework to one peculiar score belonging to Austrian violinist Rudolf Kolisch, I argue for a reconsideration of the main practices performed by users over their artifacts, namely the acts of writing (notation and annotation), of material production and alteration, and of reading in various music-making processes.

Keywords: material culture, anthropology, music reading, music writing, music-making.

Giovanni Cestino is Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Milan, where he is working on an interdisciplinary project on the role of material engagement in musical memory techniques. He holds an MA in Musicology from the University of Pavia (2014) and a PhD from the University of Milan (2019). Between 2018 and 2019 he has been Visiting Fellow in the Music Department at Harvard University, where he carried out part of his doctoral research on the relationship between twentieth-century performers and their notational artifacts. In 2020, he was the recipient of a scholarship from the Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel) to conduct archival research on the Cathy Berberian Collection. He also collaborates with the Centro Studi Luciano Berio (Florence) and the Ethnomusicology and Visual Anthropology Lab (LEAV) at the University of Milan, doing fieldwork in Kosovo and European urban environments (Vienna, Matera, Milan). After having obtained a degree in classical guitar from the Conservatory of Music in Alessandria (2010), he took courses in composition, conducting, and Renaissance lute. Since 2014 he has been Principal Conductor of the Coro Facoltà di Musicologia (Cremona).

ARTICLES

The Operatic Ear: Mediating Aurality

Megan Steigerwald Ille

During the final scene of Christopher Cerrone's opera *Invisible Cities,* protagonist Marco Polo reflects on the central role the listener plays in narrative forms: "I speak and I speak, but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear."[1] Polo's words are (unintentionally) ironic: by this point in experimental opera company The Industry's 2013 production, the spectator hardly needs to be reminded of the importance of the ear. Rather than being sung out to audience members seated around a proscenium stage, Polo's line, and indeed, the entire opera, has been transmitted into the listening ears of audience members via wireless Sennheiser headphones.

Opera scholarship often begins with the voice then moves to the ear.[2]

*I wish to thank Jacek Blaszkiewicz, Gabrielle Cornish, the participants of the 2019 "Mapping Spaces, Sounding Places: Geographies of Sound in Audiovisual Media" conference, and the anonymous readers and editors of this journal for their enthusiastic engagement with earlier versions of this work. I would also like to thank the performers and production team of *Invisible Cities* who took the time to share their experiences with me.

[1] Partially adapted from Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities,* trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 135

[2] In recent years, scholars in the field of voice studies such as Martha Feldman, Nina Eidsheim, Jelena Novak, Brian Kane, Ana María Ochoa Gautier, Steven Rings, James Q. Davies, and Emily Wilbourne, among many others, have done much-needed work to theorize and explore many capacities of the operatic voice, and in turn, the listening ear in operatic performance. Work by Carolyn Abbate and Michelle Duncan played a significant role in establishing this turn to the material properties of the voice and sounding voice-body. See Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Martha Feldman, Emily Wilbourne, Steven Rings, Brian Kane, and James Q. Davies, "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 653–685; Jelena Novak, *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Michelle Dun-

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 119–143.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss14186.

But what if we move in the opposite direction?[3] That is, what can we discover about operatic sounds—including voices—by focusing on how processes of listening are mediated by social and technological patterns of behavior?[4] While these questions have a precedent in studies of sound and voice, they also demonstrate how the operatic ear and operatic voice are co-constitutive elements in performance.[5] If, as interdependent parts, they are also—pace Polo—equally relevant, the technologically-mediated operatic ear that witnesses *Invisible Cities* offers much to studies of sound, digital media, and modes of narrative performance like opera. In this essay, privileging the biological and metaphorical ear *over* the voice allows us to consider the ways digital technologies create equivalent modes of understanding operatic *listening* as simultaneously fragmented, interstitial, and relational.

The radical, mediated staging of *Invisible Cities* was hailed by critics as "the opera of the future" and an "unprecedented, interactive dramatic expe-

can, "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 283–306; Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 505–536.

[3] This inverted formulation—ear to voice rather than voice to ear—is, in part, indebted to the scholarship of Ana María Ochoa Gautier. Ochoa Gautier suggests that by "[inverting] the emphasis on the relation between the *written text* and the *mouth* (implied by the idea of the oral)," it is possible to "[explore] how the uses of the *ear* in relation to the *voice* [imbue] the *technology of writing* with the traces and excesses of the acoustic." Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*, 7. While Eidsheim approaches voice, text, and listening from a different perspective than Ochoa Gautier, she too suggests that "[voices are] located within [listeners]." Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 13.

[4] This approach, which brings together scholarship on technology, performance, and sound cultures more broadly, is rooted in the work of Douglas Kahn, Benjamin Steege, Jonathan Sterne, and Emily Thompson, among others. See Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Benjamin Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

[5] Gautier Ochoa describes this shift as "the general auditory turn in critical scholarship," *Aurality*, 6. More specifically, Eidsheim has pointed to the way voices are co-constructed through socio-historic processes of expectation and feedback—or, in other words, modes of listening. See Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound,* 13. Clemens Risi describes the listening relationship between operatic performer and listener as "performative" and "erotic," thus implying another type of relationship between the two parts. Clemens Risi, "The Diva's Fans: Opera and Bodily Participation," *Performance Research* 16, no. 3 (2011): 49–54.

rience."[6] A key reason for the critical acclaim attributed to the performance was because of the way the opera used digital technologies to "reformulate" operatic listening, thus foregrounding the notion of the materially-enhanced ear. By asking spectators to listen to the entire opera through wireless headphones, the production foregrounded technological mediation. Simply put, the performance spotlighted the role of aural perception over other modes of spectatorship. Accompanied by the angular choreography of Danielle Agami and the efforts of the L.A. Dance Project company, the opera was performed twenty-two times in October and November 2013. Wireless headphones allowed audience members to spectate from any location as each individual wandered the "stage" of Los Angeles's Union Station while miked performers roamed the space. Far from the rooted experience of sitting in a theater, viewers drifted through the ticket concourses, waiting areas, and outdoor patios of the historic station while attempting to both locate and link the voices in their ears to the bodies in front of them. The performers began the opera in street clothes—every commuter within the station a potential artist—and gradually donned costumes as the work progressed. Following the opera's dramatic conclusion, ushers drew audience members into a common space for the final scene, applause concluded the performance, spectators returned their headphones to the stage managers, and left the station. Stage (and station) remained open, but the opera had ended.

Based upon several episodes from Italo Calvino's 1972 surrealist novel *Le città invisibili, Invisible Cities* recounts a series of conversations, memories, and elaborate stories exchanged between the explorer Marco Polo and the emperor Kublai Khan. As the Khan listens, Polo evokes the cities constellating the aging emperor's realm with visceral detail. The work's first inception, a concert staging at the New York City Opera's 2009 VOX Festival, revealed production and musical challenges. The Industry founder Yuval Sharon first encountered a version of the opera when working at VOX as a program director, and it was clear the work might need a different performance treatment to succeed.[7] The ambiguity of the narrative, lyric opacity

[6] Jeffrey Marlow, "Is This the Opera of the Future?" Wired Magazine, October 22, 2013, https://www.wired.com/2013/10/is-this-the-opera-of-the-future; Shari Barrett, "BWW Reviews: Invisible Cities Offers a Total Immersion Experience at Union Station," Broadway World, Los Angeles, https://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/BWW-Reviews-INVISIBLE-CITIES-Offers-a-Total-Immersion-Experience-at-Union-Station-20131025.

[7] See Anthony Tommasini, "Sampling of New Dishes, Some Still Being Seasoned," The New York Times, May 9, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/05/arts/music/05vox.html?mcubz=3.

of the text, and elongated musical lines meant that the work seemed to lack dynamism on the traditional stage. Enter the mobile staging of the opera four years later, which fused Sennheiser wireless headphones with audience imaginations, and drew in patrons through the allure of immersive *and* site-specific performance.[8] The changes paid off: the 2014 Pulitzer Prize committee described the work as "a captivating opera … in which Marco Polo regales Kublai Khan with tales of fantastical cities, adapted into an imaginary sonic landscape."[9]

The Sennheiser wireless headphones, individual audio feeds, and earbud microphones for each singer, dancer, and orchestral musician might have seemingly indicated that the performance of *Invisible Cities* represented a new kind of work more akin to Janet Cardiff's mixed media installations than to historical operatic convention. As I have argued elsewhere, *Invisible Cities* actually capitalized upon historic tensions inherent to the operatic form.[10] This production structure, however, allows us to think about more than just the historic trajectories and iterations of the operatic genre.[11] To

[8] The question of what constitutes site-specific performance is a topic of much debate. For instance, Mike Pearson uses the work of designer Cliff McLucas to distinguish between the "host"—the established elements of a site—versus the "ghost"—"that which is temporarily brought to and emplaced at the site." The "host" of Union Station and "ghost" of *Invisible Cities* musicians, costumes, and staging would work together to constitute this performance as site-specific. However, visual artists such as Richard Serra read site-specificity as more particular to the art's impact upon and relationship with the site itself. Thus, Serra argues that site-specific works should be "inseparable from their [locations]." As an opera revised for the LA staging and made more meaningful within a space of transit, *Invisible Cities* fits uncomfortably within Serra's definition, but squarely within Pearson's. Following language surrounding the reception of the opera, the descriptions of performers and audience members, and the musical changes made to the work for the LA staging, I interpret *Invisible Cities* as site-specific opera. Richard Serra, "The Yale Lecture, in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1096–1099; Mike Pearson, "Site-Specific Theatre," in *The Routledge Companion to Scenography,* ed. Arnold Aronson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 295–301.

[9] "Finalist: *Invisible Cities,* by Christopher Cerrone," The 2014 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in Music, The Pulitzer Prizes, last updated 2021, https://www.pulitzer.org/finalists/christopher-cerrone.

[10] Megan Steigerwald Ille, "Live in the Limo: Remediating Voice and Performing Spectatorship in Twenty-First-Century Opera," *The Opera Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2021), published ahead of print, January 7, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbaa012; see also Megan Steigerwald Ille, "Bringing Down the House: Situating and Mediating Opera in the Twenty-First Century," (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2018).

[11] While not the focus of this article, productions like *Invisible Cities* by necessity put pressure on the concept of "opera" as a fluid generic designation. See Steigerwald Ille, "Bringing

that end, as digital mediation becomes commonplace both in and out of the opera house, it is worth considering how technologically-enabled modes of narrative spectacle influence operatic performance, and vice-versa.[12] Rather than focusing on acoustic perception of sound as it relates to the concert hall, or the way the opera enacted forms of sonic gentrification, as other scholars such as Nina Eidsheim have productively explored, here I am interested in highlighting the material significance of the headphones themselves in the production.[13] I put interviews and public press reviews in dialogue with the body of rich scholarship around historical and contemporary modes of listening. I situate these headphones within a history of mobile listening and behaviors in order to understand what elements shape the twenty-first century operatic ear. In focusing on the headphones, I reveal the significance of material technologies in constituting operatic aurality.

What is the value of aurality as a critical framework?[14] Benjamin Steege

Down the House," PhD diss. For broader exploration of the ontological understandings of opera in the context of *Invisible Cities* and other productions by The Industry, see also the forthcoming monograph: Megan Steigerwald Ille, *Opera for Everyone: Experimenting with American Opera in the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).

[12] *Invisible Cities* is not the only twenty-first century opera production to engage with themes of aural mediation and spatial displacement. For instance, Cerise Lim Jacobs's *Alice in the Pandemic,* produced by White Snake Projects in late 2020, "enable[d] singers at remote locations to sing synchronously together as they [interacted] with each other and their 3D avatars who lip sync in real time to live performance." "Alice in the Pandemic," White Snake Projects, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.whitesnakeprojects.org/projects/alice-in-the-pandemic-a-digital-opera/.

[13] For an alternate exploration of *Invisible Cities* and a thorough consideration of how the cultivated aesthetic of the opera can be thought of as another version of the designed acoustic of the opera house, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 80–94. Marianna Ritchey also briefly considers the opera in the context of urban gentrification, a topic that Eidsheim also explores through the context of voice studies in a second article. See Marianna Ritchey, *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 90-113, and Eidsheim, "Acoustic Slits and Vocal Incongruences in Los Angeles Union Station," in *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies,* 301–313.

[14] While to my knowledge, aurality has not yet been used as a critical framework in opera studies specifically, the concept has been productively used in a range of disciplines within musicology, ethnomusicology, and the humanities more broadly. See Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener,* and Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality.* For a representative range of usages, see: Jairo Moreno, "Antenatal Aurality in Pacific Afro-Colombian Midwifery," in *Remapping Sound Studies*, ed. Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 109–134; Lynne Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*; and Veit Erlmann, ed. *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004). For a helpful overview of how aurality has been used as a critical

defines aurality as "a network of experiences, practices, and discourses of hearing and the ear."[15] Similarly, Ana María Ochoa Gautier uses the framework of aurality as a mode of thinking through what she describes as "acoustic abundance" and "multiplicity," in which the "entities that listen and entities that produce sounds … mutually produce each other."[16] Correspondingly, a framework of aurality offers opera studies the opportunity to think through how modes of mediated spectatorship co-constitute audience perception. Operatic aurality is a set of material contexts, discourses, and patterns that encompasses operatic performance and spectatorship within the hybrid environments I describe above.

This article is concerned with the materiality of the 400 sets of headphones sitting on the station's old ticket counter, waiting to be washed and dried in a nearby Laundromat before the next evening's performance. Throughout the opera, these headphones had facilitated whispers, shouts, and highly trained operatic voices into the ears of those audience members paying for the performance. They had been shared with those passersby in Union Station who had no idea what musical event was interrupting their commute. They had translated arching phrases and rhythmic staccati into Calvino's landscapes as amazed onlookers listened and saw the train station from a new aesthetic perspective. And they had made it difficult for tenor Ashley Faatoalia's friends to locate him in the train station by obscuring the aural signals that would reveal his specific location.[17] (This was despite the fact that these individuals knew Faatoalia was playing one of the central characters in the opera, Marco Polo.)

The aforementioned advice from Polo ("It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear") is key to not only the narrative of the opera, but also the mode of spectatorship upon which it relies. In this example, the operatic text works in tandem with the physical realities of the production. Two analytic modes, hermeneutics and materiality, dialectically constitute the spectatorial experience in *Invisible Cities*. The libretto and open-ended compositional elements emphasize individual exploration and interpretation. At the same time, the headphones offer a singular experience of sound regardless of where the audience member or performer is in the station. On

"epistemic threshold", see David Trippet, "Sensations of Listening in Helmholtz's Laboratory," essay review of *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*, by Benjamin Steege, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 47 (2014): 124–132.

[15] Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener,* 7.

[16] Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*, 4, 22.

[17] Ashley Faatoalia, interview with author, San Pedro, September 12, 2017.

the other hand, the headphones are also the gateway to a set of behaviors centered around individual interpretation and exploration. Thus, *Invisible Cities* offers an operatic opportunity to expand the ways we as listeners conceive of the relationship between mediated sound and narrative.

After providing an overview of the production, I situate the notion of operatic aurality within studies of sound and narrative. In so doing, I demonstrate how the operatic ear allows for a particular form of material and spatial listening. As a technologically-contingent work, *Invisible Cities* offers the opportunity to explore the implications of the operatic ear beyond voice. In analyzing the opera from the (aural) vantage point of the headphones, I argue that *Invisible Cities* catalyzed operatic spectacle by fusing mobile listening practices with live performance. Contextualizing *Invisible Cities* within other modes of mobile listening demonstrates how the operatic ear exists within a spectrum of recorded, live, mobile, and place-bound sound. In effect, the operatic ear shapes the context, and thus the perception, of the mediated voice. By foregrounding the material processes inherent to *Invisible Cities,* I highlight the ways technology mediates aesthetic and social performance, and in turn, how social processes inform our expectations and experiences of mediated performances.

Logistics of Invisible Cities

The Industry is a self-described "independent, artist-driven company creating experimental productions that expand the definition of opera."[18] Founded in 2012 by artistic director Yuval Sharon, the company has received national and international acclaim for their original, site-specific productions. The 2013 production of *Invisible Cities* played a large part in catalyzing the kinds of critical attention that have since become the norm for the company.

Invisible Cities begins with a short speech made by Sharon, in which spectators are told that each experience of the opera is meant to be determined by the individual choices of spectators. This speech is followed by an overture performed in the Harvey House restaurant, which has been closed since 1967. Following the overture, audience members begin meandering throughout the station.[19] The overture is followed by a prologue and seven

[18] "About," The Industry, accessed June 24, 2020, https://theindustryla.org/about/.

[19] See Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound,* 82–90 for a first-person account of the opera, and for a detailed walk-through of her individual experience of the work along with a diagram of the station in relation to the performance.

scenes which depict conversations between the two central characters of the opera, Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. The libretto's text, lifted almost directly from the 1974 William Weaver English translation of the novel, builds in complexity through layers of detail, sometimes paradoxical ambiguity, and suggestive dialogue. Along with the Khan and Polo, two sopranos, an SATB quartet, and a cast of eight dancers play a changing set of characters within the opera. Two shows are given a night, one at 7 PM, and another at 10 PM.

With a ticket, an audience member receives a set of Sennheiser wireless headphones through which is broadcast the live-mixed version of the opera. While this person may be in any part of Union Station (ushers keep spectators within the boundary lines of the space), all audience members hear the same operatic stream. The singers and dancers move throughout Union Station wearing lavalier microphones and in-ear monitors. Although there are no monitors for them to see conductor Marc Lowenstein, they hear a dry recording of the music being played by the orchestra dispersed into the in-ear monitors. As a result, they can hear the other singers, regardless of where they might be in the station. Tenor Ashley Faatoalia, who played Marco Polo, described the experience:

> You're singing for random people in a random space. Some people will know what's going on, some people won't. And so, every night was a little bit different. When we started the run, we had a little more leeway because people were following us [versus during rehearsals when performances were less of a distinct event]. So, then some people were like "ok, *something's* going on." But even that was chaos, because then the curiosity would peak to a certain point where people who were or weren't involved were cavorting around and following us in different crowds . . . Some people came multiple nights to find different parts of the story—so because of that, someone was always peeking and looking with anticipation, so even when you weren't ready to sing, you had to sit there, trying to be a character, or emote, or engage with the person on the other side of the entire campus that you couldn't see.[20]

Baritone Cedric Berry, who sang the role of the Kublai Khan, echoed Faatoalia in underscoring the challenges of the unconventional staging:

> We had rehearsed for months, we were finally becoming comfortable with the music, and then we went to the space. And I know we had talked about

[20] Faatoalia, interview with author.

> what we were going to do when we got to the space, and Marc announced that the orchestra not only would be in a different space in the train station no less, but that there wouldn't be a monitor and that it would all be aural—I thought "now he's really crazy" . . . I never thought I wouldn't be able to see a conductor *somewhere*, especially with music that really requires a conductor, but it worked![21]

There were a number of compositional techniques that anticipated the challenges in coordination Faatoalia and Berry describe, including ostinati, a strong sense of pulse used as varying types of signals throughout the entire opera, and overall a small number of vocal forces. The final scene, which was the most complex in terms of ensemble, also required all of the singers to be in one room together, although the orchestra was still in a separate space.

Audience experiences of non-aural elements within the performance were completely variable. In other words, the live audio mix being streamed into spectators' headphones was the only consistent element of the performance from night to night regardless of where those spectators were located in the station. Unless audience members removed these headphones—which some did for brief moments throughout the performance, sometimes to share with other people in the train station, or to listen to a nearby singer live—they all heard the same live-mixed recording of the opera. Thus, Sharon's production seemingly enfolded the role of visual spectacle in operatic production into the headphones worn by audience members. As I describe in greater detail throughout the rest of the article, this does not mean there was no aspect of visual spectacle throughout the production—far from it. Rather, the consistent aural elements of the work (in the headphones) suggested that everyday events in the station were spectacular, regardless of if actual performers could be seen or not. Because of the structure of the opera, the visual space of the proscenium stage that might be understood to be "controlled" by the director was not simply moved into the site-specific space of Union Station. Rather, this consistent element of onstage spectacle was relocated to the headphones, the imaginary space of which was controlled by sound design.[22]

While sound designer E. Martin Gimenez originated the idea of the headphones in the opera along with Sharon, Nick Tipp worked as lead sound

[21] The Industry, "The Industry Company – Cedric Berry," October 2, 2018, YouTube, 3:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK-8Wfl3Dm4.

[22] Ryan Ebright briefly situates *Invisible Cities* within a history of operatic sound design. Ebright, "*Doctor Atomic* or: How John Adams Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Sound Design," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 31, no. 1 (2019): 85–117.

designer for the opera after Gimenez's relationship with The Industry ended suddenly. Tipp juggled three mixes during the performance: a dry mix intended for singers and dancers, a live-mixed stream meant for audience members with a significant number of atmospheric and spatial effects, and a third mix for the orchestra that had balance adjustments made for the instrumental musicians and Lowenstein to better hear one another. Lowenstein noted that in technical rehearsals "we kept fiddling with the balance of what we heard, especially because the orchestra was seated in an unusual distribution and the pianists couldn't hear each other very well acoustically."[23] The second of these three mixes (the live-mixed stream for audiences) was created with the goal of establishing a distinct "landscape" for listeners, one that was distinct from that of the train station where the action was taking place.[24]

Reflecting on the use of postproduction techniques drawn from other genres in the final mix audience members heard through the headphones, Cerrone felt that *Invisible Cities* was "as much a sort of studio album as it is a live piece" and described the influence of recorded and even compressed formats such as MP3s to the sound-identity of the opera. He said: "We wanted it to sound more like a pop record than a classical record. So it was sort of like bringing classical music into a more sonically connected pop music [sound] than your average classical recording."[25] Indeed, the use of sound design within the live performance of the piece along with the headphones themselves played a large role in cultivating the imagined aural space described by both audience members and performers. These elements together further intensified the likelihood that audience members would listen to the recording by drawing on behaviors of listening associated with mobile music, and not live performance.

Precedents and Opportunities of Aurality

What is the function of the operatic ear? How might we situate this concept within broader discourses around the dialectical construction of spectatorship? The operatic ear represents a biological and metaphoric node in

[23] Marc Lowenstein, email correspondence with author, June 25, 2020.

[24] See Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound,* 81 for more on the use of sound design to render the "acoustic landscape" (90) in *Invisible Cities.*

[25] Christopher Cerrone, phone interview by author, August 24, 2017. Notably, combining sound design with live performance (as was done in *Invisible Cities*) is a key part of live electronic music performance as well as in the performance of live popular music.

a broader network of listening practices and behaviors. As Steege notes, the "ear" as a historical concept can function in multiple ways: "physical, mechanical, organic, physiological, psychological, or cognitive."[26] The singular ear of an audience member takes on multiple roles within a performance. The operatic ear is actually a multiplicity of ears simultaneously enacting various responses within a performance. Moreover, the roles an "ear" might take on in one performance will be different in other performance contexts, thus constituting operatic aurality as a whole.

Operatic aurality creates a space for material technologies and somatic responses in listening. Just as text and headphones work together to constitute the spectatorial experience of *Invisible Cities,* so too does aurality encompass both spontaneous experience and dictated spectatorial response. To think through this dialectic, consider a listener wearing the headphones during *Invisible Cities.* As I illustrate in the next section, wearing the headphones may, for her, trigger a set of scripted behavioral responses that imitate her personal experiences listening to music on a mobile music device like her smartphone. At the same time, as she listens, she feels a rush of air around her, and turns to notice a dancer sprinting by. Turning to watch the dancer move away, she is distracted from the aural spectacle continuing to play on the headphones. In this hypothetical example, the spectator's experience of reality is fragmented and layered. Multiple ears, or modes of engagement, constitute her engagement with operatic aurality.

Moreover, the concept of operatic aurality foregrounds both historiographical and material approaches towards listening and space. In the twenty-first century, operatic performance is accessed through myriad spaces, modes, and practices of listening. The ear is likewise responsive to these shifts in space and mode of performance. Works as diverse as David Lang's *The Mile-Long Opera,* performed on New York City's High Line, Adam Taylor and Scott Joiner's online opera *Connection Lost: L'opera di Tinder,* and traditionally staged canonic works such as *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago or Metropolitan Opera House require a similarly broad range of listening behaviors, a multiplicity of ears.

The operatic ear is the product of concomitant practices of listening and/or spectating through multiple live and mediated forms. While here I am curious about the influence of material technological practices on the ear,

[26] Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener,* 50. While Steege is arguing for hybrid understandings of the historical ear, this conception, I believe, is helpful for contemporary analyses as well.

it is helpful to consider earlier conceptions of the operatic ear articulated by philosophers such as Theodor Adorno. Adorno famously describes the ability of the operatic listener to protect herself from the adverse effects of being "[cajoled]" by the totality of the operatic experience by relocating the opera to the ear:

> Shorn of phony hoopla, the LP simultaneously frees itself from the capriciousness of fake opera festivals. It allows for the optimal presentation of music, enabling it to recapture some of the force and intensity that had been worn threadbare in the opera houses. Objectification, that is, a concentration on music as the true object of opera, may be linked to a perception that is comparable to reading, to the immersion in a text.[27]

For Adorno, the operatic ear suggests a tantalizingly pure experience of operatic audition. The listening experience he idealizes, though, is divorced from the realities of space and materiality with which the listener should also be concerned. The LP might offer freedom from the stage, but with the LP comes a new set of material behaviors, a fact Adorno conveniently ignores. In fact, Fred Moten highlights the way in which Adorno's interpretation of the listening experience enables him to ignore rather than recognize the role of materiality in listening. In Moten's words, Adorno's structural listening is "a scene of auditory reading [… related] to the literary experience of the score," reinforcing the transcendental, autonomous object of the work.[28] Technically, structural listening *does* rely on a set of behaviors responsive to material technologies. Adorno's end goal of being immersed in the "work," however, valorizes the autonomous art object at the expense of actual technologies and modes of behavior that make the listening possible.

Later conceptions of spectatorship acknowledge the role of space in the

[27] Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music,* ed Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 284–285.

[28] Interestingly, structural listening becomes a way of listening that relies on the visual: "Thus the phonographic *mise-en-scène*, because of and despite the structuring degradations of the culture industry, is revealed to be the most authentic site of a mode of 'structural listening' that approaches reading, one where development and the closed totality of the work become the objects of a kind of ocular-linguistic musical perception in which music's textual essence comes to light. As Rose Rosengard Subotnik puts it, this kind of structural listening 'makes more use of the eyes than of the ears.'" Fred Moten, "The Phonographic *mise-en-scène*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 271. See also Stephen C. Meyer, "*Parsifal*'s Aura," *19th-Century Music* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 151–172.

spectatorial experience but are broader with regards to how this space is controlled. Thinking about the experience of operatic attendance rather than the isolated listening with which Adorno is concerned, Joy Calico highlights the ambiguity of the terms "spectator" and "audience member," noting the ways these terms privilege certain sensorial modes and thus aural (and visual) expectations.[29] Admittedly, focusing specifically on the operatic ear does not allow me to sidestep the ontological mire of what the audience member is actually doing—watching, or looking. *Invisible Cities*, however, makes this choice for listeners by using aural spectacle as the main consistent element of the performance. In effect, the headphones in *Invisible Cities* mirror and miniaturize the experience of acoustic containment and manipulation Emily Thompson describes taking place in the first half of the twentieth century as concert halls and urban spaces were cultivated with architectural acoustics in mind.[30] *Invisible Cities* foregrounds the ear as the means by which the rest of the performance is perceived. In so doing, the opera offers the unique opportunity to "isolate" the ear in operatic performance, inasmuch as such a thing is possible. In so doing, we are able to explore a specific example of how heterogenous operatic ears constitute one form of operatic aurality.

The Operatic Ear in the Headphones: Performing Audile Technique

Audience members of *Invisible Cities* relied on specific sociocultural notions of listening—a multiplicity of operatic ears—to synthesize components of aural and visual alike within the work. This process of interpretation was premised upon each viewer's past experiences with modes of mobile-music consumption like smartphones and portable media players. Mobile music creates a narrative world around the listener that she herself controls. *Invisible Cities* was dramaturgically oriented around these notions of individual control and imagination borrowed from mobile-music practices. Just as listeners might create a narrative linking a specific song heard on their smartphone to a rainy day, crowd of apathetic commuters, or flock of birds, spectators at Union Station linked the sounds emanating from the headphones to the physical actions of the station, regardless of where the actual

[29] Joy H. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 147–48.

[30] Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity.*

performers in the station were located. *Invisible Cities* was also designed around an assumed *fluency* with portable audio technology. Just as attending an operatic performance in an opera house has a set of audile techniques associated with it, so too does listening to a work using headphones.[31]

The ubiquity of personal mobile-music technologies such as car radios, portable media players, and smartphones in the twentieth and twenty-first century United States has drastically changed the way music and space are perceived in relation to these innovations.[32] Moreover, electroacoustic composition and sound art more broadly have shaped how mediated sound is both composed and heard.[33] Thus, the headphones were more than just a practicality of the performance. Rather, these devices initiated a specific set of spectatorial behaviors. Indeed, this responsive pattern to material culture has a long historical precedent. Jonathan Sterne's helpful term "audile technique" explains the ways in which listeners assimilate new ways of understanding and interacting with sound in tandem with these same technologies of mechanical reproduction. As Sterne makes clear, in the early twentieth century, audile techniques—like the ability to "construct an auditory field with 'interior' and 'exterior' sounds"—were learned through "media contexts" and "through sound-reproduction technologies like telephony, sound recording, and radio."[34] As technologies of mechanical reproduction—and corresponding audile techniques—developed, listeners began to

[31] Eidsheim refers to this set of sonic expectations as a two-dimensional figure of sound, in which sound is present both in front of and alongside a group of audience members, as in a proscenium-style opera house or traditional concert hall. *Sensing Sound,* 80–95.

[32] Miriama Young describes these modes of mobile listening as "pod music," which "engages with the creation and transmission of an aesthetic centered on internalized experience of the voice through the inner ear." Young, "Proximity/Infinity: The Mediated Voice in Mobile Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies,* 404. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek emphasize that mobile sound culture is not new to the digital age, nor was sound "static" prior to the technological innovations of the late-nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Rather, "technological developments and socialities" of these periods produced new relationships between capital, consumers, and consequently, new sociocultural patterns of listening. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek, "Anytime, Anywhere? An Introduction to the Devices, Markets, and Theories of Mobile Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies, Volume I*, ed. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Sanyek (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

[33] While beyond the scope of this article, examples that resound in particular with the listening experience of *Invisible Cities* include Max Neuhaus's sound installations like *Drive-In Music* (1967), Janet Cardiff's *Walks* (1991-2019), Christina Kubisch's *Electrical Walks* (2004-2017), and most especially, Salvatore Sciarrino's *Lohengrin II* (2004).

[34] Sterne, *The Audible Past,* 137–138.

understand auditory space as private and individually constructed. This emphasis on individual control has continued to dominate rhetoric surrounding mobile-music in the forms of commercial advertising and individual behaviors alike. The twenty-first century operatic ear is a product of these material technologies and well-practiced at incorporating these behaviors.

One of the greatest allures of the individual, portable music device is the way in which it allows the listener to control her experience of space. In the act of covering her ears with the soft leather of headphones, or inserting earbuds, a listener demarcates a private aural zone and shapes personal perception of the visual arena beyond this intimate aural space.[35] Michael Bull explains that those practitioners well-versed in the use of mobile music through hardware such as the portable cassette/CD player, MP3 player, smartphone, and even automobile use sound to control and aestheticize changing urban environments, often through what he terms a "filmic" experience.[36]

Cerrone also acknowledges the effects of these patterns of musical consumption; his compositional style is a byproduct of the dominant technologies of the late- twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This aspect of individual control and private space contributed to his own listening practices and subsequently, those compositional practices at work in *Invisible Cities*:

[35] In Young's view, this process "produces … the auditory deceit of 'closeness." Young, "Proximity/Infinity," 405. Gopinath and Stanyek emphasize the intimacy of this experience of mobile listening: "Just as vital to the story is the use value of that relationship, one that vitally produces a number of different intimacies: the intimacy of *insertion* (earpiece in the ear); the intimacy of *enclosure* (the sonic bubble of the earphoned headspace and the womblike envelopment of the covers); the intimacy of the *human other* (the radio deejay, the voices of the singers); the intimacy of the *distributed collective* (listeners drawn together through the synchronic time engendered by radio technology). There is also, crucially, the intimacy of *the body with device*, that other entity beside and besides the listener." All of these intimacies produce a "network of interrelated bonds." Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek, "The Mobilization of Performance: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Mobile Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies, Volume 2,* ed. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stankyek (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31–32. While not necessarily focused on the headphones as intimate mediator, Holger Schulze puts the question of intimacy into dialogue with other types of sound art that deal with similar staging concepts as those present in *Invisible Cities.* Holger Schulze, "Intruders Touching You. Intimate Encounters in Audio," in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art,* ed. Sanne Krogh Groth and Holger Schulze (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 221–234.

[36] Bull distinguishes between two types of filmic experiences: "specific recreations of filmic-type experience with personal narratives attached to them and more generalized descriptions of the world appearing to be like a film." Michael Bull, *Sounding out the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 86–87.

> For me, [listening on headphones] is a very immersive thing, and I think it's a more private experience. There's something very public about hearing or playing music live for people, and there's something very private about the idea that you're having this experience and maybe no one else is around you. That's very much a part of *Invisible Cities*, the sense of walking around in a world. It's a modality that is much more private.[37]

Cerrone's words demonstrate how *Invisible Cities* works to aestheticize mundane actions and spaces, a key part of the artistic mission of The Industry's early productions. Moreover, the experience of turning a private technology into a public spectacle allows for a dialogic exchange between public and private experience into operatic spectatorship. The headphones give the listener personal control over her auditory, and thus visual environment in a public space. At the same time, she loses the privacy associated with headphone listening in the process of participating in the spectacle of the opera as a listener.

Notably, scholars of mobile music emphasize the role of the individual within the listening environment. Shuhei Hosokawa describes the walkman's capacity to "[mobilize] the Self" and in that process of mobilization, what Hosokawa calls the "walk act," to indicate to others the presence of a *secret* as indicated by the appearance of the walkman.[38] In *Invisible Cities,* the control over the experience, the sense of individuation implied by the presence of "the secret," is paradoxical. The audience member does not control the soundscape of the opera as she would control the streaming content on her own personal device, but the success of the narrative relies on her ability to link visual with aural spectacle. Moreover, the opera broadens the notion of Hosokawa's individual secret to that of a communal secret. Audience member Ellen described her experience of seeing *Invisible Cities* through the headphones:

> Listening to music on my headphones is really an intimate experience I have with myself. For people of our generation, it's what you do—you listen to your headphones. And then there's an element of almost cinematic storytelling that happens. Where you're listening to this beautiful song, and then a but-

[37] Cerrone, interview.

[38] Shuhei Hosokawa, "The Walkman Effect," *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 175–177. Hosokowa's conception of the walk act in connection with the walkman relies upon Michel de Certeau's writing on urban geographies, also pertinent to *Invisible Cities.* Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 98.

> terfly floats by—and you feel like you're in a movie—kind of making up this story about the people around you, and the light on the grass… and when I was watching *Invisible Cities*, because I had on the headphones—for the first few split seconds, I felt like that's what was happening, and then I realized that every person around me was doing the same thing.[39]

Ellen's past experiences with mobile music not only allowed her to create synchronicity between audio and visual elements in *Invisible Cities,* but also heightened her sense of communal viewership. In fact, she explained that what she termed the "vernacular of the headphones" made *Invisible Cities* both more personal and communal than an experience in an opera house. She focuses on the communal experience of the opera, rather than on the sense of individuation. In this way, *Invisible Cities* mirrors similar headphone-based gatherings such as silent disco, in which participants choose one of several tracks to listen to in a large group. Reviewer Sarah Zabrodski, too, emphasized the sense of connection with other spectators from the perspective of a communal space: "The thrill of *Invisible Cities* lies in creating a shared focus within a space where we intuitively tend to keep to ourselves."[40]

Heterogeneous Accounts of Spectatorship

Crucially, the headphones scripted certain audile techniques only to those well-versed *in* these techniques. Correspondingly, the behavior of the operatic ear is dependent upon those materials and audile techniques to which it has been conditioned. To the listener trained in habits of mobile music, the visual spectacle of the opera could be choreographed in a number of ways among various audience members. Meanwhile, the spectacle of the production, as we have seen, is firmly situated in the headphones themselves. Ellen's description relies on previous experiences with mobile music: "For people of our generation it's what you do—you listen to your headphones." Audience members were primed for the experience of mobile listening thanks to the ways the piece built upon an established social dialectic of

[39] Ellen's language echoes the mode of narration and control described by Bull. Ellen A., interview with author, Los Angeles, August 22, 2016.

[40] Sarah Zabrodski, "The Public Spectacle of a Personal Opera in LA's Union Station," *Hyperallergic,* November 14, 2013, https://hyperallergic.com/92262/the-public-spectacle-of-a-personal-opera-in-los-angeles-union-station/.

mobile music consumption. The material agency of the headphones, however, was predicated on an assumption: that audience members would understand the implicit signal the technology communicated about how the opera should be watched.

Spectator accounts of the opera paralleled the hype of the press reviews. Audience member Andrew emphasized the individualized experience of the work, explaining that "you could follow someone, you could see where they go and sing, and then you could follow someone else, and then they would lead you to a totally different part of the train station."[41] Rita Santos, who managed the supertitles for the original run of the opera and assisted in the audio booth for the opera's performance extension, also emphasized individuality and ownership. She explained that "*Invisible Cities* is totally your own exploration—you can see *Invisible Cities* many times, and never really see every single thing that happened—Yuval [Sharon] didn't even see every single thing that happened, and he was walking around every night. The point is that you never really know what is going to happen."[42] As Zabrodski noted for *Hyperallergic:* "No one observes the show in the same way … making it a highly *personal,* not private, experience. It is this individualized element that provides the source for sharing different stories connected by a single, very public event."[43]

Many glowing reviews of the work also reveal this same fluency with modes of mobile listening and individual narrative creation. At the same time, these reports demonstrate how the visual experience of the opera did not add up to a consistent narrative. For instance, Alissa Walker wrote in *Gizmodo*: "I discovered that I didn't even have to follow the story to have a transcendent experience—it was more like I was stepping in and out of different conversations between the music, the public and the building."[44] Similarly, Lisa Napoli of National Public Radio member station KCRW explained that the opera "made you pay better attention to the random other humans who happened in on the experience, as they gazed with wonder or concern or even disinterest at those dancers writhing on the floor of the terminal."[45] Audience members described by Maane Khatchatourian seemed

[41] Andrew A., interview with author, Los Angeles, August 20, 2016.

[42] Rita Santos, interview with author, Los Angeles, August 18, 2016.

[43] Zabrodski, "The Public Spectacle of a Personal Opera."

[44] Alissa Walker, "A Secret Opera Erupts Inside California's Biggest Train Depot," *Gizmodo,* October 21, 2013, https://gizmodo.com/a-secret-opera-erupts-inside-californias-biggest-train-1447832488.

[45] Lisa Napoli, "The Drama of Humanity Unfolds in Union Station—oh, and an Opera,

to be even more removed from any sort of visual spectacle: "some [audience members] wandered aimlessly throughout the building, listening instead of watching."[46] Each of these people had a different experience of the work. At the same time, individual spectators were left to interpret their own experience as *the* visual staging of the opera.

By contrast, those individuals who came to the production with different expectations of the type of listening required by the show were seemingly frustrated with some parts of the structure. Reviewer Isaac Schankler reminds readers that although "Cerrone's music provides a powerful throughline for the entire duration [of the opera]," he nevertheless missed parts of the performance. "When we re-entered the station [from another scene], there were several audience members clustered around some chairs where two men were sitting. One looked bewildered, while one was sleeping or pretending to sleep. We had clearly just missed something, but what?"[47] Schankler seems to be disappointed with a lack of consistency in the visual narrative as compared to the aural spectacle provided by the headphones. His reaction exhibits the conflict between how certain material technologies shape audience perceptions of aurality and corresponding behaviors of spectatorship. Another reason this kind of confusion occurred had to do with the setting of the opera in crowded Union Station as well as the fact that all of the performers began the piece costumed in everyday, casual clothing. (Audience members were marked as audience members; however, performers were unmarked.) Andrew described the unexpected discovery that certain individuals in Union Station were actually performers. "There were moments where I was like 'oh, I'm standing right in front of someone who is singing,' and sometimes I didn't even realize the singer was actually a singer [because of the way sound was processed]."[48]

In other cases, spectators who came expecting to see a certain performer often had a difficult time finding that performer. The point was to engage with the aural experience as an audience member, not necessarily to actual-

Too," *KCRW,* October 18, 2013, https://www.kcrw.com/culture/articles/the-drama-of-humanity-unfolds-in-union-station-2014-oh-and-an-opera-too.

[46] Maane Khatchatourian, "*Invisible Cities* Opera Gets Immersive with Wireless Technology," *Variety*, November 16, 2013, https://variety.com/2013/legit/news/invisible-cities-immersive-opera-1200841486/.

[47] Isaac Schankler, "*Invisible Cities:* Choose Your Own Opera," *New Music Box,* November 27, 2013, http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/invisible-cities-choose-your-own-opera/.

[48] Andrew A., interview.

ly see all of the performers heard in the headphones. That purpose, however, was implicit in the headphones themselves, not stated directly. Faatoalia explained that certain friends were disappointed when they couldn't find him or locate a specific scene they had heard about. "I tried to tell people: 'Don't feel bad if you missed different things. Just be immersed in the experience and find your own sort of show.'"[49] Faatoalia's advice to his friends—"find your own sort of show"—acknowledges the way in which *Invisible Cities* relied on singular, individual operatic ears that would ideally come together to constitute narrative.

Conclusions: From the Operatic Ear to the Operatic Voice

Invisible Cities inspires a definition of the operatic ear that is highly individuated and responsive to listener experience (or lack thereof) with various technological interfaces. Listening to sound simultaneously live and recorded demands a correspondingly hybrid form of spectatorship. Sound helps to define space and guides behaviors within this space. At the same time, an audience member has more control over the types of space she chooses to occupy as the sound moves with her. She is separate from the people at the station not wearing headphones and yet a clearly defined—even marked—member of a listening community.[50] Her experience of spectatorship is fragmented by her decisions in the moment, and yet contingent upon the behaviors of others.

As I have demonstrated, the operatic ear does not represent a monolithic set of behaviors, nor is it a singular concept. Rather, operatic ears are situated in networks of technologies, material practices, sounds, and patterns of listening. As such, they allow listeners to absorb the similarly hybrid phenomenon of the operatic voice. Relying on a variety of clues and behaviors, these listeners engage in ways both predetermined and spontaneous. Operatic ears are also shaped by a number of other dialectic tensions: public/private; encultured/unaware of listening practices, and agent/subject of aural production and control.

In the case of *Invisible Cities*, listener experiences with headphones

[49] Faatoalia, interview.

[50] Eidsheim has explored the way *Invisible Cities* created a form of sonic differentiation between audience members and commuters at Union Station. She describes this as a form of sonic gentrification through the lens of "air politics." "Acoustic Slits and Vocal Incongruences," 302–3.

shaped both spectating behaviors and the way voices were heard. As Young describes, music created for headphone distribution leads to specific types of composition, "in particular, vocalizations in *sotto voce* and hushed tones, articulated in close proximity to the microphone," techniques which in turn, lead to a "new aesthetic" of composition.[51] The intimate aesthetic Young describes certainly fits the bill for the production of *Invisible Cities,* in which performers drew on a range of pop-music techniques to sing in an appropriate way. As tenor Faatoalia explained to me, "I think my experience with mikes before on pop and contemporary projects helped for sure to learn how to balance and engage [in *Invisible Cities*]."[52] Young's words also reveal how the operatic ear might be understood as byproduct of the mediated ears of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. The "fabricated aesthetic" she describes is meant to encapsulate the intimacy of the headphones, and this is certainly true of the pop aesthetic so described by Cerrone when speaking of *Invisible Cities*. As such, the operatic ear indicates how operatic voices will be produced and subsequently heard. In turn, the notion of operatic aurality offers a new way to consider how practices of performance are inherently reliant upon other contexts. Just as ear produces voice and voice produces ear, so too is this relationship of mutual production an interstitial one.[53] By this I mean that spaces of possibility are produced in the context of aurality, and the mutually constitutive relationship I am describing will produce further heterogeneities of listening and spectatorship.

I began by putting hermeneutic analysis in conversation with new materialism, and this dialectic is, I believe, a helpful way to conclude. *Invisible Cities* ends with a dramatic scene in which the Kublai Khan, who has previously been dressed in contemporary clothes, emerges in a dramatic costume as the emperor at the height of his glory. He faces Marco Polo, who stands at the other end of the Historic Ticketing Hall of Union Station.[54] The pair is surrounded by the now fully-costumed cast, as well as the headphone-wearing audience members who have been ushered into the space by stage managers. As the two face one another, Polo and the quartet sing a repeating chorus: "Kublai Khan | seek and find | who and

[51] Young, "Proximity/Infinity," 406.

[52] Faatoalia, interview.

[53] See Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality,* 22.

[54] For a sense of the production locations as associated with specific scenes, see "Select a Scene at Union Station," Invisible Cities: Experience, accessed July 23, 2020, http://invisiblecitiesopera.com/experience/.

what, | in the midst of the inferno, | are not the inferno. | Make them endure, | give them space." This proscenium-like spectacle combines liveness, recorded sound, shared and fragmented-headphone space, voices, and ears. Aurality offers a similar sort of amalgamation of signifiers. The important thing is to discover what signifiers—material, hermeneutic, and otherwise—are present, and to give them space to sound and be heard by listening operatic ears.

Works cited

Abbate, Carolyn. "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 505–536.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Essays on Music*. Edited by Richard Leppert. Translated by Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Bull, Michael. *Sounding out the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.

Calico, Joy H. *Brecht at the Opera*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Duncan, Michelle. "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 283–306.

Ebright, Ryan. "*Doctor Atomic*, or: How John Adams Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Sound Design." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 31, no. 1 (2019): 85–117.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Acoustic Slits and Vocal Incongruences in Los Angeles Union Station." In Eidsheim and Meizel, *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies,* 301–313.

———. *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

———. *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun, and Katherine Meizel, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Erlmann, Veit, ed. *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*. Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Feldman, Martha, Emily Wilbourne, Steven Rings, Brian Kane, and James Q. Davies. "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 653–685.

Gopinath, Sumanth, and Jason Stanyek. "Anytime, Anywhere? An Introduction to the Devices, Markets, and Theories of Mobile Music." In *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies, Volume I*, edited by Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Sanyek, 1–34. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

———. "The Mobilization of Performance: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Mobile Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies, Volume 2,* ed. Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stankyek (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–39

Hosokawa, Shuhei. "The Walkman Effect." *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 165–180.

Kahn, Douglas. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Kendrick, Lynne. *Theatre Aurality*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Meyer, Stephen C. "*Parsifal*'s Aura." *19th-Century Music* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 151–172.

Moreno, Jairo. "Antenatal Aurality in Pacific Afro-Colombian Midwifery." In *Remapping Sound Studies*, edited by Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes, 109–134. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Moten, Fred. "The Phonographic *mise-en-scène*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 269–281.

Novak, Jelena. *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.

Ochoa Gautier, Ana María. *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Pearson, Mike. "Site-Specific Theatre." In *The Routledge Companion to Scenography,* edited by Arnold Aronson, 295–301. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017.

Risi, Clemens. "The Diva's Fans: Opera and Bodily Participation." *Performance Research* 16, no. 3 (2011): 49–54.

Ritchey, Marianna. *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Schulze, Holger. "Intruders Touching You. Intimate Encounters in Audio." In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sound Art,* edited by Sanne Krogh Groth and Holger Schulze, 221–234. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

Serra, Richard. "The Yale Lecture." In *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 1096–1099. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Steege, Benjamin. *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Steigerwald Ille, Megan. "Bringing Down the House: Situating and Mediating Opera in the Twenty-First Century." PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2018.

———. "Live in the Limo: Remediating Voice and Performing Spectatorship in Twenty-First Century-Opera." *The Opera Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2021). Published ahead of print, January 7, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbaa012.

———. *Opera for Everyone: Experimenting with American Opera in the Digital Age*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Thompson, Emily. *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Trippet, David. "Sensations of Listening in Helmholtz's Laboratory." Essay Review of *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener* by Benjamin Steege. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 47 (2014): 124–132.

Young, Miriama. "Proximity/Infinity: The Mediated Voice in Mobile Music." In Eidsheim and Meizel, *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies,* 403–418.

Abstract

Opera scholarship often begins with the voice then moves to the ear. But what if we move in the opposite direction? That is, what can we discover about operatic sounds by focusing on how processes of listening are mediated by social and technological patterns of behavior? I use The Industry's 2013 production of Christopher Cerrone's opera *Invisible Cities,* which relocated the audiovisual space of the opera house to a set of wireless headphones worn by each audience member, to think through these questions. In this article, privileging the ear *over* the voice allows us to consider the ways digital technologies create equivalent modes of understanding operatic *listening* as simultaneously fragmented, interstitial, and relational.

Rather than focusing on the acoustic perception of sound as it relates to the concert hall, here I am interested in highlighting the material significance of the headphones themselves in the production. I put interviews and public press reviews in dialogue with the body of rich scholarship around historical and contemporary modes of listening (Eidsheim, Sterne, Ochoa Gautier, Steege). I situate these headphones within a history of mobile listening and behaviors in order to understand what elements shape the twenty-first century operatic ear. I argue that the modes of spectatorship used in *Invisible Cities* built upon an established sociocultural tradition to show audience members *how* to successfully listen to the work. In focusing on the headphones, I demonstrate the significance of material technologies in constituting operatic aurality.

Keywords: Mediation, Aurality, Spectatorship, Opera, Headphones.

Megan Steigerwald Ille is an Assistant Professor of Musicology, Educator at the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. Her research focuses on the roles of place and digital mediation in the twenty-first century U.S. opera industry. She is currently working on a book on the Los Angeles-based opera company The Industry titled *Opera for Everyone: Experimenting with American Opera in the Digital Age*, that considers the impact of experimental spectatorship practices on contemporary operatic performance. She has published articles in the *Journal of the Society for American Music* and the *Opera Quarterly*.

REFLECTIONS

Event or Ephemeron? Music's Sound, Performance, and Media

A Critical Reflection on the Thought of Carolyn Abbate

Martin Scherzinger

All hear the sound gladly,
that rounds itself into a note.
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*)

… if our ears were ten times more sensitive,
we would hear matter roar—and presumably nothing else.
(Friedrich Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological World*)[1]

Mimesis Awry

"What does it mean to write about *performed* music? About an opera live and unfolding in time and not an operatic work? Shouldn't this be what we

* This essay would not exist without the considerable benefits of interlocution. In particular, I would like to thank Giorgio Biancorosso, Gianmario Borio, Alessandro Cecchi, James Currie, Carlo Lanfossi, and Emilio Sala for their engagement and encouragement in the writing of this text. I would also like to thank Carolyn Abbate, Amy Bauer, Seth Brodsky, Amy Cimini, Michael Gallope, Stephen Decatur Smith, Lydia Goehr, Berthold Hoeckner, Maryam Moshaver, Kelli Moore, Alexander Rehding, Holly Watkins, Emily White, and many others (too numerous to name), for their generous engagements with me over the years. The themes I raise here weighed upon our thinking particularly in the early years of the first decade of the twenty-first century, and are today marked by a certain nostalgia for the strident gaze toward the future we shared as young scholars at the dawn of a new era. This essay is dedicated to them all. One of the eight sections ("The Privileged Audility of Performance") of this essay appears in my "Music's Techno-Chronemics," in *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, ed. Gianmario Borio, Alessandro Cecchi, Giovanni Giuriati and Marco Lutzu (London: Routledge, 2020), 69–88 and another section ("On the Ethics of Abstinence") appears in "The Ambiguous Ethics of Music's Ineffability: A Brief Reflection on the Recent Thought of Michael Gallope and Carolyn Abbate," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 145, no. 1 (2020): 229–250, reproduced here with permission.

[1] Both quotations are from Friedrich A. Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 170–171.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 145–192.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss15335.

do, since we love music for its reality, for voices and sounds that linger long after they are no longer there? Love is not based on great works as unperformed abstractions or even as subtended by an imagined or hypothetical performance."[2] These are the opening lines of Carolyn Abbate's much-cited essay "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?". The essay, written almost two decades ago, is a fine-tuned elaboration of what can be described as a general turn to affect in the Humanities at the turn of the century. In particular, Abbate's text functioned as a kind of clarion call to North American music scholarship: if Lawrence Kramer's *new musicology* decentered music's perceived formalism by way of *hermeneutics* in the 1990s, Abbate's text decentered both formalism and hermeneutics (newly allied in her analysis) by way of *affect* in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

What follows is a granular reflection on some of the central claims in "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" as well as some of the argumentative maneuvers deployed to make them. This involves scrutiny not only of the tensions grounding the definitional reach of the terms of argument, but also of their influence on the dialectics of musical performance, the role of media and technology in human sonic experience, and, finally, the question concerning morals, ethics, and perhaps politics. I will conclude with three primary points. First, I will locate in Abbate's prescient text an unexpected gnostic-determinate thrust (or ontological commitment), awkwardly situated in the context of an argument about the drastic-indeterminate character of music (characterized by ontological withdrawal). Second, I will show that, given the successful overcoming of this contradiction, the argument for the drastic is not properly allied with the ethical or political positions to which it lays claim. Instead, the radically open-ended construal of drastic experience engages ethics and politics in a way that paradoxically forecloses its element of incipience and recalcitrance. Third, although they specify their ethico-political commitments quite differently, I will show how then-contemporary texts addressing the concept of affect—in particular, those by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht—too bear the marks of a similar foreclosure. The uncanny return of unwanted fixed meanings, basic categories, and gnostic determinations in a philosophy oriented toward presence and drastic openness is symptomatic of a hyperbolic construal of the opposition between language and affect—held firmly in the inertial grip of a centuries-old Western dialectic.

[2] Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004): 505, emphasis added. Page numbers for references to this article will be given directly in the main text.

Allow me a few scattered remarks about my approach to this critical reflection. Against the reticence advanced as an ethical response to music's drastic core (in Abbate's account), my approach is perhaps exaggeratedly loquacious. It is an attempt to track the nuance of Abbate's argument down to the *letter*, thereby consciously even bypassing its *spirit* from time to time. But mobilizing a mode of literalism (or what one might call *affective aphasia*) is one of the central points of this reflection. In other words, it refuses the unspecified spirit of the argument to act as a clandestine handhold for its deeper significance. This is an attempt, one might say, to sing to music's drastic potential a tune of its own making—a case of mimesis awry, or even mimicry. In other words, what is most important about Abbate's essay is not necessarily the coherent philosophical picture it frames, but all manner of brilliant observation it proffers along the way. In the years following its publication, Abbate's essay was met with considerable (and often surprisingly) negative reaction. But the vivid reaction to the essay was itself symptomatic of a kind of fascinated protesting, as if to strike a nerve at the heart of an institutionalized inertia. In reality, the essay had a lasting impact on music studies; and to the extent it was not actually influential on them, the essay catalyzed (or at least prefigured) a host of new inquiries in the first two decades of the twenty-first century—the turn to musical performance, the turn to musical timbre, the turn to musical ineffability, and of course the turn to affect.[3]

One important critique to emerge in the context of contemporary affect theory today relates to the way the libidinal drives (of the drastic) are coopted in the context of advanced capitalism. The perceptual specificity of music's drastic experience—and *mutatis mutandis* its autonomic affective intensity, pre-attentive timbre recognition, irreducible ineffability, etc.—about which visualizations and representations (from notations and transcriptions to cultural and social associations and *qualia*, by way of spectrum plots, temporal envelope outlines, and spectrograms) are ostensibly mute, is nonetheless increasingly mapped, measured, ordered, and predicted by new

[3] The proliferation of music scholarship in these domains is far too innumerable to list here. For prominent interventions in the respective fields, consider Borio et al., *Investigating Musical Performance*; Emily I. Dolan and Alexander Rehding, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190637224.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190637224; Robert Fink, Melinda Latour and Zachary Wallmark, eds., *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); and Michael Gallope, *Deep Refrains: Music, Philosophy, and the Ineffable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

statistical models for computing. One may speak here of the industrialized transmutation of music's listening systems into reflex response systems today, a subject of considerable importance in an era of industrial populism. In short, the turn to performance, affect, timbre, and ineffability marks a decisively symptomatic turn *away* from the material infrastructures of contemporary digitality—characterized by discretization, abstraction, statistical and symbolic orders, and the modeling of formal systems directly. The disavowal of industrialized computation, however, is generally *not* the tenor of the critique of the drastic that emerged in musicology in the past decade; nor is it my aim explicitly to raise this important critique in the context of this essay. To my way of thinking, the (often dismissive) musicological criticism itself had implications for scholarship that sometimes absorbed the weakest elements of the argument and simultaneously missed the insights layered into the axioms, observations, and conclusions formulated in Abbate's essay. Far from endorsing this chorus of critique, therefore, I hope to reveal some of the unintended consequences of thinking the drastic in music within Abbate's framework, and thereby marking more prominently the strains of insight that nonetheless persist therein. Above all, I hope that, without losing its critical edge, this reflection may be regarded as genuinely responsive to the central challenges raised by Abbate's riveting ideas.

Since the publication of "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" Abbate has considerably expanded her theoretical ambit, engaging questions concerning the ephemera of silent film, the curious metaphysics of mundane sound objects, and their relation to technological mediation.[4] In other words, aspects of the critique to follow have to some extent been addressed in these later writings, even as one detects a capacious consistency of argument throughout this *oeuvre*. For example, while technological mediation is downplayed, practically be definition, in the experience of the drastic, it is acknowledged in these later texts—but then, crucially, also devalued. The discussion of ephemeral sound in "Sound Object Lessons," for example, allows us something resembling an Archimedean point from which to break out of the grand tradition of technological determinism—an *enchained* narrative that "cites a device or technology and then sees its reflection in a musical work or technique."[5] While "Sound Object Lessons" tends to acknowledge

[4] See, for example, Abbate's "Overlooking the Ephemeral," *New Literary History* 48, no. 1 (2017): 75–102; and "Sound Object Lessons," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69, no. 3 (2016): 793–829.

[5] Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," 794.

the capacity of technologies to shape sound, these do not drive the startling "musicalizations" Abbate seeks to retrieve.[6] In other words, her basic philosophical position betrays a determined disinterest in non-sounding elements that may inhabit the phenomenological scene of listening. Therefore, while operationally present, sound technologies ultimately *subtend* musicalization. Instead of tracking the nuanced differences between Abbate's recent writings—the changing calibrations of the technology/music dialectic, for example—this essay explores the impulse to draw out the inherently sound-centered exposition of musical listening, most vividly experienced in the throes of live performance. Notwithstanding a certain fatigue for the drastic, this essay attempts to outline the limits of thinking musical performance as drastic experience.

Technophobic Transmissions of the Drastic

Abbate's opening lines again: "What does it mean to write about performed music? About an opera live and unfolding in time and not an operatic work? Shouldn't this be what we do, since we love music for its reality, for voices and sounds that linger long after they are no longer there? Love is not based on great works as unperformed abstractions or even as subtended by an imagined or hypothetical performance." Within the simplicity of a handful of inquisitive questions, we find a language that—consciously, perhaps—performs a kind of trick. Readers are presented less with a group of casually associated questions than with a questionable chain of casual associations. Listed as if to bear elementary likeness, we find the concepts of performance ("performed music") and liveness ("live and unfolding in time") set alongside music's realness ("its reality"), its sonorous dimensions ("voices and sounds") and its sonorous persistence ("linger[ing] long after they are no longer there"). This set of sound-centric ideas is extended in the

[6] Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," 797. Abbate's resolutely sound-centered analytics are perhaps the most influential uptake of her work in musicological writings in the wake of "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" For an excellent commentary on the turn to music as heard sound, for example, see Suzanne G. Cusick, "Musicology, Performativity, Acoustemology," in *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Deborah Kapchan (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 25–45. In her analysis of the "human microphone" (which formed part of the expressive resistance of the Occupy Wall Street movement), Cusick, on the one hand, draws on Abbate's attention to the "physical reality of music-as-sound," but mediates its hold on the listener, on the other hand, with reference to "nonmusical acoustic practice" (27, 40).

next three sentences to include "actual performances," "music that exists in time," "the material acoustic phenomenon," and the like. These are the ideas that come to define what Abbate calls the *drastic*—an irreducible (yet largely overlooked) realm of musical experience. In contrast, we find terms like "unperformed abstractions," "imagined or hypothetical performance," "meanings or formal designs," and "the abstraction of the work"—incapable of confronting music's presence; preoccupied instead by "something else," something "behind or beyond or next to" the actual music—congealing into an antipodal set (505). In short, performances are set against works; liveness against abstraction; sonorous presence against meaning and form; the drastic against the gnostic.

The first, almost obligatory, point to make about these dichotomous sets is that some of the terms are burdened by internal contradiction. For example, *liveness* is an arguably unstable idea, paradoxically constituted in our times. Phil Auslander argues, for example, that liveness is often constituted in *dissimulatory* fashion—an auratic effect both logically and practically produced in contexts of saturated technical reproduction.[7] Second, the attempt to elide drastic experience with liveness specifies a relationship between auditor and event that is, in social practice, quite constrained. Abbate resolutely stakes out the "material present event"—the "actual live performance (and *not a recording*, even of a live performance)"—as the central object of absorption and attention (506, emphasis added). On one occasion, if only to inoculate their evident power, musical *recordings* are faintly nudged toward the possibility of ushering drastic experience: "Even recordings," Abbate writes, "as technologically constructed hyperperformances, which we can arrest and control, are not quite safe as long as they are raining sound down on our heads" (512). But does the affective intensity to which the drastic lays claim have a more privileged relation to live performance—in the strict sense of the term, entailing both the spatial co-presence and temporal simultaneity of auditor and performer—than it does to modalities of reproduced sound? The idea, of course, is hotly contested and in doubt.

First, the idea is at variance with a widespread anthropological reality—the ubiquitous affective investments in streams of recorded music no less than music that possess no *live* counterpart at all. In the context of a world where representational technologies have overwhelmed presentational

[7] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

ones, modes of contemporary affect can be shoehorned into the specificities of strictly live encounter only under considerable strain. The dominant mode of musical production, marketing, and engineering today cannot be divorced from the technological resources—computer-imaging methods, beat matching, sampling, studio looping, multi-tracking, mixing, overdubbing, vocoding, autotuning, etc.—that underwrite its "material acoustic" character. If the historical *raison d'être* for sound recording was mimetic—a documentary impulse—its mid-century reality had shifted toward a constructive one. Indeed, I would describe the history of representational technologies in terms of a great shift from representational *fidelity* (in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) to *hyperfidelity* (in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries). In the context of hyperfidelity, the musical copy is itself a *surrogate*-original (skeuomorphically called the *master* copy) while the live rendition of it is a subordinate reproduction, not infrequently aspiring to the condition of the official recording. This is not to say that figures of music's ostensible *loci* will remain under the grip of this rubric in decades to come (especially as the financialized logics of digital musical streaming take increasing monopolistic hold), but that the figure of hyperfidelity still characterizes the dominant contemporary mode of musical consumption today. This leads to a second, more important, point concerning the role of technology in drastic musical experience. A host of twentieth-century composers and theorists—from Pierre Schaeffer, Roland Barthes, and Gilles Deleuze to Helmut Lachenmann, John Oswald, and Michel Chion, to name only an obvious few—turned their attention to the question concerning the technologies of music's *non*-gnostic components. What generally distinguishes these arguments from that found in Abbate's text is that they do not align contemporary modes of sonic presence most immediately with live performance, but rather with its antithesis—sound manipulation and reproduction. This reversal of fortune for technology is itself symptomatic of a paradoxical post-Cold War shift in conceptualizing the affective dimension of music's ineffability.

Schaeffer's phenomenological reduction, for example, shares with Abbate an effort to re-direct listening toward *non-appropriated* sound. In other words, his is an attempt to free auditory acts from the linguistically-mediated circuits of naturalized listening. For Schaeffer, such listening involves what he calls écouter *réduite* (reduced or acousmatic) listening, which is distinct from *ouïr* (the inattentive audition associated with persistent soundscapes), *comprendre* (listening directed at the reception of languages and the extraction of messages), and écouter (listening directed at

registering indices of objects and events in the world).[8] Acousmatic listening brackets sound from the communicative or indicative significations to which listening is all-too-easily enjoined, encountering sound instead as *objets sonores*. This is a kind of listening that leads "from pure 'sound' to pure 'music,'" bringing to earshot declensions of sonorous potential—"previously unheard sounds, new timbres, dizzying modes of playing," and so on—in short, a kind of drastic "*listen*[*ing*] with a new ear" (not to be equated with psychoanalytic listening, about which more below).[9] Despite an evident proximity of reduced listening to the drastic, however, Schaeffer's position *vis-à-vis* technology is diametrically opposed to that of Abbate. For Schaeffer, radio, phonography, and tape are the technological incarnations of Pythagoras' acousmatic ideal. Far from lamenting the losses, Schaeffer focuses on the perceptual affordances of new technologies, especially those of sound reproduction. Schaeffer's neo-Benjaminian leanings, for example, lead him to construe repeat-listening as ushering "different perspectives" that reveal a "new aspect of the object"; indeed, repetition even has the effect of "exhausting th[e] curiosity" for indexical or linguistically-based hearing.[10] For Schaeffer, in short, new technologies are the assistive vehicle for the anti-gnostic "acousmatic state"; not its antithesis.[11]

The technocentric turn in twentieth century accounts of drastic musical experience, broadly construed, extends well beyond Schaeffer's treatise. Even Barthes' famous notion of the voice's *grain*, to which Abbate's writing owes a loose allegiance, actually echoes *Schaeffer*'s notion of the grain, which he detects in the technological context of slowed-down tape recording. In Schaeffer's view, the slowed-down portion, "acting on the temporal structure of the sound like a magnifying glass, will have allowed us to distinguish certain details, of *grain*, for example, which our ear, alerted, informed, will also find in the second playing at normal speed."[12] In other words, tape recording is the technical support mechanism for a non-hermeneutic attentiveness to sound *qua* sound. The composer Lachenmann expanded this technical insight into a compositional procedure—*musique concrète instrumentale*—which foregrounds listening to the way "materials and energies" are afforded (and undermined) by specific instrumental tech-

[8] Pierre Schaeffer, *Treatise on Musical Objects: An Essay across Disciplines*, trans. Christine North and John Dack (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 64–69.

[9] Schaeffer, 69.

[10] Schaeffer, 66.

[11] Schaeffer, 68.

[12] Schaeffer, 67, emphasis added.

nologies.[13] Likewise, the film theorist Chion argues in the context of cinema that technical reproducibility is a necessary condition for "reduced" listening; a mode of listening that focuses on "traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and of its meaning."[14] While Chion's reduced listening cannot be conflated with drastic listening, its embrace of the "inherent qualities of sounds" in real time, and especially its disavowal of the "sound's cause or the comprehension of its meaning" is uncannily common to both.[15] As it is with the object of drastic listening (music's "material acoustic phenomenon"), reduced listening also involves an aspect of wildness, ephemerality, and caprice: "There is always something about sound that overwhelms and surprises us no matter what—especially when we refuse to lend it our conscious attention; and thus sound interferes with our perception, affects it."[16] In short, Chion's nonconscious, overwhelming, affected perception is the technophilic twin of Abbate's nonsignifying, unassured drastic experience.

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari, whose two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* lay the groundwork for Brian Massumi's theory of affect in the early 2000s, likewise construe affect (or "desiring-production") as an abstract *machine*, modeled on the musical synthesizer—a technology that could assemble and combine sonic elements outside of *a priori* nomenclatures.[17] Drawing on their reading of Pierre Boulez's analytic writings, the philosophers claim that the "synthesizer places all of the parameters in continuous variation, gradually making 'fundamentally heterogeneous elements end up turning into each other in some way.' The moment this occurs there is a common matter. It is only at this point that one reaches the abstract machine."[18] In other words, desiring-production resists taxonomic organization and plugs instead into machinic assemblages: "Philosophy is no longer synthetic judgment; it is like a thought synthesizer functioning to make thought travel, make it mobile, make it a force of the Cosmos (in the same way as one makes sound travel)."[19] These composers

[13] Helmut Lachenmann, "Musique Concrète Instrumentale," Slought, conversation with Gene Coleman, April 7, 2008, https://slought.org/resources/musique_concrete_instrumentale.

[14] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 29.

[15] Chion, 31, 30.

[16] Chion, 33.

[17] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[18] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 109.

[19] Deleuze and Guattari, 343.

and philosophers of techno-presence amass new sound technologies—ranging from phonography, radio, tape, and telephone to musical instruments, auditory projection in cinema, and the sound synthesizer—as resistive forces to guard against our naturalized tendencies toward gnostic (indexical, formal, hermeneutic, etc.) musical engagement. For Abbate, in contrast, technology *itself* is largely to be resisted; indeed, "the very fact of recording" comes into presence only as a "repeatable surrogate" (534). Like musical works, recordings transform the event into a "souvenir" (513); an "artifact, handheld and under control" (534). Placed alongside the work of Schaeffer, Barthes, Lachenmann, Chion, Deleuze and Guattari, and others, Abbate's construal of the drastic becomes a striking outlier. Ostensibly caught up in the wild ephemerality of its "temporal wake" (511), we now find the drastic experience itself subject to the kind of "arrest and control" (however differently inflected) associated with the "hyperperformances" that Abbate rejects (512). In short, for Abbate, drastic listening can be secreted only within the confines of a single conduit for music's mediatic transmission—the live event.

Of Auditory Relocations: Lingering or Loitering?

But what of the chain of associations that characterizes the drastic auditory experience? What of the litany of terms accruing to it—performance (505), presence (512), strangeness (508), liveness (509), sonorousness (505), actuality (509), temporality (511), reality (505), materiality (510), acoustic phenomenality (505), physicality (510), ephemerality (513), opacity (510), capacity (to transfix, bewilder, etc.) (512), ineffability (521), sociality (514), carnality (529), and so on? What do we make of this capacious ballooning of characteristics within the narrowing contexts of music's transmission? By what desire is more packed here into less? And by what inscription does drastic listening have the capacity to affect everything from love (505), fear (508), consolation (508) and peril (510) to wildness (512), desperation (510), exhaustion (533) and elation (533)? It is true that the expansive list of drastic attributes is occasionally moderated with reference to music's patently banal dimensions. In fact, we find in the text two references to the drastic mundane. First, Abbate's momentary reflection on a piano accompaniment—"*doing this really fast is fun* or *here comes a big jump*" (511)—counts as an experience closer to the music's "reality at hand" than the "bizarre" mental inquiries (511, 510)—the music's "Enlightenment subjectivity" (510),

for example, or the political order it reflects—that are associated with gnostic inquiry. Second, we find a brief reference to music's potentially "boring" effect on performers and listeners (513). *Some fast fun, a big jump*—the quotidian, if drastic, experiences of a piano performance—and something *boring*—the uneventful, if drastic, experience of an event—basically sums up the dull side of the drastic, as it is represented in Abbate's text. For the most part, however, the drastic carries an exciting Dionysian luster—it is unearthly (508), wild (509) and mysterious (513). Even the reference to boredom is abbreviated in its fuller argumentative context—a solitary adjective in a long list of alluring effects, characterized by semantically unhinged intensities. Here is the full sentence: "Music's effects upon performers and listeners can be devastating, physically brutal, mysterious, erotic, moving, boring, pleasing, enervating, or uncomfortable, generally embarrassing, subjective, and resistant to the gnostic" (513–514). In short, therefore, the drastic liberates the wildness of musical experience; while, against odds, the beleaguered gnostic tries to tame it—the gnostic tries "to domesticate what remains nonetheless wild" (508).

What *remains* wild? What remains at all? I phrase these questions this way, because in Abbate's text, one answer to them can be detected in the space that opens in the immediate aftermath of our encounter with music. Abbate repeatedly explores variations within these spaces of *auditory relocation*. In fact, therein lie the stakes of the expansive list of Dionysian attributes of the drastic. Let me explain. The uneasy affiliation of unlike terms in the list characterizing drastic experience is partnered with the uneasy *non*-affiliation of *like* terms accruing to both drastic and gnostic experience. On the one hand, for example, we are told we "love music for its reality"—specifically for those voices and sounds that "*linger long after*" they abate (505, emphasis added). On the other hand, Abbate simultaneously insists that "real music is music that exists in time, the material acoustic phenomenon" alone (505); an experience "*not enduring* past the moment" (512, emphasis added). A few pages later the point is intensified when Abbate strikes a vivid contrast between music's vanishing temporality and its *ex post facto* interpretation: "In musical hermeneutics, … effects in the here and now are *illicitly* relocated to the beyond" (514, emphasis added). Here, the attribute attendant to the hermeneutic act of *relocating* listening away from the *here and now* raises considerably the ethical stakes with which the essay began its polemic.

The essay's opening gambit about the limits of hermeneutics and formalism cohere largely around the principle of *withdrawal*. Drawing on

Vladimir Jankélévitch's writings,[20] Abbate here argues that these musical engagements "encourage us to retreat from real music to the abstraction of the work and, furthermore, always to see … 'something *else*,' something *behind or beyond* or *next to* this mental object" (505, emphasis added). This is the kind of displacement (or relocation) emerging from a mode of refusal—the *retreat from real music*. The point is reiterated throughout the essay. For example, elsewhere Abbate writes: "Between the score as a script, the musical work as a virtual construct, and us, there lies a huge phenomenal explosion, a performance that demands effort and expense and recruits human participants, takes up time, and leaves people drained or tired or elated or relieved" (533). In other words, the refusal to put in the effort, pay the expense, take up the time, and so on, amounts to a kind of retreat from the present reality of musical performances. Indeed, withdrawals such as these "lack that really big middle term, the elephant in the room," which, summed up in the next sentence, amounts to "music's exceptional phenomenal existence" (533). The point is that these acts of refusal and retreat are then *amplified*, by assertion alone, to constitute something forbidden, as if to be laundering meanings from murky origins. In less than ten pages, for example, we witness a *retreat* from something morphing into an *illicit* relocation therefrom—a metamorphosis that constitutes a particular *rhetorical relocation* all of its own (521).

The fascinating thing about relocating the musical experience in the hermeneutic/formalist manner, however, is that it blocks a kind of affective becoming that, for Abbate, remains central to musical experience. Again, the logic of *refusal* underwrites this point. She writes: "Retreating to the work displaces that experience, and dissecting the work's technical features or saying what it represents reflects the wish *not* to be transported by the state that the performance has engendered in us" (505–506). Here, a mode of gnostic repression obstructs a drastic experience—to be *transported* by sound—paradoxically wholly in keeping with romantic theories of music as processual becoming, the transfiguration of the commonplace, and so on. But, aside from archaic resonances, *whence* the overwhelming drastic *transport*? To wit, *whence* the *long lingering* in sonorities that are no longer there? What kinds of *relocations* are these—the transport, the lingering—that immunize them from their *illicit* fellow travelers? It appears that—in the wake of the vanishing presence of music's *phenomenal existence*, its ef-

[20] Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).*

fects in the "*here and now*" and no further or later—certain types of *relocations* are permitted, after all (514, emphasis added). But these are the movements of a *policed relocation*—movements along a *particular, constrained* path, steered precariously *away from* anything conceivably construed, in Jankélévitch's formulation, as "something else" (505). In other words, this is the "transport" that *steers clear* of the Scylla and Charybdis of anything that can be conceived as lying "behind or beyond or next to this mental object" (505). What to make of this mental *object*—this entity from whence music's *reality* lovingly issues forth; from whence audibility receives a wink of recognition from unsullied *phenomenal existence* itself? Is this the entity one is paradoxically compelled to describe as a dogmatic presentiment of *real music's mysterious a priori?*

Lingering in the quiet wake of music's drastic sounding thereby constitutes a mode of *supra*-audibility that breaks through the conventional barrier associated with the drastic event—fully respectful of music's essential "disappear[ing]" act (513); "not enduring past the moment" (512); the "vanished live performances" (514) and so on. As it is with the implied wish *to be* transported, this lingering-type of engagement is the privileged supra-audible truth that paradoxically transcends the supra-audible "meanings" (509) "content" (516) "import" (518) "message" (521) and "social truth" (526) to which the ear seems all-too-gnostically enjoined. The latter contents and messages and truths are *illicitly* secreted out of *enigma machines, cryptograms, seismographs*, and so on (524–529), in a process that is broadly summed up as "clandestine mysticism" (513–534). As it is with money laundering, these accounts arrogate contents and messages and truths by hiding their obscure origins and routing them through all manner of supra-audible theoretical machinery—historical, formal, linguistic, social, economic and political. In other words, the hermeneutic and formalist "inscription devices" (514) and "enigma machine[s]" (524) are the illicit middlemen laundering meaning from musical sound—a process that works "as if by magic" (528). Drastic engagement, in contrast, requires a radical de-signifying step, a shedding of devices and machines. Following a long tradition of thinking sound outside of theory, Abbate argues that, with the drastic, "there is no a priori theoretical armor" (510). This is a version of the drastic, in short, that is construed as *supra*-supra-audible.

How, then, does one tie up Abbate's central reflections on the question concerning *retrospective concern* for musical experience? What persists beyond music's definitional circumspection (or what I have described above as the real music's *mysterious a priori)*? The answer is shoehorned into some

version of the following formulation: the content of drastic *transport* and *lingering* must relocate listening *licitly* toward the absence of theoretical armor. *Ce n'est pas un a priori*. Licit relocation, in other words, takes the listener not *next to*, but simply *to* the elephant in the room; not to the mysticism of gnostic decipherment, but to the non-conceptual drastic *music qua music*. To be transported by music, in short, is to be taken not *beyond*, but to *within* music's conceptual no-place—*u-topia*. Spending-time in the wake of the vanishing live, in short, comes in two distinct forms: lingering and loitering. A maelstrom of questions arises at this juncture. First: When—in the wake of music's vanishing present—we stick around longer than music's actual sounding, are we experiencing a form of drastically (utopian) lingering or a form of gnostically (laundered) loitering? Second: Given the fact that a certain *persistence in the vanishing present* is common to both lingering and loitering, can the ontological inscription of music's ephemerality alone secure an argument that elevates the drastic experience, by casting Schopenhauerian shadows on the gnostic version of things? Third: Would such an argument both arrogate the powers of radical vanishing and disappearance in the context of emergence and appearance, and, furthermore—through its clandestine withholding in the context of the gnostic—asymmetrically so? Finally: What can happen if, instead of listening within the horns of an asymmetric dilemma, we return musical experience to the crossroads of the drastic and the gnostic, if only to ponder the road not taken?

The Privileged Audility of Performance

The gnostic seems to leave out the undomestic, untamed aspects of musical experience—its irreducible aural presence; its material sensual dimensions (triggering fear, peril, and much more) which leave listeners with no handhold in signification. James Currie would, in a well-known essay written a few years later, describe music's beriddling specificity as "the blank transformative hole" into which we fall in the moment of musical encounter.[21] The drastic, in contrast, is characterized by examples of uncanny resemblances, experiential alchemies, cracked notes, hallucinations, and so on (more on these below). Given that the gnostic attitude is "precluded" thereby, the drastic resides, above all, in *performed music* (Abbate, 510). In other

[21] James Currie, "Music After All," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no.1 (2009): 184.

words, it is at the site of performance that drastic experience is most vividly at play: "It is virtually impossible to sustain [gnostic speculations about subjectivity or politics] while playing or absorbed in listening to music that is materially present" (510). How do the examples of performance function as demonstrations of the drastic? Abbate reflects on an occasion where she accompanies an aria from Mozart's *Idomeneo*. As an experiment, she poses some distracting questions, while playing, grounded in speculations she had read about the monarchic regime and the Enlightenment subjectivity said to be reflected in the music. She concludes that, interjected *in media perficientur*, these "consciously bizarre" mental inquiries could, finally, only be "dismissed as ludicrous" (510, 511).

Interestingly, while vividly upholding the difference between drastic and gnostic, Abbate loosens the distinction between actual playing and absorbed listening in the over-arching context of performance, where one is undoubtedly "dealing with real music in real time" (511). This is the privileged site of audility—"*the reality at hand*"—which, practically by definition, sabotages the "metaphysical distance" required for gnostic arguments about politics, subjectivity, or any other modes of meaning-making or signification (511). Abbate expands the argument against gnostic approaches to musical works by appealing to their affective *value* as well. In the throes of "real music in real time," she writes, gnostic engagement is both "almost impossible" *and* "generally uninteresting" (511). A simple, practical fact hereby evolves into a judgment of value. To "depart mentally" (511) from music's reality at hand is both not practical and largely less interesting. Aside from the fact of its impracticality, why is the gnostic construed as less interesting at this point in the argument? The answer lies in the wild affective intensities associated with the drastic, and the narrowing affective reach of the gnostic: "Listening as a phenomenon takes place under music's thumb, and acoustic presence may transfix or bewilder; it frees the listener from the sanctioned neatness of the hermeneutic" (512). The drastic is liberating, in other words—it heralds states of wonder, astonishment, mystery, confusion and awe—and the gnostic is confining—it is *neat* and *sanctioned* (512) instead of *wild* and *mysterious* (513); it *locks down* meaning instead of leaving it *open*; it is a *safer haven* (512), instead of *free* (516) and *exceptional* (533) in its phenomenal existence; it traffics in abstractions *under the aspect of eternity* (512) instead of engaging the *labor* and *carnality* (514) of music's vanishing liveness.

The striking point about formalist and hermeneutic approaches, then, is not only that they have "little to do with real music" (512), but rather that

they foreclose the wildness and mystery, the open-endedness and the freedom; the labor and the carnality of drastic experience. The alluring power of the drastic is such that it can traverse all manner of affect, at once ephemeral—bewildered, mysterious, fallen into silence, etc.—*and* embodied—physically brutal, erotic, carnal, etc. (510–513). The gnostic, in contrast, is atemporal and disembodied; punitive even—it repays "the freedom" of the drastic by trapping the "gift-giver in a cage" (517). None of these attributes of the drastic are objectionable as such, but their antithetical relation to hermeneutic and formal engagements, on the one hand, and musical performance, on the other, can be sustained only with difficulty. In fact, not infrequently, Abbate's text must bend curious and complex phenomena to the scriptural pattern of a dichotomous theoretical mold. For example, the assertion that homosexual subjectivity is somehow reflected in what Susan McClary calls the "enharmonic and oblique modulations" of musical sound can hardly be described as a gnostic attempt to "*domesticate*" drastic wildness (508, 510–511).[22] In fact, Abbate's rhetorical maneuver gains traction here precisely from the seeming *absurdity* of McClary's statement—its risky wildness, its weirdness—made palpable in the paradoxical context of a *banal* performance (512). What we detect here is a *drastic* encounter unwittingly domesticated under the guidance of an instruction ("*here comes a big jump*," 511), while the gnostic engagement escalates its claims ("narrative structures" of "gay writers and critics," 511), well beyond the logic and grasp of its *a priori* instructional apparatus. Abbate's doubts about McClary's claims, at this argumentative juncture, have less to do with domesticating the drastic—the prison of sanctioned *neatness*; the entrapment of a *gift-giver*; and so on—and more to do with the unruly over-reach of their interpretive freedom—their *illicit* wildness.

This is not simply to reactively endorse the validity of McClary's claims without scrutiny, but to demonstrate the way attributing privileged audility to performance creates the conditions for the undermining of Abbate's general argument. Abbate claims that "during the experience of real music"—or, more precisely, in the context of actually "playing" it—"thoughts about what music signifies or about its formal features do not cross [her] mind" (511). Gnostic considerations such as these appear as if in "the wrong moment," departed from the "reality at hand" (511). This reality, however, is

[22] The reference is to Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 223.

highly unstable, for it encompasses both the quotidian scan for directives from the score (or its mnemonic supplement)—"*doing this really fast;*" the "*big jump*" to come; etc.—*and,* by the next paragraph, the wildness of an "acoustic presence" that can "transfix or bewilder" (512). This juxtaposition of terms associated with the drastic serves to sharpen a distinction between, on the one hand, performing music and, on the other, listening to it (while not performing); a distinction that has been clandestinely elided here. Are wholly different attentional regimes blended here in service of the drastic? How *bewildered*, for example, or how *transfixed* (or fearful, desperate, erotically aroused, uncomfortable, and so on) can one actually afford to be by the sounding passage under one's musically-performing hands? The specificity of performance—*its* reality at hand—in fact *demands* that such wild affective intensities are kept at arms' length. The successful execution of the *big jump* to come actually requires a narrowing of attention towards the physical task at hand and away from the allure of such drastic drift. To posit performance as the site of a privileged engagement with the drastic (in the *full* range and sense of the term) is paradoxically to simplify the complex audilities at play in any actual performance. There is, in other words, a strange dance between close listening and un-listening (engaging *and* suppressing real-time evaluations, alertness, affects, etc.) that characterizes actual musical performances and cannot be simply collated—under the paradoxical rubric of *freedom* (517)*, wildness* (508–509) and *openness* (516)—to the drastic.

For Abbate, "while one is caught up in its temporal wake and its physical demands or effects," the performer (at least in the context of live performance) cannot readily "depart mentally" from actual music (511). But from what event, precisely, can the performer not depart? By what inscription is the performer enjoined to remain? Again, what exactly remains? Does the idea of the *work* play no part in this remaining? What of the precarious *devastation* (513) and *dread* associated with the *departures* (511) pertaining to mismanaged performances? Why are they dreadful and how is the dread overcome? What remaining features guide the dread and its overcoming? Do all the "*formal* features" associated with this site of remaining, for example, *depart* from the performer's audility—to the extent that they do not even "cross [her] mind" (511)? How is derailment from the musical event at hand circumvented, if not by way of an appeal to at least some of these formal features some of the time—a specific affective rubric (*bravura*, say), or a guiding harmonic scheme, to offer an avenue out of a series of missed notes; or an internalized feel for specific metric coordinates, or a set of gestural

rhythmic conventions, to offer an avenue out of a missed page turn, and the like? And what sense of "real music in real time" prohibits *every* audile departure (511)? What if sustaining the temporality of a distinct motor pattern entails ignoring the inherent pattern emerging from an interlocking situation? What if driving the melodic line towards an oblique modulation entails the momentary suppression of presently unfolding heterophonic details? What if the momentary cracking of the singer's voice that one is accompanying must be suppressed in order successfully to execute a big leap that is lying in wait (beyond the moment of cracking)? Are these not the necessary aspects of *un*-listening required for the proper functioning of both solo and ensemble work? Indeed, are these not the small "reflective distance[s] or safer haven[s] from the presence of musical sound" (unilaterally associated by Abbate with the gnostic) that are, in fact, the conditions for the possibility of music's "proper object" (512, 513)?

The point is that gnostic knowledge is not the only knowledge that takes temporary leave of music's "proper object"—construed as its "ephemeral phenomenal being" alone (513). It is true that drastic and gnostic engagements differently mediate their comings-and-goings from actual performed music but neither can be immanently construed as either departed or remained; either relocated or located. The distinction between the drastic and gnostic cannot be sustained at this level of generality. Abbate argues, in contrast, that the gnostic approach alone has "misplaced its proper object," no less so when it treats performance as an "object awaiting decipherment" or as a "text subject to some analytical method yet to come" (513). Abbate writes: "To treat them this way would be to transfer the professional deformations proper to hermeneutics to a phenomenon or event where those habits become alien and perhaps useless" (513). Acts of decipherment and analysis, in other words, are habituated professional gestures that turn a deaf ear to performance—indeed, performance "is inaudible to both in practice" (513)—thereby relocating their findings to an irreducible outside, and hence *without use*. What do we make of this professional site of habituation, not infrequently associated with elitism (510, 516) in Abbate's text—and its peculiar uselessness (513)? For Abbate, this elite site (for "privileged eyes only," 528) is the clandestine mysticism deeply abstracted from actual performance, conceived (at this point of the argument) within the contours of an informal, but constitutive, *Gebrauchs*-context. But, outside the logic and grasp of these elite habits, what exactly is properly *useful* to this musical *reality at hand*? In other words, what are the performers' listening techniques, body habits, and trained reflexes that lie in wait for

the task at hand? We might frame the question thus: Are *these* habits not *ready to hand* (*zuhanden*, to invoke Martin Heidegger's formulation of such matters) for the performance's *reality at hand*? If the drastic resides but in the flux and flow of actual performance, are its freedoms not endangered by the force of these useful habits? Is the interface between the musical instrument and the human body not a fertile training ground for embodied comportment? Are these behaviors not brought under the direction of both the instrument's technical designs and (in the case of traditional European concert music at least) a host of additional mediatic inscription practices? Abbate briefly acknowledges the performer's "servitude, even automatism" (presumably to notational prescriptions) early in the argument (508), but, for the most part, the drastic is characterized by the Dionysian attributes (ineffability, ephemerality, desperation, peril, and so on) already amply listed above. If performance were taken more seriously than it is in Abbate's text, one would necessarily encounter, in a not insignificant sense, entirely new mediations of body and affect. If this were the case, in other words, one would be compelled to characterize the drastic component of music in paradoxically antithetical terms: the drastic now as conformism to prescribed codes of technical conduct; as yielding to the regulatory forces that govern the mastery of a skill set; as cultivating the automation of a host of physical human actions, and the like. In short, in the performing body we bear witness not to wildness, mystery, openness, and subjectivity, but—at least in equal measure—to cultivation, repetition, discipline, technique, and interpellation. In short, what is *useful* to music's *reality at hand* is a site *par excellence* of what could be called *coiled-up dressage*. The true drastic performance is noteworthy here not so much for its uncanny wildness and magic—its "strangeness" and "unearthly … qualities" (508)—but for its internalized familiarity, its disciplined domesticity? One is reminded of the parade of unremarkable stock gestures accompanying so much music and operatic performance.[23] Dare one be nudged even further here, and speak of the privileged audility of the performative *formula*, the *commonplace,* the *cliché*?

[23] Mary Ann Smart, "The Manufacture of Extravagant Gesture: Labour and Emotion on the Operatic Stage," (presentation for the seminar *Investigating Musical Performance: Towards a Conjunction of Ethnographic and Historiographic Perspectives*, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, July 9, 2016). See also Smart's *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

On the Ethics of Abstinence

It is not without ambiguity that Abbate suggests that due deference to the drastic may entail silence. On the one hand, she seeks to expand the limits of "remain[ing] mute" (513) in the experience of musical performance, while on the other hand, she resists the "loquacity" of music scholarship—a "professional deformation"—suggesting that, in the final analysis, this "might even mean falling silent" (510). Mostly, however, the essay is a critical story about the gnostic arrogation of meanings and forms beyond its remit. Hermeneutics and formalism summon authority by way of clandestine mysticism, an institutionally-sanctioned proffering of "messages," "cultural facts," "associations" and "constructed objects" across the terrain of music's sounding (517). Abbate, in contrast, calls for reticence, abeyance, abstinence ("leaving open or withdrawing," 516), resisting the rush to meaning. Given music's subsistence in a state of "unresolved and subservient alterity" (524) it is frequently "used or exploited" to commercial ends, a temptation that responsible scholarship should resist (517). Following Jankélévitch, music's very capacity for unleashing "potential meanings in high multiples" is therefore linked to an ethics of restraint; it is music's "ineffability" and "mutability" that ultimately "frees us" (516). This is the freedom that should not be repaid by ensnaring the *gift-giver in the cage* of gnostic coercion. Instead of "taking advantage of" music—by pinning to it a determinate meaning or form—Abbate advances "hesitating before articulating a terminus," and "perhaps, drawing back" (517). We read repeatedly of the appropriate ethical stance toward music—characterized by "grace, humility, reticence," and so on (529). In fact, the closing lesson of the essay elevates such withdrawal to a kind of principle, grounded in the acknowledgment that "our own labor is ephemeral as well and will not endure" (536). Resisting the temptation to lay bare a "cryptic truth" concealed in the performance, and "accepting its mortality" instead, she writes, may itself amount to a "form of wisdom" (536). *Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.*[24]

What is fascinating about this kind of ethics of hesitation and humility, as it is described by Abbate, is the way a gesture of abstaining—from *coercion* (535)*, authoritative conjuring* (522)*, taking advantage* (517), and so on—produces an ethical position that is as simple and eloquent as it is complex and incoherent. First, the simple of act of withdrawal recapitulates a kind

[24] "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 108.

of postmodern hesitation in the experience of impossibility/undecidability. This is a curious return to a quasi-deconstructive emphasis on troubling the certainty of embedded significations, placing prevalent concept-metaphors under erasure, and so on. In fact, Abbate regards postmodernism as *soft hermeneutics*—with "trickle-downs from skepticism"—substituting notions like "embedded or encoded" meaning for "*trace* or *mark*" of meaning (516). Despite the softening of the metaphoric attribution of meaning, both, she argues, read cultural data as inscription. In other words, deconstruction is read here as a kind of cloaked gnostic operation. Abbate also dismisses the deconstructive approach directly, associating it with masculinity, and by extension, with a differently formulated coercion that denies materiality and presence. She writes:

> Adopting a deconstructive apparatus and scoffing at presence like a man can truly seem perverse when real music is at issue. Unlike another aural phenomena [*sic*]—language or literature in oral form—real music does not propose a "simultaneity of sound and sense" that in thus positing a signifier and signified can itself be "convincingly deconstruct[ed]." Real music is a temporal event with material presence that can be held by no hand.[25]

To buttress her anti-deconstructive claims, Abbate recruits Gumbrecht's philosophical turn to presence. Against the "metaphysical" project associated with the "insights of Saussurean linguistics" (531), she advocates a discourse of "movement, immediacy, and violence" associated with events "born to presence."[26] Meaning culture, she argues, is above all anathema to the presence of performed music.

Given Gumbrecht's argumentative centrality at this juncture, it is instructive to compare the ethics of his position with those of Abbate. Gumbrecht too takes great interest in the materiality of musical experience—"I can hear the tones of the oboe on my skin," he asserts in the context of an example of the production of presence—but his ethics are in stark contrast to the reticence advocated by Abbate.[27] In Gumbrecht's

[25] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 531. The quotations are from Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 15.

[26] The last two quotes, cited by Abbate, are from Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Form without Matter vs. Form as Event," *MLN* 111, no. 3 (1996): 586–587.

[27] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 97.

universe, there simply are *no ethics* to be found in moments of presence, deixis, or epiphany. He writes: "There is nothing edifying in such moments, no message, nothing that we could really learn from them," which is why he refers to them as no more than "moments of intensity."[28] These moments depart from all scripting ("there is no reliable, no guaranteed way of producing moments of intensity");[29] they simply veer away from the taxonomies of signification, including ethical ones. In sum, there is simply *no* "convergence between aesthetic experience and ethical norms."[30] Not only is presence empty of ethical content or significance, for Gumbrecht, but—in stark contrast to the invitation to reticence or withdrawal—presence is actually perceived as a kind of brutal assault. Indeed, the reason we should be drawn to presence at all, given its lack of edification, ethics, or meaning, is, for Gumbrecht, something of an enigma: "How is it possible that we long for such moments of intensity although they have no edifying contents or effects to offer?"[31] For Gumbrecht, the fascination lies in the fact that they transcend the everyday—which is so "insuperably consciousness-centered … and perhaps even mediated by clouds and cushions of meaning."[32] It is this insight that leads Gumbrecht to link moments of intensity and presence to power and violence—the violence of "blocking spaces with bodies"—which turns out to be "irresistibly fascinating for us."[33] For Abbate, the gnostic impulse is the brutal play of authority—"taking advantage" of music's indeterminacy, arrogating and foreclosing the drastic, and so on—but for Gumbrecht, to momentarily transpose the dichotomous terms, it is in fact the *drastic* that arrogates and forecloses all remnants of the gnostic. It is presence that overwhelms us—"occupying and thus blocking our bodies"—producing a kind of drastic fascination with "losing control over oneself."[34] Gumbrecht's is a story of the assault *of* presence, not the assault *on* presence. Finally, in a neo-Schopenhauerian twist, Gumbrecht actually describes the material assault of presence in terms that resist even a residual sense of reticence toward the gnostic impulse—the wisdom of the momentary or the ethics of withdrawal. For Gumbrecht, instead, presence ultimately signals our

[28] Gumbrecht, 98.
[29] Gumbrecht, 99.
[30] Gumbrecht, 115.
[31] Gumbrecht, 99.
[32] Gumbrecht, 106.
[33] Gumbrecht, 114, 115.
[34] Gumbrecht, 115, 116.

desire for integration into the world of things; our desire to yield to an existential longing for "pre-conceptual thingness."[35]

Given Abbate's recruitment of Gumbrecht to oust the masculinist impulse of deconstruction, it is perplexing to ponder the extreme difference in their respective ethical stances. Again, for Gumbrecht, the intensity of presence is violent and agnostic of all ethics, while for Abbate the drastic is open-ended and grounds an ethics of humility and grace. Gumbrecht's position is consistent with his rejection of the linguistic turn in the Humanities, while, confusingly, Abbate's position resonates with the very deconstructive paradigm it seeks to avert. Symptomatically, we therefore witness an uneasy account of the role of so-called *non-conscious* embodiments in Abbate's text. For Gumbrecht, the assaultive character of presence lies outside of all conscious intention. For Abbate, the matter is more complicated. Here we read that a scholarly appeal to non-conscious responses is a form of "clandestine mysticism" (517), attendant to a kind of romantic gnostic chicanery. Taruskin's assertion, for example, that composers respond to circumstances "below the threshold of their conscious intending" is denounced as "Freudian romanticism," in which political circumstances are mystically said to "speak directly through the unconscious to the musical imagination" (520).[36] Abbate allies this maneuver with a "rich history" that associates music with the unconscious, and the unconscious, in turn, with "*occulted truth*" (520, emphasis added). Addressing the workings of clandestine mysticism directly, Abbate detects how references to cryptic, non-conscious, oblique, hidden and secretive contents and meanings assist in paradoxically leveraging objectivist authority. She writes:

> There are the distinct verbal signatures produced by clandestine mysticism—music reveals things "*below* … conscious intending," "*deeply hidden* things," "secrets," "*genuine* social knowledge." Words like *code* and *cryptogram* and *decipher* usher this chthonic discourse into broad daylight because hieroglyphs are at once material objects visible to the naked eye and the enigma these objects promise so persuasively as a hidden secret beyond their surface.[37]

[35] Gumbrecht, 118.

[36] Abbate is quoting from Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xxxi.

[37] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 526. The quotations are from Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, xxxi; Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 62; Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian Fugue: Ethel Smyth's Contrapuntal Arts," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music*

In other words, in a context where laundering meanings, forms, and contents functions as a cipher of a buried truth, the appeal to non-conscious operations stands as a useful alibi.

The problem with this formulation is not only that it contradicts the dimension of Gumbrecht's argument upon which Abbate relies, but that it also contradicts itself. Music's immediate aural presence is paradoxically construed as both event *and* ephemeron. On the one hand, its *vanishing act*—characterized as "not enduring past the moment" (512), "ephemeral phenomenal being" (513), "perpetually absent object" (514), "subject to instantaneous loss" (532), etc.—assures its fundamental resistance to gnostic over-reach. In other words, the *a*temporal character of gnostic investigation—"under the aspect of eternity" (512)—such as we find in formalism and hermeneutics is, practically by definition, a categorical distortion of music's reality—a kind of "professional deformation" (510) or "illicit relocation" (521) to a fixed space outside the flow of time. It is this aspect of music's ontological status—its ephemerality—to which Abbate's ethics most prominently respond. On the other hand, music's *irreducible presence*—characterized as "physical force and sensual power" (509), "material presence and carnality" (529), "the event itself" (532), "exceptional phenomenal existence" (533), etc.—assures its voluminous *being-there* for arresting embodiment. In other words, music's almost ballistic materiality, in stark contrast to its ephemerality, endows it with the physical force of an external object.[38] With *this* information about music's ontological status in mind—its event-ness—Abbate's ethics take an interesting turn. Far from being annexed by acts of gnostic arrogation, immediate aural presence now annexes the *receptive body* and even alters its state. In an act of *drastic* arrogation (momentarily in sync with Gumbrecht's conception of presence), it now "acts upon us and changes us" (532).

What is troubling about this reversal of fortune for ethics as it is *weighed upon* by the *event* (instead of *released* by the *ephemeron*), is that it indulges, fleetingly but tellingly, the very clandestine mysticism once associated with the cryptographic sublime. Let me explain. Non-conscious sonorous objects now promise embodiments that are as much a "hidden secret beyond their surface" (526) as any gnostic seismograph (528). In other words, pres-

Scholarship, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 164–183: 164; Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5.

[38] Currie's gravitational metaphor of *falling* into a transformative gap is relevant here (Currie, "Music After All," 184).

ence effects, like their gnostic arrogations, are "tandem flights" (531) toward *a threshold below conscious intending* (520): "When it is present, [music] can ban logos or move our bodies," she writes, before adding "*without our conscious will*" (532, emphasis added). But whence this drastic unconscious? It is not only that drastic encounter now shares with gnostic interpretation the "Freudian romanticism" Abbate hopes to reject (520), but that this very mode of romanticism secures the principal ethical import of Abbate's position. How so? On close inspection, the simple ethics of withdrawal described above metamorphose, as Abbate's argument unfolds, into something new—an ethics of *incorporation*. Far from mere *schweigen* (falling silent, leaving open, etc.) the ethics of the drastic in its *material* and *carnal* moment introduce a moral confrontation with alterity. The gnostic now forecloses the value of the quasi-ballistic force of the drastic—the "*value*," that is, "both intellectually and *morally*, in encountering a *present other at point-blank range*" (532, emphasis added). This encounter with a present other expands into an ethics of the other that is given voice throughout the essay. Recall, for example, the gnostic enjoinment to "articulat[e] a terminus, or [restrict] music to any determinate meaning within any declarative sentence" (517), to which Abbate responds with an appeal to freedom. The appropriate engagement with this encounter involves "not taking advantage," "hesitating," and "drawing back" from the (gift-giving) musical configuration (517). Anthropomorphism aside, Abbate argues, this kind of abstinence resembles "an ethical position" (517). Musical works are not living things, "but the way we cope with them may reflect choices about how to cope with real human others or how not to" (517).

The point is that this ethical position recapitulates the clandestine mysticism of gnostic interpretation, which too operates on the logic of resemblance, reflection, and revelation. Gnostic arrogation occurs when some configuration detected in beautiful sounds—an oblique enharmonic modulation, say—is said to *resemble* or *reflect* something alien to it—a certain subjectivity or political regime or so. By what inscription may the reticent attitude, hesitating before the call of (narcissistic?) gnostic reflection, come suddenly to *reflect* forms of social interaction (with real human others) after all (517)? By what clandestine metamorphosis did abstinence become a seismographic *reflection* of socially-mediated ethical encounter? Or does the encounter with real human others at stake here operate more by way of non-reflective *immediacy*—at point-blank range, and so on? It is unclear. But perhaps this counter-point is overdrawn, for the reference to affirmative ethics in both cases quickly recedes as the essay resumes the task of

raining down critique on the head of gnostic mysticism. Toward the end of the argument, however, Abbate actually ups the ante on this construal of ethics by *spiritualizing* the physicality of music in performance. Following Jankélévitch, she claims that music's "physical action can engender spiritual conditions, grace, humility, reticence" (529). With reference to Neoplatonic philosophy and apophatic theology, Abbate articulates acts of "understatement and silence" to a kind of "social reality" with ethical implications (530). She advances the idea that "engagement with music [is] tantamount to an engagement with the phenomenal world and its inhabitants" (530). The encounter with the other that emerges, first, by way of *point-blank immediacy* and, second, by the *logic of reflection*, emerges in this third articulation by way of a *grammar of equivalence*. The ethical consequences of all three modalities of engagement seems to be the same. In a scenario where social engagement is considered as alike to musical engagement, for instance, we take away the following *moral* lesson: "Playing or hearing music can produce a state where resisting the flaw of loquaciousness represents a moral ideal, *marking* human subjects who have been remade in an encounter with an other" (530, emphasis added). Here we find—in the paradoxical name of an ethics of abstinence—a tangible encounter with a human/musical other that leaves on its subjects a kind of (deconstructive?) *mark*. Is this a kind of *soft hermeneutics redux*? Perhaps. The larger points, however, are, first, that these are *clandestine* rubrics—rubrics that deploy drastic musical encounter as a cipher for an ethics in the *social* world; and, second, that the fact that a *diversity* of rhetorical rubrics—reflection, immediacy, and equivalence—lead to the same goal in the context of the drastic encounter probably marks a site of desire—a *wish* for social relevance in the stark silence of withdrawal.

In the final analysis, the ethics of drastic encounter, however tangibly arrested by presence, resemble less the agnosticism we find in the starkly unedifying productions of presence in Gumbrecht's formulation than they do the deconstructive abeyance we find in the thought of Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction of course rejects the self-uttering claims of presence, and marks instead the differential mediations attendant to our very hold on presence. In Abbate's text, presence is at once embraced *and* denied the violence of such claims. Far from the violence implied by Gumbrecht's arrested bodies, that is, presence in the context of the drastic is held at arm's length, kept unsullied by gnostic determination, set *free*. Herein lies one of the conundrums faced by simultaneously tethering presence to the event, on the one hand, and to the ephemeron, on the other. Caught in the crosshairs of this riddle-like suspension, we now find a noteworthy reversal of fortune for ethics in the

context of theories of presence. Of the strained claim to social relevance—gnostic abstinence in the face of drastic experience—one might say its value resides in the proximity of deconstruction. However, where a deconstructive operation such as *différance* nonetheless engages the nominal accretions and attendant effects of presence (via the internal structures of differing and deferring, etc.), the ethics of drastic encounter—at risk of ensnaring them in gnostic determination—disengages from them entirely. The political and social relevance of deconstruction is contested and in doubt, of course, even as Derrida (in his final years) insisted on the importance of the *decision* in the experience of the undecidable.[39] For the purposes of this argument, however, it is important to note, first, that Abbate's ethical abeyance is more allied with Derrida's deconstructive maneuvers than it is with Gumbrecht's story about presence; and, second, that even the (minimal) social relevance of deconstructive undecidability withers in the context of drastic withdrawal—its totalizing gnostic prohibition. This is the radical blank of the point-blank.

Technomystical Repetitions

> Suppose music really does know best ("the matrix of sounds explains the structures of power") and gives access to otherwise lost information, revelations about humankind or its societies that no other art can transmit. Suppose music has important secrets pouring from it and our enigma machine with the correct cylinder merely needs to be put in place; that is a tempting vision.[40]

These are the suppositions that modulate from Abbate's reflections on music's radical openness toward a critique of technology—the *machining* of an enigma—in the context of drastic musical experience. By endowing a machine (with appropriately fitted cylinders) the power to decode a hermeneutically-slippery medium, gnostic knowledge takes on the character of decryption. Abbate calls these machinations of the machine the "cryptographic sublime" (524). Far from actually approaching the sublime, however, this knowledge amounts to little more than sonified *fraud*. For Ab-

[39] See, for example, Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005).

[40] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" 524. The quotation in parentheses is Abbate's own translation of the blurb from the original dust jacket of Jacques Attali, *Bruits* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977).

bate, the symptomatic fallout from techno-trickery of this sort is twofold. First, real music is eroded, if not entirely eliminated, by the technological apparatus, and second, embezzled gnostic determinations are granted an aura of technical objectivity.

First, on the loss of real music at the hands of technological intervention, Abbate writes: "That technology, codes, inscription metaphors, and mechanisms flow into musical hermeneutics is not, however, just an entertaining foible. They represent the excluded presence of real music, the material and carnal as displaced onto technology" (527). Theodor Adorno's seismograph and Jacques Attali's magnetic tape constitute so much "technomysticism" to (fraudulently) spirit forth gnostic secrets as it spirits away drastic presence (527). Left in the wake of music's banished materiality and carnality, these technical decoding devices proffer a kind of fake presence—the "false Eros and synthetic carnality" of a technological metaphor (529). Under the spell of gnostic technomysticism, we are left with a music without music. This is a curious upshot for a position deeply immersed in music's ephemerality—*real music*—"so personal, contingent, *fugitive to understanding*" (529, emphasis added). Whence this fugitive? If music's vanishing act entails its escape, even hiding, from all understanding, under what conditions can one posit a music *with* music—a music that will not betray the site of its hiding? The question arises: How, where, and when is banished sound—a particular instance of its disavowal—distinct from vanished sound—a general condition of its ephemerality?

Second, on the aura of technical objectivity in the context of gnostic fraud, Abbate writes, "music qua machine traces what is there without subjective bias, thus when music and my argument run along the same lines my argument cannot be assailed" (529). In other words, the precarious hold on gnostic thought in the throes of drastic experience is pitted against the gnostic secrets that are paradoxically amplified by complex decoding machines and inscription devices. Abbreviated in value—"a state of *unresolved and subservient alterity*" (524, emphasis added)—the drastic is left to linger in the confines (at best) of subjective bias, while—bolstered by the full audio-visual technological apparatus—the gnostic reigns supreme, "untranscendable" (527). Abbate's essay seeks to upend this hierarchized opposition, of course, by advancing a seemingly irreducible fact about listening—the *de facto* overwhelming character of its live presence. At one point in her experience of Laurie Anderson's performance piece *Happiness* on March 15, 2002, for example, Abbate heard a devastating sound emerge from the clicking of teeth: "a loud boom with no reverberation" (533). The sound,

which triggered "*real terror*" (conjuring, as it did, "the sound of bodies hitting the ground from great heights"), leads Abbate to reflect on the importance of what happened "*at that moment*;" the trigger that occurred in the "*right now*" (533–534, emphasis added). In contrast to the drastic experience elicited in this radically temporalized present, Abbate examines the kinds of experience attendant to *a*temporal technologies of reproduction. She rhetorically asks: "The very fact of recording—as any future audience can experience this event that came into presence (to echo Gumbrecht) only via its repeatable surrogate—does that not alter a basic alchemy, making the event an artifact, handheld and under control, encouraging distance and reflection?" (534). Although Abbate briefly acknowledges that both drastic and gnostic elements can "furnish a simultaneous ground under the sonic circus" (533)—indeed, it is this simultaneity that constitutes an *alchemy*—the true insight to which this kind of statement points is that the recording is, *of itself,* substitutive. In other words, the recording only implausibly approaches the radical presence of the event. It offers repetition for singularity, control for wildness, and distance and reflection for immersion and absorption in the actual event. Interestingly, Abbate's skepticism toward reproducibility and repetition is, if not fully argued, repetitively asserted throughout the text. The example of an unrepeatable drastic encounter in 2002 thereby paradoxically *repeats* a central tenet of Abbate's text. As if under the guidance of the formal demands of a *rondo*, we read again a slightly varied version of what we read before. The "repeatable surrogate" that makes of an event an artifact, "handheld and under control," imitatively echoes the point, made over twenty pages earlier, that recordings are "technologically constructed hyperperformances, which we can arrest and control" (512). This is the idea, as it were, that the essay arrests under its own "aspect of eternity" (512). Even if repetition is the primary rhetorical vehicle for asserting the idea, we are warned once more of the technical conditions for placing the drastic fugitive under arrest—the drastic, in other words, as always-already arrested and controlled in contexts of technological repeatability.

But therein lies a key aspect of the dialectics of repetition. "Gnostic satisfactions can become pale," we are told in connection with Abbate's riff against the technical reproduction of the drastic experience of Anderson's performance (534). But, as with Walter Benjamin's aura, repetition can both wither (or render pale) *and* amplify (or brighten) the drastic experience. Without rehearsing once more the valorization of reproduction technologies (phonography, radio, tape, etc.) we find in the writings Schaeffer, Chion and others, it is clear that repetition actually triggers drastic experience in

Abbate's universe as well. After all, the alchemical amalgam—"live presence and secret knowledge" (534)—accruing to the moment of terror was itself "guided by earlier references to the World Trade Center's destruction" (533). The troubling return to earlier references in the drastic moment here is not simply meant to rehearse that often-repeated insight that gnostic knowledge sponsors drastic experience. This truism constitutes the crux of Karol Berger's insubstantial response to Abbate's challenging text. The takeaway of Berger's response can be summed up in a single sentence: "There is no such thing as pure experience, uncontaminated by interpretation."[41] While Berger is attempting to demonstrate that musical perception is in fact subtended by a broader sphere of human experience, this kind of truism—a tautology in recoil from the drastic—can quickly organize itself into a system for containing the frictions of nature, history, and perception. Indeed, it is the *imposition* that material presence brings to such conclusive organized systems to which theories of affect, the drastic, etc.—to their credit—attend. Although it is inconsistently articulated, Abbate's appeal to *unbidden* materializations of presence—such as the "neurological misfire" in the context of a scene in an opera, for example (535)—bear witness to the challenge of frictional encounter. The closed-circuit production of meaning, in contrast, issues a new set of perils that cannot simply spirit away the impositions of tangible experience in its own systematic maelstrom of interpretation and mediation. What is troubling about Abbate's return to gnostic invocations—"earlier references to the World Trade Center's destruction," and so on—is distinct from this catch-all coign of vantage.

There are two specific points to be made at this juncture. First, the reversion to the gnostic—the "secret knowledge of the hidden signified" (534)—which triggered the terror, was itself attributed to, first, a microphonic amplification of teeth clenching; and, second, a documentary recording by the Naudet brothers of the 9/11 disaster. Abbate adds, "No one who has seen the documentary forgets the sound [of bodies hitting the ground from great heights]" (534). Of course, Abbate concedes that this is a site of "hermeneutic alchemy" (535)—not an unfettered presence—but the matter is not settled by way of a simple acknowledgement. To begin with, all aspects of an elaborate argument about the clandestine operations of technomysticism are now placed under strain. How so? First, the gnostic signified that sets off the drastic intensity of terror is issued by way of the very *seismographic*

[41] Karol Berger, "Music According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic?" *Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 3 (2005): 497.

technology that is construed as more than mere amplification, registering instead "imperceptible shifts below the threshold of perception" (528)—the "technomysticism" that rejects vulgar representation for "buried, underground, tectonic vastness," inscription, and so on. Second, the triggering is issued by way of the very *technology of reproduction* that is construed as the "repeatable surrogate" that alters drastic experience—brings it "under control," solicits "distance and reflection," and so on (534). But this is not all, for the particular terror it triggers falls, above all, *under the aspect of eternity*—"no one who has seen the documentary forgets the sound." *No one forgets*. In other words, the drastic experience *qua* experience is here lodged firmly in the *a*temporal structure Abbate once associated with gnostic investigations—"abstractions … under the aspect of eternity" (512)—and not, strictly speaking, in the ephemerality of the moment alone. The fact that there is no unforgetting the sound, as well as the fact that the recorded sound was repeated by other technological means, is structurally central to the experience. This is not the place to dissect the dialectics of trauma, but it remains evidently open to discussion whether what is at stake here is a species of repetition compulsion or, as maintained, simply held in the grip of a singular ephemeral event alone.

The Gnostic Redux (Of White Elephants)

The second problem attendant to Abbate's reversion to gnostic knowledge for leveraging examples of drastic encounter is more paradoxical still. Take Abbate's experience of despair when Ben Heppner's voice cracked on high notes early in the performance of *Die Meistersinger* at the Met in 2001. While most of the singers belted forth in a kind of "psychotic … joll[iness]," Abbate bore witness to the "raw courage and sangfroid" of a singer who refused to give up—"a unique human being in a singular place and time, falling from the high wire again and again" (535). Abbate writes, "I was transfixed not by Wagner's opera but by Heppner's heroism … the singular demonstration of moral courage, which, indeed, produces knowledge of something fundamentally different and of a fundamentally different kind … drastic knowledge" (535). What is fascinating here is that Abbate connects drastic knowledge with the question concerning morality. Again, it would be an inadequate truism to simply point out that Abbate's intimate knowledge of the operatic work is the condition for the possibility of this drastic experience. Indeed, given that Heppner's voice cracked in the first

strophe of the preliminary version of the Prize Song, she made "a quick calculation that he had five more strophes in two full verses in the preliminary version," not to mention the many versions of the song, still to come (535). *Of course* the work-concept here circumscribes the event; it is the metaphysical *a priori* that is the condition for the possibility of this despairing experience, no less than the neurological misfire to come a few days later. But this insufficiently registers the challenge of Abbate's experience of the scenario at the Met. Neither will it do to simply point out that Heppner's *morality* is cut of a drastically different cloth from the ethics attendant to drastic experience, as it is understood by Abbate. In other words, the moral courage of Heppner's plunging-forth can hardly be recreated under the rubric of an ethics of hesitation and withdrawal. But this is where Abbate's insight into the moment may actually provide a basis for revising her more-or-less deconstructive ethical stance, and, especially, for moderating the starkly agnostic one held by Gumbrecht. Heppner's is the courage of persistence, not that of reticence.

But the more vexing problem emerges when we consider these kinds of experience in relation to an aesthetic tradition that valorizes the unexpected in art—the aesthetics of radical becoming, innovation, and transformation; the transfiguration of the commonplace, and so on. The terror triggered by an alchemical blend of drastic and gnostic in Laurie Anderson's performance of *Happiness*, no less than the despair launched in the context of a quick calculation (and a subsequent neurological misfire) of Ben Heppner's performances in a production of *Die Meistersinger,* are transmutations *of this sort*. In Heppner's case, a vocal misfire on the high notes A and G suddenly launched the real possibility of total embarrassment and scandal; and in Anderson's case, an echoless thud suddenly launched the listener into the horror of processing again an event of real death. Without diminishing their intensity, these drastic experiences are wholly consistent with the romantic aesthetics of transfiguration—Christian Friedrich Michaelis's *powerfully startling* experience, Edmund Burke's *sublime suddenness*, Immanuel Kant's *transcendence of empirical standards*, and so on—updated here for the era of post-postmodernism. Art becomes life. First a boom without reverb propels the listener into an unbearable confrontation with an actual scene of murderous death and, second, a vocal misfire catapults the living struggle of a great hero onto the opera stage. This crypto-romantic maneuver is not objectionable in itself, but it does raise a set of different questions, which, again, create the conditions for the undermining of large swaths of Abbate's general argument.

In what sense? First, recall the importance of the non-conceptual import of the drastic—its direct tethering to *music qua music*—the "elephant in the room" (533). How exactly do the examples provided by the specific experiences of performances by Anderson and Heppner tally with this aspiration toward registering affects and effects of *music qua music*? How responsive are these examples to qualities and problems peculiar to music? In both cases, the answer to this question is unsatisfactory. Not only is Heppner actually trying to *hide* and *disguise* his errors for most of the performance, but the cover-up actually registers the fact that the cracking high notes constitute the *noise* that undermines the *music*. Of course, the *possibility* of a vocal misfire constitutes an element of opera's considerable aesthetic pleasures, but, nonetheless, the drastic despair is located not in the music as much as in its ever-lurking noisy other. Furthermore, the moral of Heppner's courage resides in his ability to *continue* in full knowledge of what happened and what awaits. This—the crux of the drastic despair—is not, however, peculiar to music. Suppose a marathon runner leading the pack suddenly sprains an ankle a mile out from the finishing line, pushes through the pain, and despite competitors closing-in, persists to the end, victorious: Is this drastic event not of the same species as that in December 2001 at the Met? Does this form of "drastic knowledge" not likewise register "a unique human being in a singular place and time," "the singular demonstration of moral courage," and so on (535)? But if a sporting event so easily recapitulates the affective crux of the musical one, does the precise modality of drastic despair experienced by Abbate not equally bypass the elephant in the room, the phenomenal reality of *music qua music*? The same problem accrues to the example on March 15, 2002. Suppose the smoke rising from the ash of a cigarette triggers unbidden images of the smoldering World Trade Center: does this not constitute a similar traumatic trigger to that experienced by clicking teeth? In fact, are traumatic flashbacks not, by definition, deeply unpredictable—seeking out capriciously dispersed outlets? As a trigger of this media-indifferent sort, is not the quest to unpack what is peculiar to the inherently *sonic* dimensions of that echoless resonance a troubled one? In short, has the elephant in the room—*music qua music*—become the white elephant once more?

Paradoxically, Abbate's demonstration of the drastic in these examples is at once too abstracted from the materiality of presence unique to music qua music (as shown above) *and* too immersed in the gnostic specificity of their actual musical workings. Let me elaborate on the latter point. In connection with the Heppner incident, Abbate writes: "I was transfixed

not by Wagner's opera but by Heppner's heroism … the singular demonstration of moral courage … [what] one could call … drastic knowledge" (535). Abbate rehearses the fact the she is in fact well acquainted with the "literature on *Meistersinger*," with its "unspoken anti-Semitic underside," its problematic "reception history," and even its own claims to a "nonsignifying discourse" that may give voice to "something appalling" (535–536). However, the drastic trigger that produced the despair and, later, the hallucination were set adrift from this entire *corpus* of hermeneutic knowledge no less than the formal qualities of the actual work. Abbate's experience emerged in a *schism*—"essentially, a split where the performance drowned out the work" (535)—whereby perception, ensnared in the immediacy of drastic presence, veered irredeemably away from the protocols of the opera itself. But is this in fact so? Here is a basic (hermeneutic) outline of the opera: Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* is more or less a comedic musical drama about musical creativity and its relation to social reproduction. The masters' guild of musicians in Nürnberg is populated by, on the one hand, pedantic conservatives and, on the other, open-minded liberals. The central protagonist of the story, Walther von Stolzing (sung by Heppner in the performances Abbate attended), is not in the guild, but his superior musicianship is indisputable. Unorthodox as they are, his musical gifts are matched only by his passion for Eva, whose hand shall be received in marriage by the best singer in the midsummer song competition. In fact, the erotic striving associated with the prize is narratively allied with the passionate voicing associated with the song. Despite a series of setbacks (hence the ongoing revisions of the prize song with its demanding high Gs and As), Walther is eventually able to harness (marry!) his creative penchant for rupturing established musical norms with the sanctioned musical forms established by the guild. Walther endures numerous obstacles and struggles with the institutional politics around him, but he eventually wins the hand of Eva. Indeed, it is Walther's final prize song that ultimately exemplifies the appropriate integration of inspiration and form.

With *Eva im Paradies*, one might ask, how is this unimaginable joy properly resonant with a case of drastic despair? In fact, by the time of the happy scene-change of act 3—"full of candy-store delights," with its "sunny meadow," and the chorus belting theme songs "at the top of its lungs" (535)—Heppner's rickety vocalizations (potentially careening toward a melody-killing quandary) seem to mark a stark *disconnect* between the signifying order and affective intensity. Abbate's uneasy feeling about the demeanor of the other performers onstage—which transformed into a *psychotic jolliness*

in the moment of Heppner's vocal misfire—now probably counts as a kind of *premonition* of the "optical hallucination, a genuine neurological misfire" that occurred three days later (535). This remarkable moment—Abbate "saw stage figures not as they were, in Technicolor Germanic finery, but shrouded in black with white faces and tragic eyes under bright white lights" (535)—became a kind of unbidden *neurological restaging* of the second performance. Officially, the *meaning* of Abbate's drastic encounter is that there is a fundamental asynchrony between drastic and gnostic orders; that the drastic attitude had *prevailed* against the hermeneutic pull of the gnostic. In Abbate's words: "The second performance would not have fractured had my experience of the first not been so radically attentive to what was taking place, so inattentive to Wagner's *Meistersinger* and what its music means or conceals" (536). This is the official story. Unofficially, however, the drastic *affect* of Abbate's hallucinatory restaging actually *recapitulates* the wholly gnostic central dialectic of *Die Meistersinger*'s narrative. As it is with the fictional Walther von Stolzing, the real Ben Heppner must now harness his "extraordinary raw courage and sangfroid" to overcome the odds of disrupting the musical forms to which his singing is socially and institutionally enjoined (535). The hallucination is an uncanny recapitulation in real life of the *Wahn* that may ensue the entire operatic scene should our heroes' (respective) moral courage fail them. It is not only that the musical *work*—the content of a romantic *Meisterwerk*—makes an uncanny return in the event of a neurological misfire, but, more than that, it is that a nonconscious *Werktreue* actually leaves an indelible mark on it. This story about affect—about the drastic encounter so "inattentive" to the gnostic—is nonconsciously, but tellingly, a story about a gnostic *second coming*. Is this a paradoxical *return*—apparently caught in drastic throes of intensity—of the cultivated *gnostic repressed*?

The point of this re-telling of an encounter so apparently personal and ephemeral is not to dismiss outright the claims of the drastic, but, far from it, to reposition the force of the drastic in a region unfamiliar, not only to its gnostic fellow traveler, but also to the experienced reality at hand. I want to draw attention to the curious imbrication of the obvious and the obscure in these drastic encounters. The experience of terror attendant to Laurie Anderson's performance, too, is not a case of the off-script drastic as much as it bears the marks of the all-too-gnostic figure of the drastic. In other words, aside from the acknowledged *alchemy*, Anderson's 2002 performance piece was awash in anecdotes that referenced the destruction of the World Trade towers in September 2001. These included direct referenc-

es—the way Anderson had watched and listened to the towers being built over the years, a few blocks from her home, for example—and, perhaps more importantly, indirect ones, which, in their own way, illustrated traumatic reminders of the past event. For example, she recited a story of her rat terrier, Lolabelle, out on a walk in the safe-seeming mountains of California shortly after 9/11. Following an uneventful preamble where the narrator recollects little more than the character of the dog's ambling and rambling, she suddenly notices a new expression on the dog's face; one she had not seen before. This was the expression marking Lolabelle's realization, with large birds hovering over her, that she was *prey*; and that, furthermore, the once neutral sky had now been transformed into a menacing presence, as if there was *something wrong with the air*. It was the look on Lolabelle's face, in turn, that triggered for Anderson an expression she had, in fact, seen before—the expression of her neighbors in New York City right after 9/11. This was the look that too marked the realization that danger could come *from the air*; and that, furthermore, from this menacing realization, there would be *no turning back*.

Having been primed with anecdotes such as this—not simply images of 9/11, but references to the uncanny mechanisms that trigger these images—the reaction of terror to the clicking of teeth is what one might describe as a case of *getting it*. This is not to say that the reaction simply makes sense, but that it is *in keeping with* the fundamental points of Anderson's performance. It is, as it were, an accurate response to contextual cues that cannot be subtracted from the scene. In other words, the drastic experience hereby appropriately recoups the gnostic dimensions of the work. The point could be amplified in the context of Anderson's observation in *Happiness* that many of the horrifying images of the smoldering towers circulating on television at the time were mostly without accompanying sound. This led her to reflect on whether the microphones were shut off, or the cameras too far from the action, or whether the explosions and cries were simply unrecordable. In other words, the terrifying intensity of the event here obliterates an aspect of representability, leaving us with the repetitious dream-like silence of the television loops. Anderson's reflection on the event of 9/11 and its peculiar recording reveals a surreptitious linkage to Abbate's theory of the drastic itself, equally pitting representation and recording against the perplexing intensity of the actual event. But for the purposes of this argument, it suffices to note that the gnostic not only sponsors the drastic *a priori*, but that the gnostic here makes another uncanny return, *a posteriori*. While the event of the performance does not necessarily spell out gnostic scripts

of cultural data, the appropriately-immersed viewer is nonetheless held in the arms of their conditioning force. In other words, this is not a simple recapitulation of the clandestine cipher of the hermeneutic object that Abbate carefully puts into question throughout the text, but rather its uncanny *gnostic redux,* coiled up within drastic experience.

Sound Fraud: From Illicit to Complicit Relocation

If it is true, at least in some significant senses and cases, that the latent gnostic recurs at the core of the blatant drastic, it behooves us to consider more seriously—in the contexts of ethics and politics—the force of audile *reflex* and its *habituation*. One may speak here of the *habitus of sensory experience*, which regards drastic encounter not as the nonconscious, open-ended material experience of the ephemeral presence of a live event, as we find in Abbate, but instead as the unconscious recurrence of cultivated assumptions, reflexes, instincts, habits, and techniques within that experience. What is fascinating about this reconfiguration of the drastic is the way music's seemingly inherent ephemerality and ineffability falls prey not only to the gnostic determinations of hermeneutics and formalism, but also to the drastic overdeterminations of sensory *habit*ūs. The gnostic redux can be characterized as the recurrence of a certain guiding *foreknowledge* in the context of variable reflexes of the body. In other words, the cultivation of body techniques is a partial *condition for the possibility* of their nonconscious drastic reflexes—again, the *coiled* drastic *dressage*.

What do we make of those phenomena said to fall outside the logic and grasp of the gnostic? What dimensions of music, in particular—given the uncanny duplicitous layers of its cultivated entanglements—remain outside of the second enclosure of the gnostic? What remains of its dimensions of ephemerality and ineffability? Is the event of *music qua music*—enveloped, as it were, by dual (and dueling) *a*temporal specters of temporal experience—therefore *more ineffable still* than the concept of the drastic can permit? Or is music's claimed or real ineffability—in a dialectical *Schulterschluss* with its "broad shoulders"—in fact a useful alibi for disavowing its genuine capacity for social danger—manipulation, discrimination, fear- and hatred-mongering, and so on (521, 523)? To situate this point in the context of the previous example, what if the resistance to gnostic error in the drastic experience of terror reveals itself rather as a resistance to its truth (or, at least, its accuracy)?

For Abbate, gnostic attributions in the context of music are dismissed *tout court* as so many forms of *clandestine mysticism*: "Any argument that discovers legible meanings or significations within music is granting music certain grandiose powers" (517)—powers it simply does not possess, subsisting, as does music (after all), in a state of "unresolved and subservient alterity" (524). Paradoxically, however, these powers accrue in *inverse* proportion to their legitimacy. Furthermore, music's "messages," "cultural facts," or "associations" also gain authority paradoxically because of their misplaced media-specificity; they become "more signally important, more persuasive—than the same cultural facts or associations or constructed objects as conveyed or released by *any other media*" (517, emphasis added). In other words, it is music's very ineffability—its nonsignifying mediatic condition—that mystically intensifies the significations that are illicitly attributed to it. As it is with "film and advertising," musical works are thus "conscripted" to be "used or exploited" by music scholarship in its gnostic moment (517). By *decking out* these messages, facts and associations with "acoustic aura and sonic gift wrap," they become "less banal than they are by themselves"; in short, "the ordinary becomes a revelation" (518).

Interestingly, Abbate connects this understanding of music's revelatory force to the theoretical inclinations of nineteenth-century metaphysics, and its afterlife in twentieth-century psychoanalysis. Nietzsche's interest in listening to the musical aspect of language—"with the third ear"—for example, is a forerunner to the transverbal mode of listening—attentive to "phonic or musical element[s]"—that are said to register the unconscious (518).[42] It is this alluring association—between music's "pre-specular" character and what Theodor Reik calls the "substructures of the soul"—that Abbate puts into question: "Because the musical element is so open to interpretation, so unable to contest whatever supra-audible import it is assigned, conceptions about the psychic ill drawn from outside the musical domain become what the music is saying or revealing" (518). This is a fascinating paradox. Music is construed here as a kind of *whore* for meaning—it is "so open to interpretation, so unable to contest"; it "unleashes potential meanings in high multiples"; it has "'broad shoulders' to bear whatever specific meaning we ascribe to it and 'will never give us the lie,'" and so on—and, at the same

[42] Abbate refers to Nieztsche's expression in *Beyond Good and Evil*, §246, as elaborated in the writings of Theodor Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear: The Inner Experience of a Psychoanalyst* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948) and Roland Barthes and Roland Havas, "Listening," in Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 245–260.

time, the *virgin* of meaning—music's "ineffability"; its "indeterminacy"; its "mutability"; its "freedom," of which one should "not tak[e] advantage," and so on (516–517). Recall that the ethics of drastic encounter lies in a mode of abstinence: *hesitating* before the act of exploiting, using, or taking advantage of music. As a medium that is all-too-yielding, music becomes a fertile site for opportunistic fact-, meaning-, and truth-making. In other words, music's very lack—resistant, that is, to the genuine art of encoding cultural phenomena—is constitutively linked to its excess—its abundant dissemination of coded phenomena, as diverse as they are implausible.

On the one hand, Abbate astutely identifies, and then beautifully articulates, the peculiar magic of this link, but, on the other hand, not enough surprise is expressed at the mechanism by which a transdiscursive experience actually *amplifies* the discourse it is erroneously said to encode. By what magical mechanism do the constructed significations—meanings, cultural phenomena, sublimated "truths"—metamorphose into significations that are actually "*more* authoritative," "grandiose," "revelatory," "*more* securely affirmed when *music* is seen to express them," or "made monumental and given aura by music" (517–520, emphasis added)? In other words, what is it *about* the acoustic aura and the sonic gift wrap that allures its beholder not only to take the hermeneutic bait, but to do so *more affirmatively* than its soundless counterpart? This increase in music's signifying *gravitas*, paradoxically again, appears to be tethered to extra-musical media. In other words, music's inherent *aversion* to encoding is actually marked by its ability to *switch* signification according to visual and verbal cues and contexts. In this sense, it is not absolute or autonomous, for Abbate, but all-too-programmatic, all-too-heteronomous. She writes that "physical grounding and visual symbolism and verbal content *change* musical sounds by recommending how they are to be understood" (524, emphasis added). The paradox, then, is that music's wild indeterminacy—its effortless facility for actually *switching* signification, under the weight, say, of "oculocentric and logocentric" inputs—is allied to its peculiar capacity for raising the ontological stakes of that signification—how it is to be *understood* (524). Music's evident facility for switching meaning, in short, secures an authoritative affirmation for when it does not. If gnostic arrogation puts the *gift-giving bird in the cage,* as it were—and, concomitantly, deconstruction attempts to set free a caged bird—then, in contrast to both, the drastic power of music is such that it *holds the uncaged bird in the hand*. The drastic, after all, is *wild* even at *point-blank range*. This is the manipulative magic not of bait-and-switch, but of *switch-and-bait*.

The problem with simply announcing the alchemical alliance between image/word and music/sound is that it passes over precisely the *drastic* aspect of music's materiality that is the object of inquiry. Not only do sonic gift wraps and acoustic auras rarely count as evidence in any fields *outside* of musicology and (to a lesser extent) music theory, but, as articulated above, the force of music's interpretability seems to be leveraged by its drastic *indeterminacy*. What if, as announced above, the antithesis is true? What if the drastic is the site *par excellence* not of open-endedness but of nonconscious overdetermination? Take the case of racism in sound: Abbate is skeptical of claims that Wagner's anti-Semitism can be sonically sublimated into musical works, for example, in spite of the composer's ample attestations to that claim. Abbate argues that Wagner's argument itself partakes of the clandestine mysticism associated with the hermeneutic process—he reads "certain formal conventions in music by Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer as ineradicable signs, and truths by the basketful are discovered embodied in musical configurations" (519). Wagner's hermeneutic maneuvering may attest to "truths" that amount to "anti-Semitic slanders," while those of commentators like Richard Eichenauer or Richard Taruskin actually attempt to *expose* for critical scrutiny such anti-Semitism. For Abbate, in contrast, both positions share a fundamental *kinship*—"the hermeneutic process is the same on both sides" (519). As it is with Wagner's riff on Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, Abbate contends, Taruskin's evidence of Stravinsky's anti-Semitism seems "less mundane and more securely affirmed when *music* is seen to express [it]" (520). What is interesting about this methodological association between Wagner and Taruskin is that the outcomes of their thinking across the terrain of musical expression arguably lead to opposing moral positions. In fact, one consequence of this argument can be summed up in the following formulation: Because of music's drastic indeterminacy, its actual gnostic determinations are in fact *morally variable as well*. In gnostic mysticism, *angels* and *devils* may freely dwell. The key point is that, given the uncanny, but *constitutive*, link between drastic openness and an emboldened gnostic closure, the assertion of a moral position is ultimately determined not by music in its material presence, but by the contexts of its *use* alone.

The trouble with this kind of analysis of the drastic in music is that its utilitarian consequences cannot be sustained in the context of reflex audibility. In other words, this construal of the drastic insufficiently grasps the force and inertia of certain *gnostic* intensities. Abbate is skeptical of all claims that associate "music with the unconscious," and, even more so,

"the unconscious with occulted truth" (520). The first tension here is that the drastic, defined as nonsignifying intensity, actually bears something of a resemblance to the variously construed concepts of the unconscious Abbate seeks to critique. More importantly, however, the overarching skepticism toward the unconscious and its occulted truths does not sufficiently grasp the sonorous intensity that accrues to fixed gnostic commitments and reflexes of listening. At this point it is important to disentangle the gnostic handiwork of film, and particularly advertising, from that of music scholarship. These had been earlier affined in Abbate's text—"conscripted," in her words, "for similar duties" (517). However, the actual mechanisms by which advertising, on the one hand, and scholarship, on the other, exploit music, can be lumped together only awkwardly. Where branding, advertising, and propaganda actually deploy music's *drastic* qualities—its nonsignifying, nonconscious sensuous immediacy—to clinch an association, to sell a product, or to induce a political commitment, gnostic scholarly inquiry (especially that wedded to the social contingency of things) actually de-emphasizes the sonorous presence—the seduction of the performance experience—in service of *meaning*. Otherwise put, where advertising hitches a ride on them, musicology stops up its ears to drastic sonorities. The latter, after all, is the "antihedonist patholog[y]" of musicology, which refuses "encountering a present other at point-blank range" (532). The distinction is important because in sonic branding, advertising, and propaganda, the sensuous materiality of the music determines the value of its (commodified or political) sociological object, while in musicology, the sociological object determines and ultimately limits the value of the music's sensuous materiality. Without addressing the complex dialectics of mood and meaning here, one may conclude that, surface affinities aside, the gnostic equivalence between branding, advertising, and propaganda, on the one hand, and music scholarship, on the other, cannot be assumed.

At the risk of igniting a stale debate about music's meanings, it is clear that industry executives in sonic branding and advertising, no less than those in cinema and the music and gaming industries, do not share the view that music's material presence and carnality is, at bottom, wholly ineffable. In the interests of brevity, a few brief examples will suffice. Recording artist and video game composer, Tom Salta, experimented with using an orchestral work by Ralph Vaughan Williams for the soundtrack of *Grand Theft Auto*.[43]

[43] Tom Salta, "The Art of Composing for Video Games" (keynote lecture, Music and the Moving Image, New York, May 21, 2010).

In Salta's view, straying so far from the stock sounds associated with the action of the game produced results as absurd and confusing as those of alien visual imagery. Music's shoulders in Salta's studio are not as broad as those found in Abbate's argument. Concomitantly, the production of drastic presence is a central concern for commercial music engineers. These are the unique effects, alluring details, and expensive-sounding moments that characterize industrial song composition. John Seabrook describes this practice in the context of commercial ballads:

> The money note is the moment in Whitney Houston's version of the Dolly Parton song "I Will Always Love You" at the beginning of the third rendition of the chorus: pause, drum beat, and then 'Iiiiiieeeeeeiiieeii will always love you." It is the moment in the Céline Dion song from *Titanic,* "My Heart Will Go On": the key change that begins the third verse, a note you can hear a hundred times and it still brings you up short in the supermarket and transports you … to a world of grand romantic gesture— "You're *here*."[44]

There is no doubt that these money notes (and even money silences!) are productions of presence that are overdetermined by cultural scripts, constructions, and conventions. However, they are not *experienced* as gnostic meanings, but rather as drastic intensities—a shiver down the spine, a widening of eyes, a tremor of the skin.

Herein lies the key paradox of the kinds of affective experience attendant to significant arenas of musical listening. Drastic moments—deeply anchored in culturally-scripted techniques (from simple sonic effects to laundered money-notes)—are heard as immediate material acoustic phenomena. This is not a simple reconfiguration of Abbate's position for it adjusts the analytic gaze toward the obstinately *a prioristic* ear. Abbate casts doubt upon the arts of reading racial characteristics from purely musical sounds, for example, because the reality of drastic experience is nonsignifying. When Richard Eichenauer "read[s] out of the disembodied lines of a musical work the face of a particular racial character," Abbate responds by mischievously associating this maneuver with Wagner's troubling grasp of music's embodiments of racial characteristics (519).[45] The problem with Abbate's construal

[44] John Seabrook, "The Money Note: Can the Record Business Survive?" *New Yorker*, July 7, 2003, 45.

[45] Abbate is quoting Richard Eichenauer, *Musik und Rasse* (München: Lehmann, 1932), 13 from the translation provided by Leo Treitler, "Gender and Other Dualities of Music History," in Solie, *Musicology and Difference*, 40.

is that racism *requires*, as a condition for its efficient ideological functioning, a *nonsignifying substrate*. In other words, sonic markers of race—vocal idiolects, for example, or musical tropes—are functional sites of *autonomically experienced* audile profiling. They play out in the ballpark of reflex—that which cannot *not* be experienced. While Eichenauer's account (or that of Taruskin) may be overdrawn, Abbate's construal of the drastic, in vivid opposition to the gnostic, cannot spirit away the *dialectics of the nonsignifying signifier*. It is a mistake to place the problem of racism squarely in a field of gnostic representation. Racism is infrequently the result of deliberative thought, but embedded instead in connotations and cues that operate surreptitiously. The music and the sounds people make can solicit judgments about them that are as instantaneous as they can be brutal. To simplify a little: the *grain* of African-American or Mexican-American voices, for example, or, of the melodic traits of Islamic calls to prayer, or even, of the rhythmic *topoi* and sharp-sounding harmonizations of African music, may in itself be a fully culturally-determined *habitus*—an ingrained grain—but, for better or worse, it is all-too-often *experienced* as nonconscious reflex for racialized apprehension.[46] If the drastic component of this experience—nonsignifying, ineffable, etc.—amounts to (even if only *on occasion*) a sublimated cultural *topos*, then the act of withdrawal and abstinence risks becoming ideological—the mute witness to potential injustice and inequality. One of the primary modes of listening involves a deictic function—involuntary triggers of collateral meaning—which we find in Schaeffer's écouter, Barthes' alertness, Chion's indexical listening, and so on. Although this mode of listening is construed as the least musical one in these writers, the paradox of presence in Gumbrecht and Abbate is that it partakes liberally of *deixis*. Unless music is construed as absolutely autonomous of such listening, the repudiation of such collateral—pretending not to have what one in fact has—ushers the routine *fraudulence of sonic dissimulation*.[47]

[46] There is a vast literature on the intersections of race, music, and sound, which cannot be listed here. A few instructive recent writings on vocal timbre include Nina Sun Eidsheim's *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African-American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), Jennifer Lynn Stoever's *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), and Grant Olwage's "The Class and Colour of Tone: An Essay on the Social History of Vocal Timbre," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13, no. 2 (2004): 203–226. See also *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[47] For Schaeffer, Barthes and Chion, of course, the deictic function *is* cordoned off from other modes of listening—such as the musical écouter *réduite*, psychoanalytic listening, and reduced listening respectively.

The trouble with apparently nonsignifying (high-speed) sonic embodiments of the drastic is that their exaggerated retreat from *illicit relocation* transforms what goes as the *licit* presence of drastic experience into a *complicit* gnostic one. To remain with the example discussed above, racism (no less than other forms of routine discrimination) *requires*, for its systematic production, a surreptitious disavowal of its own existence. This is not to say that all musical and sonic events are socially legible *tout court*, but to recognize that in practical contexts of prevailing intersubjective communication, it behooves us to grapple with those sonic markers—markers that identify, signify and discriminate (in all senses of these terms)—in whose sensuous grip we are reflexively engrossed. Discussions of affect and presence in music might need to be released from the Kantian idea that music amounts to no more than imaginative flight without conceptualization—a traditional position rehearsed here as the nonsignifying drastic—and tethered to the equally Kantian idea that sound and music thereby freight signification without accountability. Just because the meanings translocated by sound and music are rarely decipherable in easy correlationist terms (Abbate's critique accurately captures the excessive dependence on these terms in hermeneutics and formalism), does not mean that it is either entirely ineffable or ephemeral. In the silence of the drastic we find the reign of the gnostic.

Finally, the productive aspect of drastic experience—a subject that would require an essay unto itself—is, for similar reasons, equally spirited away within the organizing axioms of Abbate's account. As a final gesture toward the contours of such an inquiry, two brief examples will need to suffice. In a lone footnote, Abbate makes an important nod towards Elaine Scarry's argument that beauty does not, as claimed, *distract* us from the phenomenal world, but actually *intensifies* our awareness of it (532).[48] Although it is harnessed to buttress a claim against the hedonist rebuke mounted by gnostic scholarship, Scarry's point actually poses a challenge to Abbate's figure of the drastic, illuminating instead the clandestine gnostic entanglements—its capacity to intensify worldly engagement—of beauty. This is the antithesis of the racist reflex in sound, but the systematic tethering of drastic and gnostic is similar in both cases. Likewise, legal scholars are beginning to argue that affect does not lie outside of legal interpretation and protocol, but may in fact be a necessary ingredient for its proper functioning. In the words of Emily White: "The affective aspects play a role in

[48] Abbate's reference is to Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 58–68.

setting the emotion's constituent desires for action. Without the affective dimension, emotions might, counterintuitively, be less answerable to their own distinctive built-in rationales."[49] Affect, in other words, operates not as an exterior element, but as a constitutively linked catalyst for sharpening gnostic rationales. The drastic encounter hones in on the gnostic collateral. For White, these affectively-refocused rationales actually scale to judicial interpretations of the values of human dignity itself. In contrast, the ethics of drastic withdrawal—which register the other only as (point) *blank* presence—risks serving as an ideological alibi for freighted meaning, effectively beating a retreat from holding the habituated reflex to account. Abstinence and withdrawal tarry here with refusal and denial. Where the drastic is understood as constitutively exclusive of the gnostic, we find the embodied reflex *in medio musicorum* posing as irreducible presence.

It is this radically inarticulate reflex, now reducible to a network of neurons mapped by sensors on networked subjects—symbolic orders without accountability *par excellence*—that is readied for statistical expropriation in an era of industrialized computation. Separated by a chasm between music's material event and its ineffable ephemeron, the drastic functions like software itself—executing effects without explanation, accomplishments without understanding, realizations without representations. But that is another story…

[49] Emily Kidd White, "A Study of the Role of Emotion in Judicial Interpretations of the Legal Value of Human Dignity Claims" (PhD diss., New York University School of Law, 2017), 45.

Works cited

Abbate, Carolyn. "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004): 505–536.

———. "Overlooking the Ephemeral." *New Literary History* 48, no. 1 (2017): 75–102.

———. "Sound Object Lessons." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69, no. 3 (2016): 793–829.

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Barthes, Roland. *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1985.

Berger, Karol. "Music According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic?" *Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 3 (2005): 490–501.

Borio, Gianmario, Alessandro Cecchi, Giovanni Giuriati and Marco Lutzu, eds. *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Currie, James. "Music After All." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no.1 (Spring 2009): 145–203.

Cusick, Suzanne G. "Musicology, Performativity, Acoustemology." In *Theorizing Sound Writing*, edited by Deborah Kapchan, 25–45. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins. London: Verso, 2006.

Dolan, Emily I., and Alexander Rehding, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018–. https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190637224.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190637224.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African-American Music*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Fink, Robert, Melinda Latour and Zachary Wallmark, eds. *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Gallope, Michael. *Deep Refrains: Music, Philosophy, and the Ineffable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. "Form without Matter vs. Form as Event." *MLN* 111, no. 3 (1996): 578–592.

———. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *Music and the Ineffable*. Translated by Carolyn Abbate. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Kittler, Friedrich A. *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*. Translated by Erik Butler. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Lachenmann, Helmut. "Musique Concrète Instrumentale." Slought. Conversation with Gene Coleman. April 7, 2008. https://slought.org/resources/musique_concrete_instrumentale.

Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC:

Duke University Press, 2002.

McClary, Susan. "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology,* edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas, 205–233. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Olwage, Grant. "The Class and Colour of Tone: An Essay on the Social History of Vocal Timbre." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13, no. 2 (2004): 203–226.

Radano, Ronald, and Philip V. Bohlman, eds. *Music and the Racial Imagination.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Reik, Theodor. *Listening with the Third Ear: The Inner Experience of a Psychoanalyst.* New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948.

Salta, Tom. "The Art of Composing for Video Games." Keynote lecture, *Music and the Moving Image*, New York, May 21, 2010.

Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Schaeffer, Pierre. *Treatise on Musical Objects: An Essay across Disciplines*. Translated by Christine North and John Dack. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

Seabrook, John. "The Money Note: Can the Record Business Survive?" *New Yorker,* July 7, 2003, 42–55.

Smart, Mary Ann. "The Manufacture of Extravagant Gesture: Labour and Emotion on the Operatic Stage." Presentation at the seminar *Investigating Musical Performance: Towards a Conjunction of Ethnographic and Historiographic Perspectives*, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, July 9, 2016.

———. *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Solie, Ruth A., ed. *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Stoever, Jennifer Lynn. *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening.* New York: New York University Press, 2016.

Taruskin, Richard. *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

White, Emily Kidd. "A Study of the Role of Emotion in Judicial Interpretations of the Legal Value of Human Dignity Claims." PhD diss., New York University School of Law, 2017.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K. Ogden. New York: Cosimo, 2007.

Abstract

The study of music's production, reproduction, and circulation is today suspended between two ruling paradigms—the methodological inclinations of musicology, on the one hand, and ethnomusicology, on the other. If the central referents for musicology (and especially its technical support system, music theory) exaggerate the importance of fixed texts (archival documents, audiovisual media, technical inscriptions, musical scores, recordings and transcriptions, the organology of *instrumentaria*, etc.), their antithesis—the central referents for ethnomusicology—exaggerate the value of dynamic contexts (social processes, cultural practices, affect flows, conventions, interactions, agents and networks, etc.). This essay turns toward an intermediary point of focus—the role of *performance* itself as an opening into reflections on music *qua* music. In particular, this essay engages the challenges posed by a prominent theorist of sound, media, and performance, Carolyn Abbate, and the conception of the "drastic" in music. Written almost two decades ago, at a time when the Humanities underwent an ostensible *turn to affect*, Abbate's essay "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" detects in music scholarship an abundant engagement with music's texts and contexts, and a simultaneous aversion toward music's phenomenal reality, exemplified by its live performance. In "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" Abbate redresses the imbalance and offers avenues for addressing music's material, embodied, and even spiritual presence. The essay is notable for catalyzing a series of shifts in music studies in the decades after its publication.

My counter-argument is organized around four primary themes. First, it considers the precise performative modalities of music's mediatic transmission for drastic listening. Second, it outlines the entangled moral and ethical operations that are freighted by drastic encounter of musical performance. Third, it assesses the affordances and limits of rejecting music's technological reproducibility. And fourth, it detects an uncanny return of the gnostic repressed at the core of drastic experience in real time. The conclusion of the essay demonstrates music's paradoxical ontological status as both *event* and *ephemeron*, arguing that the drastic must be reconceived to genuinely acknowledge the sonorous presence of its socio-political collateral. The primary working example for the essay's conclusion addresses the question of race and music. Its critical impulse notwithstanding, this essay also attempts to highlight the insights of Abbate's account of musical performance and the inadequacy of the largely negative reaction to it.

Martin Scherzinger is a composer and associate professor of media studies at New York University. He works on sound, music, media, and politics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Primary areas include the musical and choreographic traditions of Europe, Africa, and America as well as global biographies of sound and other ephemera circulating in geographically-remote regions. Scherzinger's research includes the examination of links between political economy and digital sound technologies, intellectual property law in diverse sociotechnical environments, relations between aesthetics and censorship, sensory limits of mass-mediated music, mathematical geometries of musical time, histories of sound in philosophy, and the politics of biotechnification.

FORUM

The Dramaturg, Today

edited by Piersandra Di Matteo

Residential Program for Dramaturg with Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi, Piersandra Di Matteo, Riccardo Fazi, Sandra Noeth, Elise Simonet. In the frame of *Les Cliniques Dramaturgiques* (Festival TransAmériques, Montréal) curated by Riccardo Fazi, in collaboration with Jessie Mill e Elise Simonet, promoted by Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe: Beyond Borders? Short Theatre, Rome 8–12 September 2020

The first Forum of *Sound Stage Screen* looks at the transformations currently affecting the dramaturg's work in various areas of the performing arts. This includes the most advanced forms of contemporary theater, experimental choreographic practices, and opera—specific collaborations with directors who work towards reinventing the possibilities of music dramaturgy. It furthermore attempts to broaden our understanding of dramaturgic processes to include the field of curatorship in the performing arts,

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 193–242.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss15387.

an area that is cooperating internationally in establishing new paradigms for theater, producing contexts, articulating new modes of perception, promoting collective discursive spaces, spatiality, and temporality situated outside the classic definition of program-making.[1]

This dossier, in its range of "voices," is an inquiry into how dramaturgs operate today, questioning their role and function. This requires, first and foremost, a full understanding of the paradigmatic shift that—to put it briefly—has undone dramaturgy's exclusive relation with the text and theatrical literary production, to reestablish it "both as *actions that work* and as *working on actions*,"[2] attending to "all those actions that are constantly being produced, constantly being proposed by every single element cocreating the piece."[3] In a seminal text written in 1994, Marianne Van Kerkhoven, the Flemish essayist and dramaturg who pioneered such a renewed concept of dramaturgy, clearly expresses the idea that:

> One of the fundamental characteristics of what we today call "new dramaturgy" is precisely the choice of a process-oriented method of working; the meaning, the intentions, the form and the substance of a play arise during the working process. […] This way of working is based on the conviction that the world and life do not offer up their "meaning" just like that; perhaps they have no meaning, and the making of a play may then be considered as the quest for possible understanding. In this case dramaturgy is no longer a means of bringing out the structure of the meaning of the world in a play, but (a quest

[1] See *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, ed. Dena Davida et al. (New York: Berghahn, 2018); *Empty Stages, Crowded Flats: Performativity as Curatorial Strategy*, ed. Florian Malzacher and Joanna Warsza (Berlin: Alexander, 2017); *Turn, Turtle! Reenacting the Institute*, ed. Elke van Campenhout and Lilia Mestre (Berlin: Alexander, 2016).

[2] *The Practice of Dramaturgy. Working on Actions in Performance*, ed. Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017), 74. This reflection is based on the word's etymological and conceptual content ("drama" coming from the Greek words *dro* (δρῶ, to act) and *érgon* (ἔργον, to work), following the resemantization proposed by Eugenio Barba, who considers dramaturgy as the "weaving […] of the different elements of the performance"—it deals not only with text and actors but also with sounds, lights, and changes in space; actions in theater come into play only when they weave together, when they become *performance text*. See Eugenio Barba, "The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work," *New Theatre Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1985): 75–78.

[3] André Lepecki, "'We're Not Ready for the Dramaturge': Some Notes for Dance Dramaturgy," in *Repensar la dramaturgia. Errancia y transformación = Rethinking Dramaturgy: Errancy and Transformation*, ed. Manuel Bellisco, María José Cifuentes and Amparo Écija (Madrid: Centro Párraga, 2011), 194.

> for) a provisional or possible arrangement which the artist imposes on those elements he gathers from a reality that appears to him chaotic. In this kind of world picture, causality and linearity lose their value, storyline and psychologically explicable characters are put at risk, there is no longer a hierarchy amongst the artistic building blocks used.[4]

Having done away with the logocentric domain, we may now conceive dramaturgy as a work that involves all types of (material and immaterial) actions active in a performance, not only through the compositional dimension of its elements, but also and more broadly through a process-oriented method of working that weaves together the relational dynamics coalescing around stage practices. Dramaturgy defines itself, from one instance to the next, based on the conditions in which it operates and without fixed preconceptions. It does not obey prearranged theoretical frames or mandatory rules. This idea, widely recognized as falling within the theoretical directions proposed by the notion of postdramatic theater,[5] "becomes an application with which to deconstruct and decode the tropes and contradictions of contemporary performance."[6]

Undeniably, a decisive contribution to the debate on the practice of the dramaturg and a new definition of the place of dramaturgy comes from the context of choreographic-performative developments, dealing with practices that originally developed out of drama. Dramaturgy here

> functions as a place in which to structure and organize physical as well as intellectual movements in a largely closed, autopoietic construct that constitutes itself in relationship to elements such as time, space, rhythm, movement vocabulary and phrasing, figures and narration or the relationship of music and movement.[7]

[4] Marianne Van Kerkhoven, "On Dramaturgy," *Theaterschrift* 5/6 (1994): 18–20.

[5] The main reference, here, is to Hans-Thies Lehmann's 1999 seminal volume *Postdramatisches Theater*, available in English as *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, 2006).

[6] *Acts of Dramaturgy: The Shakespeare Trilogy*, ed. Michael Pinchbek (Bristol: Intellect, 2020), 4.

[7] Sandra Noeth, "Protocols of Encounter: On Dance Dramaturgy," in *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, ed. Gabriele Klein and Sandra Noeth (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), 252.

The validity of this definition extends to all the areas and operational directions taken in the Forum.

A glance at the theoretical and pragmatic writings on this topic highlights an overriding concern shown by many dramaturgs, which requires them to reexamine the links between their own dramaturgical practice and the production of knowledge.[8] Here, the primary focus goes to the traditional assumption according to which the dramaturg is a figure endowed with largely cognitive skills, with which they become the intellectual guarantor of a performance's creation. A considerable number of expressions and epithets linked to this notion—the director's "first spectator" or "objective observer," "mind of the process," "vessel of knowledge," or again a "guarantor of objective knowledge," "locus of power and knowledge," "external eye" or "outside eye"—have thus come under intense critique.[9] This is because they are based on an ideological reduction according to which artistic work requires intellectual legitimacy within the horizon of *disciplined* knowledge, i.e. not only subdivided into disciplines but also separated from everything that must presumably be excluded. This interpretational defect relies on the schematic supposition that "choreographers [= practicioners] are mute doers and dramaturgs [= theorists] are bodiless thinkers and writers,"[10] not recognizing that practices are rooted in a complex array of processes and relational networks, underestimating artistic actions in their materiality (in which political subjectifications are embodied), and minimizing the ways in which existence produces becoming.

The "true dramaturg," in Claudio Meldolesi's words, "acts neither in the name of a supposed intellectual superiority, nor as a service provider or a specialist in occasionally adjusting the text to the work done on stage; rather, he/she humbly searches for new and perhaps original stimuli,"[11] suggesting and reshaping a work's layers of meaning "as an *experiencing*

[8] See Scott deLahunta, "Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and Reflections," *Dance Theatre Journal* 16, n. 1 (2000): 22.

[9] This aspect is all the more significant if one recalls that many dramaturgs have practiced or practice this work alongside choreographers, directors, and artistic collectives, at the same time covering the role of performing arts scholar. I would mention, in particular, André Lepecki, Heidi Gilpin, Bojana Cvejić, Guy Cools, Christel Stalpaert, Synne K. Behrndt, and Sandra Noeth.

[10] Bojana Cvejić, "The Ignorant Dramaturg," *Maska: The Performing Arts Journal* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 41.

[11] Claudio Meldolesi, *Il lavoro del dramaturg. Nel teatro dei testi con le ruote* (Milano: Ubulibri, 2007), 24. Translation mine.

subject and *collaborator,*" to quote Pil Hansen, "instead of the objective observer and knowledgeable critic."[12] This is a working method based on *practice-oriented theory*, understood as a particular way of fostering the metabolic mechanisms active in performance processes, and discursively encouraging, with one's own presence, the zone of undecidability and concreteness that marks the various phases of a creation embedded in a collaborative context. This specific feature reaffirms the exclusive relation between theory and practice that is redefined from one instance to the next, and that pragmatically requires the theater, dance, and opera dramaturg to act as a force that is simultaneously analytical and inventive in the space of the creative process. It is one aspect, variously emphasized by the writers of the Forum as well, which consists in the fact that commitments, methods, and strategies of dramaturgy are defined by the peculiar approaches and aims of each singular project. While the function of such dramaturgs must not be seen as a detached and authoritative "machine for producing meaning,"[13] they remain someone who brings a vested interest to the work and its many possible trajectories, thus soliciting and catalyzing situations that show how theater or dance or opera stagings "think dramaturgically," as perceptive experience, through the embodied process of the performance and through the languages taken up in it (bodies, movement, colors, lights, words, sounds/music, space and time). The field of operations which they are dealing with pertains to an interaction of the visible and the invisible, as a contingent incitement involving the "distributions of the sensible" in such a way that the work itself is able to produce its own authorial force.[14]

In dealing with the temporal, spatial, and tactile properties of performing practices, what the dramaturg brings into play is thus a theoretical sensitivity that draws on and is rooted in practice. This sensitivity is therefore not separated from or external to the processes, but it is the fruit of a pragmatic and dialogical continuum with the subjects implicated in production, based on a theory/practice integration. In this regard, André Lepecki

[12] Pil Hansen, "Introduction," in *Dance Dramaturgy: Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement*, ed. Pil Hansen and Darcey Callison (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 8. Emphasis mine.

[13] Synne K. Behrndt, "Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20, no. 2 (2010): 191.

[14] The reference is to Jacques Rancière's notion of the "*partage du sensible*." See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

distinguishes between the procedures and assignments of the dramaturg[15] and "the task of dramaturging," defined as "a particular activation of sensibility, sensation, perception and imagination towards processes of actualisation of the virtual under the singularity of a compositional, and collective, process."[16] To give effectiveness to this "particular activation" of skills learned through training with a new alliance between theory and experience, the dramaturg is involved directly with a bodily engagement that requires "a (new) body"[17] for each process. Guy Cools speaks of the dramaturg as a "somatic witness," defining the dramaturg's "creative practice [as one] in which the whole body is involved and in which somatic proximity to the creative process is as important as critical distance"[18]—a somatic and energetic relationship with the process that can only be produced "through the intersection of energy and silent talk," "a kind of 'energetic communication.'"[19]

The dramaturg's work should thus be understood as the fulcrum of "collaborative practices,"[20] where it is possible to promote interactions, synchronic influences, and adjacencies between concepts coming from heterogeneous areas of research. This way, dramaturgy is not "a form-giving instrument" at the service of (artistic) reality, but "a shared practice of encounter."[21] Sandra Noeth has acutely noted that this recognition is based on a radical call as

[15] Such as how to analyze the sources of inspiration, how to suggest iconographic references, how to choose materials, and by extension how to grasp poetic-musical and theatrical structures in an opera libretto and score, documenting and collecting the concepts and images produced in rehearsals or in convivial moments of the process as part of the editorial materials.

[16] André Lepecki, "Errancy as Work: Seven Strewn Notes for Dance Dramaturgy," in Hansen, *Dance Dramaturgy*, 65.

[17] Lepecki's words as quoted in DeLahunta, "Dance Dramaturgy," 25.

[18] Guy Cools, "On Dance Dramaturgy," *Cena* 29 (2019): 42. Following this analytical perspective, Guy introduces the notion of the "outside body," linked to the vision of a corporeal dramaturgy as proposed by Christel Stalpaert, "The Distributive Agency of Dramaturgical Labour and the Ethics of Instability. Becoming the Outside Body, Implicated in the Life of Others," in *Dramaturgies in the New Millennium. Relationality, Performativity, and Potentiality*, ed. Katharina Pewny, Johan Callens and Jeroen Coppens (Tübingen: Narr, 2014), 97–110.

[19] Eleonora Fabião, "Dramaturging with Mabou Mines: Six Proposals for *Ecco Porco*," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Femininst Theory* 13, no. 2 (2003): 32.

[20] Martina Ruhsam, "Dramaturgy of and as Collaboration," *Maska: The Performing Arts Journal* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 35; see also Ruhsam, *Kollaborative Praxis: Choreographie. Die Inszenierung der Zusammenarbeit und ihre Aufführung* (Wien: Turia + Kant, 2011).

[21] Noeth, "Protocols of Encounter," 253.

to what "being-with-an-Other" means, questioning the modes of relationship with strangers and the "Outside."[22] This is therefore a specific form of knowledge that does not discredit but, on the contrary, prepares to welcome the unexpected, which comes to life in the contact *between* the concrete reality of the elements on stage and that which has not yet been conceived but which analysis can foster.[23] The dramaturg thus goes back and forth between research and invention, reflection and creation, details and an all-embracing view, and ultimately assembles the conceptual structure of the pragmatic space within which the work is disclosed. Dramaturgs suggest anchors that provide points of reference for the entire process. They create links between ideas and clarify how the various parts of the work can be harmonized according to an internal logic. They make inventories of the directions the work is taking, and indicate how these directions could gain intensity. They may also act as a disturbing factor, to enrich the material in terms of dynamics. They are not guardians of predetermined positions, but mobile vectors for interaction: they use a methodology that is rigorous but also based on unexpected resonances, due to a "poetics of errantry"[24] that implies straying from an expected course, attentive to the echoes produced by forms of excursion, a predisposition to make room for what is unfamiliar. This is where they can fully contrast forms of self-indulgence that might lead directors and choreographers to fall back on previously used formal outlines, preferences, and aversions.[25] By its very nature, this is a "dispersed activity,"[26] since their work literally dissolves into the production. They melt and become invisible,

[22] Noeth, "Protocols of Encounter," 252.

[23] "To speculate means to place thought as belief or faith in a certain outcome without having firm evidence [...] We learn to do and say, 'let's think again,' because we don't know now, but we will have known by then." Cvejić, "The Ignorant Dramaturg," 53.

[24] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor : The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 23–35.

[25] Within prolonged collaborations with a choreographer or director or artistic collective, gaining this *dialogical proximity* also allows one to enact a meta-reflection to grasp, embrace, and question creative and aesthetic transformations and the methodological gaps produced between one work and the next, as a sort of macro-dramaturgy that coincides with a deep theoretical understanding of the artist's creative process in relation to the broader context of spectatorship.

[26] Janez Janša, "From Dramaturgy to Dramaturgical. Self-Interview," *Maska* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 57; Jansa considers this dispersed dimension in the working process as an expression of immaterial work *par excellence*; for the links between developments in the dramaturg's work and cognitive labour in the post-Fordist economy, see Bojana Kunst, "The Economy of Proximity," in *On Dramaturgy*, *Performance Research* 14, n. 3, 2009: 81–88.

incorporated into the work itself. This invisibility not only characterizes the dramaturgs' work, but also their very own persona, which remains in the shadows, often compared to a ghost.[27]

In this practice of marginality, the dramaturg manages different dramaturgical energies, promoting trajectories, operating for interference, resonance, deviance, incidence, tangency, affection maintaining agonistic relationships between contradicting movements, bodies, and relationships, which coincide with a shared and temporary space for negotiation, in direct contact with all that emerges during the creative process. Antonio Cuenca Ruiz emphasizes that the same sort of operativity concerns the dramaturg working in the field of opera: what counts is the process through which the performance is "thought" and how one "operates" in the interpretative gaps that open up *between* the "fixed" nature of the libretto and the musical score. It is a question of nurturing a dramaturgical tension capable of accompanying the director's conception, through a combination of expressive systems that can suggest unexplored conceptual transplants, grafted onto and in-between the opera's musico-dramatical structures, fully coming across through the composition of the elements of the staging.[28]

All of the aspects and dynamics mentioned above come into play when one immerses in the rehearsal process, and also when one leaves the theater to promote relations with various communities, far from places intended for theatrical production. This latter case, as Eva-Maria Bertschy suggests, involves stepping onto foreign ground, searching for unexpected common ground, constructing situations in which to cultivate misunderstanding as a tactic of reciprocity that allows new levels of stage writing to be interwoven. This is an extension of the field of dramaturgy, and calls for social responsibility and political awareness. It is a process of discovery that does not require distance and remoteness, but rather closeness, such as the one implied by a *politics of curation*—as Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi maintains, from a non-Eurocentric perspective—that indicates a specific task of the dramaturg, when they work not to stage a performance but to define the dramaturgical tensions that animate the cultural planning of a festival,

[27] See Myriam Van Imschoot, "Anxious Dramaturgy," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2003): 57–68.

[28] See Andrew Eggert, "The Role of the Dramaturg in the Creation of New Opera Works," in *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, ed. Magda Romanska (London: Routledge, 2015), 354–358.

deeply rooted in a local contest, in urban life, or more generally in projects that do not end with the presentation of performances.

Proximity to the process, however, is never blind immersion. Remaining close to the director, the choreographer, the performers, the set designer, and the conductor, as well as the technicians, pertains to the dramaturg's physical presence in the immediacy of influences, ultimately becoming an embodied memory of praxis.[29] Proximity to a process can also be described, according to Florian Malzacher, as a "distance within proximity", the possibility of maintaining a critical gap with respect to the production. This begins with an exclusive ethical and aesthetic complicity with the artist with whom one chooses to collaborate, and acting as a bridge with the institution, to make the nature of the performance project and the way of communicating it legible through an act of translation.

This dramaturgical collaborator, that the Forum wishes to help discuss and problematize, thus represents the highest point of the "separation created between dramaturgs, artists, and bureaucrats."[30] This is because the figure in question does not work on the performances selected by the artistic director of a theater or the general director of an opera house, but rather cultivates a particular relation with an artist or a group of artists fostering a certain kind of aesthetic, theoretical, and political horizon.

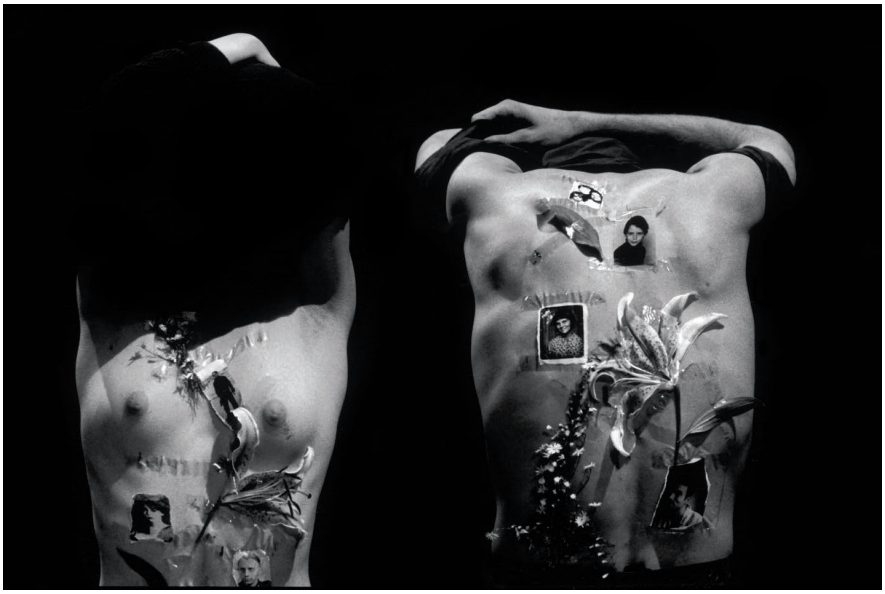
Piersandra Di Matteo

[29] "If you're close, you've got to remember not only the people off stage, but you are also going to remember the movie that we all went together to see after rehearsal and there was this great thing, and why don't you bring that in, or the thought that someone else had, or the dream I also had, that could be put in that scene. So for me dramaturgy is about proximity." André Lepecki, unpublished interview quoted in Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 157.

[30] Meldolesi, *Il lavoro del dramaturg*, 11.

The Dramaturg's Work

André Lepecki



Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods, *No Longer Readymade* ©Jan Simoens

The dramaturg's work is above all never his or her to own, to identify, or to easily point out in a given production. Contrary to all the other laborers making a piece—actors, dancers, choreographer or director, light designer, composer, technicians, who can all indicate clearly their contribution to the whole—a dramaturg's work remains boundless; even if very precise, it remains invisible; even if certainly present, it remains unclaimable; even if definitely authored, it remains unaccounted for. The dramaturg's work is, above all, invisible labor serving the conditions of visibility of each work-to-come, of each new piece.

The work of the dramaturg not being the dramaturg's work to own, it is then about working for the work being produced. In a very practical way, this is the first and most important element to always keep in mind: one works not for the choreographer, not for the producer, not for the festival (even if it is the festival, the producer, or the choreographer hiring the dramaturg and paying her salary) but one works *with* all of them, *for* the work-to-come.

What does it mean to work for a work-to-come, knowing that your labor will not lead to owning what you do (since a dramaturg is not an author, it will not be recognized as the work's author)? What does it mean to contribute to an arduous process, knowing that your actions will not be recognized as being part of the public face of the work (because the dramaturg will not be showing their face or putting their body on the line before the public as dancers and actors do)? What does it mean to engage in an activity where—as the great Flemish dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven once wrote—you know your picture will most likely not be printed in the production program?[31] It means above all to become an impersonal agent: enabling intra-connections between the multiple elements emerging throughout the creative process, for weeks, months, and even, depending on the scale of the project, years.

Given that my professional experience as dramaturg has overwhelmingly been in the field of experimental choreography, I will draw from my practice working with choreographers such as the Portuguese Vera Mantero, or the North American Meg Stuart, while also keeping in mind how to extrapolate some of the procedures required by dramaturging for dance to other fields, disciplines, and modes of creation. I will also draw from what I learned from my students in the Department of Performance Studies at NYU, where I taught for a few years in the early to mid-2000s a post-graduate course on "Experimental Dramaturgy," and where students were assigned to work as dramaturgs in film, visual arts exhibitions, curation, performance art, and also in the more traditional spaces of the dramaturg's intervention, theater and dance.[32] This means that my experience has been always to work as dramaturg in creative processes that were not text-based, in ways of making live art that became known as, following Hans-Thies Lehmann, "postdramatic."[33] The question then becomes quite interesting for dramaturgs: if the theatrical concept of "drama" is what has been bypassed by artists and ensembles such as Robert Lepage, Meg Stuart, Elizabeth LeCompte, Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio, Rimini Protokoll, Forced Entertainment, Pina Bausch, among so many others, then what is left of drama-turgy once drama, the first component of this intriguing word and work, is no longer what is at stake? If we put drama under erasure, if we write dramaturgy, then we are left with where we began: with *ergon*, or work. Once the preexisting dramatic

[31] Marianne Van Kerkhoven, "Looking Without Pencil in the Hand," *Theaterschrift* 5–6 (1994): 144.

[32] I narrate this experiment in teaching dramaturgy in my essay "Errancy as Work."

[33] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theater*.

text is no longer the ground and the vector aligning the entire field of composition of the work-to-come, then we are simply left with work to do. In postdramatic contexts, in experimental dance, in expanded choreography, in process theater, the question then becomes: What kind of work to do is the necessary one for a new work to come into the world? And how can the dramaturg work towards that work-to-do?

From a very pragmatic, practical point of view, the non-proprietary work of the dramaturg entails a consistent commitment to labor alongside the choreographer or director. In this sense, as soon as a dramaturg starts to operate in the rehearsal studio, this operation prompts an immediate and quite public opening up of the "author function"—for once a choreographer or a director decides to work with a dramaturg, she will embark in an open dialogical adventure, foregoing then of the exclusivity of attaching authorial will to her individual(istic) figure. It is this desire to embark in an open dialogue, and to expand and distribute the task of co-composing with yet another collaborator that becomes a crucial gesture for the dramaturg to embrace, foster, respect, and expand. Because it is not easy for creators to acknowledge that they do not hold full authorial *knowledge* over the piece they are about to create. Even being their piece, their work, and (copy)rightly so, any work-to-come is such a mysterious and vapid entity as to deserve the activation of a collective intellect in order to be worthy of its demands.

What else can we state about the pragmatics of working as a dramaturg, in the process of helping to create new works? It is worthwhile to quote somewhat extensively the dramaturg and dance scholar Pil Hansen's excellent introduction to the volume she co-edited with Darcey Callison *Dance Dramaturgy*; most particularly, to note how Hansen calls attention to the fact that there is never one dramaturgical method, or "the" dramaturgical method, but that each specific work (even if by the same director or choreographer) requires a careful development of a method specific for the work's own singularity. Hansen reminds us that:

> The functions, approaches, and strategies of dramaturgy are dependent on the specific sources of inspiration, movement approaches, and working methods of each individual project. A definition that encapsulates the layers of dramaturgy in one project may be counterproductive to another, and thus the adaptability of the dramaturg and the continuously evolving multiplicity of approaches has become a defining feature of the field.[34]

[34] Hansen, *Dance Dramaturgy*, 7.

Following this insight, then one of the tasks defining the work of the dramaturg is to attend to the specificity of each process, to take into consideration all of its components (including extra-semiotic ones, such as labor relations, the types of performers involved, the general political atmosphere at the moment when the process is unfolding, etc.) and then, to develop alongside all those components, a kind of singular method—ready to be discarded as soon as the work is deemed done (which may or may not happen on opening night…).

In these processes of splitting open the author function, attending to the matters at hand (human and non-human, dramatic and post-dramatic, choreographic and political, tangible and atmospheric, semiotic and affective), and developing process-specific methodologies for helping out the compositional task, the dramaturg must remember one thing: that objectivity regarding the work does not necessarily require "being distant" in relationship to the work. The dramaturg's is a task predicated on intimate knowledge of all the elements required to make live performance. This does not at all mean being technically proficient in acting, dancing, designing, or composing. It rather means being aware of the complexity of labor involved in production, it means not to shy away from being close to all of those practices, and to be receptive to understanding, from that proximal attitude, the labor and craft involved in everyone's activities.

In my own practice, I firmly believe that a total immersion in the rehearsal process is necessary, even fundamental, at least in the first few weeks of starting to work on a new project. To have everyone involved enter into the process with the same degree of excitement and trepidation, commitment and uncertainty, decisiveness and dread, knowledge an ignorance before the always daunting task of creating a new artistic proposition democratizes the collective. It helps everyone then to confront that nagging question that dramaturgs are constantly asked: who is the subject supposed to know the logic (or for some, "the truth") of the piece? To enter the process with a sense of common loss and certainty regarding this question dispels notions that the dramaturg occupies some kind of semiotic key to the overall meaning of the piece. No one holds that key, except collectively, since the work will hold it eventually, and always, in the end.

So, immersion into the process is a necessary first step to establish with all the other co-laborers a kind of collective intellect of the group. One that can then be accessed, in intimacy and with the precision that only proximity can deliver, by the dramaturg, whose main function in that collective becomes then one of being simultaneously memory repository and artic-

ulator of all the experiences, bits of actions, lost sections, and promising experiments developed throughout the rehearsal process.

Thus, the dramaturg brings to the discussions with the director or choreographer (sometimes in private, sometimes with everyone else, depending on the dynamics of the collective) remnants from a previous conversation, or an image from a newspaper, or an art catalogue, or a film, or a performance piece, or a piece of music, or a philosophical fragment, that resonate and expand the materials developed so far in the process.

Thus, the dramaturg suggests readings, indicates directions, and ask questions to the actors, to the designers, and to the director or choreographer. I find the most productive questions not those that focus on "Why?" (which tend to be questions on meaning, or on lack of meaning, propelled by a desire to wanting to make sense), but rather questions that ask "How?" or "When?" or "Where?" or "What?" or "Who"? For instance: Who will say/dance/play What, and When, and How? And once this question is answered and a decision is reached, then the quintessential dramaturgical question becomes not "What does this decision mean?" but "What does it *do* to the overall composition?" What are the ripple effects, both towards the end of the piece *and* towards its beginning, that each decision provokes? In this sense, following these many threads, a plane of composition starts to emerge, weaved as it is by the work of the dramaturg—and here, Eugenio Barba was right when he compared dramaturgy to the art of weaving—textures, texts, and actions.[35] The only remark I would add to Barba's observation is that what is weaved is also an arrangement of forces, a diagram of affects, a multi-layered field of intensities and images (sonic, visual, kinetic, conceptual, and haptic).

Finally, the work of the dramaturg must contain a certain degree of errancy, a purposeful deviation and deviancy from the "proper" paths of theatrical or choreographic semiotic behavior. It must allow and conjure a certain degree of wild thinking, of unjustifiable leaps of logic. Strong intuitions and the work of chance must remain available in the repertoire of the dramaturg, so that the work does not fall under the domain of "clear reason," of "dramaturgical sense." I prefer to think of the dramaturg as a careful articulator of improbable encounters and as a cartographer of that improbability. If any work of art results from an interactivity of matters, then the dramaturg must operate as a catalyst and as a particle accelerator of those matters provoking unexpected collisions, tracing with detail

[35] See Barba, "The Nature of Dramaturgy."

their outcomes so these can be transformed, should the work-to-come so require, from transient clashes into sustained assemblages. Often, these procedures allow for the unexpected solution of a scene that was stuck in place, not quite feeling right. Or help deciding what object must be included in the set. Or discover a sonic quality that now adds texture to the work's overall tone. Of course, all of these discoveries are not the dramaturg's, but they are achieved with the dramaturg's collaboration, knowing that the final decision will belong to the director, the choreographer, the collective, in co-resonant dialogue. And this is why the work of dramaturgs, as already said, will never be theirs to own. The dramaturgs' work is to work for the work. This is their ethics, and task.

The Dramaturg as a Ghost in the Opera

Antonio Cuenca Ruiz

Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, directed by Peter Sellars at the Salzburg Festival 2017 ©Ruth Walz/Salzburger Festspiele

I like to think of theater as an art of ghosts. The theatrical canon is, indeed, haunted and some forms such as Nō theater revolve entirely around the apparition of a phantom and the way people negotiate with it.[36] Opera, too, is an art of ghosts: operatic institutions rely mostly on the existence and perpetuation of a repertoire, endlessly revived, haunted by previous interpretations. The performers' existence on stage is haunted by the memory of something never lived in the present, to paraphrase Derrida's notion of *hauntology* in its elaboration by the field of Performance Studies.[37] Theater

[36] Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia*, the many deceased kings in Shakespeare's plays, and various characters who have one foot in the afterlife in Maeterlinck's, Strindberg's or, closer to us, Genet's plays, spontaneously come to mind when thinking about theater and shadows. Monique Borie adds to this list various iterations of puppets (in Pirandello, Craig, and Kantor) and wanderers in Ibsen's modern plays. See Monique Borie, *Le fantôme, ou Le théâtre qui doute* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1997).

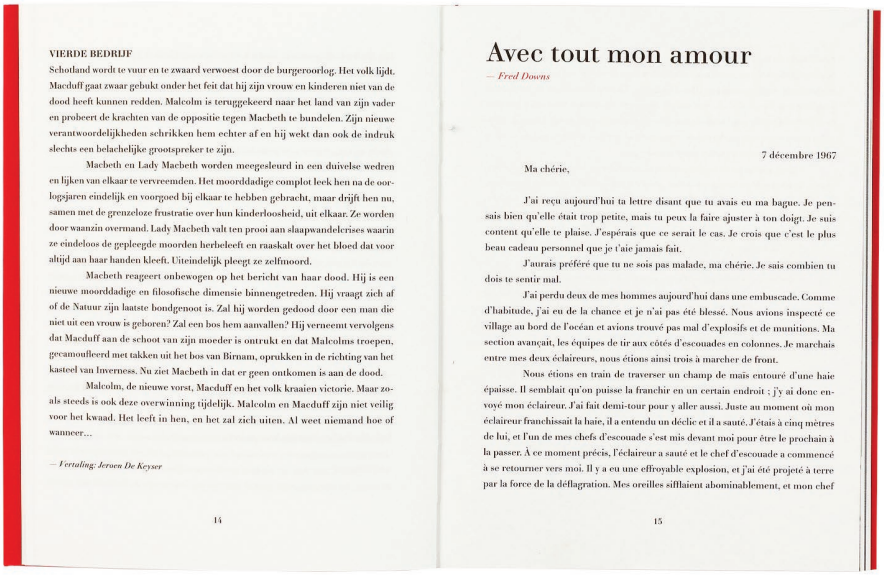
[37] See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994). A hauntological interpretation of opera and ghosts can be found in Carlo Lanfossi, "Ghosting Agrippina: Genealogies of Performance in Italian Baroque Opera," *Journal of Musicology* 36, no. 1 (2019): 1–38.

and opera aren't such pure art forms of/in the present, happening *here* and *now*, as we tend to think they are. We must acknowledge that every performance is haunted—at least by (real or fantasized) pasts, and numerous presences and voices. In this context, I am also inclined to think about the dramaturg as a ghost.

The function of the dramaturg is often confused with that of the playwright, especially in traditional theatrical fields. In the making of an opera, the work of the dramaturg is essentially considered as preparatory work: they study musical scores in depth, they compile research and documentation on the piece, its historical context, its stakes, and they act as philologists and commentators. They take part into the crafting of meaning and significance, moving between the libretto and the score of the piece and its performances. Sometimes they adapt or rewrite part of work—this is particularly the case for baroque operas, of which there may be several versions and variants (e.g., Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for which one has to devise the performance starting from two different versions of the score available. This work then continues during the rehearsals when the dramaturg closely surveys the creation and follows it as a sort of "observer."

In addition to these functions, the dramaturg with a specific expertise in musical theater and with a musical background can also work with an opera house, in its dramaturgy department. This has been my case until 2019 at the Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie, where I joined a team of dramaturgs together with Marie Mergeay and Reinder Pols. An "in-house dramaturg" leads meetings and discussions with the audience, gives public presentations, briefs the theater's teams to ensure that the goals and specificities of the project are understood by all, and writes or coordinates several publications. Among them, the most important are the program booklets which are conceived to accompany the spectator before and/or after the performance. At La Monnaie, these internal editorial projects follow a relatively clear publishing trajectory: the programs shed light more on the staged performance than on the operatic text, they give the artists a voice (statements of intent, interviews, etc.), and may include other areas of study.

An article in the program booklet is thus regularly commissioned to a researcher, personality, or academic from specific fields (anthropology, sociology, gender studies, history, etc.) who is asked to interpret the opera and the artistic project from their own perspective. At the same time, photographs and art works by contemporary artists are given priority over iconography from the past, in order to offer the spectator a visual landscape



VIERDE BEDRIJF

Schotland wordt te vuur en te zwaard verwoest door de burgeroorlog. Het volk lijdt. Macduff gaat zwaar gebukt onder het feit dat hij zijn vrouw en kinderen niet van de dood heeft kunnen redden. Malcolm is teruggekeerd naar het land van zijn vader en probeert de krachten van de oppositie tegen Macbeth te bundelen. Zijn nieuwe verantwoordelijkheden schrikken hem echter af en hij wekt dan ook de indruk slechts een belachelijke grootspreker te zijn.

Macbeth en Lady Macbeth worden meegesleurd in een duivelse wedren en lijken van elkaar te vervreemden. Het moorddadige complot leek hen na de oorlogsjaren eindelijk en voorgoed bij elkaar te hebben gebracht, maar drijft hen nu, samen met de grenzeloze frustratie over hun kinderloosheid, uit elkaar. Ze worden door waanzin overmand. Lady Macbeth valt ten prooi aan slaapwandelcrises waarin ze eindeloos de gepleegde moorden herbeleeft en raaskalt over het bloed dat voor altijd aan haar handen kleeft. Uiteindelijk pleegt ze zelfmoord.

Macbeth reageert onbewogen op het bericht van haar dood. Hij is een nieuwe moorddadige en filosofische dimensie binnengetreden. Hij vraagt zich af of de Natuur zijn laatste bondgenoot is. Zal hij worden gedood door een man die niet uit een vrouw is geboren? Zal een bos hem aanvallen? Hij verneemt vervolgens dat Macduff aan de schoot van zijn moeder is ontrukt en dat Malcolms troepen, gecamoufleerd met takken uit het bos van Birnam, oprukken in de richting van het kasteel van Inverness. Nu ziet Macbeth in dat er geen ontkomen is aan de dood.

Malcolm, de nieuwe vorst, Macduff en het volk kraaien victorie. Maar zoals steeds is ook deze overwinning tijdelijk. Malcolm en Macduff zijn niet veilig voor het kwaad. Het leeft in hen, en het zal zich uiten. Al weet niemand hoe of wanneer...

— *Vertaling: Jeroen De Keyser*

14

Avec tout mon amour

— *Fred Downs*

7 décembre 1967

Ma chérie,

J'ai reçu aujourd'hui ta lettre disant que tu avais eu ma bague. Je pensais bien qu'elle était trop petite, mais tu peux la faire ajuster à ton doigt. Je suis content qu'elle te plaise. J'espérais que ce serait le cas. Je crois que c'est le plus beau cadeau personnel que je t'aie jamais fait.

J'aurais préféré que tu ne sois pas malade, ma chérie. Je sais combien tu dois te sentir mal.

J'ai perdu deux de mes hommes aujourd'hui dans une embuscade. Comme d'habitude, j'ai eu de la chance et je n'ai pas été blessé. Nous avions inspecté ce village au bord de l'océan et avions trouvé pas mal d'explosifs et de munitions. Ma section avançait, les équipes de tir aux côtés d'escouades en colonnes. Je marchais entre mes deux éclaireurs, nous étions ainsi trois à marcher de front.

Nous étions en train de traverser un champ de maïs entouré d'une haie épaisse. Il semblait qu'on puisse la franchir en un certain endroit ; j'y ai donc envoyé mon éclaireur. J'ai fait demi-tour pour y aller aussi. Juste au moment où mon éclaireur franchissait la haie, il a entendu un déclic et il a sauté. J'étais à cinq mètres de lui, et l'un de mes chefs d'escouade s'est mis devant moi pour être le prochain à la passer. À ce moment précis, l'éclaireur a sauté et le chef d'escouade a commencé à se retourner vers moi. Il y a eu une effroyable explosion, et j'ai été projeté à terre par la force de la déflagration. Mes oreilles sifflaient abominablement, et mon chef

15

An example of a program booklet curated by the dramaturgs at La Monnaie in Brussels. All program booklets are bilingual (Dutch and French), they follow the same editorial line, and have a similar graphic design.

that opens up the performance without illustrating it. In some cases, at La Monnaie, we have moved away from our editorial line to take into account the requests of artists and directors, or the specificity of their project. This was the case, for example, with the visual artist and sculptor Berlinde de Bruyckere, who created the set design for Pascal Dusapin's *Penthesilea* directed by Pierre Audi (2015). She suggested printing a drawing on a specific paper, folded and inserted between the pages and the cover of the program; another concerns Romeo Castellucci, whose *Zauberflöte* (2019) no longer presented the original narrative to the point that it was not deemed relevant to publish a traditional synopsis in the program. These different tasks achieved by the in-house dramaturg help the opera house to achieve a consistent season so that the audience can experience a strong artistic project from one performance to the next.

In this context, considering the dramaturg as a *ghost* does not suggest that the dramaturg is haunting, almost annoying the director, in particular by being the voice of reason or philology against arbitrary artistic decisions. I also do not mean that the dramaturg is a disinterested observer, an external gaze: both presence and distance are implied in the creative process. So how do the figure of a specter and the paradoxical act of haunting inform

my practice? Two experiences as a dramaturg can help me start developing this question and provide possible answers: i.e., Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and *Idomeneo*, staged by Peter Sellars at the Salzburg Festival respectively in 2017 and 2019.[38]

Listening to Mozart's Voices

Most of the dramaturgical preparation on *La clemenza di Tito* and *Idomeneo* rested on putting their plots into a historical perspective and understanding their relevance and significance within their different historical contexts. Such work takes into account the historical referents of the pieces—Homeric narratives in *Idomeneo,* and the political career of the emperor Titus, initially bloodthirsty then virtuous, in *Clemenza di Tito*. It places these operas in the context of their creation—Mozart emancipating himself from Leopold's cumbersome presence; 1791 Europe, at the time of the French Revolution. Finally, it prompts us to question the music in light of our contemporary concerns—climate emergency or the attacks and violence that have shaken Europe since the mid-2010s. It appeares in retrospect that the two shows formed a diptych. *La clemenza di Tito* is, if not Mozart's last opera, at least Mozart's last opera seria, the previous one being *Idomeneo*, composed ten years earlier and a milestone in the composer's path to artistic maturity.

Indeed, in *Idomeneo*, Mozart articulated his aesthetic and political project to an audience for the first time. Advancing from aria to aria, from aria to duet, and from duet to trio, the music of *Idomeneo* comes to a climax with the magnificent and intensely moving quartet of act 3. Under what conditions is it possible for a society to achieve equality, when inequality, exclusion, and slavery relentlessly contradict our values and grow more prevalent from day to day? *Idomeneo* and later operas including *La clemenza di Tito* pursue this question. Their quartets and ensembles assume an equality between their participants, and make it concrete, too. They create a community that can only exist and endure if all four voices participate

[38] Both productions involved the conductor Teodor Currentzis and various artistic collaborators (George Tsypin, James F. Ingalls, Robby Duiveman, and Hans-Georg Lenhardt). The creation of *La Clemenza di Tito* also resulted in a short movie starring most of its cast: *Voices of Change*, with Jeanine De Bique, Golda Schultz, Russell Thomas, and Sir Willard White; Elsa Kleinschmager (image), Sébastien Guisset (sound) and Hélène Giummelly (editing), Arte France, 2017.

equally. They embody a radical equality, fostering an intense, richly varied dialogue between equals—children and parents, women and men, enslaved people and masters. The search for truth and justice is not the prerogative of a ruler but is brought about by a sense of community.

Opera seria before Mozart was characterized by a succession of arias which expressed the personal feelings of mostly aristocratic characters, and presupposed that history was written by "great men." In overturning the paradigms of opera seria, *Idomeneo* thus also represented a paradigmatic shift in relation to power structures. Considering this aesthetic and political project, and in order to highlight Mozart's acute theatrical sense, bold editing choices were made; most of the recitatives were cut and other pieces by the composer were added to the original script—the concert aria K. 505 in *Idomeneo* and, among other pieces, parts of the Great Mass in C minor K. 427/417a in *La clemenza di Tito*. These choices had much less to do with any iconoclastic move than with the desire to give voice to what deeply lies in Mozart's music. Through the forms he invents and develops, Mozart contributes to the emergence of new narratives and new ways of imagining the world. He strengthens us today with the belief that opera is a place for invention and political narratives, and not just the recycling of a repertoire that only serves an elite.[39]

Mozart Welcoming Multiple Voices

However, we can easily state that opera today is going through a crisis, and that there is an urgent need for innovation. As a dramaturg, one question arises: under what conditions can/should this search be carried out if it involves other cultures or other artistic forms? This is a question I personally asked myself during the creation of *Idomeneo*, whose final ballet was created by the multidisciplinary artist and choreographer Lemi Ponifasio along with Brittne Mahealani Fuimaono and Arikitau Tentau. Lemi Ponifasio situated the ballet in *Idomeneo*

> within Pacific cosmology, at the point where we hail the return of Moana, the ancestor, as a life-giver or to close the space between the earth and the sky so

[39] By stating this, I do not mean that the only solution would be to compose and create contemporary operas: some of them merely revive worn-out old narratives, while operas from the past—such as Mozart's—can be approached in a way that reinforces their relevance today.

> that the cosmos might be reformed. It's the last or the first dance of the world, a call which brings about a new beginning.[40]

It is easy to see how opera appropriates other horizons, other cultures—Pacific-islands culture being the one I'm interested in here. It is less obvious, however, to see how opera (as a genre, as an institution, as a rich cultural sector) is addressed by people from a specific culture.[41] This concern falls under the broader issue of cultural appropriation in the realm of opera, whose history is strewn with numerous musical borrowings that have promoted the genre, beyond obvious examples such as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* or *Turandot*, insofar as "a characteristic feature of the development of Western art forms during the twentieth century has been the frequent and highly fruitful exploitation by artistic practitioners of all kinds of materials drawn from non-Western cultures."[42] Without questioning the presuppositions or assumptions on which the patronizing of other cultures is based, and in spite of all good intentions, there is a great risk of keeping artists trapped in a figure of exotic otherness, that is to say in orientalist clichés.[43] This would mean weakening our guests' presences, having them being on stage merely as *ghosts*.

Up to now, I have used the term *ghost* as something emerging from (institutionalized) *history*—ghosts of previous opera singers, ghosts from the repertoire, ghosts from the history of the genre, etc. That is to say a figure of haunting, overlapping with *memory*. However, considering the risks implied by cultural appropriation, I ought to refine my definitions of ghosts and haunting. Following the sociologist Avery F. Gordon, one can state that the case of a ghost

[40] Antonio Cuenca Ruiz, "The Eruption of a New Shared Space. An Interview with Lemi Ponifasio," in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Idomeneo* (Salzburger Festspiele, 2019), 35.

[41] An example of this, however, is given by Lemi Ponifasio who, during the press conference presenting *Idomeneo*, shared the following anecdote: "When I was asked by Peter to create a Requiem for the New Crown Hope Festival [celebrating Mozart's 250th anniversary and curated by Peter Sellars], I went to the Kiribati island [an archipelago threatened by rising sea levels]. When I went there and met people in villages and I was talking a lot about Mozart, an old man said to me 'Is Mozart a king?' I said: 'No, he is a musician!' Now, I went back to Kiribati to ask [the dancer Arikitau Tentau to be part of *Idomeneo*] and everybody knows who Mozart is. For me, Mozart is now a global citizen."

[42] Brian Crow and Chris Banfield, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xi.

[43] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

> is a case of the difference it makes to start with … what we normally exclude or banish, or, more commonly, with what we never even notice. … It is not a case of dead or missing persons sui generis, but of the ghost as a social figure. It is often a case of inarticulate experiences, of symptoms and screen memories, of spiraling affects, of more than one story at a time, of the traffic in domains of experience that are anything but transparent and referential.[44]

We could add, with Marisa Parham, that haunting is not particularly interesting in that it resonates with the supernatural, but rather because it is "appropriate to a sense of what it means to live in between things—in between cultures, in between times, in between spaces—to live with various kinds of doubled consciousnesses."[45] The ghost as a "social figure" is therefore less that of an individual whose life is recollected in history, than that of someone, living or dead, left aside in some ways at the margins of institutionalized history or dominating memories.

In order to free myself from the sociohistorical and cultural presuppositions on which opera is still based, one of the first things I have to do as a dramaturg is therefore to become a ghost myself. By this, I mean losing all forms of sovereignty over creation: welcoming other imaginations and other narratives must be done at the risk of one's own function, at the risk of oneself, and it results in a ghostly presence. In other words, any form of disruption can only happen if it works to erode and shake one's own authorship and sovereignty. The figures of the ghost-dramaturg, or of haunting in its various forms, allow us to think anew about how meaning and sense emerge in a creation: "being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition."[46] Becoming a ghost oneself, joyfully abdicating one's sovereignty in the process, means, in the end, creating the conditions for the stage itself to think.

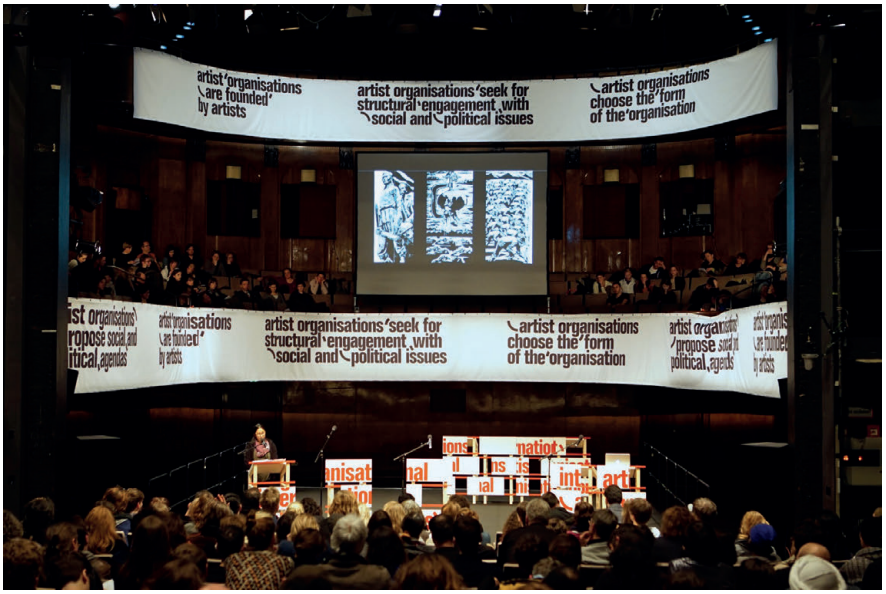
[44] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed. with a new introduction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 24–25.

[45] Marisa Parham, *Haunting and Displacement in African American Literature and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

[46] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.

And that Makes the Job even More Mysterious

Florian Malzacher in conversation with Piersandra Di Matteo



Artist Organisations International (2015). © Lidia Rossner/AOI

DI MATTEO: *In recent decades we have witnessed a shift in the dramaturgical paradigm. Practices of dramaturgy coming from the contemporary dance field are helping reshape the function of the dramaturg as part of a "collaborative turn." This has prompted a more adequate understanding of this figure in the performing arts. What is your take from the perspective of practice?*

MALZACHER: Firstly, I should admit that I actually have very little experience as a dramaturg in the way the profession is usually understood in German-speaking countries, with their very specific tradition. This is mainly because the projects I have been involved in have been based neither on a dramatic text nor on common work divisions within repertoire theaters. My work is always in conversation with the realm of postdramatic, devised theater. And one of the most obvious qualities of these approaches is: they tend to be very, very different from each other. And so do the possible roles of dramaturgs in this field.

In this regard, I am mainly interested in how the model of the "dramatic dramaturg" is supplemented as well as fundamentally challenged by a

whole range of new or changing job descriptions and job divisions within the field of postdramatic theater, conceptual dance, etc.

That said, I should add that even in more conventional theaters the role of the dramaturg has never been easy to grasp and is often interpreted in quite different ways. The dramaturg is still the most mysterious figure on a theatre's payroll.

But especially in devised theater (i.e., theater in which the script takes shape through rehearsals and improvisations) the work of a dramaturg is, usually, first and foremost to figure out what the work actually is. What is needed depends on working methods, aesthetics, group constellations, but also on the specific personalities of the artists—which means primarily the directors that are most often the main conversation partners of the dramaturg. The understanding of the role of the dramaturg does not become easier due to the fact that roles in postdramatic theater are always-already in flux—there are all kinds of collective approaches and shifting positions within the artistic process, for instance between being a performer, a writer, a director, a technician, a curator—or a dramaturg. We are part of this game of shifting job descriptions.

Concerning this, Bojana Kunst points out that the postures of the dramaturg today could definitely be understood as the embodiment of creative subjectivations due to aesthetic transformations only insofar as you take into consideration the changes in the political economy of labor, where the production of languages, contexts, and human cognitive and affective abilities comes to the foreground. She invites us to include the rise of this figure within the broader spectrum of cognitive labor in the post-Fordist economy…[47]

To make things even messier, it is necessary to stress that so far we have been talking about the part of dramaturgical work that is related directly to one specific artistic production. Another big part is programming a season or a festival—a work that is closer to the one of curators. Most dramaturgs in theaters or festivals do both, even though with different priorities in terms of time and interest.

Personally, I have been working mainly in the second field, as a curator and writer. But when it comes to my work as a production dramaturg, then the relationship to the artist is very different from the one as curator—I consider myself mainly in a serving position. It is a different conversation,

[47] See Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2015).

a different negotiation. As a production dramaturg, the job is to find out: What is best for the work? What is best for the director, for the other artists involved, for the performers, etc.? What is best for "an audience"? For the artwork itself? Obviously, there are no absolute answers to any of these questions—and, just as obviously, the answers might contradict each other.

The dramaturg's work is not recognizable by an audience afterwards. And in some cases, it might even be invisible for yourself or the director. At times, the influence is very subtle, it has to be very subtle. Sure, you could say: "Here she took some of my advice, here he cut something because I said so…" but that is not the point. I even find it problematic when in certain circumstances the role of the dramaturg becomes too important—for example, if the director is an artist from a different field and does not have much experience with theater. My suggestions as a dramaturg are most often not meant to be accepted one-to-one, but rather to start a conversation, to challenge and to be challenged. In the end, I am not responsible for the production. I do not make the final decisions.

Yes, but some kind of responsibility is at stake…

Of course, because we are committed to contributing in making it a good work. But it is not in our hands. In cases where a dramaturg is also representing an institution—as artistic director, for example—one could theoretically try to force some decisions onto the artistic process. This is a thin line—and it is necessary to be very transparent about it. For an independent dramaturg, this kind of power potentially does not even exist. I cannot give any orders, nor would I want to. I have neither the power nor the mission nor the assignment to be responsible. I can try to convince—but even there I would be careful, because in the end it is the artists' choice.

What similarities and divergences can you identify between the roles of dramaturg and art critic? A dramaturg produces theoretical texts concerning production, too. What changes in the writing?

Well, for me personally there is a connection even on a biographical level, since I used to work as a critic for several years—and I was involved in parallel as a dramaturg in a few productions while I started curating my own programs. There we have again the concept of permanently shifting roles. For me these activities are related. The reason I stopped writing criticism for newspapers and magazines was mainly due to a conflict in loyalty and not in methodology.

So, for me there is a dialectical principle inherent to the dramaturgical work which is related to the role of the critic. It can be the job of a dramaturg to challenge the production, to point out possible weaknesses, incoherencies, and such, just as a critic would do—but with the important difference that you tell it to the director, not to the world.

How much criticism, how much dialectical reasoning is useful in a specific production depends very much on the personality but also on the concrete methodology of the artists one works with. Some want to argue, some want to be challenged, others have more affirmative modes of inquiry—and others again are very vulnerable when in the middle of the artistic process. To be honest: if someone mainly needs affirmation, I am not the best dramaturg to work with. I do not say it is wrong, I am just not very good at it.

How would you describe your work as a dramaturge with the Nature Theater of Oklahoma?

My work with Nature Theater of Oklahoma is particular in that it happened mainly in the context of large state theaters such as the Burgtheater in Vienna or the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus. Within these environments, the dramaturg often becomes a negotiator between the production and the institution. Or sometimes a diplomat, and sometimes a translator between the systems.

No President, Nature Theater of Oklahoma (2018) © Heinrich Brinkmöller-Becker/Ruhrtriennale

There are still so many frictions and non-compatibilities between devised works and repertoire theaters. And it is also a different way of having to engage with the audience in these contexts, where there is less experience with non-dramatic work. More writing, more talking, more communicating.

In the case of Nature Theater of Oklahoma one must say that the directors Kelly Copper and Pavol Liška often have a very clear concept and very clear ideas from quite early on. And they are a couple—so there is a lot of dialectical work already done between the two of them. Generally, the work of a dramaturg is quite different if the work is very conceptual—for instance, you can have difficulties discussing length if the idea is to avoid cutting any part of the text, or if there is a musical score that cannot be shortened.

…and what about other artists you have worked with?

In the case of Lola Arias (or Rimini Protokoll, but I have only worked with them as a dramaturg for their very first production, *Kreuzworträtsel Boxenstopp*) the performers were not actors but amateurs, and in some cases (*Airport Kids* and *Futureland*) even children or teenagers. The work is less about a concept as it is about facilitating the needs of the performers, too, or even to protect them. In the case of *Futureland*, the performers were unaccompanied minor refugees in Berlin. There is a whole support structure for the performers, for the production, and for the director, which the dramaturg is part of. I guess at times my dialectical approach in this was challenging…

Do you follow all the rehearsals?

No, I just join every other rehearsal, sometimes even only once every couple of weeks. Not only because a freelancer has other obligations, too, but also because I need distance. For me it does not work to sit through each rehearsal.

Distance is an interesting word. Many dramaturgs used to affirm exactly the contrary. For example, André Lepecki—in this dossier as well—maintains that it is important to establish a form of proximity with the work, which inevitably involves a close relationship with the director/choreographer, performer, collaborators—the need to be part of the process and not an external eye…

Of course, I need proximity to the artist. I even usually only work with artists that I already have a relationship with. Obviously, it helps to already have an idea about how to communicate in relation to the work, what are the expectations, etc. In this kind of proximity, we can then negotiate the distance required to be able to contribute in a productive way. I know that today it is

often much more about affirmation and proximity than about criticality and distance—I guess, I am a bit old-fashioned in my dialectical thinking.

I believe the distinction you made between this proximity with the artists (and their aesthetics) and the distance from the work/production is quite important. I can also recognize how my dramaturgical practices are a continuous negotiation between being inside the process in terms of the work's aesthetic and political course, and also giving room to refresh the gaze, being able to analyze all the elements as though I was seeing and analyzing them for the first time, with all the consequences they introduce… This could be a way not to give in to consoling oneself with what is already known, with what looks good because it is familiar…

Yes, and then of course it is not about showing off how amazingly critical one can be. Sensitivity is important. Especially at the beginning things are often still very open and vulnerable. Later, a certain time pressure comes into play—the premiere has to be ready at a given date. There is a moment when things need to be uncovered, where decisions have to be made, darlings have to be killed. Here a more distant position can help to figure things out more clearly.

Coming back to what you said about working with Nature Theater of Oklahoma, what do you think about new possible forms of institutionalizing this role? As we well know, in Germany there is a solid tradition, while in Italy, for example, such role is not widely acknowledged at an institutional level, which is reflected in its economic treatment. These figures are closer to artistic projects, rather than institutions, even though we are beginning to see some signs of change.

The concept of the *Hausdramaturg* (In-house dramaturg, or Production dramaturg) was mainly fostered at the Brecht's Berliner Ensemble after the Second World War. It was not only a matter of specific people and positions—it was mostly about having a dialectical position within each production process.

In the context of independent theater companies, on the other hand, the idea of a dramaturg chosen specifically for each project, rather than being assigned due to work schedules, seems more appropriate. Especially since independent venues and production houses—if they have dramaturgs at all—face the problem of having many productions in place at the same

time. In these cases, they are often not able to be involved more than briefly, as outside eyes, only joining towards the very end of the process.

For artists, in any case, it might make more sense to have continuous relationships with dramaturgs, or perhaps to choose them for specific productions, topics, aesthetical challenges in the various roles they can play: as translators, diplomats, critics, as outside eyes, as artistic troubleshooters, or just as someone to talk to.

And since we are speaking of institutions: recently I get more and more invitations as a dramaturg with another very different function; i.e., not to accompany a specific artistic production, but rather to advise the festival or program at large; to ping-pong ideas about the institution in general as well as about certain parts of their program. This role might be called a "curatorial advisor," but actually to me this feels very much like the work of a dramaturg, helping to find out what they actually want without being one of the in-house dramaturgs or curators myself; to shape together the core of their ideas and try to push them on a conceptual level. Here again the distance or even a certain ignorance toward their pragmatic challenges and daily routines might actually be helpful at times. If one is deeply integrated within an institution, then it is not easy to find the space for more radical thinking. At times someone is needed who does not immediately have to think about the consequences of organization, financial responsibilities, etc. Someone who is—to a degree—able to think irresponsibly. Or rather who is responsible only to the artistic or curatorial concept. It seems like we have to add "curatorial advisor" to the list of roles a dramaturg might play.

You have worked in the editorial field, curating books that are important in fueling debates and creating discursive spaces in the performing arts. For example, Truth is Concrete *(2014),* Empty Stages, Crowded Flats *(2017),* The Life and Work of Nature Theater of Oklahoma *(2019).*[48] *These books give us an idea of the different lines of tension that animate your work. How is this editorial work related to the figure of the dramaturg?*

In Germany, writing and editing used to be very much part of the work of a dramaturg—when I grew up every production in a municipal theater would have often quite ambitious program booklets with sometimes long texts and additional material. This has now largely disappeared. Today we

[48] *Truth is Concrete: A Handbook for Artistic Strategies in Real Politics*, ed. Florian Malzacher (Berlin: Sternberg, 2014); Malzacher and Warsza, *Empty Stages*; *The Life and Work of Nature Theater of Oklahoma*, ed. Florian Malzacher (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2019).

might rather associate this with the visual arts, where text production is usually part of the job of a curator.

For me, as a former journalist, writing about theater and the arts has always been part of my work. It is a way to communicate with a broader audience but also to take part in the internal reflections of the field. And, not least, it is a way to think through things. I also write for myself.

Again, even writing and editing comes with different agendas: if I edit a book about a company, I understand myself, to a certain degree, in a serving position. It is about trying to bring out their voice and not necessarily overwrite it with my own interpretation. It lies somewhere in the middle; I am not their spokesperson but also not a neutral critic. It is, again, a mix of proximity and distance.

You have spoken about the interconnection between dramaturgical thinking and curatorial instances. This link is interesting to me, as it concerns my practices as well. For me, performing arts curatorship is powered or nourished by a dramaturgical stance that involves questioning spectatorship, modes of perception, spatiality and temporality, multi-layered field of intensity, and diagrams of affects. In particular, I'm referring to curation that is

Jonas Staal and Florian Malzacher at the performative training camp *Training for the Future* (2018)
© Ruben Hamelink

situated outside the classic definition of program-making. What is your point of view on this? When I ask, I have in mind your curation of Truth is Concrete *(2012), the 170-hours non-stop marathon camp on artistic strategies in politics you made in Graz; or the congress Artist Organisations International (2015) you curated with Jonas Staal and Joanna Warsza for Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) in Berlin; or the performative training camp* Training for the Future *(2019), recently programmed with Staal for the Ruhrtriennale…*

Programming a festival, especially large festivals, involves a lot of pragmatic agendas. So often the result is not as consequent or clear as one would like. Specific curatorial projects have at least the possibility of being more precise. Here a more curatorial approach comes into play—and should be played with; especially in the performing arts, we should remind ourselves that the aesthetic strategies of curating can draw a lot from the strategies of a theater director (as Harald Szeemann emphasized) as well as a dramaturg (as Beatrice von Bismarck noted).

In the case of my collaboration with Jonas Staal, it is again a bit different. In *Training for the Future*, I am neither an outside-curator nor a not-so-responsible dramaturg. It is a form of shared work. Of course, the visual language and some of the conceptual rigidity comes from Jonas, as it is very much in line with his other artistic work. There are discussions about certain aspects, but generally I mostly enjoy thinking within the frame of his artistic approach. In the end, it is a shared responsibility, a shared general development, shared content etc. And again, in this collaboration there are different roles, where mine might be more concerned with pragmatics but also with bringing in other points of views, challenging a certain rigidity, contextualizing…

Again, it is about the different roles we play…

Yes, sorry to be repetitive—but the concept of role-play is helpful for me in understanding different working circumstances. The role of the dramaturg sometimes offers certain possibilities to do something, to decide something in a certain way, which an artist might not want to do. On the other hand, the role of the artist entails decisions that I would not take in the role of curator or dramaturg. Additionally, the roles of set designers, production managers, financial directors, technicians, and so on, come into play. They might even overlap or rotate in different environments. In some long-term collaborations it took years to define them, and they still might change again. There is no essentialism in this role-playing. But understanding that it is a play allows us at times to step back, breath, and then enter again. It allows a dialectical way of working.

Dramaturgy in an Extended Field

Eva-Maria Bertschy

Some years ago, I decided to move to a "proper theater" for a while. Until then, my career as a dramaturg had taken a somewhat chaotic course. I had spent several years moving from project to project, as production manager or dramaturg with various independent groups and directors, including the Swiss director Milo Rau. After a few months spent at the City Theater in Bern, for the first time I had the feeling I understood the very essence of theater: i.e., a constant circulation among a limited group of people and their ideas. Every day you go into a dark room with them and discuss *Othello* or *Antigone*. In the end, however, everyone pretty much agrees on the meaning of the texts, because they all basically share the same background. For even if some people working in a theater have a varied background, some coming from working class and others from families of artists, their ideas and experiences have become aligned over time, all the more so the longer they have been working in this rather enclosed institution.

For people working in a theater, however, much more time-consuming than dealing with the content of plays are questions such as: "Who will be cast for the leading role in this or that play? Is the design of the stage set feasible, or perhaps too expensive?" As a trained sociologist, I was able to remain enthusiastic about analyzing all these interactions for quite some time. At least, until the inevitable happened: a fight for control between the general director and the theater director, which kept the staff busy for half a year. There was no longer a discussion about what content and what political issues we should have negotiated with the audience, but rather whose ideas were enforced within the institution. That's when I decided to leave institutional theater.

This shift from content to internal, structural issues occurs in many fields of society, and is particularly noticeable in politics or the sciences: that is, those spaces in which the subject of debate should be sought outside the institution, but where internal conflicts and motivations in day-to-day relationships dominate. In theater this is obvious due to its very comprehensive structure based on workshops, rehearsals, stage managers, dressers, administration, box offices, etc., all parts of a huge machinery that can easily keep itself in motion without external influence and without any external impact. Far be it from me to say that this is the case in all theaters. But there is a tendency to lose connection with the audience or to play only for a very limited audience which has to be constantly counteracted.

Many attempts were made over the history of twentieth-century political theaer to open it up and at the same time free it from the bourgeois and hegemonic ideas produced by a limited group of people inside the institution. Bertolt Brecht undertook many experiments at the Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, where professional actors stood on stage together with workers' choirs, students, and children and interpreted classical plays together. According to his ideas, the presence of amateurs contributed to the alienation and enabled the audience to understand the people and the characters they embody onstage, in relation to the conditions in which they themselves live. The audience can thus begin to conceive these conditions as transformable.

In his Theatre of the Oppressed, Brazilian theater creator Augusto Boal pursued Brecht's idea of a self-empowered audience by turning it into actors who can intervene in the events on stage. Brecht's and Boal's ideas were as pedagogical as they were radical: they aimed at nothing less than a renewal of society through theater. To achieve this goal, they were also prepared to make aesthetic sacrifices. The important thing, however, was to make the dividing line between the people on stage (who talk) and the audience (who experience the performance silently) permeable. For Brecht, the workers were to enter the stage, for Boal "the oppressed" were no longer to be condemned to silence—those standing on the other side of the "abyssal line" described by the postcolonial theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos:

> What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the copresence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, nondialectical absence.[49]

By exporting the modern legal system and modern science to the colonies, European delegates and salesmen installed a dividing line between the bearers of what they defined as systematic, verifiable knowledge, a legal system and culture, and the uncivilized, the savages. A dividing line that remains to this day. The problem with knowledge of the world enacted in European institutional theaters, as well as in schools and in other cultural institutions, is that it ignores, in an almost perverse way, that culture that exists beyond *Othello* and *Antigone*. We also find it hard to imagine that social orders exist beyond our liberal, democratic order and universal human rights. And so,

[49] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2016), 118.

the people who live outside this order do not appear on our stages, neither as figures nor as actors. They live in the ghettos of the megacities and in sweatshops or prisons; their organs are trafficked on the black market; they are kidnapped and then stand on the roadside a few kilometers away from seaside resorts and offer their sexual services. Only occasionally do they return to our world through force, as a threatening intrusion, terrorists, undocumented migrant workers or fugitives. After a few years they might have the chance to be given the opportunity to play Othello.

When I fled from the dark rooms of theater, walking for the first time across the shaky wooden bridge that marked the border between Rwanda and the Eastern Congo to begin research for Milo Rau's project *The Congo Tribunal*,[50] I was overcome by this bizarre enthusiasm for the many colorful and alien things we commonly subsume under the term "exoticism." Not only food and dresses, but also the meter-deep potholes, the daily power cuts, the crumbling façades—everything seemed exciting to me. Claude Lévi-Strauss mocked all explorers who give in to this feeling and, on their return, present a few accumulated images. For the audience, "platitudes and commonplaces seem to have been miraculously transmuted into revelations by the sole fact that their author, instead of doing his plagiarizing at home, has supposedly sanctified it by covering some twenty thousand miles."[51] Only when the potholes and the blackouts become tedious again, you begin to approach their meaning. Then you start to ask how people can live with them, what kind of obstacles they have to overcome on a daily basis, why the roads have not been repaired, why the electricity grid is unstable, and what are the economic causes of the deteriorated (social) infrastructure and how people nevertheless resist and show resilience.

When you, as a dramaturg, decide to turn away from *Othello* and *Antigone* and travel to Congo to deal with the civil wars and conflicts surrounding mining, it is quite reassuring to know that there are many other people out there who deal with these issues and want to speak out. These include NGOs and scientists, mine workers, CEOs of mining companies

[50] In 2015, we organized a three-day tribunal in Bukavu (Eastern Congo) in cooperation with a number of civil society organizations. In three cases, the *Congo Tribunal* examined the links between the exploitation of raw materials and the ongoing civil war in the region, the responsibility of political elites, multinational companies, and the international community. In 2017, a documentary-film about the project was released. http://www.the-congo-tribunal.com.

[51] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (London: Penguin, 2011), 17.

with a whole staff of employees, victims of resettlement, activists supporting their lawsuits, lawyers on both sides, politicians signing contracts with the companies, rebel groups controlling the mining areas, etc. You can choose protagonists and antagonists, curious side characters, competitors who push themselves to the fore but never gain your sympathy. Sometimes the fate of anti-heroes also somehow affects you. All of them are bearers of a very specific knowledge, which arises from a certain experience, in turn related to their position in a system, within which they enact it over and over again every day.

To overcome "abyssal thinking," we must work towards a complex ecology of knowledge in which the knowledge of the speakers from international NGOs is complementary to the knowledge of the displaced farmers. Let us follow Santos's reasoning a bit further:

> This principle of incompleteness of all knowledges is the precondition for epistemological dialogues and debates among different knowledges. What each knowledge contributes to such a dialogue is the way in which it leads a certain practice to overcome a certain ignorance. Confrontation and dialogue among knowledges are confrontation and dialogue among the different processes through which practices that are ignorant in different ways turn into practices that are also knowledgeable in different ways.[52]

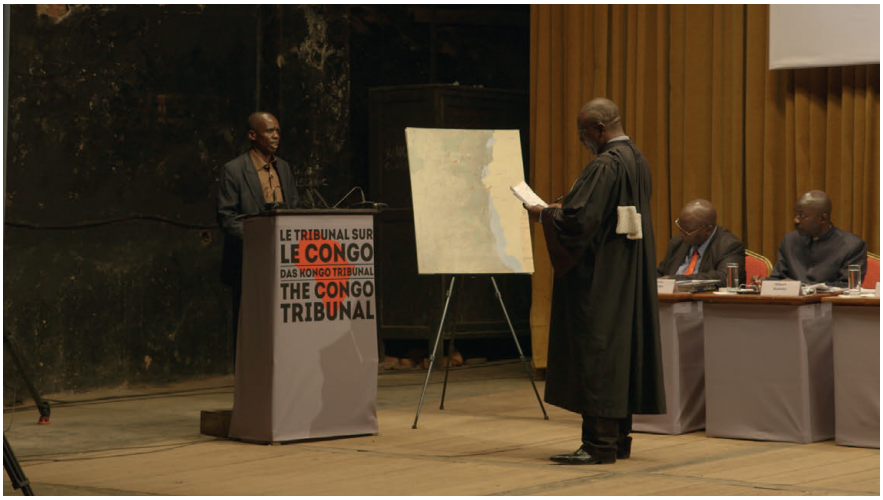
This is a dramaturgical principle that I have learned to place at the root of my own practice. And indeed, we have managed to cross the "abyssal line" to some extent by following the principle of the incompleteness of all knowledge. After having studied the conflicts surrounding mining for a while, by talking about them with all sorts of people, we understood that outside the legal system—in which mining concessions are granted by state authorities to private companies, which thus have the right to exploit the land and the subsoil—there is an opposing order: a traditional right to land. In this order, the land belongs to the village community, which has buried its ancestors there and is administered by a village chief. Various rebel groups in Eastern Congo invoke this when they defend their village community against the interests of international companies.

A few years later, when we were working on a project with the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, we understood that the conflict between traditional law and the legal system in the modern state had already been

[52] Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, 189.

metaphorically described in *Antigone*. And yet, we had not been able to read this text in this way before, when we were sitting in dark rehearsal rooms. Antigone insists on the right to bury her brother, which he was denied because he had led a revolt against the existing order. She defends a traditional right against the logic of the modern State embodied by Creon, which also involves a different relationship with the land, which is not private property to be exploited, but a common good that must be preserved. We began to understand that perhaps beyond the so-called "civilized order" of the modern, liberal State there is another order that is now more promising.

The aim of our theater and film project *The Congo Tribunal* was to create a Court of Justice where a traditional order was respected as much as the one of the lawyers who defend the property rights of the companies. The two orders should not be exclusive, but the contradictions should become apparent. We started to analyze parliaments and courtrooms, we compared the arrangement of the tribune, the different levels of the stage, the roles assigned, the speaking times, the way questions were asked and the answers produced. We tried to understand how a conflict develops, the course of which the spectators could follow, what realities unfolded before them, from a concrete report on the victims' lifeworld, through a political demand made by a trade union leader, up to an analysis carried out by a geologist.



Milo Rau, *The Congo Tribunal*. Prosecutor Sylvestre Bisimwa is questioning Stéphane Ikandi, representative of the artisanal miners during the *Bukavu Hearings* (2015) © Yven Augustin

The minute you leave institutionalized stages behind, you understand that you can set up a stage anywhere, that each stage can be shaped, that you can set your own rules, that you can establish alternative speaking times, that you can design the levels on the stage. The ninth point of Milo Rau's *Ghent Manifesto* is: "At least one production per season must be rehearsed or performed in a crisis or war zone without cultural infrastructure."[53] This rule grew out of our experience with *The Congo Tribunal*: by setting up stages where there are none—because the social infrastructure has been destroyed—and by inviting people onto the stage who otherwise would not have a chance, you can change society—at least in theater.

In 2019, we travelled to Southern Italy because Milo Rau was invited to make a film on the Gospel in Matera, the city that was elected "European Capital of Culture 2019" with its "sassi," a complex system of cave dwellings carved into the ancient river canyon. Matera is also the place where famous films about Jesus were shot, from *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964) by Pier Paolo Pasolini to *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) by Mel Gibson. During our first research trip, we discovered a reality very unlike the picturesque and renovated center of Matera: a few kilometers away, refugees and migrants live in so-called "ghettos" and are exploited in tomato fields under slave-like conditions. We understood that in a contemporary interpretation of the Gospel these people must become the protagonists. For whom should Jesus be committed to today? Who are the "last" in our society? There is a peculiar parallel between Jesus Christ's revolt against the Roman occupiers and the rebellion of invisible migrant workers, underpaid, exploited, and subjected to harsh shifts of grueling work. We tried to involve the prostitutes trafficked by the Nigerian mafia, and youngsters who managed to cross the Libyan desert and the Mediterranean, and are now trapped in Southern Italy with no prospects. We wished for them to enter the European Capital of Culture from the ghettos and lay siege to it. And we wanted to support them in this undertaking, as a kind of Trojan horse, from within the cultural institution.

Although most people understood the importance of the idea of storming and laying siege to this important cultural institution in order to make their concerns heard, only a few believed that it was worth sacrificing a working day during which they could earn 30 euros. When you spend some time in one of these ghettos with its inhabitants, you get an idea of the wounds it leaves on people when a society with all its institu-

[53] Milo Rau, "Ghent Manifesto," May 1, 2018, https://www.ntgent.be/assets/files/general/Manifest/manifest-in-NL-en-ENG.pdf.

Milo Rau, *New Gospel*. Yvan Sagnet as Jesus with his Apostles during the *Entry into Jerusalem* in Matera, 2019 © Armin Smailovic

Milo Rau, *New Gospel*. Yvan Sagnet with a group of farmworkers on the way to the tomato plantation, 2019 © Armin Smailovic

tions systematically excludes them; when they are never allowed to speak, when they are expelled once again after every peaceful protest against the conditions in which they have to live, deported; when any documentation of their misery only leads to them being perceived even more as a stigma that needs to be removed. At some point people stop making themselves heard. They leave the stage. They withdraw to places that are not marked on the map. That is why the utopian revolt starting from the "ghettos" in Europe remained an idea. We tried to depict it somehow in the film. But to be honest, we also had to portray our desperate attempt to give it a bit of reality. But in the end, our film is about the relentless struggle of those who believe in trying to storm cultural institutions, regardless of whether they are heard.

Stitching Work: Dramaturgy and the Politics of Curation

Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi

Writing this article feels like standing in a station in Brussels with no trains running. There is no precise destination, as I am anchored in the *here and now*, together with the artists I accompany. At the same time, I feel impatient and full of desire to resume my many creative travels, to be reunited again with the accomplices with whom I began a journey in Marrakech and Cairo. It is the modus of someone ready to catch a train with no ability to determine the day and time of the train to come, a daring train defying our uncertain times, unsafe and unpredictable.

Many questions cross my mind concerning the collaborations I have built over more than a decade as a dramaturg and curator. This work has nourished me, carried me, and encouraged me to engage in various projects, as well as to contribute to each other's work while respecting each person's context. For many years, we/I have been doing work that goes beyond some sort of coaching and is not driven by empathy only. This work aims above all to listen to the specificities of each and every one, and to adjust to the main ideas and principles of the projects in question. This way of listening has been carefully developed, stitching together meanings while being continuously aware of the burdens of these places and their inscription in transformative geopolitical contexts: Brussels, Marrakech, and Cairo.

These cities host subjective spaces as well as physical places, such as a rehearsal space, a theater, a fictional space, a metaphorical space… Theaters, when they exist in such contexts, are not easy to access for rehearsals of contemporary dance. Meanwhile, our own kitchens play just as important a role as the missing theater. In a journey that will extend far beyond us, all the present companions, the words written on paper, the movements traced in the studio, the sounds recorded in noisy terraces in Marrakech and Cairo, host us and form an important source for the imaginations of ourselves and hopefully others.

In their valuable companionship, I was able to be nomadic, reflecting, observing, and capturing the essence of the moment and the temporality of the place. I was, in a way, able to displace notions of time. In doing so—sometimes with effort and often with pleasure and passion—the fatigue of this passion gave meaning to the individual and collective commitment to contributing to this creative dynamic, in Marrakech and Cairo in particular. A dynamic occurs that might allow a space to dream, a performative space of the body which therefore continuously questions the politics of the city.

In this time of pandemic, where the already restricted mobility of my allies is no longer limited only by visas, but also by all kind of sanitation measures—a global condition we are all facing—I keep asking myself: How can we continue to work together, to listen, to develop this artistic exchange of thought of the body, of bodies in thought?

We are perhaps at the end of some formats, and at the birth of new ones.

It is as if a new exchange is taking place with a more silent and intense listening, imagining each other's needs even more sharply, stimulating us towards more introspection, with less voyeurism and more discreteness.

The formats of European festivals have acted as the norm too much and for too long. In these formats, the canonisation process evolves through a Western lens, leading to some artists being included and other excluded. They overly focus on needs related to the art market and remain based on Western notions and linked to western expectations, all too often tipped towards voyeurism. They reveal a sort of guarded or competitive hunt for the new, the young, the latest and most promising art works… In this art market, festivals are one of the first operating tools of the system. This dynamic operates like a mental snowball within the deeply intertwined programming of festivals and theaters in the West.

They act similarly in their representations of selected pieces and the lack of possibilities of bringing to the fore the innovative and alternate processes underlying them.

Therefore, this might be the right time to think about a different dramaturgy in a "festival," formulating a different way of listening to the support towards processes and above all developing paths in more sustainable dialogues, facilitating a platform of exchange capable of learning from others' projects. Projects which are shown not only in their staged versions, but also and especially as creative processes. In other words, as performances shown in their aptitudes towards resilience, which they continuously produce. In doing so, we need to challenge *the politics of curation*, and simultaneously push for more awareness of this concept. It is a claim to free space for other formats and listen to the African continent and its dynamics and innovations in the cultural scene. Achille Mbembe often says that Africa "is the last frontier of capitalism … It is the last territory on earth that has not yet been entirely subjected to the rule of capital."[54]

[54] Achille Mbembe, "The Internet is Afropolitan," interview by Bregtje van der Haak, *This is Africa*, August 7, 2015, https://thisisafrica.me/politics-and-society/the-internet-is-afropolitan/.

Botero en Orient by Taoufiq Izeddiou. Dramaturgical documentation by Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi ©Dorothea Tuch

In other words, how can togetherness be reshaped?

For more than a decade, I have been involved in contributing to artistic projects in Marrakech and Cairo. I will try to give flesh to the above through my experience as curator of *Un/Controlled Gestures?* in Cairo,[55] and the *On Marche* festival in Marrakesh.[56]

These curatorial experiences led to sharing a few encounters related to the creative scene with a young generation of choreographers and performers, a generation that abounds in initiatives, both individual and hyper-socialized, connected, and which, while being aware of economic and social limitations, is constantly inventing new ones. The energy of the young group proved their aptitude for an innovative generation that is open to the world and deeply rooted in the local context, whether in Marrakech or Cairo.

[55] *Un/Controlled Gestures?* is a project launched by the Goethe-Institut, curated by Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi with the support of Anna Mülter and Anna Wagner, Mohamed Benaji and Malek Sebai (2019–2020). https://www.goethe.de/ins/eg/de/kul/sup/uncongest.html.

[56] The International Contemporary Dance Festival *On Marche* is an ongoing annual festival in Marrakech, founded and initiated by Taoufiq Izeddiou in 2005.

Within Un/Controlled Gestures?

The main curatorial focus was to offer a space dedicated to such young generation, to build together with them from the start their first concept proposal, and to accompany the singularities of each one. The curator's work consists in providing an adequate framework, by extracting the raw material of the creative process. It is not only a question of accompanying the process and presenting results, but rather the construction of a shared critical space of creation, a safe space that explores a constructive critical discussion during its own making and gathers different generations of makers around itself. It puts together and advances the subjects of contemporary creation by young artists and by more confirmed choreographers. It is highly important to stimulate exchanges between generations of choreographers in MENA and in Africa. This space of dialogue between various generations is a way of contributing to writing a proper performing art history from the continent.

This is important within the discipline itself and also in relation to other disciplines such as visual arts and cinema. Fields involving image and movement are highly interconnected and benefit from less structured "boxes" in Africa, as there is much more interaction between these disciplines.

Koboul by Manal Tass. *Un/Controlled Gestures?* © Zayene Bechir

Through this open field, indifferent to the single discipline, a proper referential framework arises. By being proper, it agitates against, or decostructs, the colonial, globalized cultural system. This is taking place with an astonishingly rich artistic vitality, in terms of cultural and societal diversity and resolutely contemporary artistic and cultural initiatives. Here, the cultural landscape abounds in collaborative multidisciplinary projects and non-profit cultural organizations, both nomadic and permanent.

Through the curatorial project *Un/Controlled Gestures?*, we could grasp some of the main questions and challenges through the creative process. Young artists reflected on the autonomy of the body and the social control exercised over bodies, in their political, economic, and interpersonal dimensions. All projects were based on one main common ground where the choreographer occupies the spaces as a performer. It was an intentional choice for all participants to both be onstage and to develop the art space starting from their own bodies. From this multidimensional space, they use their choreographic art to question and celebrate our capacity to move beyond received and expected vocabularies. Collectively and individually, they construct a journey where body language and the language of bodies can evoke serenity, provoke fighting, and invite us to stand up and move against oppressive systems.

The Dramaturgy of the On Marche Festival

Marrakech is a city of multiple tensions and complex realities, with raw and intense gaps. All of this is experienced in plural and entangled temporalities capable of physically exhausting the person who practices within it. The intensity of these temporalities means that we are always experiencing an inner and an outer space at the same time. Public spaces are a permanent stage in a city which knows no pause except perhaps for the call to prayer, a space of time for the city to take up its soul, a sort of respite, a suspended moment. Since coming to Marrakech, I have never used a map, whereas in all other cities I have a map that I keep careful with my notes. Here in Marrakech, human encounters guide me and constitute my cartography: Taoufiq Izeddiou first, Laila Hida and many others… These are unique encounters that capture waves full of tension, electricity, desires, and dreams of creation. These encounters have helped me to better understand the here and the now, and to contribute as associate curator to the festival *On Marche*.

Moreover, with Taoufiq Izeddiou—apart from being associate curator for *On Marche* for the last six years—in a sort of conniving way we have been discussing all of this for ten years; my position is in between dramaturg, listener, and advisor, mostly working towards the development of the coming creation at the early stages. To be honest, it is hard to frame clearly our collaboration, since we have never been able to confine ourselves to one project and have always alternated between discussions on the festival, his ongoing creations, his commitment to guide a dance school in Marrakech, more discussions about artistic languages... everything was and still is important.

I was also part of the workshop "Temps de transe" with more than fifteen young dancers. This was structured as a workshop starting a process of creation, which is always the chosen path when working with young performers. This was especially so, since these participants had different backgrounds and were not particularly trained in dance. It was the first phase of the creation of *Borderlines*. The approach was based on traditional Gnaoua music and dance, as a valuable heritage to revisit and translate into contemporary and individual interpretations. Rhythmic breathing is a layer of composition deeply anchored in traditional dances such as Gnaoui celebrations, a sort of *reenactment* of past memories through the performative body. Breathing is part of the soundscape and is approached as a key element of composition along with guembri music,[57] performed live during the workshop. At first, we wanted to leave the space to recall body memories of known rituals and bring it, explore it within, each one opening the possibility of injecting their own specificities. And then, carefully, other layers to compose were added to amplify the intensity. Layer by layer, movements were built up, allowing us to reconstruct a proper sense, anchored in the performer, of what the "temps de transe" meant for them, then.

In this collaboration, my work as a dramaturg consisted mostly in contributing to the foundations of the creation process by proposing suggestions, books, theoretical trajectories, images that could open up the research path. After this intense moment, Taoufiq Izeddiou extracted and filtered these materials to develop a shared vocabulary. We worked to present a first stage, open to the public, involving the whole group. For both of us, it is important that artists included in the creation process are given the chance to create their proper place within the collective. I consider my collaboration with Taoufiq as based on our complementarity, as an occasion to create the

[57] The guembri is an instrument of traditional Gnawa music and rituals.

conditions for benefitting the group, giving each dancer a potential path of becoming. This process also consists in overstepping borders, often defined by the world, as much as internal limitations. The next phase was more the work of Taoufiq, continuing the errant journey with them and achieving one of the possible internal lines of tension. This, for example, was the path that led to what ultimately became *Borderlines*, involving only five selected dancers. But even then, each of the dancers have been given space and time to better understand what they could develop and grasp the potential artist they were and are.

Further on, my work in curation becomes intertwined with my dramaturgical work, since I do accompany some of them in the creation of a solo and bring it to the *On Marche* festival first, and later hopefully on another stage.

I think it is essential to be open to the unfinished, and the unforeseen. Curating with a dramaturgical approach can be more than simply contextualizing: it is the creation of a space for the fragility of a creative process, at the threshold of an aesthetic experience in staging spatial and emotional relationships. Through the years, building from one edition of the festival to another, or from one time to another, it has become a conscious process.

Contemporary dance is still searching for a full recognition in the cultural institutional system in Cairo and Marrakech. Local cultural institutions do take it as a non-conventional and somehow not permissible art form in its narratives and representations. This situation of fighting for more visibility and support, in the end, somehow brings more freedom, too. It allows for creating out of the box, even with scarce means and support. Staying at the margins of the mainstream can be liberating. It can help in getting closer to society, and consequently to everything.

The power of dance, the power of body language, is the power to imagine, move, and transform our current selves and possibly others'. Through these dynamic and vital dance scenes, their performative body liberates their and our own bodies at once. To resist is to create.

Works cited

Barba, Eugenio. "The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work." *New Theatre Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1985): 75–78.

Behrndt, Synne K. "Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20, no. 2 (2010): 185–196.

Borie, Monique. *Le fantôme, ou Le théâtre qui doute*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1997.

Campenhout, Elke van, and Lilia Mestre, eds. *Turn, Turtle! Reenacting the Institute*. Berlin: Alexander, 2016.

Cools, Guy. "On Dance Dramaturgy." *Cena* 29 (2019): 42–52.

Crow, Brian, and Chris Banfield. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Cvejić, Bojana. "The Ignorant Dramaturg." *Maska: The Performing Arts Journal* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 40–53.

Davida, Dena, Jane Gabriels, Véronique Hudon, and Marcel Pronovost, eds. *Curating Live Arts*. New York: Berghahn, 2019.

deLahunta, Scott. "Dance Dramaturgy: Speculations and Reflections." *Dance Theatre Journal* 16, n. 1 (2000): 20–25.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Eggert, Andrew. "The Role of the Dramaturg in the Creation of New Opera Works." In *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, edited by Magda Romanska, 354–358. London: Routledge, 2015.

Fabião, Eleonora. "Dramaturging with Mabou Mines: Six Proposals for *Ecco Porco*." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2003): 29–40.

Georgelou, Konstantina, Efrosini Protopapa, and Danae Theodoridou, eds. *The Practice of Dramaturgy. Working on Actions in Performance*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. with a new introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Hansen, Pil, and Darcey Callison, eds. *Dance Dramaturgy: Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Janša, Janez. "From Dramaturgy to Dramaturgical. Self-Interview." *Maska: The Performing Arts Journal* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 54–61.

Kunst, Bojana. *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism*. Winchester: Zero Books, 2015.

Lanfossi, Carlo. "Ghosting Agrippina: Genealogies of Performance in Italian Baroque Opera." *Journal of Musicology* 36, no. 1 (2019): 1–38.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Translated by Karen Jürs-Munby. London: Routledge, 2006.

Lepecki, André. "Errancy as Work: Seven Strewn Notes for Dance Dramaturgy." In Hansen, *Dance Dramaturgy*, 51–66.

———. "'We're Not Ready for the Dramaturge': Some Notes for Dance Dramaturgy." In *Repensar la dramaturgia. Errancia y transformación = Rethinking Dramaturgy: Errancy and Transformation*, edited by Manuel Bellisco, María José Cifuentes and Amparo Écija, 181–197. Madrid: Centro Párraga, 2011.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. Translated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman. London: Penguin, 2011.

Malzacher, Florian, ed. *The Life and Work of Nature Theater of Oklahoma*. Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2019.

———, ed. *Truth is Concrete: A Handbook for Artistic Strategies in Real Politics*. Berlin: Sternberg, 2014.

Malzacher, Florian, and Joanna Warsza, eds. *Empty Stages, Crowded Flats: Performativity as Curatorial Strategy*. Berlin: Alexander, 2017.

Meldolesi, Claudio. *Il lavoro del dramaturg. Nel teatro dei testi con le ruote*. Milano: Ubulibri, 2007.

Noeth, Sandra. "Protocols of Encounter: On Dance Dramaturgy." In *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, edited by Gabriele Klein and Sandra Noeth, 247–256. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012.

Parham, Marisa. *Haunting and Displacement in African American Literature and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Pinchbeck, Michael. *Acts of Dramaturgy: The Shakespeare Trilogy*. Bristol: Intellect, 2020.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Edited and translated by Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004.

Rau, Milo. "Ghent Manifesto." May 1, 2018. https://www.ntgent.be/assets/files/general/Manifest/manifest-in-NL-en-ENG.pdf.

Ruhsam, Martina. "Dramaturgy of and as Collaboration." *Maska: The Performing Arts Journal* 25, no. 131–132 (2010): 28–35.

———. *Kollaborative Praxis: Choreographie. Die Inszenierung der Zusammenarbeit und ihre Aufführung*. Wien: Turia + Kant, 2011.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Stalpaert, Christel. "The Distributive Agency of Dramaturgical Labour and the Ethics of Instability. Becoming the Outside Body, Implicated in the Life of Others." In *Dramaturgies in the New Millennium. Relationality, Performativity, and Potentiality*, edited by Katharina Pewny, Johan Callens and Jeroen Coppens, 97–110. Tübingen: Narr, 2014.

Turner, Cathy, and Synne K. Behrndt. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Van Imschoot, Myriam. "Anxious Dramaturgy." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2003): 57–68.

Van Kerkhoven, Marianne. "On Dramaturgy." *Theaterschrift* 5–6 (1994): 8–34.

Van Kerkhoven, Marianne. "Looking Without Pencil in the Hand." *Theaterschrift* 5/6 (1994): 140–149.

Piersandra Di Matteo is a performing arts theorist, dramaturg, and curator. She is research fellow in the frame of ERC funded project «INCOMMON» at Iuav University of Venice, where she teaches "Curating Performing Arts." Her theoretical interests range from contemporary theater to politics of the voice, from dramaturgy to practices in curating. She has been invited to hold conferences and seminars in international research centers and universities (Hong Kong, Shanghai, London, Singapore, Montréal, Amsterdam, New York City, Philadelphia, San Paolo, Belo Horizonte). She is Romeo Castellucci's closest theoretical collaborator, working in Europe's foremost theaters, museums, and international festivals, among the others Festival d'Avignon, Ruhrtriennale, La Monnaie Bruxelles, Schaubühne Berlin, Wiener Festwochen, Opéra de Paris, Opéra de Lyon, Bayerische Staatsoper, Salzburger Festspiele. She is also collaborating as dramaturg with the Argentine director Lola Arias. She was the artistic curator of *Atlas of Transitions Biennale* for ERT (2018–2020). Currently, she is the artistic director of Short Theatre (Rome 2021–2024).

André Lepecki is Full Professor and Chairperson at the Department of Performance Studies at New York University. Editor of several anthologies on dance and performance theory including *Of the Presence of the Body* (2004) and *Dance* (2012). An independent performance curator, he has created projects for HKW-Berlin, MoMA-Warsaw, MoMA PS1, the Hayward Gallery, Haus der Künst/Munich, Sydney Biennial 2016, among others. Selected lectures include the Gauss Seminar at Princeton University, Brown University, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales - Paris, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Freie Universität/Berlin, Universidade de Lisboa, Roehampton University, University of New South Wales, among many others. Author of *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006, translated into twelve languages) and of *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (2016). AICA-US award "Best Performance" 2008 for co-curating and directing the authorized redoing of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (a commission of Haus der Kunst 2006, performed at PERFORMA 07). In the 1980s and 1990s, Lepecki worked as a dramaturg with choreographers Vera Mantero, João Fiadeiro, and Meg Stuart /Damaged Goods, among others.

Antonio Cuenca Ruiz is an independent researcher and dramaturg in the field of opera. After graduating in Performing Arts at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, Antonio Cuenca Ruiz worked as a dramaturg at La Monnaie | De Munt in Brussels until 2019, where he collaborated—among others—with Andrea Breth, Romeo Castellucci, choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and visual artist Berlinde De Bruyckere. In parallel to his activities in this institution, he has collaborated with other artists, in particular with Peter Sellars: *La Clemenza di Tito* and *Idomeneo* by Mozart (Salzburg Festival 2017 and 2019) and Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* (Festival d'Automne, Paris 2018). His research combines aesthetics and phenomenology, and focuses on the possible relationships between body and space, as shown by his latest publication, a contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition Opéra Monde (Centre Pompidou-Metz), dedicated to Adolphe Appia's legacy in contemporary theater and visual arts.

Florian Malzacher is a curator, dramaturg and writer. Between 2013 and 2017 he was artistic director of Impulse Theater Festival (Cologne, Dusseldorf and Mulheim/Ruhr), and between 2006 and 2012 co-programmer of the multidisciplinary arts festival *steirischer herbst* (Graz). He (co-)curated the 4th and 5th International Summer Academy (Mousonturm Frankfurt, 2002 and 2004), "Dictionary of War" (2006/07), "Truth is concrete" (Graz, 2012), "Artist Organisations International" (HAU Berlin, 2015), "Appropriations" (Ethnological Museum Berlin, 2014), "Sense of Possibility" on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the revolution

(St. Petersburg, 2017), "Training for the Future" (Ruhrtriennale 2018–2019 with Jonas Staal), "After Supervising the Machinery" (2020). As a dramaturg he worked with artists such as Rimini Protokoll (DE), Lola Arias (ARG), Mariano Pensotti (ARG), and Nature Theater of Oklahoma (USA). Florian Malzacher has edited and written numerous essays and books on theater and performance and on the relationship between art and politics. His latest publications include *Gesellschaftsspiele. Politisches Theater heute* (Alexander Verlag, 2020). florianmalzacher.tumblr.com

Eva-Maria Bertschy is a dramaturg at the intersection of theater and political activism in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, D.R. Congo, and France. She studied sociology, economics, and literature at the University of Fribourg. With the Swiss director Milo Rau/International Institute of Political Murder she has conceived and realized numerous productions, international theater and documentary film projects, political interventions, congresses and other discursive formats, such as *Antigone in the Amazon* (2020), *The Revolt of Dignity & The New Gospel* (2019), *La Reprise* (2018), *General Assembly* (2017), *The Congo Tribunal* (2017). She also works regularly with the Berlin director Ersan Mondtag, the Congolese choreographer Dorine Mokha and the Swiss musician Elia Rediger. Her projects have won numerous awards, and she has been invited to the most important international theater festivals such as the Berlin Theatertreffen, the Festival d'Avignon and the Kunstenfestivaldesarts, and have been shown in more than twenty countries.

Nedjma Hadj Benchelabi, born in Algiers and operating from Brussels, is a curator and dramaturg. She performed in the theater company Dito'Dito Brussels and then as member of the artistic team of the Brussels City Theatre, KVS. Until 2013, she was programmer at the European Cultural Centre, Les Halles. From 2014, she is associate curator of "On Marche" Contemporary Dance Festival of Marrakech and, as Dance Curator of the "Arab Art Focus" at Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF, Cairo) from 2016 onwards. Focusing on supporting and voicing performing arts in the MENA region, she was associated from conception to curation of TASHWEESH Festival in Cairo and in Brussels (2017–2018), a multidisciplinary art festival conceived as a platform by and from feminist voices from the Middle east, North Africa and Europe initiated by the Goethe Institute. She has been curator and dramaturg for *Un/controlled Gestures* (2019–2020). Currently, she is curating the Mahmoud Darwish Chair Program within Bozar (Brussels), researcher at Royal School of Arts (RITCS, Brussels), and coordinator of the next Dance Biennale of Africa.

INTERVIEW

Performance/Media/Documentation… Thinking Beyond Dichotomies

An Interview with Philip Auslander

Alessandro Cecchi

Introduction

Philip Auslander (Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta) barely needs to be introduced to the audience of this journal, his name being linked to such relevant contributions as *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, winner of the Joe A. Callaway Prize for Best Book on Theatre and Drama. This book, with its two editions (1999 and 2008), has strongly influenced music, media, and performing arts scholars around the globe. One focal point of the book is the discussion of the relation between "live" and "mediatized" musical performance, which Auslander does not consider in oppositional terms, but rather as concepts involved in a process of mutual definition and possible re-definition. In his own words: "Far from being encroached upon, contaminated, or threatened by mediation, live performance is always already inscribed with traces of the possibility of technical mediation (i.e., mediatization) that defines it as live."[1] Consequently, he warns his readers against "theorizations that privilege liveness as a pristine state uncontaminated by mediatization" and that in so doing "misconstrue the relation between the two terms."[2] He has then extended his discussion to other forms of experience, including that of digital technologies as live, tackled by him in the more recent article "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective."[3] This critical approach to commonsensical concepts and cultural dichotomies characterizes most of his projects.

[1] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture. Second edition* (London: Routledge, 2008), 56.

[2] Auslander, *Liveness*, 56.

[3] Philip Auslander, "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, no. 3 (2012): 3–11.

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 243–264.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss15388.

Another relevant book, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music*,[4] connects to a relatively different strand of research, that he has expanded further in *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona*, published in 2021.[5] The concept of "musical persona" was introduced for the first time in his seminal article "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto" and became the title of the later article "Musical Personae," which elaborates on Erving Goffman's sociological perspective.[6] Along these lines, the book chapter explicitly entitled "'Musical Personae' Revisited"—included in the volume I recently co-edited with Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Giuriati, and Marco Lutzu entitled *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*—clarifies and completes his thought almost fifteen years later. Here, Auslander goes on to deny any clear demarcation between the musician's "self-presentation" and the actor's representation of a "fictional character", thus offering the model of a "continuum of behavior rather than a dichotomy."[7] This kind of self-critical refinement of his own theorizations is not uncommon in his work.

As for the musicological discussion, Auslander has a particularly strong position, which challenges many apparently obvious assumptions. For example, he does not understand music to be an "object" of performance, because he situates the concept of "musical performance" in a wider perspective. In so doing, he firmly suggests going beyond the distinction between "musical" (or "purely musical") and "non-musical" (or "extra-musical") aspects related to that complex intertwining of actions and interactions which is performance. In this regard, I want to mention a significant book chapter in which he returns to the epistemological and ontological issues he had previously identified in "Performance Analysis and Popular Music." The chapter I'm referring to has been published as "Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited" in the German collection *Sound und Performance: Positionen, Methoden, Analysen*, and is the expanded ver-

[4] Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

[5] Philip Auslander, *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021).

[6] Philip Auslander, "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14, no. 1 (2004): 1–13; Philip Auslander, "Musical Personae," *TDR/The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 100–119.

[7] Philip Auslander, "'Musical Personae' Revisited," in *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, ed. Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Giuriati, Alessandro Cecchi, and Marco Lutzu (London: Routledge, 2020), 45.

sion of his afterword to the edited collection *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*.[8] In his discussion, Auslander addresses the distinction between what music "is" (an essence) and what music "does" (an effect), which leads him to rethink the relationship between sound and gesture. In his view, "Music is not sound disengaged from the physical being of the person who makes it. … The sounds I hear result directly from all aspects of the person's physical engagement with the act of music making—all of the sounds and gestures that constitute the performance."[9] This is the result of a critical investigation aimed at questioning the still widespread idea that in a musical performance it is possible (and useful) to distinguish between "technical" (i.e., sound-producing) and "ancillary" (i.e., in some respects "unnecessary") gestures. Auslander concludes the chapter by suggesting that "the solution to the disciplinary dilemma" he had identified in 2004 could be simply "to recognize that there is no dilemma, no ontological or epistemological gap between music and performance that needs bridging. Music 'is' what musicians 'do'".[10]

Auslander's 2018 book *Reactivations* represents another arena of his inquiry. Here the author engages in a critical discussion of another strict demarcation, that opposing "performance" to "documentation." To overcome this dichotomy, he reconsiders their relationship by focusing on the role of the audience—the one witnessing the original event, and the one beholding the document. As he puts it, "It may well be that our sense of the presence, power, and authenticity of these pieces derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself *as a performance* that directly reflects an artist's aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience."[11] Although the book is mainly about performance art in relation to photographic and video documentation, music is brought into the discussion in the last chapter through the example of karaoke performance. The book therefore comes

[8] Philip Auslander, "Afterword. Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited," in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 349–357.

[9] Philip Auslander, "Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited," in *Sound und Performance: Positionen, Methoden, Analysen*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Ernst, Nora Niethammer, Berenika Szymanski-Düll, and Anno Mungen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015), 541.

[10] Auslander, "Music as Performance," 541.

[11] Philip Auslander, *Reactivations. Essays on Performance and its Documentation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 40.

to a much more general issue, that concerning the relationship between "original" and "copy," which in the perspective of performance is anything but oppositional.

On the whole, the philosophical and general cultural contribution of Auslander's work to music, media, and the arts considered as performance is the radical, critical, and self-critical questioning of cultural dichotomies that often trap our thoughts exactly when they seem to help us think more clearly. I suppose this suffices to justify the publication of this interview in the first issue of a scholarly journal entitled *Sound Stage Screen*—namely, to underline the exploration of the "continuum" between sound and vision, technique and technology, performance and media, music and the arts considered in their continuously and mutually changing relationships.

Interview

Sound Stage Screen. Three aspects or places of experience that encompass but are not limited to music (not directly mentioned in the title), and whose study is in no way limited to musicology, which, in turn, is redefined as an open, strongly interdisciplinary research field. What is the position of these three concepts in your perspective?

Given my obsessive interest in performance and performers, I would also place "stage" at the center. To me, "stage" stands for performance, though not necessarily only live performance. As you suggest in the introduction, my approach to terms like this is to interrogate the ways their relationships are traditionally configured, including the idea you also mention that sound is a means to musical performance, not its end. In books like *Liveness* and *Reactivations*, I try to destabilize traditional assumptions about the relationship between performances and recordings or documentations of them.

How would you define your research field? Do you place yourself at the intersection of different disciplines, for example, between performance studies and media studies or even musicology?

I define my research field simply as "performance," since my work always revolves around ways of thinking analytically about performance—how it is defined, its contexts, what performers do, and how audiences expe-

rience performance across a variety of social and cultural territories and media. I see myself described in all kinds of ways: as a theater or performance studies scholar, as a media scholar, sometimes as a musicologist, and sometimes even as an art historian. I have connections to all of these disciplines and practices, and I try to be a point of contact among fields that may not communicate with one another, but it's more about fostering dialogue across the boundaries than believing the boundaries can be breached or eliminated.

In retrospect, how would you describe your own overall performance as a scholar today? Or, to put it in your own terms, what are the aspects of your "scholarly persona" that you would highlight at this stage?

One thing I've noticed about myself is that I gravitate toward what seem to me to be unanswered questions or disciplinary lacunae. This was very much the case with *Liveness*. Reflecting on my experience as a young stage actor and the many times I had been told that the fact that theater is live is its essential characteristic, I went searching for writing in theater and performance studies that addressed this idea of the live directly and critically, and was shocked to find virtually none. I then discovered that liveness had been under discussion in television studies for some time, though there had been no dialogue between that field and theater studies. A similar thing happened with *Performing Glam Rock*. I became interested in Glam partly as a result of some historiographic work I had done where I discovered that there was a standard narrative in which rock reached a high point in the 1960s then fell into decadence in the 1970s until Punk ostensibly restored it to its original project. There was no place for Glam in this account, and I couldn't help but wonder why not. At the time, there were only two books on Glam (there are now many more), so I set about writing the one I'd wanted to find. Of course, I was also looking for a topic that would enable me to write about musicians in the way I wanted, since musical persona is so central to Glam. Another standard narrative I sought to challenge, this time in the work that led to *Reactivations*, was the idea that documentation necessarily betrays the live event; performance art is the context in which this idea has the most force, I think, though I have also addressed it in the context of jazz and improvised music. My insistence that musical performance is primarily about the performer, not the music, goes against much conventional wisdom in this area. My scholarly persona is impatient with received ideas and willing to interrogate them in those areas that interest me.

And what about your academic performance specifically?

I am very much aware of academic performance (conference presentations, lectures, and such) as precisely that: performance. When I was regularly attending theater conferences, I was always amazed at how poor the performance skills of many presenters were and how poorly prepared they were. I at least try to be entertaining when I present because I believe that intellectual value and entertainment value are not mutually exclusive. I also treat my presentations as performances. For example, whenever I give a presentation, even if I've given it many times before, I always rehearse it fully the night before. So, the public face of my scholarly persona is that of a performer talking about performance by performing.

This seems to be linked to your experience as a professional actor… How has this influenced your thinking about performance, including musical performance?

I'm sure that my performer-centricity derives from the fact that I've spent much of my life performing! For me, acting is and has always been the default model of performance (which I think is true for many people—when you say "performance," most people probably think of acting first). As you mention in the introduction, a significant way for me to articulate the concept of musical persona has been by contrasting what musicians do in performance with what actors do. My knowledge and experience of acting gives me a way of framing questions about other kinds of performance and the contexts in which they occur.

The other thing I would like to say about this is that I believe the fact that I am a performer (albeit not a musician) has been beneficial on those occasions when I have talked with performers directly for my research. I don't do this often, but over time, I have drawn from exchanges with the rock singer-songwriter Suzi Quatro, two founding members of the doo-wop revival group Sha Na Na, the violinist Mari Kimura and, in another vein, the actor Willem Dafoe. Being a performer provides a common ground with other performers that can be a starting point for dialogue even if we don't engage in the same kind of performance. We can speak more as colleagues than as researcher and subject.

You raise an interesting point: that of a mutual influence of research and performance. In the last few years musicology has recognized the role and value of musical performance and musical practice for research. It is no longer just

a matter of "research-led" musical performance; performance-led or practice-led research has also gained currency…

Right. I'm aware of these developments in music, art, and theater. I don't think of myself as engaged in practice-led research, more like research *informed* by practical experience. This reminds me of a piece of advice offered to me by my mentor when I was an undergraduate studying the history of art, the late historian of American art John McCoubrey. He asked if I had ever taken a course in the fine arts department. When I told him I hadn't, he said, "Well, you're studying this stuff, don't you think you should have a sense of how it's made?" So, I took a drawing course. I also studied music theory as an undergrad. I'm neither a visual artist nor a music theorist or composer, but having at least an idea of what goes into the making of the things I research, as well as familiarity with the technical vocabularies associated with making them, is valuable.

In your many publications I find several intriguing discussions or interpretations of Walter Benjamin's writings, especially his essay on "mechanical reproduction" or "technical reproducibility," according to the German title of the unfinished, open project, existing in many different versions between 1935 and 1940, the year of his death. Is Benjamin's thinking still relevant for contemporary scholars who work in such a different media environment than that experienced by him?

I do return repeatedly to Benjamin. First, I think some of the specific points he made regarding the functioning of media and their social impact are as true for our media landscape as they were for his. For example, when he speaks of "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly," or when he speaks of how the development of newspapers and cinema was leading to a cultural configuration in which anyone could become an author or an actor, he could have been talking about social media, which reflects these impulses and possibilities even more than the media of his time.[12] Second, Benjamin's idea that new media bring into being new ways of perceiving is a valuable lens through which to examine the evolution of media and their impact in any historical epoch. John Berger's classic *Ways of Seeing* is an elaboration of the same insight: that human perception is not neutral, or a given, but historically—and politically—conditioned.[13] I hope

[12] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 219, 223.

[13] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972).

that in a small way, my contention that liveness is not a stable ontological characteristic of events but a moving target, an ever-changing way of describing experience that morphs along with the evolution of technologies of representation and modes of perception, continues this tradition of inquiry.

A second, explicit model for your reflection is Erving Goffman—you often refer to his book The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life *(first published in 1959) in your own writings.*[14] *Not only does the concept of "musical persona" draw on his approach, but you clearly present musical performance mainly as a form of social, symbolic and strategic interaction, and develop a dramaturgical approach which (in some respect) can be traced back to him. How would you define the influence of Goffman on your reflection?*

Goffman is a major influence on me. I came to Goffman indirectly through Derrida and poststructuralism, which I explored deeply in the 1980s. I internalized what might be called the deconstructive gesture to such a degree that it is pretty much reflexive, most evident in my constant questioning of cultural dichotomies, as you mention in the introduction. I leave no binary unturned! But I also found that Derridean deconstruction and other poststructuralist strategies were not paths forward for the ways in which I wanted to engage with performance. I was very happy to discover a strain of anti-foundationalism in certain mid-twentieth century thinkers, Goffman chief among them, who were also pragmatically oriented toward social and cultural analysis. For Goffman, reality (including identity) is anchored not in metaphysics or the psyche but in discourse, and he is interested in how we bring reality into being through performance, a perspective I have found to be incredibly productive, especially when trying to work out my ideas about musicians as performers.

What about the potential usefulness of other models of analysis—for example, the one developed by Goffman's pupil Harvey Sacks, who pioneered such methods as Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis—for performance in general and particularly for musical performance, including the work of other scholars from Goffman's circle?

As you note in the introduction, my first foray into the line of research that culminates in my recent book *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona* (2021) was the essay "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto" (2004). This was the first time I used the word "persona" in this con-

[14] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

nection (I had previously used it in talking about stand-up comedy and experimental theater) and I had not yet realized how useful Goffman would be in developing the concept. The analytical approach I was advocating was performance analysis as practiced in theater scholarship. Recently, I was looking at a discussion of performance analysis by the theater scholar Christopher Balme, who identifies some specific approaches. In his terms, my style of performance analysis is *product-oriented* in the sense that I look at finished performances from a spectatorial standpoint, and *structural* in that I "emphasize a set of procedures—the choice and ordering of sign systems—rather than an interpretation derived from the text."[15] I remain committed to the idea of performance analysis—close reading and thick description of performances—and I like the fact that performance analysis is not a strictly defined procedure (it is defined only as being interpretive, as opposed to theater criticism, which is evaluative) or associated with any particular method. In terms of analyzing musical performances, I have found Goffman's broad framework for self-presentation (i.e., the concept of social front and the categories of setting, appearance, and manner) to be sufficient for my purposes. I can see, however, that those whose approach is more process- or event-oriented (Balme's terms again) might turn to other models derived from conversational analysis.

Musical performance and musical persona are strongly connected in your reflection. Yet, the use of the concept of "persona" easily leads one to think of it as a pre-established identity that exists prior to and independently of its performances. How would you clarify this connection between musical persona and musical performance?

This is a good question, but a complex one. There is one sense in which musical personae *do* exist prior to their performance. Musical personae are social roles and, as such, are defined collectively (socially) prior to any particular iteration. For example, if I take a job as a pit musician, I know this means that I have to assume a certain persona. I recently found a contractual document from the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra in Tulsa, Oklahoma that very explicitly defines the pit musician's persona in terms of appearance: "black turtleneck or black mock turtleneck shirt, black pants, black socks and black shoes. T-shirts are not permitted." This persona (including its front) is defined prior to my assumption of it, though

[15] Christopher B. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 144.

this does not necessarily determine how I choose to perform it. Individual performances of socially defined roles are always situated, to use Goffman's term. In some orchestra pits, wearing fluorescent socks might be an acceptable individualization of the persona, though clearly not in Tulsa! Some roles are defined more restrictively than others. Obviously, rock musicians have much greater latitude in constructing their personae than do symphony players. The point is that there are aspects of any musical persona as a social role that are in place before any individual assumes the role.

I also stress that not all performances of musical persona involve the performance of music. For example, the Beatles famously performed their individual and collective personae at their press conferences, in interviews, in their films, and so on.[16] These performances played key roles in defining the public's sense of who the Beatles were, especially in the United States. But it is obvious that this was all in the service of creating identities the audience would understand to be the sources of the music they were hearing. In this sense, these personae were not independent of the music, since they have no meaning apart from it.

When we factor in the role of the audience, it is clear that musical persona ultimately is neither independent of nor prior to its performance. For Goffman, self-presentation is a fragile effort to persuade an audience to accept at face value the impression one is trying to create. Whether or not this happens is up to the audience, not the performer. This is why Goffman refers to the process as "impression management"—an active, cybernetic process of evaluating the impression one is creating through the feedback one receives from the audience and modifying one's self-presentation as needed to maintain the impression. The musical persona, like all social identities, is not a static entity that the performer puts on display. It emerges through a negotiation with the audience and each iteration is specific to a particular interaction.

This relationship with the audience is particularly clear in instances where a group seeks to change its persona. The Beatles are again a good case in point, since they performed at least four different collective personae over the course of their career. If they still had been performing the same group persona and the music associated with it in 1967 as they had in 1964, it is doubtful they would have remained successful. At the same time, their

[16] Philip Auslander, "Live—In Person! The Beatles as Performers, 1963–1966," *Acting Archives Review* 10, no. 20 (2020), https://actingarchives.it/en/essays/contents/229-live-in-person-the-beatles-as-performers-1963-1966.html.

change in persona from a cheerful boy band to avatars of the counterculture had to be managed in such a way that they would retain the massive audience they had built.

Indeed, the performance of change is strictly connected to the change of performance…

Agreed, though this kind of change can take many forms. The Beatles undertook wholesale alterations of their group and individual personae in response to changing times and the rise of the counterculture. Responding to these same pressures, Chuck Berry changed the emphasis of his repertoire. Knowing that the rock audience of the late sixties was starting to understand the blues as the "roots" of rock, in his performances at the Fillmore West and similar venues Berry emphasized the bluesy portion of his song book ("Wee Wee Hours," for example) while still playing his famous rock and roll songs to adjust his persona to that of a progenitor of rock with a relationship to the blues.

With your publications, you have contributed to the dissemination of the notion of "mediatization" ("mediatized culture" is a part of the subtitle of Liveness*). One problem with the concept is that the media are not all the same. Records, cinema, television, and YouTube are different, they perform differently (and also a live concert is in some way a medium—a form of mediation). The same is true for the general use of "mediatized music." As any other kind of experience, music is "mediatized" differently according to the different media. Is the concept really useful and how?*

As I understand it, the term mediatization, which I took from Jean Baudrillard, is meant to describe a culture saturated by media, particularly mass media, and their representations, and I think it continues to be useful for that purpose, especially since the dominance of media in contemporary Western societies and cultures, at least, has increased exponentially since Baudrillard first wrote about it.[17] Since one starting point for *Liveness* was the live/recorded dichotomy, I was not that concerned with the different means of recording and the specific experiences they provide. However, there is a chart in *Liveness* that maps the changing meaning of the term in relation to

[17] "What is mediatized is not what comes off the daily press, out of the tube, or on the radio: it is what is reinterpreted by the sign form, articulated into models, and administered by the code." Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), 175–176.

the evolving technological landscape.[18] Here, the particularities of specific media and the experiences they help shape are key. In *Reactivations*, I am concerned with the documentation of performances but not so much with the specific means of documentation, though the book does tend to emphasize photographic documentation, still the coin of the realm in performance art, as opposed to other kinds, and therefore does get into some ideas about that particular medium by way of Benjamin and others.

Other examples of my work in which medium-specificity is central include "The Liveness of Watching Online," an essay I wrote for a Tate Modern publication, where I discuss the differences between watching a live performance on television versus one streamed on a computer.[19] Another instance is "Film Acting and Performance Capture: The Index in Crisis," in which I get into distinctions between chemical and digital photography and between film and motion capture.[20] In these discussions, technical details such as the fact that whereas television is a broadcast, one-to-many medium, the internet is a one-to-one medium since each user has their own stream, or that motion capture "cameras" do not capture light as do film or digital cameras but actually bounce light off the subject in order to capture data points, are central to my arguments.

On the other hand, the recent historical and technological developments, with the pervasiveness of the new digital media, make the idea of a generalized "mediatization" expressive of the cross-media environment—quite a few live concerts, particularly in the last decades, involve not only lighting design and videos on huge screens, but also 3D hologram projections, the resort to Virtual Reality and so on; and the unifying flow of the web leads to the same consequence…

In the essay on performance capture I just mentioned, I propose that the entity undertaking the performance is the one we see on the screen, not the actor whose performance was captured, nor the creators and manipulators of the digital puppet, etc. This is in line with some work I did earlier considering whether or not machines, robots, and software could be considered to be live performers, which I believe they can under some circumstances. I

[18] Auslander, *Liveness*, 61.

[19] Philip Auslander, "The Liveness of Watching Online: Performance Room," in *Perform, Experience, Re-Live: BMW Tate Live Program*, ed. Cecilia Wee (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 112–125.

[20] Philip Auslander, "Film Acting and Performance Capture: The Index in Crisis," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 39, no. 3 (2017): 7–23.

have somewhat the same feeling about the so-called holograms giving concerts now. The Roy Orbison hologram is not so much a mediatized version of Roy Orbison as it is a performing entity unto itself. The medium ceases to be a channel or conduit for a performance but becomes the performer. Returning to your question about musical persona, I might argue that the hologram extracts the persona from the person: it is a representation of the persona but not as embodied by the person.

Do you have any reference points in your personal approach to the media, I mean: media scholars who have particularly influenced you?

In addition to Benjamin and Baudrillard, Raymond Williams has had a significant influence on me, especially his lecture "Drama in a Dramatised Society,"[21] his book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*,[22] and his ideas of dominant culture and structures of feeling (both explicated in *Marxism and Literature*).[23] What I admire in Williams, and seek to emulate in my own way, is his effort to get to the heart of what it feels like to live a specific culture at a particular moment, while simultaneously recognizing that there will always be aspects of complex societies that will remain elusive. I realize that Williams may not be considered to be a media scholar exactly, but the materials I've just mentioned place media at the center of the cultural processes he describes and provide tools for understanding the role and dominance of media in contemporary society. In addition, he wrote beautifully in a way that is lucid, yet hints at conceptual depths that are not directly articulated.

Since I obtained the idea of liveness from television scholars, I have to give a shout out to Jane Feuer, who passed away this year, whose classic 1983 essay "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology" was an essential starting point that influenced the terms of my discussions of these issues.[24] Another media scholar to whose work I find myself returning regularly is Lynn Spigel. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* is still one of my favorite books.[25] Her examinations of

[21] Raymond Williams, *Drama in a Dramatised Society: An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[22] Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

[23] Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[24] Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—An Anthology*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1983), 12–22.

[25] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

how media are assimilated into everyday domestic life and interior design, and the later work she has done on the changing status of television in the age of the internet constitute a vital intervention on the evolving history of the medium in relation to other media and social discourses.

On the side of historical musicology, I would like to touch on the vexata quaestio *concerning the relationship between performance and "text," which can take the form of a score but also of a libretto with stage directions, while in other artistic fields it can be a script or a screenplay. This question seems to be in some way "liquidated" by your approach to performance. For example, in "Musical Personae" you engage in a discussion with Nicholas Cook, who in his 2001 article "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance" proposed to consider the score as a "script" for performance, a concept that is still present in his more recent book* Beyond the Score: Music as Performance (2013).[26] *Yet, I think performance studies could help us rethink musical and non-musical texts as integral parts of what musicians "do"—as aspects of "musicking," to borrow Christopher Small's term. Performance studies, for example, provide the concept of "media performativity"—extremely relevant in media studies but in my view still undertheorized. The concept could be applied to musical texts as well—whether scores or scripts. In quite a few performances scores are directly visible on stage and exert their own "performativity" on the audience. In many cases texts are involved or used in some way: they are used in rehearsals, read, interpreted, discussed, and also questioned, overwritten, loved, hated, ruined, and so on. I would particularly stress the "material" and "pragmatic" aspects of texts used in performance. In your reflection, what is the place of "texts" as concrete written artifacts involved in music making as well as in other performance practices?*

Cook devotes a whole chapter of *Beyond the Score* to the idea of seeing musical scores as what he calls "social scripts." Part of his argument is that if one is to think seriously of music as performance, the idea that the score is more akin to a theatrical script, which was written to be performed, is much more useful than the idea that a musical score is akin to a literary text, which was written to be read. I completely agree with this point. But I also think that Cook is committed to an idea of the musical "work" that has little presence in my thinking.

[26] Nicholas Cook, "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance," *MTO/Music Theory Online* 7, no. 2 (2001), https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html; Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

I'm not sure I can give you as direct an answer to the rest of your question. The "liquidation" you mention probably results from the fact that I came of age intellectually in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a time when poststructuralist theory and cultural studies were proposing that everything could be considered a text, to put it crudely. The field of performance studies evolved amid this ferment; one of its premises was that performances could be "read" as cultural texts. Another part of my background is in the history of art, where we treated visual objects as texts to be analyzed. So, for quite a long time, I've been used to a way of looking at performance that does not particularly privilege its textual elements but treats performances as texts in themselves. This perspective is no doubt reflected in my claim that musical compositions are among the "expressive equipment" musicians use to perform their personae rather than privileged texts whose conveyance to an audience is the purpose of performance.[27] I don't in any way discount the idea that texts, understood broadly, are integral to performance. After all, performers always need something to perform, and that something is likely to be understandable as a text of some kind. The relationship of text as an element of performance to the performance in question is always worth investigating. But I guess it just goes against my grain to consider texts as privileged elements of performance.

I also like your point about the presence and performativity of musical scores onstage. I was watching Eric Clapton's tribute concert to the late Ginger Baker, and I noticed that Steve Winwood was consulting written notation, which certainly factored into my perception of his performance. I also recently watched two performances of John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), one by David Tudor and the other by William Marx. Whereas Tudor had the score spread out on the top of the piano, Marx had it in a music stand, and this difference contributed to the very different experiences of the two performances and the personae of the performers.

Texts (scores, scripts, screenplays, even written archival materials) are also "documents." Do you consider them as in some way connected to "documentation"?

I don't consider texts that in principle precede performance to be documents of the performance. I'm not saying that they can't help one to comprehend the performance. I once saw a production of *Othello* in Lithuanian, which I cannot understand at all. Since I know the play well enough, I was

[27] Auslander, "Musical Personae," 118.

able to follow the action, so textual knowledge helped me to understand the performance. But that doesn't make Shakespeare's play a documentation of that performance, at least not to my mind.

But how would you consider scores and scripts when bearing the traces of specific performances? Don't you think they in some ways "document" the preparation of a performance or even the performance itself as specific event?

This may be a somewhat indirect answer to your question. I do think it's analytically useful to retain a distinction between score or script and document along the lines of assuming that a score or script precedes the performance and the document comes after it and records it in some fashion. However, it is clear that such documents can become scores or scripts in turn. To take a conventional example, let's say I record a song. The song, the composition, is the score and the recording is the documentation of my performance of it. But if someone else learns the song and, perhaps, my way of performing it from my recording, the recording becomes a kind of script that engenders future performances. As we know, this is traditionally how rock musicians learn to play and learn the repertoire, and jazz musicians often seek to learn their idols' improvisations from recordings. In the realm of performance art, those who wish to recreate or re-perform historical pieces do so primarily from documents rather than scripts or scores. In other words, my understanding is that the categories of "script/score" and "document" are functional, not ontological—a particular text or artifact can serve as either one or both, depending on how it is used.

Do you think your discussion of the performance/documentation relation in Reactivations *can help us to reconsider in some way the text/performance relation beyond the dichotomic thinking that usually opposes them?*

The short answer to your question is yes. In *Reactivations*, I was trying to suggest that the document is itself a site on which the performance takes place via the beholder's reactivation of the performance from it. I think this complicates the conventionally assumed relationship between the terms "text" and "performance" in what I hope is a useful way.

To what extent can the media be considered as offering a form of "textualization" of performance? Is the concept of text useful in this "active" meaning? To put it differently: can texts be considered as, say, provisional "de-activa-

tions" of performances in view of future "re-activations", to play with the title of your book?

Well, if a performance is already a text in some sense, as I said before, I'm not sure how much more "textualized" it can become! Perhaps it would be better to suggest, along the lines of what I say in *Reactivations*, that a live performance and a recording, say, are two different textualizations of the same thing, and that an experience of this thing can be had from either kind of text.

I do like the idea of a three-step process from performance (activation) to document (deactivation) to the performance reactivated from the document. The problem is that I don't like the word *deactivate* in this context partly because it makes it sound as if the act of documenting a performance renders it inactive (or worse, kills it!), which is more or less the opposite of the point: the act of documentation enables future reactivations and reenactments and, thus, the continued life of the performance.

In your recent writings, including "Digital Liveness" and Reactivations *(but not in* Liveness*, if I am not wrong), you often refer to Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, which started from the text/interpretation relationship… How is Gadamer or German hermeneutics, even including reception theory, connected to your work? Or how would you define the sense of your personal recovery and use of this tradition in your relatively recent writings?*

The honest answer is that I discovered Gadamer because I was looking for a solution to a specific problem. I wanted to argue in *Reactivations* that performance documents, including recordings, provide an experience of the performance in the partaker's own time and place, a position I had already taken regarding recordings of music. They are not time machines that transport the partaker back to the circumstances of the original performance. Benjamin's notion of reactivation addresses this. But it is also true, if I'm being faithful to my own experience, that one of the reasons we are interested in certain performances and in reactivating them is precisely because they occurred in the past. Gadamer addresses this in many ways. The simplest one is his point that since aspects of the past are always already embedded in the present, some artifacts of the past, including performances, are accessible to us through our present experience of them (in fact, this is the only way we can experience them). As he says in *Truth and Method*, "only the part of the past that is not past offers the possibility of

historical knowledge."[28] He also suggests that it is our ethical obligation as partakers to make the historical artifact immediate to ourselves (contemporaneous) without erasing its alterity. In this respect, Gadamer makes the apprehension of a work from the past—as something that can speak to us today—the result of an active and conscious effort on the part of the audience. To me, this can be seen as a description of how reactivation works, since Benjamin identifies it as a phenomenon without discussing its mechanism. I will also say that Gadamer represents for me something similar to Goffman: an anti-foundationalist thinker whose ideas lend themselves to practical analysis.

The COVID-19 crisis (this journal is produced in the past Italian epicenter of the epidemic, Milan) prompts a deep reflection on the importance of the media in everyday life. While the health emergency imposes "social distancing," the media enhance their paradoxical performance of immediacy and presence—or at least this aspect has become more and more important to us. How would you describe the role of "performance" and "media performativity" in the age of COVID-19?

I am working on such questions right now as I prepare the third edition of *Liveness*, which will be in part the "pandemic edition," since I'm writing it in quarantine and because I'm in the peculiar position of writing about the cultural status of live performance at a time when traditional live performance is impossible. Since I'm immersed in this situation, both intellectually and circumstantially, it's difficult for me to get enough distance to be analytical about it.

One thing I have noticed is that the absence of live performance has created the conditions for a resurgence of the kind of rhetoric valorizing the live experience that was one of the things I was reacting to when I first undertook to write *Liveness*. This is accompanied at present in both theater and music by a fairly desperate-seeming search for online experiences that are equivalent to—or at least viable replacements for—live theater performances or concerts. This is entirely understandable from an economic perspective: performers and cultural institutions all over the world lost their livelihood overnight; some are only starting to recover, while others are threatened with extinction. It is perhaps ironic that the lack of in-person live experiences has created a glut of online ones: there is now more music,

[28] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 290.

more theater, more everything available online than one could ever have time to watch. One of the dimensions of this situation that interests me the most is the way recorded performances, often recorded some time ago, are being repurposed as live events either by limiting access to a specific time period or by adding interactive features, such as real-time chat during the performance. I also take an interest in the new cultural performances that are emerging in the wake of the pandemic, such as people applauding first responders and hospital workers at shift change every night; people dressing up to take out their trash or coordinating times to be outside to sing or dance while maintaining social distance, and so on. The media and social media play a key role in promulgating these activities simply by reporting on them and giving people activities to emulate.

Yes, like all historical traumas, the health emergency has contributed and still is contributing to question many easy conceptual dichotomies, forcing us to rethink concepts and their mutual relationship, especially in the field of performance and performing arts. This same interview was born under the influence of COVID-19, for example because it took shape at a distance and through subsequent online exchanges, which makes it a peculiar artifact, suspended between performance, media, documentation, and history. Isn't this a very clear and sufficiently complex case of "reactivation"?

Yes. Strictly speaking, our readers are the ones who will reactivate and experience our dialogic performance from this document. Their experience is analogous to that of listening to a highly produced studio album that was performed and recorded in discontinuous segments that were pieced together through an editorial process, yet the beholder's perception of it is as a single, uninterrupted performance unfolding in real time. Perhaps we can use this circumstance to unpack one last dichotomy: that between activation and reactivation, two of the trio of terms you mentioned earlier. In cases such as a studio album or this dialogue, where the document records a performance that never took place in real time and space in the same form as it is made available to the beholder, the beholder simultaneously activates the performance, in the sense of bringing it into being, and reactivates it in the sense of constructing an experience of it from the document. The document, in turn, becomes both a primary and a secondary source. Primary in the sense that the document is the space in which the performance is initially activated, where it takes place, and secondary in the sense that it makes the performance available for reactivation.

Bibliography[29]

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London: Routledge, 1999.

———. "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14, no. 1 (2004): 1–13.

———. "Musical Personae." *TDR/The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 100–119.

———. *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

———. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture. Second Edition*. London: Routledge, 2008.

———. "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, no. 3 (2012): 3–11.

———. "Afterword. Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited." In *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 349–357. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

———. "Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited." In *Sound und Performance: Positionen, Methoden, Analysen*, edited by Wolf-Dieter Ernst, Nora Niethammer, Berenika Szymanski-Düll, and Anno Mungen, 529–541. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015.

———. "The Liveness of Watching Online: Performance Room." In *Perform, Experience, Re-Live: BMW Tate Live Program*, edited by Cecilia Wee, 112–125. London: Tate Publishing, 2016.

———. "Film Acting and Performance Capture: The Index in Crisis." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 39, no. 3 (2017): 7–23.

———. *Reactivations. Essays on Performance and its Documentation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

———. "'Musical Personae' Revisited." In *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, edited by Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Giuriati, Alessandro Cecchi, and Marco Lutzu, 41-55. London: Routledge, 2020.

———. "Live—In Person! The Beatles as Performers, 1963–1966." *Acting Archives Review* 10, no. 20 (2020). https://actingarchives.it/en/essays/contents/229-live-in-person-the-beatles-as-performers-1963-1966.html.

———. *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021.

Balme, Christopher B. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Baudrillard, Jean. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Translated by Charles Levin. St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," translated by Harry Zohn. In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 217–51. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin, 1972.

Cook, Nicholas. "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance."

[29] In contrast to the standard way of alphabetically listing titles of works by the same author, the bibliography here presents them in chronological order to highlight the development of Philip Auslander's work.

MTO/Music Theory Online 7, no. 2 (2001), https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html.

———. *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Feuer, Jane. "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology." In *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—An Anthology*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, 12–22. Frederick: University Publications of America, 1983.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. 2nd, revised edition. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.

Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Williams, Raymond. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

———. *Drama in a Dramatised Society: An Inaugural Lecture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

———. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Links

Philip Auslander's institutional website at the Georgia Institute of Technology: https://auslander.lmc.gatech.edu.

Philip Auslander is a Professor of Performance Studies and Popular Musicology in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication of the Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, Georgia, USA). He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and seven books, including *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 1992), *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism (*Routledge, 1997), *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (Routledge, 1999; 2nd ed. 2008), *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (University of Michigan Press, 2006), *Reactivations: Essays on Performance and Its Documentation* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), and *In Concert: Performing Musical Persona* (University of Michigan Press, 2021). In addition to his scholarly work on performance and music, Prof. Auslander has written art criticism for *ArtForum* and other publications and regularly contributes essays to exhibition catalogs for museums in Europe and North America, including Tate Modern, The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Migros Museum, and the Walker Art Center. He is also a screen actor and writer. "Dr. Blues," a short film Auslander wrote, produced, and acted in, premiered at the Peachtree Village International Film Festival in Atlanta in October of 2019.

Alessandro Cecchi earned his PhD from Pavia University in Cremona and is currently Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of Pisa, where he teaches Music History and Film Music. In addition to music theory and analysis, musical aesthetics, music in German literature and philosophy, and twentieth-century music in general, his research interests include film music, television music, musical performance and its circulation through media.

His main articles have been published in *Studi musicali* (2011), *Il Saggiatore musicale* (2012), *Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale* (2015), *Music Sound and the Moving Image* (2014), *Musica/Tecnologia* (2014-2015), *Journal of Film Music* (2015), *Aisthesis* (2017), *Cultura Tedesca* (2018), *Biblioteca Teatrale* (2019), *Schermi* (2020), and *Gli spazi della musica* (2020). He was guest co-editor of "Film Music Histories and Ethnographies: New Perspectives on Italian Cinema in the Long 1960s", special issue of the *Journal of Film Music* (2015), and co-editor of the volume *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections* (Routledge, 2020). He is Series Editor of *musica.performance.media* interdisciplinary series with NeoClassica, and serves as Editorial Board member of the journals *Archival Notes* and *Sound Stage Screen*, Advisory Board member of the Gustav Mahler Research Centre, and Collaborator of the Centro Studi Luciano Berio.

Book Reviews

Andrew F. Jones. *Circuit Listening: Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. 304 pp. ISBN 9781517902070.

Timmy Chih-Ting Chen

Andrew F. Jones's *Circuit Listening: Chinese Popular Music in the Global 1960s* marks the culmination of his three-decade exploration of Chinese popular music, rounding out the trilogy which began with *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (1992) and *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (2001).[1] Running through these three volumes are the dialectics of mass-mediated sonic warfare. In *Like a Knife*, it is the ideological struggle between two competing genres around the time of the Tiananmen Square student movement of 1989: state-sanctioned popular music (*tongsu yinyue*) disseminated through mass media, and subversive, subcultural underground rock music (*yaogun yinyue*) represented by Cui Jian at rock parties. Popular music is here compared to a double-edged sword, which can be used both for propaganda purposes and to protest against hypocrisy and oppression and construct an authenticity-oriented alternative public sphere. In *Yellow Music*, it is the ideological conflict between the "decadent sounds" of Li Jinhui's yellow music or sinified jazz since the late 1920s, and Nie Er's left-wing revolutionary mass music (*qunzhong yinyue*) in the wake of the January 28 incident of 1932, when Japanese forces attacked Shanghai's Zhabei district.

[1] Andrew F. Jones, *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 1992); Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 265–273.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss15389.

As a book about the Cold War, *Circuit Listening* not only picks up where *Yellow Music* left off—yellow music's post-1949 exile to Hong Kong and Taiwan, revolutionary songs' monopoly in the loudspeaker soundscape of socialist China between the 1950s and 1970s, and the return of the repressed soft, sweet love songs from Hong Kong and Taiwan such as Teresa Teng's in Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening" era in the late 1970s—but also proves ambitious in mediating between two seemingly irreconcilable global musical events during the Cold War contest in the introduction: The first is the Beatles' live studio performance of "All You Need Is Love" which culminated "Our World," the first worldwide satellite broadcast on June 25, 1967. The other is the Maoist anthem "The East Is Red" emitting from China's first satellite on April 24, 1970. For Jones, the capitalist/communist, entertainment/propaganda divides are bridged by the transistor technology, which connects and diffuses the global 1960s sounds of miniaturized and portable music. Transistor circuits engender Jones's concept of circuit listening, which harks back to *Yellow Music*'s attention to the materiality of media technologies such as the gramophone, wireless broadcasting, and sound cinema. Circuits not only enable but also restrict circulation of music, which makes circuit listening a malleable and playful framework for both "open circuits" linking Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Chinese diaspora, Japan, the West, and the "closed circuit" of revolutionary China monopolized by the Communist Party.

Chapter 1, "Circuit Listening at the Dawn of the Chinese 1960s," opens with the aerial aspirations in the opening number—"I Want to Fly up to the Blue Sky"—of the Hong Kong Mandarin musical *Air Hostess* (Evan Yang [Yi Wen], 1959), starring "mambo girl" Grace Chang, who embodies not only postwar socioeconomic mobility but also linguistic and musical mobility. The chapter ends with the tragic ending of the Hong Kong Mandarin musical *Because of Her* (Wong Tin-lam [Wang Tianlin], Evan Yang [Yi Wen], 1963), in which Grace Chang's fatal fall prefigures the real-life plane crash in Taichung, Taiwan that killed Loke Wan Tho, head of the MP&GI studio, which produced the self-reflexive *Air Hostess* and *Because of Her*, featuring the capitalist circuit along which mobile women and musical genres travel. Jones listens to not only how Afro-Caribbean-derived genres like mambo and calypso circulated in the Hong Kong Mandarin musicals of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, but also how "mixed-blood" Taiwanese ballads covered Japanese *enka* with Taiwanese lyrics in the black and white Taiwanese-language musicals throughout the 1960s. The latter was relegated to a more limited, local, and regional (albeit transnational) circuit of

Taiwanese (Southern Min, Hokkien) communities under the ruling KMT's "Mandarin-only" (1945–1987) language policy.

Chapter 2, "Quotation Songs: Media Infrastructure and Pop Song Form in Mao's China," is concerned with how a wired broadcasting network of loudspeakers as media infrastructure both disseminated and displaced Chairman Mao as media effect, penetrating the soundscape of rural China during the Cultural Revolution. *The Quotations of Chairman Mao* ("Little Red Book") were set to music between 1966 and 1969 with the use of hooks drawn from the yellow music tradition in republican Shanghai. The infrastructure of wired loudspeakers lacking bass determined the "high, fast, hard, and loud" sound of the era in duple march rhythm for effective transmission. For Jones, the Maoist media effect within this closed circuit was nevertheless diffused globally, as seen in Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967), which captures the affinity between propagandist quotation songs and the Beatles-derived yé-yé (yeah-yeah) fever of the French 1960s.

In the following four chapters, Jones approaches the global 1960s through the medium of Taiwanese music. Chapters 3 and 4, the most original contribution of this study, celebrate the creativity in the cultural logic of belated covers and pirated copies, respectively. Chapter 3, "Fugitive Sounds of the Taiwanese Musical Cinema," should be situated in the recent wave of digital restoration of Taiwanese-language films (*taiyupian*) by the Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute since 2014. A close reading of the Wen Shia (b. 1928) vehicle *Goodbye, Taipei* (1969) was likely made possible by the film's restoration in 2016. As part of the last and only surviving film of the ten-film series "Wen Shia's Drifter Chronicles," the prologue sequence of *Goodbye, Taipei* serves as an invaluable "intermedial archive" documenting and summarizing the nine preceding lost films. The film addressed its northbound rural-urban migrant audiences not only through Wen Shia's Chaplin-derived drifter image, but also through its eclectic soundtrack featuring instrumental covers of Anglo-American pop songs and on-screen performances of Taiwanese covers of Japanese hits by Wen Shia and his band, the Four Sisters. Chapter 4, "Pirates of the China Seas: Vinyl Records and the Military Circuit," tells the fascinating story of how Taiwanese pirate records of Anglo-American music relied on U.S. military bases and gave rise to the guitar-driven Taiwanese campus folk movement in the mid- to late 1970s and 1980s (discussed in chapter 5, "Folk Circuits: Rediscovering Chen Da"). In 1947, it was Hsu Shih in the company of his student Wen Shia at the tender age of 20 that had transcribed and arranged Chen Da's signature Hengchun

folk tune "Sixiang qi" or "Su Siang Ki," two decades before Hsu Tsang-houei and Shih Wei-liang's 1967 field recordings of Chen Da as part of the Folk Song Collection Movement. The final chapter of the book, "Teresa Teng and the Network Trace," begins with the infrastructure of Beishan Broadcasting Wall, built in 1967, on the frontline island of Quemoy (Kinmen). Taiwanese military broadcasting stations such as this one weaponized Teresa Teng's sweet voice from 1974 to 1991 in a psychological and sonic warfare subverting the socialist sensibility and soundscape across the straits.

Circuit Listening is written in such an engaging style that it inspires the detective work of an *audiovisual readership*, which involves sourcing the songs, records, movies, and other artefacts mentioned in the book on Youtube and elsewhere, practicing the methodology of circuit listening, and excavating both overt and covert circuits and routes of how locally-inflected global vernaculars travel, in order to trace their remediation and reception history. To give an example, I would like to take issue with Jones's analysis of Grace Chang's performance of "Taiwan Melody" in *Air Hostess* (discussed in chapter 1), which he claims was "composed by Yao Min with no reference to local musical traditions" (40) and "reputedly based on the melody of a Cantonese popular song" (p. 216 n24). His misattribution of "Taiwan Melody," following Hong Kong *shidaiqu* (Mandarin pop) specialist Wong Kee-chee, points out the complex and circuitous networks and processes of remediation and reception. "Taiwan Melody" has been heard as Japanese, Taiwanese, and Cantonese to different audiences depending on their audiovisual histories and access to audiovisual artefacts. In *Air Hostess*, the diegetic motivation for "Taiwan Melody" (Grace Chang's Taiwanese colleagues request a song from her as a gift and she complies by singing "a Taiwanese song she just learned" on a local trip) and its very name give us a clue to its close connection to Taiwanese folk songs and its uneasy relationship with Japanese colonial past. "Taiwan Melody" is a Mandarin cover of the first major hit of postwar Taiwan, a "folk" love song entitled "Night in a Southern City" / "Night in the City of Tainan" 南都之夜 (1946). The song was composed by Hsu Shih 許石 (1919–1980, discussed in chapter 5) with Taiwanese lyrics by Cheng Chih-Feng 鄭志峯, and starts with the line "I love my sister." Hsu composed "Night in a Southern City" in 1946 upon his return from musical education in Japan "so that Taiwanese people can sing songs in their own language."[2] Such decolonizing sentiment seems at odds

[2] The early history of "Taiwan Melody" is briefly documented in a 1961 article by Tsai Mao-Tang, collected in a 1980 memorial issue for Tsai, "Jin sa wu nianlai de Taiwan liuxing

with the claim in the 1960s that the song was influenced by Japanese music. According to Tsai Mao-Tang's 蔡懋棠 1961 article, Hsu Shih adapted this faux folk song from the first major hit of postwar Japan, "The Apple Song" (Ringo no uta, 1945), a new film song performed by Namiki Michiko in Shochiku's *Breeze* (*Soyokaze*, Sasaki Yasushi, 1945).[3] However, a close comparison between "The Apple Song" and "Night in a Southern City" suggests that the latter is not so much an adaptation as a new composition.[4]

Or, to be more accurate, "Night in a Southern City" was adapted from Hsu Shih's "Song for the Construction of a New Taiwan" 新臺灣建設歌 (1946) with Taiwanese lyrics by Hsueh Kuang-Hua 薛光華, which begins with the line "I love my beautiful island." In a TTV (Taiwan Television Enterprise) interview, Hsu Shih recalled that Taiwan's song circles in 1946 were saturated with Japanese military songs, so much so that in order to compose "songs of our own" he started collecting folk songs.[5] "Song for the Construction of a New Taiwan" was the first piece resulting from Hsu's folk song collection effort, which reinvented indigenous musical materials while resisting the inevitable Japanese influence in postwar Taiwan. As C. S. Stone Shih points out, Hsu Shih's insistence on composing original Taiwanese songs went against the postwar trend of covering Japanese songs in Taiwanese.[6] In 1946, Hsu Shih performed "Song for the Construction of a New Taiwan" with Tsai Jui-yueh 蔡瑞月 (1921–2005), the mother of modern dance in Taiwan, presenting the premiere of her dance piece "New Construction" 新建設 at Miyako-za Theater 宮古座 in Tainan, Taiwan.[7] "Song for the Construction of a New Taiwan" was not popular until it

ge" [Taiwanese Popular Songs for the Past 35 Years], *The Taiwan Folkways* 30, no. 2 (1980): 68.

[3] See Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 159. See also Michael K. Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 12.

[4] Music historian Huang Yu-yuan suggested in a private communication that "Hsu Shih insisted on not borrowing from Japanese songs in his Taiwanese ballads so I find it disrespectful to claim 'Night in a Southern City' was adapted from 'The Apple Song.'"

[5] See Lin Lan, "Wo ai wo de meimei ya: 'Taiwan Xiaodiao' zuoqu jia Xu Shi" [I love my sister: The composer of "Taiwan Melody" Hsu Shih], *TTV Weekly* 890, October 28–November 3, 1979, 44.

[6] See C. S. Stone Shih, "Entangled Identities: The Music and Social Significance of Hsu Shih, a Vanguard Composer of Taiyu Ballads," in Eva Tsai, Tung-hung Ho, and Miaoju Jian, eds., *Made in Taiwan: Studies in Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 75–89: 75.

[7] Shih, "Entangled Identities," 80–82.

was adapted into a love song, "Night in a Southern City," and became the first hit of postwar Taiwan.[8] The earliest recording of "Night in a Southern City" was perhaps a light music arrangement in the style of rumba, issued by Hsu Shih's own label Queen Records as C3003 between 1956 and 1957.[9] To further complicate the dialectics between local and Japanese musical traces, "Night in a Southern City" was performed as a duet between Hsu Shih and Liao Mei-Hui 廖美惠 at Cathay Theater in Taipei as part of postwar Japanese jazz queen Ike Mariko's 池真理子 concert tour in March 1961. It appeared on the B-side of "Folksongs of Taiwan," released by Hsu's own label King Records (KLK-59, 1962–1964, see figure 1) and performed live as a duet between Hsu Shih and Ike Mariko singing consecutively in Taiwanese and then together in Japanese (KLK-003, 1968 and 1974).[10] The original score and lyrics of "Song for the Construction of a New Taiwan" were rediscovered in 2016 and presented anew in a 2017 exhibition at the National Museum of Taiwan History in Tainan curated by Huang Yu-yuan 黃裕元 to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the February 28 Incident of 1947.[11]

As to why "Taiwan Melody" has been misattributed to a Cantonese melody, the reason would be that the popularity of "Night in a Southern City" engendered at least three Cantonese covers in Hong Kong: "A Star Loves a Moon" 星星愛月亮 with lyrics by Chow Chung 周聰;[12] "Old Love Is Like a Dream" 舊歡如夢 with lyrics by Pong Chow-wah 龐秋華 (1928–1991);[13] one

[8] Shih, 80.

[9] This information was provided by music historian Huang Yu-yuan based on Teng-fang Hsu's collection.

[10] For the score, lyrics in Taiwanese and Japanese, introduction, and nine record versions of "Night in a Southern City," see Huang Yu-yuan, *Geyao jiaoxiang: Xu Shi chuangzuo yu caibian geyao qupu ji* [Ballad symphony: Hsu Shih's composition and compilation of songs] (Taipei: Azure Culture, 2019), 16–18.

[11] On February 27, 1947, the beating of a female cigarette vendor and the killing of a bystander led to a protest and uprising against the corruption of the ruling KMT government the following day. On March 8, KMT troops from mainland China arrived and killed around twenty thousand Taiwanese, which led to four decades of martial law (1949–1987) known as the White Terror. See Sylvia Li-chun Lin, *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan: The 2/28 Incident and White Terror in Fiction and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[12] Performed by Chow Chung and Hui Yim Chau 許艷秋, released by The Wo Shing Co., Ltd. 和聲唱片 in 1961.

[13] Performed by Tam Ping Man 譚炳文, included on a long-playing vinyl record entitled "Connie Chan Po-chu's Songs," 陳寶珠之歌 released by Fung Hang Records Ltd. 風行唱片 in 1971. "Old Love Is Like a Dream" appears on "Connie Chan Po-chu's Songs," Fung Hang Records Ltd. FHLP-154, 1971.

year after the death of lyricist Pong Chow-wah, "Old Love Is Like a Dream" was propelled to popularity through its inclusion in the film *92 Legendary La Rose Noire* (Jeffrey Lau Chun-Wai, 1992). The song was performed on screen in a karaoke fashion by Wong Wan-sze, Petrina Fung Bo-bo, and Tony Leung Ka-fai (synchronized to the voice of Lowell Lo), coming full circle as a film song like "Taiwan Melody."

Furthermore, *Circuit Listening* is not just about the 1960s past but also about its relevance to the present and future, which has significant potentials for cultural policy, curatorial practice, and future research. The fugitive cultural forms of the Taiwanese-language music and films of the 1960s have been fixed and made permanent by film preservation and restoration in the digital age. But the laborious and manual search for the fugitive sounds and images started during the analogue era. In a roundtable discussion about the rise and fall of Taiwanese-language films between 1955 and 1962 titled "How to Preserve Taiwan Cinema's Cultural Heritage" convened at the Chinese Taipei Film Archive by its then director Ray Jiing on June 24, 1989, film critic and educator Chang Chang-Yan mentioned how the neglect of *taiyupian* prompted a program he was curating with film critic Alphonse Youth-Leigh for the Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival in December 1989. The program was supported by Ray Jiing as the first step toward a long-term collection, preservation, and research of Taiwan's local film culture. The Chinese Taipei Film Archive was then transformed into Taiwan Film Institute under film scholar Wenchi Lin's leadership, who initiated the restoration of *taiyupian* including *Goodbye, Taipei* (discussed in chapter 3) along with classics such as King Hu's *Dragon Inn* (1967), *A Touch of Zen* (1971), and Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Daughter of the Nile* (1987). Taiwanese cultural policy under President Tsai Ing-wen since 2016 has emphasized local Taiwanese consciousness and culture, thus the once marginal circuit of *taiyupian* has gone mainstream with the promotion and vision of film scholars Chen Pin-Chuan and Wang Chun-Chi as the second and current directors of the Taiwan Film Institute (now Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute) after Lin. Wang's research interests revolve around gender, sexuality, feminist studies, and *taiyupian* studies, which have gradually emerged from a male-centered, Mandarin-dominated cultural landscape in the Chinese-speaking worlds. *Circuit Listening*'s emphasis on Taiwan resonates with the current trend-setting cultural policy and curatorial practice and should be brought into dialogue with recent scholarship, such as the special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* coedited by Chris Berry and Mingyeh T. Rawnsley in 2020, monographs by Su Chih-Heng in 2019 and Lin

Kuei-Chang in 2020 on *taiyupian*;[14] a Ph.D. dissertation by Pien-Pien Yen in 2019, an anthology coedited by Eva Tsai, Tung-hung Ho, and Miaoju Jian in 2019, and monographs by Hung Fang-Yi and Peifong Chen, respectively, in 2020 and Teng-fang Hsu in 2021 on Taiwanese music.[15] The collective and creative efforts in collection, preservation, restoration, research, curation, and consumption of audiovisual artefacts have created and will create new experiences and memories of audiovisual readership and spectatorship in expected and unexpected circuits.

Fig. 1 "Taiwan Melody" in *Air Hostess* (1959) is a Mandarin cover of the first major hit of postwar Taiwan, a "folk" love song entitled "Night in a Southern City" / "Night in the City of Tainan" 南都之夜 (1946) composed by Hsu Shih 許石.
"Night in a Southern City" appears on "Folksongs of Taiwan," King Records KLK-59-B, c. 1962-64. © National Museum of Taiwan History

[14] See Chris Berry and Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley, eds. "Taiwanese-Language Films (*taiyupian*)," special issue, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 14, no. 2 (2020); Su Chih-Heng, *Wu ganyuan de dianying shi: Cengjing Taiwan you ge Haolaiwu* [Once Upon a Time in Hollywood Taiwan: The Life and Death of Taiwanese Hokkien Cinema] (Taipei: SpringHill Publishing, 2019); Lin Kuei-Chang, *Taiyupian de moli: Cong gushi, mingxing, daoyan dao leixing yu xingxiao de dianying guanjianci* [The Power of Taiyu Pian: Keywords of Taiwanese-Language Cinema] (Taipei: Guerrilla Publishing, 2020).

[15] Pien-Pien Yen, "Reception of Jazz Music in Taiwan," Ph.D. dissertation, National Chengchi University, 2019; Eva Tsai et al., *Made in Taiwan*; Hung Fang-Yi, *Qupan kai chu yi rui hua: Zhanqian Taiwan liuxing yinyue duben* [Lost Sounds of Pre-war Taiwanese Popular Records] (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing, 2020); Peifong Chen, *Gechang Taiwan: Lianxu zhimin xia Taiyu gequ de bianqian* [Singing Taiwan: Changes in Taiwanese Songs under Continuous Colonization] (Taipei: Acropolis Publishing, 2020); Teng-fang Hsu, *Liusheng qupan zhong de Taiwan: Tingjian bainian meisheng yu lishi fengqing* [Taiwan in Phonograph Records: Listening to the Music and Historical Moments of a Century] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Library, 2021).

Timmy Chih-Ting Chen is Research Assistant Professor at the Academy of Film, Hong Kong Baptist University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Hong Kong with the dissertation "In the Mood for Music: Sonic Extraterritoriality and Musical Exchange in Hong Kong Cinema" (2016). Chen has published in *A Companion to Wong Kar-wai* (Wiley Blackwell), the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas, Surveillance in Asian Cinema* (Routledge), *The Assassin* (HKU Press), and *Frames Cinema Journal*.

Performance Reviews

Sweet Land, a new opera by The Industry. February 29–March 15, 2020, Los Angeles State Historic Park.

Creative Team: Raven Chacon, Composer; Du Yun, Composer; Aja Couchois Duncan, Librettist; Douglas Kearney, Librettist; Cannupa Hanska Luger, Director and Costume Designer; Yuval Sharon, Director. Program notes and video streaming available on demand: https://theindustryla.org/sweet-land-opera/.

Jelena Novak

Opera and musical theater continue to serve as forums for debate, invoking a wide range of topics in history, mythology, power, and politics. Recent North American operas are no exception, with composers and librettists often being preoccupied with questions of power and colonization. Let me cite just a few examples. One of the first contemporary operas I ever saw was Philip Glass's and Robert Wilson's *O Corvo Branco* (The White Raven) (1998) about the Portuguese age of discovery, an age marked by the conquest of new worlds and above all by the famous expedition led by Vasco da Gama, who pioneered the sea route to India that gave Portugal a dominant position in the spice trade of the time. Another opera by Philip Glass, *The Voyage* (1992), was commissioned and first performed at The Metropolitan Opera house to mark 500 years since Christopher Columbus's discovery of America. Curiosity and courage, overcoming a fear of the unknown, the discovery and conquest of the new worlds, the effects of colonization; these are all among Glass's themes in this work. The composer John Adams and director Peter Sellars likewise turn to American history and mythology in their operas. They typically zoom in on some of the most spectacular and politically charged events from the United States' complex history—the gold rush in *Girls of the Golden West* (2017), the Trinity nuclear test in *Doctor Atomic* (2005), and, famously, Richard Nixon's historical visit to

Sound Stage Screen, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 275–283.
 DOI: 10.13130/sss15390.

Mao Zedong in *Nixon in China* (1987). One might also mention here Steve Reich's and Beryl Korot's *Three Tales* (2002), one of which is dedicated to the testing of atomic bombs on Bikini Island, a grim episode from the Cold War nuclear arms race. And finally there is Laurie Anderson, who problematizes what it really means to be American in several of her works, for example in *Homeland* (2007). In all of these there is an attempt to discuss and illuminate, often critically, important dimensions of American history and mythology.

In mapping out this context for *Sweet Land* (2020), the newest opera of the Los Angeles-based opera company The Industry, I am tempted to invoke the arrow John Cage fired into the operatic relationships between Europe and United States: "For two hundred years the Europeans have been sending us their operas. Now I'm sending them back." On the occasion of the production of Cage's *Europeras* 1 and 2 by director Yuval Sharon, The Industry's founder and leader, this quotation was singled out.[1] It signals the duality between European and American operatic worlds, a duality that appears to be of central importance to the poetics of Sharon himself. His career as an opera director has developed successfully along two separate tracks. He has created site-specific ground-breaking contemporary operas with The Industry, mostly with American artists—productions include *Invisible Cities* (2013), *Hopscotch* (2015) and *War of the Worlds* (2017)—while in parallel directing conventional, mostly European, operatic repertoire in opera houses and festivals both in Europe and in the United States. Recently Sharon's position in the world of conventional opera in the US was institutionalized when he became director of Michigan Opera Theatre, while at the same time remaining artistic director and leader of The Industry.

On a different note from these North American composers and directors, there are at least a few made-in-Europe operas dealing more specifically with American culture, myths, and stereotypes, and in particular with the "Wild West": *ROSA: The Death of a Composer, a horse drama* (1994) by Louis Andriessen and Peter Greenaway, and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (2017–2018) by Gavin Bryars, to mention but two. Operas and music theater pieces by Glass/Wilson, Adams/Sellars, Reich/Korot, Anderson, Andriessen/Greenaway and Bryars all offer some of the coordinates that enable me to map *Sweet Land*: to contextualize it and interpret it.

[1] The quotation appeared on The Industry's twitter account (@industryopera), February 8, 2018, https://twitter.com/industryopera/status/961641708369854464.

"The company that created *Invisible Cities* and *Hopscotch*, now brings you a grotesque historical pageant that disrupts the dominant narrative of American identity": this is the announcement on The Industry's website.[2] *Sweet Land*, The Industry's latest operatic spectacle, was world-premiered on March 1, 2020, in Los Angeles State Historic Park. However, the performances were soon halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The cast and crew gathered on March 15 to film the show in an attempt to save it from premature disappearance, and the two videos documenting the piece have since been streamed on demand.[3] In the course of the original performance the audience was divided into two groups so that each group could only see one part of the show. Members of each of the two audience groups were expected to finish the story on their own as the experience of being excluded from the other group was an important part of the concept.

I believe that this concept of exclusion was clear to all of those who were lucky enough to attend the live performance. For the rest of us, experiencing *Sweet Land* only through the video, the division is not apparent, though it becomes clearer after reading the program booklet. "Sweet Land … is conceived as an opera that erases itself: as the audience processes through the LA State Historic Park, the space behind you disappears, in a musical and visual experience revealing the mechanism of historic erasure. The audience is split on diverging tracks through a park to experience contrasting stories of America and its founding."[4]

The two halves of the audience never actually saw the same show. Consequently, there are now two stream-on-demand videos designed to mimic the live experience of seeing two sides of the same story. While reading about the divided audiences, I decided to follow the initial concept of the creative team in their account of the live performance in Los Angeles State Historic Park, and consequently for the purposes of this text I have focused mainly on the first online video. The other side of the story remains to be explored.

To clarify the distinction between the two performance tracks, and the two subsequently made videos, I should list their contents. The work is in five parts. The first is named "Contact" (music by Raven Chacon and Du Yun, libretto by Douglas Kearney), and here the audience has not yet

[2] "*Sweet Land*," *The Industry*, accessed September 30, 2020, https://theindustryla.org/sweet-land-opera/.

[3] "*Sweet Land*: A New Opera by The Industry," *Vimeo*, March 17, 2020, http://stream.sweetlandopera.com/. The videos were edited by Geoff Boothby and produced by Comotion.

[4] Lindsey Schoenholtz, "Meet the Voices of *Sweet Land*", *The Industry* (blog), December 2, 2019, https://theindustryla.org/meet-the-voices-of-sweet-land/.

been divided. After "Contact," the first audience group is assigned to "Feast 1" (music by Du Yun, libretto by Aja Couchois Duncan) and the second group to "Train 1" (music by Raven Chacon, libretto by Douglas Kearney). The two groups reconnect at "The Crossroads" (music by both Yun and Chacon, and improvisations by Carmina Escobar, Micaela Tobin and Sharon Chohi Kim). After that the audience is divided again for "Feast 2" (music by Chacon, libretto by Kearney) and "Train 2" (music by Yun, libretto by Duncan), and at the end they all go back to the starting point for the final scene "Echoes & Expulsions" (music by Chacon and Yun, libretto by Duncan and Kearney).

As in the previous operas by The Industry, *Sweet Land* is site-specific. For example, the opera for headphones, *Invisible Cities*, was performed at Los Angeles Union Station, which is freighted with symbolic meaning in relation to the treatment of minorities by Californian society.[5] This is because the site originally housed Chinatown, part of which was torn down in order to make way for the station. The urban planning historian David Sloane talks about this urban intervention in an Artbound documentary about the making of *Invisible Cities*. He says that "it was an act of white dictation, of power within the city and it is the symbol of the way that California had struggled with racial minorities, particularly Asian minorities, for decades. In all those ways Union Station is a very complicated social space as well as a spectacularly beautiful built space."[6]

Similarly, the Los Angeles State Historic Park, also in a Chinatown neighborhood, takes center stage in *Sweet Land*, since it too has a complex history related to immigrants—it used to be one of the busiest immigration stations for newcomers arriving to the city from the East. "In the *Sweet Land* program booklet and pre-show literature, much is made of the fact that LA State Historic Park where this performance takes place sits roughly where the Native American Tongva village Yaang-na and its cornfield once lay—an area replete with memories (many tragic) close to Downtown and the original pueblo."[7] So the universal—yet at the same time specifically North American—story of "Hosts" and "Arrivals" in *Sweet Land* finds its

[5] The Industry's *Invisible Cities* is the subject of Megan Steigerwald Ille's article "The Operatic Ear: Mediating Aurality" on this very same issue of *Sound Stage Screen* (pp. 119–143, https://doi.org/10.13130/sss14186).

[6] "Invisible Cities", Artbound documentary, *KCET*, accessed October 2, 2020, 06:44–07:15, https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/episodes/invisible-cities.

[7] Gordon Williams, "The Industry 2020 Review: *Sweet Land*," *OperaWire*, March 12, 2020, https://operawire.com/the-industry-2020-review-sweet-land/.

ideal partnership in this piece of land and in the historical layers of meanings it holds together. The opera is staged in a series of temporary structures designed by Tanya Orellana and Carlo Maghirang, all sitting lightly on the soil of the park, and easily removed. Two of them are of a circular shape, and we have an impressive bird's eye view of them at the beginning of the video.

Duality is one of the keywords for an understanding of this opera. There are two librettists (Kearney and Duncan), two directors (Sharon and Cannupa Hanska Luger, who is also costume designer), and two composers (Yun and Chacon). But there is more to *Sweet Land* than demonstrating how these several pairs work towards the same goal. The most important dimension of duality for the authors of this project concerns exclusion from the pair, and a resulting imbalance between the two sides. The focus is on how one feels and functions when not being "inside" and/or when one is not in a position of power. The authors, in other words, want to project their dialogue as a means of learning about each other's experience.

In the trailer for *Sweet Land* Sharon announces the company's turn towards the topic of Americanness: "The Industry has often taken the audience on diverging paths and telling different narratives simultaneously. *Sweet Land* is the first time that we are using that tactic to talk about American history … This opera is all about a reckoning with our American identity. That we really look at the myths around who we are and try to dismantle that".[8] In *Sweet Land* the question of what it means to be American is posed openly. However, it appears to me that several of The Industry's earlier pieces are equally about American myths and identity, even if that precise question is not brought up so directly. It is hard to imagine *Hopscotch*, an opera for twenty-four cars, set anywhere other than the United States, and particularly Los Angeles. Automobility, the use of automobiles as the major means of transportation, and the role of cars in daily life are all tightly connected to experiencing a Los Angeles—and more broadly an American—culture.[9] Another opera, *War of the Worlds*, based on the 1938 radio drama created by Orson Welles, also raises particular questions germane to US culture, and especially the "country's troubled relationship with truth."[10] Those operas

[8] Yuval Sharon in "*Sweet Land* Trailer," YouTube video hosted on *The Industry* home page, accessed August 29, 2020, 00:22–00:33, 02:15–02:24, https://theindustryla.org/sweet-land-opera/.

[9] See Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[10] Jessica Gelt "*War of the Worlds* to Invade Disney Hall and the Streets of Downtown

also look at the American myth in one way or another. But just why it is important for North Americans to "really look at the myths around who we are and try to dismantle that" *at this particular moment* is the truly interesting question, and it needs to be answered in light of the political, pandemic, ecological, and other crises, as well as the racial, class, gender, and other inequalities still present in contemporary American society.

"Central to the project is the diversity of its voices", emphasizes Sharon. And indeed, the spectrum of various cultural heritages that various artists bring to this piece is impressive. "Composer Raven Chacon is from the Navajo Nation and advocates for indigenous composers and musicians … Du Yun is a Chinese immigrant whose recent work is rooted in a lack of understanding and empathy around immigration. … Librettist Aja Couchois Duncan is a mixed-race Ojibwe writer with a focus on social justice. Douglas Kearney is a poet whose writing, in the words of *BOMB* magazine, 'pulls history apart, recombining it to reveal an alternative less whitewashed by enfranchised power.' Co-director Cannupa Hanksa Luger is a multi-disciplinary installation artist of Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, Austrian, and Norwegian descent."[11] All those "other voices" give off intriguing creative reflections that make the whole piece glitter with variegated color and light.

For me, the question is what, if anything, holds the whole operatic tissue of such diverse creative voices together, and prevents the whole structure from falling apart? The answer that first comes to mind after watching the video is the role of stereotypes. The story, despite its non-linear structure, is quite stereotypical. There are Hosts and there are Arrivals. The Arrivals arrive and start to trouble the Hosts. This is confirmed musically when one of the main Arrivals starts to sing with his countertenor voice. So the Arrivals represent authority, order, and constructed tradition. Hosts on the other hand, are actually "the others" for Arrivals. And the music of the Hosts is accordingly exotic–often modal, full of various "non-operatic" vocal peculiarities, and seasoned with the unpredictable, the experimental, and the unfathomable. A workable synthesis, a real cohabitation between two sides—operatic (conventional) and non-operatic (experimental, exotic)—is somehow not truly achieved for most of the opera. Thus, the fragmented musical structure and the various musical

L.A." *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-la-phil-war-worlds-20171108-story.html.

[11] "*Sweet Land*," Yuval Sharon's personal website, accessed September 15, 2020, https://www.yuvalsharon.com/#/sweet-land/.

languages and references add more to the cacophony of voices than to their synergy. The circumstance of the forced marriage between the Arrival Jimmy Gin (Scott Belluz, countertenor) and the Host girl Makwa (Kelci Hahn, soprano) becomes "the screen" through which stereotypes of power in terms of gender and race are projected. The marriage scene is particularly rich with such references as efforts are being made to reuse stereotypes while trying to make them grotesque. It is a mechanism that remains stuck in the process, so that the stereotypes, rigid as they are, overshadow the intention to question them. The naturalistic acting of the operatic characters in "Feast 1" and "Feast 2" represents another stereotype. The characters assume postures and gestures of a "realistic" type, but realism in opera is a complicated issue, as singing invariably deconstructs the realism. With exaggerated naturalistic acting and conventional operatic singing, what happens in Feasts is probably even more grotesque than the authors wanted it to be.

To my surprise, given that the opera seeks to reinvent myths of American history and its people, including their struggles and their powers, I find the most striking section to be the one that features animals and monsters, including coyotes and immortal, Wiindigo-cursed evil spirit with an appetite for human flesh (they come from the folklore of First Nations Algonquin tribes). Monsters and animals are also "others," in this case other than human. But unlike the line between Hosts and Arrivals—which is stereotypical and predictable, based as it is on the power that comes with colonization—that between animals/monsters and humans affords the authors more subtle opportunities, especially in the vocal sphere.

"The Crossroads" features two coyotes (Carmina Escobar and Micaela Tobin) and a Wiindigo (Sharon Chohi Kim). This part of the opera is rather short, lasting less than three minutes in the video. However, the video footage has been subject to some montage editing, so that what we see on the screen and what we hear at the same time is not synchronized, and the line between the singing body and the sung voice becomes blurred. That desynchronization is interesting and telling. The most impressive figure is Wiindigo, who is depicted as an anthropomorphic creature with long black and white fur covering the entirety of its body, and (curiously) with a huge mouth and visible teeth at the back of the head (see figure 1). The mouth is half opened, and all kinds of screams and choking sounds are assigned to it in Sharon Chohi Kim's vocal improvisations. The desynchronization poses all kinds of questions, and works surprisingly well, as (for a short time

Fig. 1 Sharon Chohi Kim as Wiindigo. Still frame from the video trailer of *Sweet Land* by The Industry.

at least) both musical and visual elements of the opera escape the world of realism.

The Wiindigo creature becomes all mouth, all voice. It claims the right to have a voice, a right that is usually the exclusive preserve of the human domain, since monsters, like animals, are normally not considered to have a voice. Wiindigo's chocking sounds, combined with the howling improvisations of two singing coyote figures, constitute the deepest, the most "knowing" moment in *Sweet Land,* the moment at which those who normally are not allowed to have a voice finally sing. It is the moment when *Sweet Land* manages to escape from stereotypes, not taking the voice for granted and asking crucial questions about who owns the voice, both for singing and, metaphorically, for being human, and why.

These are the questions that Yuval Sharon places at the heart of *Sweet Land*:

> Who is telling America's story? How can opera participate in an experiential "re-write" of that story? What can music and theatrical representation rectify that history books or documentaries cannot? And the most important question of all: How can the process of creating this work of art reflect the society we actually want to create?[12]

[12] The Industry, "*Sweet Land* Workshop," *The Industry* (blog), May 21, 2019, https://theindustryla.org/sweet-land-workshop/.

I find coyotes and the Wiindigo monster the true heroes of this operatic quest for a new relationality. They are removed from stereotypes, realism, and conventions. They manage to reach beyond the history books and the documentaries; they are activists and poets at the same time. They fight metaphorically for their voice, a different voice that can also sing, together. They are the brave "others" who can make a difference, at least in this opera.

Jelena Novak is a researcher at CESEM (Center for Study of the Sociology and Aesthetics of Music), FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa. Her fields of interests are modern and contemporary music, recent opera and musical theatre, music and new media, capitalist realism, voice studies in the age of posthuman and feminine identities in music. Exploring those fields, she works as a researcher, lecturer, writer, dramaturg, music critic, editor and curator focused on bringing together critical theory and contemporary art. She has been a founding committee member of the Society for Minimalist Music and a founding member of the editorial collective TkH [Walking Theory]. In 2013 she won the Thurnau Award for Music-Theatre Studies from the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Her most recent books are *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body* (2015), *Operofilia* (2018) and *Einstein on the Beach: Opera beyond Drama* (co-edited with John Richardson, 2019). She is currently preparing the co-edited volume (with Kris Dittel) *Singing beyond Human*. Her latest achievement as a dramaturg is: *LIMBO, an Opera* (Tel Aviv, 2019) and that same year she co-curated (with K. Dittel) the exhibition "Post-Opera" at TENT, Rotterdam.