

Symphonies Reframed

- Exploring and developing the artistic and educational potential of mid-sized chamber groups

Residing in the tradition of music transcription, this project recreates works of the classical and romantic era as chamber music. What artistic novelties and educational qualities emerge from orchestral music and sonatas, when it is arranged for, and performed by a chamber ensemble?

Sigstein Folgerø's transcriptions are scored for ensembles restricted to 7-9 musicians, with a particular setup, defined as triharmonic ensemble.¹ Chamber music of this format carries a structure and size approaching the complexity of orchestral sound, but still maintains individual parts, transparency and the possibility of non-conducted interplay.

Over the course of 4 years, our project has generated some interesting findings and holds a promise for a new and exciting path forward carrying a rich and historically relevant tradition. The main tenet of our project is to re-create/-frame/-score music for chamber ensemble. Out of this endeavor, emerge multiple aspects, worthy of research. In our presentation, we will shed light on the following perspectives:

1. Artistic eigenvalue²: We are conducting research on the artistic value of a work of music, when interpreted and performed as chamber music in comparison to the original version.
2. Roles: When comparing an orchestra project with a chamber music project, we are looking into the experienced difference from a musician's and listener's point of view. The musician's initiative and choice of sound differ depending on the ensemble format (solo/duo/chamber/orchestra). A musician's sense of ownership to a particular piece seems to differ depending on ensemble format. Sticking to the same choice of repertoire and stylistic framework enables a focus on particular questions and eliminates the influence of other variables.
3. Educational value: For students, orchestra projects might occur infrequently and be limited in resources and professionalism. This project offers students an opportunity to gain concrete ensemble experience in repertoire that is relevant for their future career. In our performances, we have chosen to mix students and teachers, thus facilitating group teaching and peer learning. This chamber format, which is far more "handy" compared to a full orchestra, enables new performing arenas - and new audiences.

Our presentation will include a live performance of excerpts and video recording of previous concerts.

In addition to our presentation, we would like to invite conference participants to join in an informal reading session of one of our arrangements. This might result in a lunch break concert or similar. Our suggestion would be Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20, 2nd movement - for piano, violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet and bassoon. (We cover the piano and clarinet parts.)

¹ Triharmonic ensemble consists of equally sized string and wind groups, in addition to piano. It requires individual parts. The maximum number possible is 9: 4 strings, 4 winds and piano and has come to use in works by Brahms and Schumann. Another option are 3 strings, 3 winds and piano which has served in music by Mozart.

² Term borrowed from mathematics/linear algebra. In this context taken to mean emergent artistic value generated by the transformation from large orchestra (or alternatively sonata format) to mid-sized chamber group. Reference to linear algebra chosen due to the maintenance of stylistic properties.

Symphonies Reframed connects to the EPARM-questions considering both perspectives on artistic research and teaching/learning perspectives. The project has so far included performances of music by Brahms, Schumann and Mozart, core composers in the European tradition of classical music, and the project covers a wide variety of formats (symphony, opera, solo concerto and sonata).³ Through Symphonies Reframed, we have “reduced” orchestral works to chamber ensemble, “expanded” a sonata for two instruments to eight, included the piano in the symphonic repertoire (and excluded it from the sonata) and adapted opera scores to make the instrumental ensemble constitute a suitable support for young singers.

Through this practice, we are establishing a new arena not just for artistic research, but also for teaching and learning. We work in ensembles including both students and teachers - a praxis that lays the foundation for both group teaching and peer learning. We aim at a flat, non-hierarchical ensemble structure, which we believe is supportive for fruitful learning processes. Through Symphonies Reframed the students get “inside experience” of repertoire from the classical and romantic tradition. They also get the opportunity to try out different musical roles. Through group interviews, we give the students the possibility to reflect verbally on both their own musical practice and their learning experiences. Data from the interviews will in turn constitute the empirical basis for dissemination and further research.

Sigstein Folgerø
Gjertrud Pedersen

The Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, Norway
sigstein.folgero@nmh.no
gjertrud.pedersen@nmh.no

Sigstein Folgerø is associate professor in accompaniment at the Norwegian Academy of Music and Barratt Due Institute of Music. His pianistic career spans soloist engagements, chamber music- and orchestra jobs. He performs frequently with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. From his particular interest in the transcription literature for solo piano, arose in 2014 the artistic research project “Symphonies Reframed”.

Gjertrud Pedersen is associate professor in music history at the Norwegian Academy of Music. As a

³ Since the project had its debut in 2014, we have produced and performed six major works within this framework: Brahms: Symphony No. 4 for nonet (piano, 4 string, 4 winds, no conductor), Schumann: Symphony No. 2 for nonet (piano, 4 string, 4 winds, no conductor), Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem for nonet + voices (piano, 4 string, 4 winds, with conductor, choir and soloists), Mozart: Der Schauspieldirektor and excerpts from Idomeneo, The Magic Flute, The Marriage of Figaro & Requiem for septet + voices (piano, 3 strings, 3 winds, with conductor, choir and soloists), Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 20 for septet (piano solo, 3 strings, 3 winds, no conductor) and Brahms: Clarinet Sonata in f minor Op. 120 for octet (clarinet solo, 3 winds, 4 strings, no conductor).

clarinet player, she combines academic work with musical performance, specializing in contemporary music. In Duo Parula she has commissioned and first performed works by several contemporary composers together with the soprano Astrid Kvalbein. Pedersen finished her doctoral thesis "Play and reflection" in 2009 on interpretation of contemporary music for voice and clarinet.