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## **The informed performer : towards a bio-culturally informed performers' practice**

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### **Citation**

Vanmaele, J. (2017, November 20). *The informed performer : towards a bio-culturally informed performers' practice*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/59504>

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**Issue Date:** 2017-12-20

## PART I: The informed performer – a conceptual exploration

Words and concepts have the capacity to create mental spaces (Fauconnier, 1994)<sup>8</sup>, spaces that can be navigated through whenever decisions are to be made, new questions present themselves, or simply when new horizons are being explored. The space of ‘information’ and ‘being informed’ generally comes in view whenever the communication of knowledge between two or more parties (individuals, groups, practices, services) is at stake. Information is then considered to be a mediating currency in a process that liberates situated and embodied knowledge<sup>9</sup> from its particular context and makes it broadly available. In relation to musical performance where romantic categories such as originality, genius, autonomy, creativity, imagination, subjectivity and virtuosity are still very influential, being or aspiring to be an informed musician may seem to be a rather dull, second-order and slightly paradoxical ambition: are not the ones to be remembered in artistic practices primarily those who initiate paradigm-shifts, get rid of existing frameworks, and ‘form’ new ways of artistic thinking? Is artistic practice in general terms not more about creating and imagining possible worlds rather than being informed about an actual and verifiable world?

In PART I, the apparent tension between information and artistic practice is examined by following a three-stage path which takes us from practical understandings by music practitioners (Chapter 2), to a more generic and intellectual history of terms and ideas (Chapter 3), and finally, to an evolutionary, developmental, and behavioural perspective on the concept of information (Chapter 4). Concluding PART I, and building on the foregoing analyses, a discipline-specific, tailor-made and provisional understanding of ‘information’ in the practice of performing scored music will be proposed and discussed; one that is directed at safeguarding and balancing individual freedom and imagination against the virtues and vices of being informed.

Next to the ‘what?’-question of informed performership, also a secondary and more practical issue is an intrinsic element of PART I. Living in an Information Age seems to hold a promise of unprecedented access to knowledge via information leading to the relative irrelevancy of discipline-oriented *Bildung*, and the facilitation of crossing of disciplinary borders (Lyotard, 1979). But is this really the case? How does an extra-disciplinary information galaxy behave when a musician is interrogating it? And what does it offer in terms of added value? These underlying questions are being put to the test in PART I

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<sup>8</sup> Gilles Fauconnier refers to mental spaces as “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003, p. 40).

<sup>9</sup> I am aware of the pleonastic use of the adjectives ‘situated’ and ‘embodied’ in relation to ‘knowledge’ but since we have not made clear distinctions yet, it seems reasonable to allow these adjectives here. ‘Embodied’ means here ‘structured by the body with its sensorimotor capacities’ and pertaining to an individual knower; ‘situated’ refers to the link between knowledge and environment (natural, cultural, social).

by 'performing' them. Throughout the investigation, disciplinary borders will be crossed by involving epistemic terrains that seem at first sight not to pertain to a musician's primary epistemic horizon (linguistics, philosophy, evolutionary theory, psychology). This may lead to a certain extensiveness *qua* volume and detail (especially in Chapter 3) but the assessment of this performative element will serve as a frame of reference for the contextual (why?), practical (how?) and operational aspects of an informed performership that will be addressed in PARTS II, III, and IV.

## Chapter 1: Setting the scene for an informed performership

Unlike concepts such as ‘authenticity’<sup>10</sup>, ‘interpretation’, ‘creativity’, ‘emotion’, or ‘musical work’, the notion of ‘information’ has hardly been the object of any in-depth analysis in the field of music performance.<sup>11</sup> Information entered the musician’s vocabularies most prominently – but at the same time also rather haphazardly and informally – in the context of ‘Historically Informed Performance [HIP]’, where it came to the fore as an alleviating alternative to the contested ideology of ‘authentic’ or ‘period’ performances. Being ‘historically informed’, ‘historically aware’, ‘historically minded’<sup>12</sup>, ‘historically-oriented’<sup>13</sup>, ‘historically inspired’<sup>14</sup>, ‘historically-alert’<sup>15</sup> was introduced to protect musical performance against an ideological regime of utopian and scholarly totalitarianism and to reclaim (mental) space for artistic imagination, freedom and interpretation. Indeed, not an insignificant ambition to be accomplished by just one word. In a well-known critique on authenticity in Early Music, musicologist Richard Taruskin is not convinced for this single term to make a significant difference:

A retreat into euphemism can be observed. The American Musicological Society, in its guidelines to the Noah Greenberg Award, now uses the term ‘historically-aware’. The New York concert series ‘Music Before 1800’ has used ‘historically accurate’ in its promotional literature. At Oberlin, ‘historically informed’ is the going phrase. But these ersatz shibboleths will not achieve a cease-fire, if that is their intent, for they still imply invidious comparison with what is unaware, inaccurate, and un-or misinformed. (Taruskin, 1988, pp. 139–140)

Taruskin’s argument is prolonged by philosopher Peter Kivy in ‘On the Historically Informed Performance’ (Kivy, 2002), one of the few papers that critically interrogates the surplus value of being informed. The crucial question that preoccupies Kivy’s philosophical and analytical considerations is the target domain of information. Is it the performer who is informed, or rather the performance? If the former is the case, Kivy asserts that “one could be as historically informed as you like, but completely rejecting of that historical knowledge as a guide to performance” (Kivy, 2002, p. 132). In

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<sup>10</sup> Ton Koopman claims a resembling process regarding the introduction of ‘authenticity’ when stating “*Niemand weet trouwens zeker wie het woord ‘authentiek’ heeft bedacht. Waarschijnlijk is het afkomstig van de platenindustrie in de jaren zestig van de vorige eeuw.*” (Koopman, 2008, p. 3) [“nobody knows for sure who came up with the word ‘authentic’. Probably, it has its origins in the recording industry of the 60’s in the previous century”]; the analytical follow-up of the term however has undoubtedly been of a more deliberate nature (Fabian, 2001a; Kivy, 1997; Taruskin, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> A precise and formal use of the term (one that refers to elements of information theory) was initiated in the context of music theory, psychology and aesthetics (Eco, 1989; Meyer, 1957; Overill, 2012) but its impact on musical practice and discourse has been rather limited. The information processing paradigm as it is known in cognitive psychology will reappear in Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> Kerman, 1985, p. 185. Kerman suggests ‘contextual’ as a valuable substitute for ‘authentic’ (Kerman, 1985, p. 192).

<sup>13</sup> See Walls (2003, p. 1).

<sup>14</sup> See Walls (2003, p. 10).

<sup>15</sup> See Walls (2003, p. 146).

that case, the impact of being informed is either irrelevant or trivial: “it certainly sounds nice to be informed. Who could object to that?” (Kivy, 2002, p. 130). If, on the other hand, performances are to be “formed, stamped, impressed, and imbued with performance history” (Kivy, 2002, p. 138) – Kivy refers here to a definition in the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>16</sup> – then there seems to be no difference between a historically authentic and the more liberal notion of a Historically Informed Performance. In both cases, performers will operationalize the available information to the fullest extent possible, but will necessarily have to invoke personal taste in judgement where information is not available or incomplete.

Leaving the specific context of Early Music aside and approaching the issue from a broader perspective philosopher Walter Benjamin expresses in a 1936 essay a fundamental scepticism concerning the value of information in an artistic context (*in casu* storytelling), and argues that information, by its self-evident character, seems to be at odds with traditional practices of storytelling:

Information [...], lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appears ‘understandable in itself’. Often it is no more exact than the intelligence of earlier centuries was. But while the latter was inclined to borrow from the miraculous, it is indispensable for information to sound plausible. Because of this it proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling. If the art of storytelling has become rare, the dissemination of information has had a decisive share in this state of affairs. (Benjamin, 1936/2007, p. 89)

Physicist and philosopher Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker confirms in his essay *‘Information und Imagination’* (Weizsäcker, 1973) the difficult position of information in an artistic setting by pointing to the epistemic and classical origins of the term. He juxtaposes ‘information’ to ‘imagination’, referring to the Platonic framework where ‘to in-form’ designates the materialization and bringing into existence of eternal and everlasting Forms<sup>17</sup>, and where – in Weizsäcker’s thought – ‘imagining’ is seen as a counter-term (*‘Gegenbegriff’*) referring to a mere and second-order imitation (*‘mimesis’*) of already materialized ideas.<sup>18</sup> In this setting, ‘information’ relates to our modern conception of rational and scientific truth and is considered to be superior to ‘imagination’, a notion more characteristic of artistic discourse. Weizsäcker bequeaths the information-imagination dialectic a central place within

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<sup>16</sup> Kivy refers to the second definition of ‘to inform’ in the OED; in the current edition of the dictionary it is meaning III that defines ‘to inform’ as: “To give form or determinant character to”.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Form’ will be capitalized when it refers to its metaphysical meaning within the context of pre-modern philosophy.

<sup>18</sup> “*im Sinne der platonischen Philosophie bedeutet Information Einformung. Sie bedeutet, einer Form einen Leib zu geben, also ein Ewiges Unvergängliches zur Erscheinung zu bringen*”. [“In platonic philosophy, information means ‘giving a form to’. It means, giving a body to a form, making apparent something eternal and everlasting”] (Weizsäcker, 1973).

Western cultural and intellectual history and holds it to be the primary cause of the arduous relation between the arts and the sciences.<sup>19</sup>

Even these selected comments seem to concur with a view of a tenacious and longstanding tension between the space of information and the one that encircles artistic practices: information is usually linked to a realm of objectivity, rationality, truth, science, yes- and no-answers, and factual knowledge about an actual world, whereas artistic practices are more readily situated in the realm of subjectivity, intuition, personal knowledge, imagination, interpretation, emotion, and the creation of possible worlds.

A look into more dedicated work (MacKay, 1969; Seiffert, 1971; Capurro, 1978; Machlup & Mansfield, 1983; Rowley, 1998; Madden, 2000; Capurro & Hjørland, 2003; Bates, 2010a; Burgin, 2010; Floridi, 2010; Lenski, 2010; Adriaans, 2013) learns that although information is frequently used in colloquial conversation in the sense of ‘knowledge communicated’<sup>20</sup>, information, as a concept, suffers from the age-old semantic syndrome that St. Augustine identifies in relation to time: “What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know” (St. Augustine, CE 397-400/1955, bk.11 ch.14). Seasoned experts in the field attest that “[information] is a term that has been defined in countless ways, over many decades” and that “it would be fair to say that there is no widely agreed-upon definition or theoretical conception of the term” (Bates, 2010a). More concretely:

The notion of information has been taken to characterize a measure of physical organization (or decrease in entropy), a pattern of communication between source and receiver, a form of control and feedback, the probability of a message being transmitted over a communication channel, the content of a cognitive state, the meaning of a linguistic form, or the reduction of an uncertainty. These concepts of information are defined in various theories such as physics, thermodynamics, communication theory, cybernetics, statistical information theory, psychology, inductive logic, and so on. There seems to be no unique idea of information upon which these various concepts converge and hence no proprietary theory of information. (Bogdan, 1994, p. 53)

The basic phrase ‘What is information?’ seems to be on the same level as: What is energy? What is matter? What is life? The question is very hard to answer, although it is addressed in numerous fields

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<sup>19</sup> He proceeds with a critique of empiricism and specialization in the natural sciences with a view to reconciling the terms and to attribute an important role to imagination in physics. According to Weizsäcker, the natural sciences seem to have lost their capacity to see the overall picture of things (“das grosse Ganze, [...] wird in Stücke zerlegt” p. 19) and, in order to compensate for that loss, they are in need of an art of imagination as a capacity to think holistically (“das Vermögen, ein Ganzes zu denken” p. 28).

<sup>20</sup> “The imparting of knowledge in general” [OED: Information II].

from physics, biology, neuroscience, cognitive science, electrical engineering and psychology to philosophy, economics, and humanities (Spink, 2010, p. vii). One way to account for the versatility of the term is to consider information from a historical perspective. ‘Information’ has a long and complex history<sup>21</sup> and according to media historian and social theorist John Durham Peters, “four main forms of life” can be discerned in connection with the notion of ‘information’, “traveling from the late medieval schools through the essays of the British empiricists to the statistical data of state bureaucracies and today’s computer technology” (Peters, 1988, p. 10)<sup>22</sup>.

Based on its pre-classical use in the context of pottery, poetry, and visual perception, information (and its analogues in Latin and Greek) initially takes part in a vocabulary that describes how matter is “imbued with the intelligible order of Forms” (Peters, 1988, p. 11). In antiquity’s cosmology, perfect order is to be situated in nature, either in a separate realm of Ideal Forms (Platonist dualism – *universalia ante res*) or in the things themselves (Aristotelian hylomorphism – *universalia in rebus*). Understanding the in-formed world and living a good life then, is a matter of (rationally) contemplating and imitating that perfect order of Forms, not one of creatively contributing to it. This first form of life spans from antiquity until the late Middle-Ages and is still included in the OED with the indication ‘now rare’.<sup>23</sup>

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the theory of pre-existing eternal forms gradually loses ground in favour of the doctrine of empiricism and the centrality of sense perceptions in epistemic development. “The universe as described by Newton, particularly, is no longer in any sense a place of peace and harmony; rather it is a world of blind forces and collision” (Ferry, 2011, p. 109). Within that framework, information’s second life-form is initiated: disordered information comes to refer to “the fragmentary, fluctuating, haphazard stuff of sense” (Peters, 1988, p. 13) and in the absence of a fixed amount of pre-existing ideas, the increase of (probable) knowledge is only possible on the basis of acquiring an increasing amount of isolated sense experiences (Adriaans, 2013). Instead of nature, the human mind becomes the central ordering principle and, by this subjective turn, also the primary target of informational processes (instead of material entities in antiquity).

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<sup>21</sup> Probably due to this complexity, the history of information as a term has received only limited and specialized attention. There’s no ‘information’-lemma in *the New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Horowitz, 2005). The most extensive and seminal analysis is to be found in Capurro’s *Information: ein Beitrag zur etymologischen und ideengeschichtlichen Begründung des Informationsbegriffs* (Capurro, 1978). Other, more modest, references include: Adriaans, 2013; Capurro, 2009; Capurro & Hjørland, 2015; Peters, 1988; Seiffert, 1971.

<sup>22</sup> Rather surprisingly, Peters does not refer to the 1978 analysis of Capurro (Capurro, 1978); in a more recent publication on the concept of information (Capurro & Hjørland, 2005, p. 351), Capurro and Hjørland lend support to meta-analysis by Peters (see also: Adriaans, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> “The giving of form or essential character to something; the action of imbuing with a particular quality; animation (esp. of the body by the soul)” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Kivy invokes and resuscitates this archaic definition in his discussion on informed performances (Kivy, 2002, p. 133).

The operationalization of statistics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century extends the communication of informational elements beyond an individual's own limited field of experience (Capurro & Hjørland, 2003, p. 354) and marks a third form of life.

A final and fourth stage in the evolution of information as a concept sets in with Shannon's publication of *A Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Shannon, 1948), where it is asserted that information is not a measure of meaning but of pure quantity.<sup>24</sup> By this ultimate degree of abstraction, new techniques for manipulating data as systems are imagined, leading to the accomplishments of our contemporary network and information society.<sup>25</sup> Information is all around now and gets discipline-specific meanings in various disciplinary fields such as biology, psychology.

'Big data' is one of the more recent sprouts of the information age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (potentially a fifth form of life) and challenges the subject-centred orientation that characterizes modernity.

[the phenomenon of big data] critically explores new forms of empiricism that declare 'the end of theory', the creation of data-driven rather than knowledge-driven science, and the development of digital humanities and computational social sciences that propose radically different ways to make sense of culture, history, economy and society. (Kitchin, 2014)<sup>26</sup>

It is remarkable that information's alleged counter-term 'imagination' seems to befall a similar fate in terms of definitional vagueness and historical versatility:

One question may be left surprisingly unanswered – or at least insufficiently answered – [...], namely, the question of what imagination is. Interestingly, this question has proved remarkably difficult to answer – so much so, in fact, that many authors [...] explicitly refrain from even trying to do so. Rather, they rely instead on our intuitive understanding of the phenomenon under discussion. [...] one might worry that there is no single conception of imagination in play in philosophical discussions and that philosophers have relied on importantly different conceptions in putting imagination to work in different philosophical contexts. This worry has recently been given colourful expression by Noël Carroll, who notes that imagination has become "the junkyard of the mind" – a place where everything gets thrown in. (Kind, 2016, p. 1)

The extensive bibliographical corpus that deals with the historical development of the term 'imagination'<sup>27</sup> – a line of scholarship that is not usually linked to the one of information – presents a

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<sup>24</sup> "The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem. The significant aspect is that the actual message is one selected from a set of possible messages" (Shannon, 1948b, p. 379).

<sup>25</sup> Peter's overview predates the era of the World Wide Web. The increase in connectedness of information however is not a conceptual turn in the meaning of information, but a consequence of this final form of information.

<sup>26</sup> See also Hofstetter (2014).

<sup>27</sup> Unlike 'information', 'imagination' is represented by a lemma in *the new dictionary of the history of ideas* (Barth, 2005).

semantic trajectory that in many ways mirrors the four lifecycles of information (Bundy, 1927; Welch, 1935; Warnock, 1978; Kearney, 1988; Watson, 1988; White, 1990; Kearney, 1998; Brann, 1993; McLean, 2008; Schlutz, 2009; Kind, 2016). Imagination makes one of its first formal and textual appearances in the biblical *passuses* that are dedicated to divine creation (or 'information' – in the archaic sense) and warn against human image-making.<sup>28</sup>

It is in Plato's dualistic ontology that a formal differentiation between 'Forms' – as elements of an eternal world of being – and 'images' – as belonging to a phenomenological world of becoming – is really set in motion. The overall picture is one that institutes a dominating role for eternal 'Forms' vis-à-vis second-order 'things' in nature and third-order 'images' created by artists.<sup>29</sup> As an impoverished reflection of the perfect cosmological order of Forms, imagination is situated in the mimetic realm (Kearney, 1988).

With the advent of modern philosophy and in quasi-synchrony with the birth of information's second form of life, the tables start to turn: "the predominant metaphor of the mind as a mirror reflecting external reality" begins to wane in favour of that of "the mind as a lamp which radiates its own inner light on to the objects it perceives" (Cocking & Murray, 1991, p. v; see also Abrams, 1953). This new constellation allows for imagination to be creative instead of imitative and enables the concept of productive imagination to take root.

Initially, objective form and subjective imagination are still carefully balanced in Kant's transcendental idealism but his synthesis paves the way for differential interpretations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, creating a rift between the arts and the sciences and eventually leading to the apex of creative and productive imagination in romanticism: "the artist is no longer seen as a craftsman-like imitator of nature, but as an inspired genius who brings new worlds into being, spontaneously generating original creations out of the depths of his own mind" (Cocking & Murray, 1991, p. v).

The twentieth century, then, is characterized by a distrust in idealistic, creative and author-centred imagination, and a transition into existential<sup>30</sup> (Kearney, 1988, pp. 196–248) and post-modern, parodic variants of imagination<sup>31</sup> (Kearney, 1988, pp. 251–298) sets in:

Talk of authentic expression becomes precarious to the extent the image itself usurps that reality it was intended to represent. Yet since the postmodern imagination is acutely aware of this irony, its paradigm is best described as a labyrinth of mirrors. The image of the labyrinth is meant to convey a mimesis gone wild, a reflection of reflection, a pure reflexivity without

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<sup>28</sup> In the second commandment of the Decalogue: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Exodus 20 :4 ; Deuteronomium 5 :8) and in the book Genesis where imagination is related to the divine power of creating man from the dust of the earth [Genesis 2 :7] (Horowitz, 2005, p. 1102).

<sup>29</sup> Works of art are imitations of things in nature, and things in nature in turn are imitations of the Ideas in the world of Ideas. Thus works of art are "three removes from reality" [Plat. Rep. 10.599a].

<sup>30</sup> See Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus, Heidegger, Sartre.

<sup>31</sup> See Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Barthes.

origin. This hyperbolic self-reflective tendency and intense self-awareness leads to a wilful self-parody. (Scribner, 2001, p. 186)

In our current time, imagination’s star is rising again. According to some analysts and futurists, following the ‘information age’, we are heading in the direction of an ‘imagination age’, where creativity and imagination will surpass analysing and thinking as primary creators of economic value (King, 2007; Magee, 1993).

	<b>‘INFORMATION’</b>	<b>‘IMAGINATION’</b>
Pre-classical life	form in the context of pottery, poetry, visual perception	Old Testament: role in divine and human creation (Genesis)/ wariness (Decalogue, Genesis)
<u>1<sup>st</sup> form of life:</u> <i>Antiquity-Middle-ages</i>	<b>Productive/creative:</b> Giving (universal) Form to matter	<b>Mimetic:</b> Imitating an appearance, mind as mirror
<u>2<sup>nd</sup> form of life:</u> <i>Modernity (Descartes-Kant)</i>	<b>Empirical</b> Impressions through the fragmented stuff of sense	<b>Productive &amp; transcendental</b> Mind as a lamp
<u>3<sup>rd</sup> form of life:</u> <i>19<sup>th</sup> century- 20<sup>th</sup> century (pre-WWII)</i>	<b>Supra-personal</b> Information beyond one’s own experience	<b>Romantic &amp; creative</b> Artist as genius
<u>4<sup>th</sup> form of life:</u> <i>20<sup>th</sup> century (post-WWII)</i>	<b>Quantitative</b> Mathematical approach to information as communication  Discipline-specific meanings	<b>Existential</b> Distrust of author-centred imagination  <b>Parodic</b> Meaning as an endless play of linguistic signs) : labyrinth
<u>5<sup>th</sup> form of life?:</u> <i>21st century</i>	Big Data?	Imagination Age?

Figure 1.1. The four lives of information and imagination.

Sketching the parallel histories of these two heavy-weight concepts (see the summary in Fig. 1.1), provides us with a general outline which, *prima facie*, is indicative for a shifting relation between information and imagination, especially in the first two forms of life. Both terms, ‘information’ and ‘imagination’, seem to stand in a dialectical twin-relation occupying alternating hierarchical positions

in the course of history. According to Livingston Welch<sup>32</sup>, the grounds for this volatile state of affairs are to be found in the worldview-shifts that operate in the background of information and imagination:

Thus at times man is taken as the mere vehicle of certain cosmic powers which he can illustrate or embody [ideal Forms & mimetic imagination]. [...]. At other times all productivity has been removed from nature, and consequently the power of creating novelty has been emphasized as something distinctively human. (Welch, 1935, p. 10)

Welch's framework analysis is helpful in accounting for the balanced relation between information and imagination in antiquity and early modernity, but shows inadequacies when related to the third and fourth form of life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, information as well as imagination seem to prosper in dedicated and separate realms of interest: information is strongly involved in mapping out an actual and objective world whereas creative imagination conquers the richness of possible and *noumenal* spheres of human thinking and feeling. In the twentieth century then, the vital force of both information and imagination is being challenged by similar processes of proliferation, deflation, and inter-permeability.

These first observations regarding the connection between information and imagination will be more closely examined in Chapter 3; for now it suffices to note and acknowledge an intimate relationship between information and imagination, one that is historically contingent, flexible and not reducible to one dominant paradigm as suggested by the authors that we referred to at the opening of this chapter. Dealing with notions that rely on an intuitive understanding in everyday communication but at the same time show a strong versatility in distinctive, historical and professional fields of application, can be both a curse and a blessing. On a communicative plane, deploying such umbrella-terms holds the danger of Babel-like and interminable confusion of tongues; on an ontological plane however, semantic differentiation and multi-perspectivism opens new possibilities by allowing for a dismantling and quasi-limitless re-engineering of stereotyping oppositions. Within the course of this investigation the inherent openness of both 'information' and 'imagination' will be considered as an opportunity and an argument for letting the relation between the two fields be the principle guide in a quest to accord information a discipline-specific space in an artistic practice of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, by considering the concept of information in its relation to imagination a new meta-practical ground is being explored for discussing artistic activity and research, one that deviates from the well-known theory-practice divide (e.g. Borgdorff, 2012)<sup>33</sup> and anticipates an inbuilt rapprochement between

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<sup>32</sup> This rather old monograph *Imagination and Human Nature* (Welch, 1935), is one of the few publications (if not the only one) that indirectly deals with the relation between information and imagination (chapter one: 'Imagination and Reason in the Classic Tradition').

<sup>33</sup> Within this context it can be noted that the theory-practice discussion deals with similar challenges: 'practice' is neither an all-encompassing marker of musicianship and 'theory' is also not the unique determinant of academic scholarship.

the spheres of information and artistry. However, promoting these two mental spaces to the status of leading protagonists requires further clarity and caution on two specific points.

Firstly, 'information' and 'imagination' seem (at first sight at least) to pertain to different linguistic categories. In everyday language, 'information' is commonly used as a count noun referring to a product, a thing, a commodity (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d., def. 1.2.), whereas 'imagination' is suffused with a process-oriented odour, referring to a capacity that is involved in producing internal images (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d., def. 1.a.)<sup>34</sup>. This incongruence potentially problematises the dialectic between the two terms, even if the OED provides for both words definitions that indicate their all-round flexibility:

- 'information' can refer to an action or a process: "the imparting of knowledge", "the action of imparting the knowledge of a fact" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d., def. 1. & 1.3.a.). In fact, as we shall see, the meaning of information as a thing is orthogonal to the classical process-oriented meaning.
- 'imagination' covers also more product-like meanings: "An inner image or idea of an object or objects not actually present to the senses" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d., def. 1.b.).

In order to overcome some of these intuitive incongruities, our analysis will not rigidly focus on the exact terms, but rather investigate the semantic spectra that envelop information and imagination; therefore, the terminological horizon will also involve terms such as 'form', 'to inform', 'being informed', 'idea', 'image', 'to imagine', 'fantasy', 'fancy'.

Secondly, although imagination and creativity are passionately debated and controversial issues in the field of score-based performance<sup>35</sup>, 'imagination' does not equal 'performance'<sup>36</sup>. It is clear that imagination is not the unique and all-determining aspect of music performance and that elements such as craft, technique, and interpretation are facets that might even be more amenable to a relation with information. Without pretending to present a fully-fledged ontology, the following often quoted appreciation (attributed to a journalist of the Seattle Times) of pianist Murray Perahia may be helpful

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<sup>34</sup> An overview of dictionary definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary [OED] are presented in Appendix 3-6.

<sup>35</sup> The artistic practice of performing musical scores occupies an interesting position in this spectrum ; the duality between objectivism ('*Werktreue*', authenticity, re-creation) and subjectivism (performance as creative and experimental practice) is negotiated in a number of recent research projects: Research Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP) <http://www.cmppc.ac.uk> and *music experiment 21* <https://musicexperiment21.eu>.

<sup>36</sup> In the same way that also practice does not equal artistic practice in the theory-practice approach.

to temporarily situate the position of imagination within a performance context: “[Perahia possesses] the soul of a poet, the mind of a thinker, the hands of a virtuoso”<sup>37</sup>. The three basic characteristics of musicianship mentioned here refer to elements of imagination, knowledge, and craft respectively. Within this informal ‘mini-ontology’, imagination occupies a position that is most closely associated with artistry as we know it in the modern system of the arts (Kristeller, 1951, 1952; Shiner, 2001) and therefore a worthy sparring partner for information.

This dialectical relation between information and imagination in the specific context of musical performance does not come out of thin air. Aaron Copland (1900-1990) dedicated a volume to music and imagination and considered the freely imaginative mind to be at the core of all vital music making and music listening (Copland, 1952, p. 7). In a more focused sense, imagination has been at the centre of Peter Walls’s engagement with ‘Historical Informed Performance’ [HIP]. In his monograph (Walls, 2003), he examines the relationship between performance practice research and actual performance and claims that the *History, Imagination and the Performance of Music* (Walls, 2003) began as an attempt to accommodate ‘imagination’ within the otherwise misleading ‘HIP’ acronym: “At one point I considered calling the book Historically Inspired Performance.) [...] The argument promulgated in my title [...] is that being historically informed shapes and stimulates the imagination” (Walls, 2003, p. 10). In *Music, Imagination and Culture* musicologist Nicholas Cook (1992) presents imagination as an essential element of musical culture: “at the core of this book lies the proposition that a musical culture is, in essence, a repertoire of means for imagining music” (Cook, 1992, p. 4). More in particular he points to ‘imagining’ as a central element in music production:

What makes a musician a musician is not that he knows how to play one instrument or another, or that he knows how to read music: it is that he is able to grasp musical structure in a manner appropriate for musical production - the most obvious (though of course by no means the only) example of such production being performance. (Cook, 1992, p. 85).

Cook continues by discussing ‘imagining’ as a philosophical equivalent of acquiring “productionally adequate cognitive representations of musical structure” (Cook, 1992, p. 86).

In the remainder of PART I ‘imagination’ will serve as a *pars pro toto*, as an artistic marker of musical performance in order to explore in a more general sense, the tensions and commonalities between two fields of human activity: academia (information) and art (imagination).

By setting the scene for an informed performership in this introductory chapter, we learned that the status of information in artistic and musical practice is far from established and even contested, that

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2012/11/4/0730/PM/Murray-Perahia/> consulted in December 2016.

its potential as a mental space is vacant, that scholars seem to juggle the term within a semantic quasi-vacuum or within specific historical contexts and that, consequently, merging these two spaces into the concept of an informed performer is all but self-evident. Looking for ways in which the semantic spectrum can be enriched and tuned towards a valuable instrument in 21<sup>st</sup> century artistry, three lines of investigation will be developed:

- Creating a semantic platform based on the actual and practical use of 'information' by musicians (and not by academics) [Chapter 2].
- Investigating the alleged duality and opposition between the fields of information and imagination from a historical perspective (deconstruction and reconstruction) [Chapter 3].
- Looking for basic, behavioural fundamentals that connect both information and imagination [Chapter 4].