

S. Crayton: *Out of Order*

Abstract

Dissertation

Out of Order makes the case for an embodied approach to composition. The dissertation proceeds from theory to history, and analysis, before bringing the argument to the domain of contemporary practice.

The dissertation roots embodied compositional practice within the larger structure of musical meaning in general, and itself embodies a kind of ontology of disorder. Drawing on the work of Bloom and others, the dissertation constructs from first principles the assertion that the perception of a work's expression is the sense of its disorder (ch. 2). It argues that contemporary practice is dominated by a limited conception of disorder which contributes towards elitist tendencies, proposing an embodied practice as a solution to its institution.

The heart of the dissertation is chapter 3, which can be considered a microcosm of the dissertation as a whole. The chapter deals with a specific expression in the work of Rameau, a kind of distance from the present which represents a particular way of listening in time. The chapter reveals that Rameau codified this expression as *tenderness*, situating it across his music and writings, as well as a broader context of eighteenth-century sensibility.

Tenderness is presented as a "disorder" of the trope of loss (ie. a trope of a trope), according to which the meaning of its expression is what it laments. As such, loss plays a dual role as subject and mechanism, with the effect that tenderness seems to reflect its own structure of meaning. Analysis demonstrates the ways in which this meaning is interlinked with performance, such that the expression's defining "distance" is embodied. Within the dissertation, the expression of tenderness exemplifies a dialogue between the mechanisms of musical meaning, and the embodied sensitivity its performance demands.

Time acts as a constant throughout the dissertation, from listening in time (3) to thinking in time (4), and analyses of works by Messiaen and Beethoven, which examine how music can challenge its own time (5-6). A non-musical opening chapter deals with looking in time, as well as introduces various theoretical frameworks.

In the final chapter (7), 'Composing in Time', it is claimed Berio's poetics represent the most expansive consideration of musical meaning in the late twentieth century, and offer a great deal to today's composers. The chapter reveals the ways in which Berio's early writing anticipates a conception of meaning close to Bloom's, and demonstrates the application of Berio's poetics within his music.

Portfolio

According to the theoretical lens of the dissertation, the portfolio represents an embodied approach to composition.

Encore (for orchestra) attempts to give meaning to a disembodied notational aesthetic. It begins in simple counterpoint, but rarely is more than one note at a time notated, such that players have to know exactly where their note is coming from, and where it is going. Halfway through, the counterpoint repeats (“encores”), only it is orchestrated in such a way that its fundamental structure is not strictly present. As such, performance relies on the sense of its earlier counterpoint, and so its later expression is a kind of memory. The musicians must therefore listen in a different way, and respond in an embodied way to a notation which is, at first glance, a disembodied cliché of the late twentieth century.

3 Dreams is composed for duo of baroque and modern violins. They are treated as different instruments to the extent that the physical realities of the instruments themselves provide the creative impulse of the work. In other words, the notes are themselves a product of the negotiations between the different physical and notational histories of the instruments.

à jamais 1 (for mixed ensemble of baroque and modern instruments) is a recomposition of Rameau’s ‘Tendre Amour’ from *Les Indes galantes* such that Rameau’s wonderful expressions appear no longer to be products of his counterpoint but the physical and notational realities of the instruments. The piece combines the techniques of *3 Dreams* with *Encore*, whose notational aesthetic is adopted. The composition began as an exercise, during which I first encountered Rameau’s ‘Chords of Supposition’, which I later discovered he considered a technique of tenderness.

à jamais 2, composed to the same ensemble as *à jamais 1*, is what I originally set out to compose. The expression of *à jamais 2* takes the sentimental feeling and then overrides its sense in an expression that pushes upwards. It is a kind of transumption of tenderness (refer to ch. 2). What I mean by this is that the first half plays on conventional structures of tenderness, ie. disordering the trope of loss, but the second half contains this expression within a larger expression which moves beyond the structures of loss as if consuming them (refer to ‘*Tendres Plaintes*’, ch. 3). Like *à jamais 1*, *à jamais 2* combines the techniques of *3 Dreams* and *Encore*.

Image is the odd one out of the portfolio. In *Image*, a room is transformed into a darkroom the audience can inhabit. An exposure is captured by a photographer; the film is developed then fixed; a print is produced from the film, enlarging the negative onto negative paper which is itself then developed and fixed; lastly, the print is presented to the audience who have been free to move throughout the process. Meanwhile, music maps onto the physical structures of the analogue photographic process: certain extracts are recorded live, later to be played back through speakers, both on its own and accompanied by the musicians, and occasionally manipulated to sound in reverse (negative). There are a vast number of considerations relating to sound and its notation but the fundamental expression of *Image* is this structure as it maps onto the physical process experienced by the audience: it is an attempt to sonify the analogue photographic process, a process of light and time, and a process of sound and time. In *Image*, sound and light both become tropes of time. The harmonic structures of *Image* are products of the temporal structures of light’s exposure and development—words, of course, ubiquitous in musical practice since the eighteenth century.