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Title: Laborinth II : denken als experiment : 472 'meditaties' over de noodzaak van het creatief denken en experimenteren in het uitvoeren van complexe muziek van 1962 tot heden

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Abstract

Making music is basically research that is practically oriented, experimental and based on knowledge. Musicians for whom performance practice is an art are also inherently the practitioners of science. Science, because artists depart within their research practice from an artistic premise which they want to resolve through their work; but also science in the sense of the development of technique because their art of bringing a score to life is based on a certain technical knowledge and skill: the '*science-art-ship*'. Musicians possess *know-how*, an implicit knowledge which takes shape in the practice of playing music. They have a theoretical knowledge and awareness that their technical know-how and skill are based on experience which immediately allows them to test a new score against the physical reality of their instrument and convert this into music practice. The premise and the research into whether a work works or does not work both belong to the domains of the arts and scientific research. The question of whether in every new score and every new performance a new kind of science of art is needed, a new kind of know-how, a new kind of knowing that results in a new interpretive art, lies at the basis of performance practice as research.

The ideas in this thesis pay tribute to the French post-structuralist philosophers Jean François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. In the terms of Deleuze they are rhizomatic structures of ideas that speak about the foundation on which the interpretation of a complex, 'unheard' and pioneering piece of music comes into being. They display the root and branch structures of thinking that happens and acts in the middle of the act of making music, of what is called experimental and complex contemporary music. They are ways of thinking which are not so much out to observe the music at a distance, from a certain height or from a certain angle, but want to grasp it from within the middle. Research inside the art, the idea of music from inside out, as a creative exposé of research into an art of thinking: shaping, conceiving and making creative concepts from which the interpretation comes to life.

The thesis wishes to examine the pathways of thought underlying the creative act of music making and the performance practice of complex music from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The questions at stake in the case of a 'new' complexity score, that is to say what is the significance of the extreme complex notation, are the score and the music playable and do they work, and how and under what condition do they work, these are the issues to be resolved by the performer.

My experience is that if one wishes to give expression in word and image to the research that is musically performed in the sound of its playing, this can only be achieved by devising a means of writing that goes beyond the form of the classical representation and escapes the dialectic of thesis and antithesis. If one wishes to linguistically approach the thinking that actually takes place in performance practice then an appropriate form has to be found that exposes the shapes of artistic thinking.

It is for this reason that the experimental form of an intertextual concept book has been chosen for this thesis. A book that is written in a numerical structure in which thinking is created and that, for the sake of the nature of the thinking itself, does not necessarily have to be read linearly, from the beginning to the end, but can possibly be read from back to front or from the middle to the periphery. I have sought for an alternative to the representational logic of the classical dissertation,

using non-linear assembled texts, a structure of separate, but related meditations.¹⁸ Inspired by the polyphony and the layered parametric structure of contemporary complexity scores, the meditations are designed to take on the structure of an intertextual polyphony. The thesis has been conceived as a labyrinth (<latin *laborare*, work and creation, <latin *laboratorium*, research and experiment, <Greek *laburinthos*, labyrinth and meshwork), the complex interweaving of texts that can be read as different 'thought voices', meditations that can change from and to 'voice' and mood', that can cut across each other and that can mutate in subject and style. So the complete collection can be regarded as the 'score' of the necessity to think and experiment in the performance practice of complex music.

As happens in a complex score, the texts also modulate and are sometimes transposed into textual compositions and word repetitions in which increasingly more musical principles gain the upper hand. The horizontal axis of the syntactical sequence of the words is deliberately interrupted in the last sections to give linguistic expression to the non-linear nature of musical thinking. Language itself could become 'art' again, just as music in its non-linguistic domain of meaning can give rise to language.

The meditations in the thesis examine writing as a possible way of thinking 'in' and 'through' music. Thinking as a possible way of making music, of becoming music. This is why the texts are not a description, explanation or analysis of the music but want to give shape in words to the forces occurring in the musical production process. Writing as the place in the thinking process where research happens, in the linguistic construction of the brain power subconsciously developing in music during studying and playing. Thinking and playing music as the coherent form of diverging elements which are at work in the music, bringing about an interpretive feedback which directs, changes and shapes the movement of the thinking and the music making. Musicians 'think' in the practice of making music in affects and perceptions, in sounds and tones, not in theories and concepts. They *become* music and while playing they think 'in' music and not 'about' music. The challenge is to write about this, inside the creative and working process of performance practice itself. Research not as an external reflection but as a productive interaction between that reflection and the thinking and research that occurs while performing music. Thinking about art becomes thinking art.

The aim is to garner 'musical knowledge' and 'inside' insights in score and performance practice, to tease out new ideas inside the act of actually making music. Insights that prompt creative musicians to think in the space where music becomes prose and poetry, without being prose or poetry, and where music becomes philosophy and psychology without being philosophy or psychology. Not writing as reflection but writing as a creative connection, that is to say bringing about a linking of ideas between music practice, the arts and sciences.

The complex music that is being examined here escapes from the equilibrium, from the reconciliation or the synthesis of the dialectic and is devoted to extremes. In similar fashion the thesis wants to reverse and subvert the logical binary oppositions of dialectic thinking, break through the classical frameworks of art and science and

¹⁸ Inspiration for the use of the number structure was taken from the works of Alain, Blaise Pascal, Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Wittgenstein, Paul Valéry, Henri Michaux, Gertrude Stein, Samuel Beckett and John Cage.

formulate a constellation of ideas that deconstructs the imaginary dividing line between musical practice and science and between the score and the performance. As fatal strategy they are each other's unsolvable riddle. The thesis is simultaneously the design of both 'music and science' and 'non-music and non-science'. Thinking in music has consequently no fixed form, nor a fixed place. It is nomadic or atopic and moves between knowing and not-knowing, it wishes to report on the thinking that thinks in the in-between space, the in-between of the practice of music making. The ultimate question to be asked is how, when and where the score works or does not work; 'how can the problem be thought about'. The whole point of the thinking is to plumb the depths of thinking in the unmediated freedom of intense music playing.

The meditations in this thesis are not intended as analyses or insightful commentaries 'about' something revealing a certain knowledge that people as readers can absorb. No they are reflections and studies designed to do something with the reader or to bring something about in the reader's thinking, affecting and involving the reader in the process of creative thinking that takes place in music practice. For this reason the meditations are not intended to be read in one go in sequence. They are designed to be the start, through the labyrinth of the numbers, of an impact that is activated in the thinking during and through reading the text. They are intended to be the constantly developing start of the need to think and experiment in order to arrive at an intense and deeply insightful experience of the music. The meditations want to be a form of thinking in the never-ending beginning, the 'preliminary' which penetrates deeper and deeper in every performance into the thoughts that the music conjures up. Musical thinking 'inside out', or thinking 'about' something that is subverted, thinking from the 'inside'. Like the performance practice of the complex music being examined here, the meditations themselves want to trigger a creative process of thinking in which readers are invited to join in the thinking and join in the development of new ideas while reading. They want to move readers themselves to take part in the thinking in the process of creation in the musical 'practice', which after all is also part of the art of listening.

An important point to make is that the meditations besides reading also require a certain listening experience if the depth to which the thoughts are intended to go can come about. The music is just as (in)comprehensible as some of the texts themselves, though it should be said that the process of a complex music piece usually acquires its full effect after having been listened to on several occasions and after the live concert experience.

Like the complex scores these meditations want to arouse a certain performativity, which is to say they want to do something with the reader and can only do so if the readers submit themselves to the influence of the texts, if they are prepared to work with the text and even join in the thinking process. For this reason readers will find that the texts are better read slowly as a contemplative or philosophical contrapuntal musical exercise (*exercitium*). It is advisable in the difficult passages of some meditations, as in the last numbers at the end, to read them aloud and even 'recite' them as a musical piece, preferably rhetorically or as rap, where applicable. The entire work comprises 472 meditations, whereas in reality there are only 236 numbers, 236 for a first reading and, just as each piece of music requires at least a second listening, 236 for a second reading. It is in the course of this exercise that the impact of the meditations becomes perceptible and conceivable. The numbers need not necessarily be followed linearly. The meditations are circular thoughts that describe concentric movements around the various dimensions of the given complex music. They can be read in all directions and combined with whatever

number. Readers can compile different tracks of thinking and draw their own rhizomatic trajectories or reading lines through the labyrinth of the meditations. The first track could be linear and the second in the form of a rhizome, springing from the one number to the other. There is a thread of headings through the labyrinth which are not to be regarded as separate chapters but function as an intertextual string of concepts and angles which feed into the research. The cluster of meditations is the conceptual meshing of experimental, creative, musical thoughts and acts and will hopefully move readers towards the de-territorialization of their own musical listening.

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