

TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE OF MUSIC & DANCE

Research Degree Programme Week

20 to 23 March 2017

**Research students present their work in progress: abstract
of presentations**

Lucie Clements presentation abstract – RDP Week Mar 2017

The psychology of creativity in contemporary dance

This talk will begin by introducing a 3-year study into dancers' use of mental imagery within contemporary dance educational contexts. In a longitudinal and cross-sectional study, dance educators, dance science researchers, and psychologists have joined together as a research team. This study was the first of its kind to investigate the ways in which contemporary dance students use mental imagery when exploring and creating movement material in choreographic contexts, and the impact of an imagery intervention on developing creativity.

In the design of the 3-year study, standardised assessments of creativity commonly used in psychology research were used to assess dancers' creativity, which assumed creativity to be quantifiable and product based. For example, these measures are scored with a key criterion of *fluency*, the ability to generate multiple answers under timed conditions, suggesting that the more solutions an individual produces, the more creative they are. These measures also inherently suggest creativity to be domain general, that is, creativity is a general attribute which could manifest in any area, be it as a dancer or an engineer.

Contrastingly, there is an argument for the domain specificity of creativity, with published psychology research across a number of creative fields demonstrating the individuality and nuances of field specific creativity. Dance, however, is yet to be the subject of in depth research within the psychology of creativity literature. This has been suggested to be due to a lack of understanding by psychologists, who believe dancers to be replicators rather than creators. It is clear, however, that contemporary dance is rooted in creativity, with contemporary dance pedagogy invested in novelty and the overcoming of habitual tendencies.

Given this paucity of research, there has been little previous quantitative dance creativity research, all of which has used domain general measures not specific to dance, glossing over the embodied nature of creativity and importance of process, both key elements of dance creativity. In the present research, a need for dance-specific creativity assessments was identified during the research process, as a result of first person experience of conducting the project data collection sessions, and discussions with creative practice staff involved in developing the research.

The talk will focus on the use of pre-existing psychological methodologies for assessing creativity, exploring the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions about the nature of creativity related to these types of tests. Possible challenges related to the validity of these methods in the dance studio will be discussed, both in relation to the present research, and more generally, in considering the development and future of dance science where interdisciplinarity is key and methodologies must be both scientifically and artistically meaningful. The talk will present findings from qualitative work which have underpinned the development of dance-specific creativity measures, quantitative findings from both domain general and domain specific measures, and an argument for sensitivity when bringing pre-existing scientific methodologies into the artistic setting.

“The Composer as a Choreographer of Noise-Making Action”

The title of this presentation is a term I am using to consolidate different expanded compositional parameters that have become central to my creative practice and research; the spacing, placement and movement of performers (and audience) in the context of a piece of music, the dramatic potential of noise-making actions/movements, the relationship between the performer, their actions and the sounding objects being used, and the design and construction of the performance space.

The presentation, inevitably, focuses on my own recent creative work, but also considers the growing trend within certain schools of the contemporary music world, to focus on embodied aspects of performing and observing sound. This is a trend that sees composers remarrying and re-imagining the relationship between sounds and actions, and exploring the dramatic and theatrical potential of sound composition - as well as embracing alternative ways of “observing” sound performance. Above all it is a trend that celebrates sound composition as a *live experience*, and crucially, as a *live performed* art form.

Performed sound requires musicians to learn and use a range of highly specific associated movements and actions to generate different types of sound. The actions employed are determined by the type of sounding object being used and by the **intention** of the performer (and also of the composer). Think, for example, about all of the different ways one might be able to articulate a middle C on a piano, and all of the variations to action and touch this requires. These variations are generated by changes to the “movement, timing, perception of force, spatial aspects and perception of underlying intention” – **which are all choreographic parameters.**

Professional musicians, then, train their bodies to be able to execute highly complex and specific movements in order to make specific types of sounds. The sound and the action are intertwined – one would not exist without the other. This means there is significant dramatic potential in approaching sound composition as a “choreography” of these actions in time, and space. Composing with imagined physical action as the starting point is also a way for me to subvert and circumvent certain traditions, fixations and expectations that surround the classical music institution.

My presentation will end with a discussion of some of the difficulties encountered in adopting this approach and possible solutions I have explored so far. Difficulties primarily include identifying efficient and appropriate methods of communicating and notating directions for these expanded parameters, generating convincing performances within the, usual, extremely short classical music rehearsal period, logistical and practical problems that occur when working with movement for musicians, and problems that occur with unconventional placement of players (how to direct it, how to synchronise, how to keep a sense of ensemble, and how to hear and play across space) as well as how best to document and capture works of this nature.

Jun Ishimura RDP Week presentation – March 2017

Chopin through Pleyel and Erard

The presentation starts with giving the overview of the research project 'New interpretation of Chopin's piano music using the comparison between modern and historical instruments and the performance of his Piano Sonatas' and reporting the progress so far.

The issues focused in this presentation are the mechanisms of Pleyel and Erard fortepianos and the effect of the mechanism on interpretation. The movement of hammers will be compared and the effect of these differences will be argued. The second subject from the first movement of Chopin's Second Piano Sonata will be played as an example to show the differences of the sound production between the two instruments and how these affect the performance.

Erard made possible to have very rapid and reliable repetition of a single note, which effect is called 'double escapement'. Because of the repetition principle, the rapid return of the key is less crucial so that Erard was able to adjust lever ratios and apply counterbalancing weight to give his action an appreciably lighter touch than the Pleyel. The player feels an ease and smoothness on the Erard but also a somewhat diminished tactile intimacy with the control of dynamics and timbre compared to the simpler actions of the Pleyel.

On the other hand, Pleyel's actions are direct, supple and agreeable to the touch, and permit a precise control of dynamics. All of Pleyel's actions have comfort and silent operation; every moving part is cushioned, and the hammer-notches are garnished with twice as much soft leather and cloth as their London-made equivalents.

Videos showing the motion of Pleyel and Erard's hammers will be played in the presentation. Slowed-down videos will be also shown and these allow the audience to see more clearly the difference in the way the hammer moves.

A demonstration on the modern piano will introduce new approaches to legato line and long phrasing. A recording of my performance recorded before the research took place will be played to make a comparison to the live performance on the day with the experiences of examining the Pleyel and Erard fortepianos.

The Pleyel is easier to create a legato line because the mechanism is more sensitive to different touches, and thus allows a wider range of attack than the Erard. The Erard has a lighter touch, so that it is physically easier to create a longer phrase, and because of that it is easier to imagine and feel longer phrases. These features sensed on the period instruments can be transferred to the performance on the modern piano, and a better shape of rounded legato line and longer phrases can be appreciated in the latest performance.

The Historicity of the Keyboard Dance Suite: a study of the importance of the keyboard dance suite and its change between practical and absolute music from the sixteenth to twentieth century

"The following dissertation aims to discuss the historicity of the keyboard dance suite from the sixteenth to twentieth century through a series of case studies. During this time, the popular genre underwent changes in form and structure, as well as social and musical importance. What was once a practical form of music, later transformed into absolute music, where composers would evoke dance in their compositional style, rather than compose dance music for practical dancing purposes. The subsequent case studies will begin with pieces from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, when keyboard dance movements were beginning to be paired together, an early precursor to the dance suite, and continue with the examination of select pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951). The aforementioned composers were not the only musicians to employ dance music in their compositional output. However, these composers and their selected works provide an ideal representation of the evolution of the keyboard dance suite.

The presentation will include information on early dance notation from the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries from sources such as Thoinot Arbeau, who provided one of the most detailed and authentic records of fifteenth and sixteenth century dances; Raoul Auger Feuillet, whose system of dance notation based on tract drawings influenced his contemporaries across Europe; and Kellom Tomlinson, whose book, *The Art of Dancing*, contains some of the clearest and most descriptive full body illustrations from this period. In addition, a portion of the presentation will be dedicated to the English Virginalists with musical examples from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. These examples will showcase the dance-music relationship by cross-referencing the above texts against the musical examples. Lastly, the presentation will address the early development of the dance suite leading into the Baroque Era, as well as some key differences between the Baroque court dances and Renaissance dances. For example, according to Anthony Newman in *Bach and the Baroque: European Source Materials from the Baroque and Early Classical Periods with Special Emphasis on the Music of J.S. Bach* (1995), choreographies during the Renaissance period were composed for specific pieces while in the Baroque period, court dances were comprised of a combination of simple and compound steps that were selected from a common repertory of steps. This is important because this is an early sign of the dance music repertoire breaking away from practical music as the relationship between the dance and music became less dependent on each other."

Fei Ren – RDP Week presentation 2017

A delve into the inevitable: themes and correlations between Fanny Hensel's music and her choices of epigrams for *Das Jahr*, where art, literature and philosophical musings intertwine with personal life.

The rediscovery of *Das Jahr* is monumental in forming our post-modern critical reception of Fanny Hensel. With the publication of the 1st edition in 1989, performers, academics and listeners were introduced to a piano cycle that significantly enhanced the nineteenth century Romantic piano repertoire. However, in the circle of academics that had specialist interest in Fanny Hensel, it was always acknowledged that there is a fair copy of the work in private ownership, and that there could be major disparities between the two versions. Eventually the fair copy was acquired by the National Library in Berlin in 1997 (150th anniversary of Fanny's death), and it revealed a wealth of musical, visual (vignettes by Fanny's husband Wilhelm Hensel and notes printed on different coloured papers) and literary (epigrams placed before each movement) elements to the cycle that combined to contribute to this major *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a synthesis of arts).

As a musician, the opportunity to examine, study and prepare this piano cycle for performance has produced a whole multitude of questions and ideas, each element of the work presenting as many mysteries and theories as the next. Researching on Fanny Hensel, who is a product of the German Romantic enlightenment, as well as being descended from a rich tradition of the Berlin Salon scene, many of which were hosted by Jewish women including her mother Lea, I have been able to contextualise *Das Jahr* as a reflection of her scholarship as well as the fluid structure of the Salon culture. Even as the *Sonntagsmusiken*, the fortnightly musical Salon held by Fanny was entirely musical, she would have been familiar with the Berlin Salons of Amalie Beer or Sara Levy, where music, art, and poetry intermingled with philosophy and politics. In *Das Jahr*, alongside and within its musical, visual and literary elements, there becomes apparent an underlying thematic arc about the passing of time and the cyclical nature of the seasons, where philosophy and religion come to the fore. How to interpret and convey these extra-musical elements, and to determine whether it is the intention of the composer to make clear these themes and ideas to the listener, had introduced points of contention for myself as a researcher and performer.

In this presentation I am focusing on the epigrams chosen by Fanny for each of the movements in *Das Jahr* (excepting for the postlude or *Nachspiel*, which is based on the chorale *Das Alte Jahr vergangen ist* with no epigram), making a case study of January, putting the epigram in the context of the poem it was taken from, and analysing its potential impact and connections to the music and other extra-musical factors. I will also be presenting my thoughts on the full effects these extra-musical elements have on the performer, and in consequence the audience. Is this *Gesamtkunstwerk* meant for the performer AND the audience? How much and how explicit should the imparting of these extra-musical elements be? These are the questions I am beginning to attempt to address here.

Abstract
Park Stickney

Trinity Laban RDP research week

Fast 7ths, episode 4, a new hope.

In the last 20 years, the general level of jazz improvisation on the harp has risen dramatically. This can be linked to many things—a rising general (classical) harpistic technical level, more harpists playing jazz which leads to a critical mass of people working on its inherent problems, better communication between harpists through jazz harp workshops and festivals, more access to jazz information via the internet, the rapid evolution and near-ubiquitous-ness of electric harps, as well as improvements in amplification technology.

And, in addition, there have been many advances in harmonic approaches specifically with regards to the harp's pedals. I think that an approach that I devised in 2006, called "fast 7ths" is part of this evolution. This tool, which basically allowed harpists to instantly play any of the 12 dominant 7ths chords with only 1 foot motion, opened up a new world of chromatic improvisation with the seemingly diatonic-only harp.

My original research project was to explore more thoroughly these Fast 7ths, and to look for F7's relationship with various scales, to find out if there was a difference between chord-based and scale-based improvisation, and what this might be.

However, while exploring this project this past year, and while reading about Practice as Research, to try to better understand the context in which I find myself in this project, I realized that I was also, in a way, completely lacking objectivity about the harp. That what was important about Fast 7ths wasn't the tool itself, but rather *how I arrived* at this discovery—by looking at the harp differently.

So, my research project now aims to consciously do again what I arrived at by accident before: To look at the harp, taking nothing for granted. To ask "What, really, is a harp?" And more concretely, what happens with this machine (because the harp is a kind of mechanical computer), what happens if we change the basic tuning system—not in an anecdotal, exceptional way, but if we, in fact deeply change the tuning? Essentially, we would be re-programming the machine.

The overall goal/hope is to find new tuning paradigms, new harmonic worlds for improvisation, primarily in a jazz context, although I imagine that these new harp tunings will also be useful for composers and non-jazz harpists. I'm working for the moment with the double-action harp, although these ideas will be (I think) applicable to single-action and lever harps as well, and perhaps will end up also involving the relatively new MIDI harp.

As this is just the beginning of this journey, my presentation will focus more on the general framework I've established, the 3 classes of scales/tunings I'm currently exploring, my methodology (recordings, videos, notes, combined with a forthcoming historical/literature review, and qualitative interviews of harpists, and other musicians whose instruments also have a history of retuning), and where I hope to go from here.

We also may (briefly) discuss exploding harps.