

# Deconstructive Virtuosity

9<sup>th</sup> EPARM Conference, 2022

Sergej Tchirkov (Sergei Chirkov)  
PhD Candidate, The Grieg Academy, KMD,  
University of Bergen

[www.tchirkov.eu](http://www.tchirkov.eu)

[Sergej.Tchirkov@uib.no](mailto:Sergej.Tchirkov@uib.no)



# Plan of the presentation

- Background and the main points of the whole project
- Artistic research design
- The context of the case study
- Methodology of co-creative practice
- Outcomes

# Virtuosity is for many not for the few..?

- The project aims to explore the notion of virtuosity in experimental music practice.
- Artistic and scientific methods.
- Unpack the historical concept of virtuosity and create a framework.
- Reflection through co-creative practice on my own practice.
- Focus on the agent of instrumentality as part of the social mechanics of interaction between composer, performer and the score.
- My key objective is to create a vocabulary of practice that apprehends new viewpoints on historically problematic meaning of virtuosity.



# Hypothesis and research questions

- Virtuosity – a dialectical agency which is rooted in the structure of composition and reveals itself in the act of its performance.
- How does a performer's embodied knowledge of his or her instrument affect the identity of the work at the moment of the performance?
- To what extent is it legitimate to argue that it is virtuosity that contributes to this knowledge and its transfer?



# Why/What?

*“As established musicians, we tend to form conventional or habitual ways of approaching and performing music. A main challenge is to keep the artistic processes and performances always alive and innovative. Unsettling and unlearning implies being able to rethink earlier views, challenge old notions, explore new possibilities and thus renew oneself.” (Un-)settling sites and styles - in Search of New Expressive Means (Røttingen, 2021).*

*Paul de Man on deconstruction: “It's possible, within text, to frame a question or undo assertions made in the text, by means of elements which are in the text, which frequently would be precisely structures that play off the rhetorical against grammatical elements.” (De Man, 1983).*



# Who?

Sergej Tchirkov live © Laimonas Puisys



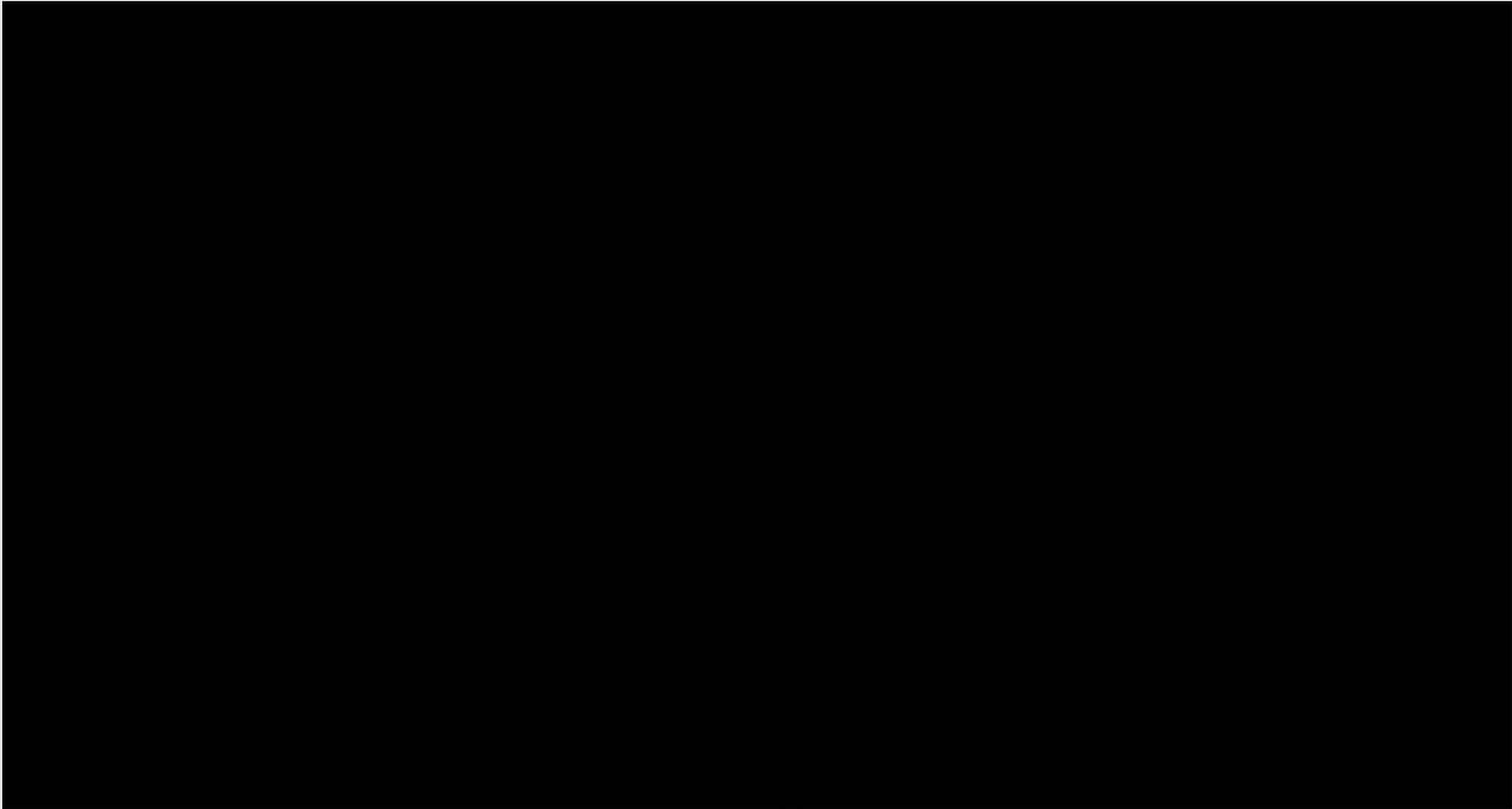
© Francisco Corthey



Sergej Tchirkov practicing



# Francisco Corthey *Estamos bien, pero tiemblo* (2021)



# Artistic context. Composer's perspective

- Presentation of accordion as a distinct agent in the creative process and not merely as a neutral tool (Magnussen, 2019; Östersjö, 2008).
- Poem by Juan L. Ortiz "*Si, mi amiga*" (1958).
- Focus on the notion of *trembling*.
- *Keywords*: fragility, shivering, trembling, vibrations, transformations.



60

lion

voice & gestures

i a m

*p poco sf (p)* *mp p subito*

15<sup>ma</sup>

2

short and energetic exhale

ca. 3"

a pesar de esas  
llamas dulces  
contra junio

15<sup>ma</sup>

*poco sf pp* *poco sf pp* *poco sf pp*

8<sup>va</sup>

3

parlato

1" miro

5:4

2"

parlato

3" es cierto

*mp p < mf p p* *mf p* *mf p*

# Artistic context. Performer's perspective

- First approach to the score. All the elements that create the sonic image of instability and trembling are already written out – i only have to perform the text as accurately as possible (practice leaps, control bellow, fingering, and gestures).
- Francisco's reading the poem is yet another source of information for me.
- Second approach to the score. I accept the precarity of technical realisation of these elements.



# Steps of collaboration

1. Presentation of instrument, focusing not on what you can do with it, but on how it can be thought of.
2. Trying to find a shared approach to the musical idea. The instrument as a source of unstable, precarious sonic events.
3. Discussion about the score – what does it contain? My first attempts to look beyond the score.
4. Trying to identify the characteristic elements in the score – *Spielfiguren* (Dahlhaus, 1980).
4. The image of composer reading the poem as a source of information for me.
5. I began to rely on the performance environment. I let the energy of the moment guide me and structure my instrumental experience within the performance. Unlearning in order to learn.



# Outcomes

- Following the composer's approach to the fragility of the sonic image, I intentionally put apart my instrument and my technique in their functional meaning.
- I deliberately let my instrumental experience and the tension of the performance situation inform my performance in real time.
- Our awareness of the uniqueness and eventualisation of the performance. We have accepted the divergences between our strategies and the real-time situation. We also accepted the role of my relationship with the instrument in the production of the meaning.



# References

- Dahlhaus, C. (1980) Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts. Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft Band 6. Laaber: Laaber-Verlag.
- De Man, P. (1983) Blindness and Insight, 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- D'Errico, L. (2018) Powers of Divergence: An Experimental Approach to Music Performance. Orpheus Institute Series, Leuven University Press.
- Lüneburg, B.(2013) A holistic view of the creative potential of performance practice in contemporary music. Diss. Brunel University London.
- Magnussen, T. (2019) Sonic writing: technologies of material, symbolic, and signal inscriptions. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Røttingen, E., Finseraas, B. (2021) (Un-) settling Sites and Styles. Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, 1 (2021)  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/987790/1003214>
- Ugelvik, E. et al. (2018) Performing Precarity  
<https://nmh.no/en/research/projects/performing-precarity>
- Östersjö, S. (2008) SHUT UP 'N' PLAY! Negotiating the Musical Work. Lund University



# Thank you!

Sergej Tchirkov

[www.tchirkov.eu](http://www.tchirkov.eu)

[Sergej.Tchirkov@uib.no](mailto:Sergej.Tchirkov@uib.no)



UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN