

The Informed Performer

Towards a bio-culturally informed performers' practice

[summary]

Joost Vanmaele's dissertation is directed at carefully and systematically evaluating the state of musicianship in an age of informative abundance and connectedness, to consider ways of re-balancing its epistemic grounds and attuning its information systems, with a view to artistic development, enrichment and/or liberation, and to put these contextual re-arrangements to the test in practical situations.

Technological advances in our Information Age and the renewed institutional architectures of the European Higher Education Area in recent decades have been rather generous in facilitating access to an abundant amount of knowledge via information, but for some reason(s), musical practice still seems to be reluctant (or unable) to meet the challenge of practically engaging with knowledge and insights generated by an extensive field of practical, academic and para-academic enquiry. The grounds for such a state of affairs seem to be both of an ideological-epistemic nature as well as of a more practical and operational kind. In the dissertation, a conceptual and contextual space is created with regard to the notion of an 'informed performer' where these systemic bottlenecks are discussed and a way forward is proposed under the heading of *a Bio-Culturally informed Performers' Practice* of Western Art Music [BCiPP].

Throughout the investigation, which is primarily meta-practical in its focus, the following elements are proposed in support of such a new conceptual space: 1/ a discipline-specific, activity-based understanding of *information*, one that safeguards the role of imagination and freedom in artistic practice; 2/ a specification of the concept of an *informed performer* by relating it to an active, prospective, and systematic interest in information originating from extra-disciplinary fields; 3/ the creation of a multilevel context that supports the exchange of knowledge via information, stimulates the integration of a theoretical, practical and productive track in musical enquiry, and creates a dedicated research space for *Artistic Information Researchers*; 4/ the interposition of *personal theory* as an experienced-based and processual mediator between theory and practice; 5/ considering *performers' practice* as a performers-centred social practice and as an interconnected array of activities and metapractical/(proto-)theoretical understandings; 6/ the introduction of a bio-cultural approach to music which can function, via a focus on experience, action and interaction, as a common ground between musical practice and *academia*; and finally 7/ a process-oriented topical attractor-model that acts as an information system mediating between a performer's concerns and the abundance of an information galaxy.

The impact of a bio-culturally informed performership on the concerns of score-based musicians is illustrated by presenting two case-studies that pragmatically and consiliently integrate extra-disciplinary information units in score-based performance. On the action-side, the *Quadrant-technique* is proposed as a framework to reflect on the basic stroke(s) in piano-

playing. In the field of musical interaction, the concept of an *Interactional and Bio-topical Performative Analysis* is proposed as an experience- and interaction-based analytical tool to vitalise performances.

Finally, and in conclusion, the concept of a *Bio-Culturally informed Performers' Practice* is situated within a larger framework of an *Informed Pluralistic and Creative Pragmatism* [IPCP].