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Embodied listening and expression in the arts: panel report

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Monday 8.3.2021
14:05–15:25 PANEL DISCUSSION
Embodied listening and expression in the arts
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 Sibeliussäätiö, Uniarts Helsinki – Chair of the panel
 Professor, **Susanne Jaresand**,
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This article examines a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to understanding aspects of *embodied listening and expression* in performing arts and arts pedagogy, drawing on presentations from the expert panel during Research Days at the Sibelius-Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, on 8 March, 2021, chaired by Marja-Leena Juntunen.

Marja-Leena Juntunen

Introduction to the theme of embodied listening and expression

When discussing embodied listening and expression, it is essential first to address the notion of *embodiment*. Indeed, on a very concrete level, embodiment refers to our physical existence, to being a body and having a body. Philosophically, the notion of embodiment can be traced back to phenomenology, particularly to Merleau-Ponty's (1962) philosophy. He defended the bodily basis of human existence, experience, thinking, feeling and knowing against Cartesian mind-body separation and the general disembodiment of experience in relation to knowledge in Western culture. Embodiment recognises the body-mind as one entity and views the mind as embodied and the body as mindful (i.e., inseparable from the mind), and it focusses on how our bodies and experiences shape how we perceive, feel and think.

During the past 20 years, embodiment has become a significant research paradigm in artistic research, musicology, education, neurosciences, philosophy, psychology and digital technology

research. In addition, more and more embodied practices and meditation techniques that reinforce and help people become aware of body-mind interconnectedness have been surfacing. In research, the notion of embodiment refers to a theory for understanding and studying the body-mind – a theory that comprises two main branches: phenomenology and embodied cognition theory (Marshall and Hornecker 2013). *Phenomenology* examines phenomena as experienced subjectively, and perception is viewed as our primary way of knowing the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Regarding the relation between the mind and body, objective world and experienced world, Merleau-Ponty in particular focussed on the problems of perception and embodiment. For him, the self is a body subject, and we essentially are physical beings. He suggested that we experience things ‘in themselves’, as they really are in the mind-independent world, and that in our experience, no separation exists between mind and body. Objective thinking (analysis and reflection) – when detached from the lived experience – separates us from ourselves, the world in which we live, and other people with whom we interact (ibid.). In addition to examining subjectivity’s corporeality, phenomenology directs attention toward intersubjectivity and intentionality. Intersubjectivity refers to how two or more people can come to a shared understanding without having direct access to each other’s mental states (Marshall and Hornecker 2013; Zlatev, Racine, Sinha and Itkonen 2008, 1), and intentionality refers to pre-reflective ‘directedness’ towards and understanding of the world in our bodily actions.

The *embodied cognition* approach (see, e.g., Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991) describes how the body and environment are related to cognitive processes and argues that cognition is embodied and grounded in sensorimotor and motor experiences. For example, this approach emphasises the close connection between music and movement in the brain, where the motor and auditory systems are intertwined inextricably. Within music, this theory addresses the relationship between the properties of musical sounds and how musicians and listeners experience music in their body-minds, as well as how music – and rhythm specifically – ‘moves’ us (Maes et al., 2014). The enactivist approach (Varela et al. 1991) emphasises dynamic coupling’s role in brain-body-environment. In music, it uncovers how various aspects of the mental processes involved in listening to, creating and performing *music* are dependent on our sensorimotor abilities and skills (Matyja & Schiavio, 2013; van der Schyff, 2015).

In our daily activities, we constantly communicate nonverbally through the body, interacting with each other in creating, manipulating and sharing meanings and experiential content, such as feelings, perceptions and thoughts (see Marshall & Hornecker 2013). In fact, nonverbal communication forms a substantial part of our interaction with others. Even little children can grasp ‘the purposeful intentions of others through perception of bodily movements, gestures, facial expressions, etc.’ (Gallagher & Hutto 2008, 17). When people interact in arts activities, they communicate on a very different level than when using words, engaging and interacting with their whole selves and holistically, i.e., bodily, intellectually and emotionally. Thus, it could

be suggested that the arts, as an embodied practice, form our primary and profound access point for understanding others (ibid., 20).

Embodiment also provides an interesting explanatory framework for understanding artistic expression in performance and perception. Artistic practices are embodied in many respects. All the arts – music, dancing, acting, painting etc. – are bodily activities in which several qualities of expression – such as rhythmic accuracy, articulation, phrasing, sound, etc. – largely depend on the body, or rather on the harmony or functionality of the body, mind and emotions. The body is also a gateway to creative expression and a tool for gaining an open-minded and experimental attitude toward creative processes. Furthermore, the arts have unique and sometimes disturbing ways of capturing our attention and awakening us to new ways of perceiving and thinking. Artistic activities – either in creating or receiving – provide holistic ways to make sense of the world and approach life situations, including painful ones, in which critical reflection is not enough; thus, art may promote well-being, even healing (Lawrence 2012).

In artistic expression, we utilise our bodies to extend from it and reach the external world (see Leder 1990, 16). In skilful artistic actions, we do not act or respond to the world automatically or mechanically, but rather through bodily reflection, i.e., the moving body can reflect and adjust its own actions (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Parviainen 2000). Often, gestures or other bodily expressions, as well as speech, are viewed as translated thought (see Wis 1993, 40). From the embodied perspective, drawing on Merleau-Ponty, this paradigm of a stimulus-response connection can be disputed, and expression can be viewed as a completed thought, accomplishing thought or emotion, i.e., they are one and the same (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 174–99). Likewise, there is no thinking that parallels or follows listening, i.e., listening is thinking (Langer 1989, 59).

Listening is a very physical thing, as we listen through the whole body. It is a form of vibration that starts off as a kinaesthetic sensation. When listening to music, the sound waves strike both the eardrums and skin, passing through to the bones and resonating in the whole body (e.g., Bowman 2000; 2004; Bowman & Powell 2007; Stubley 1999; Greenhead, Habron & Mathieu 2016). Eleanor Stubley (1998) employs the notion of ‘being in the sound’ to describe how sound opens up the channel that enables one to encounter music as a living being and fuse with it as one. By listening through the body – what in phenomenology is called kinaesthetic sensitivity or empathy (Parviainen 2000, 157; also Reynolds & Reason 2012) and in cognitive theories, motor resonance (e.g., Uithol et al. 2011) – we can feel, tune into and understand other people’s movements.

However, listening is not only a physical activity: ‘Hearing is intimate, participatory, communicative; we are always *affected* by what we are given to hear’, as David Michael Levin (1989, 32) writes. The human body as a whole holds a listening attitude. Levin (1989) uses the

notion of ‘preconceptual’ listening, i.e., listening in which one gets attuned to what is heard through the entire body of felt experience, and describes skilful listening as a ‘practice of the Self’, a term introduced by Foucault. It guides us to listen not only to our own felt needs (ibid., 38), but also to other people’s needs and voices. According to Levin, the cultivation of listening even can help form ‘moral character, encouraging communicative relationships, awakening a compassionate sensibility and understanding it bears within it, motivating a concern for reciprocity and respect for difference’ (p. 3).

Thus, embodied listening and expression comprise a theme that extends to several fields of human existence and action. Within the context of higher education for the arts and arts education, the theme addresses the inseparable link between body, mind and emotions in artistic, pedagogical and research activities. Embodied listening and expression invite us, and maybe even require us, to get attuned to our mind-body wholeness; listen to our emotions; become connected with imagination, intuition and affect; and engage in embodied dialogue between our inner reality and the world ‘outside’, among other things.

In the following sections, the panel’s members will present four different interpretations of embodied listening and expression. First, Eeva Anttila addresses the theme from the point of view of a dialogue, both in relation to pedagogical interaction and inner turning towards the other. Among other things, she notes that silence is important in all kinds of interaction and essential in embodied listening. Then, Susanne Jaresand discusses the relationship between music and dance, musicians and dancers, in the context of her dance productions and the complexity of listening in and through the artistic processes. She argues that embodied listening as a meaning-making action in the performative artistic processes can enhance understanding and bring about new interpretive dimensions in and of artistic expression. Marianna Henriksson examines embodied expression in interdisciplinary performance drawing on theories of musical affect from the 17th century and describes how this approach has influenced her music performances of that time. Finally, Erik Söderblom considers embodiment as a state of existence. For him, theatre performance can be viewed as an animistic metaphor and projection of how we exist as human beings. In addition, he discusses the tension between the individual and the group and between the group of people and the surrounding world and makes comparisons between the human embodied action and behavior of the flock animals on how to deal with change.

Eeva Anttila

Embodied listening, dialogue and pedagogy

I come from the dance field. Of course, embodiment in many ways is always present in dance practices and in dance research – in one way or another. My doctoral work focussed on dialogical dance pedagogy. I completed my doctorate in 2003, so I actually started to think about dialogue and embodiment more than two decades ago.

The reason why I start with the term *dialogue* is that listening is a key element in dialogue. Without listening, dialogue does not exist; thus, listening has been following me as I worked on this notion of dialogue for more than 20 years.

I did not start with the notion of *embodied* dialogue, as I was interested in dialogue more as a conversation or interaction – something that always involved some kind of conceptual or verbal exchange. However, through my doctoral work, I became deeply interested and intrigued by this notion of embodied dialogue, as it refers to prelinguistic or pre-reflective interaction – communication without words or nonverbal interaction.

Most of us probably have heard that nonverbal communication comprises about 70% of all interaction; however, more central than such percentages for me is understanding that embodied dialogue and listening actually shape the quality of the whole interaction process. If embodiment is understood, addressed and acknowledged as a central element in communication, it generates different qualities, even with words. If embodied listening is present in interaction, even verbal communication becomes different. Thus, embodiment and embodied listening elicit a qualitative difference in all communication.

Through my doctoral work, I realised that dialogue inherently is an embodied phenomenon, and various extant literature can be cited on this topic. One of my key sources was, and still is, the philosophy of Martin Buber, viewed as one of the fathers of dialogical philosophy, who stated that a shared silence also can be dialogue, and ‘for a conversation, no sound is necessary, not even a gesture’ (1947, 3). Thus, listening also includes listening to silence.

In any kind of communication, be it between human beings or between human beings and, for example, an artwork, silence is an important element. Without silence, I don’t think we really can understand sound. It is the same with bodily expression. If movement never stops, it is hard to understand movement, i.e., motionless, still moments or pauses are as important as sound and movement. Silent and still moments are important in all kinds of interaction and are part of embodied listening in my understanding.

The other partner when interacting, listening or seeing need not be another human being, but often, when we talk about dialogue or listening, we think about contact with other human beings. However, in this case, we are dealing with the arts and music. Buber often noted that the other partner in dialogue need not be another human being. It can be an animal, something in nature, a living or non-living element, an artwork or, of course, music, probably most self-evidently. But we can listen to dance, as well as tea kettles, as Buber noted. A baby conversing with a whistling tea kettle is one example that he provided (1937/1970, 78). He also talked about being in

dialogue with natural elements, e.g., with a tree; thus, the dialogue partner can be pretty much anything.

In all, listening and dialogue in an embodied sense start with an intention. Buber and many other dialogical philosophers have an existential phenomenological background, and intentionality is a central notion in phenomenology. For Buber, intentionality means that dialogue starts from within, from an intention to turn towards the other (1937/1970; 1947). This is first an internal movement. This inner turning towards the other then becomes a bodily, physical movement that we can perceive. It is not moving as such, but rather softening the body, voice and gaze, while heightening sensory awareness. This heightened awareness then leads to bodily awareness and bodily consciousness. This is how the elements of embodied listening merge into a whole.

Susanne Jaresand

Embodied listening in performing arts

Embodied listening can be understood as a meaning-making action in the performative artistic process, including musicians, dancers, choreographers, conductors and visual artists, among others. This artistic approach towards listening leads to further understanding and new interpretive dimensions in artistic expressions. The concept of reflective listening is, for all participants of the performative process, an important parameter as a methodology for analysing how music and dance inter-operate, as well as how choreography creates a kind of corporeal listening. Contrary to how eyes perceive the world through objectification and classified distance, hearing is directed towards proximity and procedural openness (Jaresand & Calissendorff 2013). Thus, listening is a fundamental phenomenon in human relations (Wallrup 2002). This thinking and doing guided by listening can transform music into an embodied experience. The common point of departure is that listening has held a hidden place in philosophy, in which sight quickly is established as the primary sense in that which came to be called 'ocularcentrism' (Espinet 2009). The visual appears as fixed conditions and concrete evidence, while auditory perception is ephemeral, in-process and transformative.

There is freedom in listening to an artistic work, whether it concerns music, dance, drama or visual art, but it also can entail great constraint. Understanding a work is synonymous with perceiving its inner logic, in which the work's integral structure exerts a veritable compulsion over the one who has this ability. Expanding the concept of comprehensibility means being able to conduct an open, embodied listening process that entails different artistic methods.

In Luigi Nono's String Quartet piece *Fragmente-Stille, An Diotima*, the composer applies a number of pre-compositional strategies in the production of the piece, but he breaks up the various constructions, stores them on top of each other, then dissolves them. The listener is meant to face these cracks, travel into them and choose their own paths through the sounding material. In this

way, listening and thinking develop in a differentiated interaction – as embodied, reflective listening open to the unexpected. Listening that is not focused on understanding is open – including to the unknown. Open listening can lead to belonging, which can reach beyond points of the known or comprehensible and into the unknown.

Another example is the dance research project *Beauty/Schönheit/Skönhet* (see Jaresand 2014). In this performance, the choreography neither visualises the sounding music, nor simply contrasts it (e.g., strongly rhythmic music with a *legato* dance or a *fortissimo* in music with a solo dance in a movement sequence in *pianissimo*). Instead, the focus is on perceiving dance and music as equally transformable voices – transformable in the sense that both artistic expressions are using embodied listening as a common denominator through the musical elements in a structured form in which the artistic choices are based.

In a forthcoming artistic research project, the complexity of listening through the artistic processes will be highlighted, taking into account embodied listening of the dancer and musician. The process of creating a performance can be viewed as a series of performative acts of listening and responding to others' performative episodes. In this practice-based artistic research, we will examine the *musical* acts of territorialisation that two kinds of bodies perform in mutually constitutive relationships: interacting *corporeal-performing-bodies* – with individual pasts, tendencies, wills and affective attunements (Massumi 2011) – and *musical-objects-as-bodies*. Now we have the dancing body and the playing body – embodied skills in articulated non-acoustic and acoustic sounds through performing-bodies-as-musical-objects and musical-objects-as-bodies.

This involves two levels of abstraction: ascribing body status to sound groups and doing the same for historical trajectories, cultural conditionings and dislocations, i.e., 'the threshold or borderline concept that hovers dangerously and (is) undecidable at the pivotal joint of binary pairs' (Grosz 1994, 23). One such binary pair that will be problematised is that of production and perception – to perform and perceive – the two perspectives on the same phenomenon. The producers are also the perceivers, and this also applies to the listeners: Acts of perception are themselves productive in the sense that they create contexts – inner movement, to be affected within – in which meaning emerges.

The concept of duration will underlie the basis for these embodied experiments. According to Wallrup, music and movement duration is concerned with temporality, as well as mobility, spatiality and materiality – all having to do with listening (Wallrup, 2012). He discusses how music is embodied by elucidating the dimensions of the musical world that emerges when a listener is attuned. If movements are auditory, they cannot be described like a movement in space. It is not space in the conventional sense, but a musical *spatiality*: 'This is how the music is

embodied. Musical spatiality is nothing other than the expanded spatiality of the lived body' (Wallrup 2012, 224).

More specifically, the choreographer chooses a piece of music to build a frame as a starting point for the choreography. The choreography of non-acoustic corporeal music then evolves in silence in a collaborative process with the choreographer and the dancers. In an exciting moment, the performing-bodies-as-musical-objects and musical-objects-as-bodies play together equally in a two-voice counterpoint in which polyphonic and polyrhythmic elements occur.

The method also is open to implementing its opposite, in which a composer listens to and analyses a choreographed dance designed in silence, then creates a counterpoint in a musical composition. In this case, the dance takes on the role of setting the artwork's enabling frame. In this method, the dance is choreographed in advance, with musical elements and structures as the inspiration and starting point for the form and the movement's qualities and content. The composer then must open up to the music of the dance and 'hear' the dance score, live or filmed, and have this score as a frame for the musical composition. The choreography made in silence should have the possibility of being open for interpretation in the same way that an orchestral score is interpretable to the conductor and the musicians.

The dancer's role is based on improvised movement in silence, with the musical elements as enabling constraints. Jaques-Dalcroze (1920) claimed that musical expressiveness could be taught and does not depend solely on natural talent, and also that prominent musicians often have an instinctive physical connection to music. He trained students in each of the musical elements so that they could represent these elements physically. This physical listening resulted in a virtual lexicon of musically translated movements. The parallel elements between music and dance, as suggested by Jaques-Dalcroze, are expressed in Table 1, below (Jaresand & Calissendorff 2013, 150).

Table 1: Relationships between music and dance, as suggested by Jaques-Dalcroze

The dancer's individuality, experience, imagination and embodied musical knowledge permeate the material into the style in which the choreographer is working. The dance sequence is based on interaction between listening to the natural rhythm that occurs in the dance improvisation and the choreographer's formation of movements for a musical listening purpose. The music's sounding metrics are neither controlling, nor limiting. The dance sequence then is performed to the sounding music to listen for 'meeting places' – tones/movements – in which, by coincidence, intuition, knowledge and experience will occur. It is important to provide the dance with a scale of expressions in a musical cultivation, giving the body both full control of all available elements of dynamic and agonic nature, as well as the opportunity to experience every nuance of the music to

express them through the muscles. This investigation must be complemented with knowledge about agogic and spatial laws to anchor variations in the time value through listening.

Listening permeates every part of the process and should be analysed as follows:

- The dancer's own improvised sequence in relation to the choreographer's intentions.
- The co-dancers' improvised sequences in relation to their own nature as a dancer.
- The unanimous dance with the sounding music.
- The physical listening of the audience's attentive listening.

The musician's role is based on listening to the interpretation put forth through interaction between the co-musicians and/or conductor. What is relevant is the interpretation of the meeting with the 'music' of the dance as well as finding a repeatability, which deepens the interactive listening. If the music is composed with intervals of silence, the musicians can open their listening out in the space to the dance. The musician also can depart from the sheet music and add additional dimensions of inner and outer listening to the performance. The music, based on improvisational models, can lead to greater interaction between the musician and the music of the dance through collective listening.

Improvisation also will be productive entry points for questions of embodiment, perspective, subjectivity and emergent meaning. The phase, i.e., the transition between improvisation and composition, will be of interest in a coming project, as well as how the concept of *temporality and presence* can emerge and become differentiated in the different forms of expression. Lived experience is characterised by an oscillation between presence and meaning in a provocative instability and anxiety. We will build a special framework, a disposition to 'focussed intensity,' to be able to experience the excitement. It has a spatial articulation, and its temporality is an 'event'. Through embodied listening, the musical elements, transformed into materialised non-acoustic movement, will point to new meaning-creating states in the presence of an expanded 'now' (Gumbrecht 2004). This will be the performers' milieu, to be composed in time in moments of intensity. Moments of intensity or lived experience assume that the physical experience that already has taken place, followed by a becoming, the result of an interpretation of the world through action.

Anything that creates meaning needs further attention, in which human values' significance needs its own tracks in the form of personal creativity and co-creation. These thoughts form a micropolitical basis for our project, in which embodied listening is the common meaning-bearing denominator. How is the body written musically? How do we physically perceive music in a landscape of improvisation and composition and in the phase in between? The subject's materialistic foundation must be understood as a relationally embodied, affective and responsible consciousness, not just a transcendent entity.

If we assume that there is *one musical body* that both produces and perceives, subjectively forming corporeal movements and acoustic musical gestures, then where do the boundaries, thresholds and intersections of musical bodies lie? How can ‘descriptions’ help establish and legitimise listening as a reliable research methodology across the disciplines, and how does reflective listening emerge? Can the abstract in music be found in dance, or must dance be comprehensible because of its corporeality? How do we think about the processes of subject formation that unfold through interactive music-making? How are performing bodies being described in relation to the musical-objects-as-bodies? Upcoming research will examine ways to describe embodied listening so that it can gain significance, and listening can enter our imagination of the real – terminology that can articulate listening in a way that is useful and adaptable to various disciplines, i.e., a vocabulary. A shareable and transferable methodology is needed that does not ignore the particularities of movement, sound and listening.

Marianna Henriksson

Embodiment and historical theories of musical affects as background for interdisciplinary performance

As a harpsichordist and doctoral student at the Sibelius Academy Docmus doctoral school, I approach the notion of embodiment from the perspective of historical ideas and concepts.

In my ongoing artistic research, I have concentrated on early 17th century Italian music and the underlying concepts of music’s affect ability on a humoral/bodily level. I have examined the philosophical-medical ideas valid in the 17th century, such as the humoral pathology and the conceptions of musical passions as bodily events. In the degree’s artistic components, I have performed both a solo repertoire and collaborative projects. I’m interested in working on this music’s effects through interdisciplinary collaboration. In this text, I reflect on how the aforementioned historical conceptions function as a background for my work with choreographer Anna Mustonen, whose field is contemporary choreography.

In my doctoral study, the research questions are: How was music’s bodily affectivity understood in the 17th century, and what influence does this historical knowledge have on my work as a performer? What kind of performances are created within this scope of this understanding in a contemporary performative context?

The 17th century thought system that guided the understanding of the human body and music’s function in it is sometimes called *Galenist affect theory* (Wentz 2010, 52–53). Galen was one of the classical authorities who continued to dominate medical science at least until well into the 18th century (Wentz 2010, 53; Gordon 2004, 20). It commonly was believed that humans’ health was based on the balance of four basic bodily fluids called humours: blood; phlegm; yellow bile; and black bile. These were connected with corresponding temperaments: sanguine; phlegmatic;

choleric; and melancholic. Every individual had a personal complexion and fluid mixture. The balance could be maintained and altered through so-called non-naturals: food and drink; breathing; exercise and rest; excrement; and affects. Music's affect ability connected it with this system. Its capability to move was understood quite literally: The vibrating air penetrated the body by entering through the ears, and once inside, set vital spirits in motion. The spirits stirred the bodily fluids, eliciting passions or emotions. It was very clear to people at the time that music could both heal and harm, and it did so by causing changes in the body (Joutsivuo & Mikkeli 1995, 37–40; Gouk 2000, 173).

Studying these themes has made a strong impact on how I want to perform the music of the 17th century. If the aim is to make the music physically enter the body and move it from the inside, I must really try to play out the music's frictions, meaningful intervals and gestures. However, the impact expands from my personal instrumentalist practice towards questions of collaborative work. For me, these early theories act like an invitation to search for performance contexts that best allow bodily stirrings to happen. So, how can one reach this state of affectivity today with a contemporary audience? My tendency has been to move away from the context of a classical concert (in itself, fully anachronistic – for this music anyway) and towards contemporary performance surroundings.

I started my collaboration with choreographer Anna Mustonen in 2004. We realised that contemporary choreography and 17th century music share the questions of internal stirrings of the body, and that we could work together to make them happen. We have sought to make the stirrings tangible by sharing the same stage and creating performances that are somewhere between concerts and dance pieces. It is an internal part of our work to discuss the affective elements in our chosen music. The discussions, often drawing from historical affect theories, serve as a basis for the performances to find their shapes.

Our previous project was called *Maria-vesper* (which premiered in 2018 as a co-production of Helsinki Baroque Orchestra and Zodiak Centre for New Dance Helsinki), Monteverdi's *Vespro della beata Vergine* as a choreographed version for six singers, three dancers and an instrumental ensemble. In this work, we developed practices in which dance is intertwined deeply with listening to music, and the music-making movements can be experienced as dance. The Vespers are a sacred music collection containing both monumental renaissance polyphony and intimate solo songs, and they offered a very versatile foundation for experimenting with bodily listening. Singers were dancing, dancers were singing and instrumentalists were set on the same round stage with the audience surrounding the stage. Mustonen's choreography partly comprised dance based on what we call a 'listening-moving-practice', i.e., a bodily task in which the performer allows the music to travel through their body and affect the body's being and movement by listening to the body and the music simultaneously.

We will continue our collaboration in an upcoming project, *Eros the Bittersweet* (working title), scheduled to premiere in fall 2022. I am currently in the process of writing more about our collaborative work.

It is artistically very fruitful to set the historical conceptions of passions and affects in dialogue with the present-day understanding of embodiment. It is deeply moving (sic) for me that centuries-old (and, scientifically speaking, false) theories on music's influence echo so strongly in our current artistic practices. Over the years, many have expressed basically this same fact in numerous ways: Music is an embodied experience.

Erik Söderblom

Embodiment as a state of existence

My background is in classical music. Currently, I work as a professional musician in the fields of opera and theatre; thus, I approach the issue of embodiment from a very practical perspective of 'search', rather than 'research'.

When discussing embodied listening and expression, we actually are dealing with a very essential dilemma of human life known as the Cartesian mind-body dualism, which has affected Europe's history significantly. Ever since antiquity, there has been a split between the body and mind. The oldest description of this split goes back even before classical times, to the myth of the 'forbidden fruit', taken from 'the tree of knowledge' in the biblical Book of Genesis. In a way, stealing the apple was the moment when the animal became a human – the moment when consciousness was formed, the animal became aware of itself and the split between body and mind came into being. It also was the moment when the 'animal' became aware of the fact that one can 'think out' or 'think away' from your body. The body is the body, but the soul is something separate. However, an animal's life – in a simplified way – can be viewed as pure embodiment. Animals do not need an intellectual apparatus or intellectual functions; they just react to what they experience, living in an embodied way, whereas humans have lots of trouble trying to find their way back to this pure state of existence, which includes the body in a direct, unreflected way.

In the theatre, the edge of the stage, the line between the proscenium and the audience (*ramppi*, in Finnish), is a very central phenomenon in this dilemma. Theatre performance, in my view, is a very clear, original, animistic metaphor and projection of how we exist as human beings, how our self-consciousness works. This line, the *ramppi*, is a border that separates the living and the dead – *dead* not being in a literal sense here – but spiritually, as souls of our ancestors living in the world of spirits. In the mythology of antiquity, this line between the living and the dead was conceived as the River Styx in Greek mythology (in Finnish mythology, it is called the River of

Tuonela; the Finnish word *tuo* means ‘that, on the other side’). When we sit in the audience and watch people on the stage, we see embodied spirits. Also, from the performer’s perspective, when you are on the stage, you are in the ‘state of embodiment’. It is a state in which the ego, personality, individuality, persona and the person with responsibilities in society loosen up. When we perform, we leave our social signum at home and go on the stage with a performer’s state of mind, in which there is no line, no separation between our thinking – the mind – and our physical experience – the body. We are, in a way, back in an ‘animal’ state.

An issue seldom discussed related to this phenomenon is hypnosis. We all can be hypnotised in the sense of becoming *enchanted*. *Chant* means a song or to sing. It also refers to praying. When entering the mental state of praying, our ego, the ‘me’ part, gets loosened up or is dissolved. This state of mind is how we perceive any work of art. You must believe in the work of art; you must believe in what happens on the stage. If you do not, the artwork does not speak to you. What we experience in this state of mind is a kind of embodiment.

The whole issue of embodiment further reflects the tension between the individual and the group, i.e., the flock. Genetically, we are flock animals, by which I mean that this ability to become enchanted is connected to flock animals’ characteristics. The animal, as a member of the flock, is not intellectually considering or discussing its future actions; it just moves on. The flock is enchanted by the leader animal and, thus, becomes one entity. Any group of human beings, in fact, has this kind of dynamic as well. In a way, any group must choose the alpha animal to lead the group, and the other members of the group must give in, must let themselves become enchanted by the leader animal’s suggestivity. To do this, the group needs to be stable in a hierarchical way. On the stage, you become the leader animal of the audience that is the flock.

Simultaneously, the world around the flock is an unstable system. Like the weather, it changes all the time; therefore, an inevitable tension exists between the group of humans (the flock) and the world around it. This elicits the need to get away from this individual, intellectual perspective to be able to loosen up and take in the ever-changing circumstances that surround us. Thus, art as a phenomenon deals with the tension between the flock and the real world outside of art. The artwork – be it a concert, theatre performance, painting, or something else – is a proposal for the flock on how to deal with the change, the tension between the stable and, thus, stiff hierarchy of the flock and the ever-changing reality. Art is about adjustment, about accepting change. Art is society’s development department.

Thus, embodiment in art describes the individual’s ability to let go of the self, the ability to become enchanted, borderless and limitless. In this enchanted, ecstatic state, we experience ourselves as being ‘whole’ or ‘united’. This unification also goes with the group, the tribe. We speak of an atavistic dynamic that always has been there and always will be. Art deals very much with this dynamic.

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