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Musika: The becoming of an artistic musical metaphysics

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CHAPTER 5

Musical vs. Physical: Music that Cannot be Played

*“Run, run, run, as fast as you
can, you can’t catch me . . .”*

In Chapters 3 and 4 I presented a theoretical model of music by differentiating and defining (some of) its ontological entities and modes of existence. Among those are music’s larger reality frame (MRF or Musika Reality Frame), its physical medium of becoming (sound), its virtual forms of existence in MRF (Musikling), its mutualistic strategy for attaining higher forms of organization and therefore consciousness (e.g. through symbiotic action with entities in our Physical Reality Frame), the musical mode/organization shaped by the *Umwelt* of the PMR musicking entity (Musinculus), the emergence of a compound heterogeneous collective entity, the vehicle for the becoming of the Musical (Musical assemblage), music’s embodiment in text and symbol (the Music score), its enduring, nonlocal and nonlinear form (the Music work), its quality of being (the Musical), the musical Individuated unit of consciousness and its Free will awareness unit, and finally, I introduced a general ontological category signifying Musical entities (Musikon). Clearly, this list is not exhaustive, and it is not meant to be as there is myriad considerations of music’s evolutionary, material, organizational, existential, modal, affective nature to be addressed and inquired into – beyond the scope of this dissertation. In the present chapter I focus on a few particular ways in which the Musical, as opposed to the Physical, manifests, i.e. makes itself known, through certain problems in interpretation and performance I have encountered in my practice.

These problems emerge and find definition from the following irksome proposition: There are pieces of music that cannot be played. Well, they can, and they are played all the time by all kinds of people of all kinds of excellent ability – the right fingers on the right keys with the right touch at the right time – but in the end, no single performance seems to be able to fully render the idea coded in the score in the way the score itself seems to be suggesting or calling for. The recognition of the aforementioned incongruence has dawned on me often enough to become suspicious and to begin wondering whether this is generally the case with all music, or whether it is a peculiarity, a sort of a glitch short-circuited in particular pieces. Recently, an assumption has begun taking shape, as to why this perceived discrepancy

between 'what should' and 'what is' might be. Before attending to it, I shall outline a few ideas I have come across along the way.

All case studies are based on examples from the so-called 'classical' repertory, for two reasons. First off, the music from the common practice period is the music I grew up with as conscious being, and as such it is, a musical mother tongue to me. It is reasonable, when trying to grasp and convey complex ideas, to approach those from the most familiar point of access – for me this happened to be the 'classical' music. Secondly, as I characterize aspects of music as 'conscious,' it is natural and convenient to relate to these as one conscious entity to another, as 'man to man'. I believe that 'classical' music has come as close to becoming-man as music has ever been (this proposition I discuss toward the end of the chapter).

With that said, nothing could be further from the truth as the inference that my approach and the ideas I propose apply only or mostly to a specific kind of music.

The privacy clause

Classical music developed with a single aim: to be listened to¹³¹ (...) rather than heard as part of some other activity, usually a social or religious ritual. (...) [T]his sort of listening involves both focused attention and active involvement. Its attention is a form of attending; it is not just a hearing but a hearkening. To practice it is to presuppose that listening is a discrete form of activity, of interest in itself

¹³¹ In the Indian classical tradition the 'purpose' of classical music is to connect with, to please, and to glorify the Gods, hence the saying, S/he is singing for God. This attitude is exemplified in the popular tale about the visit of emperor Akbar and his court musician Tansen to the legendary musician and mystic Swami Haridas, Tansen's teacher. The story goes like this: [Emperor] Akbar one day expressed a desire to meet Tansen's guru and hear him sing. Tansen said to Akbar: "My guru, Swami Haridas, will not come to your court. He is not employed by you like I am. He lives in a hut in the jungle. He sings only when he feels like; so no one can command him to sing." "If he will not come, we will go to meet him" said Akbar.

When Akbar and Tansen reached Swami Haridas's home, they found him sitting outside, silent, with his musical instruments beside him. Tansen requested Akbar to wait while he himself started singing. After a while, he deliberately made a mistake, at which Swami Haridas said benignly, "Don't sing like this, Tansen." Then Swami Haridas began to sing, casting a magic spell all around. Akbar was in a trance, transported to a state of spiritual bliss, broken only by the cessation of the melody. The emperor left for his palace but the song haunted him throughout the journey.

Akbar asked Tansen: "Why don't you sing as well as Haridas does?" Tansen folded his hands and said, "Your Lordship! Between Guru Haridas and me there is a vast difference. I sing for my king while he sings for the Lord of the universe. He is a musician of a much higher court." On hearing this profound truth, Akbar fell silent.

independent of what is heard. Listening so conceived is capable of sustaining personal, social, and spiritual values (...). Such listening quickly develops the ambition to get beyond the quicksilver transitory character of hearing in the moment. It seeks to embody itself in forms that can endure and so become the “classics” upon which a culture of heightened listening depends (Kramer 2009: 18).

Listeners¹³² and performers alike, we all listen to music, in order to hear it. But where for the listener the activity of listening alone is at the basis of her relationship with music, for the performer it is just one avenue. The difference in performer’s and listener’s rapport with music is of definition and scale, of degrees of relatedness, of layers of knowing: where the former conceives and creates, the latter receives a product already incepted, weighted and packaged, which she then in turn perceives, unpacks and interprets. Understanding or knowing music via listening alone is a bit like driving a car without knowledge of its mechanics (which is perfectly possible and, incidentally, the way I do it). Or, like getting acquainted with a great work of literature through its film adaptation (e.g. meeting Anna Karenina via Keira Knightley) – you will get it, but it will be someone else’s truncated (limited, ideologized or simply appalling) idea of the work. Unless you listen a lot to many – to all – available recordings of the piece and create an assemblage of their ‘best’ parts, you cannot begin to form an understanding of ‘what the piece really is (about)’. Thus, while I agree and appreciate the astuteness of Lawrence Kramer’s proposition on listening classical music as a discreet form of activity, it seems to me that no matter how much one listens and hearkens, there is a level of analysis – the anatomical, deep tissue, chemical level – that the listener does not, some may argue that she does not need to, attend.

Ironically, what seems to be ‘lacking’ for the listener is counterbalanced by what appears ‘excessive’ for the performer: where the former may not get enough, the latter gets more than she needs of ‘what the piece really is (about)’. During routines, like breaking phrases down in parts, comparing the latter, repeating passages multiple times, finding tonal or rhythmic patterns and tensions, inverting, permuting, and perturbing the musical material in all diverse ways musical practice has imagined, the performer encounters music work’s implicit privacy clause. “Run, run, run as fast as you can; you can smell me, you can see me, but you

¹³² As Van der Meer has pointed out (to me in personal communication), while the *composer*, the *performer*, the *improviser* or the *interpreter* are all people we could meet and touch, the *listener* does not exist but as a monolith construct, an abstraction. The listener exists only as an ‘implied listening subject’ (Currie 2012: 78). With this in mind, I continue to recklessly use the term as an amalgamation, as an imaginary fictitious entity in which all collective experiences of the *audience* (another construct) are sublimated.

can't catch me. . .”¹³³ The conscientious and deliberate practice inevitably results in an accrued intimate ‘knowing’ of the piece, down to its pretend-plays and secrets. Secrets, because the performer simply cannot share them with the audience: the details are lost in the rich sonic drama of the performance.

Thus, the performer is faced with a problem: she simply cannot share all she knows is the deeper truth of the piece. That, which could be shared, she needs to prioritize, put in the right perspective, hierarchize, so the piece makes sense as a whole. In the following examples I examine and tune up this proposition, and then I discuss possible approaches.

Shadows

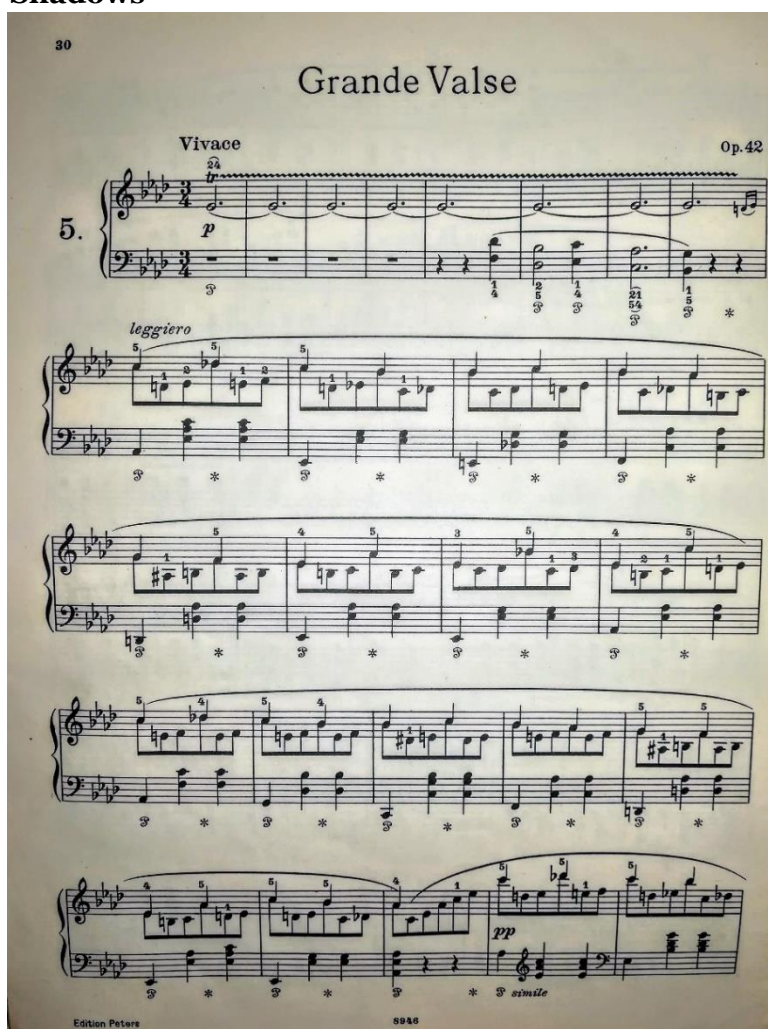


Figure 17// The opening of Chopin's *Grande Valse* in A flat major.

The *Grande Valse* in A flat major, the so called 2/4 Waltz, Chopin wrote in 1840. It begins with a long trill – a joyful and suspenseful anticipation of something wonderful. That the event is joyful, we infer from the sixths that join the trill – in major key, they ring like bells announcing the birth of a long-awaited child. Let us imagine that this child is the melody – unfolding throughout the first page of the score, it is our first encounter with the *Valse*, the embodiment of our first impressions. As such, it contains and constitutes the most important markers, the coded ‘aboutness’ of the *Valse* as a music entity: its face, its

demeanor and inner disposition, the hidden tremblings of its soul, if we may. Played by

¹³³ A variation on the original “Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man!” – the famous line is from 1875th story *The Gingerbread Man*.

itself, the statement made by the two 8-bar phrases reveals, say, a lyrical, feminine, rather melancholic (or bored?), perhaps curious and yearning, yet aware of its place in the world, personality (the rotation-based ‘sighing’ descent at the beginning, the repetitive pattern, the three consecutive upward thrusts from the E flat, the quick departure from the tonic, the all too easy slip into the parallel minor, the inevitable rooting back in A flat major).

The melody alone is simple and schematic, a bit like a template or an archetype – what does it mean? Could the ethos of its conventions be really engendered as a melancholic antsy female or does it stand for something entirely different? How can we judge? To begin answering, one needs to, first of all, reconcile with the idea that music can ‘refer’ to something this concrete, e.g. the way language does. Yes, it can, as the piano Teacher would confirm. Scott Burnham argues that our very training as musicians “encourages us to treat music as something like a language with its own claims” and that a notion of music’s autonomy is an indispensable corollary to the act of learning this language (Burnham 1997: 318). Don’t we always imagine something when we play music, whether it is this concrete or less so? Most all children’s music has evocative titles – *The Sick Doll*, *The Wild Horseman*, *The Snow is Dancing*. The basic music conventions imprinted as formulas or associations on child’s imagination do not just magically transform into a mature understanding of abstract patterns – tones, motifs, phrases, themes, circle of fifths, tonal hierarchies and tensions – nor do they conveniently rest within the confines of childhood. They grow with the child, to become more refined and singular, to be combined with other patterns into complex clusters of meaning. In other words, they do evolve into a kind of language. I would even argue that it is something immanent to this language that makes music so irresistible, so intimate and indispensable – we are on the cusp of understanding it, as in a dream, yet it most always alludes our naming impulses. But liaising patterns in music with emotional or physical dispositions is an intrinsic part of music teaching method: it helps fermenting the rows of notes into music, it helps internalizing the abstract musical patterns and render them ‘meaningful’. We do this, as teachers, because we want the child to hear the music talk, to associate the sound patterns with real-life images, events and phenomena; more so, we need her to. For what is music, if not taken personally, if stripped from its real-life significance and relevance?

The language of music, as a communication practice made of patterns, is indeed very much like the real-life world, if we imagine the latter as an “infinite hierarchical landscape of patterns” (Peterson 2006); it is also like the hierarchical landscape of our conscious mind (Ibid.). In order to understand the meaning of these patterns, we must relax and perhaps

tweak our conception of what does it mean to understand something. “What do you see when you don’t know what do you see? On what reality level the words/patterns translate into meaning?” asks Jordan Peterson in his talk “Music and the Patterns of Mind and World” from 2006, and goes on suggesting that reality is in the interaction between the patterns of the world and the patterns of our mind. This proposition is supported by quantum mechanics interpretations, and especially through the implications of the so-called Observer effect – the theory that a (state of) phenomenon changes upon observation. Or, to take the retina – it picks up patterns from the world around and translates them into neural impulses; these, in turn, are processed by the neural system and other parts of the brain that cooperate to produce a representation of the initial image in the brain. But neither the retina, nor the ‘I’ sees the ‘real’ image as it ‘objectively’ exists in the world: we ignore almost everything that arrives at our brain, and ‘see’ (an interpreted version of) only that, what is deemed relevant (Ibid.: YC Leong et al. 2019). From this, we can extrapolate that musical meaning is in the interaction between 1) the patterns of music filtered through and delivered by the patterns of the world, and 2) their ‘interpretation’ by the patterns of our mind. So the problem with our melody is not whether it is, indeed, feminine, masculine, in-between or both: more importantly, it is something to begin with, something we need to hearken and ‘understand’ in the ways we ‘understand’ stranger’s energy and May morning’s haecceity; the notion of gender here is at its most conjectural. We need to ‘understand’ what the melody is, in order to know how we ought to position ourselves and to relate to it appropriately and adequately. The ‘ought’ we derive from the ‘is’. As performers, we carry the responsibility to help the realization of the melody by focusing on its intention, by bringing out its inner truth.

To judge what *Valse*’s melody ‘means’ or ‘is’ about, a context is needed. We add a bass. This maneuver allows us to situate the melody in space, to assign it a territory with possibilities and to draw some constraints. The [melody + bass] contour to the music entity is like an astrological horoscope, a diagram with potential, favorable occasions, opportunities and suggestions for being. The big question is, what sort of being the *Valse* is, and what kind of actions this being is interested taking. The addition of the 3/4 waltzing chords to the base help clarify a lot – it fills in data about Melody’s social environment: the playground where it gets to grow. It is the simple, predictable, entraining and naïve environment where many spend their lives: in the reassuring familiarity of their native cultural frame, in the friendly neighborhood of their tribe.

The bass and the accompaniment, played by the left hand, should have enriched the melody, dressing it, packing it, filling it up with sonorities of support. But, somehow, this enrichment

only makes it more burlesque, less genuine. There is a perceived clash between the lyrical high ground and the jovial middle: the latter, it seems, strives to capture and assimilate the former in its webs of well-meaning. This, thankfully, is not the obvious choice of our Melody, as we are to learn shortly: it is charged with a double complication clause that needs attention and on which resolution depends Melody's destiny.

The first part of the challenge introduces a murmuring, motoric 'filling' in the right hand, which plays role of an additional accompaniment, forcing the melody to be sung by right hand's weakest fingers (4th and 5th) and thus braking its smooth line – at this point the melody walks in 6/8 step. This is a pivotal moment. Our Melody is not a clean slate anymore, it has acquired a baggage: a subconscious, dynamic, persistent under-thought, a second nature that aspires to be integrated in melody's personality. The Shadow. Carl Jung defines the shadow as "that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious" (Jung 1963, Glossary). We take the shadow as a metaphor of unconscious forces which, however restrained and bridled, work on subliminal level, affecting the Conscious/Melody and its choices. Indeed, the murmuring voice is nagging from 'underneath' Melody, tracking its every move, as a persistent yet undifferentiated wannabe-melody. It changes its *modus operandum* only in Melody's times of doubt, when the latter more seriously considers an escape from tonic, its native culture, to the dominant – its higher, intense mode of being (see bars 9-12 of the melody). Is this escape a direction Shadow desires, or is it something Shadow is desperate to avoid? Solving this ambivalence amounts to integrating – i.e. solving the problem of – Shadow. Consider what would Melody's life have been without its complicating murmuring – entirely *comme il faut*: a good citizen of an avuncular Hobbiton. Where in life this *status quo* is a not just acceptable, but often advisable, in piano literature such simplicity is attractive mainly to beginners. The Shadow presents Melody with a challenge and forces it to work, fight, and define itself, to become a Hero who smiths his 'right form of life' (see the interlude On Practice).

And as if dealing with an unnerving Shadow is not enough of a challenge for Melody, there is an added timing conflict between the 3/4 moving left hand accompaniment and the 2/4 singing of the melody. The discrepancy showcases the loneliness of Melody who – in a jolliest waltzing environment – is doomed, however lovely – to be the ugly duckling. Or better said, who, in the town of senior citizens' tricycles finds itself with a two-wheeler. The 2/4 : 3/4 compatibility is a ratio problem each pianist needs to solve – should she decide to emphasize the melody with its 2/4 swing, the whole dramatic 'tortured-individual-against-society' plot

will be underplayed, if not lost. In the opposite case, the pianist risks facing ridicule as it is unacceptable for an accompaniment to be overshadowing the melody – the pun is intended for in such a case the melody itself would appear to be the Shadow of its Accompaniment. . . . The interpretation of the first eight-bar enunciation is crucial for it sets the tone of the whole. The introduced conflicts in the vertical – 1) 2/4 versus 3/4, and 2) melody vs. wannabe-melody – are transposed onto the horizontal through the successive contrasting episodes of the *Valse*. For example, the immediately following one I name ‘Dance of Shadow:’ it is a refrain that appears nine times, connecting all different sections of the piece; like Shadow, its Dance shows even stronger pull towards the dominant Es major; like Shadow, its Dance is assembled by infantile, obsessive, repetitive flying arpeggios that lead nowhere and say nothing, but weave tighter and tighter web around the melodic idea.

What is the right way to solve the problem of a shadow-challenged individual vs. its culture? What is the right form of life? How to integrate the different levels of reality? These are questions we abstract from the patterns of the *Valse*. Their answers, too, come in a hierarchy of patterns that interfere with the patterns of our mind to result in abstracted meaning. This meaning is contingent: as in a kaleidoscope, the musical patterns have innumerable ways to abstract and hierarchize meaning – each performance is a small rotation of the instrument, effectuating a unique ‘answer’. Not surprisingly, the answer most pianists opt for is over-pronouncing the melody, which leaves the rich contextual landscape in a mushy, soupy, undeferential state, especially with the generous aid of the right pedal. Another pitfall many plunge into, is picking too fast a *tempo*.¹³⁴ Here again, we have a chance to make an analogy between Physical and the Musical being. As in life many individuals foster an existence focused on the most fascinating object there is, themselves, so in music we often over-pronounce the melody; as some people live their life so hurriedly that it passes in a blur (a fact they might realize in the last bar), so in music we might nervously pick too fast of a *tempo* and then just carry on following the inertia, trying to catch up; as there are those who indiscriminately ‘take it all’ as it comes – as bits and pieces, never truly understood and properly integrated, so in music one could go through a piece like the *Valse* by simply stringing its different episodes loosely without losing sleep over stuff like integrity or meaning.

¹³⁴ In my edition, *Peters*, the instruction is *Vivace* and the opening part is specified as *lively* – something is lively when it is alive and breathing, with all inherent complexity of the state. In the first editions of Breitkopf und Härtel, from 1840, however, the direction is simply *leggero* [https://imslp.org/wiki/Waltz_in_A-flat_major,_Op.42_\(Chopin,_Fr%C3%A9d%C3%A9ric\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Waltz_in_A-flat_major,_Op.42_(Chopin,_Fr%C3%A9d%C3%A9ric)).

It is fascinating to listen – to hearken! – the kinds of answers some of the great pianists have to offer to the problem of the *Valse*. Arthur Rubinstein¹³⁵ – famed as the best Chopin interpreter of his time – plays this *Valse* with a big picture in mind, unifying its contrasting parts, with an elegant flow and elfin grace, with most beautiful phrasing. There is no perceived tension or conflict – the *Valse* is played in *the right form of...* a waltz – a decorative piece of upscale entertainment. Leonard Pennario¹³⁶ picks a fast *tempo*; his brilliance reminds me of the words Schumann allegedly said when he heard the waltz: “It must never be danced—unless, at least, it were to be danced by a countess.” Eric Lu’s interpretation¹³⁷ is sentimental, smooth and simple – a Romantic waltz with pretty tunes. Krystian Zimerman¹³⁸ does not get fooled by the *vivace* and approaches the whole in calmer, exegetic spirit, treating the *Valse* not as a ballroom gig showcasing skills and brilliance, but rather as a story, or as a character study – one episode flows into another and they are all meaningfully connected, each one with a unique contribution to the whole. Evgeni Bozhanov¹³⁹ offers a more quirky read: his use of right pedal is frugal, which contributes to the clarity of the bass/accompaniment of the left hand, brought out with a ferocious crispiness. Through an accentuation of weak beats at times, attention is drawn to the formative background of the melody. There is a dialectic tension in the construction of the whole, where different parts are not only contrasted but also hierarchized through corresponding means, like tempo, *rubato* and agogic, pedal etc. The obvious result is, more perceived depth and drama, more information to be integrated, meaning to be perceived.

Different performances offer a variety of advices as to how to create a ‘perfect being’ and what is the ‘right form of life,’ However precious the individual insights into the *Valse brillante* are, there still remains the want for the one version that tells the whole story in a true and convincing way. The question that matters most here is how I as an artist understand the work and what is my answer. Can I, knowing what I know about the piece, play the *Valse* in a true and satisfactory way? Can I convey all I want through the piano? Frustratingly, the more I engage with this piece, the less I am able to communicate its secret message, as if enchanted by the spell of its privacy clause. Could it be that, after all, the *Valse* is simply a waltz, that there is no need to dig out the deeper meaning I perceive is mapped in

¹³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jogEHo9suZs>

¹³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmX1LJx3wgo>

¹³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4b9vilZx4dc>

¹³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akx-seCD9aw>

¹³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpXradK7QXg>

it? What is the nature of the limitations I struggle with? Imagination or perhaps technical deficiencies? Could these limitations be of a dimensional nature? As the Square from Flatland of Abbott's eponymous book, despite all its open-mindedness, is unable to see the Sphere from Spaceland as anything but a circle, so the Physical Matter Reality's (PMR) earthlings experience serious limitations when trying to assemble and revive the Musical of Musika Reality Frame after its interdimensional transfiguration. Could it be that, similarly to the monarch of Pointland, our PMR intelligence perceives Musical's communication but as thoughts originating in its own mind, because it cannot conceive of anything other than itself?¹⁴⁰

The next example attempts to make a case for this 'dimensional' friction.

Glitches



Chopin's Nocturne in D-flat major from 1835, too, contains the privacy clause ("You can't catch me..."). Here, the problem is even more transparent thanks to the clear and straightforward separation of the hands as technique, identity and purpose: the left hand is homogenous, it provides a lacy accompaniment of broken chords above which the

Figure 18// The opening of Chopin's Nocturne in D-flat major. right hand sings the

melody – an arrangement typical for the genre of *nocturne*. How can this most stereotypical discrimination melody/right hand – accompaniment/left hand be a problem? The issue is rather subtle and has to do with the fact that the melody occupies a reality that is

¹⁴⁰ The references are from Edwin Abbott's satirical novel, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884).

qualitatively different than that of the accompaniment. This difference could be fathomed along different axes. Robert P. Morgan, for example, explains it in terms of ‘tonal space:’

The range of humanly perceptible pitches form a tonal range, which receives an abstract indication in the notion of “tonal space.” Melody and accompaniment do not simply merge into a single temporal continuum but appear to occupy different spatial locations, thus maintaining both individuality and a clear mutual relationship (Morgan 1980: 528).

Phillip Tagg points to the psychological aspect of the difference and the relationship between melody and accompaniment:

Melody can be seen as the line of individual expression in music, as the music’s ‘ego’, so to speak. That which ‘surrounds’ the melody sonically, e.g. the accompaniment in Western European music (...), can in turn be interpreted as the individual’s affective environment (Tagg 1997: 10).

In a sense, we are used to the special and psychological differences between melody and accompaniment; they are, as if, part of these entities’ blueprint. In terms of difference, I prefer to think of melody and accompaniment as occupying different realities. Particularly and immediately troublesome in the example above is the fact that the melody flows in a different musical time than the accompaniment. Although all notes on the two staves (melody vs. accompaniment) are correctly organized in measures and bars, something of an organizational nature is crucially amiss. Throughout the majority of piece, the melody is either suspended over an accompaniment, or both voices move simultaneously, meeting each other at every step, e.g. in bars 4, 6 and 8. It is precisely in these ‘meeting’ times when both hands recite their notes simultaneously, as *punctus contra punctum*, that the different time scale of the two musical entities – ‘melody’ and ‘accompaniment’ – becomes obvious. The musical time of the weightless, sylphine melody just does not want to ‘meet’ the homogenized accompaniment in its clock-time momentum; more so, the melody should not at any cost meet the accompaniment for this meeting hinders its enunciation, attracts unwanted attention, produces a glitch in the system. The (lack of) rapport of melody and accompaniment here elucidate the more general problem of these musical entities’ autonomy and relationship: while we could be certain that both are in some transpersonal Order of relations that is mutually supportive, interactive, and influencing in important ways, what precisely this Order is?

Presuming, as I do here following Campbell, that we inhabit a fractal reality, it should be possible to think up a nonmusical analogue to the ‘glitch’ in the flow enfolding the melody and the accompaniment. The heart, for example, has a certain autonomous beat that does vary, but no matter how one impacts it, e.g. through meditation, swimming, singing, or cold shower, the beat does never synchronize with the blinking of one’s eyelids, which is random by default (or so it appears to us). More so, the blinking should stay random, for becoming-rhythmical is often associated with serious physiological (epilepsy) or psychological (schizophrenia) disorders. Our fortunate body, enjoying billions of years of leisurely evolution, has learnt how to perform its rhythms in perfect coherence inconspicuously, in the background; noticing any of those is usually a no-good sign.

And noticing an emphatic temporal difference is what one does in the Nocturne. In it, the left hand – an environment, a perfectly functioning circadian reality, a body – needs to be mastered to where it becomes-imperceptible, to where it completely melts in the background, so the melody in the right hand – the face/the self/soul/spirit/inner I/et al. – is able to concentrate all attention for the important disclosures it makes. The composer has captured the different temporal geometry of melody/accompaniment, evident in the discrepancy in their flows, but while translating the musical to physical reality frame, while trying to embody the Musical in Musinculus’ sound-material exoskeleton, the fine differentiating is lost, and we are left with some rather blunt rhythmical melody/accompaniment rendezvous, as exemplified in bars 4, 6, and 8.



Ultimately, the score is all we are to work with. And where we are not allowed to alter anything in it, we are encouraged to experiment with our own perspective. It could be even argued that, when working with something simultaneously as foreign and intimate as the Musical, it is mandatory to consider it, at some point, from an alternative perspective. Like in photography – to capture that which eludes framing one switches between different angles, zooming in and out, testing different filters searching for the perfect light . . . My default approach to a music piece, for instance, is top down starting from the ‘head’ or alternatively from the ‘foreground’ – i.e. from that which is talking to me. In the aforementioned Chopin examples that would be the melody. It is from the melody’s logic and melody’s nature that I piece together an understanding of the whole. This, the writer of *The Master and his Emissary* Iain McGilchrist would assert, is a left-hemisphere approach. In fact, it is the approach which ‘Western’ culture has adopted in the last few centuries since the Renaissance

and particularly with the rise of the Enlightenment – a left-hemisphere dominance consisting of gradual rise and supremacy of the materialistic paradigm. Thus, approaching the whole from the head/melody is not only one of the possible ways, but in some sense, it is the convenient and effective, and in others, it is simply the ‘natural’ and expected way. After all, it is Melody we attend to when we listen to music – its assertiveness and convivial gait are admittedly appealing, or so it seems to us, heirs of the European Enlightenment nurtured and raised with left-hemisphere paradigmatic biases.

But Lovely Melody, usually played by the right hand/left hemisphere exhibits alarming self-confidence and it seems quite oblivious to the fact of left hand/right hemisphere’s existence – as an adolescent with a ravenous healthy ego, it is ‘all about me’. McGilchrist suggests that the world created by the left hemisphere is a self-reflective virtual world, a sort of hall of mirrors. Entertained and pleased with encountering everywhere its own self-reflections, the left hemisphere “has blocked off the available exits, the ways out of the hall, which the right hemisphere could enable us to understand” (2009: 6): as the Point from Pointland, it takes any communication and interaction with Others personally, as ‘thoughts’ originating in its own head.

This attitude towards melody is problematic. While it is important to stress that we need both hemispheres equally, it is still more important to cognize the fact that their relationship is not symmetrical: McGilchrist insist that “the left hemisphere is ultimately dependent on, one might almost say parasitic on, the right, though it seems to have no awareness of this fact” (Ibid. *italic mine*). Rethinking Chopin in the light of right/the Master and left/the Emissary hemisphere relationship, quite reverses the power dynamics between melody and accompaniment by shifting the focus from the melody to its suspending web. Despite its subordinate name, in both the *Valse* and the Nocturne (and most everywhere else), the accompaniment does concur with its suggested function of a right hemisphere matrix – it has all the information, all the potential, it enfolds all present and future possibilities for deviations. Like an Implicate Order from which a melody is explicated. Like a metrical wave from which a rhythm is abstracted. Or like the pre-compositional space, the background tonal web on which the Ursatz is suspended. Like an all-seeing, all-knowing Being.

But if the accompaniment is so almighty, we may ask, what should be its relationship with the cheeky melody? Does it need it at all?

In his book *12 Rules for Life*, Peterson recalls an old Jewish story that begins like a Zen koan. “Imagine a Being who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. What does such a Being lack?” The answer is “Limitation:”

If you are already everything, everywhere, always, there is nowhere to go and nothing to be. Everything that could be already is, and everything that could happen already has. And it is for this reason, so the story goes, that God created man. No limitation, no story. No story, no Being (Peterson 2018: 343).

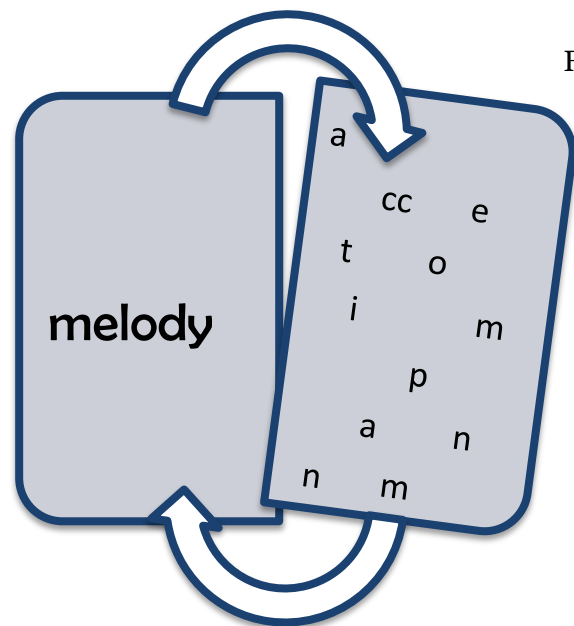


Figure 19// The relationship Melody – Accompaniment is analogous to the dynamics between the Implicate – Explicate Orders.

Mirroring the ways of man and God – or of the Explicate-Implicate Order – are melody and accompaniment, an example of interpersonal relationship between the general and the particular. The accompaniment has all the information, it is brimming with potential, enfolding all possible moments of a given reality. Despite this power, it is caught in a feedback loop, remarkably unable to form a single thought and for this reason, containing all of them. Melody is the *cogito*, the thinking Self that abstracts information from the impassive data and distills it into meaning. Melody could have been any other melody – in the way You could have been your brother, had your parents met earlier or later, had they been warmer or colder at the moment of conception, and so on. The fact that a melody – a materialized musical thought – is explicated from the homogenizing, unifying, self-perpetuating and perfect-in-itself accompaniment is matched by the equally incredible fact that a being like you has been unfolded out of the billion years old machine of life, running

on recycled genetic differences. Such way of thinking permits comparing our melody to self-consciousness – a phenomenon with beginning, middle and end, dialoging with itself, yearning to become. And as in life, the question of what to do with one's self is the greatest question, what to do with a melody becomes the greatest problem of a music work:¹⁴¹ how to find the right form – whether of life or of music.



However much one is inclined to contemplation, one is still to sit before the keyboard and play the music. But what to play and how to play it? What, for example, is to be done regarding the power dynamics of the melody and the accompaniment, if anything? On the one hand, emphasizing the melody and hushing the accompaniment is the obvious, though quite uninteresting, smearing the implicate tension, route. Another one, slower and encumbered, is the route exploring and boggling over such minute, barely perceivable and almost ineffable 'problems' as those discussed here. Where is the mean between the polished and slick but psychologically lacking and possibly superficial version, and the granular and thick yet likely awkward and still wanting read? Is this apparent choice between two options just another evolution of the tension between the physical and the musical? Does it pertain to the material and the capacities of the specific medium?

And then, more generally,

- Can the epignosis of the work be translated into gnosis and correspondingly, performed and shared?
- Is the listener able to independently perceive any of these fine cracks in the body of music, through which flickers light of otherness?

Cracks

I begin with the last question first, as it is the more narrow and practical one; it presupposes the adoption of another perspective, that of the 'listener', which may illuminate our inquiry 1) through the distance from the object it demands, and 2) through the different attentions it requires. For me, becoming a listener means leaving the comfort and familiarity of the piano

¹⁴¹ Melody here is used in its broadest meaning, as a foreground, theme, the central idea or the opening statement.

and entering another realm, in this case, the realm of voice.¹⁴² The issue with the Musical's embodiment in sound receives a fundamentally different, perhaps clearer and more direct articulation and problematization through the voice.

The voice is one of the oldest musical instruments and, among those, one of the first ones to achieve a modern day level of sophistication. Of all Musinculi media, the voice has had the most biological time to refine itself and to osmose, to integrate the Musical. In the prehistoric, thick impenetrability of the rainforest our ancestors have relied on the voice to convincingly perform urgent meanings long before the body was harnessed as a musical performing instrument and before language emerged as a mode of communication. Although the body is not typically regarded as musical instrument, the voice cannot be disclosed without it; in ancient Indian musicology the voice is *sharira vina*, i.e. the instrument of the body. The peculiar nature of the voice-body relationship is at the basis of voice's explicit stand in regard to the Musical – unlike the instrumentalist (pianist) and the instrument (piano) who work through a relation of exteriority, the voice and its body are entangled in a codependent relation of interiority, i.e. it is performer's own body that produces both the Musical and the Musinculus, simultaneously. Two seriously disparate functions and aspects of music must make home in a single body and issue a univocal statement. Compared to the pianist and the piano, who each have a separate ontological status, as two Musikons in Musika's reality, the voice and the body of the singer are in a more difficult situation. Where the pianist is deliberating on problems of perspective, integrity and meaning of constituent layers, like melody, harmony, or bass, the voice seeks coherence between (usually) the meaning of the words, the meaning (the logic, dynamics, conventions, integrity) of the music, and importantly, the meaning of the performing body (including timbre) – i.e. the word, the sound and the gesture. Conveying the Musical in a given *aria* is predicated on what the latter represents and on how one embodies its meaning/s. This, counterintuitively, is not an obvious discrimination to make (Fig.20).

¹⁴² Disclaimer: while I enjoy the activity and often practice it, I am not by any means a professional singer.

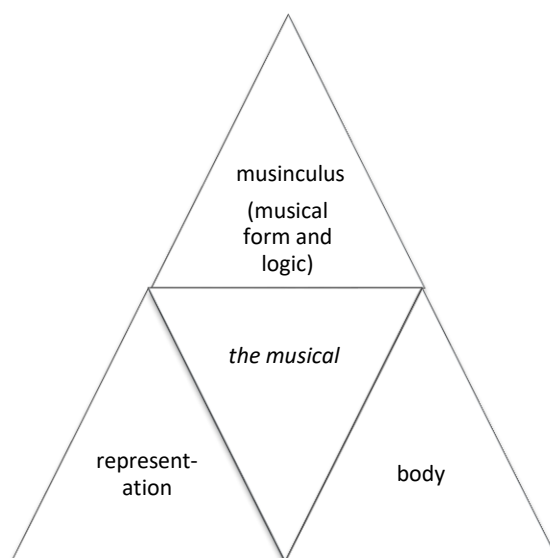


Figure 20// The power triangle of singing: music-language-gesture. From within it must emerge the Musical.

More frequently than not, the timbre and the inflections of the voice – its materiality – are crucial for conveying the Musical, for ‘believing’ the singer and the character she presents. Schubert’s song *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, for example, I’ve listened in various interpretations, all available on YouTube – Barbara Bonney,¹⁴³ Renee Fleming,¹⁴⁴ Elisabeth Schwarzkopf,¹⁴⁵ Kiri Te Kanawa,¹⁴⁶ to name a few. Undistracted by body’s gestural declarativity and expressive power, all one has to do here, is to listen to the voice itself. Upon the absence of visual information, all elements of the musical assemblage here must converge into the voice, inducing the semblance of a maiden – infatuated, dreamy, restless. The artists I mention above offer us only some of the best portrayals of Gretchen, each constituting a singular entrance into character’s personality. Recalling the two-sidedness of the music project, we hear the scientific side, the Musinculus, beautifully rendered – with its rich sound machine’s capacities, the voice conveys information of the ‘main line’ of the repertory item through the music that is in the score. The other side, the Musical, the magic, is the music that is precisely not in the score – it conjugates the timbre, the tempo and its deviations, the nuances of the dynamics, the breaths, the pauses, the rich expressivist repertoire of the voice as medium... in short, the ‘back channel’ of the story, or the information that is the psycho-emotional makeup of the character. The first side, informing about the character and its story, presupposes knowledge of Gretchen’s facts: the story comes from Goethe, the music from Schubert, and the composition is a representation of the

¹⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LQgXtDOaYU>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUhYoZc58v4>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV7QWJyFQVI>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MY0eeotSDi8>

genre of *Lied* from the beginning of the 1800s, which the artist must perform with all intrinsic stylistic nuances. The second side, the magic, is collective and virtual; it must suspend our disbelief and manifest the Musical Free Will Awareness Unit of the character itself.

There are interesting aspects in all performances: Barbara Bonney provides the voice – young and lyrical, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf wraps it in an aura of doom, Renee Fleming discloses Gretchen’s passion and fervor, and Kiri Te Kanawa, delivering an exquisite culmination, gives us even a taste of Faust’s kiss. The common thread in all these Gretchens is that each one of them comes out ‘interpreted:’ slightly exaggerated, memorably idiosyncratic – the Pure, The Expressionist, the Passionate. In performing their own edition, these artists shape different characters; in fact, the difference in their versions perhaps traces a difference in their personalities. What is being performed, therefore, is not the character *herself* but rather artist’s exaggerated grasp of it as an alchemical distillation down to a pure ingredient, to a single capacity. The question is, is this distillation convincing? Can one facet – however finely cut – give us the whole? The instinctive reaction to such a purification is diffusion. And we diffuse the character over many and diverse singularizations – our chance to experience a full-blooded, whole, rich and complex Gretchen is to appreciate her as a multiplicity, as an amalgamation of all the Gretchens we can get hold of, in both actuality and virtuality. The totality of Gretchen’s Being across time – the assemblage of all her Musikons – would give us her ‘Self,’ aligned and harmonious. The addition of all interpretations results in an over-interpretation, i.e. integration. This super-assemblage of the one True Gretchen is the example one refers to when one thinks “Gretchen,” its coherence providing a model for proper being.

Another example of asymmetry between the ‘main story’ and the ‘back track,’ here already translated as a disparity between voice and body, we find in the opera *Manon* by Jules Massenet (1884),¹⁴⁷ recounting the story of Manon Lescault, one of opera’s archetypal *femmes fatale*. The *Gavotte* “Obéissons quand leur voix s’appelle” from the third act of the opera portrays a subtle emotional-psychological moment. Celebrating the opportunities youth and beauty afford, Manon urges us to never miss a call of love for we won’t stay 20 forever. The second verse of the song brings in a change of tone, meditating on the dark side of the preceding lines: youth and beauty are short-lived; equal to the chilling impartiality of

¹⁴⁷ The opera is based on the 1731 novel *L’histoire du chevalier des Grieux et du Manon Lescault* by Abbé Prévost.

temporality and aging is the tragic logic of the Heart, which, too, is propelled toward change, thus it always moves on and forgets its Love. Here, Manon gives us a piece of self-analysis – it is perhaps her own ‘faithful heart’ that, horrified of age and death, does not resist any ‘call of love’. If this supposition is correct, the key to interpreting Manon’s character is not so much in her surface femme-fatale-ness but in the deeper and more complex layer of a charming but psychologically underdeveloped and emotionally stunted personality with a narcissistic, opportunistic, impulsive response to life. A greedy exuberant child wrapped in voluptuous woman’s body.

The *Gavotte*, therefore, is a psychological node of contradictory desires and lines of flight; the artist must dissect and isolate different strains in the emotion, and then to integrate and perform them. Frequently, the go-to interpretation of this *Gavotte* portrays a flirtatious, racy, risqué Manon, reveling in the joys of youth and the adoration of the gents. This incongruity and mismatch between inner truth (content) and outer manifestation (expression) is particularly well exemplified in the performance of Anna Netrebko – one of the iconic Manons of our times. When I first heard Netrebko’s *Gavotte* on a record, I was convinced that the singer understands the character in its innocent and even noble, if misguided, core. Confirming my sense of the musical truth, Netrebko aspires to convey it vocally and does so masterly – the voice inflects shades and tones of meaning that enter smoothly into my consciousness to inform and enrich my grasp of Manon’s character. Naturally, I looked for video of Netrebko, for Manon is not a voice alone: there is a body to perform. Often, instead of replicating and reinforcing – or problematizing – voice’s narrative and making it physical, visible, palpable, the body overwhelms and muffles the voice, misinterprets it, or is static and submissive. In Netrebko’s case, where her voice pleases with sophistication and subtlety, the performing body portrays a luxurious *fille de joie*: a seductive and sanguine extrovert, without discernible inner conflicts or regrets.

But how, indeed, to suggest body-wise the idea that Manon is anxious, guilt- and regret-laden, while singing a superficial refrain, looking spiffy and promenading in the company of flattering courtiers, as the script demands? The disparity between voice and body is problematic. To some extent, it is rooted in body’s and voice’s different artistic histories, and also in the nature of stage behavior. Meant to attract attention and to elicit reaction, the stage develops its effects accordingly. It is much easier to extract a quick response through an exaggerated body/gesture language than to aspire to a nuanced body-hearkening rooted into voice epignosis. The likely reason Manon ends up portrayed as the “innocent but

frivolous country bumpkin,”¹⁴⁸ is because of her performing body in the limelight, needing overemphasis, loud makeup and large motions. After all, one of opera’s eminent ancestors is the rowdy *commedia dell’arte* with its stock characters, exaggerated gestures, pantomimes, and crude jokes. The body on the stage knows well how to perform a storyline and basic emotions: it can convey and plant a given idea (e.g. the idea of playfulness and frivolity through a simple roll of the eyes) as directly and firmly as words would, if not more so. When words and gestures are accompanied by music, however, one must tread softly, for music is brimming with ‘emotional’ qualities that are not so easy to define, qualities with their own logic.

To come back to my question, i.e. whether the ‘listener’ is able to perceive nuances and ‘cracks’ in the body of music (e.g. between the Musinculus and the Musical): yes, she is able to, definitely; the more she listens, the better can she discern and tune up her perceptions. The shift from performer’s to listener’s perspective, however, translates into a shift in the issues streaming through the cracks: these travel from the dimness and the intense urgent focus of performer’s kitchen to the brightness of the salon, to pose and engage in more general inquiries. The change of scenery calls for yet another transposition: from studying the twofold side of music our attention is now zoomed out to reveals a larger picture that exposes a new set of concerns, e.g. of (performer : character) relationship, or of (voice : body) dynamics. Zooming out further still inevitably reveals the ultimate tension – (physical : musical).

This larger picture is worth a more careful consideration.

Bodies <-> Voices

The tension between voice and body has long been a topic in opera studies. Opera researcher Jelena Novak defines this disparity as a ‘gap:’ as a “break and imbalance” when “what I see (the body) and what I hear (the voice) at the same time do not follow expected, usual form of mutual representation” (Novak 2011). This gap has been problematized and attended to through different ontological perspectives and to different ends. Music historian Carolyn Abbate, for example, boldly declares most conventional opera characters deaf to their and others’ music (in *Unsung Voices* 1991). This conclusion is a result of Abbate’s appreciation of the opera spectacle from the perspective and laws of everyday life. Commonsensically

¹⁴⁸ An expression apropos Anna Netrebko’s Manon in the Los Angeles Opera from 2006
<https://movieweb.com/hollywood-beat-pole-dancing-at-the-opera/>

speaking, opera characters do appear unaware of the fact that instead of talking to each other, they relate and communicate through music. The logical, if disturbing conclusion, then, is that, indeed, opera characters must be musically deaf, or in Abbate's wording, "they do not hear the music that is the ambient fluid of their music drenched world" (Abbate 1991: 119).¹⁴⁹ This view emphasizes the distinction between the body of the performer and that of the character – the former is aware of the music, the latter is not. Is not this gap reciprocal to the gap between the ventriloquist and her dummy? asks Novak in an article titled "Throwing the Voice, Catching the Body" (2011), where 'throwing the voice' is a common expression in ventriloquism. This is a good question. In his book on the phenomenon, *Dumbstruck* from 2000th, literary scholar Steven Connor points that when animated by ventriloquist's voice given to it, the dummy "appears to have a much wider range of gestures, facial expressions and tonalities, than when it is silent" (Connor 2000: 36). Indeed, when Manon 'catches' Netrebko's voice, she receives not only a "wider range of tonalities," but, in fact, life and consciousness. Netrebko herself, like the ventriloquist, does not exist but as a moot body – becoming wilfully deaf to singer's voice, all we listeners hear is the voice of Manon. We see the body of the performer and hear the voice of Manon, coming as if from somewhere else, from metaphysical voice-land. Where Netrebko is the equanimous, omniscient master behind the scenes, Manon is a charming and fascinating dummy; catching the voice, she herself does not 'hear' the music, as Abbate submits.

'Musical deafness' is a diagnosis we must reconcile with, if we consider opera an everyday affair, an ordinary world like our own, in which we are aware of music only when we explicitly perform or listen to it.

But opera is nothing like ordinary. In his opera ontology composer and music theorist Edward Cone defines opera as a fictional world, "the world of music" (in Kivy 1993: 142), where characters' thoughts and actions are manifested musically, and where music and singing are the ordinary mode of communication. In this world, opera characters are the composers of their own music and the orchestral music is a product of the imagination of the collective musical consciousness. Of orchestral music, the opera characters are not consciously aware, neither are they aware of their and others' music; subconsciously,

¹⁴⁹ Musical deafness is demonstrated by most all conventional operatic characters, except for those in rare cases who's singing is explicitly marked as performance, e.g. Carmen's *Seguidilla*, Cherubino's "Voi Che Sapete," Olympia's doll song – these songs Abbate dubs 'phenomenal' vs. the 'noumenal' music of the 'usual' opera singing. By other opera researchers the dichotomy between said and sung music has been identified as 'artistic' performances in the fictional world of opera vs. 'nonartistic' singing (Penner 2013), or as 'realistic' vs. 'operatic' singing (Cone 1989).

however, they are so (Cone 1989: 136-137) – like fish of water, opera characters are unconscious of music, which is their medium, through which they communicate and think. What this proposition means, regarding the gap between voice and body I am interested exploring, is that where for Abbate the conscious gap is somewhat external, between the singing body of the performer (aware of music) and the voicebody of the character (unaware of music), for Cone the focus and the tension are between the body and voice of the character itself – the music and the voice are the larger sub-consciousness from which Manon derives the limited understanding of her self-aware singing body. Where this vast music-consciousness that is opera's medium comes from, is a question of acousmatism. Acousmatic, is music “that is heard without its origin being seen” (Chion 1999: 97). Introduced in the 1950s by French composer Pierre Schaeffer in regard to *musique concrete*, the concept describes the asymmetry between voice and body. Indeed, in opera we enter a world of sound, enraptured by the consciousness that flows through voice. But the voice itself, the voice without a body, needs support and attachment: the acousmatic voice is a “voice in search of origin, in search of a body” (Dolar 2006: 60). By the virtue of such reasoning, the body – moot and machinic – too, is in a search of a voice. . . . The acousmatic voice and the invisible body – what a pair!

The gap between voice and body is additionally deepened by conventional opera staging: it is either that bodies are neglected, shadowed by the fetishized exuberant voice, pretending that they are not there, or they perform in a different key, like in the case of Manon-Netrebko. The challenge, Jelena Novak argues, is in infusing the body with meaning and including it in the meaning production by reinventing, problematizing and reworking it (Novak 2011: 151). This suggestion is easier said than done. The effort of bringing the body up to the speed of the voice reflects the insurmountable effort to integrate the Musical and the Physical. Admittedly, the rethinking of opera performance from the past 20-30 years has yielded interesting results, especially in the field of opera staging. What, for example, American theater director Peter Sellars, German opera director Harry Kupfer, or the Spanish multimedia opera house La Fura dels Baus have done for the conventional opera performances has been revealing, inspiring, and provoking. In a sense, they have tried to musicalize the opera machinery, following Musical's drive to becoming-experiment, expansion, extension. Yet, as composer Christopher Fox point out, these and others conceptual directors of opera productions, despite “adding an attractive dose of contemporary relevance to old favorites,” have, in fact, only “attempted to cover up the absence of new ideas by shoe-horning old texts into new theatrical shapes” (Fox 2010). Fox warns of the dangerous, institutionalized shift in meaning production in these directors' brilliant *coup de*

théâtre by fostering “the growth of a culture in which it seemed to be the producer-director, rather than the composer or librettist, who created the ultimate meaning of any operatic project (Ibid.).

Whether adopting drastically sparser language, or moving towards a more abstract, more medium-like and less representative presence, the musicalizing of the body must be done on body’s own territory and on no other. To express the nuance encoded in the voice, our sopranos have to go to a different acting school than the one tracing the template of theater drama. Christopher Fox wonders, appropriately, whether the “new reformed opera will (..) have something to do with the great theatrical innovators of the last 100 years – Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch” (Fox 2010)? Perhaps it should. But before rushing with solutions, we must accept that the problem with grasping and rendering the Musical is a real, fleshy problem, rooted in the fact that musicians do have physical bodies that have not necessarily evolved for making music, but whose capacities are nevertheless used to that end.

You Can’t Catch Me...

No matter – never mind. No materiality – no (self)consciousness.

No body – no voice.

No sound – no music.

I began this chapter by asking what is the nature of the perceived discrepancy between what a music piece declares it is through its performing, transient sound form, and what it seems it wants to be, as outlined in its text body. One of the suggested answers is that this discrepancy may stem from the latitude in proficiency with which our different faculties and modalities translate the Musical into the Physical. E.g. the performing-the-Musical voice, it was proposed, is more advanced in grasping and conveying musical subtleties than the performing-the-Musical body. It is possible that the rapport between the voice and the Musical is not even a matter of practice and exposure, but rather of the bio-cultural specifics of our perceptual abilities – we hear the voice and see the body. The visual and the auditory are two not simply different, but in a sense, perpendicular worldviews, which construct two contrasting *Umwelts*. In his research “Musicológica Kamayurá,” published in 1978, the Brazilian anthropologist Rafael José de Menezes Bastos discusses the Amazonian tribe

Kamayurá's auditory cognizing of the world, their 'world-hear' as opposed to 'world-view'.¹⁵⁰ In this tribe's world, the sound is not intangible and elusive, but dense, opaque and three-dimensional. "Seeing for the Westerner is the privileged instrument of body technic as far as the senses are concerned," reminds us Menezes Bastos and contrasts this with Kamayurá's system of senses' grading, in which the word for 'hear,' *anup*, is superior to *cak*, the word for 'see'. The superiority of the ear over the eye is reflected in a corresponding hierarchy of metaphoric concepts, e.g. *anup* also means 'to comprehend' and 'to understand,' whether *cak* is fathomed as 'to know' and 'to identify'. The eye, then, is good for recognizing things and objects for what their function and purpose is, but the ear alone hears what those things and objects mean. Is this dichotomy between hear and see a divide along the axis 'West and the rest' or does it stem from deeper and older source?

The world-hear is horizontal, like a rainforest canopy, made of centers and meanings. Canadian philosopher Marshal McLuhan submits that this world understanding is dominant in preliterate societies and proceeds:

Until writing was invented, we lived in acoustic space, where the Eskimo now lives: boundless, directionless, horizonless, the dark of the mind, the world of emotion, primordial intuition, terror. Speech is a social chart of this dark bog (McLuhan 1960).

Speech, and music, we may add. In this resonant space, McLuhan notes, there are no connections, but "only interfaces and metamorphoses" (in Probes). Contrasting it to the visual space founded on hierarchies, continuity, linearity and compartmentalization, McLuhan describes the auditory vicariously, via an obscure Medieval definition of God, provided by the 12th century's *Book of the 24 Philosophers*: it is "the intellectually knowable sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere" (Findlay-White & Logan 2016). "The eye explores surfaces," Joachim-Ernst Berendt writes in *Nada Brahma*, "whereas the ear cannot discern anything that does not penetrate" (Berendt 1991: XIX-XX). Thus considered, the plane of hearing populated by meanings and milieus, flows and encounters, interfaces and metamorphoses, of moments, is a metaphor for the Implicate Order, while the visual plane and the visible world corresponds to the Explicate. By extension, anything perceived by the eye is but an abstraction of the whole implicated in the acoustic and penetrated by the ear. That is to say, the body is contained into the voice. Or

¹⁵⁰ When discussing the visual and the auditory in regards to music, one cannot do without mention of the third sense with a formative impact, the tactile. Aspects of the tactile were already considered in the discussion of the body-voice, performer-character, and generally, physical-musical relations. For the purposes of this chapter, the tactile as such will not be explicitly addressed.

rather, it is a hierarchical structure abstracted out of the destratified grassroots rhizomatic reality occupied by the voice, like the explicate matter is coagulated out of the fundamental ground of the implicate reality of consciousness.

By now, I have observed a number of tensions and discrepancies in our musicking – tensions between hearing and seeing, between the voice and the body, between the melody and the accompaniment, between the text and its performance. The questions I have posed in this relation have mostly been oriented in the direction of said tensions' resolve, pair by pair. In the spirit of the theories used in my thesis, I wonder, could these problems have a single solution? The answers I seek may be the orbit of the holomovement, i.e. that, which integrates the Implicate and the Explicate, and which itself is the movement and the 'source of life'. The integration of implicit and explicit information follows the Musical like a shadow from the very beginning of its symbiosis with the Physical. First, as the Musical is unfolded from Musika and integrated into Physical reality frame's explicate forms, like the Musinculus and consequently, the Music Work. Then, on the level of the Performance as these explicate forms are enfolded into spacetime's holomovement via the living sound and the 'message of the medium'. Finally, on the level of the individual, as one strives to unfold and integrate Musical's meaning into one's own consciousness. The harmonious accord of this multiple integration planes is of paramount importance for the individual and the Musical consciousness alike: it is by integrating meaning that we organize and create consciousness, thus contributing our share to the Absolute Unbounded Manifold's (AUM) process of organization. The higher the level of organization – the higher the consciousness, as both Thomas Campbell and the neuroscientist Giulio Tononi submit: 'integrated information' is, in fact, Tononi's definition of consciousness proposed in one of the most promising and plausible theories of recent years, the Integrated Information Theory (Tononi et al. 2016).

And herein lingers the answer of the question I posed earlier, remained unanswered until now. Can the epignosis of the work be translated into gnosis and correspondingly, performed and shared? To answer, one needs to fathom performance as integration. Something happens during performance that makes it possible for the humble Musinculus and the insecure Sapiens to transcend their limitations and to share their secret. In the chariot of the performance, Musinculus and Sapiens are pulled by Musical's three horses. The first one, Time, starts-off the machinery in practice-rehearsed movement, making it all possible. The second one, Desire, dashes and adds speed, crazed by inevitability and danger. The third horse is without a name: he simply knows the way, tuned into some ineffable Implicate Order. These are the three levers of performance: Time-movement, Desire-danger and

Something like a blind belief in (one's) larger consciousness, in a 'Me' as opposed to 'I' (discussed in the Intermission). The 'Me' that we have practiced and trained for so long has all the information and seems to know how to play so that the Work would disclose as this particular being and not as another – the 'Me' knows what the 'I' vaguely infers. When all three of these moments are integrated – and they must be integrated! – the secret of the Work is heard singing. Even if we don't understand it, we experience its meaning as epignosis, overriding the gnosis altogether.



. . . or so the story goes. Integration is a problematic endeavor for both the human being and the Music work. 'Made in our image' and dependent on us for its existence, the Music work can be played or delivered, i.e. integrated, just as 'perfectly' as we are able to conceive of it. Constrained by our deficits and limitations, we have inadvertently imposed them onto the Musinculus and its higher evolution, the Music work. Being ontologically multiple (Kania 2017), the Music work simply cannot, by design, be completely disclosed in a single performance – it lacks the means to do so. The glitches, shadows and cracks we notice betray these shortages in integration – they are the markers of the conflict between agenda and abilities, between music working toward integrating the physical, and music having to face the constraints of this goal. Humans, too, struggle with the disadvantages of the single performance design project that they are as Free Will Awareness Units in physical reality frame. We don't know ourselves how to 'be perfect' other than as singular slices at a time, e.g. the Pure, the Passionate, the Expressionist, or, alternatively, in the space of dichotomies, e.g. melody-accompaniment, score-performance, voice-body. The impossibility to make others, and even ourselves, fully aware of our own penumbral spectrum, reflects in our inability to realize *Gretchen* in her wholesomeness or the *Valse* in its secret folds and orifices – all we as artists are able to, is to pick and choose between Music work's moods and hairdos, between different masks through which we can perform its personae. Only if and when we learn how to integrate all of our multiple experiences and personae and to bring them to accord, might we be able to perform the 'perfect' realization of the Music work. Reciprocally, when we know how to perform the Music work perfectly, we may be well able to live our lives 'in the right form'. . .

We have, indeed, tried to make music fit into our shoes. In the European art tradition, the beginning of music's humanization could be chased back to the 'divine' vocal chant of Roman

church music.¹⁵¹ Conceptually, music evolves from tracing the face of the Almighty and being a cosmic phenomenon in the Medieval, through becoming-magic in the Renaissance, to the age of the Enlightenment, when the vast domain of musical topoi zooms in a familiar fleshy form, as an intense exploration of Man. The musical language, too, adapts to the growing demands for ever-greater realism, through experimenting with richer textures, more complex rhythms, deeper expressivity. Lured in this pursuing of 'life-like' representational art,¹⁵² the old vocal polyphonic style evolves into more man-like homophonic semblance. Harmony gradually takes over the polyphonic discourse, considerations like 'variety' or what sounds 'pleasant' topple the sacred rule and the impersonal play of numbers. Harmony emerges from within counterpoint, and from within it in turn – as Venus out of the sea foam – emerges the concept of tonality. It is tonality – this coded grid system of vertical allegiances and horizontal filiations – that places centerstage the Individual: The Hero, his societies, his shadows. In the symphonies and sonatas of the Classical and the Romantic periods the instrumental music language comes so very close to becoming-human. Consider: the theme of the sonata form is an order-word that literally tells you what to think; it is so dense and concrete, almost three-dimensional – you can practically see it. From the first sound onward, the music development colors the blueprint of One's destiny: 1. Introducing the Hero and establishing the territory of his encounters, 2. The Hero leaves the territory to gain experience through trials and tribulations, 3. The Hero returns to re-establishing the territory and to insure order. In music, this narrative is portrayed through tonal networks of melodies and motives, conversing and evolving against the dramatic backdrop of thinner or richer harmonic codes and textures, which accompany, reflect, oppose, challenge and comment on Hero's actions. Tonal music depicts all these intricacies with fine strokes, and we can hearsee that it is itself becoming-man.

But, it must be assumed, the tonality-based musical progeny of the common practice period with all its forms and conventions – which is virtually all pop music and practically all music performed in opera and concert halls today – may not be the best or the most interesting becoming of the Musical, at least not for those who are interested in latter's evolution, and also probably not for the Musical itself. The musical experimentation in 20th and 21st

¹⁵¹ Coincidentally, such is the argument presented in Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947) by the semi-fictional Naziesque intellectual Dr. Chaim Breisacher, in chapter 28.

¹⁵² The pressure toward realism is particularly obvious in painting, where from the beginning of 15th century set of new techniques, and especially *perspective*, come to replace the medieval portrayal of the universal through flat perspective, repetitious faces with no emotion, general lack of expression. "Perspective is an art technique for creating an illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface... [It] is what makes painting (...) look 'real,'" defines artist Marion Boddy-Evans (2018).

centuries reveals a multiverse of potential musical becomings; the modern and post-modern musical discoveries expose the ‘humanizing’ of music as too prescriptive, too stratified and coded within its “anthropological constraints” (Han 1998: 13). In all fairness, the reluctance of commitment to becoming-man may not necessarily mark a difference between the Musical and the Human: the latter, too, is not too pleased with the human condition. Doesn’t the whole story of our ‘human, all too human’ evolution march under the banner of Overcoming? Of becoming-more-than-man in a post-human world? Like music, humans too find the anthropological constraints claustrophobic.

Perhaps the biggest difference between men and music is that where we seem to have limited choice on matters like change and personal improvement, music has more and then some. Bounded by time and history, by the speed of the collective evolution, by our physical limitations and cultural codes, by our technologies, we have little faith in Overcoming. Music seduces us with promises for an unrestrained experimentation – expansion, extension, enhancement of the given material, of the given medium, of the given body. Through it, we vicariously – and safely! – experiment with ourselves. The sole request of music, in search of its bodies, is this: Play with me! And we do, but there is an insurmountable distance between us. No matter how fast a runner, all one is to catch and pin down is Musinculi skeletons, while the prize, the Musical, rests obscure. Music, in turn, tries each and every body that comes its way, and yet it always remains elusive and found in no place and in no person. “By this detachment from an essence, it gains in ubiquity. If it is not found anywhere, it can attach to various supports to spread everywhere: it becomes rope, throat, electricity, vinyl” (Serres in Detry 2012).

“The sound world is not a space we can enter; it is a world we treat at a distance,” submits Lydia Goehr (1999). Distance is the way between us and the Musical. It allows us to perceive one another as different. Because the Musical can neither be caught, nor tamed and studied, one is best to surrender. Loosen the reins and let one’s larger consciousness (the nonconscious ‘Me’) organize and integrate its meanings. Surrender does not necessitate understanding. Max Martin, the Swedish pop-song-writer, admits that he loves listening to jazz, because he finds the fact that he does not understand jazz liberating: “Music stays just music. I just listen instead of listening to what kind of bass drum they are using” (Gradvall 2016). Listening to Chinese radio in my car, ‘I’ am lost in the Mandarin speech, where the Musical freely roams, inflecting words full of meaning, which I don’t understand. The Musical rejoices in the encounter with the unknown, with the unknowable.



Where ‘distance’ is a diagnosis, ‘integration’ is a cure. Provided one is eager, open and accepting, shouldn’t it be possible to overcome this distance between the Physical and the Musical? To soak in the Musical, to be in the middle of it – what that might be like? To musicalize our mindbody enough so the dimensional wall between us and the Musical implodes?

V INTERZONE

How Not to Make Yourself a Body without Organs

Disclaimer: If you feel you need to stop reading at any point, please feel free to do so, I know this text is not for everyone.

“This must be what food poisoning feels like,” I thought when I first experienced Tanya Tagaq.

It was in 2013, an online video of her live performance in Puebla, Mexico, from 2010.¹⁵³ Following with the musical transformations, my impressions proceeded from wonder to curiosity, from disbelief to fascination, to settle in as general anxiety; toward the end I was experiencing an altogether new emotion – a residual awe mixed within something bitter and pulsating resembling disgust. The physical dimension of these sensations went along the lines of goose bumps, spine needles, sweat, and finally something alive and impossible, a sickening feeling in the stomach. Impressed beyond reason, I started considering what had I had for lunch and wondering if this could really be a food poisoning: I so struggled to believe what Tanya was doing. With no regard for personal space or even propriety, she has hurled herself into the collective subconscious, summoning unawaken until now (musical?) entities. Howling, whispering, grunting, snorting, gasping, screeching, weeping and cackling multiplicities called into being and physical space appeared and disappeared, vivid and palpable. Juggling with musical temporalities and unknown dimensions, Tanya was presenting the Plane of immanence. To a bystander, this felt unbearable.

Three years later Tanya Tagaq came to Amsterdam for a concert, part of Holland Festival.



How to perform the Musical? How to employ the Musical? How to understand shades of affects and perceptions transposed onto physical media when, startled by the gray light of consciousness they vanish in an instance?

¹⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKJbziZlogk>

Engaging with these questions through music – by a musician who looks on music from the inside and lacks the perspective of the fresh eye – is the natural but not necessarily the most illuminating approach; a technique of indirection or displacement might be needed as means of creating distance to gain clarity. Thus, before introducing the idea of Musika as the realm of the Musical, I had to dive into concepts like the Implicate Order (Bohm) or the Absolute Unbounded Manifold (Campbell) – these other realities that grow and mold the ineffable, the image of consciousness. The knowledge and the insight acquired through investigating these systems of organization are not only inspiring in terms of modes of thinking and applied philosophy: by differentiating conditions of being, they urge our musicologicas to fine-tune language in order to adequately address the discreet variety of phenomena crowded into the term ‘music’. As an answer to this call, I have sought it useful to distinguish between Musika, Musinculus, Musical, Musical entities and Musical assemblage. Among all personas of music to entertain in words and symbols, the Musical has been most precarious. It is the state of music that most finely resonates with the term ‘ineffable’.

Many have exercised in spelling the ineffable, and often it seems to me that I grasp it. Yet, there is a gap between understanding or intellectually knowing something and experiencing it, as dealing with it in a murky back alley. Thomas Campbell gives us a tip for systematically and intentionally experiencing the ineffable, meditation.¹⁵⁴ As a personal journey, where ‘progress’ is gained through discipline and ‘success’ is marked by small incremental repeatable steps, meditation is a training, rich of insights. Attaining the Musical through meditation, contemplation, and mindful observation, is a gnostic, Apollonian practice, which has opened for us the extraordinary world of music theories, philosophies and concepts. To catch the drastic Musical in action, though, when it least suspects the coming assault, to perturb it so to see it for what it is, one needs a lighter step and less baggage – the Apollonian panoply might prove heavy and clumsy when trying to ride the wild Dionysian mares. To catch the performing Musical, one needs to go on a hero journey out of music, to form a new territory, maybe even to call it ‘home’. Only then is one to return – as a stranger – and examine music with new sensitivity.

A way to exercise this risky operation – to meet the Musical on its own grounds – passes through the middle of a Body without organs (BwO).

“The concept of Body without organs is the most misunderstood concept on the planet!” This strong statement comes from the philosopher and Deleuzian scholar Ian Buchanan (2015).

¹⁵⁴ Campbell is endorsing a certain kind of transcendental meditation.

A brief consultation with *Google* seems to confirm his diagnose – while there are many appeals for help with understanding the concept, there are even more answers and explanations. Which, probably, only means that everyone has their own (understanding of) BwO. Mine, starts off with the following three points.

1) Strictly speaking, the BwO is a metaphor made popular by Deleuze, a yet another facet of the virtual super-field of flows, connections, moments (Bohm, the Implicate Order), information, potential, energy (Campbell, the Absolute Unbounded Oneness), which Deleuze might also call at different occasions field of difference, plane of immanence, plane of consistency, the rhizome. The metaphor in question points at a particular capacity of this field, namely, its formless, structureless, liquid condition, which remains so until various desiring machines plug into it and produce the explicit, the familiar. It is the brimming chaos of particles, vibrations, relations, affects and becomings, out of which God miraculates the world.

2) The BwO is also a real, actual body. There is a masochistic ring to this strange body, originally conceived by the schizophrenic poet and dramatist Antonin Artaud in his poem from 1947, “To have done with the judgment of god,” as an escape from the unbearable suffering of the human condition. There is nothing more useless than an organ, Artaud exclaims: the organs placed in man by god¹⁵⁵ have their shapes, properties and shelf life over which man has no control – but god does; in order to free man from this painful alien machinery we must re-anatomize man’s body, to de-organ-ize it, to free man by making him a body without organs. In his initial elaboration of the concept, Deleuze is influenced by psychoanalyst Melanie Klein’s conceptions of urinary vs. anal objects developed in Klein’s seminal book from 1932, *Psychoanalysis of Children*. Urine here is seen as a smooth mixture without parts and capable of melting, which removes all attachments, in contrast to the anal objects, with which we establish complex love-hate relationships and with which we form pleasurable or painful dependencies. Significantly, the Klein-inspired BwO is a focal point of two related positions – the nursing infant’s and the schizophrenic’s reality. As it is not simple for neither to split bad from good, which is a necessary, developmental psychological stage, the inherently unstable schizoid position of the BwO becomes particularly appealing. “What is opposed [to bad partial objects is not good ones, but] is rather an organism without parts, a body without organs, with neither mouth nor anus, having given up all introjection or

¹⁵⁵ ‘God’ in Artaud is a lowercase character, a ‘god.’

projection, and being complete, at this price,” writes Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1990: 188).

Finally, the concept of BwO appears in full regalia in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, in the plateau “How do you make yourself a body without organs?” Here, like in Artaud’s, the BwO is no stranger to pain and masochism: one of the ‘practical’ answers to the title question, for example, is sewing together all body parts (Deleuze and Guattari 2013: 175). The essence of Deleuze and Guattari’s proposition is this: besides organs our body has intensities, gradients, vibrations – it is this virtual potential that man needs to unleash to reset and fertilize herself. In principle, this could be achieved through careful experimentation or through conjunction with other bodies (without organs). Warning: however creative, liberating and joyful this experience could be, the authors advise, it needs to be approached with great care and wisdom, for it is a rather fine and dangerous endeavor. Which brings us to

3) In fact, the BwO could never be reached, it is a limit point where it all hangs on a blade of grass – a breakthrough or breakdown: upon reaching it, you die (Buchanan 2015). Therefore, playing on the cusp is the place, and great caution is the way. Great caution, the “art of dosages:” you don’t measure your overdose with a sledgehammer, “you use a very fine file” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013: 185). Therefore, in the effort to make oneself a BwO as means of liberation from the unbearable weight of natureculture strata one is smashed between and under, one should most meticulously scrutinize one’s methods to ensure keeping wild destratification at bay. For there is something worse than stratification, Deleuze and Guattari warn: “the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which bring them back down on us heavier than ever” (Ibid.). The craft and forethought put in the approach of how safely to self-destratify and dance with the unlimited energy of the (Implicate Order, AUM and the) Plane of immanence, predicate the outcome and spell the difference between, what Deleuze and Guattari define as, the ‘empty’ (the masochistic sewn together BwO) and ‘full’ BwO (the free-flowing creativity generator).

As I have decided that the BwO, free from objects, identities and significations, and brimming with intensities, gradients and vibrations, is a field that seems particularly conductible to overcoming the distance and meeting the Musical I am interested in, I apply this concept, with its associated language and imagery, to my encounter with Tanya Tagaq.



Sitting on the stairs of the full-to-the-brim Bimhuis, I was waiting to see in action what has become my emblem of the Dionysian Musical and an embodiment of the absolute limit of drastic music. Tanya came on stage – a little, gentle, shy thing. Smiling, she looked at the full semi-amphitheatric hall and said the following: “If you feel you need to leave at some point, please do. It’s OK with me, I know my performance is not for everyone.” Having already a taste of where this strange disclaimer might be coming from, I knew I am about to wade into strange waters. In fact, I had already considered my exit options: unfortunately, the only exit was at the far end of the hall. I remember looking at the senior couple sitting on the stairs next to me and trying to cheer myself with the assurance that if they can endure Tanya, so surely can I – though likelier, I thought, they will opt for the exit at some point and I can then follow them.

The reason for these overly cautious premeditations is that the previous year I had had an unforetold spell of anxiety and panic attacks, which resulted in some enduring depression and insomnia. This misfortune had taken me – for a period of time – way out of my comfort zone and had shown me in practice the true meaning of the obscure and technical term ‘destratification’. Although now, a year later, I had succeeded to re-stratify most of my Ego/self and my integrity back, I was keenly aware of my vulnerability and was apprehensive of intense mental challenges. Actually, the concert of Tanya Tagaq was probably the worst place for me to be at that moment but, as impressed with her old *YouTube* video as I was, I simply had to take the risk and to experience her live.

As always with Tanya, what was going on in my head and body was at least as bizarre as what was going on stage. The ordeal lasted about an hour and I remember that by the last third or quarter of it I had completely parted with any hope for an early exit. Instead, a fear stemming from the inky depths of my reptilian brain has gradually taken me over, a fear never experienced before, at least not in Holland and most certainly not at a concert. Pathetic as it sounds, it was a gut feeling auguring that here and any moment now something terrible will happen. The tension in the air was so visceral that I could see it occurring –

Someone having weak nerves and a bad day just cannot bear this impossible outrage labeled as ‘concert’; Someone starts screaming, causing a mass commotion; bewildered people rushing on all sides with hands in the air, pushing and pressing each other; elderlies falling down deadened by the human stampede; younglings crying; everyone in a frantic hustle for the tiny door marked EXIT, away and out, where there is air to breathe in and sky light to live by . . . in short, an apocalyptic vision. But it was just my best-case scenario. What my principal

idea actually intimated was that, in fact, Someone-with-the-weak-nerves had never ever intended to do any screaming – she had a gun with which she was now going to shoot Tanya Tagaq. Or maybe, worse still, there are people with knives in the crowd and they will kill her, and blood will be spilled, and there will be havoc . . . Whatever it was, I was waiting for it to happen.

But it didn't. The event ended, people clapped, me included. Someone (else) gave Tanya a large flower bouquet, in her girly voice she said, "Oh thank you, you are so kind" and off she went. The crowd dissipated quietly and orderly, as most crowds in Holland do nowadays. Only after we had left the building behind, I dared to look at my husband who was with me, searching his eyes. Even though there was no screaming and shooting, it still seemed to me we had attended something of an illegal nature, it felt like we shared – by the sheer act of being there – the guilt and the responsibility for what happened. That we participated in a criminal, no: incestuous act, and from now on this will weigh on us forever as a secret, as a sin. "What do you think?" I asked. My husband returned my side glance squarely. "Oh, great fun, she is a force of nature," he replied and by the way he intoned this phrase I knew that we have not only not shared the last hour-moment, but that there never was Someone with weak nerves in the crowd, besides me perhaps.

In all my years of concert-going I have never fallen prey to music in such a manner. What happened in the Bimhuis was an unholy assemblage becoming on the territory suspended between my particular psychological condition and Tanya's performance. As I already mentioned the former, a few words on the latter are in order.



Tanya Tagaq is marketed as an Inuit throat singer, which she is in the sense that she is an Inuit and she uses traditional throat singing techniques. However, this label does not give justice neither to her, nor to First Nation's throat singing. Tanya's style is unique and extremely corporeal, she is indeed writing herself (Cixous 1976) using the voicebody as a machine for sound producing, as a tool for channeling signifieds, as a funnel to the prehistorical, as crystal ball. Feminist writer Hélène Cixous' urge to women to "proclaim this unique empire – their inner world" – has here become fully satiated: Tanya overflows; her "desires have invented new desires," her "body knows unheard-of songs" (Cixous 1976: 876) that she now renders audible. But the gist of Tanya's performance resides beyond the unique and the singular, beyond shades of gender and beyond the red-hot edge circumscribing our humdrum reality: it gushes from behind the walls of culture that guard us from the

unknown. Tanya's Dionysian multiplicities are spelled by the unconscious, the animalistic, the tribal, the sexual. Headfirst, she plugs into a pre-personal realm of an uroborean Implicate Order where everything is enfolded into everything else – the mother into the witch, the wolf into the newborn, the laughter into the white plains of Nunavut, the bloodthirsty murder into the shaman's weep. Here, Tanya is stage, actor and drama at once. Her performance showcases the deep, immanent integrity of creation – beneath its multiple faces and roles,

beneath all its godliness and violence

– its *via crucis* –

it is all meat.¹⁵⁶

Life and death trajectories.

Space and time movements.

Change.

Difference

and repetition.

This creation is pre-moral or meta-moral – the morality that makes us shiver by the idea of Kali eating the flesh of her offspring is extorted by the life-and-death double helix bit by bit, and with it, we have built the ark of our Apollonian consciousness, the walls of our culture. And while Melanie Klein's infant struggles to split good from bad objects and, thus, instinctually retreats to the liquid spacetime of the organless body, Tanya wilfully becomes it, the Body without organs. She performs the passage from the magic, the collective, fractal and enfolded, to the subjective, religious, secessionist and abstracted: the passage from the un-formed to the in-formed, or in the words of Deleuze, from noise to voice (*The Logic of Sense* 1990). But contrary to the historical, linear order of affairs – the way reality is delivered to

¹⁵⁶ "Pity the meat! (...) Meat is not dead flesh; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, 'Pity the beasts,' but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is a common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility" (Deleuze 2005: 17).

our senses through ever narrower intent-determined abstractions – Tanya performs the passage backwards, forwards, sideways, upside-down and inside-out. . . .

Unquestionably, this process is a powerful destratification technique: as anyone can observe, during performance Tanya is not Tanya, for she is in the delirium of becoming-acoustic. In this delirium, she has unraveled, or to use again Hélène Cixous' language, she has depropriated herself:

Body without end, without appendage, without principal “parts.” If she is a whole, it's a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects, but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organized around any one sun that's any more of a star than the others (Cixous 1976: 889).

In ritualistic depropriation into this body made of centers, without ends or margins and without organs, Tanya herself is becoming-acoustic space, made of “simultaneous and diversified information,” “surrounded by sound – from behind, from the side, from above” (McLuhan). Acoustic Tanya dispenses with the Logos to lend her vocal medium to a range of glossolalic semi-formed and quasi-grammatical organelles. Although it is difficult to qualify them, it seems that unlike the Dadaistic juggling with nouns or Bohm's *rheomode* that made the verb a sovereign of the flowing movement, the explicated organelles are akin to ... not verbs ... not adjectives ... conjunctions! For the witch and the murderer nor the shaman but the piss or the wolf yet the healer so the deer even if the horror however the new life just as the burial – all blurs, screams and shimmers, torrenting through the voice. Through the unbecoming-voice. “Is not first through the voice that one becomes animal?” ask Deleuze and Guattari (in “Rhizome”). Starting with the smiley, gentle little Tanya, the Becoming-electrical picks up speed in transforming geographies, accelerating geometries, subtracting and negating anything individual and unique and stable from the whole, until she has enfolded us all into a multiplicity, a rhizome made not of things, but of what's between them – metamorphoses, movements, intensities.

Needless to say, this multiplicity presents us with an alternative form of organization than the one we are used to, it showcases the sub-reality of the individual ripped open inside-out. Like in Artaud's dream for the new, re-formed man with a body without organs, Tanya dances the “wrong side out” (Artaud 1975). To someone who observes this act from the outside, the “wrong side” conjugation is violent and disorienting, for nothing seems to be formed there yet: all is potential, speeds and affects. It is as if we enter into the sound itself

before its medium in-formation – is not all in-there pure potential, pressure, and speed? “What it would be like, to be in the middle of sound,” I have wondered in the past and here I am now, right in the middle. Surprisingly, this magical sub-reality manifests as an unbearable ordeal – for someone made of carbon bits, that is.

. . . In a few words, Tanya’s presentation overwhelms with its ultimate variability, which translates as chaos. This chaos arrives at our doors of perception as a two-fold problem: on the one hand we must deal with its content, on the other – with its expression. The content of Tanya’s virtual reality is dark – out of all possibilities existing in the primordial rhizome she accentuates the screwed up – death, suffering, evil.¹⁵⁷ However grim these movements already are, their effect is hugely amplified by the fact that they never quite become Evil or become Death, so we can face them, slay them and become the hero we are meant to be: they are always in a process of becoming – a sickening, dizzying continuous variation. On the top of this indeterminacy is added speed. As Deleuze and Guattari astutely point out, “Chaos is characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish” (1994: 42). Tanya’s stroboscopic performance combining speed and indetermination renders a becoming with extremely high entropy. Entropy, the hidden information.



In retrospect, I believe it was the swiftly shifting, insidiously undetermined quality of being, operated by palpable yet hidden principles that got me that evening. Somehow, until then I had been spared – not the idea that music could be evil – but the certainty that it can. Although I have been exposed to death metal, Mahler and Shostakovich, the idea of dread and realness of evil has never really seized me through music. Debussy compares the attraction of the virtuoso for the public to that of the circus for the crowd: there is always the hope that something dangerous may happen (Holmes 1989: 10). Although Tanya Tagaq is a dangerous virtuoso par excellence, the reason why she drove me to panic in fear for her life that night is, I think, my extreme openness at the time of performance, my vulnerable psyche, my own dealings with some shifty hidden realities. It was like a sympathetic magic where like produces like: Tanya performed a reality in which the musical entities harmonized with my slightly deterritorialized, slightly decoded, slightly destratified Ego-self, and the diffracted pattern produced some neurotic resonance. The territory on which we connected –

¹⁵⁷ I must specify that this is strictly my perception from that particular performance; others have defined Tanya’s images more generally as “primordial” or as “raw energy.”

this body without organs – raised an assemblage with density and intensity significantly past my then-current tolerance level. Coherence was lacking. Tanya Tagaq had found a way to make herself a body without organs – a ‘full’ one that celebrates, rejoices and rejuvenates – and to gift it to her audience. But the BwO is not and cannot be a gift. It has nothing to do with presents and good intentions, it is the farthest cry from Christmas and from lazy, friendly concert consumerism. I happened to connect and resonate with Tanya’s BwO, and in the process had fallen prey of that too violent of destratification of which Deleuze and Guattari warn. As a result, my outer membrane, the shell that protects my soft and moist insides and keeps me whole, had become partly unraveled, leaving the ‘wrong side’ out, exposed and vulnerable – the pre-atomized state of becoming-BwO. It is on this basis that a substantial difference of intent between Tanya and me become manifest: where her efforts and motivation are to de-organ-ize – and “dance the wrong side out,” my individual goal was to re-organ-ize – to stitch and smooth the rip, to make it all right again. A crucial incompatibility. So, instead of letting go of constraints and inhibitions and breakthrough the wall headfirst having graduated from Tanya’s academy “How do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs,” I was gasping, grasping for something – for any last blade of grass – that would help me hang on the edge and not fall into the whirling abyss.

How was I to stop this from happening?

Something we cannot see protects us from something we do not understand. The thing we cannot see is culture, in its intrapsychic or internal manifestations. The thing we do not understand is the chaos that gave rise to culture. If the structure of culture is disrupted, unwittingly, the chaos return. We will do anything – anything – to defend ourselves against that return (Peterson 1999: xi).

Perhaps my Nonconscious has crafted the idea of havoc-apocalypse-murder as a hastily put together emergency response to my quickly disintegrating cultural membranes and structures of protection. In the last analysis, perhaps it is not so strange that I had imagined someone killing Tanya Tagaq.