

Exploring Musical Togetherness – An embodied approach to relational interpretation in instrumental duo encounters

The artistic research presented in this session explores the complex interpersonal dynamics in duo performance by adopting an embodied and enactive framework. The overall aim can be described as an enhanced understanding of musical togetherness that goes beyond synchronization and alignment of technical and musical parameters, but encompasses the experience of relationship, of musical being-with, or the emergence of a “We” (Angelika Krebs 2015, Deniz Peters 2020). If we understand duo performance as enactment of such (musical) relationship, then a consideration of the bodily dimension of this relationality is essential.

Challenging my own established duo practice, I initially engaged in experimental duo encounters with various unfamiliar partners, focusing on contemporary repertoire by George Crumb and Maurizio Pisati. In these case studies, we conducted artistic and interpersonal experiments that explicitly addressed bodily aspects of musical interplay. Starting from the question of how this can foreground, augment, and refine the relational component of our interpretation, we experimented with spatial dispositions, choreographed movement and physical touch while playing together. These experiments, along with audio-visual documentation and detailed analysis based on stimulated recall, led to considerable changes in perception of intersubjective musical phenomena, and subsequently in the process of developing a relational interpretation.

To further substantiate this approach, a joint study was initiated between violinist Johanna Ruppert, contemporary dancer and researcher Elisabeth Waterhouse, and myself, in which we opened up to duo repertoire from different periods. Given Waterhouse’s artistic background and her extensive research on duo dance performance (Waterhouse 2022), this interdisciplinary collaboration not only generated valuable conceptual exchange on mutually relevant issues such as relational movement and entertainment. Waterhouse’s differentiated analysis of our bodily actions rather enabled us to artistically experiment with nuanced qualities of movement, and to relate them to values of musical togetherness. Negotiating our (musical) relationship through somatic attention and empathic kinesis, while artistically working with and modulating the musical qualities and intensities that emerged, substantially enhanced our musical expressivity, forming a multimodal unit of touch, movement, sound, and musical timing and phrasing.

Links: <https://youtu.be/-g8sbdyW3W4>
<https://youtu.be/FxE6vmESBzE>
<https://youtu.be/ZM0ilwfC3bA>

Parallel Session

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Jessica Kaiser is an active guitarist, chamber musician and artistic researcher. Concerts, research residencies and lectures led her to festivals and symposia all over Europe, and across South America and Asia. As a soloist, she performed with orchestras at Herkulesaal der Residenz in Munich, Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, and Baku Philharmonic Hall. She was awarded numerous prizes at international competitions and received grants from various institutions, including the DAAD or Neue Liszt Stiftung. In 2019, Jessica joined the art factory baseCollective for a one-month artistic research residency at Adishakti Laboratory in Tamil Nadu, India. Since 2020, she acts as co-organiser of the SONify! Festival of Music and Artistic Research. Jessica currently holds a position as research assistant at the University of the Arts, Graz, where she engages in research activities in the context of ensemble empathy, while working on her dissertation on interplay in duo settings.