

Deconstructive Virtuosity

The presentation is part of a larger research project which explores the notion of virtuosity in contemporary music, and which draws on recent artistic studies on co-creative practice. This study focuses on exploring a specific model of how virtuosity informs the performer's embodied knowledge of own instrument and how it affects the social mechanics of composer-score-performer-instrument interaction.

The context of my artistic method was grounded in a composition that requires that the instrument is intentionally taken apart (in both its functionality and meaning). The collaborative practice was combined with a theoretical framework which reflects on virtuosity. This framework captures a hypothesis that the notion of virtuosity can be seen not merely as a set of extraordinary skills, but as an agency that is implied by the structure of every composition and that reveals itself in the act of performance. It is therefore an essential aspect of instrumental knowledge which is inherent to every performer.

The composer Francisco Corthey approached the accordion from a rather unconventional perspective which required me to reconsider my previous experience of playing the instrument. The reflections on my own practice, as well as the discussions with the composer provided data for my research. These data have yet to be analysed but preliminary findings show that both Francisco and I share the same musical ideas, although neither of us could fix them as 'the work'. I further observed the divergences both between the composer's ideas and the score-based notation, as well as between what I could identify as potentially characteristic 'virtuoso' passages in the score, the way I intended to perform them and how I actually performed them. These splits were more present in my performance than would likely have been the case in a more conventional composition. Thus, a deconstructive aspect within my agency as a performer has become obvious.

Here, not only the sonic result but also the internal workings of the performer's narrativity become elusive and precarious. In this situation, a new kind of virtuosity reveals itself: one that deconstructs the embodied instrumental knowledge of the performer.



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Sergej Tchirkov currently works as a PhD candidate in artistic research at the University of Bergen. From 2019 to 2021 he was lecturer at the Contemporary Music Department of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Assistant artistic director of the Studio for new music ensemble Moscow (2013 - 2021) he has also been active as an independent curator and has collaborated with ensembles, festivals and foundations in Norway, Russia and Switzerland. Tchirkov has been guest-

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As an accordion performer he has premiered more than 250 works and has collaborated with composers such as Thomas Kessler, Elena Rykova, Pierluigi Billone, Hanna Eimermacher, Ivan Fedele, Dieter Schnebel among others. Sergej Tchirkov performs as a guest musician with major European ensembles for contemporary music and has been engaged in many multidisciplinary artistic projects. www.tchirkov.eu