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Creative Processes
in
Western Art Music Performance
Practice
with reference to the
Journey of a Professional Cellist

Ferenc Szűcs

**A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Arts (Arts D).**

**Media and Performing Arts
Middlesex University
London, UK**

March 2014

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Abstract

This practice-based research undertaking investigates the creative and decision-making processes pursued within expert-professional performance practice, in the Western art music performance tradition, through the work of the individual signature practitioner. The thesis examines the practice in terms of a complex, relationally defined, knowledge-practical system and aims to demonstrate how this knowledge is acquired, shared, communicated and disseminated through an elaborative process of articulation.

The research explores the professional identity of a concert cellist (in the first person) as a creative decision-maker, by revealing parts of the practice, which are rarely accessible to spectators or even to theorists or musicologists. It aims to show the habitus of the expert performer through the stages of development as well as through specific and documented accounts of professional practice, including studio work, preparation, rehearsals, pedagogy, research and performance events in a variety of conditions and environments. This is an investigation into expertise itself as an epistemic category, by exploring questions of professional judgement, the use of expert-intuitive processes, models of intelligibility, the artist's signature and the notion of qualitative transformation, as they appear in actual practice. The audio-video documentation of rehearsals, performances and discussions provide an opportunity to consider questions concerning technique, style, interpretation, communication methods between performers, the performer's relationship with the notation of the score, and the experience and conceptualisation of performance events from the performer's point of view, representing the seldom-heard voice of the practitioner.

My work in this research context is highly experimental in terms of the relationship between research methods and expert-creative practice, where the 'immersed' researcher is also the research subject, with many of the problematic implications noted by social sciences. This research is presented in a mixed-mode heuristic framework, where the focus is on the practice itself, while the text and documentation serves to illuminate that practice, as I propose to write, demonstrate, transfer and validate non-conceptual and non-discursive knowledge through the mediation of the paradoxes inherent in 'theorising performance'. The critical engagement relates to my claim as to the lack of effective treatment in published research of issues specific to expert-professional performance practice, and the new knowledge emerges from the new questions I am asking with reference to my own practice.

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Miklós Paraczký (clarinet)
Károly Ambrus (horn)
Massimo Paris (conductor)
Peter Fribbins (composer)

Concerto Malaga Chamber Orchestra
Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra
Triantán Irish Piano Trio
Academos Irish World Academy Strings
Irish Chamber Orchestra

La Musica Festival, Sarasota, Florida, USA
Festival Forum Internacional, Malaga, Spain
Festival Conciertos Las Bellas Artes, Nigüelas, Granada, Spain
Sionna Festival, Limerick, Ireland

Middlesex University, London, UK
Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Ireland
Tibor Varga Institute of Music, Széchenyi University, Győr, Hungary
Franz Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest, Hungary

Foreword to the reader/viewer/listener

This mixed-mode practice-based thesis is presented in a website format where audio-visual material is embedded in the text and is an essential constituent of the presentation.

The content of the concurrently submitted printed/pdf version is identical to the website in terms of text and image components, while the places of audio-video samples are substituted with still images.

It is preferable to view this thesis in the website format, by accessing the text within the full audio-visual context, whereas the printed/pdf version is provided for reference.

Technical guide – viewing the thesis as a website

This presentation in its current website format was created on an Apple Mac computer by using a combination of programs/applications (iweb, imovie, iphoto, garageband, itunes and word). For best display it is recommended that the presentation to be viewed (when possible) on an **Apple Mac** computer, using **Safari** web browser and **Quick Time Player** applications.

The website can also be viewed on a **Windows** computer, using **Mozilla Firefox** web browser and **Quick Time Player** programs. In this case the full audio-visual and text content is accessible but a slight displacement of images or text boxes might occur on a small number of pages due to the limitations of particular computer programs as well as to do with issues of compatibility.

Older web browsers like Internet Explorer or other combination of programs/applications might not display the content properly or make the audio-video material accessible, and the website cannot be viewed on a conventional DVD player.

Opening the website

The large folder named “SZUCS Arts D THESIS” contains two sub folders:

“SZUCS Arts D THESIS pdf” – a thesis presented in pdf format

“SZUCS Arts D THESIS Website” – a thesis presented in website format

To view the website: Please open the folder named “SZUCS ArtsD THESIS Website” and find inside a subfolder (under the same name) and two other documents called “index” and “assets”.

To view the website the reader/viewer/listener only needs to **open one single document** which appears named as **“index.html”** on a Mac computer, or on a Windows computer the same appears named as **“index Firefox html”** (depending on the system used) but the key words to look for are “index” and “html”. All other documents in the folder are technical components of the website and must remain intact for the website to operate.

Once **“index.html”** is open the presentation displays and operates as a conventional ‘online’ website. It is assisted with directories and by clicking the cursor on the various links the reader/viewer/listener can navigate between webpages.

DVD-R / Electronic Folder

SZUCS Arts D THESIS

Content:

Foreword and Technical Guide pdf

Folder 1: SZUCS Arts D THESIS pdf

A thesis presented in pdf format

Folder 2: SZUCS Arts D THESIS Website

A thesis presented in website format



DVD-R

Introduction

This research project focuses on a specific type of musical performance practice, situated within the Western art music tradition, with particular reference to the individual instrumental musician (in the first person), and it examines how a performing artist works, how creative decision-making operates within the practice, how critical mastery is developed and how knowledge is created and communicated.

The primary aim of this project is to investigate expert-professional performance practice and to introduce this practice through a set of case studies for the purpose of articulating certain creative processes, which operate within the practice. I aim, in doing so, to establish a mixed-mode document attempting to create an interface between two areas of research activity: *1) knowledge as existing in practice*, and *2) knowledge as articulated in writing*. It is the latter, which is in historical terms the dominant mode for knowledge dissemination within academia and it remains the norm in the context of the doctorate thesis.

The basic assumption informing the project is that such processes, which are pursued within expert-professional classical music performance, already incorporate and are indeed driven by ongoing, perhaps life-long research imperatives as well as professional, creative and philosophical imperatives (Melrose 2005a). By research imperatives, I am referring here to the notion that research is something that is driven, that for the researcher has to be done, rather than something dry, dull or dusty, carried out predominantly in libraries or laboratories. In this context I propose to suggest that if research can be demonstrated to be passionate, then perhaps we can begin to see that it is more 'like' expert music performance than others might have thought.

I aim to demonstrate through this practice-as-research enquiry that expert-professional performance practice rests on a significant and complex knowledge

base, as do more conventional notions of research, but that in the case of music performance a large part of this knowledge can be identified as somatic, involving psycho-physical activity as much as what others might understand as ‘simply’ learnt material actions and that it tends to be oral and dialogue-based rather than primarily literate. I intend to propose that certain instances of expert-professional performance practice can be seen and recognised as knowledge-creating and knowledge-validating, or “epistemic practices” (Knorr-Cetina 2001). Research activities more generally tend to be knowledge-creating or knowledge-validating: researchers are trying to find something, or to find out something, and then they proceed to try to validate those discoveries, often by writing them up, with reference to the discoveries or arguments of other researchers. Both stages are part of epistemic practice, but so too are the long processes of exploration and discovery, leading to public performances, carried out by the performing musician, whose performance will also tend to refer, in expert fashion, to other expert practitioners’ performance discoveries.

I am conducting this investigation from the self-reflexive position of the performer-researcher. A primary aim is to create a voice, for expert practice, from ‘inside’ the practice, as distinct from the voice of the critic, who tends to be an expert and even a professional listener and who writes about the event. A considerable amount of writing about music tends to be written from the position of the expert listener rather than from the position of the expert performer. Such a first-person performer’s perspective based on performance processes is clearly and significantly missing from music-related writings. Perhaps this is, in part, because the expert performer-practitioner has to spend a considerable amount of time in practice, for the sake of his or her expertise, whereas the expert listener has more time to write. In this connection, musicologist Nicholas Cook (1998) highlights the fact that music’s status “as a *performance art* is most under represented in writing (particularly academic writing)” (p.77), while “the performer occupies a conflicted and inadequately theorised role within musical culture” (p.26).

One of the reasons for this ‘conflicted and inadequately theorised role’ of the performer might be that performers, particularly in the genre of Western

art music, often not appear to have a discursive voice beyond their musical voice. While there are creative and constructive processes within performance making, known and used by expert-professional performers-practitioners, those same performers themselves (until very recently) have rarely articulated these processes in theoretical writing. They tend to rely on musicologists, critics, theoreticians, philosophers and professional writers, often, in other words, ‘expert spectators’, to comment on their activities (Melrose 2005b), and according to Melrose these expert spectators, unlike the performers themselves, tend to be positioned at a distance from what they are writing “about”.

Another reason for music performance’s under-representation in music theoretical writings has to do with a conception of music and a ‘formalist aesthetic’ that has dominated 20th century thinking. Lydia Goehr (1998) points out that while “many theorists have asserted that music has no meaningful existence other than through its performance, yet the role of performance, and even more so that of the performer, remains surprisingly undertheorised” (p.134). Traditionally, Goehr observes, the formalist aesthetic has elevated composing over performing and assigned the creative input to the composer-author in musical culture while the role of the performer was reduced.

Most writings devoted to Western art music in the last two centuries would primarily concentrate on ‘musical works’ as part of, or related to the ‘musical canon’ and it is only within the last few decades that this ‘work concept’ had been questioned and exposed as essentially a social construction of 19th century romantic thinking. In this context the performance became totally subservient to the ‘work’, and the performer’s task is to interpret it in performance while faithfully following the ‘composer’s intentions’. “Following from the central conception of a musical work as a self-sufficiently formed unity, expressive in its synthesised form and content of the genius’s idea”, Goehr adds, “was the general submission for all associated concepts. Concepts and ideas having to do with notation, performance, and reception acquired their meaning as concepts subsidiary to that of a work” (Goehr 1992, p.242).

Music is often compared to language and composing to writing (Menuhin 1978). In this connection, musical compositions have often been compared to literary writings (Barenboim and Said 2002). Focusing the attention on the composition of musical works and treating them as imaginary objects (existing separately from the music as sounding in performance) gave rise to the notion of the musical score as ‘text’ (Nattiez 1990; Goehr 1992; Treitler 1997). In this understanding, what is often called the ‘musical text’ is encoded in the notation of the score, which means that it requires both decoding as well as revelation by the performer. Hermeneutic strategies familiar from 20th century literary studies have been brought to the task of attempting to ‘decode’ music’s complexity while remaining at the level of the score. It is still the case, however, that the expert performer’s place in this ‘textualist’ undertaking is rendered obscure (at best she or he becomes a metaphoric reader, an orator of a language which cannot be articulated). As Cook highlights: the musical score, while it conserves music, “conceals as much it reveals, so that performers have a creative and not merely reproductive role in musical culture” (Cook 1998, p.81).

The newly emerging field of artistic research or arts practice research, conducted by the artists themselves, could provide insight and deeper understanding of the creative processes operating within art-making practices and the performer’s role in musical culture could perhaps become clearer and more defined. According to a recent definition (Coessens *at al* 2009) artistic research as a meta-practice is different from the artistic practice itself, both in terms of its purpose and its methods. It examines the *process* of creativity rather than its outcome, and results in a secondary *research* output. This type of research is challenging for the artist and, I argue, full of unresolved tensions. The performer’s task in the professional context is not to explain but to demonstrate. The territory is always shifting, never stable, in movement, in a continuous state of becoming, which escapes fixation (Massumi 2002). Experience (and tacit knowledge) can never be fully captured by language or through documentation (Melrose 2011). In attempting to do so we are attempting the paradox of ‘expressing the inexpressible’ while the artist-performer-researcher must embrace vulnerability (Crispin 2009).

My work as a performing artist by its nature is affectively invested (as all arts practices/practitioners arguably are) and it is also singular and signature-bearing (it requires this status, in part, for me to continue to operate to formal commissions in the cultural market-place; see Melrose 2009) but at the same time the practice is situated in the social, economic, cultural and knowledge-political context of society, with ever-shifting boundaries and expectations.

In examining my practice, I have conducted certain excavations into my own experience as a musician-performer-practitioner. In what is effectively an auto-ethnographical account (Chang 2008) the separation between subject and object is somewhat blurred and the ‘immersed’ researcher is also the research subject, with many of the problematic implications noted by social sciences. However, much of my work in this research context is highly experimental in terms of the relationship between research methods and creative practice, rather than simply the creative practices themselves, which suggests that this mixed-mode undertaking itself challenges certain research traditions. While I might be able to use some of the methods borrowed from qualitative research practices (see for example Denzin and Lincoln 2005), at times I had to test out my own methods and subsequent articulation, and in this sense this project is tied in to and specific to understanding my own expert practices as a research undertaking over the period of registration. However, I argue that this research can demonstrate and reveal, or ‘bring forth’ in Heidegger’s (1977) understanding of *poïesis*, in part and in this limited form, vital aspects of the performing artist’s work more generally, and in this aspect it is representative.

In the context of my doctoral thesis, the written presentation represents 20% of the work and the larger part (80%) consists of the documented practice itself, which exists effectively ‘behind’ the research project. It surrounds the written text, informs it, and tests the means of presentation and what is articulated: are the commentary and documentation adequate to the professional nature of the creative practice? I am looking at here the professional identity of the concert cellist as a creative decision-maker, and viewing the body of documented practice quite specifically as the opportunity to ask a series of questions, which are different from those that might be asked by a musicologist, who may well not have this

quality and degree of immersion in professional performance practices. The critical engagement relates to my claim as to the lack of effective treatment in published research of the issues specific to expert-professional practice, and the ‘new knowledge’ comes from the new questions I am asking with reference to my own practice. Hence, it is imperative that my reader engages systematically with the documented practice at those sites and moments indicated in the text.

I have chosen a website format for this presentation, which allows me to juxtapose text with images and audio-video material, including samples of rehearsals, performances, seminars, discussions, recorded interviews, and connect this material with external sources as well as with relevant theoretical-philosophical writings. The text uses a variety of registers and modes of writing and is constructed to serve and to illuminate the practice, *to which it is secondary*. My thesis is informed by an ongoing research-focused enquiry *into* creative practices rather than *about* those and reflecting on arts-professional performance practice as a mode of knowledge.

In my perception, this mixed-mode presentation operates like a ‘window’, through which the reader/viewer/listener can (partially) access hidden parts of the creative process as experienced by the performing artist working within the canon. Working as a “chorographer” in creating a “my story” (Ulmer 1994) through this project, I propose to allow the reader/viewer/listener to activate this window of attention like a ‘lens’ at precisely the times signaled in my document where I explore some of these processes while focusing on different parts of the performer’s work.

My research is based on decades of working as a professional performer, soloist, chamber musician, orchestral principal player and recording artist, which involved countless public concerts, commercial recordings and extensive touring in over fifty countries. From the larger part of my professional life I do not have readily available documentation, since it was not customary to make recordings for research purposes at that time, and neither did I perceive myself as a ‘researcher’ while working as a professional musician. But from the commencement of the present project I have systematically documented as many of my professional

activities when it was reasonably possible. Therefore the video samples featured here are dating back to a period of eight years (2004–2012). In addition, I can also rely on my experiences as an educator and curator. We must note however that the audio-video material used here is restricted to the technology accessible to me at the time of recording or editing.

The content of this presentation is organised into sections comprising a number of parts (webpages) and assisted with directories for easy navigation. The present ‘Introduction’ together with my professional ‘Biography’ and the following ‘Video Gallery’ (featuring a selection of short video samples from some of my recent performances) provide the reader/viewer/listener with the background and context to this research project. The main body of the research is presented in the following four sections.

‘Developing Expertise’ begins with reflecting on the question of expertise as a knowledge (epistemic) category. I explore relevant aspects of training and continuous learning through ‘deliberate practice’ (Ericsson 2001) in order to show how expertise is developed over a long period of time through a process of ‘elaborative articulation’ (Spinosa 2001); I discuss the question of ‘talent’ and show how the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977) of the performing musician is established as I recall my own training experiences as well as rely on shared experiences with my colleagues. This section also features the cello traditions and teacher-student lineage of the Liszt Academy in Budapest, as relevant to my own training.

‘Mechanics of Production’ focuses on rehearsal processes and highlights the most important aspects of the preparation process before and during rehearsals. I demonstrate how complex relational performance-making dynamics work, how knowledge is created and shared, how critical judgement and ‘expert intuition’ (Melrose 2011) operate in this context. I investigate the question of how expert performers relate to one another in highly charged circumstances and by what discipline-specific means they communicate with each other. I explore the notion of ‘qualitative transformation’ (Massumi 2002) and the emerging ‘signature’ (Melrose 2009) in this context. The section features videos of working as a soloist with orchestras and as a chamber musician in various rehearsal contexts. It shows

documentation of working with a contemporary composer and features an open rehearsal performance-research seminar.

‘Dissemination’ discusses modes available to performers for sharing and transmitting knowledge in the professional and in the research context. The section primarily focuses on performance events by showing and comparing video examples and exploring the use of ‘expert intuitive processes’ (Melrose 2005b) in performance practice while communicating to an audience through the act of performance. I explore perceptions and experiences in connection with the relationship between music and time and investigate the performer’s relationship with the composer and with the notation of the score, aiming to highlight the creativity of the performer in this context. I examine various approaches and coping strategies during performance events and analyse the performing experience from the performer’s point of view.

‘Pedagogy and Research’ shows examples from my current teaching practice in Ireland, at the University of Limerick, as aligned with and connecting to my performance work in the context of this research project. The section features accounts of one-to-one studio teaching, ensemble coaching and a larger scale ensemble project involving master students and professional musicians. Finally, I reflect on my experiences and challenges as a researcher working in academia, within the emerging field of arts practice research, while attempting to translate or transfer discipline-specific performance knowledge into different forms, through writing and documentation, by conducting the present research project and constructing its subsequent articulation.

Biography

Ferenc Szűcs is Senior Lecturer at the University of Limerick, Director of the Master's programme in Classical String Performance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and Artistic Director of *Academos* Irish World Academy Strings. As a professional cellist he has performed in over 50 countries and has associations with numerous orchestras, ensembles and institutes worldwide. He appeared as a soloist in major concert halls and given master classes in Hungary, England, Ireland, Italy, Turkey, China and the USA.



Born in Hungary, he studied at the Bartók Conservatoire and at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest and won the prestigious Hungarian State Award for musical excellence. He was invited to join the Hungarian State Orchestra while still studying at the Liszt Academy. This was followed by his appointment as principal cellist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London. He played with many of the great conductors of our time including Solti, Doráti, Ferencsik, Maazel, Wand, Haitink, Ozawa, Rozhdestvensky, Davis, Pritchard, Rattle, Berglund, Sinopoli, Termikanov, Gergiev and others. He also performed a wide range of contemporary music working with composers such as Messiaen, Boulez, Lutoslawski, Tippett, Stockhausen, Xenakis, Birtwistle, and Schnittke. He played as principal cellist with many other orchestras including the London Festival Orchestra, New Queens Hall Orchestra, Oxford Orchestra of Camera, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera, Mozart Festival Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, English Symphonia, Orchestra of St John's, London Mozart Players, Irish Chamber Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra in Canada and the Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Netherlands.

He has been a member of various chamber groups and collaborations including the *Triantán* Irish Piano Trio, Fibonacci Sequence, London Festival Ensemble, New Queens Hall Quartet and J S Bach Ensemble. He made radio and television broadcasts and recordings for the BBC, RTE, MRT and published commercial CDs on ASV, BMG, Hyperion, Arte Nova, Future Classics and RTE Lyric fm labels. He contributed to seminars and symposiums in Ireland, UK, Hungary, Italy, Turkey, USA, and was involved in collaborative research projects and performances with contemporary dancers, choreographers and traditional musicians. His research is focusing on creative art-making processes and knowledge transfer in contemporary musical performance practice.

Recent Major Performances

Irish World Academy, Ireland (2012)
Academos, Dublin, Ireland (2012)
Concerto Malaga, Spain (2011)
Anima Musicae, Hungary (2011)
Trinity College, Dublin (2011)
Kilkee Music Festival (2010)
University of Limerick (2010)
Academos, Paris, France (2009)
Cork School of Music, Ireland (2009)
National Library of Ireland (2008)
Academos, Dublin, Limerick (2008)
La Musica Festival, Fl, USA (2007)
Middlesex University, UK (2006)
Sionna Festival, Ireland (2006)
La Musica Festival, Fl, USA (2005)
Hertford Festival, UK (2005)
Shanghai University, China (2004)
Sionna Festival, Ireland (2004)
Crawford Gallery, Cork (2004)
Glor Theatre, Ennis, Ireland (2003)
English Heritage, UK (2003)
Bank of Ireland, Dublin (2003)
University College Cork (2003)
Killaloe Festival, Ireland (2002)
Tralee Festival, Ireland (2002)
Verbania, Lago Maggiore, Italy (2002)

Master Classes

Irish World Academy, University of Limerick, Ireland (2011, 2012, 2013)
Széchenyi University, Győr, Hungary (2011)
Irish World Academy, University of Limerick, Ireland (2007, 2008, 2010)
Musica Europa, World Youth Orchestra, Ankara, Turkey (2007)
Musica Europa, World Youth Orchestra, Rome, Italy (2004)
Shanghai Conservatoire, China (2004)
International Academy of Fine Arts, Ireland (2004)
Summer Music, Limerick, Ireland (2002, 2003, 2004)
University of Debrecen, Hungary (2003)
Musica Europa, World Youth Orchestra, Santa Fiora, Italy (2002, 2003)
Verbania, Lago Maggiore, Italy (2002)
Széchenyi University, Győr, Hungary (2001)
Ithaca College, New York, USA (2001)

Published Recordings

Music by: Boccherini, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Saint-Saens, Elgar, Damase, R Strauss, Schoenberg
Recording labels: ASV, BMG, Hyperion, Future Classics, Arte Nova
Recordings for Radio & Television: BBC, RTE, MRT
Recently published CD: *Triantán* Irish Piano Trio, G A Osborne: *Shower of Pearls*, RTE Lyric fm (2011)

Radio Programs (as presenter)

Review of Hungarian Music, Drive-time Classics, RTE Lyric fm (2004)
Hungarian Music, Lyric Collection, RTE Lyric fm (2004)
Cello Repertoire, Lyric Collection, RTE Lyric fm (2004)
Hungarian Artists in Europe, Irish Week, MRT Hungarian Radio (2004)
Cello Radio Master Class, Horizons, RTE Lyric fm (2003)

Conferences and Seminars (as presenter)

Arts Practice Research, Society of Musicology Ireland, NUI Maynooth (2013)
Arts Practice Research, Society of Music Education Ireland, Dublin (2013)
The Art of Transcriptions, Research Seminar, University of Limerick (2013)
Arts Practice Research, University of Limerick (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013)
Ex Tempore Research Seminar on Improvisation, University of Limerick (2007)
Behind the Notes - Lecture at *La Musica* Festival, Sarasota, FL, USA (2007)
Performance Research Seminar, Middlesex University, London, UK (2006)
Aesthetics of Musical Performance, Middlesex University, London, UK (2005)
Music Aesthetics in Practice, Middlesex University, London, UK (2005)
Music Aesthetics in Practice, Goldsmith College, London, UK (2005)
Performing Music, Lecture at *La Musica* Festival, Sarasota, FL, USA (2005)
Irish Composers Past and Present, Irish World Academy, UL, Ireland (2003, 2004)
Virtuosity and Performance Mastery, Middlesex University, London, UK (2003)

Video Gallery

In this gallery I have selected and included a variety of short video clips in descending timeline from some of my recent concert performances and invite the reader/viewer/listener to browse freely and in any particular order. My purpose here is to juxtapose different samples of my work, as seen from an audience's point of view, and to give a first impression, an initial 'feel' for the musical performance practice we are going to engage with in the context of this research presentation.

(In the present printed and pdf version of this thesis the places of video samples are substituted with still images extracted from the videos. The full audio-video content can be accessed by viewing the corresponding website presentation.)



[Video sample](#)

[Video Gallery \(6\)](#)

[Bach Gamba Sonata \(6\)](#)

9 February 2012

Irish World Academy of Music and Dance
University of Limerick, Ireland

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Sonata for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord
D major, BWV 1028

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Yonit Kosovske (harpsichord)



Video sample

[Video Gallery \(5\)](#)

Haydn Cello Concerto (5)

29 September 2011

Tibor Varga Institute of Music
Széchenyi University
Győr, Hungary

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No 2, D major, Hob. VIIb

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist/director)
Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra



Video sample

[Video Gallery \(4\)](#)

Academos (4)

13 March 2009

Le Centre Culturel Irlandais
Paris, France

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)
Chamber Symphony for Strings, Op. 110a

Academos Irish World Academy Strings
in collaboration with the Irish Chamber Orchestra
Ferenc Szűcs (conductor)



Video sample

[Video Gallery \(3\)](#)

Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata (3)

16 November 2005

All Saint's Church
Hertford, England, UK

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Cello Sonata, G minor, Op. 19

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)



Video sample

[Video Gallery \(2\)](#)

La Musica Festival (2)

12 April 2005

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival
Sarasota Opera House, Florida, USA

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Souvenir de Florence

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
String Sextet, No. 1, B flat major, Op. 18

Federico Agostini (violin)
Cecilia Zilliacus (violin)

Jennifer Frautschi (violin)
Bruno Giuranna (viola)
Cynthia Phelps (viola)
Francien Schatborn (viola)
Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Ronald Thomas (cello)
Cecilia Radic (cello)

Extracts from 20th Anniversary Video Documentary
with kind permission of *La Musica*



Video sample

Video Gallery (1)

The Goldberg Variations (1)

18 November 2004

Sionna Festival
St. Mary's Cathedral
Limerick, Ireland

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
The Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

String Trio arrangement by Bruno Giuranna

Mariana Sirbu (violin)
Bruno Giuranna (viola)
Ferenc Szűcs (cello)

Section I. Developing Expertise

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What is expertise?

The question of expertise is also necessarily a question about knowledge itself, but in the context of this project takes as its focus professional performance practice rather than philosophical writing. It might be readily assumed that any professional performance, which already been evaluated by both the performance community and the public, would have to demonstrate a great deal of skill, technical competence, musical understanding, professional maturity and disciplinary mastery. Such disciplinary mastery is most likely to be acquired over a long period of time, by virtue of training, education, profession and experience. Such knowledge is developed through practice, embedded in practice, embodied in the performer, and disseminated to the public through performance events or recordings.

I propose to begin by asking a number of questions but will probably not be providing answers at this stage. However, I am inviting my reader/viewer/listener to engage in a virtual dialogue with me, as I attempt to sketch out the parameters of the question of expertise in the context of professional classical music performance practice. These questions will follow us throughout this project:

What is expertise?

How can we develop it?

How can it be demonstrated?

How do we know if we have got it or not?

Who decides?

Can it be measured?

If we have got it, then what is it we have got?

How do we rate talent?

Does expertise mature?

Can we lose it?

Can we all become experts?

Where does expertise lie in professional performance practice?

On what basis do we judge a performance to be expert-professional?

Could it be articulated in discursive writing?

‘Expertise’, in the context of professional practices, including the performing arts (and also in research terms) can be understood as a “highly specific and recognisable knowledge category” (Melrose 2011; Schatzki *at al* 2001). In this understanding, the ‘epistemic’ aspects of performance creation (which also includes the research element) differ from the habitual skills or routine tasks of the performer. Rather, they manifest themselves in the “open, knowledge-creating, question-generating and complex processes and projections” (Knorr-Cetina 2001, p.181), specific to performance making in a high-risk professional context. These performance-making processes could be considered as “epistemic objects” recognised by their “lack of completeness”, an “unfolding, signifying [meaning producing] character” and their “constant moving towards ever increasing complexity”. The “relational dynamics” between the performer (self), the instrument, the music, and the audience, from this perspective, suggests, in Knorr Cetina’s account of research itself, a “deep emotional [affective] investment” by the performer, which is characterised by a “chain [or structure] or wantings”, which she describes (briefly referencing psychoanalytic theory) as a “never-ending quest” (Knorr Cetina 2001, pp.181–186). In the case of the performer, that quest is always to try to produce something ‘better’, which is, in Brian Massumi’s terms, a matter of “qualitative transformation” (Massumi 2002, p.8).

The results of such qualitative transformation—when it happens (rarely enough, which causes the quest to continue)—might be experienced in the performance event itself, but in research terms, these results could also be regarded as visible or audible manifestations of certain “discipline-specific expert-intuitive processes” identified by Melrose as “constitutive to expert performance-making” (Melrose 2011). Intuition is a complex phenomenon, and Melrose has argued that we need to make a clear distinction between everyday intuition, and what she calls “operations of expert or professional intuition”, where the internalised mastery of professional judgement, performance criteria or expertise acts in such a way as to

make the intuitive ‘material’ or insights obtained, appropriate to and productive in terms of that discipline or profession. She points out that very few writers make this distinction, yet it is on the specificity of expert intuition as constitutive, that the event of performance depends. I return to the questions of qualitative transformation and expert-intuitive processes in the context of my discussion (below) of performance events.

Expertise in the case of music performance cannot be gained primarily from books or other inanimate sources but it is developed through a process of learning via interaction with members of the culture that exemplify the practice. It is a process that Charles Spinosa calls (based on Heidegger’s theories) “elaborative articulation” (Spinosa 2001, p.206), which describes an expertise that grows *through* ongoing practice itself. Critical mastery in this case is developed slowly and progressively through steps and stages of a developing articulation of skills and knowledge, rather than through a radical break with that tradition of practice. The notion of the ‘critical’ here is not necessarily an engagement with ‘critical theory’ associated with iconoclastic or supposedly ‘radical’ practices of the second half of the 20th century, but rather it refers to a self-critical attitude, evaluation and judgement, which is constantly driving the undertakings of the ‘reflective practitioner’ (Schön 1983).

Developing Expertise (Section I. Part 2.)

First steps

In this part I highlight certain aspects of the initial training period for classical musicians leading towards professional expertise. My reflections are based on my own experiences as well as on shared experiences with fellow practitioners. In addition, I can rely on my observations from my teaching practice while actively training others.

Professional work in the performer's world (in the case of an instrumentalist in the Western art music tradition) cannot exist without vigorous, lengthy and specialised training, which very often commences from early childhood. It is important to point out that the length, quality, and level of training are factors which set apart the person who might have a chance to become a professional performer in this context. Since auto-ethnography is a major component of this project, perhaps it might be appropriate for me to reflect briefly on my own initial training period and point out what I consider, in the present context, to be relevant components.

My own musical training took place in Hungary. In many ways it was typical and identical to the training of my fellow music students at that time. Its first phase (in my case) began at the age of three in a regional state music school, corresponding with primary schooling from age six, and concluding this phase at the age of fourteen. My early musical interest and education was strongly induced and carried by my parents, but it was never forced on me and always remained my choice.



Figure 1. Photo Archive 1.
Starting the Music School at age 3 with my family and performing at age 13

Studies at the music school incorporated a wide range of subjects including instrumental lessons, often on more than one instrument (in my case the piano and the cello), and also included classes of music theory, music history, folk music, singing, solfeggio and ear training based on the Kodály method, as well as studies in classical harmony, counterpoint, chamber music, orchestra, and from the very

beginning the young students were provided with frequent performing opportunities. I could perhaps note here that for me and those other young children in the school, music became our ‘first language’ long before we learned to read and write—traditionally, in Hungarian schooling, from the age of seven. In terms of Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977), my music training can be identified as “durably installed”, experienced as a positivity in terms of praise and opportunity, and it is clearly the case that it conditioned my sense of self, attitude, system of values, and sense of the possible, as well as what might be called my ‘musical imagination’.

My memory of the music school is of a warm, family-like atmosphere, where a young child could develop fast in a playful, supportive and inspiring environment. This environment (as I experienced it) appeared to be in rather sharp contrast with the harsh and penalising general political mood in my country at that time, which had filtered through to the education system too, following the repression of the short-lived Hungarian uprising for independence in 1956. The music school (in my perception) provided a ‘cultural oasis’, invested with quite particular cultural values, which even a young child could recognise as being different from the experience of a regular school at that time. But we must also note here that the same political system had provided all students with free education through to university level.

Developing Expertise (Section I. Part 3.)

Professional training

My initial training period was followed by four years of intensive study at the Bartók Music Conservatoire in Budapest, along with general secondary school education, between the ages of 14–18. This was an important time during our formative years. The best students were gathered here from all parts of the country and by mid teens we developed stout ideas about our purpose in life. By being

successful in that already very competitive environment one could have reasonably raised hopes for a future professional performing career.



Figure 2. Photo Archive 2.
At the Bartók Conservatoire in Budapest at age 17 with my schoolmates

Finally I studied a further six years at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, regarded as one of the best music training institutes in the world and transmitting over a century of musical tradition. It has an impressive line of teachers over generations and for me this certainly proved to be an ideal learning environment.

To gain entry to the Liszt Academy was regarded as a great privilege and carried prestige. The Academy building towers over one of the most popular squares of Budapest (named after Liszt) and symbolically represents the status and value of ‘High Art’ in society. Walking through this building commands respect. As ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl (1995) observes, such an environment can easily be compared to a semi-religious belief system and perhaps the building of the Liszt Academy (often referred to as ‘Music Palace’) could pass as an example of a ‘temple’ of such system. As students, we practically lived in those corridors of the Academy building, constantly practising our instruments, sharing ideas, attending

lessons with inspiring teachers, having daily access to the beautiful concert halls and listening to as many performances as possible, given by leading artists and orchestras visiting from all over the world. Expertise, on this basis, was acquired and reinforced consistently, but rarely needed to be articulated verbally: it was a given as well as an expectation.



Figure 3. The Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest

We only need to make a quick mental calculation of the number of training years I described above to note that by the time I graduated from the Liszt Academy at the age of 24 (and simultaneously was offered a position in the Hungarian State Orchestra) I had already passed through 20 years of intense and highly specialised training. A training environment of this kind, as I have noted above, was responsible for the acquisition of knowledge and complex skills but also of the ‘habitus’ of the young student, which included learned attitudes, beliefs, the musical imagination, as well as a strong sense of identity as a musician. This elaboration of expertise was in a significant sense tacit, involving an ongoing mastery that passed through particular stages of expert practice.

Habitus, talent, deliberate practice

Reflecting on this period of training, perhaps I can begin by describing a certain attitude or *mentalité*, characteristic to the habitus of performing musicians in the genre of Western art music. From the way I described my own training years above, it seems to be idyllic and relatively unbroken. Perhaps in my case it was, but there are other and much less favorable sides to our training and profession. It is highly competitive. It might promise glamorous moments but it could also have a great deal of stress and insecurity. It requires many sacrifices. The return for investment and effort is not at all guaranteed and the rewards can be elusive. In my time of training a good performer of classical music enjoyed a reasonably high status and respect in society. In subsequent years our profession was still accredited but to attach a little question to that acknowledgement would not be uncommon – “*Oh, you play music? That is really nice. But what do you do for living?*”

Why, on this basis, would anyone want to become a professional musician? The following words from Sándor Márai, one of the most widely read Hungarian writers, give us an interesting perspective:

About art as destiny...

Talent is not enough. Reason is not enough. Learning is not enough for someone to be an artist. Destiny is needed that no human will can change. There are many talented people in all areas of life, who can, in favorable moments, through their ability, dedication, depth, and effort create something useful, or at times even something unique and beautiful... But these people are not creators, only executors: because they do not have a destiny. If they by chance wander into another profession to be engineers or doctors they would also show their talent and make something useful. But the artist, the true one, cannot “wander” into another path, there is no force or circumstance, which could deter him from his task: cannot be other than writer, painter or musician. The artist has a destiny. This is the most important.

(Márai 2002, p.117, my translation)

Perhaps today this seems to involve an outdated romantic notion. Márai wrote this paragraph in the 1940s but it might be surprising to learn how widespread this belief in ‘destiny’ can be even among today’s professional musicians and also among young students. In my experience, while interacting with colleagues, there always seems to be an underlying current suggesting this way of thinking, even if that is not declared openly. To my knowledge, most of my colleagues (including myself) had never seriously considered another profession and that feeling of having a single purpose mostly originates from early childhood. That feeling of destiny could perhaps be described as a wish to follow an irresistible ‘calling’.

I still remember a moment from my own life, when a particular comment was made, which proved to be so important that it followed me for many years to come:

I was around 7 years of age and performed on a concert in my local town. After the concert an old and respected teacher came to us. He patted my shoulder with a big smile and said to my mother: “This boy has got the virus, he will surely be a musician!”

(Szücs 2012, extract from personal diary)

The use of the word ‘virus’ is telling, because of its association with an illness that spreads by itself and in turn referring to the exceptional level of commitment one would have to make. I understood this remark at the time as a confirmation of something, which we might still have to call ‘talent’, for want of another more apt term. What we mean by ‘talent’ is notoriously hard to define, but does seem to suggest a naturally occurring aptitude, rather than something learnt, an aptitude and measurement that is inborn, and that can thereafter be developed, rather than liable to be acquired later. In this sense it is clearly undemocratic, in educational terms, but it would be foolish to ignore it, given my sense that it has the potential to be seen, in practical terms, as a vital category of human knowledge. In professional terms but equally in terms of music training, we cannot readily articulate what it is, but as teachers we all recognise it when we see it, and we also know what it produces and what results when it is absent. Nonetheless it is not widely discussed in cultural or critical studies. Whatever ‘talent’ might be, amongst other things, it seems to be a requirement for those selected in or excluded from various training institutes.

In music, talent usually *manifests* through a collection of special gifts and endowments, although this does not allow us to identify its ontology. For instance, an ability to recognise and repeat musical patterns and intervals, good hearing and ability to sing in tune, good sense of rhythm, natural touch and ease while playing an instrument, good musical comprehension in order to form musical phrases, excellent memory to remember and recall long musical lines, and in general, producing unusual advancement in comparison with peers. Talent as it is manifested also includes good physical co-ordination and awareness of one's own body as well as sensitivity to self and to others and an ability to understand depth of emotions. But this list still does not define talent so much as qualify its manifestations. As I suggest above, what we seem to be looking for is evidence of an inner quality, a 'sparkle' of some kind, which ignites it all and, at its best, is highly persuasive, instantly winning the listener over. Once again, what is at the source of this sparkle is very difficult to define, yet is professionally vital to a solo performer. As such, it is an epistemic quality that defies verbal articulation. Most colleagues would say that this element could not be taught, only shaped. At the same time, whereas you cannot 'learn' talent, many teachers and researchers, as Ericsson (2001, pp.31–33) suggests, share the opinion that innate talent only accounts for a relatively small part in achieving success in comparison with hard work and attained skills.

The word 'talent' is mostly used with reference to early development and suggests a promise or a capacity to do certain sort of action, which will win the approval from a majority of experts, and which thereafter internalises that approval and is thereby strengthened. If this is the case, then it is relationally-determined rather than self-defining. In a sense it has a shared code within expertise, for certain sorts of advanced practice, but poorly-articulated outside it. It is always an observation of something by somebody else. The individual can only hope but cannot declare that he or she 'has' talent until someone else—expert—ratifies that view. In contemporary terms, it is in the gaze of the other, vulnerable with regard to the judgements of other people and in need of repeated confirmation—a feedback loop.

One could also consider talent as a 'deposit' for an investment, for a kind of

‘contract’ between the individual, the parents and the teachers. Such (generally unspoken) contracts can put an enormous burden of responsibility on a young person. It can of course be very motivating too, but there are some notable dangers associated with this phase of development. For young performers, success at competitions is necessary to gain access to the best teachers and training environments, which in turn increases the chances of attaining one of the small number of openings for full-time professionals in the domain. For many young students who might have achieved high status in their local environment the first serious test comes when they are placed in a higher-level specialised school where they are compared with other high achievers. The competitive environment can prove to be stimulating for some but for others it might produce devastating effects if they feel that their aptitude is overtaken or diminished by the presence of ‘even more talented’ people. Here you are measured by what others show you to be—hence the ‘I’ is not fixed but negotiated constantly by people who were put in the position to tell you their judgement. Such judgement by its nature is discriminative. Expertise, as I have suggested above, is not democratic.

The realm of practice in our case is quite secluded and exists independently from everyday activities. It supposes that the child is inserted into a world of practice to be guided through stages of development, persistence and initiation strategies. This could be seen as a rather manipulative framework where the different stages are marked out by internal rules, mostly invisible to outsiders. Parents trustingly give away their children to teachers who are regarded as experts and holders of a secret knowledge embedded in practice and hermetic to its own community, but which is filled with promise and reward. The knowledge is apparently ‘secret’ because it has not and perhaps cannot yet be adequately accounted for in an analytical-theoretical context, let alone an everyday one.

In such secluded community of practitioners, within specialised music schools and conservatoires, expert teachers would assemble a training program with mostly unwritten and highly individualised curricula, based on their professional judgements, expertise, intuition, and depending on what they judge to be the next step for the talented child. The child is inserted into a machinery to be tested at every stage according to internal requirements and rules—to make progress.

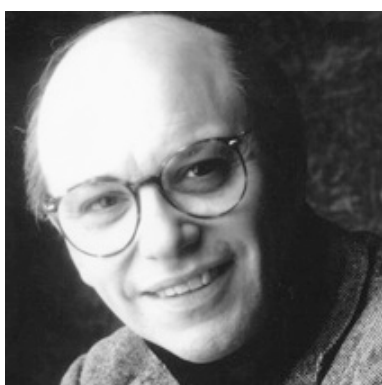
The practice is developed both through the individual and regardless of the individual, via a complex network of intersecting practices, regulated by a number of professionals, where compliance with the rules becomes mandatory and where judgement is exercised at all stages.

According to Ericsson (2001) scientific studies and laboratory analyses consistently found that such deliberate training is responsible for the development of very complex skills and highly refined representations. Ericsson asserts that “various types of training activities can, over time, change the body according to the well-understood physiological principles and expert performance can be viewed as an end product of an extended series of psychological modifications and physiological adaptations” (p.31). Ericsson also found that such intense training processes result in “measurable changes in the brain and in the body”—akin perhaps to what cultural theorist Fredric Jameson (1990) metaphorically called ‘cognitive mapping’—and “responsible for neural changes in the central nervous system...involving adaptations even at the level of individual cells” (Ericsson 2001, p.33).

Interestingly, with regard to the question of talent and its role in the acquisition of expertise, Ericsson found that “most masters would consider inborn capacities and innate talent as relatively unimportant in comparison to attained abilities and skills”. They tend, instead, to “emphasise the role of motivation, concentration, and the willingness to work hard on improving performance” (Ericsson 2001, pp. 31–33).

Motivation and persistence

In connection with motivation if the question is raised – “*Why did you become a musician?*” – many colleagues in the profession (with whom I have discussed the issue) tend to refer to their experience of a particular inspirational moment. In recent years I have recorded interviews and discussions with a number of colleagues for research purposes and in the following short audio clip Mauricio Fuks, Professor of Violin at Indiana University, and one of the most respected violin pedagogues in the world today, tells this part of his story:



As a young child Mauricio attended a concert in his native city of Montevideo (Uruguay), to hear the great violinist Fritz Kreisler play. He was so moved by this performance that after the concert he said to his father: “Please buy me a violin, I want to play LIKE THAT man!” – A few years later Mauricio went to study with famous teachers, including Jascha Heifetz.

(My synopsis of the interview excerpt)

Interview with Mauricio Fuks

Audio sample

The audio sample is available on the [corresponding website](#)

Figure 4. Mauricio Fuks

Many of us in the profession share similar experiences when hearing a great musician for the first time and that often becomes a deciding factor in either starting or continuing our studies with renewed strength and ambition. I recall one of these inspirational moments from own my life:

I was around 15 years of age and was already admitted to the conservatoire in Budapest, simultaneously on my two instruments, the piano and the cello. I soon realised that continuing to study both instruments at the same level might prove to be too demanding; therefore

I would have to make a choice. A decision seemed impossible to me at that time. My older brother, who was studying conducting at the Liszt Academy, encouraged me to choose the cello because there were many excellent pianists around and it was much harder to make a living as a pianist. It was practical and sober advice, but the piano was my 'first love' and I had just won a piano competition a few months before. The cello at that time was still, in many ways, unexplored territory to me. One night my school friends were running to tell me that I must go with them to a concert. I did not know anything about that concert but went along and somehow sneaked in without a ticket, standing at the back of the great hall of the Liszt Academy. A man I had never seen before was playing the Dvorak Cello Concerto and when he started to play I had a physical reaction of pleasure. It felt as if my blood was frozen at that moment and a characteristic tingle was running down the back of my spine. I never heard anything like that before. Afterwards I was speechless for quite a long time and thought that if the cello can be played LIKE THAT then I want to be a cellist. The person who played that night was Mstislav Rostropovich. (Szűcs 2012, extract from personal diary)

Such inspirational moments—we recognise them as qualitatively transforming and strongly invested in affective terms—are very important in motivating the student to begin a regime of consistent hard work. Ericsson (2001) identifies this regime of consistent hard work with reference to expert performance as 'deliberate practice', and the most effective way to attain and improve expert performance. He also identifies music students' solitary practice, in which they work to master specific goals determined by their teacher, as a prime example. The extensive research conducted by Ericsson and his colleagues is particularly useful for the performer-researcher because it confirms in a written, structured and citable way what we, the performers, have already experienced. To analyse the development of expertise in the context of deliberate practice is beyond the scope of this project, but I would like to highlight another important insight from Ericsson's research.

As I indicate above, Spinoza (2001) draws on Heidegger's notion of the 'elaborative articulation' of practices in order to account for expertise as developed gradually over a long period of time: in other words, practice progressively improves practices. Ericsson notes meanwhile, that "most people

find it inconceivable that the dramatic differences between expert and novice performance can be explained by a series of incremental improvements starting at the novice level. They believe that most of the benefits of learning are attained rapidly within weeks or months, as is the case for most everyday skills and leisure activities. They are surprised to hear that it takes years, even decades, of gradual improvements for even the most ‘talented’ to reach the highest levels of performance” (Ericsson 2001, p.32).



**“A lesson in music”
Interview
with
János Starker**

In one of his interviews the legendary Hungarian cellist and pedagogue János Starker, Distinguished Professor of Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, explains how we have to develop and articulate our knowledge through steps. He points out that there is no upper limit to acquiring knowledge and we can only be stopped by our own limitations.

(My synopsis of the interview excerpt)

To access the video sample please follow this external link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WxtYc_cTTc

Figure 5. János Starker (1924–2013)

(The video clip begins with Starker teaching a master class. The interview part starts at around 1 minute 20 seconds, followed by a few moments of Starker’s own playing.)

János Starker was one of the famous representatives of the Hungarian cello tradition. In the next part I follow the teacher-student lineage specific to the Hungarian cello school and highlight traits with regard to the musical traditions of the Liszt Academy in Budapest, traditions that are relevant to my own progressive development of professional and creative mastery, in technical terms, to which I return below, as well as in ‘cultural’ terms relating to performance quality, evaluation and aspiration.

Cello traditions of the Liszt Academy

The cello school of the Liszt Academy in Budapest originates from Bohemian cellist David Popper (1843–1913) whom Liszt invited in 1886 to join the faculty and to establish the new cello school (Moskovitz 2007). Popper enjoyed a high reputation as a cello virtuoso and his concert tours were acclaimed throughout Europe. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest masters of his instrument of all times. Pablo Casals referred to him as “the old Maestro” (Deák 1980). Among his friends were Liszt, Wagner, Berlioz, Anton Rubinstein and the conductor Hans von Bülow, with whom he appeared as soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic (Moskovitz 2007).



Figure 6.
David Popper (1843–1913)

Popper performed Brahms’ chamber music with the composer and formed the Hubay-Popper string quartet (Moskovitz 2007). He also composed a large number of cello pieces and his study book *Hohe Schule des Violoncello-Spiels* (High School of Cello Playing) is still used by cellists today all over the world. Popper studied in Prague with Julius Goltermann (1825–1876) who in turn was a student of Bernhard Heinrich Romberg (1767–1841) and Friedrich August Kummer (1797–1879) the two great masters of the German cello school of Dresden (Moskovitz 2007; Éder 2011).



Figure 7.
Bernhard Heinrich Romberg
(1767–1841)

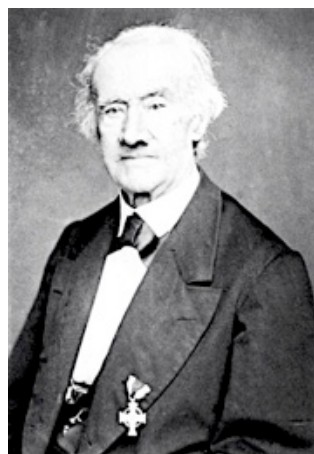


Figure 8.
Friedrich August Kummer
(1797–1879))

Popper remained in his post as professor of cello and chamber music in Budapest for the rest of his lifetime (nearly three decades between 1886–1913) and nurtured a whole generation of cellists. Among his students were Adolf Shiffer (1873–1950), Jenő Kerpely (1885–1954) and Miklós Zsámboky (1890–1961), succeeding Popper as professors at the Liszt Academy and continued his legacy of teaching (Éder 2011; Halász 2012; Szitha 2012).

These three students of Popper directly taught two of my own teachers. My first cello teacher Pál Szüts (1927–2003) studied with Zsámboky and Ede Banda (1917–2004), my teacher at the Liszt Academy, studied with Shiffer (who was also the teacher of Starker), with Kerpely (to whom Kodály dedicated his *Sonata for Solo Cello*) and also with Zsámboky (who was the teacher of my first cello teacher). In this musical family my generation of Hungarian cellists is the fourth in the Popper tradition (his musical great grand children) and we had the privilege of cello lessons taught in the same studio where Popper used to teach.



Figure 9.
Pál Szüts (1927–2003)
My first cello teacher at
the Music School



Figure 10.
Ede Banda (1917–2004)
My cello teacher at the
Liszt Academy

Apart from the Popper heritage there were other influences in the Hungarian cello school, but mostly looping back to the German cello school of Dresden where Popper's teachers originating from. My cello teacher at the Bartók Conservatoire, Ferenc Wilhelm (1921–2004), came from a different lineage of teachers but he also endorsed Popper's teaching principles. His teacher at the Liszt Academy, Antal Friss (1897–1973), was not a Popper student but studied instead with Hugo Becker (1863–1941) in Berlin at the *Hochschule für Musik* (Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1994). Becker was highly regarded as a master teacher and famous cellists like Enrico Mainardi (1897–1976) and Gregor Piatigorsky (1903–1976) were among his line of students (MacGregor 2007).

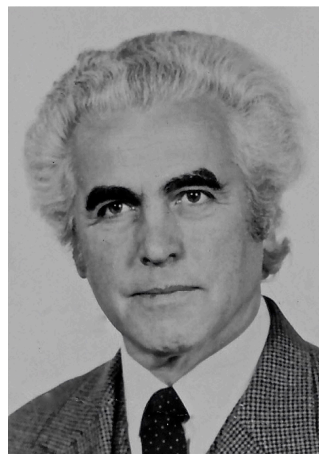


Figure 11.
Ferenc Wilhelm (1921–2004)
My cello teacher at the Bartók
Conservatoire

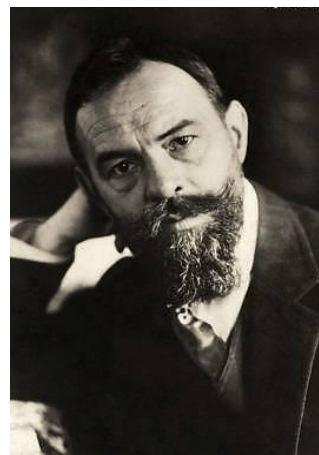


Figure 12.
Hugo Becker (1863–1941)

Becker studied at a young age with Italian master cellist Carlo Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901), and later with Friedrich Wilhelm Grützmacher (1832–1903) who—along with Kummer and Romberg, teachers of Julius Goltermann, who in turn was Popper’s teacher—is again a representative of the German cello tradition of Dresden. We can trace this lineage further to Johann Friedrich Dotzauer (1783–1860) who was the teacher of Grützmacher (Van Der Straeten and MacGregor 2007).



Figure 13.
Johann Friedrich Dotzauer
(1783–1860)



Figure 14.
Friedrich Wilhelm Grützmacher
(1832–1903)



Figure 15.
Carlo Alfredo Piatti
(1822–1901)

What this lineage of cellists and teachers transmitted to us is a particular type of knowledge, which is embedded in practice and passed on primarily through an oral tradition. To verbalise characteristics of ‘schools’ of cello playing (apart from the place of origin and teacher-student lineage) is problematic. To some extent we can talk about certain ways of playing, bowing style, fingerings, use of vibrato, sound production, expression, and other such details that are largely technical. Yet we cannot define exactly what the ‘Popper school’ might be. If we look at an established and recognisable mode of performance practice as a complex knowledge-practical system in postmodern terms (Cilliers 1994), we do find that it is self-organising, self-regulating, constantly changing and evolving—values or qualities that I would attribute to the ‘Popper school’. The knowledge, despite its constant change and evolution, is ‘held’ by individuals invested with that authority (whose views and playing style can differ), and also held collectively by the performance community. Such knowledge is both interactive and—as I have indicated above in terms of expertise—it is relational, yet paradoxically perhaps it is also invested in certain ‘master’ figures.

When we try to define that ‘school’, we may only find traces of practices, complex in the terms cited above, rather than definitive ‘things’ or ‘phenomena’. In theoretical terms such partial traces of practices might be identified as belonging to certain ‘models of intelligibility’ (Melrose 2009) that inform and organise expert practices, signaling a certain way of knowing, understanding and doing something as it appears in practice, that is specific to one or another established tradition (or ‘school’). Hence we are able as performers to distinguish, in practice (performing or listening), between models of intelligibility that were ‘Popperian’, contrasting these with those derived from other master figures. Plainly these dominant models of intelligibility are also invested with values, as we see below.

Hence, while we do not have any sound recordings of Popper’s own playing but from our oral tradition (as well as from historical sources) we know that it was characterised by ‘superior’ technical fluency, a ‘beautiful’ singing tone, a particular continuous use of vibrato, and above all ‘gracefulness and elegance’ (Deák 1980). His studies and compositions indicate that the equal use of high positions on the fingerboard combined with a fluency in string crossings provided him with new possibilities on the cello to overcome certain technical challenges. His flamboyant concert pieces are still among the most popular and difficult concert repertoire for cellists today.

I mentioned Rostropovich above as one of my inspirations. The following link provides a short video of him playing the *Dance of the Elves* by Popper (and most likely beating any previous time record for speed):

Rostropovich, Popper Dance of the Elves

To access the video sample please follow this external link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJWjYLG3B7o&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PLF9E1B76A3DF14E94

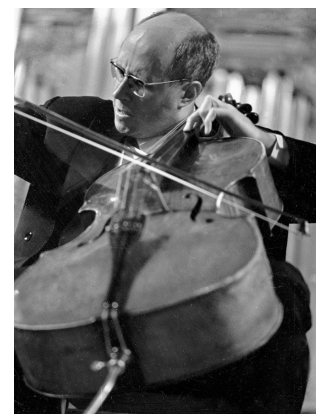


Figure 16.
Mstislav Rostropovich
(1927–2007)

With the aim of finding a better definition of the characteristics of the Popper school I have documented conversations with colleagues and include below an excerpt from a discussion with fellow Hungarian cellist Pál Banda, who is the son of my teacher Ede Banda, and was a student of his father at the Liszt Academy. (Note the use of evaluative qualifiers as much as technical terms, and possibly a shared assumption of expert performers that the ‘music speaks for itself’.)



**Interview
with
Pál Banda**

Audio Sample
The audio sample is available on
the corresponding website

Figure 17. Pál Banda

It became apparent from our conversation that the main characteristics of the Popper school (as we understand it) are to do with virtuosity through gracefulness and elegance, which incorporates certain lightheartedness too. This approach then translates into many concrete technical and musical solutions on the cello. The use of these solutions can be recognised by fellow musicians, as evidently Bernard Greenhouse had done so while listening to Pál’s student. The differences between German, French, Russian, Hungarian or English schools of cello playing could be characterised by a certain ideology, which (as we experience it) primarily manifests through the type of sound and the use of bow and vibrato.

(My synopsis of the interview excerpt)

(Note: The “session orchestras” we refer to in the conversation are ‘elite’ groups assembled from invited musicians for specific studio projects mostly recording Hollywood film scores. This is probably the highest paid orchestral work in London and both Pál and myself are familiar with this scene.)

Once again, I would point out that our discussion assumes expert practice as the basis upon which we discuss the specifics of the tradition we share. In technical terms, for those viewing the material, you might note that when referring to the ‘use of bow’ or ‘use of vibrato’ or ‘type of sound’, these expressions cover a multitude of different technical approaches as well as musical considerations. The use of bow and the use of vibrato are determining factors in relation to the character of the sound produced. Scores only contain limited instructions with

regard to the use of bow. Customary bowing marks for ‘down-bow’ or ‘up-bow’ only indicate a suggested direction of the bow but leave out many other considerations like the starting point, part of the bow, length, speed, strength, weight, distribution, intensity, or character of the stroke. Moreover these bowing symbols are usually inserted by editors and hardly ever originate from the composer. With regard to the use of vibrato (its large variety or absence) the score gives no instructions whatsoever. The decisions are left with the performer and this provides infinite potential for creative expression. The way we use these tools of expression can leave recognisable traces with reference to both individual style and ‘schools’ of playing.

The playing traditions and lineage of teachers for cellists I followed above are very important for instrumentalists and similar ‘family trees’ could be found for other instrumentalists, like the piano school after Liszt or the violin school after Hubay in the case of the Liszt Academy in Budapest. But we must also consider that a musical tradition or music making is not limited to the specifics of any one instrument. While the instrument is an important means of expression, a lifelong partner, and also a trademark for professional (instrumentalist) musicians, we must learn to understand the purpose of playing them. In this wider context we must look for the meaning that the notes engender, and consider carefully *what* we might want to communicate to an audience and more specifically *how* to do so.

This is an issue of expert interpretation (achieved through practice), on the basis of which the expert performer has the potential to mark out her or his own creative choices. It is quite precisely on the basis of expertise that these sorts and the range of choices are available to the expert practitioner. This territory, in other words, provides us with a significant range of possibilities for developing our own creativity as performing artists and in essence signals the notable difference between novice and expert performance. As we progress towards expertise these aspects would become much more important than the means (or limitations) of any one instrument through which music is expressed. I return to these questions in the context of interpretation in the following parts of this project.

With reference to the musical traditions of the Liszt Academy, my colleagues always talk about a particular key person: Leó Weiner (1885–1960), who was a composer and contemporary of Bartók and Kodály. Weiner’s work as a pedagogue at the Liszt Academy spans over five decades (1908–1960) teaching a variety of subjects including composition, music theory and chamber music (Weissmann and Berlász 2007).

Weiner left an enduring legacy and his musical ideas influenced a whole generation of musicians like György Solti, Antal Doráti, György Kurtág, Léner quartet, Bartók quartet, Weiner quartet, Tátrai quartet, Tibor Varga, György Sebök, János Starker, Sándor Végh, Ferenc Rados, András Schiff, Miklós Perényi, Takács quartet and many others including my own teachers (Campbell 2007; Potter 2007; Beckles Willson 2007; Berlász 1992, 2003; Halasz 2012).



Figure 18.

Leó Weiner (1885–1960)

Weiner encouraged and induced a certain ‘musical intelligence’ approaching the music as from the standpoint of a composer or conductor rather than being limited to instrumental concerns. He taught his students to ‘listen’, demanded precision and a certain clarity or ‘plasticity’ of articulation. His analytical method, knowledge of repertoire, of style and interpretation, particularly through the art of ensemble playing, was legendary (Zsekov 2011; Berlász 2003; Molnárné Svikruha 2011).

This training provided us with a strong base from which we could develop our own signature practices as solo performers. While certain principles coming from this inheritance might become part of our own understanding, our physical gestures, ways of knowing and expressing musical content, we also acquired a particular creative ethos: the need, as creative artists, to step beyond any particular technique or school and to find our own voice, use our own creativity, and decide

for ourselves how we might want to communicate to an audience—which does not mean, however, that a listener may not recognise the traces of a particular model of training. In this way expertise is constantly developed as we meet with our colleagues, including musicians from other parts of the world, refine and share our knowledge and skills through an elaborative process of articulation that is also open in part, allowing for a continuous process of testing, critical reflection and feedback that I have defined in research terms (above). This process never ends, since our ‘objects of knowledge’ are unfolding indefinitely and increasing in complexity throughout the lifetime of the performer-practitioner. It is only through this kind of model that I can begin to differentiate between a mature trained performer, and a less experienced one—hence the apparently paradoxical need for the notion of a dynamic, open system to characterise something that is also ‘held’, relatively stabilised (allowing identifiable ‘signature’), and at the same time ‘recognisable’ in terms of origins.

Developing Expertise (Section I. Part 7.)

Can we all become experts?

The question – “*How much do you practise?*” – is often asked of musicians. This aspect seems to be of interest to spectators (for whom such a discipline might be unimaginable) and music students must also have a clear understanding of what is expected of them or what represents sufficient time in terms of hours and daily routine. According to Ericsson: “By the age of 20 the best musicians had spent over 10,000 hours practising, which is 2,500 and 5,000 hours more than two less accomplished groups of musicians, respectively, and 8,000 hours more than amateur pianists of the same age” (Krampe and Ericsson 1996, pp.27–28). One of the important differences between expert performance practices and everyday skills is that expert performance never becomes fully habitual or automated, while experts must keep learning in a continuous (or elaborative) manner. According to Ericsson the reason for this appears to be primarily motivational.

Practice theorist Knorr-Cetina characterises this sort of drive for constant learning within knowledge-centered or epistemic practices as a “structure of wantings” that is bound-in to the possibility of pleasure. She points out that “the existence of such a dimension is borne out by the intensity and pleurability of objectual relations as experienced by experts”. The conjunction of the relational and libidinal dimensions, she argues, gives the expert (research) practice “a flavour and quality distinctively different from that of routines and habits”. Such a flavour and quality of expert enquiry feeds what she identifies as an “experimental *mentalité*”, which means that the ongoing experience can be “defined as an arousal of the processing capacities and sensitivities of the person”. On this basis, “the idea of the structure of wanting implies a continually renewed interest in knowing that appears never to be fulfilled by final knowledge” (Knorr-Cetina 2001, p.186).

Deliberate expert practice, then, is the opposite of mindless repetition. Those solitary hours must be spent in a purposeful, focused, structured, highly concentrated and time efficient way, aiming towards goals and improving specific aspects of performance. We constantly increase our self-awareness and learn to listen intently with a critical ear. It is most important for students to learn how to practise and train alone and to decide what exactly should happen in those thousands of hours of individual preparation. Learning also includes time spent away from the instrument, studying scores, literature and listening to other performances.

Our individual studio work, which we call ‘practising’, follows us throughout professional life, and it is the most important pillar and foundation for the existence of a performing musician. It is also far the largest part of our work. Training in this context is not only maintenance and conditioning but also the site of continuous refinement, learning and *research*. We do not know exactly when we reach a level of expertise acceptable to ourselves or to others. As with talent, expertise is likely to be recognised by others rather than by us. We might be proud of certain moments in our career but I am yet to meet performers who would ever be fully satisfied with their work—whence the notion that the performer continues to seek qualitative transformation, in Massumi’s terms (2002) and that the

performance, at any given time, is experienced, whatever the short-term euphoria, as a momentary instantiation of an ongoing (research) enquiry (Knorr-Cetina 2001).

The price to pay for attaining excellence in any field, but particularly in the performing arts, is very high, and the following anecdote attributed to violinist Isaac Stern illuminates the point:

A middle age lady once confronted Isaac Stern after a concert. She gushed, "Oh, I'd give my life to play like you!" ... "Lady", said Stern acidly, "That I did!" ...

Section II. Mechanics of Production

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Preparation

In this section I investigate two main areas of the creative process, which are normally concealed from spectators in the context of expert-professional performance practice. I present examples from my professional practice, explore aspects of the individual and collective preparation processes taking place before and during rehearsals, and explain particular approaches the performer needs to adopt in a variety of circumstances.

As we noted earlier, the larger part of the performing artist's work happens in the solitary confinement of our private studio. The rehearsal, on the other hand, is a collective preparation process, generally taking place prior to performances. These individual and collective preparation processes are not accessible to spectators and the audience can only experience the 'finished product' through the performance event (or recording), hence there is likely to be a lack of knowledge, in listeners, as to the different degrees of expertise in the different participants, and of the strategies adopted to enable the listeners' experience to seem unified rather than the opposite. In knowledge terms, then, we can suppose that certain key types and instances of knowledge remain specific to the performers, and are unavailable as such even to experienced listeners.

While performance events can be seen as culmination points of specific projects, for the performer-practitioner they only represent interim stations in the creative process, since our work and the quest for seeking improvements does not end with any particular performance but continues towards future projects, rehearsals and performances. We can suppose, as well, that the performer-practitioner's expertise continues to develop, on the basis of different experiences, hence it is difficult to locate borders around expertise, to contain it, or to measure it—even though expert practitioners and listeners continually engage in this sort of measurement. These different and dynamic elements in the case of our performance practice are part of a complex system of art-making, which incorporates developing, refining

and sharing knowledge.

It is important to point out that our regular training activities and preparation processes encompass a notable *research* element, conducted by the practitioner through means and methods integral to the practice. Apart from working with our instruments and learning through playing—one key element in growing and enhancing expertise—this research also involves studying large volumes of notated scores, reading supporting material, examining historical sources, comparing playing traditions, listening to other performances (live or recorded) and sharing information through discussions and debates with colleagues. These processes of exploration and discovery within expert-professional performance practice, taking place both individually and collectively, are comparable to research processes conducted within the more traditional writing based research paradigms although plainly some of their methods and some of their research outcomes are different.

One such difference might be that we rarely disseminate our research findings in a written form but rather we do so in the discipline-specific context of our performance practice. Interestingly, other practitioners are likely to sense a research breakthrough in a colleague, when they see, hear or discuss it, and in this sense research dissemination does occur. To some extent we might employ methods of qualitative research during our preparation processes and it can be argued that we are ‘immersed’ as practitioner-researchers, but our research activities might be better aligned with the more recent suggestion of a ‘performative’ research paradigm (Haseman 2006). In a performative research paradigm, I would suppose that the score itself has a particular force, almost an imperative, which as expert-practitioners we are likely to obey but while bringing to the task our expertise as performers and as skilled interpreters.

In examining creative performance-making processes as a research-centred mode of intervention, we might want to ask the following questions:

- i. What does ‘practising’ mean for musicians? Implicit in this question is my observation that practising is not ‘simply’ a matter

of professional preparation. I am arguing, as well, that it can also constitute a relatively informal mode of enquiry into expertise itself—hence it is one way that expert practice develops.

- ii. How do performers prepare for rehearsals, and what typically happens at the rehearsals?
- iii. How does a performing group typically make artistic decisions? In what ways might expert performers share their knowledge?
- iv. How do performers communicate with each other and to what extent do they use verbal communication? What other communicative modes operate in practice?
- v. Where can we recognise instances of qualitative transformation, supposing, along with Brian Massumi (2001), that the ongoing quest for qualitative transformation distinguishes the activities of the expert practitioner-researcher from the more routine tasks of the working musician?
- vi. What constitutes the individual performer's signature, and how do we recognise it?
- vii. To what extent can we argue that a research enquiry in terms already identified above—eg. relational dynamics, expert intuition and professional judgment—actually operates in this context?

What do we mean by ‘practising’?

Before we examine rehearsal processes I propose to reflect further on our individual training activities and preparatory work, a large part of which we call ‘practising’. I am bearing in mind here my earlier observation, which is that practising involves discipline-specific knowledge rarely available to the non-practitioner. What exactly happens during those thousands of solitary hours we spend in our private studio-laboratory?

This area is a space from which we would normally want to exclude others. I would argue, on the basis of extensive experience, that many artists tend to be rather shy and secretive about their individual methods, strategies, challenges, struggles, or even successes, while working alone. Practising is actually not pleasant to listen to because we tend to concentrate on improving elements we have a problem with rather than ‘enjoying’ musical lines we can play well. Practising often consists of working on small sections of the music or refining technical aspects by using repetition in a constructive way. In my experience, while we are working on these essential details we do not really want anyone to know what we need to do to achieve certain goals or how long it might take us to do so. We tend only to want to emerge from our studio when we are ready to show the results to the outside world.

This attitude could explain (in part) the use of unwritten and highly individualised curriculum for training programs within conservatoires and specialised institutes. In the pedagogical context, again in terms of my own professional experience, I observe that we do reveal some of our secrets to our students but this knowledge (while it has common and collective elements) tends to be specific to the individual teacher, and on this basis the name of a particular teacher might have greater weight than the detail of the curriculum. In the performance community we often discuss these aspects but I would maintain that an individual practitioner’s secrets are normally concealed and carefully guarded, suggesting

that there is a strong degree of competitiveness in the profession. In the professional world, where commissions or funding for expert practice are competitively obtained, it is the outcome that matters and it can even be considered unprofessional to reveal too much detail from our private studio work.

Yet, this large and invisible component of intense and sustained activity provides the foundation for our entire existence as professionals. In other words, knowledge already acquired is not a basis for continuing to work as a professional. Our actions, thought processes and creative energies are constantly revolving around such issues and any professional career totally depends on the quality of this solitary work. This is a creative space where deliberate practice operates, mastery is developed, innovation is born and individual signatures emerge. This part of the performer's artistic (and research) activity could provide us with rich material for future research, but within the present project I can only highlight three key components from our work in this area.

The first component has to do with general conditioning, which is part of our ongoing routine training activity with the aim to keep the player in a continued state of 'fitness' in relation to the instrument. I would argue that instrumentalists train in very similar ways to athletes. Such training includes warm-up and structured daily exercises to develop and maintain our level of playing, aiming to improve our skills, strength, endurance, speed, accuracy, sound production and other such components. In doing so we experiment, combine or invent new training methods and continuously try to exceed our own limitations.

The second element I could describe as a combination of activities. Here we aspire to grow not only as instrumentalists but also as musicians and creative artists. We want to enlarge our repertoire by learning new pieces as well as working further on music we already played. We are aware that technique in itself only serves us up to a point and it does not really have much use in isolation (see for instance: Pleeth 1982). The question is always to understand what we want to use technique for. Ultimately we must grow beyond technique and work towards expression, meaning and communication, many aspects of which depend upon experience and the ability to apply it constructively to the professional context.

In Western art music we tend to learn pieces by using a score. We tend to begin by seeking to understand—in professional terms—every detail that can be revealed through the notation. This involves time of study away from our instrument as well as with the instrument. We must make sense of the music: in my experience we aim to locate and develop meaning apparently hidden ‘behind the notes’ and imagine how we might want the music to sound. Plainly the spatial metaphor ‘behind the notes’ signals a hermeneutic undertaking on the practitioner’s part, that tends to bring notions of historical and biographical contexts into play, interweaving these with the constraints that seem to apply in the context of the targeted performance. It seems to me that as we work in this way we continuously have to revise our technique and approach, in our engagement with the score’s particular demands. Our studio is like a research laboratory where we can slow down our actions, physical movements, musical gestures, passages and phrases, and place these complex processes under a metaphoric magnifying lens in order to examine them, correct mistakes and improve our expression, balance, alignment, fluidity, accuracy, efficiency and other such components before putting them back together again in the context of playing the music.

The third element is learning the actual pieces of music coming up for rehearsals and performances. In preparing for ensemble work, in one example, learning to play our own line is a relatively small part of the process. The more important question is how we might relate our part to the piece of music as a whole at any given point. In other words, we are playing our part but in relation to *what*? At this point, it seems to me, theories of relationality and of complex knowledge systems come into play, even if for the expert practitioner these are taken for granted. In order to find the answer to the question of relationality of ensemble performers—plainly a matter of the weight of experience but also of the relative importance of the role in the composition—we need to study the score in every detail, examining the music in terms of its compositional style, musical form, construction, harmonic structure, dominant ways of expression, motivic and melodic content, particular rhythmic characters, phrasing, instrumental distribution and balance. We need to be aware of the historical context of the music together with its past performance history and current trends of

performance practices, which seems to me to suggest that a *research* undertaking is required, even if its outcome is rarely viewed as a research outcome by academics—partly, perhaps, because it emerges as expert practice and not as written text.

At a particular stage in this enquiry we can begin to make decisions about how we might want to proceed with our interpretation of the music and with playing our own part. In doing so we relate our interpretation to the particulars of our instrument by finding, selecting, adapting or inventing techniques of playing. Once we clarify our understanding about our preferred interpretation, it seems to me, that we proceed to internalise the way we might want to play the music, and this internalisation means that we are likely, from this point on, to be able to make what Melrose (2005/c) has called ‘expert-intuitive decisions’ with regard to professional practice. We practise the piece and experiment with different ways of playing while constantly revising our results. The outcomes are reinforced by repetition as we commit the information to be stored in our kinesthetic memory, in our brain and body. While we proceed with our own preparation towards rehearsals and performances we must also remain open to adjust our interpretation in the light of new information we are likely to receive at the rehearsals.

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 3.)

About rehearsals

An inherent part of a performing musician’s milieu is the art of collaborative playing as an artistic form of musical expression. Solo playing brings the focus to bear on individual decisions, while ensemble playing requires additional skills and a particularly-developed musical approach based on the ability to weigh musical options and opinions in the light of other individuals playing in the same continuum. In the case of any form of collaborative playing the rehearsal becomes a necessary component of the performance production. Rehearsals are preparatory

events taking place prior to public performances. The purpose of the rehearsal is to practise playing together in the context of preparing for a public performance and to refine and align individual approaches in order to present a coherent and unified musical production. Clearly the knowledge acquired in individual preparation is likely to be revised in part on the basis of collaborative practice, provided the relationship is one based on comparable expertise. (Just as clearly, this is not always the case).

Performing groups vary in size and could range from two players to large symphony orchestras with over one hundred members. The nature of the group is a deciding factor in how the rehearsals are conducted. For larger groups there is usually a conductor, director, or a leader who directs the performance and consequently the rehearsals too. In this case the overall responsibility for the performance remains with the director and the players only have partial or limited roles in decision-making assigned with their positions of responsibility within the group. In smaller chamber groups the status and responsibilities of the members are more equally shared and the artistic decisions are usually made collectively and in a more democratic manner.

The length of this collective preparation period is determined by the circumstances but rehearsal time is always limited. Rehearsals often involve bringing performers together from long distances or even from different parts of the world and fitting rehearsal time into their busy schedules can be challenging. Considering the cost of their professional engagement together with the related expenses of travel, instrument transport, accommodation, venue hire and other logistics, it is imperative that rehearsals are highly concentrated and productive to be cost effective, and clearly this process demands a professional expertise that goes beyond the mastery of one's instrument.

Once again, we are dealing, as researchers, with highly-specialised skills—or knowledge-practices (epistemics)—that also include a psychological understanding of group dynamics and their implications for music performance, that are very rarely written about and certainly underrepresented in terms of published research, despite their importance to the music professions. This is a

curious matter but hardly atypical as far as professional performance-making is concerned.

The final rehearsal or ‘dress rehearsal’ usually takes place in the actual concert venue and on the day of the performance. The purpose of the final rehearsal for musicians is to provide them with the opportunity to get used to the acoustics of the particular venue, to allow time for the necessary negotiations about practicalities like positioning on stage or lighting and to make the final technical and other checks with regard to the performance. Musicians at this rehearsal could decide to play through their pieces (if considered necessary after the previous rehearsals) but more often they use the time to try out only parts of the programme and save their energy for the performance. In this case they only ‘top and tail’ their program by checking particular key areas or meeting points called ‘corners’ in the pieces.

Rehearsals normally take place behind closed doors and are not accessed by the public. However, in exceptional circumstances, performers or concert promoters could decide to open their rehearsals for interested members of the public and in this case some performance-making processes can be observed—although this could possibly change the dynamic.

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 4.)

Open rehearsals at *La Musica* Chamber Music Festival in the USA

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival in Sarasota (Florida, USA) has two particularly unique features. It invites *individual* musicians rather than established chamber groups and from the very beginning (since the festival was established) the founders had decided to open all rehearsals to the public (see <http://www.lamusicafestival.org/>). Each year a small number of reputable

musicians are selected from different continents and invited to play chamber music together. Many of these musicians meet there for the first time and over a period of three weeks they prepare to perform a number of concerts at Sarasota Opera House. These concerts feature different programs and the musicians appear in different chamber groups and also alternate between different roles. Each concert performance is usually preceded by two rehearsal days and the entire rehearsal process takes place in front of the public.

The video extracts included here are part of a documentary film produced in 2005 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of *La Musica* Festival. The film presents the history of the festival, features material from rehearsals, performances and includes interviews with musicians and promoters. I was one of the performers at the time of making this documentary and propose to begin by showing a slightly longer clip from the film (II/4/a – about 5 minutes in length) and then proceed to analyse shorter sections in detail.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 4/a.)

II/4/a. Open Rehearsal Laboratory

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival
Sarasota, Florida, USA, 2005

Performers:

Federico Agostini, Cecilia Zilliacus, Curtis Macomber, Fionnuala Hunt (violins)
Bruno Giuranna, Cynthia Phelps, Francien Schatborn (violas)
Ferenc Szűcs, Ronald Thomas, Cecilia Radic (cellos)
Jan Manasse (clarinet) Derek Han (piano)

Interviews:

Derek Han (Performer, Associate Artistic Director)
Bruno Giuranna (Performer, Artistic Director)
Cynthia Phelps, Fionnuala Hunt (Performers)

Extracts from 20th Anniversary Video Documentary
with kind permission of *La Musica*

Perhaps what we might note here firstly – as Derek Han (pianist and associate director) points out in the last interview – is that the rehearsal is an “intense process” for the musicians. The presence of the audience might add something to the intensity – as viola player Cynthia Phelps comments – as it “puts us on our toes”, particularly if we are aware that members of the audience are knowledgeable and well-informed about the music. At the same time we can also feel supported by the audience – as violinist Fionnuala Hunt explains – since undoubtedly they “want us to do well”, and are aware of the pressure of the occasion.

In the wider performance context the presence and reaction of the audience is an important component, in that it is here that our own creative decisions and prowess as performers, along with our own musical judgement, are tested by expert listeners. In our performance practice there is an interactive triangulation present between the music (or the composer), the performers and the audience. If we modify any of these contributing elements that will be likely to change the performance practice itself. Such changes could affect the choice of music, the way it is presented, or the way it is appreciated. The triangle between the composer, the performers and the audience operates by *relational dynamics* where each element *affects* the other and thereby the practice is continuously evolving and changing as a result. In the terms I have set out thus far, this expert relational practice is fragile, and its management requires a particular sensitivity as well as technical mastery and creative flair.

However, in the context of our open rehearsals at *La Musica* I do not think that the presence of the audience had significantly changed the terms of how these rehearsals were conducted. There might be several reasons for this. Firstly, during rehearsals the musicians are engaging with the music at a very intense level and therefore the presence of the audience – as Derek Han notes – “isn’t something that really bothers us”. The preparation process for the upcoming performance is much more of concern for the musicians than is the presence of the audience at the rehearsals.

Secondly, the intensity of these rehearsals was increased by the pressure of time.

In the case of these concerts at *La Musica* we only had two days to prepare for each concert with a full evening program with playing time of approximately 90 minutes. Concert programs would comprise several—at least three, but more often four or five—pieces of music. Time slots of about two hours were allocated to rehearse each piece twice within the available rehearsal days and about one hour given to each piece at the dress rehearsal. The rehearsals for each piece were scheduled on consecutive days. In this way the performers had sufficient time in between rehearsals to update their approach and integrate new information. The combined total rehearsal time for each piece (including the dress rehearsal) therefore hardly exceeded five hours at the maximum, which is very short indeed, and I would argue that the nature of the event plays on the requirement of the performers that they be both expert, known in their field, able to operate under particular pressures, and highly experienced—hence ‘signature practitioners’, in the way Melrose uses the term (Melrose 2009).

Finally, there is another interesting issue to rise with regard to the presence of the audience at these rehearsals. It is likely that during these rehearsals the performers were more concerned with impressing their colleagues than with pleasing the audience. The selection of musicians for the festival is based on already established professional reputation (or signature) but any future engagement is likely primarily to depend on the opinion and the judgement of fellow musicians. Judgement, as readers will be aware, is a complex matter, and one approached explicitly by relatively few researchers, even if it tends to be implicit in every choice they make. (Bourdieu’s ‘judgement of taste and value’ (1977) takes up and reaffirms the Kantian tradition, but he does so within an ideological framework—concerned in particular with class division and degree of access to ‘symbolic capital’—which may have meant that few performance researchers maintain that concern.)

However, professional practice and expertise in that practice are singularly a matter of the exercise of discretion, as is the case here, where judgement is constantly made, but is modulated, in its exercise in this particular context, by discretion. Such expert evaluation—which is ongoing and liable to change, rather than fixed—could, in turn, either enhance individual reputations or equally could

damage them. In any case, the best way for performers to impress an audience in these circumstances might be to concentrate on their work and to be totally absorbed in that process. On the basis of these factors, and drawing on my own experience, I would argue that these rehearsals at *La Musica* likely have been conducted exactly the same way with or without the presence of the audience, since the real and most demanding audience, in professional as well as aesthetic terms, is the other performers.

At the rehearsal individual views are compared and judged by oneself as well as by the other players until an agreement is reached in terms of how the piece might be approached collectively. In chamber music there is no conductor. Each player, while playing, is also listening intensely to the others, and making moment-to-moment decisions and adjustments, selecting from a wide range of possible responses. The leading lines or ‘tunes’ and the supporting or accompanying lines often rapidly change their function in music performance. Musical lines (along with their players) group together and re-group again at each moment as the music unfolds in time. Each player has to know with whom he or she is aligned at any point in the piece. They also need to know which player to listen to in particular to catch the next cue for tempo, dynamics, style and nuances like slowing down, taking time, or starting a new sequence, and in turn they have to give such cues to the others. In this way the players continuously give signals to each other and also receive such information, in an intensive semiotic dynamics that is particularly difficult to write about.

The players (while engaged in playing) communicate with each other purely by musical—hence non-verbal—means. On this level of engagement the ‘play’ or ‘game’ of music (Green 1987) becomes fascinating in its complexity, and in the rapidity of its development. It can be mesmerizing to experience the mastery of this kind of subtle communication in between a group of experts both for the players and also for the audience. However, in the terms of this research enquiry, I argue that the larger part of this subtle and complex moment-to-moment communication in between players remains hidden and inaccessible to spectators. Only its outcome—from which the major part of this epistemic enquiry has been removed—is available. Such discipline-specific communication might be more

noticeable at rehearsals—especially if these are carried out in the particular circumstances included in this example—but in actual performance any visible signs of this communication is reduced to the minimum and to the absolutely essential as the players aim towards the audible *result* in expressing the music.

The complex communication that I have tried to set out above has a visual component but more importantly (in the case of a musical performance) it is based on *listening*. Moreover, it goes beyond using only these two faculties of sensation. Since music itself is a process, as it unfolds in time, consequently we cannot change anything about the notes we already played but rather we must *anticipate* the ones we are going to play. We have to take action and make choices *before* we play anything and also indicate to the other musicians *how* we are intending to do so. What will happen in music very much depends on what happened before and on how we lead up to a particular point, but it is constantly the fact that the choice has to be made before the next thing happens: hence there is a duration (in Bergson's sense of the term) to each choice we make, that expands in both directions in time, and for the performers at least it 'thickens' each instant of performance-making, as does, in fact, each performer's own musical memory.

Expert musicians make these choices, at lightening speed, *before* and in *between* the notes. This is a virtual space, where things have not happened as yet but are about to happen, and are, therefore, in a continuous state of *becoming*. Brian Massumi (2002) calls this virtual space a "field of possibilities". While playing directly within this "field of possibilities", the communication must be finely tuned so that each performer can *sense* what the other player is going to do, with full and expert knowledge of possibility, and take the mental and physical preparatory action simultaneously coordinated with others in order to arrive to a point together. Arriving together does not only mean making the correct choice in terms of timing but also selecting from a multitude of possible choices with regard to character, intensity, mood, shades of colour in sound, dynamics and style. Musicians would say that you do this by 'just feeling it under your skin' and the phenomenon is often referred to in the profession as 'being musical'. Melrose (2009) calls this phenomenon the operations of 'expert intuition'. I propose to return to these questions, of the virtual, of expert-intuitive processes, and

examining music as process in its relation to time, within the context of discussing specific performance events in the next section.

In communicative terms, there is characteristically relatively little verbal communication or ‘talking’ involved in professional rehearsals, although one could say that metaphorically, instrument speaks to instrument, and expertise to expertise. Musicians consider lengthy discussions during rehearsals both unnecessary and also unprofessional. In my experience as a professional practitioner, most of us would hold the view that if ‘we need to talk about it’ then something is already lost in our communication and our rehearsal has drastically gone ‘wrong’. The larger part of the rehearsal time comprises *playing* together. By *listening* intently and *communicating through musical means* the group would soon unify their approach. As Bruno Giuranna (viola player and artistic director) explains in the film: by playing together the differences would “go away”, the playing gets “smooth” and “harmonic” and the moment arrives when the group finds that “single focus” which is absolutely essential for a good performance.

That “single focus” implies that a “qualitative transformation” (Massumi 2002) is taking place at the rehearsal. This notion is delicate and its elements difficult to identify individually, but I argue that it is brought to pass by the knowledge, skills, expertise, creativity and *aspiration* of the performers. In my view, such qualitative transformation is less a humanist metaphor for a desire for artistic achievement than it is actually a *research outcome*, as well as a justification for undertaking that research. Moreover, there is often a further qualitative transformation or ‘step up’ that takes place in between the final rehearsal and the performance, as the performer’s concentration reaches maximum levels, and the resulting performance is often aesthetically different from, and surpasses what has been achieved in rehearsals—provided, plainly, that technical mastery and musical expertise is in place. The reason might be that in between the dress rehearsal and the performance (in a matter of a few hours) we all adjust our expectations as well as our own *mental image* (a combined musical, special, physical, visual, conceptual and sound image) of what we are about to do, based on the most recent experience of the last rehearsal, and at the same time collect our energies to give—in humanist terms—the ‘very best’ we can possibly produce in

the performance, not only on our own behalf, but on that of our fellow musicians. (I explore questions concerning this ‘mental image’, which performers construct in visualising their performance in the next section in connection with performance events.)

While rehearsals mostly comprise playing, they do however have moments of verbal discussion. (A video documentary is likely to select from these moments rather than feature long sections of playing, since a moment of verbal discussion might appear to be more accessible to an audience.) *What* is discussed at rehearsals tends to be rather revealing. For instance, if a player asks a question where the answer is considered to be self-evident to an expert musician, such question would be an instant giveaway of an unexpected nervousness or incompetence.

I attempt to explain this without going into lengthy and detailed musical analysis. Among expert musicians there is a large body of accumulated knowledge and certain understanding—which Melrose (2007) identifies as ‘models of intelligibility’, or established ways of seeing, doing and knowing—about ways of playing in particular styles and making musical responses considered to be ‘correct’. In my experience, musicians believe (in the context of Western art music practices) that there are certain basic laws operating in music, which are in many ways considered to be similar to basic laws of nature. For instance, if ‘A’ is introduced in a particular way then ‘B’ has no choice but to follow with a certain response pattern. In this context some responses would definitely be considered ‘wrong’. However, within the ‘right’ response category there are still many possible choices that remain. These choices could be the subject of a brief discussion at rehearsals and I highlight some of these moments from the *La Musica* video we have seen.

In the first example (II/4/b) if we take a closer look at one shorter section of the *La Musica* video clip again, we can note how the performers approach a particular challenge with regard to the start of the *fugato* section in the last movement of Tchaikovsky’s *Souvenir de Florence* and what kind of ‘discussion’ is taking place while the players are searching for a solution.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 4/b.)

II/4/b. Open Rehearsal Laboratory

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival
Sarasota, Florida, USA, 2005

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70

Federico Agostini, Cecilia Zilliacus (violins)
Bruno Giuranna, Cynthia Phelps (violas)
Ferenc Szűcs, Ronald Thomas (cellos)

Extracts from 20th Anniversary Video Documentary
with kind permission of *La Musica*

There are three interrelated questions arising here with reference to the start of the *fugato* section: a) How to prepare the start, in other words, how to arrive to this point? b) How to start the new section? c) What is the best style for starting the next section or the head of the *fugato*?

These questions emerged as the group played through this passage and since they were not satisfied with the result they stopped to discuss the matter. The ‘discussion’ typically takes place by using a combination of means for communication: special words, gestures and showing possible choices by demonstration. I attempt to ‘translate’ the essence of this conversation:

Federico (1st violin) says that the start of the *fugato* “comes too soon” – or as his gesture indicates: ‘hits you in the face’. Bruno (1st viola) suggests that the start should be better prepared or “placed”, meaning that if the start is not secure or well established we could easily lose control in the following section and it could become too fast and unstable, and he is gesturing with his hands a ‘stumbling over’ motion. I insert (playing 1st cello) that we should “hold it steady”, agreeing

with Bruno's comment. Ronald (2nd cello) makes a good point by saying that the players of the finishing line (while closing the previous phrase) should not "worry about the downbeat" (or the starting point of the *fugato*) since the beginning of the next section is more in the hands of the violas. At this point Cynthia (2nd viola) is asking Bruno (1st viola) a very valid question about clarifying the style of playing these starting notes. Bruno says "Ah" which means that he considers the question good and relevant. The reason for this "Ah" (which is understood by everyone in the group) is as follows: the motif (head of the *fugato*) will re-appear again many times as the passage develops and in turn will be played by other players. According to the internal rules of music making, once a motif is introduced the first time in a particular way, all the other players must imitate that same articulation, while the music remains or reappears in the same context, in order to maintain the identity of a particular character. It is therefore crucial that the two viola players agree on articulating these few notes at the beginning of the sequence exactly the same way. This will also ensure the secure placing of the start. Bruno is showing (by playing) two alternatives (one of them is the 'wrong way' and the other is obviously his preferred choice) and says that the notes should be a little "heavy" (slightly lengthened). He considers this way of playing to be the right style for the head of the *fugato* in this particular moment. This decision also corresponds with previous parts of the discussion about securing the arrival to this starting point and establishing the next sequence. The discussion is closed and the group continues the rehearsal by returning to playing.

We can witness here the efficiency of this type of communication. It only took 44 seconds of rehearsal time to debate these questions and examine the possible choices. The desired solutions are found. Each player carefully notes the agreed action points with reference to their own contributing lines and the results are incorporated into the performance.

The next example (II/4/c) from the *La Musica* video clip is showing another situation where a discussion became necessary. In chamber music (as mentioned above) we have equally shared responsibilities for decision-making and consequently the players listen intently to one another while constantly evaluating particulars. In this regard we have an important rule. When players are not

required to play at any particular moment, they cannot take a ‘rest’ by simply counting the empty bars in order to know when to join in again, but are expected to keep listening to the others in case any helpful comments might be needed. In this way the directorial responsibilities are shared out since the players who do not play are in a better position to judge the balance for those who are actually playing.

For instance, the last movement of *Souvenir de Florence* starts with the accompanying motif played by only three players (violin 2 + viola 1 & 2) before the first violin introduces the main theme and the other players join in. After playing these few bars at the rehearsal there is some uncertainty. The group stops and the opinions of the other three players (who are not playing but listening) asked. Bruno turns to the other players (to the first violinist and particularly to the cellists who are sitting a little further) and asks: “How was it?” From this question the musicians immediately understand that Bruno is concerned about the texture and the balance, otherwise there would be no reason to stop after the first few bars. Since this introduction ideally needs to be very light and transparent I comment (playing 1st cello) that it could be “smoother” which means that it is perhaps sounding a little too labored. Federico (1st violin) immediately replies that the texture here is “too thick”, with which Bruno agrees, since this is precisely the reason he stopped. In this context we all have the same understanding with regard to why Bruno stopped and the question “How was it?” also means to us: “Do you hear the same problem as I do?” in other words, and to be more specific: “Are you listening and agree with me that the texture here is too dense?” Clearly the players understand this question exactly the same way and all members of the group understand *a) what is the problem* in the first place, as well as know *b) what is the solution* (make the texture lighter and more transparent) and have their expertise available with reference to know exactly *c) how to apply that solution* in technical terms in connection with the music and in relation to their instruments and the other players. The matter does not need any further discussion. However, Cynthia (2nd viola) adds one more point: once the mood is established we should “come down” (lighten or thinner the texture further) in order to give way to the leading voice of the 1st violin. This comment is also agreed with affirmative nods.

Again, this method of communication proved to be highly efficient as it only took about 25 seconds to reach this agreement and the rehearsal continues.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 4/c.)

II/4/c. Open Rehearsal Laboratory

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival
Sarasota, Florida, USA, 2005

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70

Federico Agostini, Cecilia Zilliacus (violins)
Bruno Giuranna, Cynthia Phelps (violas)
Ferenc Szűcs, Ronald Thomas (cellos)

Extracts from 20th Anniversary Video Documentary
with kind permission of *La Musica*

We can see similar discussions in other parts of the film too, but in most cases these discussions are very short and communicated in a similar way. This type of communication among musicians is often reduced to half words or gestures or simply nods in the rehearsal context and the point made is most likely to be demonstrated through playing. Moreover, these kind of ‘discussions’ can also take place *during* playing, not in words, but by musical means, by using a particular tone colour or emphasizing a phrase or a rhythm in a way from which the other musicians understand (primarily by listening) what is intended and immediately react to the information. Sometimes, visual signs of particular looks or subtle gestures indicating an agreement might accompany this communication, but it is always expected that such initiatives and reactions expressed through playing.

It is also worth noting that in our verbal communication we largely rely on using metaphors like ‘heavy’, ‘thick’, or ‘smooth’ as in the case of these examples. In fact it is hardly possible to talk about music without the use of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). For instance, when we are referring to a note as being ‘high’ or ‘low’ it is already a spatial metaphor since a sounding musical note is a frequency of vibration in the air. Each of these metaphors mask a multitude of complex considerations, actions and instant responses carried out by the performing musicians, on the basis of their long acquired expertise, in order to achieve the desired results.

These examples aim to demonstrate that certain instances of expert-professional performance practice can be recognised as ‘epistemic practices’ (Knorr Cetina 2001, Melrose 2005). The knowledge is created in and through the practice and it is validated, shared and exchanged in between practitioners by discipline-specific means, which we can argue are themselves informed by knowledge held in the wider cultural context. Even if this knowledge is created and disseminated through means different from conventional writing-based research practices, the findings, I argue, are equally valid, and the long and complex processes of exploration and discovery leading to expert-professional performance *necessarily* incorporate a sizable research component—even if it is rarely recognized or acknowledged as such, especially in the discourses of musicology. (This research undertaking aims, in part, to underline that omission and to trigger a change.)

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 5.)

Working as soloist with orchestras in Spain and Hungary

In 2011 I was invited to perform Haydn’s *Cello Concerto in D major* as a soloist with two different orchestras: *Concerto Malaga* in Spain and *Anima Musicae* in Hungary. They are both small chamber orchestras. The available rehearsal time in both cases was typically two rehearsals (approximately two hours duration each)

plus the final dress rehearsal on the day of the concert.

One of the notable differences between these two groups (apart from the players and the locations) is that *Concerto Malaga* works with a conductor, while *Anima Musicae* operates without a conductor, which likely to change the way the rehearsals are managed.

For larger orchestras it is customary to work with a conductor, since beyond a certain number of players on stage it is difficult to see and to hear each other sufficiently to play together effectively. In the case of a large group there can be a sound delay in between players sitting far apart and what players actually hear from the other side of the stage can be deceptive. Therefore in this case it is safer to follow the visual beat and gestures of a conductor. In addition it saves time during rehearsals if the direction originates from one person.

It is also interesting to mention that in orchestras there is a certain hierarchy according to the position of the players and they tend to operate in a fashion some might identify as military. Each section has a principal player who is leading that group of instruments and the principal player of the first violins is simultaneously the 'leader' of the entire orchestra. In rehearsals the conductor usually addresses requests to the leader or to the principal players and in turn the various sections (violins, violas, celli, basses, woodwind, brass, percussion) follow these instructions from the conductor but through their section leaders. If questions arise from the player's side then only the principal players voice the question to the conductor or to another section leader. The conductor essentially makes all the major artistic decisions about the performance and consequently decides how the rehearsals are directed. This situation can encourage conductors to behave in a dictatorial manner but at the same time a group of players also have the collective power to change their conductors if they are not satisfied.

Smaller orchestras or performing groups may work with or without a conductor. In the presence of a conductor a small orchestra (chamber orchestra) operates much same way as a large orchestra in terms of hierarchy and artistic direction. When a soloist joins the orchestra the negotiations mostly take place between the

soloist and the conductor. The role of the conductor in this case is to direct the orchestra while following the soloist and in turn the orchestra (while simultaneously listening to the soloist) follows the conductor. In the next parts I feature video samples of rehearsing with both of these orchestras.

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 6.)

Rehearsing with *Concerto Malaga*

This video sample (II/6/a) shows part of the rehearsal while I was working with *Concerto Malaga* and here we see aspects of the communication in between the soloist, the conductor and the orchestra.



Video sample

**Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 6/a.)**

II/6/a. Rehearsal with *Concerto Malaga*

Festival Forum Internacional
De Alto Perfeccionamiento Musical Del Sur De Europa
Auditorio Fundación Colegio de Médicos
Malaga, Spain, 2011

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist)
Massimo Paris (conductor)
Concerto Malaga Chamber Orchestra

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIIb

Having already played through the piece in the earlier part of the rehearsal,

at this point we stopped and I made three requests. Firstly, I asked that after finishing the slow second movement, the faster third movement should start without a break. The word used for this in music is '*attacca*' (derives from the Italian '*attacare*', meaning 'to tie' or to connect). The conductor simply gave a nod and the players immediately made a written mark in their parts as a reminder to accommodate my request.

As we started the third movement, within a few bars we arrived to a place where one particular note is held longer, with a slight pause (the Italian word '*fermata*' is used for this). The question was to decide how long this *fermata* might be. Since the decision was mine as the soloist, I simply showed the way and length I wanted to hold this note. The conductor immediately followed it while the orchestra spontaneously responded and the matter was resolved without the need of any verbal discussion.

Finally I asked the orchestra to play the beginning few bars of the third movement '*sotto voce*', which means very quietly and in a soft or whispering tone. The orchestra again noted this in their parts. As we repeated the passage my requests were followed. If we check the time clock on the video we can note that it took less than 60 seconds of rehearsal time for me to make these three requests and have the results achieved.

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 7.)

Rehearsing with *Anima Musicae*

A few months later I played the same piece (Haydn's *Cello Concerto in D*) in Hungary with a different chamber orchestra called *Anima Musicae*. This orchestra does not have a conductor. In the case of a chamber orchestra working without a conductor it is always directed by one person, most likely the leader (first violin), or perhaps another member of the group. With *Anima Musicae* it is usually the

leader who directs the concerts and consequently the rehearsals too. With chamber orchestras it is also customary to be directed by the soloist for the piece he/she is involved in. At this time it was agreed with the leader that I would direct my piece in the program. This situation allowed me to work with the orchestra during the rehearsals in a somewhat similar way as a conductor and to shape the performance-making process towards my interpretation of the music.

In the following video sample (II/7/a) I rehearse part of the piece when the soloist is not playing (called ‘*tutti*’ passages) with the orchestra. This does not really involve conducting in terms of giving a continuous beat, but rather using gestures, instructions or animation to encourage the orchestra to play in my preferred way and style.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 7/a.)

II/7/a. Rehearsal with *Anima Musicae*

Budapest, Hungary, 2011

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist/director)
Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIIb

Directing in this manner was only possible at rehearsals and in the passages where I was not playing. We might note that in the rehearsal I was positioned to face the orchestra (which would not be the case in performance) and this gave me more visual contact with the players. This positioning in the rehearsal also allowed me to give directions and instructions (by looks, nods or gestures) simultaneously while playing as the next example (II/7/b) shows.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 7/b.)

II/7/b. Rehearsal with *Anima Musicae*

Budapest, Hungary, 2011

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist/director)
Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIb

In performance the situation was different. The soloist (in the case of a string player) is normally placed on stage at the front of the orchestra and turned towards the audience. This positioning is better for projecting the sound in the auditorium but at the same time limits the visual contact with the orchestra. In this case the soloist is in direct communication with the leader who acts as the ‘representative’ of the soloist towards the orchestra and gives the necessary leading cues and impulses to the group. In performance the visible signs of directing by the soloist are reduced to very simple gestures since his or her requests were already incorporated into the performance through the rehearsals. The following video clip (II/7/c) shows this positioning during the dress rehearsal.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 7/c.)

II/7/c. Dress Rehearsal with *Anima Musicae*

Tibor Varga Institute of Music
Széchenyi University, Győr, Hungary, 2011

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist/director)
Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIb

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 8.)

Working with a composer in London

There is wide range of repertoire featured in classical concerts today with music spanning over four centuries of composition. In the majority of cases the performer has no direct contact with the composer. In terms of decision-making with regard to interpretation, the performer primarily relies on the notation of the score while also considers evolved performance traditions and styles. In this connection he/she can draw on historical data, take into account collected evidence, accumulated knowledge and oral traditions about past performance practices, and consider the experience derived from current performance practices. This must be combined with his/her own expertise, creativity, intuition, individuality and skills as a performer in creating a performance event. In these circumstances having a chance to work directly with a living composer provides us with a unique opportunity to find out more about the ‘composer’s intentions’ with regard to how the composer might prefers the music to be performed.

My professional experience includes instances when I collaborated with a number of living composers both as a soloist and as chamber musician. In addition, as an orchestral musician and particularly during the time I held a position as principal cellist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, I worked with many of the most reputable composers of our time including Messiaen, Boulez, Lutoslawski, Tippett, Stockhausen, Xenakis, Birtwistle, Schnittke and others. Some composers

(Boulez or Lutoslawski for instance) preferred to conduct their own music and functioned in a dual role. But in most cases, the composer (in my experience) attended the rehearsals in an advisory or even ‘honorary’ capacity rather than actively interfering with the performance production and thereby giving considerable freedom to the performers for interpreting their music. (I note here that the activities of composing and performing have only separated into different professions from around the 19th century and prior to that a musician simultaneously fulfilled both roles of composer and performer.)

In 2005 I was preparing for a recital in London (UK) with my pianist colleague Mine Dogantan Dack and we wanted to include a contemporary piece in the program. We asked British composer Peter Fribbins if he had any suitable pieces for cello-piano combination. He provided us with a piece, which was originally composed for violin-piano and he agreed to make an arrangement for cello. We premiered this version at Middlesex University.

The title of the piece ‘...*that which echoes in eternity*’ derives from Canto VI of Dante’s Inferno:

*He wakes no more till the sounding of the angel’s trumpet,
when the adverse Judge shall come:
each shall find again the sad tomb and take again his flesh and form
and hear that which echoes in eternity.*

As Mine and I progressed with our preparation we invited the composer to one of our rehearsals. Peter listened intently while we played through the piece and gave some helpful comments afterwards. By using a selection of short video samples below I show parts of the rehearsal and some of the discussions taking place between the performers and the composer.

The general mood of the music is contemplative, melancholic and mournful. It starts with a piano introduction (II/8/a) creating a feeling of timelessness.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/a.)

II/8/a. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – piano introduction

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins “*that which echoes eternity*”

The entry of the cello line (II/8/b) continues this dark mood but as it develops it also brings light, warmth, gentleness and almost angelic beauty through expressive lines in the string part.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/b.)

II/8/b. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – cello line entry

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins “*that which echoes eternity*”

The music becomes more turbulent at times and the heavy and sonorous chords in the piano part complemented by the rich and passionate cello line in the development section (II/8/c).



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/c.)

II/8/c. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – development section

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins “*that which echoes eternity*”

As we were working on the piece I had an ongoing concern with regard to the cello part. While my line is composed to be expressive, I wanted to make it more contemplative rather than ‘too beautiful’ and was wondering if I should make it more reserved or even possibly bring in ‘sinister’ undertones at times. In the discussion that followed Peter assured us (II/8/d) that he liked the way the piece was presented and his remarks were complimentary.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/d.)

II/8/d. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – discussion

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins “*that which echoes eternity*”

Peter explained (II/8/e) his concept of the music in terms of musical structure,

which turned out to be aligned with how we envisaged the piece. He was completely open to our interpretation and gave us total freedom in deciding on how we wanted to proceed with presenting the piece.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/e.)

II/8/e. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – discussion

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins *“that which echoes eternity”*

However, after listening to our rehearsal Peter made one helpful interpretative suggestion (II/8/f). This was with reference to the cello line at a particular moment where the solo cello remains alone. In that rehearsal I played this section rather tentatively which turned out to be far too slow. Peter was perfectly right in pointing out that playing this section faster and lighter would better suite the over all structural balance of the piece.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/f.)

II/8/f. Working with composer Peter Fribbins

Rehearsal – discussion

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins *“that which echoes eternity”*

At that point of the preparation process I was still unsure about this section. Since the arpeggio passages written in the cello line were in sequences of five notes, it was technically rather challenging because it involved huge shifts between notes on the fingerboard within each chord. Since the cello has only four strings, playing arpeggios comprising four notes is relatively easy if the notes of the chords are within easy reach because that would involve only bow movements of string crossings, which can be done at a fast speed if needed. But to insert a fifth note in each chord resulting in long distance shifts in the left hand considerably slows down the player. We have discussed this issue with Peter and he suggested (II/8/g) to change or even to leave out some of the notes of the chords to make it more convenient for the cello. Following our discussion I have worked on the passage, making minor changes in the cello line while leaving the musical context intact. (In the next section I feature this part of the piece in performance in video sample III/6/b.)



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 8/g.)

II/8/g. Working with composer Peter Fribbins Rehearsal – discussion

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005
Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Peter Fribbins *“that which echoes eternity”*

There are examples in musical history for this kind of collaboration between the composer and the performer. For instance, in the case of the *Cello Sonata* by Rachmaninoff (the piece featured in the next set of video samples) we know that this sonata was dedicated to cellist Anatoliy Brandukov who premiered it in Moscow on the 2nd of December 1901. According to Rachmaninoff's biographer (Culshaw 1941, p.138) it appears that Rachmaninoff must have made some last-minute alterations *after* the premiere as the date he wrote on the score was "12th December 1901". These alterations were likely to have been made in discussion with Brandukov but unfortunately we have no record of what suggestions Brandukov might have made to Rachmaninoff. I refer to this in the open-rehearsal research-seminar featured in the next part.

Mechanics of Production (Section II. Part 9.)

Open rehearsal and research seminar at Middlesex University

In the final part of this section I propose to show a research event, which took place at Middlesex University in London, UK. The event was designed in collaboration with my pianist colleague Mine Dogantan Dack and was moderated by Michael Frith. It was markedly different from our established ways of rehearsing and could perhaps be described more in terms of an open rehearsal or a staged workshop in front of an audience. The members of this audience were faculty and students of the university and we asked them to actively participate in the event by discussing with the performers a variety of questions arising in connection with the performer's work on developing an interpretation of Rachmaninoff's *Cello Sonata*.

Among the questions were: What are the cognitive/affective processes that performers go through as they formulate their conception of a chamber-music piece and create a performance interpretation? What kind of musical information does the score provide, and what kind of knowledge do performers employ in

interpreting the score? How prescriptive is the musical score and how much room does it leave for creative decisions? How do the constraints imposed by the style/period/genre of the piece determine performance choices? What are the musical issues that arise for co-performers in a chamber music context in developing an interpretation of the music they play? How do the co-performers interpret and apply the various suggestions and requests made during the process of developing a performance interpretation? What are some of the markers of professionalism that are perceivable by the members of the audience? (Dogantan-Dack and Szűcs 2005)

The following video samples show parts of this open rehearsal workshop where some of these questions were discussed.

In the first video clip (II/9/a) the discussion focused on issues of timing, listening and the difficulties arising for the cellist to detect a particular entry point while the pianist is playing the up-leading passage quite freely. We also elaborated on the question of how much information we might be able to find in the score with regard to the ‘composer’s intentions’. In this context I pointed out that the cellist Anatoliy Brandukov (to whom Rachmaninoff dedicated the sonata) was likely have made suggestions to Rachmaninoff for changes in the score after the first performance (Culshaw 1941) but we do not have information about what these changes were, nor in fact how Brandukov played the piece.



Video sample

**Mechanics of
Production**
(Section II. Part 9/a.)

II/9/a. Open Rehearsal and Research Seminar

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005

Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Moderator: Michael Frith

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) *Cello Sonata*, G minor, Op. 19

A member of the audience raised a very interesting question: – “*What is going through your mind while performing?*” – This question was asked (II/9/b) in connection with an earlier conversation with regard to what extent the performer might be using mental images as tools in the performance production. While it is not possible to comprehend the complexity of how our mind works, particularly in the heightened moments of performance, nonetheless certain aspects of ‘what it feels like’ to be in that moment can be described. I recalled from experience that during performance I do not want to be fixed on any particular image but rather restrict my mind to follow simple steps and a certain ‘time window’ as it is passing from moment to moment and concentrate on the immediate action taking place. With this approach we can keep our balance and feel more secure. In the context of the discussion we were talking about using mental pictures (like thinking of a lake when playing Debussy or perhaps using a religious image when playing Bach) and my preference was about not using such images. However, I believe that in preparation we do build a complex mental image of the *performance* itself, which is of a different kind. I return to this question in the next section (III/7) in the context of discussing performance events.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 9/b.)

II/9/b. Open Rehearsal and Research Seminar

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005

Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Moderator: Michael Frith

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) *Cello Sonata*, G minor, Op. 19

With regard to the various strategies the performers might adopt in performance, we explained (II/9/c) the need to enlarge and exaggerate musical gestures and nuances in order to project them and to make an impact on the audience situated at a distance from us. Mine and I referred here to enlarging musical gestures primarily in an auditory sense, however, a visual impact can equally be taken into account in this sort of event, where listeners are also spectators, and playing an instrument is a visual event as well as an auditory one.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 9/c.)

II/9/c. Open Rehearsal and Research Seminar

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005

Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Moderator: Michael Frith

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) *Cello Sonata*, G minor, Op. 19

Michael Frith (moderator at this seminar) raised a question as to whether there might be a narrative encoded in the music and how we might detect this while analysing the score. We discussed (II/9/d) this aspect in relation to the harmonic structure and particularly the cello line. A further question was asked about what tools we have to achieve certain goals, and in this case Michael was referring to the use of vibrato. I explained that this music starts tentatively with a still and slow introduction and therefore I am using little vibrato to make this effect and ‘warm-up’ the sound with more intense vibrato as we progress. The question of whether we might envisage a ‘narrative’ in the music or not, and if so what kind, was important. As discussed above, the performer must study the score in great detail in order to find the ‘meaning’ or what we might call the ‘essence’ of the music, and I return to these questions in the next section.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 9/d.)

II/9/d. Open Rehearsal and Research Seminar

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005

Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Moderator: Michael Frith

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) *Cello Sonata*, G minor, Op. 19

We continued the seminar by playing (II/9/e) the opening theme of the first movement.



Video sample

Mechanics of
Production
(Section II. Part 9/e.)

II/9/e. Open Rehearsal and Research Seminar

Middlesex University, London, UK, 2005

Ferenc Szűcs (cello) Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)
Moderator: Michael Frith

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) *Cello Sonata*, G minor, Op. 19

The aim of the workshop was to explore and affirm the status of professional music performance practice as a research activity. In this connection, the rehearsal itself could be regarded as a site where various research processes take place,

including observation, evaluation, judgment, reasoning, suggestion, negotiation, analysis, criticism and reflection. These processes are essential parts of collaborative music making and play a key role in the creation of a performance interpretation. Although one or another of these research processes may not seem to constitute research as the university understands the term, my argument is that over the duration of my professional career, these sorts of findings accumulate, contribute to expertise, and over time can be viewed as a matter of ongoing and sustained enquiry into expert practices, through expert practices. (The full video of this event is available on PRIMO, Practice as Research in Music Online: Dogantan-Dack and Szűcs 2005).

In this section I explored aspects of the production, from the intimacies of studio-based practice, through to the complexities of collaborative rehearsals, including reflection on the relationship between performers and also their relationship with conductors and composers. All of this reveals many nuanced layers of knowledge acquisition, investigation and communication, which make up the performance experience of the professional musician. The next section focuses on performance events and modes of dissemination available to the expert performer.

Dissemination

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How do performers disseminate their knowledge?

There are a number of key modes through which today's professional performers in the Western art music tradition might disseminate their knowledge, in general terms to various audiences, but this likely to include other artists and researchers. The modes of dissemination that I identify below operate differently when it comes to the specifics of knowledge and/or research dissemination as such, and on occasion that dissemination may seem to be haphazard rather than organised. Nonetheless, I argue that expert practitioners tend to learn from other expert practitioners' professional work, and that professional work, in the hands of a master practitioner, will tend to communicate the outcome of that expert practitioner's own ongoing enquiry, to those able and prepared to recognise it—that is, to other professional or expert practitioners who pursue a similar sort of enquiry. The five key modes of knowledge dissemination that I want to consider here are:

- Rehearsals
- Public performances
- Published recordings
- Teaching activities
- Arts practice research

Each mode serves a particular purpose and is able to disseminate knowledge—itsself likely to be the outcome of an ongoing enquiry that I would identify in terms of research—to different communities. At rehearsals (and also through performances) we share our expertise with the performance community, as well as with more general audience members. This is important both for the individual practitioner and also for the performance community. The expert judgement of fellow practitioners (as we have seen above) weighs heavily in terms of maintaining our individual professional status (signature), and sharing our knowledge with our colleagues in turn enriches and develops the practice.

The performance event, on the other hand, is a public forum for disseminating knowledge. The performer's prime function here is to present the 'artwork'. In our case this means a commitment to communicate the whole and entire conception of the music, as it unfolds in time, typically in the context of performance events. The audience's judgement and that of the critic is one of the crucial deciding factors in measuring success for the artist and I would argue that feedback from these sources can eventually change the way the practice operates—although this is difficult to chart in research terms.

By the second half of the 20th century recorded music increasingly became not only an important alternative form of dissemination for performers but also a dominant way of accessing music by the public (see for example: Chanan 1995; Cook 1998; Day 2002; Robert 2004; Katz 2004). The history of recorded music can provide an invaluable resource for studying the developments of performing styles as well as related social-economic changes. It is not my purpose to engage with this rich field of enquiry within the present project but I would note that the questions around "liveness" led to interesting debates in recent years (Auslander 2008).

It is important to point out that through performance events and/or published recordings our knowledge is primarily communicated by *discipline-specific* and *non-linguistic* means (although plainly programme notes provide added detail that can be invaluable to the dissemination of a range of factors relating to music history, interpretations, the identity and biography of composers and performers, and some information about the music). My argument here, is that this discipline-specific and non-linguistic communicative mode can now be understood to be a significant *research mode*, provided we find the means to identify it as such. These means tend to be discourse-based, as is much of the present undertaking, but the orientation has shifted: here the written component has the specific task of illuminating expert or professional practice in the arts, and is *secondary* to it. The practice-as-research and practice-led research debates have intensified over the past decade, as is revealed in the work of—amongst others—Coessens, Crispin and Douglas, at the Orpheus Institute in Belgium (2009).

In addition, the performance practice (for most professional performers in my experience) incorporates some form of teaching activity. Here we share our knowledge with our students in a pedagogical context thereby maintaining the continuity of the practice. Beside the traditional core activities of the practice (training, rehearsal, performance) the mode of instrumental teaching might be the only platform where we are forced (to some extent) to verbalise our knowledge in order to explain particulars to our students. But (as I propose show in the next section) this verbal communication is particular to the individual teacher and closely related to the discipline-specific communication methods we use in the professional rehearsal context (as I demonstrated above).

We must also note that *none* of the above modes of dissemination by the practitioner are traditionally *writing-based* (apart from a relatively small number of publications primarily related to artist's memoirs or teaching aids; examples include: Menuhin 1977; Pleeth 1982; Wolf 1991; Brendel 2001). In this connection perhaps the newly emerging field of arts practice research provides the first opportunity (and substantial challenge) for performing musicians to begin to articulate (parts of) their knowledge through discursive writing and/or present it through structured documentation (as I do). In this case we primarily disseminate our knowledge to the research community. Then again, large parts of that complex activity and experience of art making might continue to resist many attempts at linguistic articulation.

In this section I primarily focus on performance events with particular emphasis on the experience from the performer's point of view. The accompanying text together with the featured video examples and interviews aim to highlight certain shared aspects of the performing experience in relation to the practice. I propose to comment on teaching and arts practice research activities in the following section.

Performance events

Performance events are undoubtedly the culminating points of the performance production and (in part) could be considered to be the ‘finished products’ of specific performance projects. However, from the performer’s (and also the researcher’s) point of view, any one performance only represents an interim station or a temporary ‘pause’ in terms of the ongoing larger processes of performance making. Each performance event is likely have been preceded by long preparation processes and/or possible previous performances, which strongly relates to and affects the particulars of each event. It is also likely to be followed by subsequent reflection and evaluation that provide ongoing feedback leading towards future performances.

The ‘event’ as a knowledge category is always singular and unrepeatable (see for instance: Davidson 1969, 1980; Lombard 1998). There are an infinite number of contributing factors making each live event a unique one-time experience both for the performers and also for the audience. We can never reproduce the same thing twice, nor it is desirable to do so, particularly in Western contexts where originality as well as maintaining aesthetic norms tends to prevail (even implicitly). Brian Massumi (2002) suggests too that artists tend to aim for qualitative transformation in relation to previous practices and outcomes and their own experiences of these. Even if we play the same piece again, the disposition and interaction of the (often different) players, the venue, and the presence of various audiences produce a different multi-layered experience each time.

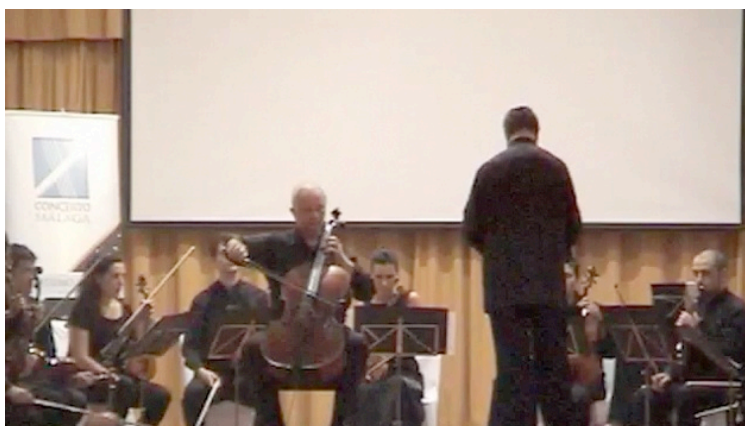
Some parameters of performance events appear to be fixed and certain factors are ritualised—in anthropologist Victor Turner’s (1969) sense of the term—as we play out roles given in advance, which tend to be accompanied by particular attitudes and expectations. Other factors are, in part, accidental, which cannot be known in advance and which are rarely documented as such and this makes them difficult to deal with in terms of traditional analysis. The live performance event

always remains more or less unpredictable, subject to human strengths and weaknesses, and no matter how well we prepare for it, each performance presents new challenges for the performer. Generally, the *expert* performer within any performance group is able, at lightning speed, to compensate for others' performance difficulties. This is one aspect of the performer expertise with which this study is concerned.

Dissemination (Section III. Part 3.)

Comparing three performances of Haydn's *Cello Concerto*

In 2011 I played Haydn's *Cello Concerto in D major* in three different locations and with two different orchestras. (I focused in the earlier section on the rehearsal processes leading up to these performances.) Two of these events took place in Spain only a few days apart in July with *Concerto Malaga* while the third one was scheduled in September with *Anima Musicae* in Hungary. I have selected and included here three video extracts from these performances (III/3/a; III/3/b; III/3/c), showing approximately the same part of the piece: the ending of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd movement.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 3/a.)

II/3/a. Concert Performance – Haydn

Festival Forum Internacional
De Alto Perfeccionamiento Musical Del Sur De Europa
Auditorio Fundación Colegio de Médicos
Malaga, Spain, 2011

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIIb

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist)
Massimo Paris (conductor)
Concerto Malaga Chamber Orchestra



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 3/b.)

III/3/b. Concert Performance – Haydn

Festival Conciertos Las Bellas Artes
Inglesia De San Juan Bautista
Nigüelas, Spain, 2011

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIIb

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist)
Massimo Paris (conductor)
Concerto Malaga Chamber Orchestra



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 3/c.)

III/3/c. Concert Performance – Haydn

Tibor Varga Institute of Music
Széchenyi University
Győr, Hungary, 2011

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Cello Concerto, No. 2, D major, Hob. VIIIb

Ferenc Szűcs (soloist/director) *Anima Musicae* Chamber Orchestra

In these examples of repeated performances we can readily recognise the same music (in this case the main theme of the third movement) and the obvious differences between the venues. We can suppose that the audience was also different each time while the performers were either the same or different: these are some of the performance-contingent factors, to which a thorough qualitative analysis—as distinct from the outline here—would draw the reader’s attention. Plainly my own expert contribution is likely to be viewed by a non-specialist reader as the stable aspect of these three performances. But by taking a closer and expert look at the three video samples, we might note a number of more subtle differences, for instance the variations in tempi, timing, tone quality, gestures, ensemble work, sound production and other nuances including the different ending of a *trill* I used in the final bar of the *cadenza* of the slow movement. While certain aspects of repeated performances might be seen as ‘routine’ for the performers, I can assure the reader/viewer/listener that each of these concerts provided me with distinctive experiences and challenges, and I highlight a few of these factors below.

Some of these differences are connected with physical aspects, including the different venues (as mentioned above), the acoustics and spatial disposition of the players, but some are to do with the organisation of the players with reference to directorial roles. The first performance with *Concerto Malaga* took place in Malaga city (Andalusia, Spain) in an auditorium with relatively ‘dry’ acoustics (low reverberation) where the stage was elevated high above the seating level of the audience. The second performance took place in a church in the small town of Nigüelas (province of Granada) with rather ‘booming’ acoustics (high reverberation) and the orchestra was positioned at the same level as the audience. These factors had to be considered by the performers and in turn that changed the way the musicians interacted with each other and consequently altered the way they projected the sound to the audience.

The third performance in Hungary with *Anima Musicae* took place in a restored synagogue located within the campus of Széchenyi University in the town of Győr. The acoustics of this venue was perhaps the most favorable in comparison with the previous venues while the orchestra and the audience was totally

different. In addition, in Spain I was working with a conductor as a soloist while in Hungary I took a dual role of being both the soloist and the director. This had significantly changed the dynamics and communication strategies in between the players (as discussed in previous sections in connection with the rehearsal processes leading up to these events), and consequently the performing experience for me was significantly different from the previous ones in Spain.

There is another aspect here to highlight here with reference to the notion that expert performers aim to produce something ‘better’ each time and aspire to surpass what was achieved in previous performances, thereby actively initiating changes from one performance to another. Haydn’s *Cello Concerto in D* in the context of expert-professional performance practice (and also in the research context) can be considered in Knorr-Cetina’s terms (2001) as an ‘epistemic object’, which is characteristically ‘open, question generating, and complex’. As Knorr-Cetina explains, the complexity of such knowledge objects tend to unfold indefinitely, and thus expert practitioners maintain renewed interest, which propels them to revise and refine their interpretation through repeated performances. (I propose to return to the notions of complexity and ‘knowledge objects’ in the following parts below.)

Any performance (in my experience within the high-risk professional setting) engrosses the performers entire being, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Every detail of an immediately past performance is stored in our cognitive and kinesthetic memory. Following each performance we repeatedly ‘re-live’ the performing experience in our minds while critically going over the details and looking for possible improvements. During this evaluation process we can adjust our approaches mentally or can change technical elements too. In between repeated performances, the performers often tend to revise their approach by adjusting their ‘mental image’ of the upcoming performance. Our visualisation of the performance, which is connected to decision-making processes, is likely to modify the next performance. (With reference to how musicians ‘imagine’ the music, see discussion by Nicholas Cook (1990, pp.103–121) and also my examples below in the context of the featured interviews with Bruno Giuranna and Michael Wolf.) These modifications from one performance to another, in

turn, are recognised and reacted upon by the other performers (as expected of them in the expert-professional context) and thereby the next performance of the same piece is likely to be different from the previous one. However (as I pointed out in connection with rehearsal processes above), these subtle changes, along with our communication strategies to recognise and act upon them, mostly remain inaccessible to spectators, nonetheless they are dynamic contributory elements to singular performance events.

Dissemination (Section III. Part 4.)

About complexity

In referring to performance practice in postmodern terms as a complex knowledge-practical system—as I do above where I note the distinctive challenges of each event for the expert practitioner—I am using the notion of complexity as understood in the context of ‘connectionist’ models of information processing, as in neural networks or other self-organising systems. Paul Cilliers (1994) highlights the differences between something being complicated or complex. In this regard the most sophisticated computer is complicated in the sense that no matter how many tasks it can complete, it is still rule based, representational and finite. It can only do what it was programmed to do. It cannot think or respond outside its programming, and (above all) it cannot cope with contradiction. By the way of contrast—as Cilliers explains—in complex systems the information processing is distributed rather than rule based, therefore complex systems have the capability to react and adapt to new circumstances by self-organising their internal structure and thereby have infinite possibilities to cope with changes including contradictory impulses (Cilliers 1994, pp.3–12).

My principal aim here, in my reference to Cilliers’ work, is to signal the complexity of the expert practitioner’s choices and actions within a particular event, which some might otherwise see as simple and straightforward. The idea

that an expert practitioner might have choices ‘at her fingertips’ as a result of training and of a considerable history of experience tends to minimize the complexity of the performance systems within which a professional practitioner makes creative decisions. But those decisions do involve a particularly demanding exercise of judgement—of audiences, of other performers’ capacities, of the various contingent factors that apply, of her or his own ability to estimate the extent to which he or she can intervene in the work of the group.

In my view, Cilliers has precisely reflected on this sort of systemic complexity, that involves a network of both human and material differences, and the relatively abstract sorts of factors—like performance expectations—that come into play. He informs us that good examples for complex systems are for instance living organisms, human society, a growing economy, or language, but the best example is the neural network of the human brain. I quote selectively: “The human brain consists of a huge network of richly inter-connected neurons... These components and their interactions can only partially explain the behaviour of the system as a whole... They encode information about their environment in a distributed form and have the capacity to self-organise their internal structure”. But most importantly, as Cilliers explains, in a complex system “*meaning is a result of process*” and “*there is no abstract procedure available to describe the process used by the network to solve a problem... There are only complex patterns of relationships where the significance lies in the values of the weights of the connections*” (Cilliers 1994, pp.10–19, my italics).

Cilliers points out that the processes producing meaning and action in a complex system are essentially relational rather than rule based, and this might explain why we have difficulties with describing the operations of such systems from an outside (or indeed from an insider) observation point or through language: “Reflexivity”, he argues, “disallows any static description of the system since it is not possible to interpret the reflexive moment... It also disallows a complete description of the system at a meta-level... The temporal complexities produced by the reflexive nature of self-organising systems therefore *cannot be represented*” (Cilliers 1994, pp.108–109, my italics).

If we think of expert performance-making processes within an arts-professional framework under these terms, describing what exactly happens during a performance event becomes problematic. Expert performance in music tends to carry its own complex array of pleasures as well as challenges and professional responsibilities for the expert practitioner, and these sorts of factors are particularly difficult to quantify and to qualify in words. In viewing the next short video clip (III/4/a) from one of the performances at *La Musica* Festival let us imagine examining the situation with the metaphoric magnifying lens of some kind of futuristic X-ray machine. If we would look through and beyond the immediate appearance of the players, and even beyond the sound they produce, we could see an infinite web of interlinking connections, all processing information. The action here is distributed not only in between the players but also within the minds and bodies of each player in relation to their instruments and in relation to the audience. What we are witnessing here are complex interacting processes and patterns of relationships—and thus far, we are only looking at the onstage event-specifics.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 4/a.)

III/4/a. Concert Performance – *La Musica*

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival
Sarasota Opera House, Florida, USA, 2005

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70

Federico Agostini, Cecilia Zilliacus (violins)
Bruno Giuranna, Cynthia Phelps (violas)
Ferenc Szűcs, Ronald Thomas (cellos)

Extracts from 20th Anniversary Video Documentary
with kind permission of *La Musica*

Expert-intuitive processes in performance practice

Looking beyond the actuality of performance, or the sounding of the music, we might see many layers of processes in action in expert-professional performance making. The outcome is more than the sum total of its parts and the process cannot be totally controlled (or described, or represented) either from an outside reference point or from any particular position from the inside. The meaning created through a performance event is a result of a combination of complex interlinking processes. Each interacting element has the capacity to affect or to be affected. In this case *affect* itself might be that connecting node or invisible ‘glue’, by which the system actually operates (Massumi 2002).

Moreover, these processes, as I briefly indicated above, surround, anticipate, pass through any one performance and involve evaluation and continuing judgments. While we think of any one performance as a one-time experience belonging to itself, at the same time we must also note that it is connected to the great many processes surrounding it and passing through it. Melrose (2005a), who is trying to draw attention to the practitioner’s expertise in performance-making, calls these connections and any new intervention in them “interpraxiological”, by which she understands the co-operation of a number and range of practice logics, each of which separately, as well as interactively, calls for a logical choice from the expert practitioner.

If we see expert-professional performance practice as a collection of processes of these kinds, it then becomes what Melrose (2005b) calls, quoting Brian Massumi (2002) a “complex web of process threads”. They are, in Melrose’s terms, “central to the practice and woven through the practice”, and it is “through their expert weaving, by the practitioner, in a specific discipline or disciplines, that the practice and the practitioner’s work can be identified.”

Since performing is a complex activity in Cillier's sense, particularly in the context of the performance event, at times, as performers, we cannot follow it with our cognitive reasoning and conscious mind, and perhaps this is where we mostly rely on motor-perception and above all on expert-intuition, which supposes that the expert practitioner has internalised complex knowledge to such an extent that he or she can bring it into play, in appropriate situations, at apparently lightning speed. Melrose argues that this internalisation of professional knowledge tends to mean that the expert or professional practitioner her or himself is likely to under-estimate her or his own competence, at least in discussing it (Melrose, 2005/c).

Yehudi Menuhin, not atypically, describes the use of intuition the following way:

Intuition is born, I think, of many things happening at the same time but not quite simultaneously. Our reason is geared to taking one problem on its own, analysing it, and reaching a conclusion about how we shall proceed. But when we are faced with ten different factors, all acting upon each other and among them creating some astronomical total of variables, reason is defeated and only intuition can cope. Thus it is in violin playing – too much going on for direction by the conscious mind. Then the player's vision takes over, intuitively selecting from those billions of possibilities the thousands it needs. (Menuhin 1977, p.486)

Melrose (2005b) has argued that we need to make a clear distinction between everyday intuition, and what she calls the operations of “expert or professional intuition”. She points out that very few writers make this distinction, yet it is on the specificity of expert intuition that the event of performance depends. I am going to argue that the music performer makes apparently immediate decisions constantly, as a professional, on the basis of expert-intuiting in the circumstances that actually apply in the event, and *modifies* that event on that basis. Expert intuition is something on which the performer is relying heavily, when decision-making has to be performed very quickly, and on the basis of fragile present factors mediated by the artist. The interconnecting processes might well be too complex for the conscious mind to cope with, and in this case, what we are looking at are the intuitive operations of expertise.

Cello-piano recitals in the UK and Ireland

A large part of the repertoire for cellists consists of pieces composed with piano accompaniment. In this case the cello has the solo line and the piano is in a supporting role. But we can also select from many pieces—typically cello-piano sonatas—where the musical material is equally distributed between the two instruments in which case finding an ideal sound balance between the players and their instruments in connection with the musical material is of prime concern. The following samples come from a series of recitals while I worked with pianists Mine Dogantan Dack in the UK and Una Hunt in Ireland.

The first video sample (III/6/a) shows the closing part of the *Prologue* from the *Cello Sonata* by Debussy, performed with pianist Mine Dogantan Dack in All Saint’s Church, Hertford, UK. This is the only piece we have for cello from the ‘father of musical impressionism’ and the first movement is noted for its beauty, simplicity and clarity of composition.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 6/a.)

III/6/a. Concert Performance – Debussy

All Saint’s Church, Hertford
England, UK, 2005

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) *Cello Sonata*

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)

The second sample (III/6/b) comes from a concert at Middlesex University in London and features part of a piece entitled ‘...*that which echoes eternity*’ by Peter Fribbins. In the previous section I have shown the rehearsal processes and discussions leading up to this performance while working with the composer himself.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 6/b.)

III/6/b. Concert Performance – Fribbins

Middlesex University
London, UK, 2005

Peter Fribbins (b. 1969) “*that which echoes eternity*”

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Mine Dogantan Dack (piano)

The next two videos (III/6/c; III/6/d) are samples from two different recitals given in Dublin at the National Library and at Trinity College with pianist Una Hunt and feature the *Cello Sonata* by Chopin and *Rhapsody* No. 1 by Bartók. Chopin never composed a work that did not include his own instrument, the piano, but it seems that the warm melancholic sound of the cello well suited his sensuous melodic style.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 6/c.)

III/6/c. Concert Performance – Chopin

National Library of Ireland
Dublin, 2008

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)
Cello Sonata, G minor, Op. 65

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Una Hunt (piano)

Bartók is regarded not only as one of the greatest composers of the 20th century but also as one of the founders of ethnomusicology. *Rhapsody* No. 1 was originally composed for violin-piano but he made violin-orchestra and cello-piano versions too. The second part called “*Friss*” (meaning lively or fresh) features a collection of folk tunes from Hungary and the surrounding areas of Central Europe.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 6/d.)

III/6/d. Concert Performance – Bartók

International Association of Music Libraries
60th Anniversary Conference
Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, 2011

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Una Hunt (piano)

Béla Bartók (1881–1945) *Rhapsody*, No. 1

The act of performance

Performing is a distinctly different experience from practising or rehearsing. During preparation we can slow down our tempo, stop and repeat passages while consciously using reasoning, evaluation, comparison, selection and judgement—many of which operate with great rapidity. But the performance is different—not least in terms of time—a matter to which I return later in this section. Once the music starts its journey to unfold in time it has to follow on to the end. We have no possibility to ‘think’ the same way as we have done before in rehearsals and do not have the opportunity to correct mistakes. We cannot stop and so we each have to make all our decisions in isolation, in movement, and while being fully in the present moment. Here expert practitioners have to adopt new strategies. In performance we must ‘let go’ of certain previously employed strategies and rely mainly on our expert-intuitive faculties of processing. (I highlight some of these strategies through the featured interviews below with Michael Wolf and Bruno Giuranna.)

It is important to stress, however, that these expert-intuitive faculties are expert precisely because practitioners have internalised the exercise of judgement in practice over what are often considerable periods of time. The neuro-scientist Elkhonon Goldberg (2005) goes so far as to say that:

The intuitive decision-making of an expert bypasses orderly, logical steps precisely because it is a condensation of extensive use of such orderly logical steps in the past. It is the luxury of mental economy conferred by vast prior experience (pp.151–152).

Goldberg further states:

Intuition is often understood as an antithesis to analytic decision-making, as something inherently non-analytic or pre-analytic. But in reality intuition is the condensation of vast prior analytic experience; it is analysis compressed and crystallized. In effect, then, intuitive decision-making is postanalytic, rather than preanalytic or nonanalytic. It is the

product of analytic processes being condensed to such a degree that its internal structure may elude even the person benefiting from it (p.150).

In the following interview Michael Wolf, Professor of Double Bass at Berlin University of Arts, talks about the experience of performing and the differences between performance and preparation strategies.



**Interview
with
Michael Wolf**

Audio sample
The audio sample is available on
the corresponding website

Figure 19. Michael Wolf

Michael Wolf explains that there is a difference between our concept of preparation and the concept of the performance event. In performance we are mainly concerned with communication among performers in relation to communication to an audience. Our connection with the audience is a vital component of the event. In order to be understood we must be clear and unambiguous in our message. But the way we might communicate in the moment depends on many unpredictable factors. The presence and size of different audiences, the acoustics of venues, and the disposition of the performers are all contributing to create a unique 'atmosphere' in the room.

Our sense of time slows down on stage and it feels like if we are acting in slow motion. We also have to exaggerate our gestures, but the proportions have to be judged in the moment. We must find our own way to communicate while being true to ourselves. It is difficult to have a structured preparation for these elements. In performance we must catch innovative 'sparkles' coming from colleagues, pick them up and 'run with it' (act on them), and this shapes the performance. Practicing is actually forcing us away from the skills we need to perform. In preparation we listen 'backwards' very critically in order to correct mistakes. In order to do that, we must remember the past. But on stage we must do the opposite. We must not dwell on the past but think 'forward' and also 'sideways' to catch the nuances in the moment. After years of training of listening critically to ourselves we must now forget all of that and trust that our preparation was sufficient to sustain us. (My synopsis of the interview excerpt)

If I wanted to explain to someone what it ‘feels like’ to perform (and we might recall here the question raised during the performance-research seminar at Middlesex University featured in the last part of the previous section: *What is going through your mind when performing?*), I would probably use a combination of metaphors in relation to the experience of driving a car (or flying an airplane as I imagine) to describe my own performing experience. But in this imaginary situation our body is simultaneously the engine, the wheels, the wings and all other internal and external parts of the machine. Our mind is in the driving seat. It is not focused on any particular point (or images) but staying alert in a flexible kind of ‘hovering’ state. The main task is to follow a ‘time window’, which is the equivalent of the ‘path ahead’. The mind is like a lens and in an active anticipatory state able to focus or to move back very quickly. Our attention is working in clusters or ‘sparkles’ as dictated by the immediate need for action. We are more concerned with what is around us rather than with ourselves (or the mechanics). We feel the energy and intensity of this situation and are aware of our potential for creative action. At times this can result in a ‘flow’ experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1988), which can be beautiful. However, we must not indulge too much in this ‘flow’ experience but soberly come back to our time window otherwise we can easily lose control and crash. We must always stay in the present moment, in a calm and collected way, and follow very simple steps for upcoming action. To use different metaphors, this is like juggling or walking a tight rope while keeping a constant balance. We want to be in total control but also want to be free, inspirational and creative. This is not an easy thing to do and to control our nerves in this situation is difficult. We can only ‘practise’ performing by doing so and develop our strategies based on accumulative experience. Our communication to the audience is coming from the inside but not directly aiming at them. We communicate the music while being fully engaged with it.

Is it all in the score?

The tendency to ‘objectify’ music, and in particular to understand Western art music in terms of a ‘museum collection’ of solidified imaginary objects called ‘musical works’ originates from the 19th century and prevailed throughout the 20th century (Goehr 1992). A major consequence of this way of thinking is that the performance activity can be viewed as either a reproduction of those objects or as a reading or interpretation of scores as ‘texts’. In this case the performance element itself is seen as ‘naturally’ secondary to the ‘artwork’, a conservative judgement, which came into being by the sole creative input of the composer (author) and is supposedly recorded in the score. The issue has been widely debated in musicology (Goehr 1992; Small 1998; Cook 1998, 1999; Rink 2002). The scope of this present project does not allow undertaking an extensive review of the work of each writer but we can note that in the last few decades there has been a tendency to turn towards emphasising the *activity* of music making and to understand ‘music’ as primarily being a performance art.

In Western art music in most cases there is a considerable time-gap between the composer and the performer. Part of the performer’s task is to make every effort to find all available information with regard to what can be understood from the score. But as many writers have noted in recent decades, the notation (while it is of prime importance) can only reveal certain elements of the music (or the composer’s intentions), while hiding many other important factors with regard to professional judgement as to *how* the music should be performed in terms of style. Moreover, the notation of the score cannot be equated with the music itself, which is manifested in sound. What the audience experiences in the event (as the music) is a result of a collaborative effort in between the composer, the conductor and the performer and in this case both the responsibility and the creativity is shared. A large and significant part of the decision-making with regard to how the music might sound in performance is left to the individual interpretation, skill, innovation, and creativity of the performer and the result achieved in performance is also influenced by the oral traditions of performance knowledge within the

practice. Bruno Giuranna, one of the most respected viola players and teachers in the world today, in his recently published memoirs makes this point very clearly:

There is a very beautiful chapter at the beginning of Das Glasperlenspiel (The Glass Bead Game), the last work by Herman Hesse. The lesson that the old Magister Musicae gives to young Joseph Knecht is not based on words, on concepts, on theories. It consists of playing together, transmitting joy through the in-depth examination of music. It is a striking insight, which I carry with me as a symbol of making music together with the young. In playing together, the ancient tradition of the oral transmission of music resounds; it still lives in popular traditions. In such teaching, based on imitation, not only the notes were transmitted but also 'how' to perform them; the interpretation and the characterization of the music were also communicated. The listener received, together with the notes, also that which musical notation cannot express. Notation is inadequate in transmitting the essence of music. It hides it instead of revealing it. (Giuranna 2012, p.128)

How then might musicians conceptualise the performance? I have discussed these issues with many of my colleagues and also recorded some of these conversations. In the following interview Professor Giuranna explains the importance of constructing a 'musical image' about the performance and also discussing our relationship with the score.



**Interview
with
Bruno Giuranna**

Audio sample
The audio sample is available on
the corresponding website

Figure 20. Bruno Giuranna

Bruno Giuranna highlights the important connection between the performance event and the preparatory processes prior to that event in constructing our musical image of the performance. He emphasises that while the score is preserving important aspects of the music we must still

keep in mind that notation is actually not faithful to the music, as it cannot possibly give back the full content and meaning realised in performance. Our preparation is concerned with examining the notation and from that preparing a musical image based on what the music might mean to us and to others. In this way we are adding a great many elements to the basic material by creating sound images, timing and an understanding of content and meaning. In addition we are also finding the right tools of expression and techniques to realise that content in the context of the performance while communicating it to an audience.

(My synopsis of the interview excerpt)

Dissemination (Section III. Part 9.)

Performing with *Triantán* Irish Piano Trio

This piano trio was formed in the 1990s with my two colleagues, violinist Ruxandra Petcu-Colan and pianist Una Hunt. The name *Triantán* comes from an Irish word, meaning ‘triangle’. The trio has explored large parts of the available repertoire for this combination of instruments and we performed all over Ireland as well as recorded for radio and CD. In this section I show video samples from two of our performances. The first one (III/9/a) is featuring part of the 1st movement of the *B-flat major* piano trio by Schubert and the second (III/9/b) is part of the *Waltz* from the second movement of Tchaikovsky’s piano trio.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 9/a.)

III/9/a. Concert Performance – Schubert

Glór Theatre, Ennis
Co. Clare, Ireland, 2004

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Piano Trio, No. 1
B flat major, D 898

Triantán Irish Piano Trio

Ruxandra Petcu-Colan (violin)
Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Una Hunt (piano)



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 9/b.)

III/9/b. Concert Performance – Tchaikovsky

Cork School of Music
Cork, Ireland, 2009

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Piano Trio, A minor, Op. 50

Triantán Irish Piano Trio

Ruxandra Petcu-Colan (violin)
Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Una Hunt (piano)

What we can see in these extracts is the outcome of a particular way of working together. The question of balance between contributing instruments is a major consideration for all ensemble combinations (from duos to large orchestras), but in piano trios this is particularly challenging. While the important musical lines tend to be equally distributed between the three instruments, it is often the case (particularly in the Tchaikovsky trio) that the piano part is composed to be far too dense in contrast with the single line string parts. The piano is a large instrument in comparison to the violin and the cello and capable of producing an overpowering volume of sound. One of the challenging aspects of working

together as a piano trio is to find an ideal balance by making our decisions based on the internal logic of music in relation to the distribution of the musical material and aiming to be discerning with regard to volumes and dynamics in the process of collectively discovering and revealing the musical meaning.

Dissemination (Section III. Part 10.)

Music as process [in time]

In this part I propose to focus on aspects of the performing experience (from the performer's point of view) in relation to how we might experience music's temporality within the constant fluidity of process. The nature of music is that it is expressed in sound and creates an interrelated world of sounds. Sound is ephemeral, short-lived and fleeting. It comes from silence, lives for a short while, and returns to silence. Silence is, in fact, an important part of music. However, music actually achieves its being not simply in sound, but in that particular quality and context specific to sound, which is time. It is in time that the event of performance occurs, and it is in time that this interrelated world of sounds and the act of performing and listening takes its place. Time is complex—as we can see when we reflect on the music of times past performed once again in the present—and there is a considerable amount of writings by theorists and philosophers, concerned with time, duration and movement and/or their relation to music (see for instance: Bergson 1910; Langer 1953; Heidegger 1962; Husserl 1964; Brelet 1965; Alperson 1980; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Massumi 2002; Ford 2010).

It is not my purpose to discuss these writings but propose to reflect on certain issues in relation to musical performance—while keeping the focus on the performer's experience with reference to understanding music as a complex process in the context of expert-professional performance practice—by referring here to a series of dialogues between pianist/conductor Daniel Barenboim and literary critic/political writer Edward Said as recorded in their jointly published

book titled *Parallels and Paradoxes* (Barenboim and Said 2003). Said was an accomplished pianist and he also wrote about music as well as literature and politics. Their close friendship and sharing of ideas is both interesting as well as politically significant, as Barenboim is from a Jewish background, who regularly teaches and plays in Israel and Said is both of Palestinian origin and one of the most outspoken defenders of the Palestinian right to self-determination.

In one of their dialogues Said notes: “It is generally true in the arts that what seems like a finished performance, whether it’s a painting or a poem, really is anticipated by a great many processes, moments, choices that go on before the finished work is put before you” (p.28). Barenboim replies: “There is a very clear difference between the whole process of preparing a work of music for performance and the performance itself” (p.28). As Barenboim explains: “In performance you don’t stop. Once the piece starts it goes to the end. It has certain inevitability and a certain logical construction. A performance has only one possibility—in other words, the nature of sound being ephemeral, once it is over, it is finished” (p.28). In their conversation they highlight the actuality of performance and the significance of process. Said points out, that performance is a “one-time experience, a highly plastic process, or what you call transition, which seems to be working itself out right there.” Barenboim compares this to a “life of a plant or a life of a human being” (p.29).

Wilhelm Furtwängler was one of the most revered and legendary conductors of the last century. Many musicians observed something particular about the way Furtwängler sensed and approached music and noted his unique feeling for time. Barenboim says: “Furtwängler understood music philosophically. He understood that music is not about statements or about being. It is about *becoming*. It is not the statement of a phrase that is really important, but how you got there and how to leave it and how to make the transition to the next phrase”. Barenboim highlights that “with Furtwängler it was a new concept of time. Here, time was transformed into all the possibilities of organised sound and beautiful plasticity” (Barenboim and Said 2003, p.17, my italics).

‘Becoming’ is a significant term within the writings of French philosophers Henri

Bergson (1946) and Gilles Deleuze (see for example Deleuze and Guattari 1987) where it suggests the generation of new ways of being, where one element is removed from one assemblage and moved to another, where new ways of being are revealed. More recently and specifically referring to artistic practices, Coessens highlights (based on Deleuze's theories) that: "artistic activity is intrinsically a 'becoming': it entails movement and dynamism of change; it is a continuous production of unique events, each participating in its own continuity" (Coessens *at al* 2009, p.92). Although this is not the place for a detailed commentary on becoming, the notion is of keen interest here because I am arguing that an engagement with the expert performer's artistry—the performer who has not yet played but will play in an endless series of future times—is vital to a full appreciation of the composer's work.

"In music making there is an absolutely innate relationship between the content and the time it takes" – Barenboim explains – "you have extremes; you have to find a way to put the extremes together, not necessarily by diminishing the extremity of each one, but to form the art of transition. One of the main principles of making music is the *art of transition*." Edward Said adds to this observation, that music making is "*process made apparent*" (Barenboim and Said 2003, p.69, my italics).

Pianist Alfred Brendel is also interested in Furtwängler. In Brendel's book entitled *The Veil of Order* (2002) he writes: "Having heard Furtwängler conducting, it became clear to me what transitions actually are—that is to say, not patchwork inserted to link two ideas of different nature, but *areas of transformation*" (Brendel 2002, p.205, my italics).

Perhaps from these few extracts from the conversations and writings of these respected musicians, we can conclude the following: music is expressing something in sound; sound is ephemeral, fleeting, defying silence; music happens in time; a performance is a one-time experience; it is unrepeatable in experiential and qualitative terms; it is not something solidified, but rather it is moving and in transition; it is *about* transition. It is more about becoming rather than being, and perhaps we can say that music itself—as it sounds in performance—is indeed

intensified process. To use the words of Edward Said again: “It is process made apparent” (Barenboim and Said 2003, p.69).

Hence, in the video excerpts I have included in the preceding section (three consecutive performances of Haydn’s *Cello Concerto in D*) what I am trying to show is the fact that successive performances of what might seem to be the same piece entail what are in effect remarkably different experiences for myself as performer. Some of the differences are contingent upon the time and place of each event, but some emerge, more importantly, from the always-different input of the other expert practitioners with whom I was working. In experiential terms, I recall with considerable clarity apparently small differences between these three events, and I want to see these as changing nodes within a network of actions and reactions, in the sorts of terms Cilliers introduces above.

To think of the processes of performance making under these terms, Melrose (2005) has suggested that we can begin to think of these processes as specific to “objects of knowledge” or “epistemic objects” as described and characterised by practice theorist Knorr Cetina (2001), which seem to me to resonate with Cilliers’ own work, referred to above. According to Knorr Cetina these “objects of knowledge are characteristically open, question-generating and complex. They are processes and projections rather than definitive things.” Once enquired into, they tend to “increase rather than reduce their complexity”—which means that more and newer questions need to be asked of them; they are “relationally-defined”—in other words they depend upon other participants’ engagement to operate, rather than operate to any notion of the ‘work itself’—and they are fluid and open-ended, hence “escape fixation” (p.181).

If we decide to investigate such processes existing in professional music making, then our ‘complex web of processes’ can consider being ‘objects of knowledge’ or ‘epistemic objects’. Such objects of knowledge, in the case of the professional expertise in music performance, are revealed as soon as we are able to demonstrate, as I am trying to do here, that apparently simple performance decisions are in fact both complex and contested, involving oral exchanges, communication through expert practice, technical mastery and wide experience,

as well as those additional and rarer aspects of mastery that tend to be identified in terms of artistic signature. Rather than being ‘definitive things’, Knorr Cetina observes, their sense of identity as ‘knowledge objects’ could be better described as a set of currents, flowing currents, rather than something fixed and stable, as might be suggested by the noun ‘music’ itself. In fact music’s processes escape fixation, and despite attempts to establish boundaries, they are in constant movement and transition, within changing cultural set-ups, contexts, and ways of seeing, doing and knowing.

It follows that we face great difficulty if we try to describe such processes discursively. In fact we have a problem with describing anything, which is in movement and not in a fixed position. To quote Cilliers again: “The role of science has traditionally been understood as one that has to fix knowledge in a permanent grid. Everything too complex or containing uncertainties or unpredictability is, for the time being at least, left aside. Consequently, large parts of the totality of human knowledge are disregarded as unscientific—most of the arts, most of psychology, and often, human sciences in general” (Cilliers 1994, p.118).

Brian Masumi (2002) writes about movement and continuity in such a way as to seem to characterise music performance, as I understand it. He observes that: “movement, in process, cannot be determinately indexed to anything outside itself. It is in becoming, absorbed in occupying its field of potential” (p.7). Masumi brings the analogy of a football game (pp.71–78) and I think that his description is relevant to the experience of musical performance: “The player does not play on the ground. He looks past it and past the ball to the field of potential—which is insubstantial, real but abstract. He plays the field of potential directly” (p.75).

Playing Bach: choices of style and interpretation

Sometimes people ask me about my favorites pieces of music. I always have difficulty with answering this question, which calls upon Bourdieu's (1977) judgements of value as well as taste, to which I would add professional judgement. Working over several decades as a professional musician I played through large volumes and variety of repertoire, including solo works, chamber music and a considerable amount of orchestral material too. Apart from the classical repertoire, spanning over four centuries, I also worked with folk, traditional, jazz and pop musicians at times. I suppose my list of favorites would be far too long.

However, I always had a distinctive relationship with the music of J S Bach, not only as a player but also as a listener. In my experience, professional musicians tend to be very particular about their choices when they listen to music for 'pleasure' and they often actually prefer silence in order to take a break from 'work'. Moreover, if they decide, as professional practitioners in the same field, to listen to music they would also be rather selective about the performers. We often find that we need to be in a certain mood to want to listen to a particular piece. But for me Bach's music is different somehow. It always works. I am always in the mood for Bach.

When I meet with old schoolmates from the Liszt Academy we often talk lovingly about our teachers. One of them was musicologist András Pernye. His lectures on music history were legendary and his death was untimely. His memory is alive through his books, plaques on buildings, and he is often cited in articles of Hungarian music magazines. I can still remember his words when he talked to us about J S Bach in room XVIII of the Liszt Academy, and what I want to suggest here is that I have, as a practitioner, almost certainly acquired judgements of (expert) taste and value in significant part through the pedagogic relationship fostered by the Liszt Academy, in that curious 'hot-house' environment

established by tradition to foster creative mastery in relatively few advanced students. Plainly there are individual as well as genetic factors in the development of taste in the expert practitioner, trained to work in solo performance within the canon, but I am suggesting here that human factors—of personality, discipline and creative dedication to teaching—equally play a significant role in the development of taste in the professional performer. I would add, that we might need to consider all of these factors, and their intersection and particular inflection, when we consider how the expert practitioner acquires and develops, and equally transmits, her or his taste and capacity for judgement.

In the words of András Pernye:

You know... the music of J S Bach is very special and somehow different from others... It comes from one seed, one principle. But then it has many faces. Thousands of faces! It is timeless like the universe... The feeling you get is like looking at the sky, or the stars, or the sea, or a mountain or a waterfall. It is just there... You cannot say that Bach “progressed” in his lifetime. Everything is good... from the smallest to the largest... from the early to the late... He did not differentiate between sacred and secular. All is sacred... It is universal and at the same time fully human... You know... He did not really work for the court of Weimar, or for Prince Leopold of Köthen, and not even for the people in charge of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig... (At this point Pernye looked up and gave his characteristic playfully curious smile and continued) ...Do not be mistaken ... his employer was God...



Figure 21.
András Pernye
(1928–1980)

(My recollection and translation of selected content from a lecture given by András Pernye on J S Bach at the Liszt Academy in Budapest in around 1974)

The six *Cello Suites* of J S Bach are regarded as the cornerstones of the cello repertoire. (The recent suggestion by Jarvis (2011) that these suites could be the compositions of Bach’s second wife Anna Magdalena does not seem to effect their prominent position.) I have played these suites since I was 12 years old and

still do, and it is unlikely that my performance has not changed since that time, and equally unlikely that my knowledge of them as complex ‘epistemic objects/practices’ through performing them has not deepened. I performed them many times individually and also as a set in series of concerts. Unfortunately I do not have available recordings or videos of these events. Instead, in the closing part of this section I would like to show something different.

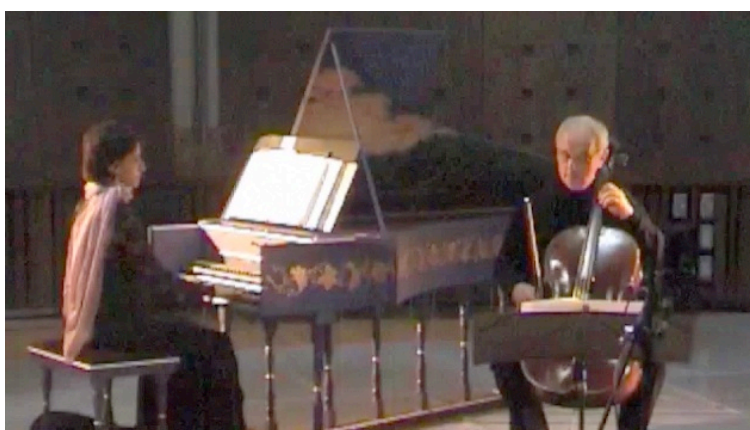
In 2012 I was scheduled to perform two *sonatas* by J S Bach with my harpsichordist colleague Yonit Kosovske for a concert in Ireland at the Irish World Academy, University of Limerick. These *sonatas* feature a unique instrumental combination as they were originally composed for *viola da gamba* and *obbligato harpsichord*. To perform the *viola da gamba* part on the *cello* presents an entirely new set of fingering and bowing challenges since the two instruments belong to completely separate families of string instruments, the *viol* and *violin* families respectively.

Performing Bach’s *viola da gamba* sonatas on the *cello* provides us with many choices with regard to stylistic considerations and interpretation. For the larger part of the 20th century it became customary to play these sonatas by using *cello-piano* or *viola-piano* combinations and they have also been performed as *trio sonatas* using two string instruments and keyboard. Since the arrival of the ‘early music’ or ‘historically informed’ performance practice movements in the 20th century, both the *viola da gamba* and the *harpsichord* had been revived. Consequently these sonatas are performed again by using the original instrumentation. The approaches used in ‘historically informed’ performances can vastly differ from previously favored ‘modern’ or ‘romantic’ performing styles and the questions around authenticity has been long debated by musicologists and theoreticians (Harnoncourt 1984; Leech-Wilinson 1992; Kivy 1995; Rosen 2000). It is not my purpose to enter into these debates here but simply note that at present these performance practices co-exist, with considerable tension and division between music practitioners with regard to questions of interpretation, while the musicians tend to specialise in either one or the other performing style.

Through the larger part of my professional life I considered myself belonging to

what we might call the ‘main stream music camp’, but I always aimed to keep an open attitude of curiosity towards any new initiatives. Since the opportunity presented itself to experiment playing with an early music specialist I was eager to gain more experience in this area. Therefore I approached the rehearsals and the following performance as a research project with the aim to find out more about particular techniques and interpretation strategies.

The music is essentially a *trio sonata*, revealing three equal voices intertwining in a multitude of ways, including thematic voice exchange, shifting roles of melody versus accompaniment, polyphonic counterpoint contrasted and integrated within ornamental arpeggiation, imitative fugal writing, and suggested dance forms. The three voices are shared between the string part and the right and left hands of the harpsichord parts. In this case the cello has to adapt to the sound of the harpsichord to balance the three voices. Therefore in this performance I used a baroque bow and decided to imitate (to some extent) the articulation and sound nuances of the viola da gamba. In the introductory part of this project I featured a performance of the *D-major sonata* (Video Gallery, No. 6) and in the following video clip (III/11/a) we can hear the last movement of the *G-minor sonata*.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 11/a.)

III/11/a. Concert Performance – Gamba Sonata

Irish World Academy Luncheon Concert Series
University of Limerick, Ireland, 2012

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Sonata for Viola da Gamba & Harpsichord
G minor, BWV 1029

Ferenc Szűcs (cello)
Yonit Kosovske (harpsichord)

Due to its musically ‘holistic’ nature Bach’s music actually works well in almost any instrumental combination (Bartha 1960; Wolff 2000). His keyboard piece *The Goldberg Variations* has been performed not only on keyboard instruments but there are arrangements for guitars, wind ensemble, accordions and other combinations. Since this piece is constructed as interplay of three consistent musical lines it easily lends itself for string trio. My last example in this part comes from a concert given at the *Sionna* Festival in Ireland in 2004. With my colleagues Mariana Sirbu and Bruno Giuranna we performed the string trio version arranged by Bruno Giuranna.

We approached this performance with the same elaborate rehearsal-research process as we normally do with any of our performances in terms of stylistic considerations and interpretation. We used our usual modern instruments and bows. But with reference to ‘modern’ instruments we might need to use the word with caution. My cello (the actual instrument used in these performances) originates from around 1750, which is very close to Bach’s own lifetime and my colleagues also used instruments of similar age and caliber. I do not think that this performance could be considered less ‘authentic’ or less ‘historically informed’ than certain opinions could possibly claim it to be. The question of authenticity is rather problematic, and perhaps Kivy’s suggestion (1995) of a multiple understanding, as “authenticities” of different kinds, might give us a better perspective in this regard.

For me it was both challenging and joyful to work on this piece. Since I was also trained as a pianist in my early years in Budapest, at times I had the strange sensation that the three of us were united as one single person, as being the right and left hand of a keyboard player. The next video sample (III/11/b) shows parts of variations 25 and 26.



Video sample

Dissemination
(Section III. Part 11/b.)

III/11/b. Concert Performance – Goldberg Variations

Sionna Festival, St. Mary's Cathedral
Limerick, Ireland, 2004

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
The Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Arranged for string trio by Bruno Giuranna

Mariana Sirbu (violin)
Bruno Giuranna (viola)
Ferenc Szűcs (cello)

In this section I presented examples of performance events from my own practice and elaborated on issues concerning process, complexity, temporality, expert intuition, the performer's relation to the notation, attitudes and strategies with reference to the act of performance and choices of style and interpretation. In the next section I continue to focus on ways of sharing knowledge through pedagogy and discuss questions and concerns arising in connection with arts practice research.

Section IV. Pedagogy and Research

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Pedagogy

I discussed key elements of training with reference to developing expertise in the first section of this project and pointed out that the skills needed for expert-professional performers are acquired over a long period of time through an elaborative process of articulation (Spinosa 2001), which includes mental, physical and psychological conditioning as well as cognitive-conceptual knowledge.

Mentoring the next generation of performers is an intrinsic part of professional practice for the majority of performing musicians. In the case of expert-professional performance practice we mostly rely on discipline-specific and non-linguistic modes of communication (as I demonstrated above). Instrumental teaching and ensemble coaching, on the other hand, provides a different platform for disseminating knowledge and requires additional pedagogical skills and in this context verbal communication and explanation is not only possible but also expected.

However, since instrumental or ensemble skills cannot be learned from books or by listening to lectures, but through engaging with that practice, the curriculum can only be specified in broad terms and the implementation is often left to the individual teacher. In this context cognitive understanding (while it is important) does not bring the desired results without direct application in practice. As students are approaching professional level, our communication methods for passing on models of intelligibility increasingly become aligned with actual professional practice, and it is important to state here, that there are models of intelligibility that are uniquely practice-centred and articulated, and many of these are not only resistant to verbalization, but robustly so (Melrose 2011). As such, I want to argue that these can only be grasped in and through expert practices, by skilled artists, which does tend to mean that they are unavailable, in their particulars, to non-practitioners or even to musicologists. This argument might not be popular with some readers and researchers, but I make no apology for it.

I have been involved in some form of teaching throughout my professional life. In 1998 I was appointed as senior lecturer at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, with the task of establishing and directing a Masters programme in Classical String Performance. In the following parts I reflect on my experiences as a pedagogue and highlight a few selected points in connection with the present research project.

Pedagogy and Research (Section IV. Part 2.)

Instrumental teaching

Instrumental teaching at an advanced level is primarily based on one-to-one tuition but this can also take place within small groups in the studio or in a larger master class setting. In all cases we tend to work with one student at the time while the other students are observing, therefore a master class is effectively one-to-one tuition in front of a specialist audience. Each student is different in their ability and in terms of attained skills, even if they are approximately at the same level. Working with individuals in this context, from the teacher's point of view, is similar to attending to a garden, where plants grow together but each plant requires unique individual care.

Instrumental lessons are very different from 'chalk-and-talk' lectures or presentations customary at universities. For instance, an instrumental lesson never starts with the teacher explaining something but always begins with the student's playing. Based on what the student brings to the lesson, the teacher determines the best strategy for working on improvements—in that moment. The instruction depends on the level of the student but can also be different if the student only started to learn a piece, or is approaching a performance, or if the teacher wants to work on particular issues of technique. Conceptual knowledge and instructions need to be applied immediately otherwise they have little effect, by which I mean that they must be communicated via expert practices, rather than as quasi-discrete

knowledge supposedly “about these”.

I propose to show two video samples from this kind of studio teaching practice involving advanced MA students. The first sample (IV/2/a) features part of a lesson when I work with a student on the opening theme of Tchaikovsky’s *Rococo Variations*. The first few notes and phrases of the *Theme* are important in establishing the character of the whole piece therefore in this part of the lesson I concentrated on these few phrases pointing out where improvements could be made while the student was simultaneously playing. This kind of analytical work and using repetition in a constructive way also teaches the student how to practise alone.



Video sample

Pedagogy and
Research
(Section IV. Part 2/a.)

IV/2/a. Studio Teaching

Irish World Academy of Music and Dance
University of Limerick, Ireland, 2010

Ferenc Szűcs working with student Péter Sebestyén
Pianist: Moira Gray

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33

In the second example (IV/2/b) I work with another student on part of the 1st movement of the Dvorak *Cello Concerto*. Here again I focused on a small section of an ascending scale of trills and encouraged the student to adopt a particular style of articulation. These examples demonstrate that in the context of instrumental teaching our communication methods are very similar to the way expert musicians communicate during professional rehearsals, even if in the

pedagogical context this can be more explicit or elaborate in an explanatory way. We tend to use a combination of short comments, special words, metaphors, gestures or perhaps singing the musical line. But inevitably we find that demonstration is more effective than lengthy explanations. Language is limited in explaining music while actual expert demonstration is precise and usually results in the student replying: “*Aha, now I understand what you mean*”.



Video sample

Pedagogy and
Research
(Section IV. Part 2/b.)

IV/2/b. Studio Teaching

Irish World Academy of Music and Dance
University of Limerick, Ireland, 2010

Ferenc Szűcs working with student Livia Nagy
Pianist: Ervin Nagy

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)
Cello Concerto, B minor, Op. 104

Pedagogy and Research (Section IV. Part 3.)

Ensemble coaching

In previous sections I reflected on the complex skills and approaches we need for the art of ensemble playing as well as on methods of communication used between expert performers. I pointed out that such knowledge is both interactive and relational while dominant models of intelligibility tend to be invested in certain ‘master’ figures.

One of these master figures teaching and working with us on the MA course at the Irish World Academy was Irish-born violinist Hugh Maguire, who sadly passed away in 2013 but lovingly remembered by colleagues and many young musicians he mentored. He was a highly respected string quartet player as well as an orchestral leader and as a pedagogue he inspired a generation of young musicians, particularly through teaching the art of ensemble playing. In a recent interview with *The Strad* magazine (2012) he elaborates on the qualities defining a good concertmaster and chamber musician:



Figure 22.
Hugh Maguire (1927–2013)

Being a concertmaster is all about leading by example, not saying do this or that... They [colleagues] must be intuitively musical people who instinctively know how to shape a phrase. That's quite rare... My leading all comes from what the music says to me... I don't think I ever had to suggest anything to people with whom I played in quartets. There has to be a complete understanding between the performers, so that no one needs to say a word. The music tells you what to do – from the first chord it will show you. You play it, then perhaps you will talk about it a little.
(The Strad, June 2012, pp.65–66)

Hugh Maguire emphasises the need for leading by example—primarily through musical means—rather than giving instructions or engaging in lengthy debates verbally. These comments confirm that in the professional context the elaboration of expertise is in a significant sense tacit, involving an ongoing mastery through the operations of expert intuition, which is understood without much need of verbal communication. Hugh Maguire largely employed the same principles in his teaching and coaching of young professional chamber ensembles. The video link below shows him working with the Elias String Quartet at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh (Suffolk, UK) in preparation for their performances of the complete cycle of Beethoven quartets.

“Aldeburgh, Working with Hugh Maguire”

To access the video sample please follow this external link:

<http://www.frequency.com/video/aldeburgh-working-with-hugh-maguire/101945124/-/Vimeo>

As Hugh Maguire explains in the interview, he did not want to “impose his will’ but given that the players already “understand the mechanics” (they already acquired a considerable level of expertise) he rather preferred to “embroider” their will (interweave it with his own suggestions) and perhaps through a few well chosen comments enhance their own creativity. This is a good example of the fragility of expert relational practice, and while judgment is constantly made, its management requires a particular sensitivity modulated by the exercise of discretion as well as creative flair. The players testify that this kind of coaching can result in “dramatic changes” in their performance (or a qualitative transformation is taking place in Massumi’s terms, 2002), and that is largely inspired by the presence and personality of a master figure.

Pedagogy and Research (Section IV. Part 4.)

The *Academos* project

Since expert performance skills and particularly ensemble skills can only be acquired through experience, and part of that experience can only be learned ‘in the moment’ of performance, I (and my colleagues) believe that one of the best ways to teach these kinds of skills to advanced music students is to give them the opportunity to work side-by-side with professionals.

Academos is a performing ensemble of the Irish World Academy operating in association with professional players of the Irish Chamber Orchestra. I have been working with this performing group as artistic director and curator since its launch and first performance in Dublin in 2008.

The video sample below (IV/4/a) is a short (8 minutes) promotional film made at the time of our first concert and features performances of Tchaikovsky’s *Souvenir de Florence* and *Dekatriad for Thirteen Solo Strings* by Irish composer Raymond

Deane. I was directing the concerts as well as curating the project, and was also closely involved with the making of this film, which explicates the concepts and the educational vision that informs *Academos* and the objectives of this innovative pedagogy. The film is narrated by Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (founding Director of the Irish World Academy) and it shows interviews with teachers, students and key people involved and gives a synopsis of my present pedagogical work in the context of directing the Masters programme in Classical String Performance.



Video sample

Pedagogy and
Research
(Section IV. Part 4/a.)

IV/4/a. *Academos* Irish World Academy Strings

Academos promotional video
Irish World Academy, University of Limerick, Ireland, 2008

The performance featured in the video was recorded at the
Button Factory, Temple Bar, Dublin, Ireland

Academos Irish World Academy Strings
in association with the Irish Chamber Orchestra
Ferenc Szűcs (director/conductor)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) *Souvenir de Florence*, Op. 70
Raymond Deane (b. 1953) *Dekatriad for Thirteen Solo Strings*

With kind permission of the Irish World Academy

Since 2008 *Academos* has performed in major cities in Ireland, made its European debut in Paris in 2009 (the concert featured in sample No. 4 of the Video Gallery), and its US debut in New York in 2010. The ensemble has collaborated with contemporary Irish composers, baroque specialists, singers, instrumentalists, traditional musicians, dancers and visual artists through workshops and public performances. With this project we are literally ‘taking the curriculum on the

road’ with our annual touring and our students are both treated as professionals and also expected to produce work as professionals.

Pedagogy and Research (Section IV. Part 5.)

Arts practice research and knowledge transfer

Practices—as complex, open ended, interdependent, and socially mediated arrays of human activities (Schatzki *et al* 2001)—constantly transform, change, develop, evolve and adapt to circumstances, while remaining within the parameters of the discipline and the judgement that informs them (historically and in the present). Over the past decades while working as a professional cellist I witnessed significant changes in the cultural world within which my practice is situated. These changes are tied to multiple social, political and economic factors. The performance practice of ‘classical’ music has been facing certain challenges (decreasing funding and audiences) and the function of the expert performer in this context has been increasingly re-defined as a ‘practitioner’ operating in multiple roles, which include portfolio carriers, alternative ways of presenting music, entrepreneurial dimensions, collaborating with other art forms, social awareness and community engagement, a growing sense of reflexivity and multiple approaches to knowledge transfer (HEFCE 2005; Polifonia 2010).

Higher education reforms in many European countries (including the Bologna process) transported music academies and conservatoires into university structures. Since ‘research’ is part of the primary function of universities the question of integrating artistic practices into traditional modes of research in academia and key (academic) performance indicators in the research context has been the subject of contentious debates (Frayling 1993; Borgdorff 2007; Coessens *at al* 2009; Melrose 2011; RIA 2011; REF 2012; Till 2013; Nelson 2013).

While it is argued that the production of art/performances is itself a knowledge

engagement (epistemic practice) incorporating substantial elements of research, and artworks/performances are, in large part, the products of research processes (Borgdorff 2007; Melrose 2011), the question of equivalence of such expertise within the traditional research culture of universities (essentially based on a scientific model) has not been sufficiently addressed. Melrose (2011) argues, in fact, that the quest for equivalence with established research models is demeaning, in that the newcomer is tested against the tradition and always found to be wanting. The emerging field of arts practice research (or artistic research) is attempting to bridge the gap (and the epistemic differences) between theoretical undertakings and expert practice, but the knowledge-political status of disciplinary mastery and performance-making expertise is yet to be fully accepted within the knowledge economy of universities.

According to recent definitions, arts practice research as a meta-practice, is different from the artistic practice itself, both in terms of its purpose and its methods (Coessens *at al* 2009), even if, to an uninformed eye, some of the processes involved are identical. It is a practice-based as well as a discursively informed enquiry—as I have shown in this undertaking—where the investigation is ‘intended as research’ and is conducted by the artist-performer-researcher (Borgdorff 2007, 2010). This research examines the *process* of creativity rather than its outcomes as such (Coessens *at al* 2009; Till 2013)—although plainly the processes involved in professional practices are determined in significant part by the expertise, values and judgements involved in that externally-validated outcome—and aims to provide insight into the (often hidden) creative processes taking place *inside* art-making practices. The key question is how to access the ‘practice’ and how can artists-performers write, demonstrate, transfer or validate non-conceptual and non-discursive knowledge through the meditation of the paradoxes inherent in ‘theorising performance’?

Arts practice research—in my own experience of the music professions—has many challenges. Performers in the past found it sufficient to disseminate their knowledge through disciplinary means within the boundaries of their performance practice and (until recently) we were never required to validate or disseminate our knowledge through academic writing. Two decades ago the amount of published

material discussing performance knowledge from the *performer's point of view* and/or with the *performer's participation* was far more limited than it is today. In such a context, performers—unlike PhD students—have not been sufficiently trained in research-centred registers and in order to conduct such research they have to acquire new skills residing outside of their primary expertise. In attempting to do so the artist-practitioner-researcher is both exposed and vulnerable (Crispin 2009) and formal research activities undertaken by the artist can take time and energy away from the core of the practice—hence the danger of “good research” resulting in dull performances (Till 2013). Arts practice research, while breaking new ground, is only beginning to generate discipline-specific discursive vocabulary. Since tacit knowledge escapes fixation and can never be fully captured by language or through documentation (Massumi 2002; Bannerman *at al* 2006; Melrose 2011), artistic research employs experimental methods (as I do) to reveal and articulate knowledge (including whatever is constituting expertise) that is embodied in the artistic process.

But the findings and insights from this research journey leads me to propose that there might also be far-reaching benefits for artists engaging in arts practice research. By becoming more aware of our actions, and of whether and how they might constitute expert arts practice, we are attempting to bridge the gap between practice and theory. We are clarifying aspects of our creative process to ourselves (self discovery) and to others (dissemination to the performance community, research community and to the wider public). In the process of connecting different modes of knowledge we are finding and generating new knowledge. In doing so we might be in a better position to situate our practice (or argue for its existence if needs to be) in the knowledge-political context of academia and of society in general, with ever shifting boundaries and expectations.

As Coessens and her co-writers point out: “The second manifestation of creative thinking, first considered as a tool for, and reflection on, the artist’s own work, can then become a shared tool for others, helping them to understand and learn about this specific artistic practice” and “these insights, in turn, change the way in which the artistic community and communities beyond think” (Coessens *at al* 2009, p.25). In this case a *knowledge transfer* is taking place in between the artist-

performer, the research community and the professional world of performance practice, as the expert practitioner-researcher is representing a seldom-heard voice in these communities.

Pedagogy and Research (Section IV. Part 6.)

[In place of a] Conclusion

My engagement with arts practice research corresponds with my work as senior lecturer at the University of Limerick. It is notable that at the time of my appointment in 1998, I was the first *professional performer* ever to be appointed in a *senior academic* position in Ireland and this was based on my professional status rather than on academic credentials or a doctorate. Working as performer in an academic environment I found myself in the centre of the ‘research debate’. I discovered that there is considerable divergence in the understanding and *value of knowledge* between academia and art-making performance practices. While universities have made considerable strides to accommodate the media through which performance presents itself, the responsibility seems to reside with the artist-performer-practitioner to ‘explain’ or ‘repackage’ our knowledge in research terms acceptable to academia, and as a result “many artists teaching in universities are now putting themselves through elaborate contortions to justify their work as research” (Till 2013).

These circumstances prompted me to contextualise, define, and re-define my practice—as well as the disciplinary traditions within which I practice it, and which in turn act upon it and define it—along with considering the wider socio-economic contexts within which the practice exists, and examine how the practitioner might continually needs to adapt to these new environments and conditions.

As part of the research process I recorded discussions with many of my colleagues and their insight and comments proved to be an invaluable resource for me. In this concluding part I propose to show a short audio clip from a conversation with Dr. Neil Boland, a professional pianist with whom I have given concerts in Ireland before he moved to New Zealand to take up his post as lecturer at the Auckland University of Technology. During his recent visit to Ireland we discussed music, artistic research, our changing profession, and the challenges with regard to the ‘crisis’ of classical music. Reading through my draft thesis he made helpful comments and part of the discussion focused on the notion of ‘transformation’.

In our conversation we have discussed the ‘crisis’ of classical music performance practice in the context of its place in education and society in general. Dr. Boland believes that Western classical music has an immense value to offer to any culture and he emphasised its transforming quality. In reflecting on my present project he thought that the notion of ‘transformation’ is implicit in my thesis, as I describe my own journey from training as a young child to working as a professional musician, then being a teacher and becoming a researcher. He pointed out that being a professional musician is a process of constant inner transformation.

(My synopsis of the interview excerpt)



**Interview
with
Neil Boland**

Audio sample
The audio sample is available
on the corresponding website

Figure 23. Neil Boland

In connection with the notion of transformation and with reference to music itself, we might recall here the comments quoted earlier from Brendel (2002, p.205) with regard to music being the “art of transformation” and from Barenboim and Said (2003, p.68) with reference to music as the “art of transition” being “similar to the life of a plant or a human being” (p.29) manifesting itself in sound as “process made apparent” (p.69) while unfolding in time.

In this research project I described, investigated, documented and presented performance practice in terms of a complex knowledge-practical system, which is constantly changing, evolving, being in movement or ‘in transition’.

Consequently—as Neil Boland pointed out—the practitioner operating within such system must also undergo a process of ‘constant inner transformation’.

We can hardly predict where this process will take us but perhaps the expert performers-practitioners of the future might have to embrace a moving identity or “embodied multiplicity” (Roche 2011) as they might transfer knowledge or shift roles between being those of performing artists, researchers, academics, educators, curators, community workers and entrepreneurs in a diverse, multicultural and global society.

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List of images, audio-video samples and external links

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