Putting Sound to Work

Piano Preparation, a tool for composing within hybrid tuning systems

What happens when multiple musical practices collide, how do we attend to this collision and how can we leverage it as a resource offering new perspectives on transcultural creation? The performance aims to present my current artistic research on hybrid tuning systems and Piano Preparation, a technique altering pitch and timbre of the piano through materials inserted within its strings. I start from my practice as a pianist and composer and move towards a introductory note on EMBAT, the ongoing collaboration between the Indonesian Gamelan ensemble Sandikala and my trio, Anaphora. The discussion focuses on *Questions Bouclées* (for re-tuned Gendèrs , Sulings, Rebab, Drums, Prepared Piano, Trumpet and Double Bass) that I wrote for the project. I would like to share the motions in thought that this encounter awakened in my work and how Piano Preparation became both an epistemic interface and a material practice of instrumental intervention with which to navigate and think through this encounter. If music is a form of thought (Nono, 2018), then instruments constitute objects through which this thinking is made, they entangle and co-compose with our creative capacities (Patteson, 2015). They are an extension of the performer (Magnusson, 2009), materializing cognition as a process unfolding through material interfaces and in-between human and non-human bodies (Sauvagnargues, 2013). I wonder if Sound offers a different image of thought, one in which instruments become technologies for knowing otherwise.

The up-coming album for EMBAT was prepared throughout a residency in October 2024 at the Institut Francais of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. With two different families of instruments — Equal Temperament and Sandikala's own 14-note tuning system — the hybrid tuning line-up was both a challenge and an opportunity to consolidate new methods of composition improvisation, interplay and formal organization of the material. Because harmony and melody depend on a larger tuning system organizing the structural possibilities of relation between pitches, these notions cannot be used as stable parameters of form across two tunings. Rhythm and Timbre become the primary elements shaping musical form and interplay. Timbre, because it relates to the harmonic spectra of the note being sounded, is a physical characteristic of the instrument and for this reason is not bound to any tuning system in particular. Cyclicity is a preferred vehicle for organizing rhythmical and timbrical materials, which become directly generative of form through their iteration. Piano preparation turns the instrument into a rich timbrical palette and highlights its percussive character, becoming an ideal carrier of this logic of hybridity.

I put this to example through Anaphora's piece *Le Nomade,* and continue through with the piano solo performance, exploring other compositions and sketches exploring the notions discussed above.

Putting Sound to work gives us a chance to slow down the way we know by embodying it through our performing practices. Relational,(Star Rogers, 2022) artistic research offers an ecological understanding of how we unfold and mend into the worlds we co-create with. These entanglements call to our attention : sound teaches us a practice of motion, because thinking well is "moving well with others" (Nail, 2020, p.188)

Musical Link

Anaphora – Le Nomade / collaboration with Balinese Dancer Kadek Puspasari (IND) and Clément Maiheux (FR) ANAPHORA - LE NOMADE - YouTube

Bibliographical References

Hass, M. (2021). On the Practical Conditions of Research between Theory and Practice , the Science and the Arts. *How to Relate: Knowledge- Arts- Practices*. Transcript Verlag.

Magnusson, T. (2009) « Of Epistemic Tools : musical instruments as cognitive extensions" , *Organised Sound*, 14 (2), 168-176

Nail, T. (2020) *Lucretius II : An Ethics of Motion* , Edinburgh University Press

Nono L. (2018), *Nostalgia for the Future: Luigi Nono's selected writings and interviews*. University of California Press.

Patteson, T. (2015*) Instruments for New Music*, University of California Press.

Sauvagnargues, A. (2013) , [trans. Samantha Barker] *Deleuze and Art,* Bloomsbury.

Star Rogers, H. (2022). *Art in Science and Technology Studies and Positioning Aesthetic Knowledge: The Blaschka Models. Art, Science and the Politics of Knowledge* MIT Press, 1 75.

Amalia Deorsola
Independent Researcher (Brussels, Belgium)

filippodeorsolamusic@gmail.com
https://www.fdmusic.live/

AMALIA DEORSOLA Is an Italian pianist, composer and researcher based in Brussels. With a mixed background of Music (BA) and Philosophy (MA), their practice is hybridized and encompasses group and solo projects, article publications and composing for diverse setups including chamber ensemble, Javanese Gamelan instruments and smaller electroacoustic line-ups.

They are known for their long-standing piano trio project, Anaphora. Releasing a first album for Auand Records (IT) in 2022, the group's latest work¿[Bloom], mixes jazz with textural and percussive influences from Balinese Gamelan and released on January 2025 for Swedish label Loumi Records. A multi-awarded artist in solo (Best instrumentalist, Tremplin Jazz d'Avignon 2024) and with Anaphora (Burghausen Nachwuchs-Jazzpreis 2025, Jazz Migration 2025, Keep an Eye 2024, Goethe-Culture Moves Europe 2023, VGC 2023, Italy Music Export 2022), they are also co-leading EMBAT, an international collaborative project between the gamelan ensemble Sandikala and Anaphora.