

# Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body



# Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body

Edited by

Marilyn Wyers and Osvaldo Glieca

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body,  
Edited by Marilyn Wyers and Osvaldo Glieca

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## FOREWORD

Recent years have seen a rise in collaborative and interdisciplinary artistic endeavours sometimes motivated rather more by fashion and economic considerations than real artistic necessity and exploration. All too often such work is undertaken superficially, rather than on a deeper level of research.

Although for many years, dating back to the 60s and 70s, the nature of performance has been challenged and redefined resulting in some very interesting innovations, it has taken some time for the real implications of such developments to take shape in terms of a theoretical practice-based research, often leaving external observers to undertake much of the theorising retrospectively. It is only after such a period of investigation and questioning that the true potential of this research in terms of the physicality of performance, the relationship between improvised or devised and notated elements, the interaction between the physical, the visual and the sonic, seen more specifically as a means of engendering new forms of material, can be realised. What does it mean to collaborate? What are the fundamental differences, similarities and appropriations fundamental to the process of bringing different artistic disciplines together, which might serve to forge new artistic grammars? Frequently, collaboration results in one art form being subservient to another, as a form of accompaniment, rather than a deeper exploration of language.

New forms of categorization have become necessary as musicians, artists, dancers and actors, sometimes working on the fringe, question and redefine their respective craft incorporating and exploiting previously neglected elements, perhaps traditionally seen as peripheral or irrelevant to the main practice. Frequently they absorb techniques informed more by the practice of another discipline, such as aspects of improvisation or devising for example, further challenging the received ideas informed more by habits of thought than the true spirit of research. What are the implications of working in the margins? How do we start to codify elements, which seem to lie beyond traditional forms of codification?

Music is fundamentally physical by nature, both in terms of its means of production (performance) and transmission (airwaves). There are forms of musical notation, which focus on the physical movements of the player rather than the specific sounds to be produced; just as there are aspects of

improvised music which rely on the physical nature of playing the instrument rather than anything that could be notated.

What are the limits of notation, or the role of the score in creative discourse? The very act of notation often defines boundaries, which delimit or restrict the nature of musical material and seek to define the process of creation. How do we access those aspects of material, which lie beyond this process? Could the movements of a dancer serve as a musical score?

The *Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body* conference convened by Marilyn Wyers documented in this book, provided a vital forum for such explorations which aims to address such issues confronting traditional boundaries of thought in relation to the nature of collaboration.

Professor Roger Redgate  
Goldsmiths, University of London

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The Editors



# INTRODUCTION

This book is a result of the Composer, Choreographer and Performer Collaboration Conference of Contemporary Music and Dance 2012, which was hosted by the Institute of Musical Research at the University of London. The theme of the conference: Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body had a global reach and attracted a high number of first-class international proposals addressing the meaning and significance of interdisciplinary relationships and collaborative processes involved in creating and performing new music and dance/movement. Thus the opportunity for scholarly dialogue that might embrace the relationships between sound, music and movement was timely, generating wide-ranging interest and lively debate of current research and practice. This publication brings together some of the diverse discussions, thoughts, reflections and considerations.

Although the book is not organised into sections, a clear thread runs through the volume and, despite the broad spectrum of topics, resonances between chapters are abundant including such varied themes as sound production as theatrical action; collaborative creation; generative computer/electronic music through body movement; music, movement and metaphor; applying body movement/dance to music performance practice; choreographic perspectives in contemporary opera; functions of gesture as compositional parameters and effects of visual contact on musicians' movements in performance. That these resonating themes have arisen attest to their general significance and contemporaneity and it is hoped that the book will serve as a research tool for further scholarly study and as a practical reference for those engaged in making music and/or dance.

In the first chapter, Jeremy Peyton Jones considers the debate regarding the significance of musical performance. He draws on Nicholas Cook's discussion about the role of the performer to explore the extremes of the debate which range from the subjugation of the performer to the text/score, to one in which the performer can take the opportunity to fully interpret the work. Peyton Jones argues that it is the relationship between process and product that defines performance and that interdisciplinary performance theory, particularly theatre studies, can offer a structure for examining the performative aspects of music. By focusing on the theatrical, visual and physical aspects of music performance Peyton Jones

broadens the debate by taking into account the ways adventurous music theatre is looking to experimental theatre and performance arts for inspiration claiming that some of the most innovative theatrical ideas of the last 75 years have enormous potential and use in devising and performing music.

Michael Picknett takes up the theme of devising music drawing on a simple definition developed by Heddon and Milling (2006). Presenting his research he outlines an interest in breaking down the classical distinctions between creation and performance as separate entities before proposing a more inclusive practice using performance as a creative tool. Homing in on creation as an aspect of performance he reveals his desire to explore why we perform rather than what we perform, taking into account inquiry about the role of the audience, as well as the performer, in his compositional practice.

Mark Wraith looks at Harrison Birtwistle's dance theatre piece *Frames, Pulse and Interruptions* which was later renamed *Pulse Field* (1977), a work made for Ballet Rambert in collaboration with choreographer Jaap Flier. Relating his involvement in the creation of the piece as one of the dancers, Wraith considers why the piece did not remain in the repertoire and was regarded, at the time, as an apparent failure. In pursuit of insight into these questions, he traces its performance history and Birtwistle's use of experimental instrumentation and intimate involvement with the theatrical environment. By providing an inside story, Wraith reveals a new understanding of this piece of music/dance theatre and allows a unique glimpse into the spontaneous musical and choreographic decision making collaborative process which, one may term as in-the-moment.

The process of creating music/dance pieces in-the-moment is also considered by Helen Minors. Focusing on the use of signed coded gestures by a Soundpainter (the creator), Minors explores the ways in which Soundpainting uses different concepts of space to foster music-dance interaction before suggesting that the practice merits experimentation, testing and reflection to reassess and raise new questions about the use of space within this creative method. Aspiring to illustrate how music-dance relationships are fostered via the spatial parameter within the Soundpainting language, she addresses three of these fundamental questions and unravels her response to the role of spatial conditions within the practice.

Experimenting with novel means of generating sound through the movement of the body, Joshua B. Mailman and Sofia Paraskeva explain how they utilise technology to develop their own interactive system to generate expressive computer music. By embracing the ability of sensors



to respond to mood shifts through motions of the body, Mailman and Paraskeva broaden the possibilities of interaction between dance/movement and sonic composition. The authors draw on an embodied interactive music generating system called *Fluxations* and describe how the system senses the musician's/dancer's movements from spatial positions and orientation of the whole body and its individual parts rather than by interpreting individual expressive gestures before going on to explain the complexities of the system more fully.

Aside from computer technology Magnus Andersson tackles the recurring theme of many debates regarding the connection of music and movement by considering the metaphoric perception that music is movement. Exploring the implications of this perception from an experiential perspective, based upon extensive practical experience, as a tango dancer and music educator, Andersson explains some of the exercises that he gives his students and discusses the benefits that musicians may reap from embracing a corporeal way of understanding music-making.

The experiential perspective of music as movement is echoed in my chapter, which uses Neil March's *Diversions* (2009) to investigate the use of body movement/dance in music performance practice. Considering connections between physically shaping phrase through movement/dance and shaping phrase in music performance I explore how music performers can accomplish a greater sense of control over musical intention and desired outcome in the use of expressive parameters, such as dynamics, tempo, emphasis and pitch. My central aim is to investigate how sound-related movement knowledge can influence a musical interpretation and to draw attention to debate regarding the role of dance/movement-based approaches in music performance practice, especially in regard to preparing and performing contemporary classical repertoire. Prior to outlining the experience of participating in sound-related dance/movement tasks I draw on March's explanatory comments regarding the background to *Diversions* and the compositional processes of the work to provide insight into the collaborative relationship that has emerged between himself as a composer and me as a performer. (Note: this presentation was given at the CMPCP Conference, University of Cambridge in July 2011 and has been included here because, due to lack of time, the planned presentation had to be considerably abbreviated).

Continuing on an interdisciplinary theme Osvaldo Glieca argues that music and dance/movement can be seen as two interdependent forms of art and as such can be tied to interdisciplinary experiences. He suggests that the arts are over-filled with concepts and theories and that this over-

abundance, which offers countless combinations, renders the isolation of one art form from another unthinkable nowadays. Before continuing to discuss the range of frameworks for collaborative activities that explore the connections between the arts, Glieca approaches the challenge facing music and dance practitioners and university arts departments to renovate the interdependent relationship between disciplines and encourage inter-professional dialogue.

Further discussion of the notion of the interdependency of music and dance/movement follows in the chapter by Tatiana Oltean, who analyses the choreographic perspectives of Melinda Jakab in the staging of two recently composed Romanian operas based loosely on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Adducing data from the two scores, one written by Șerban Marcu and the other by Tudor Feraru, Oltean proposes that certain compositional devices such as instrumentation, imitation and mirrored superimposition act as clues to Jakab's use of symbols and messages in the music and how they link to her choreographic vision and the composers' intentions.

Considering the compositional process, Kelvin Thomson investigates his occupation as a composer. He explores his musical intentions and creative practice through an edited collage of his *Bee* works before revealing frameworks for recycling his music which recognise and celebrate the multiplicity of opportunities and outcomes of collaboration. One opportunity identified by Thomson warranting further examination concerns the development of ideas regarding the relationship between music, gesture, movement and performance, which is the very topic addressed in Nguyễn Thanh Thủy and Stefan Österjō's chapter.

Noting that Rolf Riehm's *Toccata Orpheus* (1990) utilises the bodily action of the performer as an intentional compositional parameter, Thanh Thủy and Österjō describe and reflect on the experience of including the bodily movement of musicians as part of a musical installation. They use the theories of Rolf Inge Godøy (2006) as well as more recent investigations to demonstrate that performed music has the potential to represent forms of movement and they go on to suggest that this potential can be fostered to develop artistic strategies that allow music creating and choreography to coalesce giving rise to new modes of expression. Through exploring this expanded notion they make a contribution to the development of terminology and theory in the study of musical gesture and, in particular, to the investigation of musical gesture and expression of gender.

Robert Fulford and Jane Ginsborg take a more pragmatic approach to the use of musicians' movements in performance. Whereas Thanh Thủy

and Östersjö cast musicians' movements as an expressive musical parameter, Fulford and Ginsborg observe that movement can also be used as a visual cue enabling performer interaction during performance. Exploring the use of visual feedback during performance, Fulford and Ginsborg examine the movement and looking behaviour of four violinists. As a result of considering the outcome of this observational study they extend current knowledge about how movements are visually perceived and used by musicians and the value of visually-perceived information in music performance.

As this overview suggests, the twelve chapters unite speculative enquiry with empirical case studies, many of which refer to live music/dance performances, video and audio recordings and in some cases to the authors own compositions and performances. The focus on music and dance/movement practice from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries inspire discussion on a narrow range of relevant research and practice. However, this restriction is balanced by a wide range of pertinent topics.

By raising issues of concern to composers, choreographers and performers alike, this work has the potential to speak to anyone involved in making music and/or dance, as well as to musicologists and music/dance enthusiasts. Indeed, it is hoped that for all readers *Sound, Music and the Moving-Thinking Body* will shed new light on the diverse topics researchers and practitioners across the sector are exploring and the issues concerning collaborative aspects of creating and performing new work.

Marilyn Wyers  
London, July 2013

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## CHAPTER ONE

# SOUND PRODUCTION AS THEATRICAL ACTION

JEREMY PEYTON JONES

In his 2001 essay *Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance*<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Cook included two particularly thought-provoking quotes from opposite ends of a debate about the significance of musical performance. The first is attributed to Schoenberg and goes like this:

The performer, for all his intolerable arrogance, is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print.<sup>2</sup>

The second is by the drama and performance theorist Baz Kershaw and goes like this:

It is a fundamental tenet of performance theory . . . that no item in the environment of performance can be discounted as irrelevant to its impact.<sup>3</sup>

Here we range from an approach in which the performer is encouraged to entirely subjugate him or herself and not impinge on the primacy of the “text” (i.e. a text to be reproduced rather than an opportunity for interpretation by the performer or performers), to one in which it would seem utterly imperative to take into consideration every aspect of a performance: aural, visual, social and contextual. Cook’s essay examines how the “text-based orientation of traditional musicology and theory

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Cook, “Between Process and Product.” *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 2001. Available for reading at the following address: [http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook\\_frames.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook_frames.html)

<sup>2</sup> Dika Newlin, *Schoenberg Remembered: Diaries and Recollections*, (1938-76) New York: Pendragon Press, (1980): 164.

<sup>3</sup> Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*, London: Routledge, (1992): 22.

hampers thinking about music as a performance art” and how it is that the relationship between process and product defines “performance” in the western “art” tradition. What is interesting is that he turns to interdisciplinary performance theory particularly citing theatre studies, poetry reading, and ethnomusicology in order to examine the performance aspects of music, and moves towards a consideration of scores as scripts rather than texts. In the conclusion to his essay Cook refers to the problematic aspects of Adorno’s claim that music:

Presents social problems through its own material and according to its own formal laws... the problem disappears if instead of seeing musical works as texts within which social structures are encoded we see them as scripts in response to which social relationships are enacted.<sup>4</sup>

I was fortunate to see Nicholas Cook as keynote speaker at the *Music and Gesture Conference* at the University of East Anglia in 2003 where he gave a very interesting presentation on musical performance and gesture focusing on Jimi Hendrix.<sup>5</sup> His summary encompassed something of a truism, but anyone involved in the combination of music and dance and/or performance, either as audience or practitioner, would no doubt agree with him when he said that “there is more to music than what you hear” and “what we see is as much a part of the music as what we hear”. These last two thoughts provide a very useful stepping off point when considering the untapped potential of the theatrical or visual or physical aspects of musical performance.

Cook’s summary struck a chord for me in relation to a short feature I wrote for Newnotes ten years ago on the future of music theatre and opera in which I lamented the fact that much mainstream contemporary opera, despite a few notable exceptions such as Glass and Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach* (which is not really an opera), had largely ignored recent developments in theatre and performance and maintained the conventions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century scenic illusion; characters singing naturalistic dialogue, all lines delivered by operatic voices, lavish sets, separation of theatrical action and musical accompaniment which is usually hidden.

At the same time, many more adventurous approaches to music theatre, largely outside the mainstream, looked to experimental theatre and performance arts for their inspiration, as noted by Nick Till in his round table position statement at the same UEA conference:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> International Conference of Music and Gesture, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, 28-31 August 2003.

It is characteristic of the overcoming of boundaries in twentieth-century art that most forms of experimental music theatre seem more akin to experimental theatre and happening and performance art than traditional opera...Instead of treating music as an acoustic backdrop to theatrical action as in traditional opera, music theatre tends to develop kinesic out of music-making itself, or conversely, present sound production as theatrical action. In many ways, then, music theatre tries to rediscover the wholeness of musical experience with its sense of ritual and spectacle which has been suppressed in Western classical music (the closed eyes of the intently-listening music lover pointing to a rigid separation between what is essential to the music itself and what is an external distraction: its making).<sup>6</sup>

At the time, it still remained something of a mystery to me why more opera and music theatre directors did not go down this route. Some of the most innovative theatrical ideas of the last 75 years (from Artaud's theatre of cruelty to Grotowski's physical theatre), which have been developed so impressively by theatre practitioners all over the world, have enormous potential for the use of music. This is because of the simple fact that they have toppled the primary position of text and narrative in favour of an equal expression through physical action, image, sound, light as well as text. So directors and companies such as Peter Brook, Pina Bausch and Jan Fabre in Europe, The Wooster Group, Mabou Mines, or Robert Wilson in United States, or the People Show, Pip Simmons, Impact Theatre, Lumiere and Son or Forced Entertainment in the UK, (not to mention several dance/theatre companies such as DV8) have created a theatrical style in which music can and does have a powerful role to play. All of them use image, sound and music as major elements of their theatre on an equal footing with, or sometimes even replacing text and narrative. Some of their collaborations with composers have been enormously impressive forays into a new style of music theatre. Music is by its nature entirely abstract, and several musicians involved with this work have wholeheartedly taken on the implications of this more abstract theatrical language.

To put it another way: the multimedia combination of the aural and the visual, as found in music theatre, would seem to provide the ideal opportunity to combine music, which is quintessentially abstract in its means of communication, with image, text and physical gesture in a way which breaks the bounds of realism, naturalistic representation or narrative

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<sup>6</sup> Nick Till: Position statement for *Beyond Opera: Gesture in Music Theatre*, round table. International Conference of Music and Gesture, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, 28-31 August 2003.

structure. Given that many theatre makers and live artists have moved well beyond the primary reliance on text and narrative towards the creation of total theatre, one feels it should also be possible to introduce the sensual and visceral possibilities of real performance into the sensual and visceral sound world of, say, dramatic opera or music theatre or for that matter any combination of music and action. Linked to this is the issue of realism and naturalism in performance: Our modern sensibilities, thoroughly saturated as they are in film and television, are now so steeped in this audio-visual culture that we will, naturally, have a different response to staged theatrical performance than to the ubiquity of this hyper-real narrative world. Film and TV can effortlessly recreate the real and even when the result is utterly fantastic or implausible, we are carried along by it.

This new cultural situation we find ourselves in is reflected in contemporary developments in theatre, performance, live art and dance/theatre. Many of those making theatre since the advent of film and more recently television, having decided that it is fairly futile to compete in terms of realism and conventional narrative, have found this to be a profoundly liberating experience. They have found great mileage in the eliciting of an emotional depth and multi-faceted and multi-layered meaning through non-naturalistic devices, whether it is dream-like image, surrealism, sound-scape, visual and physical performance or similar devices. In this place, unlike in most naturalistic genres where text or dialogue is dominant, all elements, from sound to image to text to lighting to gesture and physical expression can take on an equal significance.

Part of this effect is achieved by giving up acting and instead simply performing. As is illustrated by the contemporary reaction to melodrama, the greater the intensity of the acting, the more distanced contemporary audiences become unless we can suspend disbelief and are swept up and enveloped by the spectacle. Screen actors, assisted by the camera; whether it is cinema verité or the latest Hollywood blockbuster, can easily do this because they are in a quasi-real setting. Although they are very often super or hyper-real we are seduced into thinking them real, just like versions of you and me in real situations and we readily suspend our disbelief.

Opera is at a distinct disadvantage in this respect, in that the characters are singing instead of speaking and usually singing at full throttle with full vibrato, so any sense of them being characters with an outward semblance of normal human behaviour and interaction becomes more difficult. Traditionally opera has overcome this disadvantage by sweeping us up in the emotional intensity of the music and the sheer spectacle of the staging. Many 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century operas are full of overwhelming musical moments, which, if you let yourself go with the flow, can steadily



accumulate. Western art music has now developed its musical language and range of expression to such an extent that its effect is perhaps more subtle and less direct than the music of, for example, Mozart, Puccini, or Verdi, or popular forms such as musical theatre. Since the loosening of the bonds of tonality in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century we are, quite naturally, exploring a musical language which is aesthetically more diverse, richer and often more ambiguous. This can work particularly well when the setting in which it is presented is equally indirect, where performers characters and narrative structures are not naturalistic. It is however utterly at odds with naturalism. The exploration of a far wider range of musical expression combined with the non-narrative combination of image and performance would seem to offer the possibility of regaining such intensity of sensual experience.

In much contemporary performance and experimental theatre the performers tend to “do” actions rather than “act” them in any sense of naturalistic representation. Alternatively they might purposefully undermine any attempt to invite the audience to suspend disbelief by announcing the fact that they are acting, or commenting on their own performance while performing. Performers in the Sheffield-based performance group Forced Entertainment often carry cardboard signs telling us who they are or simply telling us that they are acting, so the audience witnesses a real event, rather than having to interpret a pretend event. This concept of doing rather than acting is a crucial aspect of any consideration of the potential of the performance aspects of music. Tim Etchells, writer and director of Forced Entertainment, comments:

The thing that attracts us to performance is this idea of something really happening in the space now—so we get attracted to things like exhaustion and to real physical things that are happening to the performers rather than pretended things—so performers that are very tired, performers that are covered in water, performers that have physical things to do that are difficult in some way.<sup>7</sup>

The key phrase here in relation to musical performance is: “Something really happening in the space now”. This is an aspect of musical performance which is often ignored or downplayed. The somewhat formulaic conventions of the concert hall can serve to neutralise the performers and put them in the background and we can lose sight of the fact that they are exerting themselves physically in order to make the

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of these practices and Tim Etchells approaches see: *How We Work*, <http://www.forcedentertainment.com/page/3010/How-we-work>

music. In a similar way, Jan Fabre's or Pina Bausch's performers exhaust themselves through relentlessly repeated actions and the audience cannot help but react to the reality of such intense physical exertion. The performance of music might not entail the same levels of physical exertion or lead to such extreme exhaustion in performance but there is something about the relentlessness, not to mention stamina, required for the performance of much music, which, in a similar way, affects both the performer(s) and the audience. This is particularly true of much repetitive music in which during live performance, the tension mounts because the listener cannot quite believe the performers are carrying out this relentless repetition without faltering.

Examples of contemporary music practice which focus on these aspects, although not common, can readily be found as soon as you move away from the mainstream. It is no coincidence that the three examples I use here to illustrate the more integrated use of performance, all involve improvisation either in performance or in the devising process and that at least two of these examples were clearly prepared and rehearsed over a long devising period with the composer working closely with the performers. The Dutch free-jazz drummer Han Bennink, has always been a theatrical performer and his performance at the Bimhuis in Amsterdam on April 21, 2007 was no exception. Here he performed a duo with tap dancer Marije Nie and the direct connection made between drummer and dancer served to emphasise the physicality of his performance. Starting seated at his drum kit, Bennink's initial solo becomes more and more loosely connected with the kit, sometimes incorporating other parts of his body to supplement the drumsticks or alter the drum sound and finally breaking free from the kit altogether and moving across the stage (drumming all the while) to the dancer's platform. He ends up performing an intricate duet, firstly sitting on the floor in front of the dancer, then lying prostrate on the floor, feet towards her. Drumming already has a tendency towards the theatrical, largely due to its palpable physicality, but Bennink is clearly a drummer who has realised the potential of exploring the physical and theatrical aspects of his musical performance to the full.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear from virtually any performance by Meredith Monk with her company of singers/dancers that she has spent some time with them devising the performance, and *Turtle Dreams* (1981) is no exception. The four singers (two male, two female including Monk herself) perform simple steps and gestures in a tightly formal construction, while singing

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<sup>8</sup> Han Bennink's 65th birthday at the Bim. Solo and duo with tap dancer Marije Nie. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crrKIZfwyL4&feature=related>

interlocking vocal phrases over the repeating electric organ ostinato in triple meter. Monk explains that the devising process involved working closely with the performers, trying out ideas, rejecting this and using that, until the structure was fixed and formalised. Even then there is a looseness in performance allowing for spontaneous elements to emerge:

Once I have the structure I like to stay with it, but there's always room for the performers to play... even with a form that's very set it's so amazing how one performance is so different from another. A performance is such a live art: it's always changing.<sup>9</sup>

The choreography is simple but effective, perfectly matching the musical style and subtly implying a narrative focusing on the individual, but through repetition and duplication, simultaneously making the message more universal:

I had this idea of just going forward and back...and then we started working with that and we realised that there were a million variations. You know, you said are these people four types from America and I would say it is more like four kind of types from contemporary life.<sup>10</sup>

Heiner Goebbels' *Black on White* is a landmark of contemporary music theatre made by composer and theatre director Goebbels in collaboration with the Ensemble Modern in 1996. Well known for its ground breaking relationship between instrumental performance and dramatic gesture and acclaimed for its fresh and innovative presentation of musical performance as theatre, much of the critical response has concentrated on the actions, gestures and speech undertaken by the musicians at the same time as playing a demanding musical score. It brings together all the points I have raised, being essentially a piece of music in which the theatrical, gestural, visual, textual and social interaction aspects of the performance have been considered on an equal footing with the sound. The players sometimes form groups, sitting or standing, but otherwise are constantly on the move across the stage, playing and/or singing while walking, crouching, or while marching up and down stage changing instruments as they go.

Close analysis of the performance reveals an interesting relationship not only between dramatic gesture, stage picture and music but also between incidental sound (noise), performed music and the overall

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<sup>9</sup> Meredith Monk interviewed in the documentary film *Four American Composers* directed by Peter Greenaway, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

rhythmic periodicity of the work. Every surface and object of the stage is amplified for sound and every gesture, touch, movement and interaction with the set and various objects on it becomes part of the sound score seamlessly integrating with the performed music much as in a carefully constructed soundtrack for a film. Thus the sounds of a scratchy pen on paper, tennis balls thrown at a metal sheet, dice thrown onto a makeshift chequerboard, brass mutes scraped and rolled along the floor become vital elements of the sound-scape, carefully controlled as sound objects. Goebbels has commented:

When I compose I feel sometimes more like a theatre director (respecting and directing the biographical elements of the musicians or the different musical styles as a language), and when I direct my pieces on stage I feel more like a composer (being interested in the sounds of language and the rhythm of the performance and the musical use of the space).<sup>11</sup>

Although the piece is presented as a finished structure with space for improvised material, it is clear from watching it that it was devised through improvisation, a point confirmed by Goebbels when describing his working methods. He undertook extended periods of exploratory work with the performers, trying out ideas and drawing out the particular possibilities offered by those performers, followed by a period of gestation and development of material, followed by an extended rehearsal period. Such logistics of production have significant financial implications and are rarely available even to large-scale opera houses, so it is perhaps not surprising that such integration of music and physical theatre is rare.<sup>12</sup>

Ten years ago I identified three things which I felt were instrumental in preventing this rich area of performance from being exploited more fully. The first concerned education: that few musicians are trained in aspects of performance and dramaturgy and vice versa, few theatre and performance students gain an understanding of how music works. The second concerned the conventions of rehearsal, noting the sharp contrast between the small amounts of time allocated to the rehearsal of a new piece of music, and the comparatively generous amounts of time allocated for the devising process in contemporary theatre. Professional musicians are victims here of their own proficiency, in that their technical skills in sight-reading and performance allow new works to be rehearsed in a relatively

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<sup>11</sup> Heiner Goebbels quoted in programme note for the London premiere of *Black on White*. Barbican Centre, London, UK, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Heiner Goebbels personal website:

<http://www.heinergoebbels.com/en/archive/works/complete/view/37>

small amount of time. However, there is no doubt that the more generous amounts of time available in the devising process allow far greater possibilities of experimentation, play and the development of ideas. The third was the lamentable fact that, despite notable exceptions such as those described above, the physical performance aspects of music are often either ignored or neglected.

Returning to my initial point and asking the question how we might move away from considering the performer merely an interpreter or reproducer of a text, I can briefly summarise my conclusions as follows:

- You carefully consider all aspects of a performance even if they have no obvious specific meaning.
- You focus on the doing of it, as much as the interpretation of it.
- You work in a way which blurs the boundaries between composing, devising and performing.

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