Mediating from within: metaxical amplification as an alternative sonic environment for classical music performance

Amaral, H.

I – Constructing Silence

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.
(W.B. Yeats)

Although the Cambridge dictionary defines silence as a period without any sound, silence as such does not really exist. As composer Pierre Schaeffer (2017 [1966], 74-75) recalls, '[t]he most profound silence is still a sound background like any other, and against it, the noise of my breathing and my heart stand out with unexpected solemnity'. Logically then, the environments in which I perform or listen to classical music are not silent either. This is evident in the case of the classical concert hall: apart from the music itself, there might be sounds produced by the audience and the musicians moving, coughing, grunting or breathing; there might be mechanical sounds produced by the instruments, such as bow crossings, guitar string squeaks, the beatings of an untuned piano, pedals pressed and released or piano hammers hitting the string; then there are ambient sounds, the sound of the ventilation, heating and light systems, the creaking of floors and chairs, electromagnetic interference from mobile phones and other transmission devices; if the doors or windows are open, or the space not properly isolated, there might be street sounds – rumbling from construction sites, cars passing by; when the concert is amplified, we might hear hisses, buzzes, electrical crackles, clicks and pops from the loudspeakers or audio feedback. In short, the classical concert environment is noisy, very noisy even. And yet, the history of the classical concert and the more recent history of the recording medium is marked by efforts to cleanse the acoustic environment, removing or minimising all sounds extraneous to the music in order to create a background of silence upon which music can shine undisturbed. How has silence come to be valued in classical performance as such an ideal background for the music?

This chapter examines how an environment free of sounds extraneous to the music – unwanted sounds: noise – may contribute to the reception and performance of classical music. The beginning of the chapter considers the historical developments in music reception since the appearance of the first public concerts in the Western world in the 18th century, including the establishment of new social codes and the emergence of a romantic aesthetics, and the later developments in the recording industry that cultivated music as an extraordinary experience. I show how this new musical experience was facilitated by silence, symbolically but also in practice, in particular in what concerns the interpretation, by the performer, and the access by the audience, to the temporally remote and closed universe of the musical work. Focusing particularly on the performer and drawing on my own experience, I argue, in what follows, that the mental activity traditionally required for the classical performer to be able to give a coherent interpretation of a musical work requires deep concentration and total absorption in the music, and that it unfolds best in environments that are sheltered and free of noise, and where our perception of time is reduced to the perception of the time of the music. The chapter ends with a chicken and the egg dilemma: does the music need silence or has it

become conditioned by silence? In attempting to answer this perhaps unanswerable question, this chapter paves the way for the subsequent chapters and the imagination of a practice freed from such absorption and silence.

Back in the 18th century, music-making, with few exceptions, was often integrated within other activities, such as court ceremonies, church liturgy, village dances and balls. With the appearance of the first so-called 'public concerts' (*concerts publics*) in France in the 1720s, music became the central event, and was heard by and for itself (Ledent 2008, 2). Concerts became known as 'spaces of realisation of autonomous music' (Heister 2003, 686). Still, in the beginning, concerts were not necessarily quiet. Music historian William Weber (1997, 678) reports about the babbly audiences of these events, which imitated the festive and social musical gatherings in the court and opera. Progressively, however, and especially in the Romantic period, there was a move towards a more restrained atmosphere and an ever-quieter environment. In this environment, perception was oriented in a particular way, maximising the attention of the performer and the spectator on the music. Although many types of concerts have coexisted since the 18th century and continue to do so today, this more sterile background became the standard mode of relating to music, still prevailing today in what I will call 'the classical concert'. [13, 14]

To understand the appearance of a silent background in the classical concert, it is necessary to examine in more detail the social, cultural and political landscape in Europe during the blossoming years of concert culture. When the first public concerts appeared, the continent was caught between two Revolutions, which historian Eric Hobsbawm (1996 [1962], 2) designates as 'the twin crater of a rather larger regional volcano'. The French Revolution had contributed to the emergence of democratic thought in various European nations, and of public cultural institutions disconnected from Church and Court, among which was the classical concert. 'In response to a shift in the political regime, the aesthetic regime invents new institutions and new figures', says sociologist David Ledent (2009, 1, my translation), reflecting on the establishment of the first public concerts in Paris, and how they were meant to function as a space of sharing beyond social boundaries, and ideological, religious and political arguments. Even though the public concert was originally envisioned as an 'open tribune' accessible by all citizens, it was soon claimed by the liberal bourgeois society, made rich by the rise of capitalist industry, which needed forms of leisure that would set it apart from both the aristocracy and the working class.

Partly, the new rituals developing in the concert hall, in particular the habit of being quiet and sitting still, can be attributed to new social codes emerging in bourgeois

[13] The historical overview that follows is based on 'Musical Materiality: Concert Formats, Curatorial Concerns and Promiscuous Interactions' (Amaral 2021a), an essay written during this research trajectory.

[14] I use the term classical concert in reference to Martin Tröndle, whose book *Das Konzert* (2011), translated in English into *Classical Concert Studies* (2021), has contributed greatly to the music curatorial field.

society across social spheres and evolving around notions of *réussite*, sobriety and composure. As sociologist Norbert Elias points out (2000 [1939], 397-398), composure belongs to a rationalised body that is best understood against the background of a new industrial reality driven by the economic interests of the bourgeois. Faced with the need to foresee the intentions of others in order to better control them, and at the same time, with the necessity of concealing one's intentions and emotions from others in order to avoid being exploited by them, the bourgeois, as the aristocrats had done before them, relied on their composure – a conscious form of resistance against the spontaneous expression of emotions – as refuge and shield. Acting composedly within the concert hall, the rationalised body displays power, epitomising an individual who observes the world with a certain detachment, while simultaneously profoundly aware of the gaze of their fellow spectators.

Apart from issues of power, the interiorisation of emotions and the avoidance of visible and audible displays of appreciation represented, for the bourgeois, a way to harmonise egalitarian ideals and an autonomous sense of self. The concert in a growingly democratic society represented a particular entanglement of public and private: in this context, sitting still allowed one to dive deeper into one's own listening experience, and it was simultaneously a mark of respect for one another's individual experience (Ledent 2009, 7-8). At the same time, the control of the body expressed a new and reduced tolerance for the corporeal in line with the growing puritanism among the middle classes, in which the composed body as a moral symbol played an important part. Tellingly, William Weber (1997, 690) also explains that the ascetic concert hall behaviour from the mid-1800s onwards was a way of cleansing the musical space from the 'libertinage' of the aristocracy common in European theatres and operas throughout the 18th century, and possibly also to curb the sexualisation of musical experience, such as the 'brain fever' outbursts of the aroused young female spectators of Rossini's *Moise* (Stendhal 1992 [1824], 2).[15]

The widespread popularisation of a new concert etiquette also reflects a profound change in the attitude to art. Despite their dominating social position, the bourgeois found themselves entangled in the growing webs of capitalism and subjected to rational forms of control and bureaucracy which, albeit less oppressive than the ones they imposed on the workers, still impacted their sense of individual autonomy. Because of these constraints and restrictions, there was a need for spaces in which dreams and desires could be acted out. The concert, understood as a special activity separated from everyday life, offered a socially accepted form of acting out these desires momentarily,

[15] For a general discussion on the puritan approach to the body in the 19th century see Corbin (2016b). Corbin argues that one of the reactions to the messiness of the industrial world was a vertiginous purification of many aspects of life in the 19th century. This purification included, for instance, the rise of a hygienist discourse promoting a clean body, fresh air and well-ventilated spaces (Corbin 2016b; Amaral 2021a); the invention of electricity and the idea that electricity could 'cleanse' communication, polluted air and the public space (Spiegel 1992, 110); or the depuration of mores that accompanied the rise of puritanism in bourgeois societies, such as Victorian England or Biedermeier Vienna (Hanson 1985; Scott 1994; Weber 1997).

through the music, even if only in the imagination. Ledent (2008, 4) emphasises how, while embodying the democratic ideals of the French Revolution, the concert also offered a refuge from the messiness and the transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution: 'In this century which consecrates machinery and technical reasoning, the classical concert seems to draw a space of resistance to the reduction of man to a productive force'. Similarly, sociologist Max Weber suggests that these artistic 'spaces of resistance' would have a much more profound and symbolic function than that of a mere activity of leisure: 'Art was constituted into a cosmos of its own values, ever more conscious, more coherent, more autonomous. It has a function of interworldly liberation, whatever the definition of the term: liberation from the everyday and, above all, liberation from the growing pressure of theoretical and practical rationalism' (cf. Buch 2018, 4, my translation). Such liberation came through music, with romantic performances appealing to the listener's subconscious (Dorian 1966, 219), stirring memories and associations, and making one dream about personal freedom through the freedom of their imagination.

Even more than a space of dreams and resistance, concerts became an occasion for bourgeois individuals aspiring to personal autonomy to expand and cultivate their sense of self, as well as to compensate for a lost sense of spirituality in an increasingly secularised world. The late 18th and 19th centuries indeed saw a new image of the individual take shape, the 'person', understood as a being possessing self-knowledge, with access and interest for one's emotional life and psychology, and having an individual consciousness. Various factors explain the individual's ascension to what anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1985 [1938], 20-23) calls the 'category of person'; the category emerging was hugely influenced by democratisation, the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie, German Idealism and theological pursuits such as pietist worship, which emphasised personal morality and the sacred nature of the individual. This new self-consciousness, coupled with the bourgeois' social aspirations, became manifest in the ability of the individual to represent themselves. Individuals came to hold the double position of living their life and at the same time observing this life and themselves through their own personal mirrors, reflecting on aspirations, learning to 'perform' and to forge a sense of the person they would like to be.[16]

When it comes to art, this new self-consciousness translated into a hope and belief that art could teach people something deep about themselves. In this respect, the Idealist thoughts of Immanuel Kant were extremely influential. Kant believed that the contemplation of art could be a source of self-knowledge and moral elevation. Raised in a pietist context marked by inner discipline and strict moral values, Kant saw the contemplation of art as a combination of intellectual activity and an activity of the senses requiring introspection, effort, reflective judgment and disinterest, without practical

[16] It was in this climate that US Senate member Henry Clay coined the expression 'self-made man 'in 1842, illustrating the period's dream of social mobility and equality of opportunity – to be born 'from nothing and, through ardour, perseverance and self-cultivation, go 'from rag to riches' (Wyllie 1954, 210).

intentions or for mere sensual enjoyment: art should be enjoyed in and for itself. Kant (n.d. [1790], n.p.) writes in this respect:

> [B]eautiful art is a mode of representation which is purposive for itself, and which, although devoid of [definite, translator's note] purpose, yet furthers the culture of the mental powers in reference to social communication. The universal communicability of a pleasure carries with it in its very concept that the pleasure is not one of enjoyment, from mere sensation, but must be derived from reflection; and thus, aesthetical art, as the art of beauty, has for standard the reflective Judgement and not sensation.

In music, aesthetic contemplation would involve deep attention to the music and intellectual effort, practice and experience to access the depths of a musical work. Psychologist Gregory Gorelik (2016, 290) has sought to describe the effects of aesthetic contemplation on the individual as such:

> For those who have [them], these experiences of illumination and enlightenment are in a different epistemic category than everyday encounters with people, places, and objects. [They] are marked by the feeling that some fundamental truth or revelation was glimpsed, and such experiences are often followed by a change in [one's] perspective on life and the nature of reality.

Contemporary artists and thinkers continue to posit listening as an arduous but deeply rewarding experience. For instance, for composer Helmut Lachenmann (cf. Orning 2014, 291), to listen to music means to observe oneself 'by listening to the spiritual process that a piece of music represents, by following this process, remembering where one comes from […]'. Likewise, philosopher and musicophile Jean-Luc Nancy (2002, 25) describes listening as a form of knowledge, reporting that an engagement with the music that resonates with the listener is a 'straining toward the self' ('être tendu vers soi'), that is, toward a presence to self and an awareness of the self as a sentient being. In short, listening has become a symbolic act with its own rules – an existential experience and engagement that composer and artist-researcher Paul Craenen (2020, 20-21) has summarised pertinently:

> At the beginning of the 19th century, the practice of music rose rapidly from a subordinate and decorative art form to become the most prominent in bourgeois culture. This ascending status was accompanied by a growing awareness that music can review a reality that is inaccessible to language, although not without effort from the listener. Partly under the influence of 18th century idealism and the philosophical ideas of Immanuel Kant, in early-Romantic music, listening was discovered to be an activity, something that listeners had to do for themselves. That insight gave listeners opportunities for personal development, but also entailed responsibilities. Listening was elevated to a task and an art, with the distinction between experts and amateurs gaining in importance. At the end of the 19th century, silent listening in concert halls became standard practice […]. These developments can each be placed in their own cultural and historical context but first and foremost they are all expressions of a belief that music can provide a meaningful experience if the listener makes the effort to focus entirely on what is unfolding within the music itself.

The introduction of silence as a background for music in the classical concert must be understood in the light of this existential experience, connected to the imaginary of silence in the Romantic period. This is when silence was viewed as a promise and a condition for the most private but also the most elevating experiences involving communication with the self and with the world. Corbin (2016a) refers to a compendium of Romantic writers reflecting on the potent and timeless presence of silence, to poets like Baudelaire and Chateaubriand, as well as to religious and mystical authors for whom silence was an omen, the sign of a 'presence in the air' waiting to be revealed. This is also the way silence appears in the artistic sphere, where, equated with the biblical nothingness that precedes the genesis, it forms the beginning of artistic creation: the white canvas of the painter, or Blanchot's white page vertigo, which he describes as 'a dike of paper against an ocean of silence' (ibid, 119). In a concert, silence precedes the music, resounding directly from the composer's soul (Hunter 2005).

These romantic considerations on silence connect to the classical definition of communication. In its classical sense and considered within a context much broader than the musical, communication is regarded as the transmission of thoughts, ideas, events and consciousnesses that precede the communication and that should be transmitted, ideally, without any loss to their proper sense and meaning (Derrida 1972). In order to achieve this purpose, the medium transporting a message from a sender to a receiver should be able to deliver this message in the best possible and most immediate manner. This idea lies behind the development of most communication technologies, developed in a way such as to be as efficient and neutral as possible. In media theory, this understanding of the role of the medium is based on the notion and the intention of an 'excluded middle' (Alloa 2020, 148). The principle of the 'excluded middle' has entered media theory through the Aristotelian theory of the syllogism, where the term uniting the first and second proposition of the syllogism, the middle term or *meson*, becomes irrelevant for reasoning once the final deduction has been made, and is thus excluded from this reasoning.[17] Transposed to the context of communication, the principle of the 'excluded middle' presupposes that materialities should disappear in the act of communication so as to establish a direct contact between message and receiver. This would make sense when one considers, for example, that when one reads a book or watches television one is interested in the stories and the content that they tell or show, and not in the physical presence of those objects. To be able to focus on their content, these physical objects should remain unnoticed, or 'disappear' from one's perception. The disappearance of the book and television is what allows understanding the message or meaning they are conveying. Too present, the medium clouds the transmission, like

[17] A syllogism is a form of deductive reasoning derived from two propositions. To better understand the role of the *meson* in the syllogism, let us look at the well-known example 'all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, hence Socrates is a mortal'. As Aristotle explains: 'If A is predicated of every B, and B of every C, A must be predicated of every C' (Aristotle 1995, 123). In the example of Socrates, manhood (B) is used as a term of passage between Socrates (C) and mortality (A); it is an operative term that highlights what is common between Socrates and mortality, establishing a direct relationship between the two terms. In this context, manhood has no function other than that of establishing this relationship, which is why it can disappear in the final proposition.

for instance when the pages of old books are stuck together, and we keep forgetting what we have just read in the process of unsticking them; or when signal interference affects the quality of the televised content so badly that instead of images, we see a frozen or pixelated screen.

Communication becomes complexified in artistic-interpretive practices, such as mainstream theatre or musical interpretation, due to their representational character. What representation means here is the practice of 'presenting again' an original idea that has been encoded or 'kept alive' through media such as musical notation, and that will be rekindled through communication (in music, through the performer's interpretation). As pianist and artist-researcher Paulo de Assis (2018, 11) articulates pertinently:

> With "representation," I am referring to the performance "of something, or, more precisely, to the performance of something "as" something, which implies the existence of something "original," prior to the performance, something that is then rendered perceptible through some sort of "representation" in the moment of the performance.

In other words, musical performance as a representation would consist in the acoustic rendition of something that is both exterior and anterior to it, that is, something that exists beyond the performance. This abstract and quasi-mystical notion of music as transcending time and space was central in the development of Romantic musical discourse. As musicologist Nicholas Cook (2001) explains, the musical work in its romantic definition is viewed as an imaginary object that somehow pre-exists the performance and which 'continues to exist long after the sounds have died away'. Performance, in this context, represented a promise of access to this (musical) beyond. Thus, in the same way that the television should 'disappear' from my perception so that I can watch the film, the media employed in the performance and the performance environment in general should not obstruct direct contact with the music: in acoustic terms, beyond the mediation of the music, they should be silent.

In what way does silence – silent media and a silent environment – contribute to direct contact with music? There is a sense, which I would qualify as 'spatial', in which the silencing of the media involved in the performance makes the listener and the performer feel that the music is physically closer to them, that is, that the sounds of the music come to them without obstruction. In this sense, silence must be understood as the absence of interferences which would disrupt the illusion of an unmediated sensuous experience of music. This possibility of an unmediated physical contact with the music has been realised in practice by certain innovations in instrumental technique, space acoustics and the making and tuning of musical instruments occurring since the 19th century, all of which are directed at the reduction of sounds extraneous to those of the music. These innovations were multiple. There was the popularisation of tuning systems that exterminated natural harmonics (considered out-of-tune) and the more homogenous and clear sound created by fine adjustment of instrument mechanics (Caznok 2015, 71). There were also developments in space acoustics, incipient at the time. These further

evolved to include the removal of background noise, complex isolation techniques and materials, and the construction of surfaces that eliminate excessive reverberation and reflection of sound to impart a feeling of intimate proximity. The aim of these innovations is that the music is heard clearly, as if told by the performer to each spectator directly and without interference, all the while keeping enough reverberation to make the listener feel immersed in the music.[18]

Next to the cleansing and adjusting of space acoustics, performers were challenged in matters of instrumental technique; for, as musicologist Mary Hunter (2005, 360) points out, it was important that music as the noblest of arts generated sounds as if they were produced 'by no human labor'. For performers, the thorough training of the body came to be considered and practiced in-and-of itself, on the grounds that the music can flow from it effortlessly. For this effect, pianists work relentlessly on etudes whose goal is to 'equalise' the ten fingers so that they can move about the keys with the same dexterity, and to train the pianist to bypass the mechanical noises of the piano, for instance by learning to pedal clearly and noiselessly. Hunter (ibid, 88) notes how the performing body was turned into a machine in the 19th century, 'with rectilinear grids upon which posture was mapped, and fiendish exercises devised to put the fingers in every conceivable configuration'. More poetically, Ledent (2008, 6) speaks of the promethean performer, their virtuosity as transcending all mechanisms and materialities. My own musical education is based on this notion of technical excellence: by learning to practice the work thoroughly at the instrument until technical difficulties are overcome, the work becomes second nature; as the work becomes part of my body, my body becomes the work. As an aspiring pianist I would obsess over and experiment with multifarious exercises to improve my own dexterity so that my fingers would become truly musical.

More extreme voices have also posited the visibility of the performer as a form of visual noise, the general idea being here that music should be conveyed to the listener 'immediately' and that this immediacy should not be obstructed by the visual presence of the performer (Goehr, 1996, 7-10). While there are many disagreeing views on the matter, excessive visibility continues to bother performers who would like the focus of their performance to be the music only. By the end of his soloist career, pianist Sviatoslav Richter (cf. Monsaingeon 1998, 108) refused to play in public unless he could play in complete darkness for his own concentration, but also to prevent the listener from being distracted from the work by the spectacle of his hands and face: 'That's why I now play in the dark, to empty my head of all non-essential thoughts and allow the listener to concentrate on the music rather than on the performer. What's the point of watching a pianist's hands or face, when they only express the efforts being expended on the piece?' Glenn Gould withdrew into the recording studio, in order, among other reasons, to be able to concentrate on the audible without being placed on display (Danuser 2015, 188).

[18] For the norms and history of acoustics in classical concert halls see Boren (2018); Caznok (2015); Beranek (2008); Skålevik (2006).

Lastly, the audience – whose composure since the early (and not so early) years of the public concert was partly dictated by etiquette and social constraints – was and continues to be made silent by the means of explicit instructions. By ways of example, we read in the press announcement of a concert in Hanover, USA, in 1769, that the audience should maintain 'a becoming silence and decorum, during the performance' (Virginia Gazette 1769, n.p.); in Charleston in 1796, 'the greatest silence' was requested during the performance; until as late as 1940, the programs of the Berliner Singakademie specified that the audience should '[r]efrain from applause between the movements of a piece'; and at least until 1918, proper conduct was mandatory in concerts in Genf, with concert tickets stating that attendees should 'avoid demonstrations of approval or disapproval'.[19] Such 'collective behavioural control' (Tröndle 2021, 16) is still familiar to us today in a more contemporary form, as in announcements such as 'please switch off your cell phones'. Furthermore, the 19th century saw the appearance of a 'listening police' formed by music connoisseurs, writers and other specialists who through their articles and reviews took care that the contemplative attitude to music and musical works was made known and respected. William Weber (1997, 678) describes this as the emergence of an ideological discourse on 'listening as absorption'. This social vigilance is further enforced by the audience members themselves, who watch and correct each other with the typical 'shhs' that anyone having attended classical concerts will be familiar with.

The wish for immediacy in the form of acoustic and technical purity has been greatly explored and intensified by the recording industry. With the advent of sound reproduction technologies such as the phonograph in the late 19th century, it became possible to imagine voices coming 'out of nowhere' (Bünger 2009-2011, n.p.). Later, this illusion was cultivated in recordings of instrumental music that focused on the absolute and direct appearance of the pure tone. As composer Richard Beaudoin (2021, n.p.) elaborates in an essay concerning what he calls the habit of 'nullification' of noise of the recording industry,:

> The history of recording of notated music can be read as a search for methods to suppress sounds that are not dictated by the score. That history can be charted from wax cylinders to the noise reduction techniques invented by Dolby Laboratories, to the digitally manufactured "silence" that envelops modern studio releases.

Beaudoin describes how it has become common for record producers to use editing and restoration software to reduce mechanical noises – for instance the surface noise of screeching needles in old LPs –, instrumental sounds, corporeal noises, as well as to compensate for poor acoustics in recording situations. Software, such as, for example, iZotope's RX7, released in 2018, has become increasingly more precise. However, the the controversies regarding silence in recordings are from an earlier date. By ways of example, Beaudoin discusses the audible noise of Glenn Gould's piano chair in his 1965

[19] All examples in Salmen (1988, 177ff.).

recording of Schönberg's *opus 19*. Consternated by the impossibility of removing this noise, producer Thomas Frost (1965, n.p.) writes apologetically on the back cover of the album that 'Glenn Gould refuses to give up his chair. Columbia Records refuses to give up Glenn Gould. And we hope that you, the consumer, will refuse to be discomforted by some audible creaks that are insignificant in light of the great music-making on this disc'.

Gould's fans love these creaks and similar noises for their historical charm and the human aura they impart to the recording. They are traces of Gould's presence, indicating that he had once physically 'been' there, in the somewhere where the recording was done (Sanden 2013, 10). Speaking about the 'humanising' and memorial function of these signs, Beaudoin (2021) refers to Roland Barthes, calling such interferences the recording's *puncta*:

> As audio evidence of Gould's corporeality these non-notated sounds inspire many of the same (often contradictory) reactions that Barthes experiences while looking at photographs: the chair creaks annoy, disturb, and break cultural agreements, while at the same time arousing sympathy, fascination, and a sense of intimate connection. As such, these sounds are exemplary audio *puncta*.

As Barthes (1981, 26) himself expounds, the *punctum* refers to the small details in photography, including technical glitches, that disrupt the *studium*, which is the factual investigation of the content or theme of the picture. *Puncta* are touching because they are in a way rather banal and familiar, they belong to anyone's everyday life; they are 'the accident that pricks me', thereby conferring an emotional reality to the image. However, although some listeners appreciate such contextual interferences, others deplore their presence, as we can read in Phil Gold's (n.d., n.p.) review of Franz Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor* for piano, in which we find a typical description of the annoyance caused by noisy recordings, compared with the pleasurable clarity of remastered historical recordings:

> The sound on this carefully restored set of Horowitz recordings from 1930 to 1951 is thin and lacking in any real sense of tonal color, but it is also mercifully clear and undistorted and relatively free of background and groove noise. This allows us to hear all the notes and gives us a hint of the sonority Horowitz must have produced at the height of his technical powers. What emerges is a highly cohesive overall framework on which to hang the various episodes. […] Richter's 1965 live performance comes with much more than its fair share of coughing and other distracting noises, and his piano seems to be a little out of tune. Of the four recordings, [… this] is the performance which brings out the widest gamut of Liszt's vast canvas; how sad it is that the recording quality is so soft, to put it politely.

Over time, recordings also alter the way we listen, behave and perform in a live performance environment. Performance theorist Philip Auslander (2008 [1999], 10) remarks that while recordings were at first meant as a memory and complement, and then later as an emulation of the concert experience, they have progressively developed their own characteristics that are today emulated by the concert. As an example, the

obsession of neutrality of the recording industry ends up influencing our behaviour, making us need more silence. And music critic Alex Ross (2010, n.p.) argues that the silence between movements in a recording makes us more used to the lack of applause in concert, and more capable of conceiving a musical work as a totality. Mediatisation also influences our ideals of sound and acoustics, whereby live performances are miked today, not for listening convenience but to create the intimate effect we know from TV, films and recordings (Auslander 2008[1999], 36-37). In *Prospects of Recording* (1966), Glenn Gould alerted us to how recordings would dictate the evolution of concert hall acoustics:

> If we were to take an inventory of those musical predilections most characteristic of our generation, we would discover that almost every item on such a list could be attributed directly to the influence of the recording. So, if the first recordings tried to emulate the reverberant, cathedral-like sound of historical concert halls, successful experiments in the recording studio made us crave for a more intimate musical experience characterised by analytic clarity, immediacy, (almost) tactile proximity, direct and impartial presence. These characteristics are taken into consideration by acousticians today when designing new or renovating old concert halls.

Gould describes an evolution from a 'cavernously reverberant', church-like sound of the first concert halls, probably deriving from the reverential approach to music of the late 19th and early 20th century concert hall, to our current preference for more neutral acoustics; such 'neutral' acoustics place more weight on the technical perfection of the performance, since they are much more transparent - and as musicians say, 'unforgiving' - than reverberant halls. Bearing in mind that Gould's miking preferences are representative of the 'flat neutral' studio sound cultivated in the late 1970s and 80s, and that we have since seen a swing back to a more reverberant aesthetic, the ideal of acoustic perfection and sound purity developed through recordings such as Gould's continues nonetheless to haunt today's performers. I say haunt because the transparency offered by recording media intensifies an already existing obsession with technical perfection: in a recording studio, the microphone works as a magnifying lens, making mistakes seem huge that would seem insignificant in the ephemerality of live performance. As a result, musicians become increasingly self-critical. However, if the act of recording makes mistakes and undesired sounds overly audible, it also offers the possibility of endless corrections and readjustments, so that the final mastered recording is duly 'photoshopped', edited and mastered to a polished level. Musicians, who are constantly exposed to these recordings, seek to emulate them in their live performances. They aim for the same degree of faultless perfection and the same noiseless context consistent with their experience of these recordings. And so as not to disappoint the audiences who are similarly familiar with these recordings, they make the recorded into 'live' performance.

In order to be close to the music, it does not suffice to hear 'pure' sounds; one must also make sense of them. Making sense of classical music is largely a mental activity which asks from performers and listeners a great deal of intellectual work. Next to the absence

of interferences, this activity requires the absence of interruptions. As Tim Ingold (2020), an accomplished cellist and renowned anthropologist, argues in an article about playing the cello, we are used to apprehending composed music not as sound, but as formal compositions rendered in sound. That is why when we listen to musical works, especially familiar works, we do not simply listen to sonorities but to sequences of gestures moving in a specific direction. In other words, we listen to a precise object and with a particular intention. Put together in time, these sequences of gestures form a closed structure, consisting of interrelated parts that constitute a whole. In relating to a structure, experienced listeners relate at once to its parts, to the way they interact and to the way they relate to the whole. Drawing on relevant theories and my own experiences as a performer and listener, I will linger for a moment on the specifics of this mental activity, or process, in order to demonstrate how it connects to silence and why it is important that there be no interruptions as this process unfolds.

Sociologist and musician Theodor Adorno (1976 [1962], 3), speaking from the perspective of what he calls an 'expert listener' – a professional musician or someone with consistent theoretical knowledge of classical music – refers to this mental activity as 'structural hearing'. For Adorno, musical works are to be considered as 'objectively structured things'; against the objective background of the work, listening consists of a multi-layered temporal process. He (ibid, 4) describes the activity of the listener in this complex process as follows: 'Spontaneously following the course of music, even complicated music, he hears the sequence, hears past, present, and future moments together so that they crystallize into a meaningful context. Simultaneous complexities – in other words, a complicated harmony and polyphony – are separately and distinctly grasped by the expert'. In this description, Adorno alerts us to the temporal nature of this mental activity, or process. How to relate to these different moments in time and to these musical complexities? In her reflection on time, philosopher Catherine Malabou (2019, 30) argues insightfully that the perception of any sonic event is formed in one's consciousness through a disordered interlacing of impressions and expectations which she, referring to Edmund Husserl, designates as 'retentions' and 'protentions'. Retentions are mental representations of the past, a series of images that keep changing in function of what one hears. Protentions, on the other hand, are a kind of anticipated future: they are images forming in one's mind based on previous experiences with similar sonic events, suggestive of what might come next. It is this synthesis of present perceptions and future expectations shaped by past experiences, as well as the retention of what has just been heard, that allows the perception of, for example, a sequence of notes as a melody, rather than as a succession of dissociate sounds.

Thus, to listen structurally to musical compositions implies, according to Adorno, that the listener, musician or not, has some knowledge of music and can undertake such synthesising processes; the more knowledge and the more previous experiences with classical music – the more 'expert' – the more one will be able to assimilate a musical composition. Musicians, by training their aural skills, become familiar with this structural approach: in perfect pitch exercises they learn to recognise single tones

detached from any context; in melodic dictations, they identify tones in relation to each other; in rhythmic dictations, they learn to remember rhythmical patterns; in chord hearing, they identify types of chords and inversions detached from any context; in functional or harmonic training they determine the harmonic function of the chord within a chord progression. Ideally, this training enables musicians to simultaneously distinguish, within complex musical structures, harmonic and overall rhythmical progressions, the profile of each chord forming these progressions, the melodies, motives and rhythmical patterns these chords accompany, and finally, each single pitch that makes up the work.[20,21]

When the musician performs, and not just listens, 'structural hearing' is complexified further by both the 'doing' of the playing and the necessity of mentally processing the score into sound. This process consists in the production and realisation of mental representations or sonic images. In my practice as a performer, when I read scores, practice, listen to or perform a piece of music, I am constantly producing mental representations which precede my performance and guide my playing. These images form the pillars of my interpretation, and are suggested by the musical score, by performance conventions, and by my experience with previous iterations of a particular musical work. Music education researcher Edwin Gordon refers to this ability of the musician to imagine sounds and rhythms as *audiation*. For Gordon, audiation is a form of 'forward thinking' in sound: 'When one audiates […] one knows what to perform next […] by anticipating in familiar music and predicting in unfamiliar music what is to come' (cf. Williams 2019, n.p.).[22] Experienced players trust the automaticity of the skill, relying on their bodies to do the work. They focus on the sounding results, rather than on body movements or on what one should do to produce this sound, for doing so might lead to mistakes and have a negative impact on the performance. Tuba player and brass pedagogue Arnold Jacobs (ibid) confirms this by encouraging musicians to listen to 'ideal music', that is, to focus on the sound they wish to produce rather than paying

[20] As Cook (1998, 104) argues, musical education is in fact so focused on this type of training that the ears of the students become conditioned, with the possible consequence of making them oblivious to other ways of understanding music as well as to certain musical parameters such as timbre and texture. Cook furthermore argues that the privileging of such scholarly knowledge over other less theoretical approaches, turns music into what music sociologist Mário Vieira de Carvalho (2011, 7) refers to as a 'self-referential system', only understandable by the initiated.

[21] Historically, certain initiatives provided a similar training for non-musicians. For instance, the Society for Private Musical Performances founded in 1918 by Arnold Schönberg, whom Adorno admired greatly, had as its purpose the dissemination of in-depth knowledge of musical pieces through rehearsals, the actual concert being of secondary importance. In one of its seasons, the Society included ten public rehearsals of Schönberg's *Kammersymphonie*. 'That way,' Schönberg wrote in the text accompanying the subscription invitation to the concert series, 'the listener will have the possibility to listen to the work often enough so as to be able to understand it both as a whole and in its details '(Nicolas n.d., my translation).

[22] One might note the parallel between audiation and visualisation techniques practiced in many disciplines, for instance in sport, where athletes such as tennis players imagine the direction of a serve and the path of the ball before the actual serve (Girod 1997).

attention to their movements or to the actual sounds they are making: '[W]hen you have [mentally] controlled the sound, you have controlled the body'.

These considerations find resonance in the musician's daily practice and in instrumental teaching. Audiation was an important part of my own musical education; still today, my practice consists to a great extent on the construction and refining of mental representations. Generally, I imagine a sound but sometimes it is more visual. My body, used to thinking in images, knows how to respond. By depressing the keys slowly and softly, accompanied by a mental image of a cotton field, my fingers, arms, and body are engaged in a particular way, producing a specific touch informed by a repertoire of touches accumulated over the years through practice and experimentation. In their well-known treatise on piano technique, pianists Walter Gieseking and Karl Leimer refer to this form of practicing as the 'training of the inner ear' (1997 [1932-1938], 33). According to them, this training consists of developing a precise mental representation of the music before playing, 'an exact impression of the note picture upon the mind' (ibid, 90); the 'silent reading' of the score while imagining the music; and the visualisation of the music before playing, including imagining the physical act of playing (ibid, 11). Pianist Claudio Arrau (2011[1983], 108) reports on how he mentally goes through the score and the music backstage in the concert hall before a performance. Max Neuhaus (1998 [1958], 20), more elaborately, sees inner images as a conglomerate of intentions, experiences and imagination: 'The spirit is clothed in flesh […] The image conjured by us by imagination, emotion, inner hearing and aesthetic and intellectual understanding becomes a performance'.[23]

How do these mental representations come together during the performance into a coherent whole? Although mental representations may relate to various musical parameters, for example articulation or timbric quality, each of these images, because they represent sounds or musical gestures, have a temporal dimension, which is why I call them time-images. So, one thing is to make images, the other is to make time-images; in the same way I can imagine what I will play, I can also imagine how long it will last. Saint Augustine (1991, 605-607), preparing to recite a poem out loud, introduces us to the relationship between time-images and their realisation in sound. Having recited a poem mentally and entrusted it to his memory, Augustine claims to know in advance how long the poem and its different verses will last when said out loud. In his words, 'the space of time' of the poem is planned so that the recitation will have a beginning and an intended end, and that the variations of speed occurring during the recitation, voluntary or not, will be considered in relation to this planned space. The recitation has thus a pre-defined temporality given by Augustine's mental image of the

[23] The notion of inner images or 'inner ear' is not the privilege of the classical musician, as it is also decisive in other musical styles. Whilst playing together, Frank Zappa complained about the tone of guitarist Steve Vai. When Vai protested, arguing he was playing on great gear, Zappa (in Coleman and Moran 2017, n.p.) replied by saying that 'the tone is in your head', meaning that the desired tone comes from the mind, and that no instrument, however great, can make up for a poor inner ear.

poem. The same goes for my playing. Connecting time-images while performing is like piecing together a jigsaw time-puzzle or editing a movie with a pre-defined time frame, fitting images or blocks of images together into larger scenes and finally into an entire film. Putting these time-images together in practice means to listen to the sounds I produce at the same time as my fingers are playing the sounds that will be produced next, and simultaneously evaluating what I hear in relation to what I would like to hear based on my mental representations. While I do so, my mind is already anticipating what I will play next, perhaps modifying certain pre-rehearsed representations depending on the acoustic results of my playing, including unexpected circumstances that might prevent me from realising them.[24]

Each interpreter will have their own way of approaching the score and the performance situation. Some musicians will predefine articulation, dynamics and temporal variations – they will have an entire film ready in their minds to be reproduced during the concert. Others might prepare different versions for specific passages without deciding what versions they will use when they play. Others again might practice without creating a plan, at least not consciously, or else they aim to forget about the plan when playing and just go with the flow; in such cases, practicing consists mostly of getting the technique right, without consciously assessing interpretive decisions and trusting that what was practiced remains stored either as muscle or mental memory. The preparation for the performance will depend on each performer's attitude towards the musical score and performance conventions. The more rigid the relationship with the score, the more fixed their performance will be. Personally, the way I prepare for a performance depends on the occasion and repertoire, and could include any of the elements just described, but generally I tend to spend more time practicing transition-passages, since they are the pillars that orient the overall structure of a piece. By mastering these 'safety points' I am sure that my performance will not fall apart, and I can more freely experiment in the spaces between them. Therefore, while my mental representations guide me, they do not entirely restrict my actions. For instance, when it comes to timing, I can spontaneously decide to play slower or faster, changing the anticipating images accordingly for various reasons, including as a response to unexpected musical opportunities. Musicians call this strategy of time manipulation 'tempo rubato', from the Italian *rubare*, 'to steal'; they speak of a give and take where the time stretched in one passage is 'returned' later by playing another passage somewhat faster, although they may of course also decide to steal without giving back. Even then, just the fact that they are 'stealing' implies that they are dealing with a representation of the totality of the work and not just with the passage in question. Concretely, and because of the expectational structure of the images, it feels like holding an elastic between one's fingers, which loosens and then stretches until it almost snaps. This gives tension and energy to the performance, and a

[24] These unexpected circumstances can consist of a variety of things, for example, an unknown instrument. Mindful of the fact that pianists are confronted with unfamiliar instruments at each performance, pianist Claudio Arrau (cf. Horowitz 2011 [1983], 109) warns young musicians about the necessity and importance of being able to adjust on stage, 'instantaneously'.

sense of mastery of time. But again, they are not mastering or manipulating time in absolute terms but in relation to temporal representations, themselves constructed against the temporal horizon suggested by the musical score. However personal the images that shape the interpretation, they are nonetheless related to the work.

Looking at this from a slightly different perspective, one understands better the relation of the performer to the closed structure of the musical work when comparing my practice as described above to that of musicians working without a score or pre-composed materials that suggest a fixed temporal structure. In conversation with improvising musicians, I have heard that they too work with pre-constructed images: by way of example, percussionist Ståle Liavik Solberg once told me that his practicing routines consisted of exploring a preconceived sonic image in different ways, including repetition and variations not unlike those I practice when rehearsing passages of composed works. Yet there is a difference in how we mobilise our images during a performance, in particular with regards to time: while the beginning-middle-and-end structure of composed works imposes certain limitations on how much I can experiment with time-images during the performance, Solberg operates with an open-ended form. While Solberg is free to explore and develop his images during the performance, I actualise my images against the background of the notation and the totality of the musical work. In other words, while his images are open-ended, mine, like Augustine's, are always thought-of in relation to a whole that I must bring to its end. This difference explains, for instance, why the visual performance of improvised music can be so different from that of composed works. Take, for instance, the performance of Rachmaninov's 2nd piano concerto by the accomplished virtuoso Lang Lang I attended some time ago. From my seat in the choir stalls at the rear of the stage I could observe how Lang Lang would start lifting his arms and pulling back his shoulders already instants before a bravura passage; similarly, his head would start sinking discreetly several bars before a concentrated moment, possibly as he imagined the beautiful sound that he would then produce. The impression one is left with is that the interpretation of the music unfolds in the mind of the performer like a finished film that is projected live. By contrast, in *Aberrant Decodings*, a performance by Lucia D'Errico and Marlene Monteiro Freitas at the Ghent Handelsbeurs that was partly composed and partly improvised, we see D'Errico, surrounded by cables, pedals, monitor, computer, microphones, guitars and scores, calmly and concentratedly manipulating the many instruments and effects at her disposition (D'Errico 2018b). There are no mannerisms in her performance, no way for me to imagine what will come next, and I can sense from her movements how she first appreciates the sounds she produces before defining what to do next. Although performances of both composed and improvised music can of course look very differently from D'Errico's and Lang Lang's, my point is that while the former have a cinematic narrative feel, improvised performances often lack this teleological drive, and therefore more easily draw the listener to the sounds without as many expectations for their unfolding.

Back to my own practice. Due to the intellectual nature of the process described above, when operating within the temporal horizon of the score, my activity, outer or inner, only fleetingly involves paying attention to what I am doing and to the physical now of the performance in terms of what is going on in the performance environment at large. Amidst the entanglement of images, doing, anticipating, adjusting and evaluating, my experience of the actual physical present of the performance is lived in relation to the internal time of the work and not for and in itself, and in case I do pay attention to my surroundings, it is generally in terms of how it is contributing to the performance of the work. Otherwise stated, the now is 'an instant without identity' (Malabou 2019, 380, my translation), irrelevant except as a site of transference and a synthesising node between the different movements of my attention, as I oscillate between listening, playing, preparing and evaluating, between memory and anticipation, between future and past. In fact, this state of oblivion seems to be a necessity, as philosopher Peter Szendy (2008, 103) notes, specifying that hearing structurally means that there can be 'no void, no distraction, no wavering in listening, other than that of the brief comings-and-goings of memory between past, present, and future'. Once I have started the process of playing, listening, evaluating and reconsidering, it must run its temporal course otherwise my interpretation risks breaking down.

Reports by other musicians would suggest a similar experience of being detached from the physical environment when one is playing: 'When I am playing I do not think of the arm motion. I am, of course, absorbed in the composition being performed', says pianist Ossip Gabrilowitsch (cf. Cooke 1999, 129). 'At my own recitals no one in the audience listens more attentively than I do. I strive to hear every note and while I am playing my attention is so concentrated upon the one purpose of delivering the work in the most artistic manner dictated by the composer's demands and my conception of the piece, that I am little conscious of anything else,' Ferrucio Busoni (ibid, 99) corroborates.[25] These musicians, indeed, are so engrossed in the musical work as they play that their surroundings disappear; they forget about themselves and their bodily presence. This seems to be applicable to the audience as well, described by Weber (1997, 678) as 'absorbed' – listening 'in complete attention to the music'. Art critic and historian Michael Fried (cf. Wesseling 2016, 173) elaborated on this 'absorbed mode', describing

[25] The complete oblivion of the surrounding at one extreme, musicians in fact cherish the liveness of performance, the palpable energy of the audience or the special acoustics of a good concert hall. These factors are enabling, they make them more daring. And yet, this response is often described in evaluative terms, *in relation to* an expectation, however vague: performers speak of an 'approving energy' or 'disapproving bows'. These kinds of reactions from the audience are somehow anticipated, already inscribed in the conventions of the performance, so that the performer is prepared to have to deal with them. The situation is different if the environment manifests itself too loudly or unconventionally, even though there are cases where musicians also report reacting positively to unexpected noises. If one remains open to these noises, they might make them resort to interpretive devices that they had not counted on, and the effect of this can be surprisingly positive, as we will see in chapter three. But here again, when asked about how performers react to unexpected sounds, there is a tendency to describe musical decisions in a comparative mode, in relation to an a priori: 'I played louder', 'I played much slower', 'my phrasing was different'. In other words, there is always a desired image regulating musical actions.

how the viewers of representational artworks, although they are physically situated in front of the painting, are mentally drawn into the image, whose 'life' apart from them arouses their interest and invites them to be lost in the work, without awareness of their own bodily presence or the passing of time. Art historian Jonathan Crary (2001, 10), studying attention, describes this same activity as a form of perception 'so rapt that it is an exemption from ordinary conditions, that it becomes a suspended temporality, hovering out of time'. Since time is suspended, all physical perceptions beyond those that occupy the attentive subject are also suspended; the spectator becomes oblivious to the rest of the world. [26]

Yet for the physical now of the performance to maintain its status as a neutral medium – that is, suspended physical time – it must also behave as such. Performance theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006, 160-162), speaking of theatre, describes the fragility of the relationship between the perception of the internal temporal structure of a dramatic play and the physical environment: the performance is at constant risk of being interrupted by other phenomena, which themselves possess an own time. What Lehmann maintains, echoing my reflection, is that dramatic plots have a closed structure, characterised, like a musical work, by a beginning-middle-and-end. The temporal cohesion proper to the work can only be adequately perceived or performed when the play is presented as a continuous whole without interruptions or interferences, and when the spectators and the actors are drawn into the action and absorbed by the play. If something unexpected happens, attention will be directed to this disruptive occurrence and the internal logic of the plot might be destroyed. In these moments, the now is no longer a medium, it acquires a thick presence that the audience can actively relate to. For the balance between internal time and acoustic unfolding to be maintained, 'time as such' – that is, the perception of physical time – must 'disappear'. That way the focus can be completely on the time of the play.

Especially in sheltered and silent performance environments, disregarding the now of the performance goes effortlessly, for what one hears is the acoustic realisation of the music, which contributes to one's appreciation of the music's internal time. As musicologist Edward Cone writes (1966, 15-16), these environments provide a frame that protects musical time from the chaotic and indistinct flux of ordinary time. Also, performers and audiences are trained to focus and prepared to concentrate. In my experience, it is part of the skillset of performers to be able to concentrate deeply, not only in music but also in fields such as acting or sports. In the famous acting method of Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* (1989 [1936]), the fictive director Tortsov asks his students to draw an imaginary circle around them, a tight circle, with enough

[26] In this sense, absorption is also close to what literary critic Katherine Hayles (2007, 187), studying student focus in educational settings, has described as 'deep attention' or the ability of 'concentrating on a single object for long periods […], ignoring outside stimuli while so engaged'. However, Hayle's theorisation does not involve a reflection on the engagement between reader and content, whereas Fried's notion of absorption and Crary's 'suspension' suggest that the spectator's concentration comes partly from a strong identification with or personal interest for the content of the artwork.

space for the actor, a few objects, and not much more. The students are supposed to keep their attention and actions inside of the circle. The circle is supposed to create an effect of 'solitude in public', making the actor feel protected and safe from the pressures of the audience or the distractions of the environment: 'You are in public because we are all here. It is solitude because you are divided from us by a small circle of attention. During a performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle like a snail in its shell' (ibid, 82). In music, Arrau (cf. Horowitz 2011 [1983], 98) recommends something similar to young musicians, citing a passage from Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*: 'I expect you above all not to let yourself be confused by the presence of spectators but to go through the ceremony quite unperturbed, as though we were by ourselves'.

When it comes to the audience, ritualisation and the fact that the performance takes place in a special location smoothens the transition to an absorbed state. Drawing on ethnographic studies on ritual, performance theorists Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008, 174-180) and Richard Schechner (2006, 66-70) stress how being away from one's usual milieu makes individuals more open for new and transformative experiences. This deterritoralisation frees individuals momentarily from the constraints of everyday life, leading them into a different reality where it is possible to try out new perspectives, roles, and so on. From the point of view of perception, senses are sharpened, and impressions intensified by being in a new place that is out of the ordinary and where special rituals are enacted. In the concert hall, the frontal seating arrangement and the dim lighting in the hall, as well as a measured distance between performers and spectators – not so close as to break the spell and not so far as to be distracted from the music (Lehmann 2006, 21) –, are also crucial for sustaining attention, since they provide the ideal setting for individuals to immerse themselves in the fictive universe of the work. In his analysis of the cinematic *dispositif*, psychoanalyst and film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry (1975, 66-67) evokes Bertram Lewin's 'dream screen', highlighting how being enveloped by darkness as though umbilically attached to the screen (or in the case of the concert, the stage) suggests sleep, the mother's womb, and the beginning of a regression that brings us to a *place comfortable* (Wolfgang Ernst 2020, personal correspondence) in which we can dream away to the world of the film.

However, sounds extraneous to the music have the potential to disrupt the musical 'film' unfolding in minds and bodies. While most sounds occurring in a sheltered and acoustically isolated performance environment will be too discrete to actively notice them, at times something unexpected occurs that claims attention, transporting it from the time of the musical work to this sonic event and its temporal unfolding. Because such uncontrollable sonic events can be so unpredictable, they can keep a performer's attention on hold for an indeterminate amount of time, making them forget what they were playing, thus threatening to break the internal time of the music.[27] This ties in with

[27] Of course, not only physical phenomena have the ability to deviate the attention of the listener from the music. As Anna Scott notes in a personal correspondence, 'nothing snaps a rapturous audience out of their absorption

the Heideggerian idea that ordinary things only become present in extraordinary circumstances and through the disruption of expectation, for instance whenever they appear outside of their habitual context or as result of an interruption of our everyday practices. Heidegger (1962, 101) says that the things (*Ding*) and tools (*Zeug*) that we use in our everyday dealings are 'ready to hand': we are not concerned with what they are but with the actions they allow us to realise. As long as things are considered for their purposefulness and used accordingly, they remain transparent to us. In other words, in the flow of practice, we interact with our environment in a non-analytic fashion. However, if there is an accident – a 'breakdown' –, and the thing/tool does not work as expected – the object becomes dissociated from us, and we become attentive to its actual properties (ibid. 116). Hence, if sounds that I can usually suppress from my consciousness, like the noise of the piano action, become too present, let's say because of a broken part, there will be a renewed kind of attention to the sound of the action and to the piano, which is then no longer only considered as a medium for transporting sounds. The same will happen to my perception of time, which will for a moment be concerned with following the unfolding of the action's sounds.

To give another example, in the play *Some Use for Your Broken Clay Pots*, theatre director, composer and performer Christophe Meierhans (2014) presented, in the form of a performance-lecture including a Q&A with the audience, a constitutional text written for a democratic state that does not yet exit. In most of the performances of the play, the debate between Meierhans and the audience turned into a lively debate: audience members found themselves discussing the system proposed by Meierhans as if it were a reality. Occasionally, though, terracotta vases hanging from the ceiling as part of the scenography would fall to the ground with a crashing sound. Through the disruption caused by the falling vases, the audience would be brought back across the border between fiction and reality, reminding them that this was but a play, and that the real life-changing discussion would need to take place outside, 'in the real world'. Examining my reaction in the aftermath of the performance, while at first just assuming that what had distracted the audience was the sound of the vases crashing, a closer reflection made me realise that it was not just the sound that 'awoke' me from my absorbed position as a spectator, but the fact that my attention, after having perceived the noise of the crash, lingered first on the resonance of the crash and then on the visual spectacle of the crushed vase, thus making a large detour before I could focus back on the protagonist of the play. This process took time, and although I did not think of time as such in that moment, or in such concrete terms, I did notice it indirectly, as I realised that I had better rush to focus again on the play.

in the time of the work like a performance that markedly goes against their understanding of the temporality inherent to that work's unfolding – a conception of time rooted in, for instance, recordings or previous performances of the work'. The interference, in Scott's example, does not come from the environment but from the mind of the listener. However, for the purpose of this study and the artistic creations that it proposes (see Chapter Two), it is more interesting to focus here on the disruptions that are caused by events external to the listener.

The example of the crashing vases adds a further nuance to the relationship between the work, silence and time. When the spectators notice time like that, it disrupts the internal time of the play, but also the illusion of the play, resituating the spectator in the now. In the case in point, the disruption of the illusion was purposeful and belonged to Meierhans's overall artistic intention, which was to make the spectator reflect on the distance between his proposition and the state of affairs in the real world. However, returning to symbolic functions of silence, interferences and interruptions would disrupt the idea of musical masterworks as eternal and existing out-of-time, which is one of the pillars of Romantic aesthetics and of musical performance in a representational sense. In its most common definition, silence corresponds to the absence of sound, hence to the absence of sonic impulses. If no sonic impulses are perceptible, one does not perceive movement, and without movement, one cannot feel time, for the latter is made perceptible through movement. By virtue of this, silence is often associated with eternity, infinity, or with being out of time, as already noted by Chateaubriand. As such, silence abolishes the distance between the present of the performance and the musical past, transforming the environment of performance into an atemporal zone where the timeless aura of the masterwork stands out. Additionally, this silence facilitates the listeners' journey between the work and their inner subjective selves. For although they are timeless, musical works also function as time-machines: because of their evocative potential, listening to musical works produces associations and awakens memories that remit to one's personal past; as Ledent (2009, 7) writes, '[i]nvested with an incommensurable dimension, musical works could awaken individual reminiscences in search of lost time'.

Reflecting back on this chapter, I have established that, due to a reconfiguration of the musical landscape since the 18th century towards what one could call a spiritualisation of musical experience, a silent background has become a necessary condition for the performance and reception of classical music. I have given three main reasons for this necessity: silence emphasises the immediate contact between music and performer/listener; silence contributes to enhance the timeless aura of the musical work; and silence facilitates the mental activities of performer and listener, with regards to grasping and realising the closed temporal structure of the work. That is why, when we are in the presence of music, we silence. Yet behind this silence there is a tension and a constant negotiation between performers, audiences, concert organisers and all other partakers of musical events, all of which enact conventions, rules and strategies designed to create silence and to maintain the asymmetrical balance between the physical world and the music, where parts of the former disappear to give place to the latter. But, what if we could do away with this necessity? What kind of listening and performing practices could be imagined then? What kind of relationships could be established between music and world? In the last decades, silence or the motivations for creating silence have been questioned, opening the possibility of such questions. I end this chapter with these questions, which will be eventually answered in the next chapters through reflection and

examples from my own artistic work, in which I reconsider what it means to listen and perform with noise.