

Stefan Östersjö
Malmö Academy of Music
Orpheus Instituut, Ghent

I. Abstract

Go To Hell: longitudinal developments through artistic research

This presentation outlines artistic development within my practice as a classical guitarist through a series of research projects, starting with my PhD (Östersjö 2008) and continuing in two senior research projects funded by the Swedish research council and in projects at the Orpheus Institute, Ghent.

In 2004 I started working with the composer Rolf Riehm on his guitar composition *Toccata Orpheus*, with the ambition of documenting the emerging performance practice of his music. In rehearsals with the composer I began to see how the gestural content in the piece contained much of the essence of the music. The findings from my work with Riehm created the artistic impetus to present the “toccata” in an interactive installation in 2008.

Throughout the projects outlined here I have been working from a three-fold methodological basis. First, I understand my artistic practice as the foundation for action research which aims at creating a change in the artistic domain in which I am active. Second, I study the artistic process and my interactions with other artists through video documentation and a qualitative research method often referred to as “stimulated recall”. Third, I devise analytical methods suitable for each project I am involved in, they may be quantitative or qualitative. In the case with Riehm, I analyzed the score using the concept of the gestural-sonorous object (Godøy, 2006).

In 2011 I started up an international research project on musical gesture, building on the findings in my thesis but taking these notions further, looking for ways of merging choreography and musical composition based on an understanding of musical perception as multi-modal: toward a gesture-based paradigm for musical composition. One of the results of this project was the multi-media installation “Go To Hell” which consists of new choreographies, video art, a light and sound installation and new music for trio, all drawn from the guitar composition by Rolf Riehm. The artistic methods used here were developed through artistic research on collaborative and cross-cultural artistic practice. My presentation wishes to pinpoint the direct interactions between artistic exploration and analytical research procedures that characterize these artistic research projects.

References

- Godøy, R. I. (2006). Gestural-Sonorous Objects: embodied extensions of Schaeffer's conceptual apparatus. *Organised sound*, 11(2), 149-157.
- Riehm, R. (1990). *Toccata Orpheus*. Munich: Ricordi.
- Östersjö, S. (2008). *SHUT UP 'N' PLAY! Negotiating the Musical Work*. Lund University, Malmö.

II. A response to the questions

The presentation wishes to respond to the questions raised in the call in the following way:

In the long sequence of artistic development outlined here, the main “argument” has always come from the artistic work. The first impulse was the gestural qualities in Riehm’s Toccata. But what I wish to stress here is rather the interaction between analytical research strategies and artistic production. It is not the one or the other.

My practice as a performer has changed and expanded greatly over the past ten years. This development is I believe due to my collaborative practice with musicians from other cultures and artists in other fields but the notion of a gesture-based compositional practice has also sparked many new ideas. But this development has always taken place in a research environment, enhanced by the research methods, here in particular the stimulated recall method adopted for the analysis of video documentation.