
REVIEWS

Article received on September 12th 2016
Article accepted on November 28th 2016
UDC: 78:005.745(469)"2016"(049.32)

NATAŠA CRNJANSKI*

University of Novi Sad
Academy of Arts,
Music Department
Section for Composition and
Theoretical Subjects

Musical Gesture as Creative Interface

March 17–19, 2016
Universidade Católica Portuguesa
Porto, Portugal

The body is inseparable from musical practice. The embodiment is an important element in the process of learning, performing and listening to music. New developments in the cognitive science of music have stressed the role of corporeal articulations, gestures and embodied interactions with music. There are many possible ways in which music theory can explore gestures, but the fundamental idea in every perspective remains the same: gestures provide

* Author contact information:
natasacrnjanski@live.com

great opportunities for the development and deepening of playing, singing, composing, in other words creating music in general.

“In recent interdisciplinary research, the notion of musical gesture has emerged as a crucial interface for a post-Cartesian understanding of all forms of human music making involved in the creation of the multifarious relations that arise between music and sound, mind and body, movement and meaning.” It was exactly with these words that the *Porto International Conference on Musical Gesture as Creative Interface* was announced, thus opening a meta-analytical debate among scholars from various disciplines, all embracing musical gesture as their main focus of research. The Conference was held in March, from 17th to 19th in Porto, at the Venue of the Catholic University of Portugal (Universidade Católica Portuguesa) which is located in an amazing place where the Rio Douro directly flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Mindful of raising awareness of the relation between physical domain and human cognitive processes, intersections of the body and sound itself, the Organizer of the Porto International Conference – the Research Center for Science and Technology of the Arts (CITAR) – paid special attention to the elaboration of musical gesture. Three days long, with eighty

(80) participants from all over the world (22 countries), the Conference was a festival of creativity in the exploration of the musical gesture itself.

The eventful and comprehensive program of the Conference consisted of sixteen (16) different parallel sessions, six (6) lectures, two (2) workshops, daily round tables and music/dance recitals, as well as evening concerts. The conference welcomed approaches that might clarify and further explore the various functions of musical gestures, whether metaphorical as concepts underlying movement perception and the organization of musical experience, of control as elements of interactive and computational systems, or communicative as vehicles for meaning in social interactions. In particular, it included contributions that might be able to bring into contact the various tensions and “divides” of the field, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies; pursuing humanistic/artistic, natural, social, or technological inquiries; or exploring relations between phenomenological, perceivable, interactive, and measurable accounts of musical gesture. The proposed topic was of interest to a variety of fields, including musicology, music theory, psychology, cognitive sciences, human-computer interaction, and social anthropology among others. All the presentations heard could be classified in three large sections: 1) Embodied music theory 2) Gesture and performance practice, and 3) High technology and research in music. Sixteen different sessions were titled according to the approach and the object of research showing a sub-classification of the previous three. Controlling and navigating musical gestures; Musical gesture beyond notation; In the cross-cultural

perspective; Gesture recognition in performance and composition; Agency, identity, methodologies and the mapping of gesture; Gesture in Dance, Opera and Theatre; The Ecology of Musical Gesture; Gesture Electronics and Metapraxis in Music were some of the topics elaborated at the Conference. Accordingly, participants were music theorists, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, performers (instrumentalists, dancers, singers...), and anthropologists, engineers, philosophers, mathematicians as well.

A special value of the Conference (and this is not the practice for music theory and musicology conferences!) were two different Workshops during the first day given by two renowned researchers. These workshops were held by Professor Lawrence Zbikowski, University of Chicago, US, the author of the famous book *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (Oxford, 2002), which was awarded the 2004 Wallace Berry prize by the Society for Music Theory, and Professor of Media Computing at Goldsmith Atau Tanaka, University of London, who bridges the fields of media art, experimental music, and research. In Zbikowski’s workshop, the participants were able to listen to an introduction to cognitive processes related to an analogy of how gestures can be correlated with music and how music can be correlated with gestures. That was effectively illustrated by the music put to Warner Bros. cartoons.¹ Tanaka showcased some of the technologies, such as combinations of the Myo sensor band, Bitalino, Wekinator and mobile

¹ All participants of the Zbikowski’s workshop were sent workshop’s material to prepare for it.

devices, and how to use them for gestural interaction with music. Very lively discussion and the engagement of all participants in the workshops ensued in an effort to resolve some intriguing questions of music theory and mapping the physical domain to music, as well when the participants actually tried some of the high-tech products attached to the body which react to bodily movement by producing sound. This later culminated at the evening lecture/performance in the modern architecturally designed building Casa de Música where Tanaka was performing and talking about biomedical technologies and how biosignals provide a virtual instrument or turn the performer, the human body, into a musical instrument itself. Justifying his label “The Man-The Instrument” his performance was fruitfully joined by Digitópia Collective, a group comprising artists and developers associated with Casa da Música, dedicated to the creation of music in a technological format. The interesting building where the event took place is actually a major concert hall space in Porto, designed by the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and the acoustician Renz Van Luxemburg, and Arup-AFA. Intended as part of Porto’s designation as the European Culture Capital in 2001, it was only finished in 2005 and today is a symbol of this city. Featuring a 1,300-seat auditorium suffused with daylight, it is the only concert hall in the world with two walls made entirely of glass.²

² See further: <http://www.casadamusica.com/>; <http://www.ezportugal.com/porto-portugal/attractions-porto-portugal/casa-musica-porto>; <https://www.musicworks.ca/featured-article/profile/casa-da-m%C3%BAsica-builds-home-experimental-music>; <http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2005/apr/10/1>;

The Organizer of this Conference can be proud of the keynote speakers whose presentation and following discussion brought this meta-analytical debate to a whole new level. Beside Zbikowski and Tanaka, who also gave keynote speeches, there were also Professor Marc Leman, Ghent University, IPEM Musicology, BE, Professor Guerino Mazzola, mathematician and jazz pianist, University of Minnesota, US and University of Zurich, SUI, Miguel Ribeiro-Pereira, Professor of Music Theory at ESMAE – Instituto Politécnico do Porto and researcher at CITAR-Universidade Católica Portuguesa, and Professor Marcelo M. Wanderley at CIRMMT, McGill University, CA, a researcher on acoustics, signal processing, and computer science applied to music. Marc Leman proposed a model of musical intentionality drawing on the concept of enactment and alignment, illustrating it with empirical and computational studies including video animations. One of the most interesting and certainly intriguing was the mathematical theory of musical gestures by Guerino Mazzola which he has been developing since 2002. This conceptual framework is based upon the category of local and global gestures, enables also the construction of gestures of gestures, so-called hypergestures and their application to embodied counterpoint and harmony. The highlight of the third day was the keynote speech by Pereira, elaborating the words “movement” and “moment” of the same latin etymology *movimentum* and focusing on the phenomenon of dissonance. *How to create a digital instrument?* An impressive conclusion to the keynote speeches was Wanderley’s illustration of ongoing research on Digital Music Instruments (DMIs) at the Input De-

vices and Music Interaction Laboratory, MacGill University. He not only discussed the use of theories from Human-Computer Interaction, the design of DMIs, the analysis of performers' gestures in collaboration with anthropologists and kinesiologists, but also presented the various uses of DMIs for musical performance.

Apart from the aforesaid, and bearing in mind the fact that the participants/audience had to choose between one of two parallel sessions, the conclusion is that all the presentations were equally provocative and qualitative for the audience. However, one could single out the group of researchers from the Sorbonne Universités, FR and McGill University, CA presented their several-year project which involved ethnomusicologists, musicologists, acousticians, biomechanists, performers and pedagogues, thus offering a unique comparative perspective on the topic of musical gesture. The research was done in Europe, Central Asia, Central and West Africa. The most interesting point was to see the comparative study of xylophonists from Cameroon on the one side, and from Canada and France on the other. Among other things worth pinpointing, was the eye-hand coordination practice which showed how African performers see notes and play those notes at the same time, no matter how fast the tempo is, while Western tradition players try to read beforehand and are thus in some kind of "schizophrenic" situation – seeing one thing and playing another. The device *Motion Composer* was thoroughly presented by Robert Wechsler, a past Fulbright Fellow, who studied with John Cage for ten years, Weimar, DE, one of the inventors of a device for persons with (and without) disabilities. By joining the idea

that *any gesture can be musical* with motion tracking technology, people with movement issues can also produce a sound/compose/play by blinking their eyes, shaking the head, rotating their hips, etc.³ One step further in involving people with different disabilities in creating music was presented by Trinity College Dublin, IE, researchers George Higgs and Dermot Furlong, who broadened the understanding of composition in general by regarding the musical experience as a "sense ensemble". Working in a deaf school for girls, they developed a more open approach, pursued when creating the instrument and a composition, equally addressing three senses: of hearing, sight and touch. To be more specific, their observations and compositions were drawn on Embodied Music Cognition research and the theory of motor mimesis (Godøy 2000; Cox 2011). Because there is a deep gestural connection between sound and sound production, it allows the deaf performers a way into the music that is not solely "visual" or "tactile", to the extent that the *gesture itself represents the sound*. Beside the apparent interest in scientific circles for using high technology in research of the topic, creating DMI and different products for performance, one quite large group of participants was directed to the elaboration of gesture and performance, exploring some tacit dimension of the signification process that constitutes the musical interpretation. It is not surprising then, that most of them are actually performers themselves, like Pavlos Antoniadis, pianist and researcher, STMS Ircam-CNRS UPMC, LabEX GREAM, Université de Strasbourg, FR; Diego Castro Magas, a

³ www.motioncomposer.org

Chilean guitarist and researcher, University of Huddersfield, UK; William Teixeira, cellist and researcher, Universidade de São Paulo, BR; Fabrice Marandola, xylophonist and researcher, Sorbonne Universités, FR, McGill University CA or Guisy Caruso, pianist and researcher, Ghent University, BE, among many. It is quite understandable that in an ordered society scientists have proper scientific conditions for their work, so it is not surprising that behind most of the participants were different kinds of institutes for music research or labs, grants and the support of foundations. The importance and investment in scientific research in the arts is what we aspire to in our country as well, even though it might be difficult to see “the light at the end of the tunnel” at this precise moment.

If someone counted how many times during three days the term “Musical Gesture” was uttered, surely it would be a very big number. Considering the multiple meanings of this word, this conference aimed and succeeded in examining the unfolding of its theorization from various standpoints. But after all, there was no proposed convention, no definition of the term which could cover all its possible meanings, as a metaphor for the expression, the instance of embodied cognition, and as a bodily and visual component of performance and composition. Its success, however, lay in answering the many questions posed, emphasizing the importance of music-mind-body research with the musical gesture being an instance of communication and human behavior, and the raising of some new questions that need to be answered in the future.

Article received on December 17th 2016
 Article accepted on November 28th 2016
 UDC: 78:005.745(492)"2016"(049.32)

RADOŠ MITROVIĆ*

University of Arts,
 Faculty of Music, Department of Musicology

***Gaudeamus Muziekweek* (7–11 September 2016)**

Since 1947, when the first review of Dutch contemporary music was held, the development of *Gaudeamus Muziekweek* has gone through a number of stages. The most significant stage occurred during the late 1950s, when the project was complemented with an international competition in contemporary music. Some of the first laureates included Louis Andriessen and Pauline Oliveros, and later also Vinko Globokar, while the 2010 laureate was the Serbian composer Marko Nikodijević. This is a major music competition, based in Utrecht, and offers young artists various opportunities to develop their careers. Each year, a three-member jury nominates several authors, who are given an opportunity to present three compositions each, one of which must be written specifically for the festival’s resident ensemble.

This year, the jury comprised Seung-Won Oh from Korea, Willem Jeths from the Netherlands, and Pierre Jodlowski from France. They selected five composers with various poetics, who were given an oppor-

* Author contact information:
 radosh.mitrovic@gmail.com