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Shifting identities : the musician as theatrical performer

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Citation

Hübner, F. (2013, November 13). *Shifting identities : the musician as theatrical performer*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/22342>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

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Title: Shifting identities : the musician as theatrical performer

Issue Date: 2013-11-13

CHAPTER ONE - THE MUSICIAN

In this chapter I delineate a conceptual basis for speaking about the subject of this research: the musician. Also related to the more specific focus of this study, the concept of the reductive approach, I will, in some sense, have to define the subject, the musician and her profession. As the process of "taking away" abilities of the musician suggests, one has to know which kinds of skills or qualities are actually belonging to a musician's profession in the first place. This discussion leads to the necessity of conceptualising the profession of the musician. Is there any accepted conceptualisation? After developing such a framework I will use it as a point of departure, going further to propose a structured "vocabulary" of the musician's profession in order to discuss what the possibilities and consequences of taking away the different elements actually are. This will serve as a backbone to develop a scale of extensions for my model of the musician's profession in Chapter Three.

Concerning the actual concept of identity, the first aspect is that any identity is marked not only by what it is, but especially by what it is not; identity to be defined as "the condition or fact that a thing is itself and not something else." (Cobussen 2008: 32) This first entrance lets the musician's profession be compared to that of other performing artists such as actors or dancers: A musician is someone who makes music, and does not act or dance. By highlighting specific differences between the profession of musicians and that of dancers and/or actors, it might become easier to achieve a clearer sense of the specific professional identity of the musician, as we "define ourselves by how we relate to others; who we are is how we relate." (Small 1998: 60) Identity develops through relating and interacting with "the outside", rather than being created only from "the inside", by itself so to speak. As philosopher and pianist Marcel Cobussen puts it: "To be is to be different. This difference marks any identity." (Cobussen 2008: 32)

However, in practice things are not always this unambiguous. Obviously not everybody who plays music is thereby automatically a professional musician. Also, musicians in the theatre often have to do other things than just making music on stage, as they might be walking or dancing, and not performing any music; but this does not necessarily imply that they have suddenly become dancers. The perception if someone is a musician or not can be analysed from various sides, from the one performing, from the audience, from a theoretical or aesthetic perspective, and so on. In the course of the text, I base my analysis on the performer's point of view, connected to observations of concrete performance situations related to what musicians are actually doing in these situations, with the aim of developing this into a theoretical framework that describes the profession of the musician as a network of different elements. There are two reasons for this starting point: First, the concrete practice of the musicians, the specific requirements and practical problems in this kind of theatrical work are seldom discussed in theory and research. Second, my own perspective as an artist comes from the concrete practice, from the experience of working with musicians, from observing how a specific approach of working with performers has an impact on them, and how this affects the rehearsal process as a whole. I am arguing that the combination of these two reasons forms a basis for developing a specific kind of knowledge about the musician that is characteristic for and only obtainable by the insights of a practitioner.

From the performer's point of view, what does it take for someone to consider oneself a musician? An actor who is singing a song or playing an instrument as part of the staging of a dramatic play, most likely does not consider herself a musician, but a music-making actor. And if a musician does not play an instrument in a specific scene in the same dramatic play, but has to stand at a specific spot on the stage drinking a glass of water, she would still consider herself a musician, but one who is performing an assignment that does not include making music. The performer's perception is depending on what this performer considers as the core of her profession, largely based on what she does on a daily basis, what she spends most of the time of her professional life with, and what she is most comfortable with. The audience's perception will often correspond to how the performer defines her profession, but can also differ from it, depending on what the performer does and how a situation is staged, or presented. The aforementioned singing actor could be experienced as a musician, and a musician who has to speak a considerable amount of text could be perceived as an actor. What the audience experiences does not only depend on the performer, but also on what they observe, and what the context and performance space is (theatre space, opera house, public space, gallery).

The aspect which I regard as essential for constituting a professional identity in the context of the discussion here, is what the performer actually *does*, how she *behaves*, and which kinds of performative acts she is *carrying out*. Performance theorist and theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte discusses the constitution of identity by recalling *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* by Judith Butler (1988). Fischer-Lichte's central argument is that identity is "not in the first place, that means ontologically or biologically, given, but [...] the result of specific cultural constitutional acts." (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 37, my translation)³⁸ Fischer-Lichte points out that these constitutional acts are not limited to speech acts, but include bodily actions and utterances. As such, identity is constructed through oral and bodily acts (*ibid.*)³⁹, it unfolds in action. Therefore, what somebody *actually does*, instead of what she *is*, is leading and essential for the course of the argument that takes its way through the text. It is in the doing that someone becomes a musician, a dancer, an actor. Here it is important to realise that, as Butler notes, an identity "is in no way a stable [...] locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is [...] an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*." (Butler 1988: 519) Identity is unstable, something that changes according to different acts, practices and contexts, yet is able to manifest itself by *repetition of acts*. Taking this as a starting point, in this chapter I aim to develop a flexible framework of how to describe the professional identity of the musician, which will be picked up again later, when the discussion enters the extension and reduction of this profession. In short, extension is marked by performative elements that the musician is asked to do which do not belong to her core profession, which are added to it, while reduction is understood as the denial of performative elements that the musician is accustomed to or even dependent on. In discussing these two different strategies of working with musicians in practice, I continue to rely on the argument that identity is closely related to performative acts. Taking this understanding of identity as point of departure with regard to the musician's profession, I consider how it might shift while

³⁸ "In dieser Arbeit soll der Nachweis geführt werden, dass Geschlechtsidentität (gender) – wie Identität überhaupt – nicht vorgängig, d.h. ontologisch oder biologisch gegeben ist, sondern das Ergebnis spezifischer kultureller Konstitutionsleistungen darstellt."

³⁹ It is worth noting that this notion of constitutional acts "performing" an identity ultimately leads to Fischer-Lichte's conclusion of basing her aesthetic of the performative "on the concept of performing" ("Es bietet sich daher an, eine Ästhetik des Performativen im Begriff der Aufführung zu fundieren.") (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 41), and therefore lies at the foundation of her theory.

working in the theatre, or in theatrical projects. However, this is not to assume that these distinctions are always clear-cut or to deny the many grey areas might occur in practice. I pointed out already that the boundaries between professions, as between the art forms themselves, are dissolving more and more.

The first question that I address in this chapter is: *What kinds of acts are constituting the professional identity of a musician?* In the context of this study, I mean specifically what a professional musician does. At first consideration, one might think the answer to be quite obvious, as almost everyone recognises a musician on stage, whether it is a club concert, a DJ performance, a symphony concert, a piano recital, a theatre piece or a dance performance. But when it comes to clearly defining the actions which constitute a professional musician, the available literature does not offer very much; lexically speaking, "the musician" is poorly defined, and the nature of her profession is unclear. It seems to be a tacit concept, "a concrete idea that one can use directly but that one can only describe indirectly." (Polanyi quoted in Féral 2002: 95)

Taking a look at music encyclopaedias for the entry "musician", or even "instrumentalist" or "singer", one may end up being disappointed. It is easy to find entries for "instrument", "music theatre", "performance" or even "singing". But it seems that the agents who are creating and/or performing the music are either considered not interesting enough, or too difficult to be defined or described, or theorists just have not paid attention to it yet. As Philip Auslander points out, this is in alignment with the work-centred emphasis of traditional musicology, "worshipful of the musical work and disdainful of performance". Only recently has traditional musicology "been undergoing a 'performative turn' ". (Auslander 2006: 100) The observation and analysis of performers as creators of (musical) meaning, but also their professions, creative strategies, problems, struggles, activities and so on demand extraordinary attention, not only in the field of music, but also in those of theatre and every other live art form. There have been sporadic attempts to describe certain aspects of the profession of the musician: Ethnomusicologist Alan P. Merriam writes about the musician's relationship to and his or her position in society as early as 1964. He would most likely agree that a specific definition of a musician and his profession would be possible and meaningful, as he states that

[in] nearly every case, however, musicians behave socially in certain well-defined ways, because they are musicians, and their behavior is shaped both by their own self-image and by the expectations and stereotypes of the musicianly role as seen by society at large. (Merriam 1964: 123)

However, Merriam remains rather vague as to what these stereotypes of the musicianly role could or should be. As will become clear later, social context is particularly important in shaping the musician's professional identity, because musicians always enact this identity in a social realm, which is given shape not only by the performance space and the audience, but also through conventions and traditions. However, Merriam does not go into this in greater depth in his text. Alongside such minor attempts to contextualise what "a musician" is, what many encyclopaedias offer, does not, in most cases, apply significantly to the contemporary culture of the twenty-first century, neither in a musical nor theatrical sense. *Das grosse Lexikon der Musik* defines the musician as "Wissender im Bereich Musica", at the historical distinction between *Musica theoretica* and *Musica practica*, discussing the difference between both and the different value assigned to

each profession (first the *Musica theoretica* was valued higher than the *Musica practica*, later this was inverted). (Honegger 1981: 392-393, 397-398) *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* discusses the whole development and employment culture of musicians in various ancient high cultures, all the way from musicians described as "Magier mit Musik und Tanz" (Finscher 1997: 1217) through the Middle Ages to the modern era, including the divisions of musicians into various groups - musicians at courts, cantors, organists, virtuosos, conductors, orchestral musicians, choral singers, musicians in the military - around 1500. (ibid.) Obviously, both contributions do not have significant relevance for contemporary music culture or the profession of the contemporary musician, as the field is too narrowly defined and restricted exclusively to the category of Western classical music.

At the outset it is essential to investigate which elements or aspects might actually be considered constituent of one's identity, in the case of this research: a musician's professional identity. What makes *this* musician a musician, and from which point of view? As composer, researcher and professor of "Digital Humanities" Andrew Hugill points out, "the attributes that constitute a musician are [traditionally] summed up by the word 'musicianship'. [...] there is clearly a need to summarise the things that constitute this unnameable 'musicianship' [...]. There are some musical skills that are irrelevant to it, some that are perhaps marginal, and some that are essential." (Hugill 2008: 121) In his discussion, Hugill mentions five specific skills: technological understanding, transliteracy (the ability to read across a range of media and notations), interactivity (described as the ability to handle human-computer and human-human interaction mediated by technology), reflective practice, and finally virtuosity. Hugill sees technological understanding and transliteracy as most essential. Virtuosity is regarded as less important, however redefined to be "able to both originate and develop successful musical materials and forms". (Hugill 2008: 128) However, the skills Hugill mentions are not entirely appropriate for the discussion at stake due to his focus on what he calls the "digital musician". I regard reflective practice as a fairly relevant skill for the discussion at hand, as the "ability to critically reflect is key to improving both creativity and musicality." (Hugill 2008: 127)

I frame the professional identity of the musician in terms of the specific constitutional acts of this profession: What musicians *do* is what constitutes their identity as musicians. In this also lies the fundamental distinction from other professions within the performing arts: ballet dancers or clowns have a different professional identity than musicians by acting differently in ways that are both perceivable for themselves and for an audience. However, the central difficulty of this idea is the general complexity of all these professional situations as such: Obviously different kinds of musicians are doing different things, such as a jazz saxophone player in a trio with drums and double bass compared to a violinist in the second violins of a symphony orchestra. But also "comparable" musicians - two players in a string quartet, or two drummers playing in local top 40 bands - can differ greatly in what they actually do and how they do it, not only in performance, but also in their practice, habitudes on- and off-stage, communication among each other and to others, and so on. A musical profession cannot be described as something fixed, predefined or precisely delineated, and there might exist many contradictory ways for a musician to enact a professional identity. What I would like to propose is that "the musician" is not a construct in the sense of a closed framework into which different kinds of musicians fit (or don't fit), but what musicians *actually do* gives shape to what a musician is.

It is this point which brings my argument close to the ideas of social theorist and musicologist Bruno Latour, one of the main exponents of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). He states that it is important not to confuse what to "explain with the explanation."⁴⁰ In the case of this study, it is necessary not to *start* with the definition of what a musician is, but to end with it. "[...] instead of taking a reasonable position and imposing some order beforehand, ANT claims to be able to find order much better *after* having let the actors deploy the full range of controversies in which they are immersed." (Latour 2005: 23) There is no such thing as a predefined profession: the musicians are the ones who constantly shape and reshape it. The profession called "musician" is continuously changing, developing, as well as expanding, such as into the realm of management or self-presentation, making websites, etc. Musicians are always acting out their profession in different contexts, revealing more or less specialised parts of what they are able to do (or what they have studied).⁴¹ Although there might be many cases in which the profession remains more or less stable through a professional life, it is much more likely that the profession and the professional identity is constantly re-shaped. Additionally, the musicians also *create* (or at least co-create) the context of their profession in the very moment of carrying out this profession. A rock concert is not an event defined in advance, but it is constituted by a number of actors, including the musicians who give shape to it, their appearance, their names and public image, and, as a matter of course, by the music they play.⁴²

Therefore it is also important to take the musician's opinion about her profession into account. Most musicians (in fact all that I know) have their own quite well-formulated ideas about their profession, how it developed in the way it did up to a certain point, what it does and does not consist of, and so on. Speaking with Latour, it would be distracting and misleading *not* to include the musicians' views on this. If "the actor's presence or opinion has made no difference in the analyst's account, they are not real *actors* and have literally not been 'taken into account'." (Latour 2005: 57, footnote 58) To convert a slogan from Actor-Network-Theory, one has to "follow the musicians themselves."⁴³ I will trace what musicians *actually do* in their professional life. I am obviously not conducting a sociological study; what enables me to reduce the amount of data that would inevitably be gathered when executing a serious ANT study about musicians, is the focus on how the professional identity of the musicians on stage shifts from being and acting as *musicians* to theatrical performers. Therefore I will narrow my discussion to include only performing artists or musicians who actually perform on stage. The physical expression of music in the very moment, as

⁴⁰ See Latour 2005: 8

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that Latour uses the term "performative" in his theory: "If a dancer stops dancing, the dance is finished. No inertia will carry the show forward. This is why I needed to introduce the distinction between ostensive and performative: the object of an ostensive definition remains there, whatever happens to the index of the onlooker. But the object of a performative definition vanishes when it is no longer performed - or if it stays, then it means that *other* actors have taken over the relay." (Latour 2005: 37-38) Similar to Butler and Fischer-Lichte, Latour understands an identity as *performed*. (Latour 2005: 34)

⁴² Obviously other factors determine the event of a rock concert as well, such as audience arrangement (seated or standing) and the size of the concert venue.

⁴³ "To follow the actors themselves', [...] is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish." (Latour 2005: 12)

all the different activities of musicking⁴⁴ add up to a single event, the performance. As I am investigating the characteristics of the *performing* musician, I am excluding activities such as teaching, self-management, or creating websites, although they do clearly belong to the activities of many professional musicians nowadays. In "following the musicians themselves" in their performing practice, this concrete practice is what counts and what I attempt to write about. The study includes musicians in the styles of pop, rock and jazz music, classical concert musicians, conductors, DJs and computer musicians. I am limiting my study to performing musicians, the ones who are actually present on stage.

In the first pages of this chapter I shifted the discussion from what a musician *is* to what a musician *does*. I continue with a number of aspects that I regard as essential for describing what a musician does while making music. I assign four conditions for activities to the musician, mainly thought from the perspective of a professional musician: First, the production of **sound** (including silence) is essential, which is, second, often produced by the musician playing an **instrument** (which includes the voice). The third aspect deals with the more or less direct relationship between the **gestures** of a musician and the sound she produces. Fourth, the existence and nature of a **musical persona** will be discussed, a concept to describe how the behaviour of musicians might change depending on (social) context. Although listening certainly belongs to the core activities of a musician as well, it will remain disregarded, as I focus on the four aspects as described according to their relevance for the theatrical-performative. These four conditions of musician's acting will bring me to a model of internal, external and contextual elements of the musician's profession at the end of the chapter. This model will serve as point of departure for the further discussion of the musician as theatrical performer.

The Art of Sound

The first careful attempt toward investigating what a professional musician actually does when making music is that she produces sound. Music in this first attempt is conceived of as the art form whose medium is sound, understood as the organised form of acoustic events. To put this into perspective, I start my investigation by offering a few standpoints in relation to this most general observation.

Andrew Hugill proposes to use "the word 'musician' [...] to cover all those working creatively with sound." Hugill characterises three types of musicians: First, musicians in traditional contexts such as classical music; they play an instrument, and they are located in a context where the "criteria for recognizing virtuosity are clearly established". (Hugill 2008: 2) Pitch is the starting point for the musical training of this type of musician. The second type of musicians, according to Hugill, has rhythm or beat as starting point. As third type, Hugill takes into account musicians with the starting point of *timbre*. They are dealing with sound rather than notes, and are harder to pin down. Sound, as employed by this type of musician is often generated by electronic means.

⁴⁴ Christopher Small defines musicking or "to music" as "*to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.*" (Small 1998: 9)

Regardless how different these three starting points are, the common ground is that all three types of musicians share sound material as their very basis. Composer and multimedia artist Todd Winkler approaches the problem of defining the musician in a slightly different way, as he discusses musicians in the different settings in which they work, rehearse, and perform, such as the symphony orchestra, chamber music and jazz or improvisation bands. This somewhat more narrowed approach to categorising different kinds of musicians has its origin in Winkler's understanding of these different contexts as communicational frameworks, accentuating the social dimension of musical performance. He analyses and categorises the different kinds of musicians according to the way they communicate within a given context. In the symphony orchestra, according to Winkler, all communication is centred around the conductor, "a personality acting as a conduit for musical expression [with] all the large, global decisions regarding interpretation in the hands of the conductor, who relies on the players' skills and judgment for further interpretation." (Winkler 2001: 23) In turn, the conductor reacts to the sounding feedback from the orchestra, which once again informs his conducting actions. In chamber music, Winkler sees the interaction between musicians as much more complex, "since several musicians reciprocally influence each others' performance. [...] Intonation, phrasing, and tempo are constantly in flux, with control often passed around to the musician with the most prominent musical material." (ibid.: 25) The third model to which Winkler refers is the one of jazz bands or improvisation ensembles. Here a structure and shared conceptual framework is used to make a broad range of interaction between musicians possible, which influences both the way written music is interpreted (such as the melody or "head" in a jazz tune) and the improvised material (solos, accompaniment, etc.). A considerable number of shared assumptions makes sure that this rather open setting works, and provides a "rule-set" for playing the music, based on a long history of collective experience.

Next to the social and communicational dimension of Winkler's categorisation, and his concern with describing the musical material into categories such as notated and improvised music, audible criteria such as aspects of intonation, phrasing and tempo, are most important. In doing so Winkler both supports and extends Hugill's argument that being a musician means first and foremost engaging in creative work with sound. Summarising the discussion until this point I would like to propose that the main focus of the musician's task, also in comparison to other performing artists, lies in the production of tones, sounds, or music in the most general sense.

The instrument

The physical instrument forms an extremely important part in describing musicians' actions. I agree with Andrew Hugill who states that the instrument "traditionally defines musicians. A person is called a guitarist, or a pianist, or a sitar-player, before they are called a musician." (Hugill 2008: 128) The instrument is of considerable importance when it comes to describing what musicians do, both for an audience and for the musician herself. It is essential for many musicians to "master their instrument" in one or another way: Particularly in the first years of studying and practicing, the relation between musicians and their instruments is characterised by resistance, which musicians aim to reduce in order to make the instrument "a part of themselves", so to speak. This happens by applying technique, in order to "encourage the most efficient meeting with the instrument's resistances." (Evens 2005: 160)

For most musicians, their instruments are their property, well-chosen, and often musicians spend a considerable amount of time and money in order to choose and purchase their instrument(s) of choice, often refined during a period of years or even decades.⁴⁵ Some instruments are not usually property of the musicians, such as grand pianos provided by the concert venue, or several instruments of symphony orchestras (double basses, especially the five string models, percussion instruments, harp, and so on).⁴⁶ Musicians typically have a quite close, if not intimate relationship to their instruments. Speaking in ANT terms, the instrument is a *non-human* actor. Bruno Latour argues that, while it is essential to follow human actors, everybody and everything, including objects, must be taken into account:

No science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call *non-humans*. (Latour 2005: 72)

Musical instruments as non-human actors are by definition literally made to be heard or to sound themselves, to communicate their physical sonic capacities, and thus to be accounted for. They form a considerable contribution to the identity of a musician, although they can certainly be called non-humans. Latour provides an interesting parallel to the relationship between a musician and her instrument, namely that of a puppeteer and his puppets:

But it appears that puppeteers [...] possess pretty different ideas about *what* it is that makes their puppets *do* things. Although marionettes offer, it seems, the most extreme case of direct causality - just follow the strings - puppeteers will rarely behave as having total control over their puppets. They will say queer things like 'their marionettes suggest them to do things they will have never thought possible by themselves. [...] So who is pulling the strings? Well the puppets do in addition to their puppeteers.' (Latour 2005: 59-60)

Just as a puppet, an instrument might be considered to follow and obey the actions and commands of the musician. A pianist presses a key on a piano to provoke a complex chain of mechanical movements, which in the end produces a sound. A drummer hits the skin of his drum with a drum stick, which causes the skin to vibrate, the drum to resonate and to sound. The goal of all the training of the musician is to allow the instrument to become a transparent medium. But, as mentioned, it will also bring some resistance into play, which is traditionally to be minimised by means of practice. Despite the often negative association with this resistance, it can also be understood much more positively, as an "inviting and inspiring quality [...] that results in a specific tension while performing." (Craenen 2011: 132) Understood like this, the aforementioned idea of minimising resistance is incomplete, often only applicable in the first years of one's practice of learning to play the instrument. For experienced musicians technique is not a means to overcome the instrument's resistance, but to "feel and work in the resistance offered by the instrument [...], to learn in [one's] body the dynamics of its resistance." (Evens 2005: 160) The relationship between musician and instrument is not unidirectional, but marked by cooperation and reciprocal dynamics.

⁴⁵ This goes especially for musicians with somewhat larger amount of equipment devices: keyboards, synthesisers, guitars, different kinds of plectrums, amplifiers, effects, microphones, all kinds of percussion mallets or other sound producing objects. Electric guitar and bass players tend to own a range of different instruments for different styles and purposes, such as a jazz guitar next to a Fender Stratocaster and a custom-made acoustic guitar.

⁴⁶ Of course musicians in general do own such an instrument, but these larger instruments are in most cases provided by the orchestra for financial and organisational reasons.

This makes the instrument very much an actor in Latour's sense, as "*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor" (Latour 2005: 71). An instrument clearly makes a difference in the course of the musician playing it, as it is not only a passive agent that simply follows what the musician initiates, but rather influences what the musician does, in a mutual relationship. The musician reacts to the sound the instrument makes, as well as to the mechanic or physical reactions the instrument provides, which are in turn provoked by the musician's initial physical act of pressing a key, plucking a string, and so on. These physical acts, the musician's gestures, are the subject of the next few paragraphs.

Gestures

Besides seeing the musical performance as Christopher Small seems to do, exclusively "as an encounter between human beings that takes place through the medium of sound organized in specific ways" (Small 1998: 10), gesture is an integral part of making music as well. Gesture is considered here in a broad sense, as a physical act in general. To produce any kind of sound, a physical action is required. Even in the most solitary and "anti-performative" laptop performance, the musician has to execute an action in order to produce a sound. This does not mean that one specific action always produces one specific sound, every relationship between gesture and the resulting sound on a computer can be designed by the composer, software instrument builder, and performer.

Many musicians tend to think about movement in the sense of how it supports the sound in one way or another. In general, most bodily movement is seen not as an autonomous, self-fulfilling element, but as supportive for either making a specific sound possible, or directed toward achieving a specific reception of the music by the audience. Think about a notated crescendo on a sustained piano chord, which cannot actually be realised sonically, but can be suggested by the pianist by means of specific movements of his body.

Of course, this is not the same for different kinds of musicians. Some tend to optimise their movement, make it as small and efficient as possible; others enlarge the movement in order to enhance the visual and sometimes theatrical aspects of making music. Pete Townsend, guitarist of the rock band *The Who*, is well-known for making large circles with his arms in the process of playing several chords on his guitar. These large, over-sized movements are obviously not necessary for playing the instrument, nor are they very efficient or even helpful for a precise timing of the chords. They serve to enforce the visual reception of the music, situated in a rock setting.

Additionally, several developments in contemporary composed music during the twentieth century emphasised bodily movement while producing sounds: One example is the instrumental playing as theatrical action in the Instrumental Theatre of Mauricio Kagel. In several cases Kagel even asks for bodily movements independent from sound, or movements that are not even meant to produce sound. Another example is the "musique concrète instrumentale" of Helmut Lachenmann in which the scores often ask for specific sounds that need considerable physical effort and unusual playing techniques in order to produce them. In the *Letter Pieces* (2007, ongoing series) by British composer Matthew Shlomowitz, physical actions, text and sounds are combined by means of letters, to which the performers have to invent specific acts in sound and

movement.⁴⁷ These different approaches result in an intermedial art form where movement and sound can act as individual counterparts, at times supporting each other, at others contradicting.

The cause-and-effect chain of making music

I summarise the discussion of gestures in relation to the concept of the *cause-and-effect* chain of making music. The basic idea is that a musician performs a specific movement, which causes a specific sounding result. This does not necessarily imply an exclusive one-to-one relation between cause and effect. In the case of playing traditional instruments the chain is obvious and relatively easy to follow and understand. A violin player starts moving the bow with its hairs on the string, this string starts to vibrate, and sound is released through the resulting compression and expansion of air. The sounding result reflects directly the nature of the bowing movement, depending on bow pressure, the spot on the string where the bow is placed, the speed of the bowing movements, and so on. When a drummer hits a snare drum, the sound is the most direct result of the material of the object used to hit it, the speed of movement, the place where the drum is hit, the weight of the stick. It is important, however, to realise the difference in relation to movement and sound from instrument to instrument. The snare drum sound is a sounding result at the end of the hit movement, whereas the string of the violin only sounds *during* the bowing, hardly after.⁴⁸

Not all kinds of "musicking" fit into a direct causal relationship in this cause-and-effect-chain. The circumstances are generally different in the case of electric and electronic instruments. Music critic and researcher Björn Gottstein remarks that "[t]he laptop musician, who only lets his finger glide across the touch pad, who leaves the genesis of sound to mathematic algorithms, seems to have withdrawn from the idea of a physical-physiological music." (Gottstein 2006: 17, my translation)⁴⁹ However, what Gottstein does not take into account is that in most cases the laptop musician does not *leave* the synthesis completely to algorithms, as he is the one who designed these. In this way he designs his own instrument, including the means of playing and controlling it: he determines a physical action which results in a sonic result. What makes the analysis of this relationship difficult is that both physical action and sonic result are completely self-designed, without the restrictions and usual resistances of traditional (mechanical) instruments. On the side of gesture design, the musician/programmer/composer/instrument builder can choose between pressing a button on the computer keyboard, using the touchpad or touch-sensitive hardware controllers, turning knobs or pushing faders on physical controllers, or tilting an iPad, up to generating large bodily movements in space (on a concert or theatre stage, in a gallery space, or almost anywhere else) which are registered by sensors - video cameras or devices such as the Microsoft Kinect®. So the artist chooses which kinds of gestures controls which kinds of sounds in

⁴⁷ For more information about the *Letter Pieces*, see <http://letter-pieces.blogspot.nl/2008/06/letter-pieces-are.html>, last retrieved July 19, 2013.

⁴⁸ An open string might continue vibrating shortly after the bow leaves the string, but this is negligible here. First, this vibration is hardly perceptible to an audience at a distance greater than 4-5 meters. Second, the visual image of the musician lifting the bow up or away from the string suggests and emphasises the impression that the actual sound has ended.

⁴⁹ "Der Laptopmusiker, der seinen Finger nur noch über das Touchpad gleiten lässt, der die Klanggenese mathematischen Algorithmen überlässt, scheint sich von der Vorstellung einer physisch-physiologischen Musik verabschiedet zu haben."

which way. The difference with traditional musical instruments is that the relation between both can be designed as the instrument builder desires and changed not only by altering the physical design, but also through programming and mapping. The laptop musician described by Gottstein is just one - quite extreme - case. Many computer performers nowadays do pay a significant amount of attention to the design of their instruments, and to the relation between gestures and their sounding results.⁵⁰ In general, also in laptop performance, the link(s) between movement and sound need to be designed, though to a large extent based on the needs, skills, and technical opportunities available to the instrument builder. But, recognisable, logical or not, there is still a link, and the link is not accidental, but chosen.



Image 1.1: laptop performer

Summing up, the kind of cause-and-effect-chain that I describe here can be understood as a process that adapts to different kinds of musicians to which it is applied. In the case of a cellist, the chain looks different than with a saxophone player, which differs, in turn, from a DJ performing scratching effects with vinyl LPs. In the case of laptop or electronic musicians, the link between movement and sound can take on a different nature, due to aspects such as starting playback-tracks or loops, or because of the ever-renewed design of the relationship between controllers and software. In the development of the definition of the musician's profession, I can conclude that the musician is still an "artist of sound". This includes bodily movement, traditionally inseparably connected to the production of sound. In computer music performances this connectedness can

⁵⁰ Concerning recent research, I refer to the doctoral research of Juan Parra Cancino, who investigates the relation between composer, performer and instrument builder, embodied in one person, in the context of contemporary computer music performance.

become much more loose, as the relationship between movements and sounds becomes an object of design in itself. The production of bodily movement and its resulting sound(s) become separate entities, and the relation between them, not predetermined, has to be defined and given shape by the musician. It is this combination between a consciously produced movement and its concentrated deployment for the purpose of both sound production and reception, that creates a difference between the physical, bodily movements of musical performers and those of other art forms such as dance or acting. In contrast to musicians, the dancers' movement is itself in the centre of carrying out their profession. Although dancers obviously do produce sounds while dancing (such as feet squeaking, breathing, throat and non-language voice sounds), sometimes very intensely, their main medium is bodily movement, whereas in the case of musicians movement is practically always linked to sound - even if there is only an implied reference to sonority (Nattiez 1990: 43), such as in John Cage's "silent" piece 4'33" or Mauricio Kagel's *Con Voce*. For musicians movement does hardly exist in isolation, or in a self-sufficient way without a sounding reference, but is rather closely related to it, and in most cases a movement is meant to result in some kind of sound or a specific way of perceiving sound.

The social realm: Musical persona as part of the musician's professional identity

Sound and movement, despite their central function in making music, are still insufficient to describe the musician's profession and the various performance situations of a musician. Philip Auslander proposes to think "of musicians as social beings - not just in the sense that musical performances are interactions among musicians [...], but also in the larger sense, that to be a musician is to perform an identity in a social realm." (Auslander 2006: 101) The point of departure in his text "Musical Personae"⁵¹ is particularly interesting for the present discussion, as he chooses a performer-centric analysis of musical performance, taking "the presentation of the performer, not the music, to be the primary performance." (ibid.: 103)

With "musical persona" Auslander describes the performing musician's identity as "a performed presence that is neither an overtly fictional character nor simply equivalent to the performer's "real" identity." (Auslander 2006: 102, footnote 5) Unlike many actors, a musician does not embody a character on stage while performing, but still enacts a persona, which is different from the "not-music-making" person offstage or in private life. On top of this, it is important to mention the role of the audience as co-creator of the musical persona: "In no case, however, is the musician in a position to construct a persona autonomously - personae are always negotiated between musicians and their audiences within the constraints of genre framing." (Auslander 2006: 114) The musician's persona is created by interaction with an audience, and is a social construct, created in the process of interaction. This resonates with Erika Fischer-Lichte's "feedback loop"

⁵¹ Auslander, Philip (2006). "Musical Personae." *The Drama Review* 50/1: 100-119.

Auslander bases his discussion of the musician's identity, among others, on Nicholas Cook's "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance" (2001) and, more important, on Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and *Frame Analysis* (1974). Whereas Goffman suggests that people perform differently in different routines, Auslander uses this argument to suggest that "musicians [do not] perform the same identity when playing music as in their other life routines." (Auslander 2006: 104) Although I choose to analyse the *professional* identity of musicians rather than including all other life routines here, Goffman's and Auslander's ideas certainly are of importance for my argument that musicians have to shift their identity when they change from playing music to performing theatrical.

between audience and performers in a theatrical situation, where the roles of both performers and audience are constantly re-negotiated before, during, and after a performance. The persona can change over time, always in negotiation with the audience, and musicians may enact multiple personae in multiple musical situations - in a rock band, an ensemble for contemporary music, as conductor in a musical, or as a jazz instrumentalist. These multiple personae involve presenting oneself differently, and in different genre frames. But, no matter how many different personae a musician embodies, they are most likely different from the "real" person in private or daily life who embodies them.

When thinking about theatre, there is another interesting parallel that can be drawn between Auslander's musical persona and Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory on performativity. Auslander gives an example of the actor Jack Nicholson: "We do not just see the character Nicholson portrays - we see 'Nicholson' portraying a character. The 'Nicholson' personage is not simply equivalent to the real person; it is the version of self Jack Nicholson performs in the discursive domain of movie stardom." (Auslander 2006: 102) Likewise, when an audience visited a performance of Verdi's *La traviata* with Maria Callas in the leading part, they very possibly went to the opera not only to see the life and death of the character of courtesan Violetta Valéry, but to see the famous opera singer portraying this character. During the opera, the gaze of the audience possibly switched constantly between seeing Violetta and Callas, a phenomenon Fischer-Lichte calls "perzeptive Multistabilität" ("perceptual multistability") However, the audience of course saw Maria Callas, though not the "real person", but the persona of the singer portraying a character - while at the same time enacting herself as opera singer and actress.

The previous paragraphs aim to show that the social context, the relationship between different (musical) roles on stage, the behaviour of musicians, how they enacts themselves as musicians, fully belongs to their professional identity. While adding these findings to the previously collected elements of sound and movement, I will integrate them in the following paragraphs in a flexible framework that allows to describe the musicians' actions in a variety of professional situations.

The internal and external elements of the musical profession

In the previous sections I have gathered different arguments and points of view surrounding the question of what the musician's professional acting could be, what it could entail and what could be necessary in order to be able to describe those actions which turn a person into a musician in various situations, depending on the kind of musician and the context in which she is performing. In order to condense these elements into a more or less coherent concept, I would like to recall the initial main question of this research: How can a musician be transformed into a theatrical performer by reducing, denying, absorbing and adapting, or taking away essential elements of music making? As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, when something is to be taken away, one must know (or at least have an idea) what is actually available and which elements can actually be removed from a musical performance without it becoming something else, leading to the question this chapter is dealing with, namely: *What does a musician do, actually?* My initial standpoint was that the profession of the musician can only be outlined in a model that describes what the musician actually does and that this model needs to be flexible, as there is no such thing

as a monolithic construct called *the musician*. The study of both Latour and Auslander support my initial argument that a blueprint of the musician's profession must be based less on the products of musician's actions, and rather on the actions themselves. Where Latour establishes the identity of his actors based on their concrete actions, "following the actors themselves", Auslander sees the musician in a social realm performing her identity *as musician* - which becomes different in every new or changing professional situation. Closely following musicians in their daily professional practice, I divide the profession of the musician into several skill-related elements, such as playing an instrument or singing, or acquiring an appropriate breathing and finger technique required to make the desired kind of music. Also, the ability to control and to decide what to play and when, on both a macro and a micro level - controlling rhythm and timing in general - surely belongs to the qualities and abilities of a professional musician, just as the ability to control sound and timbre. Very often a prodigious level of control of specific parts of the body, depending on the instrument (including singing and the voice), is considered a part of making music. For different kinds of musicians very different skills can be involved: For classical and jazz musicians abilities such as building larger structures in real time (either notated or improvised), to build a sounding dramaturgy live on stage, compelling interpretation or highly developed listening capabilities are essential, whereas a Schlager singer needs to be able to transport the simple melodies convincingly towards the audience. An average pop musician in a top 40 band has to be able to come as close as possible to the musical original, which asks for specifically refined listening capabilities on the one hand, and both vocal/instrumental and technical abilities to reproduce melodies, keyboard or guitar sound effects and specific styles on the other. An opera singer does not only need to be able to sing on a professional level, to read the score and to understand the lyrics (sometimes in a foreign language), but also has to interpret the character she is embodying (or acting out) and to express this character through posture and facial expressions.

None of these skills are considered as being absolute or restricted for the types of musicians in question here, a lot of overlap exists between different kinds of musicians, the abilities that I mentioned here are meant as extrapolations, certainly sometimes much more blurry than described here. I see all these different abilities and skills as possible *elements* of the musician's profession, and propose to structure them into two main groups: the external and the internal elements of the musical profession. External elements are physical objects not belonging to the musician's body: the instrument and necessary tools for playing the instrument. As I suggested above, the instrument as the most obvious external element plays an important role in the professional identity of the musician, being much more than a vehicle or transparent medium for the musician's expressive and musical qualities. Also, the manifold additional "peripherals" of instruments, such as mutes, bows, percussion sticks, mallets, and so on, belong to this group of external elements. Speaking in ANT terminology, both instrument and peripherals are full-blown non-human actors, participating in the act of making music, just as musicians are.⁵² As I will elaborate in Chapter Four, the instrument is such a crucial factor that taking this element away from the musician has enormous and radical consequences, up to the point of drastically challenging and almost stripping her professional identity away.

⁵² Compare this to Latour 2005: 72:

"ANT is not the empty claim that objects do things 'instead' of human actors: it simply says that no science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call *non-humans*."

The internal elements are, on the one hand, physical abilities like breathing and finger technique, on the other hand emotional and intellectual capabilities such as control and interpretation of rhythm and timing, the control of sound and timbre, listening capabilities or specifically trained aesthetic and musical judgement (such as recognising and being able to describe the appropriateness of a specific melodic phrasing in a solo concerto or the timing of a funk groove). The internal elements of the musician's profession are not always so easy to identify, trace, and prove. Finger techniques or breathing techniques are relatively easy to recognise, as they are either visible or audible. Intellectual abilities, on the other hand, are more difficult to trace and to display in musical performance, and even more difficult are the musician's listening capabilities or a specifically trained aesthetic judgement (such as sense of style, for example the ability to judge if a specific kind of timing of a bass guitarist applies more to rock or to reggae music). However, it is widely accepted that active listening as "a state of heightened perceptive or receptive aural awareness [...] will be invaluable in most musical situations" (Hugill 2008: 16) - regardless of its traceability. The internal elements are also more difficult to grasp and to summarise in the form of a list of some kind, as this list could be potentially endless.

As a closing statement of this section, I would like to point out that the internal and external elements cannot exist in isolation or independently from each other, but rather maintain a constant and important relationship towards each other; they are two sides of the same coin. In order to be able to use a drumstick - an external element - on a ride cymbal according to the norms of drum playing in a jazz band, a musician must be trained in playing with this drum stick, producing a specific sound with it on the cymbal, in a specific rhythmical manifestation with a specific technique of holding the stick and hitting the cymbal - a whole set of internal elements. Conversely, the internal element of playing technique needs its external element, the instrument, in order to realise its full potential.

Contextual elements

In addition to the internal and external elements, one more group of elements can be added to the set of elements that frame the musician's actions. This group of what I call *contextual elements* is linked to the musician more indirectly, but is no less important for music to happen. I term this "indirectly", because these elements deal with the *context* in which a musician is performing, rather than being linked directly to her body or playing.

A musician is performing *in a specific context*. In the literature this idea of context has been widely acknowledged, such as by Howard Becker in his classic publication *Art Worlds*.⁵³ Becker suggests describing and analysing art as collective activity and assigns art to various networks of activities, such as creating, distributing and consuming. For Becker an art world consists of "all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world [...] defines as art." (Becker 1982: 34) What I am referring to with the group of contextual elements is included in the abovementioned art world of Becker, but is more to be understood as a subset of it rather than encompassing all aspects of it. I am narrowing the focus slightly to elements and factors in these art worlds that have a more direct and concrete influence on the

⁵³ Becker, Howard S. (1982). *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

behaviour and performance of the musician, rather than those which facilitate it in the broader sense.

A large theatre stage is a different context than a small jazz club, a rock music hall, an open air festival stage, or a concert hall for symphonic orchestral music. When a musician plays on the street, the challenge is to get the attention of the pedestrians quickly passing by, the musician's "potential audience", a situation completely different from performing in a well-organised concert of classical music. This context can be seen as a concrete space, such as a building or environment in general, but not necessarily. It could also just be two different social occasions or social situations in which the musician is executing her profession. The different locations also function as conveyors of cultural codes, as sites of social situations determining what kind of music is expected and how an audience behaves. Playing a jazz standard at a cocktail party or a wedding dinner is a completely different situation than performing the same standard as part of a concert in a jazz club, as far as the expectations of the audience, the dress of the musicians (most likely), the length of the improvisations, and so on. Depending on the context, the meaning of what the musician performs also changes. What is expected or even asked for in one occasion is not accepted in another. Different kinds of presence, behaviour, musical style, clothing etc. are expected from a musician in different contexts. Changing the context means changing the musical event and the activities of the musician as well. Seen this way, according to Latour's theoretical framework, context can have the function of an actor as well, co-constituting an artistic event and being an essential part of it. Any change of context will change the event as a whole. And, as I pointed out with reference to Philip Auslander, these contexts are never purely aesthetic, but always have a social aspect as well. Audiences react differently depending on the context: in a classical music concert the culturally implicit code is to sit still and listen silently to the music, whereas in a disco this behaviour would be seen as "inappropriate" (or in fact impossible, as everyone else is dancing).

Combining the groups of elements

It is not possible to discuss this aspect of context in its full complexity here. What is essential for this research is that contextual elements play just as important a role in defining the professional identity of a musician in a given situation as the internal and external elements do. One must keep this in mind while attempting to describe and to analyse a specific professional situation in which a musician might be situated. Each musician's acting can be described in a specific "set" of internal, external and contextual elements. This "set" is flexible and can be formed differently in each situation in which the musician performs, or, in broader terms, executes her profession. On the basis of these groups - internal, external and contextual elements - it is possible to define what could be seen as elements which can be either *added* or *removed* in order to achieve a specific effect, a theatrical effect, for example.

Just as the internal and external elements cannot be seen in isolation from each other, the same goes for the complete triad of the internal, external and contextual elements. All three groups are related to each other, and only in relation they can give some kind of a picture that describes the musician's actions in a specific situation, space and time. The three groups should not be understood as completely separated from each other, but rather as permeable, with holes and

flexible spaces in between them. A costume, or clothes in general could fall in both the external and contextual category: despite not being a tool for playing an instrument, clothes can give context to the musician, or set her into a specific context by being clothed in this or another way. An organ in a church is an instrument, and an external element, but at the same time gives a whole amount of context to the space and to the profession of the musician - embedded in history, religion and culture.

Inherent theatricality

Having discussed the triangle of internal, external and contextual elements as a model to describe the musician's activities, the foundation is provided to discuss elements that might be added to this profession in order to achieve a theatrical effect. However, before going to these added elements, it is useful to take one step back: Besides theatrical elements applied to the musician on top of her profession, there are some words to say on the theatricality which is already inherent in music-making itself. It is well acknowledged and argued countless times that any live performance of music contains theatrical elements. This is supported by the rather evident fact that in a music concert, not only the audible, but also the visual, plays an important role in the audience's experience: "One looks quite intensely during a music concert. Already simply because the music making action is audible, it becomes visible, too." (Craenen 2011: 27, my translation)⁵⁴ On the basis of what is already theatrical in the music-making process, I am about to identify the extra-musical elements in performance, which are added to the musical performance by the composer and/or the director, with the aim of achieving a theatrical effect. It should be noted that the theatricality most authors and critics refer to is slightly different from the one I conceptualised in the Introduction, namely a process of giving space for imagination, and as an invitation to the audience to supply additional, non-pre-defined meaning. Sociologist and media theorist Jason Toynbee argues for understanding the theatrical in music making as "stage[d] as something performed by musicians for an audience." (Toynbee in Bennett et. al 2006: 75) Music is not only performed to be listened to, but to be seen as well. Toynbee's observation of "performers conceiving themselves as performers and audience members thinking that they are members of the audience" (ibid.) goes in line with what I previously discussed about the social realm in which musicians are performing and acting out their musical persona, which can never only apply to listening, but always has a visual element in it as well. Inside the different social/performative realms, a multitude of performance strategies are developed, ranging from sincerity and calmness to showmanship and wild entertainment. A demonstrative example of theatricality inherent in performance is the "guitar face", well known to regular visitors of rock concerts. (see image 1.2) During (mostly virtuoso) guitar solos, and well-supported by volume, several rock guitarists contort their faces, during the bending of a string, for example, as if they were experiencing pain during playing. "What is important, after all, is that the performer *appear* [sic] to be feeling and expressing certain emotions, not that she really *feel* [sic] them at the time of performance." (Auslander 2006: 112, footnote 18) It is an example of a phenomenon I would not understand as an extra-musical theatricality, as it does not refer to a specific meaning or statement outside the concert and music, but is deeply rooted in the musical culture itself in which it appears. Moreover, it is not necessarily only in the context of rock music performances that musicians tend to contort their faces, but among a diversity of other styles, e.g. in jazz and blues music.

⁵⁴ "Er wordt wel degelijk zeer intens gekeken tijdens een muziekconcert. Alleen al omdat de musicerende actie hoorbaar is, wordt ze ook zichtbaar."



Image 1.2: "guitar face" during a guitar solo

But also phenomena such as the head-banging of rock and metal musicians (and their audiences) are certainly inherent to the music making itself, despite their fairly theatrical manifestation. They belong closely to the specific musical-social culture in which they occur and do not refer to any extra-musical meaning. Both the guitar face and the phenomenon of head-banging - two examples out of hundreds - make quite clear that music making and its reception is multi-modal⁵⁵ in itself, not reducible to simply the audible. The sound itself is not at all what should be exclusively framed by the term "music making". When a rock guitarist distorts his face, this *is* part of the music making, at this moment, in this specific situation. This is what differentiates it from theatrical elements devised by a composer or director for achieving a theatrical effect additional or different from the already inherent theatricality of music making. Also, I see the inherent theatricality in music making as part of the triangle of internal, external and contextual elements: a phenomenon such as the guitar face could be described as an internal element of the guitar player, as a means of communicating a specific musical expression. The theatrical elements in most of the examples considered as theatre or performance are understood to be "outside" of this model - understood as elements that the musician is not used to in her professional life *as musician*.

⁵⁵ With "multi-modal" I refer to multiple modes of reception, meaning not only the audible, but also the visual, physical and other sensory modes.

Musicians as performers - how to perform?

The flexible three-cornered model of internal, external and contextual elements will serve as a starting point for further debate, as a point of reference detailing what musicians do in their daily professional life as musicians. The model makes it possible not only to describe how the musician's profession is shaped in a given situation, but also how it might change due to interventions in the setting or the context, in what musicians are asked to do, and so on. Using the model as reference, it becomes possible to identify performative elements that are added to this profession and therefore extend it, or elements that might be taken away and therefore reduce it. This becomes particularly interesting when musicians are working and performing in theatrical situations, or as part of multi-media projects with other art forms such as dance or theatre. In addition to the inherent theatricality of music making itself it becomes useful to examine the questions of how musicians may become theatrical and by what kind of means or techniques. If a musician is considered to be acting, what does "acting" mean in this case? In the aftermath of performance art and Fluxus, actor/performer and performance scholar Michael Kirby thought intensively about the nature of "acting", about what performers do while acting and how this could be described, analysed, and theorised. He summarised his findings in *A formalist theatre*⁵⁶. In short, Kirby outlines acting as

to feign, to simulate, to represent, to impersonate. [But, as] Happenings demonstrated, not all performing is acting. Although acting was sometimes used, the performers in Happenings generally tend to 'be' nobody or nothing other than themselves; nor did they represent, or pretend to be in, a time or place different from that of the spectator. They walked, ran, said words, sang, washed dishes, swept, operated machines and stage devices, and so forth, but they did not feign or impersonate. (Kirby 1987: 3)

In *A formalist theatre*, Kirby aims to build a continuum between the two extremes of Not-Acting and Acting. In this continuum he differentiates between five stages: Not-Acting, Symbolised Matrix, Received Acting, Simple Acting and Complex Acting (see image 1.3). Synonymous to Not-Acting, Kirby refers to "Nonmatrixed Performing", when stage attendants or technicians are present on stage but not embedded "in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time [...]." (ibid.: 4) In fact these "nonmatrixed performers" are there but do not do anything like acting, neither are they perceived as doing so. As soon as one or more referential elements "are applied to but not acted by the performer" (ibid.: 5), such as a costume or the title of a play, Kirby speaks of a "Symbolised Matrix". A costume can assign meaning or a role (a worker, a businessman, a cowboy) without the performer needing to enact this character. The point where the performer does not act - meaning to simulate, represent, impersonate and the like - and where it simultaneously becomes difficult to say if she is acting or not, due to an increasing amount of "received" references" (ibid.: 5), Kirby calls "Received Acting": "Although the performer seems to be acting, he or she actually is not. [...] The amount of simulation, representation, impersonation and so forth has increased [...], but, so far, none of this was created by the performer in a special way we could designate as 'acting.' " (ibid.: 6) The performer merely receives enough references to make her "ordinary" behaviour seem as if she is acting.

As soon as impersonation, simulation, representation, or "the smallest and simplest action that involves pretense" (ibid.: 7) is devised, acting begins. Kirby uses the term "Simple Acting" to acting an emotional presentation. That could mean, that a performer says something on stage

⁵⁶ Kirby, Michael (1987). *A formalist theatre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

which is true ("I'm not allowed to carry a loaded weapon."), but also adds an (acted) emotion to it, anger for example. Kirby's criterion for the appearance of acting is "the point at which the emotions are "pushed" for the sake of the spectator. [...] [I]t does not matter whether an emotion is created to fit an acting situation or whether it is simply amplified. [...] It may be merely the use and projection of emotion that distinguishes acting from not-acting." (ibid.: 8)

On the other end of the spectrum is "Complex Acting". Kirby refers to different areas in which pretence might take place, such as acting out emotional or physical conditions (a person portrayed as young, old, athletic, and so on). As the number of areas increase, the complexity of acting does as well. A performer might not only wear specific clothes, but also chooses to act a specific emotion while dressing. Additionally, she might perform specific physical characteristics of her character, such as portraying an old person or a very young one. She might also act as if she is standing at a specific place, as during a specific weather condition. All of these different conditions could be acted in isolation or in combination. The more conditions that are combined in the actor's performance, the more complex the acting becomes.

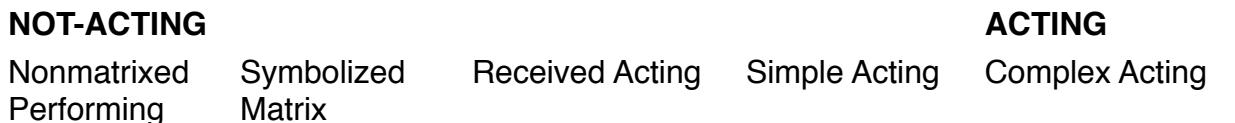


Image 1.3: Not-Acting - Acting continuum by Michael Kirby (1987: 10)

Kirby's model and its consequences

With regard to musicians performing in theatre productions, specifically the middle range of Kirby's model (symbolised matrix up to simple acting) seems to be useful for this study. It happens regularly that directors ask musicians to perform simple tasks, to speak one or two lines of text, at least for short moments during a performance, which are able to transform musicians into theatrical performers (make them "seemingly act", as Kirby would put it) mostly *without* the necessity to act. A fairly obvious example is the way in which a costume can create a character. In such a case, representation, simulation or other qualities that define "acting", according to Kirby, may not be accomplished by the performer herself, but applied to her by the audience. For Kirby this stands in contrast to the performer *actively* feigning, simulating, and so on, which is obviously more on the acting-side of the continuum. The idea of extending the musician's profession, discussed in detail in Chapter Three, in some instances comes very close to Kirby's idea of *applying* elements such as simulation or representation to the performer.

But Kirby's continuum has also other interesting consequences for the actions of the musician in general. The way in which a costume can create a character without the performer having to contribute anything actively to its creation, can also create the identity of a musician on stage as perceived by the audience. If a person is dressed in a way that one would expect her to be a musician (by wearing the same clothes than other musicians who are playing music, for example), she is perceived as one, regardless if she plays (or is able to play) any music or not. But also other "received references", such as carrying music sheets can suggest that someone is a

musician, without playing music at all. But does this also mean that the person in question actually is a musician?

Of course it is possible that an audience perceives a non-musician as a musician, just as a technician can be mistakenly perceived as an actor. Especially in theatrical settings and interdisciplinary performances in which the roles of performers constantly change, it can be hard to trace the actual original profession of performers, such as in the ever-blurring work of Jan Lauwers and NeedCompany where dancers, actors and musicians constantly defy any definition of a monodisciplinary profession. However, my model of internal, external and contextual elements aims at something different, which is the description of the professional musician, coming from the professional activity of making music and shifting in her activities while working in the theatre. This is an altogether different approach than dealing with someone who might be acting as a musician. My observation starts with the acts of the musician herself, as opposed to how these might be perceived by an audience. This is exactly the main difference between the starting point of this study and most other studies: I do not regard the final performance as main object of study, but rather what the musician *does* in her daily professional life, from practicing to rehearsing on the way to the perceivable result, while always staying as faithful as possible to what the actual activities of musicians are. What makes this approach, and the model of internal, external and contextual elements fruitful is its application in different areas where musicians perform in their profession, and to compare these situations, in order to understand on the one hand the differences between them, and on the other hand to understand how the profession (described as a set of elements) might be extended and reduced by composers and directors.