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***(Re-)processing Research: musical practice as both source and target domain  
for artistic research in music***

**Description of the content**

*An artistic research project currently in progress that is generating artistically relevant insights for the researcher, with thoughts as to how these might have a longer-term impact on his or her musical practice.*

The title of the artistic research project that I started in September 2014 (as a PhD student in the Arts) is '*Phonetic Relations between Vocal Music, Electronics and Linguistics in the second half of the twentieth century*'. Influenced by new, even revolutionary linguistic theories of renowned scholars, such as Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), several composers established an interaction between vocal/electronic compositions and the phonetic dimension of the linguistic apparatus. The research project focuses on compositions written by Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007), e.g. *Gesang der Junglinge* (1955-56), by Luciano Berio (1925-2003), e.g. *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958), by Luigi Nono (1924-1990), e.g. *Omaggio a György Kurtág* (1983), by Kaija Saariaho (1952), e.g. *Lonh* (1996), by Jonathan Harvey, i.e. *Speakings* (2008).

I am currently studying the following topics:

- 1) Interactions between the *phonetic characteristics of a text* and the *timbral and formal features of a composition*, including voice and electronics.  
Phonetics offer a series of discrete elements, organized within a structured system (i.e. the 'International Phonetic Alphabet' or the 'Distinctive Features Theory') that can be considered as a valuable resource for *compositional parameters*, suggesting for instance, a particular instrumentation system, a particular form of electronic processing and a particular hierarchy of sound relationships.
- 2) Exploration of the subtle transformations between *words as bearers of meaning* ('sense') and *words as sound material* ('sound').  
Music can be considered a *tool for text analysis*. A composer can autonomously decide (i) which sentences or words can be highlighted in the text as bearer of meaning and (ii) which sentences or words can be reduced to meaningless acoustic material.

A substantial part of this research will be carried out by using *music itself as a tool for text analysis* through the creation of two original compositions for voice, instruments and live electronics. By adopting techniques such as *text fragmentation*, I will focus on the following topics:

1) Exploration of the syllabic structure

According to Stetson<sup>1</sup>, every syllable consists of three components: the release, the culmination and the arrest of the pulse. This model can easily be compared to the envelope shaping of a sound (attack, decay, sustain, release). By using the above-mentioned parameters in a musical context, I intend to compose sound structures that are based on the envelope characteristics of a syllable.

2) Exploration of the phoneme's distinctive features

The phoneme is a complex entity, which can be decomposed into *bundles of distinctive features* that are classified according to a binary opposition<sup>2</sup>. I intend to explore – from a musical-compositional point of view – the *continuum* between opposite terms that constitute a series of distinctive features.

By musically exploring the intrinsic syllabic and phonemic structure of a text, it is my intention to create a *new set of compositional parameters*.

*Do I integrate findings of my artistic research in my own artistic practice – including teaching practice - , and if so, how?*

Since my compositional practice constitutes a substantial part of my research, the findings of my research influence to a large extent my artistic practice and vice versa. My research combines authoritative linguistic theories, concerning phonetics, of a.o. Stetson, Jones, Jakobson, Halle, with thorough musical practice and therefore consists of a balanced interplay between artistic and theoretical approaches. In the words of Borgdorff: “methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings, and products come into being”<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, in order to transfer my theoretical insights to the artistic practice, I intend to communicate my research results to composers via a *syllabus* that I will compose.

In addition, I strongly believe that the results of this research project will be useful for singers and instrumentalists who wish to study and perform the vocal and instrumental repertoire of the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, I intend to disseminate my research results through a series of five *lectures*, linked to the course ‘Musical Analysis’ at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (teacher: Wim Henderickx).

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<sup>1</sup> R. H., STETSON, *Motor Phonetics*, Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> R., JAKOBSON, C., FANT, M., HALLE, *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis: The Distinctive Features and Their Correlates*, Cambridge: Mit Press, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> H., BORGDORFF, *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012, p. 146.