ELEMENTS OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE IN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSIC

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Abstract

Classical music has made significant strides, during the 20th and 21st centuries, in terms of advanced instrumental techniques, experimental notation and mixtures with other art forms. In the theatre branch, collaborations between playwrights and composers were long cultivated, through incidental music, live performances or pre-recorded samples used in stagings. Even more interesting, however, are theatrical expressions notated in the musical score, scripted to be performed by the musicians themselves. This article highlights such elements in works by three Romanian contemporary composers (Sebastian Androne-Nakanishi, Cristian Bence-Muk, Irinel Anghel), with insight into their written cues and their performing challenges.

Keywords

classical music; music notation; performance; gesture; extra-musical;

Music and theatre, past and present interconnections

Music and theatre are artistic domains with arguably broad distinctions in terms of their language of expression, anchored in a well-defined set of methods and conventions. However, numerous creative ideas, that push towards a stylistic blending, have been advanced in modern times, intended to blur the lines between the genres and to craft new attributes related to performative roles. After all, the 20th Century was most defining and deviceful in terms of experimentation, improvisations, mixtures and interferences.

In this regard, several concepts of intermixture between music and theatre have been established over the course of the modern period and exercised to the point of forming new conventions. On the theatrical side, musical interludes were used both to keep in with tradition – one can still witness at Shakespeare's Globe jigs at the end of plays, in which the cast sings and dances, with live instrumentals performed by an ensemble up in the music gallery -, as well as to envision new functions: live or pre-recorded music, from various genres, used for the segues between scenes or for diegetic signals; actors with vocal training (sometimes instrumental, as well) performing scripted or improvised songs. There is also an active collaborative component, by which composers are brought in to write

original scores for the play, or ensembles of musicians are cast to perform live music during the theatrical showing.

Modern classical music has highlighted a similar integration of theatrical roles, most often also in a collaborate spirit. An early instance of extending the musician's role past traditional methods was best showcased in Arnold Schoenberg's iconic *Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21 (1912)* for voice and ensemble, which introduced the concept of *Sprechstimme*, a manner of singing the vocal line with spoken inflexions – in line with the work's highly charged expressionism. The piece is performed within the conventions of a chamber music recital, but has all the potential to be staged as a full burlesque – a very recent, acclaimed example being violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja's version, in which she donned the Pierrot costume and performed the singing-acting dual part herself. Further modern works that incorporated spoken dialogue, to the extent of employing acting roles, included Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918), Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), Jani Christou's *The Strychnine Lady* (1967) or Luigi Nono's *A floresta é Jovem e Cheja da Vida* (1965-66).

Much of the collaborative relation between the musical and theatrical mediums also came down to the emergence of popular new modernist genres throughout the 20th Century, such as cabaret shows, musicals, children's theatre, radio-broadcasted plays and, later, a variety of multimedia productions. Hence, musical performances often became an intrinsic part of the theatrical staging, according to the authorial or directorial vision. Several famed playwrights have worked closely with contemporary composers of equal renown – one can bring to mind Bertolt Brecht's use of political songs, conceived in association with Hanns Eisler or Kurt Weill, Paul Claudel's plays scored by Darius Milhaud, Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* with music by Pavel Haas, or Vladimir Mayakovsky's *The Bedbug* with music with Dmitri Shostakovich.

Choice, improv. and „theatrics" in musical writing
A different approach surfaced, during the modern period, through an ever-expanding amount of experimentation in *classical music notation*, which challenged musicians themselves to (en)act elements of a theatrical fashion. There are several stylistic factors which put in motion such ideas.

One of them relates to the steps taken outside of convention in regards to the technical aspects and interpretive indications – i.e., the *extended vocal and instrumental techniques*. Modern composers have worked closer than before with contemporary instrumentalist virtuosos to expand the scope of techniques and effects that can be produced to assort and dramatize the musical discourse. While extended techniques are grounded in musical performance, as well as the field of acoustics, one can infer the small experimental steps needed to achieve a correlation with extra-musical effects (rhythms, onomatopoeias) or motions (clapping, kicking, tapping, speaking whilst playing, moving in different stage spots).

To this extent, perhaps one of the most interesting profiles in modern composition is that of Argentine-German composer Mauricio Kagel (1931-2008), whose works have constantly shown a penchant for inscribing the performance with directorial, "visual and

theatrical elements"[1] and creating the sense of mismatch, histrionics and slapstick, akin to an absurdist play. He himself has referred to this as "Instrumental Theatre"[2]. Examples of such works include: *Ungis incarnatus est…* (1972) for piano and a secondary, freely-chosen instrument, staged to be seated "*as far apart as possible"* or even "*out of sight*" and instructed to shout words at the end of the piece; *Match* (1969), where three player's placement (2 cellists and a percussionist) resembles a game of tennis with an umpire; *Konzertstück* (1990-92) for timpani and orchestra, designed to end cartoonishly, with the soloist lunging headlong into a decoy timpani (covered with a fake membrane); or *Phantasiestück* (1989), a conventional piece of absolute music, staged however for flute and piano with accompanying instruments (and optional conductor), which are to "remain hidden (preferably close to the piano) behind screens or another location in the hall (e.g. a loge)…"[3], something remindful maybe of Beckett's *Eleuthéria*, in which the main and marginal actions coalesce on stage through split scenes[4].

Another factor relates to the development of *aleatoric music,* which allowed for greater freedom, chance and spontaneity in the musical performance, depending on the limitations placed or lifted by the composer. This method encompasses a wide range of indeterminate elements, from particular notes, rhythms or effects, indicated to be played *ad libitum* in a small time frame, all the way to a complete improvised performance, prompted only by written textual instructions. In certain respects, depending on what kind of performance was envisioned, these aleatoric pieces can share the theatrical attributes of an *improv* session.

While no musical composer has fully embraced a definitive, free musical performance i.e. conceding all stylistic intentions to the artists' liking, several big names come to mind. John Cage embraced at a certain point in his career a non-traditional, even non-instrumental side of improvisation (*0'00"*, which asks only of a "disciplined action" to be performed[5], *Branches,* for which plant materials, such as cacti and amplified pods, are recommended to be "played at"). Groups of artists such as Fluxus have focused on creating "events" or happenings, in which every performance cue is free. In more niche genres, like free improvisation, some ensembles, such as AMM, professed creating unique combinatory sounds out of every performance, while others, such as John Zorn's Cobra, set out by default to create absurd, outlandish acts of frantic motions and theatrics.

Recent developments in multimedia (or mixed media) art have taken musical productions even closer towards a full performative act. Robert Ashley's *She Was a Visitor* enlists a soloist to invariantly repeat the titular phrase, while a separate group, alike a Greek chorus, replicates in sync distinct phonemes from that phrase. Austrian composer Peter Ablinger often conceals non-musical and theatrical elements in some of the most

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[1] Kennedy, Michael, "*Kagel, Mauricio*", in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, p. 458

[2] Nyffeler, Max, *There Will Always Be Questions Enough*, http://www.beckmesser.de/neue_musik/kagel/int-e.html, accessed 14.04.2023

[3] Kagel, Mauricio, *Phantasiestück*, scoring notes, Litolff / Peters, Frankfurt, 1990

[4] Beckett, Samuel, *Așteptându-l pe Godot. Eleutheria. Sfârșitul jocului*, translated by Gellu Naum and Irina Mavrodin, Curtea Veche Publishing, Bucharest, 2007

[5] https://www.johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=18, accessed 14.05.2023

conventional genre designations, like his *Sonata for 2 speaking voices*, which turns out to be a simple philosophical dialogue, scripted or improvised, between two persons[6].

Performance cues in three contemporary ensemble works
I will now focus on the aspect of notating theatrical(-inspired) actions and expressions in classical composition and/or "scripting" them for the performance, by analysing three contemporary works that contain such indications or allusions. Notably, these works belong to three Romanian composers: Sebastian Androne-Nakanishi (1989 –), Cristian Bence-Muk (1978 –) and Irinel Anghel (1969 –), themselves part of three different generations.

Much of the insight into these works comes from personal experience in having performed them together with the Atem Ensemble, a collective of musicians based in Timișoara, Romania, with a decade-long activity of highlighting modern and contemporary music, as well as performing brand new works. My personal experience with Atem Ensemble has been nothing short of enlightening in how complex, rich and animated modern language and performance can be.

Sebastian Androne-Nakanishi's work ***Mnemo*** is an example of a composition rooted in convention and designed for an almost straightforward (if very creative, energetic and boundary-pushing) musical act, save for its peculiar introduction.

The composer wrote the piece in 2015 for the *N-Escu* Project, in which he was one of seven composers selected to write variations on a theme from Enescu's *First Symphony*. It was originally scored for quartet (clarinet, violin, violoncello and piano) and later adapted for trio (without the cello part) to be expressly performed by the Atem Ensemble[7].

Besides its "cipher" based off Enescu's leitmotif (to which another, by Bach, was added in the mix), the work is founded on a philosophical thematic, all the way from its title to its musical content and dramaturgy. In the composer's own words, it is "thematically built around the concept of anamnesis, as well as a reference to the amnesiac character from the animated film *Finding Nemo*, and musically coded around the incipits of both Bach's Badinerie and Enescu's First Symphony. […] The thematic conflict threatens to disintegrate in another experience of memory loss, but ultimately achieves a recognisable resolution"[8].

The opening phrase in *Mnemo*, performed by the pianist alone, sets the intrigue. It represents a sort of wrong-footed start in an attempt to "recreate the theme of [Bach's] *Badinerie*"[9]. The pianist performs 16 bars of sparse, hardly coalescing notes, clusters and shards of motifs, bounced off different pitch registers, before finally finding his cue and bursting with renewed confidence into a first improvisation based on Bach's *Badinerie* leitmotif. In terms of writing, the pianist faces a fractured discourse made of a sequence of loose, "imprecise" clusters or arpeggiated chords, with many gaps and breaks in between,

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[6] https://ablinger.mur.at/sonate.html, accessed 14.05.2023

[7] In November 2019 at the Meridian International New Music Festival, in July 2021 at the *"Romanian-American Archetypes"* live concert organized by Parma Recordings, and in October 2022 at the Romanian Music Festival in Iași.
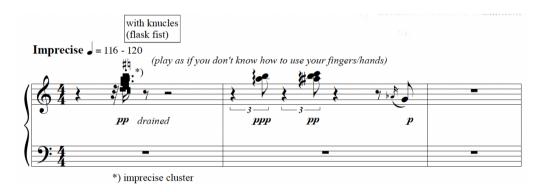
[8] https://www.facebook.com/events/1146034019238962/?post_id=1152117358630628&view=permalink, accessed 14.05.2023

[9] *Ibidem*

before slowly etching out the first three notes of the leitmotif (*A − C − E flat*). The composer's indications elicit a similarly elliptic image, writing down only that the notes should be performed "with knuckles" (adding a "flask fisk" specification) and played "as if you don't know how to use your fingers/hands"; dynamics don't paint a fuller picture either, with just a *pianissimo, drained* at the start which evolves erratically up to furious triple *forte*.

This motion surfaces once more towards the end of the piece in which the pianist seemingly stumbles once more into another "memory loss", only to regroup together with the whole trio and create a rushing synthesis of the Bach and Enescu leitmotifs. There are no additional performance indications raised in this fragment, apart from the "knuckles" technique being once more specified.

The rest of the piece is styled in an entirely different character, vividly animated and precisely rhythmical, brazen in cluster sonorities which mount up to a wall of noise or frenzied in melodic lines which form a twisted, pulsating dance. Hence, the work itself exhibits traits of a *spiel*, not meant to be played in a conventional spirit, in order to captivate the audience.

**Opening statement (bars 1-3) from *Mnemo*, showcasing the irregular,
spaced out note formations and the author's technical and dynamic indications**

The challenges of performing the opening passage of *Mnemo* are twofold. On one hand, it is unlikely the audience will perceive its full meaning, even if reading beforehand the composer's generic notes. Any performance done plainly or even with too simple gestures would surely be perceived as unconvincing and bizarre. Its best impression, I believe, lies in performing it as clearly as possible as a "false start", a debut gone wrong, and an artist fumbling to play properly.

On the other hand, the pianist is tasked to give his creative input to a statement that lasts about 30 seconds, without much musical material or guidance in terms of interpretive cues. A theatrical reading (the fumbling, worked up artist) is essential. The knuckles technique is put on paper straightforwardly, but leaves everything up to the pianist's capabilities to perform it creatively. The dynamic indications are more frequent and indicate clear contrasts, the sharpest of them all signaling that a certain loss of composure should be reached. Otherwise, the imprecise notation gives the interpreter the task of making it all work.

Throughout the several performances of the piece by Atem Ensemble[10], I have opted to correlate the musical gestures with as many facial and body gestures as possible, in order for the image of a distressed, fumbling artist, that plays badly or wrongly, without control, to come through. The element of "not knowing how to use fingers" was likely the most difficult to enact, since it contradicts the innate pianistic mentality of playing with skill and precision. For the very first gesture, I have opted to act as if starting the piece with full confidence, only to be bewildered right away by the result. This is a liberty taken from the composer's expressive indication („*drained*"), which I felt would have been a less convincing opening mood, i.e. the work, in my view, requires something to start off-balance, not sluggishly. The following bars, I acted as if fumbling even harder, switching to the left-hand low register, only to play just as "bad", thus building distress. I used the bars that are just full breaks to mimic further reactions to my "bad" playing (pondering, sighing, scratching the back of my head incredulously); on one occasion, I even improvised, for comedic potential, looking over at the violinist's score, only for her to shut me off and turn the stand away from me. Throughout the following fragments, I increased the sense of agitation, making quick leaps between registers and showing signs of clear irritation – culminating in smashing the keys in total anger, followed by a despondent pause. The final bars are indicated *agitated* at the start, but I took once more the liberty to perform in a way in which I would finally gain composure, by making slow gestures to position my fingers properly on the keyboard and press the right notes. I usually ended the opening statement with an "a-ha" or „hmpf" like gesture, meant to signal that the supposed solo melody was finally remembered.

Cristian Bence-Muk's ***9 minutes and a half of stress*** (in Romanian, *9 minute și jumătate de stres*), written in 2014 for clarinet, violin and piano, is a textbook example of modern musical notation crafted to serve a musical programme and, in this case, enact a very whimsical narrative, with a couple of clear-cut theatrical forms of presentation. This work is very typical of Bence-Muk's stylistics, i.e., abstract music filled with a lot of creative "antics", and has proven a popular piece of his, being performed several times throughout the years, including twice by Atem Ensemble last year, in 2022[11].

The composer stated[12] that the work's key concepts are both self-ironic (in the sense that modern music, meant to mirror modern life, is often perceived as stress-inducing) and symbolic (by taking inspiration from everyday sounds to craft the musical themes effects). The piece's programme attempts to compress in short, eloquent sequences, the stress-filled routine of an average workday: "from the sudden rouse caused by the alarm clock early in the morning, to heading to work (through the street clamor), to working under constant beratement from the boss, to the point of a verbal confrontation, after which all that's left is to trace all the steps back home, and back into the state of sleep and forgetfulness".

This entire description sounds fitting for a theatrical set piece, in which a similar waketime-to-bedtime rite would unfold, showcasing one or several characters' stages of
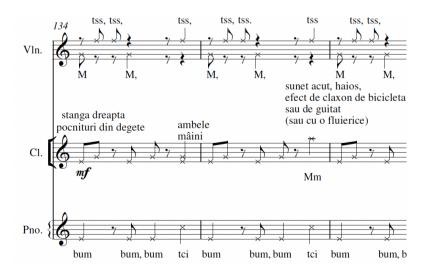
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[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-qep5fvCnM

[11] In October 2022 at the Romanian Music Festival in Iași, and in November 2022 at the Meridian International New Music Festival.

[12] In a short presentation written to the Ensemble prior to the performance, which he also wished to function as a programme note for the piece

ennui, discomfort, work-related stress, mental escape and compliance with that ongoing life cycle. All the segments of the piece are designed as "scenes", with specific subtitles indicated by the composer (*"Sleeping…", "In the street, heading to work…", "Paroxysm: Blowup with the boss…"*). Indeed, the journey of a "character" appears to be at the core of the work's narrative line, with the music clashing between personifying said character's state of mind or rather all the background noise that overwhelms him/her.

The musicians are tasked to create, through extended techniques and through well-timed dialogues, several symbolic images and sentiments. In that regard, *9 minutes…* has the potential to relate to the audience several correlations between musical techniques, the formal set pieces and the intended symbolist: *glissandi* slides and air noises akin to breathing and snoring; fast tremolos and flutter-tonguing that recreate the rousing alarm clock ringing; an assortment of shrill trilling, ricocheting, and mouthpiece-screeching for an audio image of traffic uproar, claxons and wailing sirens; cluster-hits on the keyboard to signify "the mumbling and grumbling of the boss". Performance-wise, the trio is asked for very clear and precise gesturing, as well as technical mastery, but to equally display great energy and caprice in creating several contrasts of moods and a nuanced sense of adrenaline.

One scene in particular comes perhaps closest to a theatrical performance, the self-explanatory titled *Repression: BEAT-BOXING* intermezzo at the mid-point of the piece, which is meant to express the character shutting out the boss's yells and all surrounding turmoil, and yearn for a late-hour unburdening at the local pub or disco club. The musicians break off themselves from their instruments, creating percussive vocal effects together with other body movements (clapping, stomping, chest-thumping, hitting the piano fallboard with the palm), in a gradual developing polyrhythmic show off; the pianist also mimics holding a microphone and shifting the sound quality of the beats. Bence-Muk's written beat-boxing elements are arguably more approximate than a genuine beat-boxing style (the *bum, tchi, tss* phonemes not being an entirely accurate representation of the relevant bass drum, snare and hi-hat sounds).

Excerpt (bars 134-135) from the beat-boxing scene of *9 minutes and a half of stress*, "lyrics" line made out of representative phonemes; technical indications written in Romanian

In terms of performance, the ensemble is offered all the tools to create a unique moment, to surprise at once the audience and at the same time detach them from the high-octane listening experience they've partaken in up to that point. Nonetheless, its execution should not be regarded too simple. The requested vocal techniques and even the beat-boxing genre itself are not something classical musicians will likely be accustomed with – I myself took, in fact, steps to watch several tutorials on how to best articulate the beat sounds. The buildup of verbal and rhythmic patterns should be made clear, as to impress. At a certain point in our practice of the performance, we considered improvising even more gestures, such as getting up from our spots and moving to the music's groove on stage (liberties not written down, but neither out of the range desired by the composer). Mastering the method and performing it with ebb and flow should create an entertaining moment for the public.

Lastly, **Irinel Anghel**'s ***Where to go When*** for flute and piano is a work so replete with extended techniques, effects and high jinks, that it is impossible to view it as anything but performance art, driven by a high amount of flair and improvisatory freedom, as if to constitute a one-man (or in this case, two-man) show. The piece was written in 2019 and was awarded the Composers' Union's Prize for Chamber Work one year later. It was premiered in 2019 by renowned flutist Matei Ioachimescu and pianist Alfred Ovalles; two years later, at his initiative, Ioachimescu performed it again together with myself at two important festivals[13].

Irinel Anghel herself is a most interesting figure in Romanian contemporary art. After classical-oriented studies, she steered headlong into experimental multimedia art (avant-garde music, dance and acting) and developed the profile of an "all-round artist", whilst also curating some high-profile new music festivals (SIMN, Meridian) and producing some of the most outlandish and *outré* shows in the country.

Irinel Anghel & Friends during the *Dollcore Doll-Hall in Doll Mall* performance at the Apollo111 Theatre in May 2019 (photo credit: Lucian Pârvănescu)
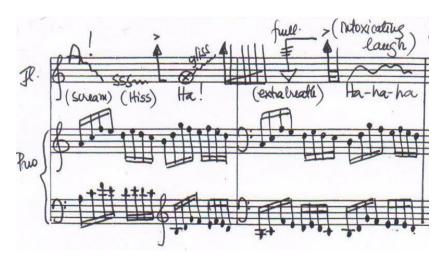
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[13] In May 2021 at the SIMN International New Music Week in Bucharest, and in November 2021 at the Intrada International New Music Festival in Timişoara

In *Where to go When*, Anghel combines indeterminate notation with freeform improvisation and directorial cues, purposed to engage musicians and listeners altogether in a kinetic and chaotic procession of sounds, noises, gesture and sensations. Like Bence-Muk, Anghel structures the work in several "scenes", segued seamlessly and bearing absurdist titles (*Knock, knock!*; *Open Sesame!*; *Damn you, Ceaikovski (Autocorrect); Tail Chasing; Hanon-Metal; Can you hear me?*), though in this case there is far less clarity in regards to what the narrative line should amount to. The piece starts with a frenzied jam session – a "noisy-jazzy" slew of palm-taps on the piano fallboard and key-clicks on the flute – and ends in pantomime – an "air play" of previous motions, stuck in a loop of "barely audible", "ghostly" touches and sounds.

In terms of how theatric-mannered this piece can be performed, both players are scripted to unleash a great amount of histrionics, but with clear distinctions in how they connect with the elements of a stage play. The pianist appears locked in with his instrument, looking inward and making musical-derived motions out of every idea – from percussive finger-tapping on the piano frame (for which I paraphrased a variety of sources: free-jazz, be-bop, percussion works by Xenakis) to crashing chords into the keyboard, *à la* Tchaikovsky's piano concerto opening, to practicing scales mechanically, with extra heavy metal accents.

The flutist, on the other hand, is given much more freedom to exteriorize and to engage closer with the audience – most notably in the second section, in which they are told to move across the stage to different spots next to the wall, to "face the wall", perform an eight-note incantation and then "move and try again" at a different spot – or the fifth section, in which the mad and loud improvisation is replete with shouts, hisses, roars, screams and "intoxicating laughs".

Excerpt from Anghel's *Where to we go When* (bars 7-8 of the *Hanon-Metal* section), showcasing the variety of vocal effects and histrionics performed by the flutist

To further prove how much freedom there is to the interpretation, Irinel Anghel joined us on stage at the performance she attended, as a third "character", portrayed as an eerie presence set in a corner of the stage, delivering an *ad lib* of verbal chatter, mumbling, shouts and yells and distorted facial expressions.

For our interpretation of *Where to we go When*, Ioachimescu took extra steps to up to antics and infuse each musical moment with suggestive stagecraft. For the jazzy improv, he added faint vocal chatter and light dance moves. For the face-the-wall ritual, he waltzed in a circle around the stage, timing his interventions at different walls, breaking the fourth wall to communicate his "findings" towards the audience with excited or puzzled facial expressions, even "talking" with the statue of Enescu (at the National Museum venue). For the second, noisier improvisation, he overacted every vocal effect in a wild, cartoonish, crazed manner. And finally, for the pantomime finale, we decided to repeat the gestures at length and without stopping, increasingly frozen in our spots, until the audience would decide to applaud – something which almost backfired since, for a good minute and a half, it didn't seem like they were ever going to.

Performative perspectives

Beyond any listing of theatrical indications in musical composition, a more important aspect to review is understanding their function and their performative character and quality. Performers have to assume accordingly these traits, in order to send the message and create the moment openly and clearly towards the audience.

Theatricality, as a concept, can prove a nebulous term for any musical element of particular expressivity or for any speech- or motion-related element that's added to the musical playing. Furthermore, one can connotate as "performance" any expressive, poignant or especially eccentric, "show-off" interpretation. Music playing is inherently a performance of a certain dynamic and artistic value. Any musical concert will showcase one or several artists reaching out towards listeners, with the sense of doubling themselves and "acting out". Yet one can also sense that the most distinguished and inspiring musical performance of them all (whether the historically-noted excellence of Liszt, the shamanic expressive wizardry of Scriabin, the wondrous joy and liberation of Patricia Kopatchinskaja or Gilles Apap, the mad zaniness of Keith Jarrett or the quirky antics of a Frank Zappa show) give the vibe of a brilliant, transformative "act" of music-making.

Performing extra-musical elements, relating to either speech or motion technique, poses several challenges. The first is that, much like any experimental musical language, it requires openness from the performers, i.e. for them to commit to an informed and adept performance. Reciting, speaking, creating odd vocal effects, moving whilst playing – all of these push players, by default, past a certain comfort zone.

When the variance in style and range is substantial – going as far as to create precise disco rhythms in *9 minutes and a half of stress* or to improvise wildly in the manner of free jazz in *Where to go When* – one should delve into the specifics of those genres and take as much inspiration and interpretive cues as possible, in order to create such non-classical tropes. But even when the indications are simpler and guide the musician to "act out" in an unfamiliar manner – like the "play as if you don't know how" example from *Mnemo* –, artists should make the effort to conceptualize it to the fullest, with a rich assortment of gestures.

To put it simply, performers should "dial in" to the notion of extending their technical palette or embracing skills from other arts. The composers themselves may not be well versed in the musical or theatrical genres they signal, but surely do not desire any lukewarm or half-baked rendition of their written ideas. If modern composers conferred to instrumentalists to understand better the capabilities of their instruments and

instrumental technique, musicians could consider collaborating themselves with actors or directors, in order to work on their facial expressions and gestures.

Another challenge is the inherent gap between the composer's indications and intents and how much it can reach the audience's attention and understanding. Most conceptual moments will lack explanatory notes from the composers. While there is no definitive requirement for such elements to be explained and perceived in full, presenting them beforehand to the audience, either in writing (in programme notes) or in a short speech, would arouse more interest and bridge a better link between intention and perception.

A final challenge posed to the interpreters is for them to perform such modern elements of expression – especially should they prove outlandish and theatrical – not only with proper knowledge and skill, but also with proper conviction. In other words, to give the intended, composed statement a clear, convincing, credible interpretation. In this regard, the musicians' mission should be no different than that of actors, narrators, singers, or dancers performing on stage: clear delivery (diction, in case of speech-related elements), overt, augmented motion (full range of facial expressions and hand gestures) and the sense of duality, of doubling oneself and transposing into the role, of creating a veritable persona.

Conclusion

This research was done with full knowledge that most correlations between modern musical techniques or extra-musical effects and true theatrical performances are tangential at best. At the very least, however, such distinct elements in musical performance push closer towards that sphere; they expand past simple music-making, and at the same time circle back to enrichen it; they challenge music players to reflect upon and train "methodically" to bring forth such a performative act.

In this closing note I would also like to thank and credit the Atem Ensemble, with which I collaborated throughout the past decade, for a highly inspirational venture into performing new works, exploring their stylistic and conceptual twist and turns and writing in depth about their particularities.

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