Playing In The Creative State

Michael Chekhov and piano performance in dialogue

AURA GO

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DocMus Doctoral School

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Abstract

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Situated within the paradigm of artistic research, this thesis constitutes the final component of a doctoral research project in piano performance. Propelled by questions about how musicians within the domain of Western Classical Music may enliven their engagement with repertoire and develop a practice of creative freedom and imaginative play, this work investigates the application of the psychophysical acting technique of Michael Chekhov (1891–1955) to pianistic practice and to music performance more broadly. It utilises embodied research methods and reflective analysis to examine the ways in which a Chekhovian approach may awaken the musician's embodied experience of movement, develop the imagination, and open the door to a 'creative state' for music-making characterised by freedom, play, and connection to the present moment. Utilising Rautavaara's Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon* as a case study, this work examines the potential of the Chekhov technique to guide and synthesise the creative process of preparing repertoire for performance. Taking a broader view, this work situates Chekhov within understandings emerging from music performance and creativity studies and reconceptualises music performance to reflect the integral role of the imaginatively embodied musician.

My research makes a significant original contribution to knowledge in three ways. Firstly, it is the first interdisciplinary study of Michael Chekhov technique undertaken from the perspective of instrumental music performance. While interdisciplinary research into Chekhov is growing (with recent work discussing its application to dance, design, therapeutic and community contexts, to name a few), intersections with instrumental music performance have not been explored. Secondly, it offers to performing musicians a new methodology for embodied practice. Embodied perspectives are gaining traction within the scholarly literature in music performance studies, with this domain primarily concerned with the ways in which embodied knowledge may make valuable contributions to music (performance) analysis. My research utilises and develops embodied knowledge not for analytical purposes, but for the purpose of enriching and deepening embodied practice itself. Thirdly, it develops a new conceptual model

for music performance. Building upon the work of scholars including Nicholas Cook, John Rink and Lawrence Kramer, I develop a conceptual model for music performance that highlights its essentially collaborative nature. This new model, Embodied Imaginative Collaboration, describes the synergistic web of elements that constitute music performance and the imaginatively embodied musician's role within it. It positions the Chekhov technique as both a conceptual frame (highlighting the synergies between Chekhov and current views in embodied creativity studies) and as a practical methodology for musical embodiment in and through performance.

Keywords: piano performance, Michael Chekhov, imagination, creativity, embodiment, embodied research, artistic research, Rautavaara

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I was privileged to meet and play for Einojuhani Rautavaara several times before his passing in 2016. My heartfelt thanks to him and Sini Rautavaara for their beautiful hospitality and for so generously participating in recorded discussions for this work.

Discussions with dear and trusted friends have been integral to the development of my ideas. I recall with fondness and gratitude the many inspiring conversations with Tomoe Kawabata, Maria Männikkö, Joel Papinoja and Erica Back. Lastly, I extend gratitude to my partner Ian Munro for his unwavering belief, wisdom and support.

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www.aurago.net/playing-in-the-creative-state

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1 Beginnings

The performing musician's work involves a complex creative process of receiving, interpreting, sorting and synthesising a vast range of information, influences and impulses. Due to the temporal and ephemeral nature of performance, performing musicians work in the rich and often intangible spaces between elements that are fixed and elements that are free. For the musician working with notated music, an example of a fixed element might be the notes themselves. But the nuances of each note, as well as all that happens *between* the notes, present infinite possibilities to the performer. In this way, the musician's practice bears resemblance to that of the actor, who routinely inhabits 'in between' spaces and navigates the terrain between the fixed and the free. That an actor must find life in the spaces between the written word and the spoken word, between the idea of an action and the action itself, is clear: after all, the actor's job, put simply, is to embody — literally to *give body* to — the characters they play. The starting point for this dissertation is my contention that the performing musician's job is essentially the same. The musician brings music (whether fully notated, freely improvised, or anywhere along that continuum) into being in each moment of its unfolding, thus *embodying* it. When considered in this way, we may begin to observe the many unexplored in-between spaces we inhabit as musicians, as well as the need for reliable technical means and a practical methodology to support us in the creative process of musical embodiment. These technical means are not confined to the relationship between performer and instrument, or between performer and score, but extend to the relationship between performer and space, performer and audience, body and air, outer and inner impulses, atmosphere and individual feelings, the receipt and delivery of ideas, and more.

The psychophysical acting technique developed by Michael Chekhov (1891–1955) offers a practical and holistic approach to the development of awareness, freedom — indeed artistry — in these rich and fascinating 'in-between' spaces. This dissertation is about how the Chekhov work may guide and be effectively integrated into the musician's practice.

My path to the Chekhov work has not been a straightforward one. By way of introduction, and to elucidate the personal performance history that propelled this project to its present form, I begin by detailing the evolution of my research. This is followed by an outline of the research inquiry; a brief introduction to Michael Chekhov; key conceptual, theoretical, and disciplinary frames; research aims; methodology; and an outline of chapters.

1.1 Setting the scene

It was at the 2015 Summer Academy of Artistic Research in Stockholm that I first scrawled the name 'Michael Chekhov' into my notebook. By that stage, my doctoral project had already undergone significant change, and I remember the feeling of uncertainty and unease that I brought to that summer school.

At the beginning of my doctoral adventure, I had set out to undertake artistic research into the performance of the piano music by one of Finland's preeminent composers, Einojuhani Rautavaara. The melancholic and mystical sound worlds of his symphonic and choral music had transported me as a child, and I had quickly become acquainted with the piano music, performing Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon* and the first and second piano concertos in Australia in the early 2000s. Since my first encounters with Rautavaara's piano music, I had been struck by the gap between information contained in the scores and the ways in which this information had been rendered through recordings. These early observations were instructive. Grappling with the contradictory influences of scores and recordings — as well as developing my own musical intuitions as I practised the music — I was learning firsthand about the many layers of information and influence that must be navigated and synthesised each time we set out to perform a piece of music.

I moved to Finland in 2012 and was fortunate to meet Rautavaara three times before his death in 2016. I played most of his solo piano music for him, and I recorded our discussions about the works. Rautavaara emphasised the importance of some key performance indications contained in his scores, expressing frustration that these were often misinterpreted or ignored by performers. Reflecting on my early experiences untangling the layers of information and influence when practising Rautavaara's music, I realised that I was being presented with a fascinating case study. Here was a clear and contemporary example of a performance tradition emerging during the composer's lifetime. It shone a light on the ways in which the various elements that contribute to music making do not always converge. And it offered food for thought about the relative importance bestowed upon each aspect of a performance and what makes a great one.

This larger question — what makes a great performance? — persisted, and gradually brought about a shift of focus in my research. It is an impossibly big question, of course, and one that has occupied everyone touched by music in one way or another. For performers, and teachers of performance, contending with this question is a daily occupation. Composers are invested in the sounding reality of their creations, which happens, by and large, through performance. Music scholars

and theorists have historically been engaged in the ways in which knowledge embedded in or extracted from music notation and analysis may illuminate its sounding forms — in recent decades this knowledge transfer has increasingly gone both ways. And let us not forget listeners and lovers of music (to whose group we all belong), who experience a moving performance and wonder where the magic came from.

Reflecting on my experiences of performing, teaching, and listening to music over the years, it struck me that the making of a great performance lies beyond instrumental skill, musical understanding, or a combination of the two. The following, transcribed from a masterclass with the pianist and pedagogue György Sebők (see Video 1.1), illustrates this point and helps to set the scene for this research. These precious moments of teaching and learning take place in Ernen, Switzerland in 1996, and are captured in the documentary *György Sebők: Une leçon du musique* (2009).[1]

> A student is playing the opening section of Chopin's Scherzo No. 1. The student's mechanical efforts are clear, and this aspect seems to dominate the performance.
>
> GS: I have the feeling that you want to play 'OK'. And I have the feeling that somewhere there is something else that doesn't come out, which is beyond 'OK'. Now, here are the facts written [indicates the score on the music desk] and you want to do them right, instead of saying what it means to you.
>
> The film then skips to work on the lyrical B section, where the phrases gently lilt and undulate.
>
> GS: There is some kind of musical wave going on… [gestures with his hand horizontally moving waves in front of his chest.] Don't play the music like a straight line. If I want to feel that I go from here to here, [demonstrates bars 309–312. The warmth of tone, swell in dynamic and subtle flexibility of timing all in harmony and completely natural, as if being discovered on the spot. Sebők's physical movement is simple, understated, natural.] I can have those sensations without doing… [plays the same phrase but this time with an obvious physical gesture, bowing his

[1] I am grateful to the filmmaker Etienne Blanchon for generously agreeing to make this excerpt from the documentary available to my readers on Vimeo. This video, along with all video examples created for this thesis, is accessible at www.aurago.net/playing-in-the-creative-state

> head demonstratively as the music swells.] But I don't inhibit that… [demonstrates an inhibited version, without expressive nuance.]
>
> Now I was hiding what I feel. And then my teacher says "crescendo, decrescendo!", and I can play it crescendo-decrescendo without feeling anything! [Demonstrates the same phrase with a controlled crescendo-decrescendo but completely without life. It seems detached, academic, a delivery of an instruction. Laughter from audience and student.]
>
> So, what was that? [laughter] Cold, non-sense. All the notes were right. Legally, nobody can accuse me of doing anything wrong! Because listen, I played all the notes, I played crescendo, I stayed in tempo, and everything was the way it should be!
>
> (Blanchon, 2009, at 38:51)

The documentary cuts to another scene here, so we do not hear the completion of Sebők's thought. But his demonstration is clear: accuracy — in any sense of the word — is not the essential ingredient in a natural, moving performance. This truth was immediately understood by everyone in that room in Ernen, who heard Sebők's two versions of the same music played with identical notes and near-identical dynamic shaping, but with an expressive effect as different as night from day. Perhaps there is a clue in the very language we use to describe these special performances: they 'move' us. To what are we referring when we say this? Surely to the intimately bound nature of life and movement. Moving performances are imbued with life.

Back to 2015 and the notebook. Hearing about my interest in exploring the connections between acting and music, then-professor at the Theatre Academy at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Esa Kirkkopelto, suggested that I familiarise myself with the work of Michael Chekhov. At that time, my research was beginning to centre around Konstantin Stanislavski, whose books I had read as a student. I had some prior awareness of the resonances between the revolutionary theatre director's work and that of great Russian piano pedagogues including Heinrich Neuhaus and Theodore Leschetitzky, and was interested in exploring what musicians might learn from them. In his classic book *The Art of Piano Playing* (1973), Neuhaus encourages pianists to read the books of Stanislavski to develop understandings of the interdependence of musical elements and the process of achieving a unified performance (p. 53). It was a year later when, again dissatisfied with my project, I flipped through this old notebook and decided to finally follow Esa's advice.

Upon searching for information about Michael Chekhov, I encountered a series of videos in which London-based Chekhov practitioner and pedagogue Graham Dixon demonstrates key principles of the technique.[2] This is what I had been looking for all along! I devoured Chekhov's book *To the Actor* (2002) the next day and began practising the exercises on my own. Not having the slightest acting experience but led by a strong urge to learn more and see where it would lead, I signed up to the next workshop at Dixon's Michael Chekhov Studio London. A fortnight later I was in London, participating in a Chekhov workshop as the only non-actor in the room. As we explored the key principles of the technique through psychophysical exercises, I felt overwhelming sensations of aliveness, connection and freedom. The exercises were potent in their simplicity. This approach — with its emphasis on impulse and the imagination — resonated immediately with my pianistic practice, and I began to make connections between my experiences in the acting studio and my experiences in the practice room and on stage. I participated in three of Dixon's workshops in London between 2016–17, taking notes after each session. Returning home to Helsinki after each workshop, I experimented with the techniques at the piano. I was struck quite early on in the process by the realisation that my obstacles in piano playing were not just about piano playing. Finally, I felt I had stumbled upon an approach that might help me break some long-engrained habits.

Ever since childhood, I experienced a strong emotional connection with music. One of the first pieces I played was Béla Bartók's *Evening in Transylvania*. I happened to own an old copy of the sheet music to the collection of Bartók's *Ten Easy Pieces* and a recording of the composer himself playing the piece, which I had recorded onto a cassette from the radio. I was mesmerised by the atmosphere of the piece and by the atmosphere that Bartók created through his playing of it. I listened to this recording again and again, trying to emulate that atmosphere and that elusive expressive flexibility I found so compelling in Bartók's playing. As my emotional connection to music developed in those early years, so did a great deal of physical tension. Over time, these became inseparable. While I was often praised for the emotional maturity of my playing, the emotional aspect always translated to physical effort at the piano. Teachers tried to rid me of this tension, but, clinging to the enjoyment I derived from experiencing strong emotional involvement in the music I played, I avoided a complete dissection and recalibration of my approach. Reaching adulthood, I was dissatisfied by the limited scope of my playing. Listening back to recordings of my performances, I was dismayed at how little my imaginative and emotional intentions actually carried through into the playing. These feelings stuck around for years. Although I

[2] The first of Graham Dixon's educational videos on the Chekhov technique is accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPOk7rd8HFU

did undertake several technical overhauls in my twenties, a more fundamental shift was needed.

Two realisations, within a few months of each other and on opposite sides of the world, clarified my research path. Shortly before discovering the Michael Chekhov work and finding myself in London, I was rehearsing Messiaen's *Visions de l'amen* in Melbourne with my piano duo partner Tomoe Kawabata. It is a substantial work for two pianos, challenging not only in scope and musical complexity. Messiaen reaches far beyond the realm of human expression in this work — there is a cosmic quality to this music. During rehearsals, I realised with renewed frustration that my strong emotional connection to music was limited — and *limiting*. Now that I was called upon by the music to render expression and atmosphere of a non-personal, universal kind through sound, I was stuck. 'I' kept getting in the way, conveying my personal response to the music, rather than allowing the music to flow through me. More importantly, I did not know how to approach this music in any other way. That was the first realisation.

The second realisation occurred during my first Chekhov workshop in London, when it was my turn to stand in front of the group and deliver a monologue. I had brought an extract from Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*, which I had been toying with for a musical project. In that workshop, participants had been learning to awaken our psychophysical connection and to achieve an open and easeful 'home base' most conducive to artistic work. We had also been practising the principles of 'receiving and radiating' through deceptively simple ball exercises. I felt freedom and openness in the exercises and thought that I would be able to maintain this free flow of impulses when it came to delivering my monologue. But no sooner had I stood up and begun to imagine the opening words ('On November 13th, 1895, I was brought down here from London') than the very same obstacles arose. By imagining the suffering that gave rise to Wilde's words, the colour and feel of them, and how they might be inflected, a sensation of physical and emotional tightness came over me, just like it always did at the piano. What I had always thought to be a process of delving into the inner life of a musical character or atmosphere was, in fact, counterproductive. I was not free, far from it. I was limiting the music — and now the script! — to the confines of my personal bubble of experience and effort.

The relevance of the Chekhov work to my musical practice came into focus in that moment. I was excited to learn more and to explore how these approaches might be applied to the piano. From that point, my research found its trajectory.

1.2 Research questions

This research investigates the ways in which key concepts, principles and processes that constitute Michael Chekhov's psychophysical technique of acting may be placed in dialogue with and applied to piano performance. The first and overarching research question is:

> 1. How may the Chekhov technique of acting be applied to piano performance?

The preparation of repertoire, with a focus on the ways in which a Chekhovian approach may be synthesised with the musician's existing creative process, is investigated through a second research question:

> 2. How may the Chekhov work guide, or be integrated into, the musician's creative process in the preparation of repertoire?

Finally, the musician's Chekhov-inspired creative process is contextualised within creativity and music performance studies and further explored through a third research question:

> 3. How may the performing musician's creative process be conceptualised to reflect the role of the embodied imagination?

1.3 Who was Michael Chekhov?

Michael Chekhov (1891–1955) was a Russian actor, director, and teacher of acting.[3] His father was the brother of playwright Anton Chekhov. Michael Chekhov trained and worked as an actor with Konstantin Stanislavsky, Leopold Sulerzhitsky and Evgeny Vakhtangov at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) and made his professional debut at the MAT's First Studio in 1913. His theatrical performances were considered by mentors, peers and critics to be electrifying in their "seamless and startling mix of deeply emoted realism within a portrayal of grotesque fantasy" (Mel Gordon in introduction to Chekhov, 1991, p. ix). With his startlingly original performances, Chekhov seemed to be redefining theatre acting.

Following the death of Vakhtangov in 1923, Chekhov took on the directorship of the First Studio (subsequently named Moscow Art Theatre II), where he began to explore experimental approaches with the actors. His interest in the work of

[3] For a detailed account of Michael Chekhov's biography, see Autant-Mathieu & Meerzon (2015).

Rudolf Steiner and his experimentation with Eurythmy led to controversy surrounding his methods. Rejected as an 'idealist', a 'mystic' and described as a "sick artist" in the major Moscow newspapers, Chekhov emigrated in 1928. He lived and worked as an actor in theatre and film, as a director and as a teacher of acting in Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Paris, Latvia, Lithuania and England, where, between 1935–39, he established the Chekhov Theatre Studio at Dartington Hall in Devon at the invitation of Beatrice Straight and Deidre Hurst du Prey. These women were instrumental in the development and dissemination of Chekhov's acting technique (Mitchell, 2020a). In 1939, Chekhov relocated his studio to the USA and settled in Ridgefield, Connecticut. In 1943 he moved to Hollywood with the assistance of his friend Sergei Rachmaninoff, remaining there until his death.

Chekhov acted in a small number of films in Hollywood, including the part of the Freudian psychoanalyst in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* in 1945, for which he received an Academy Award nomination. He began to teach professional actors in Hollywood on a part-time basis, and through his teaching influenced a generation of actors, directors and teachers in the United States. His students included Marilyn Monroe, Anthony Quinn, Clint Eastwood, Elia Kazan, Mala Powers, Yul Brynner and others.

Through a lifetime of experimentation and refinement, Chekhov developed his artistic ideas and methods into a holistic system of actor training. His work absorbed elements from a diverse range of influences, including Russian theatre systems (from Stanislavsky to Serge Wolkonsky), director Max Reinhardt; singer, orator and teacher François Delsarte, music educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, the movement work of Rudolf Laban, and traditional Indian dance (Autant-Mathieu & Meerzon, 2015, pp. 2–3). Chekhov's methodology functions as an organic whole, underpinned by several fundamental principles and comprising a web of interrelated elements. He described his technique as 'psychophysical', in that it adopted an integrated concept of body and mind. Through his technique, he sought to help the actor to attain a seamless connection between physical and inner impulses, resulting in a body that behaves like a "sensitive membrane, a kind of receiver and conveyor of the subtlest images, feelings, emotions and will impulses" (Chekhov, 2002, p. 2).[4] He placed the actor's embodied imagination at the centre of the technique, rejecting the use of the emotional (or affective) memory. Instead of consciously drawing on the actor's personal experiences or emotions, Chekhov devised exercises to develop the actor's imagination and cultivate a sensitivity to the inner life of movement. Chekhov cautioned against actors becoming wedded to only one technique, claiming that actors "have the

[4] By 'will impulses', Chekhov is referring to impulses that originate in the actor's will — in other words, the actor's intention for action.

freedom to make the most of the best in all techniques" (quoted in Fleming & Cornford, 2020, p. 5).

1.4 Conceptual, theoretical and disciplinary underpinnings

Earlier, I drew a parallel between the actor and the musician, claiming that both are primarily concerned with the pursuit and practice of embodiment. This claim raises ontological and epistemological questions about *what* it is that the musician is embodying, what it *means* to embody it, and *how* this process of musical embodiment might be carried out. Guided by these questions, I now establish the conceptual, theoretical, and disciplinary underpinnings of this project. While a comprehensive literature review is beyond the scope of this work, key literature is highlighted below. More in-depth engagement with the literature occurs at pertinent junctures in the main body of the text, acting as gathering points for contextualisation and reflection. Creativity research is utilised in Chapter 4 to further contextualise the findings of the earlier chapters and is introduced at that point in the text.

I shall begin with what the performer plays — or the concept of the musical work.

1.4.1 What the performer plays

The performative turn that has marked the humanities and social sciences in the latter half of the 20th century has had profound impacts on musicology, precipitating the emergence of a new field within musicology, music performance studies. Over the past few decades, music performance studies has challenged what Nicholas Cook terms the 'paradigm of reproduction' (and with it, a predominant 'music as text' view), in which the musical score is viewed as the conveyor of objective knowledge and meaning, and performance is relegated to a subsidiary role (Cook, 2013). Music performance studies sought to understand music not as text but as performance, as creative practice, as process, and as collaboration (Cook, 2013, 2018; Kramer, 2016; Rink, 2020). Lydia Goehr's influential *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (1992) contributed to this paradigmatic shift by troubling the conception of the musical work as an objective and permanent artefact that is fixed to the details contained in musical scores. Goehr proposed a shift from thinking about the musical work as an object of any kind, to thinking in terms of an open, emergent, and regulative 'work-concept'. For the performing musician, the open work-concept positions musical meaning-making in the 'in between' spaces to which I alluded earlier — somewhere between the processes that take place between composers, performers, listeners, their cultural environments, and the artefacts (which may be scores, performances, recordings, etc.) which result from them. This open conception of musical works

underpins my research. It dovetails with the work of scholars Nicholas Cook, John Rink, and Lawrence Kramer (among others), who practice a musicology that places the sounding reality of music at the centre of research about music, rather than on the sidelines. A rapidly growing field, music performance studies has contributed new understandings about the validity, value, and variety of knowledge that can emerge from conceptions of music that place performance at its centre.

A main thrust of recent scholarship from music performance studies is that the processes of music making are inextricable from their social context, rendering musical acts — of creation as well as of performance, and even in their solitary forms — intrinsically social (Cook, 2018). This position aligns with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Keith Sawyer's work on creative insight, which observes that even in solitary creative work, individuals often have deep awareness of the social and collaborative influences on their creativity at each stage of their creative process. They note that while "the moment of creative insight usually occurs in isolation, it is surrounded and contextualized within an ongoing experience that is fundamentally social, and the insight would be meaningless out of that context" (Csikszentmihalyi & Sawyer, 2014, p. 77). Cook and others take this notion further, pointing to the ways in which musical works, instruments, and imaginary characters can seem to take on identities and wills of their own and begin to 'talk back' to artists (Cook, 2018). Kramer presents a similarly interactive view of music making, contending that music performance is essentially a 'collaborative effort' between composers, performers, and listeners (2016). He extends this notion of collaboration to encompass the ways in which performers 'collaborate' with scores and instruments, a point that shall become central to my research. Kramer demonstrates this by way of Schubert's Moment musical No. 2, an example, he argues, of a score that not only allows but invites — indeed calls for — collaboration from both performer and listener. Cook and Kramer highlight, in different ways, the tangible senses in which interaction can take place between artists, instruments, scores, listeners and spaces. This collaborative view of music performance underlies the embodied methods I explore in this work and contributes to the model of 'embodied imaginative collaboration' that I propose in Chapter 4.

1.4.2 The role of the performer

If even solitary forms of music making are intrinsically collaborative, what are the implications for the performer? The performer's role has been described in many ways. In the 'paradigm of reproduction' mentioned above, performers fulfil a supplementary function and *reproduce* the work (Cook, 2013). Then, granted additional agency but still conforming to 'music as text' thinking, there is the

performer who *interprets* the work.[5] For Rink, who has written extensively from his perspective as performer-scholar, the performer '*projects*', '*realises*', '*gives shape to*' or '*brings to life*' the music (1990, 2015, 2020). Reflecting on a particularly rewarding performance experience, Rink describes a kind of merging of identity between himself and the music, as though he had '*become'* the music (2017, p. 347).[6] For Edward T. Cone, the performer on the one hand '*lives through the music'* and on the other '*projects'* a kind of culminating synthesis of the music (1977). In music conservatories around the world, students are taught to *convey*, *communicate*, *portray, express, deliver* and *present* the music — the list goes on.

Interrogating the words used to describe the performer's role or function may seem a rather superficial exercise, but given the drastic paradigm shifts described earlier, words do matter. For performers, the purposes and functions we attribute to their role have real implications for performative aims and methodologies, for music performance pedagogy, and for research. Laurence Dreyfus raises several of these implications in *Beyond the Interpretation of Music* (2020). Noting that while the "historian needs evidence to back up historical assertions, everyone agrees that performances never succeed on the basis of historical evidence" (p. 270), we return to a version of the question with which we started: on what basis *do* they succeed? This question, and its subsequent methodological one — the *how* of performance — are my points of focus in this work. At the end of his account of what he deems the oppressive hold inflicted on performers by the metaphor of interpretation, Dreyfus offers a liberating conclusion. After all is said and done, he reminds us, "we play music". Embracing more imaginative approaches to music making, Dreyfus encourages us to "revel in the wealth of experiential possibilities open to us as lovers and players of music" (p. 272).

In the spirit of Dreyfus' call to reinstate *play* as central to the performing musician's work, the verbs I choose to ascribe to performers' roles in this research are 'play' and 'embody'.

1.4.3 Performer as 'embodier' of music

Embodiment — the experience of "having, being in, or being associated with a body" (Smith, 2017, p. 1) — has a complex philosophical and scientific history. At its centre lie questions about the properties of and relationships between the body, the mind, and the environment. Dualist approaches to the mind-body problem have

[5] The subject of musical interpretation has been dealt with widely and is not a focus of this work. See for example Kramer (2011) and Rink (1995).
[6] This merging of consciousness during optimal performance is a characteristic of the psychological state of flow. See Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996).

been prevalent for several centuries. In the 17th century, René Descartes developed what became known as Cartesian dualism, in which the body-mind is divided into two distinct substances: matter (which extends in space) and mind (that thinks). The philosophical branch of phenomenology that developed in the early 20th century takes a different approach to knowledge, placing the condition of embodiment front and centre in our understanding of reality. More recently, extended mind theory and embodied cognitive science have proposed ecological conceptions of cognition that uproot the mind-body divide (Clark, 2008; Clark & Chalmers, 1998). An outline of the philosophical and scientific history of embodiment and its implications for creative and musical practice is beyond the scope of this dissertation.[7] It is, however, important to lay out the way in which the term embodiment is understood and utilised in the pages to follow.

Ben Spatz's *What a body can do* (2015) provides the grounding for my use of the term embodiment in this research. Noting the lack of depth and precision that often accompanies discussion about the knowledge contained in (or developed through) embodied practice, Spatz develops an epistemological framework for analysing embodied practice. Pointing out that current scientific understanding rejects the idea that the body can be separated from the mind, Spatz explains his usage of embodiment as based on the assumption that "mind and body are holistically intertwined — or rather, following current trends in cognitive studies, that mind is an emergent property of body, just as body is the material basis for mind" (p. 11). I adopt Spatz's usage of the term 'embodied' to include not just bodily actions such as movement or gesture, but "everything that bodies can do. In addition to the physical, this space of possibility includes much that we might categorize as mental, emotional, spiritual, vocal, somatic, interpersonal, expressive, and more" (p. 11). In taking this approach, I intend to draw a clear distinction between that which is bodily (i.e., purely physical, such as Sebők's demonstration of 'empty non-sense' in the Chopin scherzo) and that which is embodied (i.e., wider territory that includes the emotional, imaginative, expressive elements of playing). In describing the Chekhov work in the following chapters, I use the terms 'embodied' and 'psychophysical' interchangeably.

At a glance, this understanding of embodiment may seem simple enough, but complexity emerges when we apply it to music performance. If we take, for example, the simple act of playing a note on the piano, we may consider it in the two ways described above. A 'bodily' view would consider the way the body is arranged in its seated position in relation to the instrument, the way the hand is positioned, the physical movements involved in the preparation of the arm, hand and finger, and the bodily action of depressing, holding down and releasing the

[7] See Smith (2017).

key. An 'embodied' view would include the pianist's experience of the activity, including sensory and imaginative aspects. It would include the experience of imagining the sound before playing, the experience of listening to it, of inner movement in preparation to play, of vibrations passing through the finger and hand, and of the movement of pianist's attention during the activity. This simple activity of playing one note on the piano becomes complex and fascinating when considered in terms of embodiment.

But if we now imagine not only playing a single note but a musical phrase — let us take the phrase from Sebők's Chopin example once more — the concept of embodiment becomes even more complex. The phrase has its own affordances, or possibilities for action.[8] In other words, it opens itself to certain possibilities of dynamic shaping and timing, within a framework created by its harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and textural characteristics. On its own (musical) terms, the phrase is its own 'agent', simultaneously operating and coming into being with and through us. If, in playing this phrase, we embody it, there is a merging of experience as these two agents — the musical phrase and the pianist — intertwine. To give body (by which I mean to give an *embodied* body) to the phrase might be described as a process of allowing the phrase to open to its potential *through* our experience of embodiment.

The idea of the performer as a kind of 'embodier' of music is not new, nor is it limited to the effusive music criticism of the mid-19th to early 20th centuries.[9] In *Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story or a Brahms Intermezzo* (1977), Edward T. Cone draws a thought-provoking analogy between a reader's experience of a Sherlock Holmes story and a listener's experience of the Brahms Intermezzo Op. 118 No. 1. Cone is interested in the development of the reader's/listener's understanding, enjoyment, and emotional experience over the course of three distinct 'readings' (the number serves a conceptual purpose; the actual number of readings may be more than three). Moving from a first encounter with the story/music (the First Reading) in which its temporal unfolding — the 'what happens next?' — motivates the reader, the reader/listener then has a reflective and analytical phase (the Second Reading), in which connections and features within the story/music are considered in a non-linear way. The final and ideal stage is the Third Reading, in which the reader/listener can once more enjoy the temporal unfolding of the narrative/music but now all the more, due to the enrichment of understanding provided by the analytical Second Reading. Cone makes an apt connection, not only between Third Readings and performances, but

[8] James J. Gibson's theory of affordances is discussed in Chapter 4.

[9] For example, Hans von Bülow's ecstatic review of Joachim's performance of Bach and Beethoven, in which he declared that "it was not Joachim who yesterday played Beethoven and Bach, Beethoven himself played!" (Quoted in Dreyfus, 2020).

between Third Readings and good acting, stating that "a good actor is an ideal Third Reader who really experiences the succession of emotions he is supposed to be feigning" (p. 563). Cone goes further, emphasising the importance of 'identification', the kind of full participation that is only possible at the stage of the Third Reading.[10] Moreover, he contends that this Third Stage is a requirement of performers, who "must experience music by living through it" (p. 564).

In his review of Cone, Fred Everett Maus (1997) draws attention to some of the problems in Cone's narrative-music analogy. One of these is Cone's unsubstantiated likening of the ordering of events within a narrative to the ordering of 'events' (in this case, the revealment of harmonic functions) in music. While this criticism is only tangentially relevant to the present study, Maus' suggestion that a more apt analogy may be drawn between drama and music is of real interest here. Maus argues that by choosing narrative to draw his analogy, Cone sets himself up with the problem that along with narrative comes "a sense of narration, at one time, of events that have taken place at another time – that is a distinction between story and discourse" (Maus, 1997, p. 301). What Maus is getting at here points to some of the distinctions between performer 'roles' discussed above. Cone appears sensitive to a connection between drama and music, actor and musician; but he seems unsure as to how far this connection might extend. This confusion is demonstrated through contradictory claims about what performers do — or should do. 'Living through' and 'projecting' are two quite different activities, which Cone leaves unresolved. Finally, and even more interestingly, he raises a central problem faced by performers in achieving this ideal Third Reading. Given that so much needs to be known and internalised in order to render the music fresh and spontaneous in performance, how much should the performer 'know' and how much should she 'forget' in the act of performance? Returning to Sherlock Holmes, Cone poses the question this way:

> Is [the pianist's] dramatic role that of a Dr. Watson, who is surprised by every new turn of events, or of a Dr. Roylott, who engineers them? Is he sharing his astonishment with his auditors or is he trying to spring a trap on them? Or is he perhaps playing a subtler part – that of a Sherlock Holmes, who deduces the course that events must take and is hence prepared for whatever happens?
>
> (Cone, 1977, p. 575)

[10] Cone explains 'identification' in *The Composer's Voice* (1974) as the "active participation in the life of the music by following its progress, attentively and imaginatively, through the course of one's own thoughts, and by adopting the tempo and direction of one's own psychic energies to the tempo and direction of the music" (p. 118).

Pianist and former Sebők pupil, Susan Tomes, describes this very problem of conveying a 'known' emotion as if spontaneously felt, in *Speaking the Piano* (2018):

> Sebők once accused me of sounding as if I was 'reciting an emotion I had learned by heart' when I played a sad movement of Beethoven. I *had* learned the emotion by heart and didn't see how I could have done otherwise. It was my aim to understand the sad emotion and communicate it to the audience. I had thought about what kind of sadness it was and what kind of tone to use to express it. So I was frustrated when he said it didn't sound as if I was sad now. Actually what he was asking for is one of the hardest things to achieve in performance, and few people achieve it.
>
> (pp. 158–159)

Performers' embodied experiences have been largely absent from musical scholarship until recent developments in the field. Rink's contributions through his advancement of 'performer's analysis' and 'informed intuition' (1990, 2002) have done much to draw attention to the value that embodied knowledge, developed by performers through practice, brings to the study of music, thus expanding methodologies for music analysis. In more recent work, Rink has turned to new possibilities for musical understanding afforded by the embodied reality of playing music, arguing that "how the unfolding music feels to the performer — that is, how it is embodied — is a key element of both the performance experience and the music's ontology' (Rink, 2015, p. 137). Further, "the physical actions of the performer not only inform but shape the analytical awareness that may emerge" (p. 146). While Rink's investigation of Chopin's Prelude in B-minor Op. 28 No. 6 (included in the same chapter) is undertaken partly from an embodied perspective, it is important to note that his primary aim is not to deepen the performer's embodied experience of the music (although this is a possible and even likely unintended result of the research). Rather, he seeks to investigate methodologies for analysis, namely, what kind of analysis is best suited to the study of musical structure if (as he argues it should) structure is reconceptualised as 'shape' that is constructed in real time performances, rather than as 'architecture' inhered in the notation.

Pianist-scholar Mine Doğantan-Dack has argued for an increase in performers' embodied perspectives within the scholarly musical discourse, noting that while "newly acquired ontological primacy of musical performance would place the performer at the foreground of music scholarship, and thereby encourage and support the exploration of the bodily and affective dimensions of music-making", musicology has not followed this through, due to performing musicians' "absence in the majority of research discussions about the performing body" (2011, pp. 246–247). Her scholarly work on embodied pianistic perspectives aims "to

understand the contributions of the lived and living body of the performer, with its pulsating inner life and particular point of view" (p. 248). Like Rink, Doğantan-Dack's research primarily seeks to integrate "embodied pianistic expertise into music analytical thought" (Doğantan-Dack, 2015, p. 196). Sharing this aim, violist Phoebe Green (2020) proposes amendments to Rink's 'performer's analysis' to incorporate more of the performer's embodied experience into the analytical framework. Significantly, Green takes into consideration the performance space and the ways in which new interpretative decisions (and therefore meanings), are created in performance through the interaction between performer, score, and space. The performer's relationship with space is an integral part of the collaborative notion of music performance I propose and is addressed throughout this work.

So far, these embodied perspectives have aimed to contribute to musical analysis, rather than to deepen or extend embodied practices themselves. In this latter category, Päivi Järviö (2006) relates how her initial research on performance practice of vocal music from the Italian Baroque was overtaken by embodied research when she discovered the absence of the performer and the subjective human body in music performance scholarship. She notes the "gap between the way the literature on singing technique handles voice production and the way voice teachers work with the student in the class" (p. 68). Alexandra Pierce's *Deepening Musical Performance through Movement* (2010) sits firmly within this latter camp. Pierce's central question resonates with my own (namely, how may musical performance be enlivened through embodied movement?) as do her methods (an integration of embodied movement into the practice process). Pierce investigates isolated musical elements (such as melody, beat, structural levels, character), drawing on Schenkerian analysis to explore what she terms 'Schenkerian movement' — movement that captures the defining quality of each musical element. Whilst our work overlaps in terms of overarching embodied movement approaches to performance, Pierce's approach of isolating musical elements and adopting Schenkerian-based conceptions of hearing and movement are points of significant difference. For the purpose of clarity and consistency, and to distinguish the holistic Chekhovian approach adopted here from that of Pierce, I do not adopt Pierce's movement terminology in this work.

Being focused on the embodied creative processes undertaken by performers, this research naturally turns to practitioner literature. This literature plays an important role in the dialogue between the Chekhov work and pianistic practice, and various practitioner voices are woven through the chapters. Boris Berman's *Notes from the Pianist's Bench* (2000) is a valuable resource for pianists and teachers, with insights drawn from decades of performance and pedagogical experience. Of particular interest here is Berman's inclusion of a chapter entitled 'The technique

of the soul', which draws on Stanislavskian approaches and presents Berman's suggestions for using the emotional (or affective) memory in developing vivid and reliable characterisation in a rapidly changing passage in one of Debussy's études. More resonant with the work of Michael Chekhov, György Sebők's teaching drew attention to natural principles and phenomena in order to break down the obstacles within performers that hinder freedom and creative expression. Former Sebők pupil Susan Tomes recounts extensively from lessons and classes with Sebők in her books *Beyond the Notes* (2004) and *Speaking the Piano* (2018). The latter is a key resource for this study.

1.4.4 Michael Chekhov

Chekhov's primary work, in which he articulated his acting philosophy and technique with exercises directly addressed to the actor, exists in two versions. The original book-length text, entitled *Michael Chekhov: To the Actor*, was completed in 1942 in the United States but was rejected by publishers. Chekhov translated his original text into Russian, and a privately printed book, *O Tekhnike Aktera*, appeared in 1946, distributed at Chekhov's personal expense to American libraries and Slavic departments. Renewed efforts at publication in English (this time from re-translated chapters from Russian back to English) were unsuccessful, until in 1952 a significantly abridged version was published as *To the Actor* in 1953 (with a second edition published in 2002). *On the Technique of Acting,* published in 1991 and edited by drama scholar Mel Gordon, is closer to the original 1942 text*,* containing all the exercises and narratives that were removed from the 1953 publication. The order of chapters is also different, the 1991 book beginning with chapters on the actor's imagination and the 1953/2002 text opening with a chapter on the actor's body. Both the 1991 and 2002 texts are utilised in this research. Other key sources from Chekhov include his autobiography *The Path of the Actor* (2005), *Lessons for the Professional Actor* (1985) and *On Theatre and the Art of Acting* (2005), an audio recording of Chekhov comprising six hours of lectures.

Two key scholarly works on Chekhov provide important context for this project. *The Routledge Companion to Michael Chekhov* (Autant-Mathieu & Meerzon, 2015) offers a wide-ranging study of Chekhov's life and works from historical, theoretical, philosophical and interdisciplinary perspectives. *Michael Chekhov Technique in the Twenty-First Century: New Pathways* (Fleming & Cornford, 2020) is an important recent contribution to Michael Chekhov studies, which investigates the interdisciplinary potential of Chekhov technique for devising, directing, dance, voice work, dramaturgy and collaborative playwriting and theatre-making. Notably, music is not included.

The Michael Chekhov Association's (MICHA) *Masterclasses in the Michael Chekhov Technique* (2007a) comprise twelve masterclasses and two discussions led by leading Chekhov practitioners Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Lenard Petit, Ragnar Freidank and former Chekhov pupil Joanna Merlin. Each masterclass focusses on one key element of the technique, demonstrating the concepts and exercises through guided collaborative exploration with a group of professional actors (many of them now MICHA faculty members). The exercises are then applied to work with real characters and scenes from Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, illustrating the techniques in real theatrical contexts. These masterclasses provide valuable insights into the technique and are recommended to musicians interested in exploring the content discussed here for themselves.

To date, no research has been undertaken to apply the techniques of Michael Chekhov to music performance in non-text-based or instrumental contexts. Literature that draws connections between Chekhov and music performance more broadly is limited to two practitioner articles that apply aspects of the Chekhov work to the vocal performing arts. Here, the similarities between the roles of the actor and the singing-actor are immediately apparent, as performers in both artforms work with text in either spoken or sung form. Leslie Bennett's *Inspired states: adapting the Michael Chekhov technique for the singing actor* (2013) presents a brief practitioner account of the ways in which a number of core elements of the Chekhov work (including qualities of movement and atmosphere), may be applied to the work of the musical theatre singer. In a similar vein, James Haffner's article *Musical Synthesis of the Michael Chekhov technique: Integrated training for the singer-actor* (2017) applies Chekhovian principles to the work of young opera singers in establishing a holistic and healthy singing apparatus and developing the physical life of characters on stage. Bennett and Haffner focus on the utilisation of Chekhov technique for optimal psychophysical preparation (for example, in addressing performance anxiety, self-consciousness, and to achieve greater ease and comfort in singing) and text-based song work. Musical elements themselves are peripheral in both articles and receive little attention.

The literature reveals an opportunity to undertake original research into the interdisciplinary dialogue between Chekhov and music performance.

1.5 Research aims

As the first interdisciplinary investigation into music performance and Michael Chekhov technique, this project aims to make an original contribution to the domains of music performance, music performance studies and Michael Chekhov studies. To music performance, it seeks to contribute a new methodology for deepening and enlivening musical practice. Through its focus on the techniques

and methods of embodied musical practice, it offers musicians a practical way of approaching an area of practice that can be discomfortingly elusive. To music performance studies, it offers a new practitioner perspective to the growing number of practitioner-scholar contributions that highlight the importance of performers' embodied knowledge in music performance meaning-making. And finally, this research aims to contribute a music performance perspective to Michael Chekhov studies, opening new avenues for interdisciplinary research.

1.6 Methodology

With its focus on experience, sensation, impulse, gesture, and imagination, I characterise this project as 'embodied research' (Spatz, 2017). Situated more broadly within the paradigm of artistic research, this work aligns with the definition offered by Henk Borgdorff in *Conflict of the Faculties* (2012):

> Art practice – both the art object and the creative process – embodies situated, tacit knowledge that can be revealed and articulated by means of experimentation and interpretation. Art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes. Art research begins by addressing questions that are pertinent in the research context and in the art world. Researchers employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes. Research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public.
>
> (p. 53)

Borgdorff's definition of artistic research encapsulates the purpose, methods and modes of this research. First, its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding of embodied creative processes in music performance by conducting an original investigation into the resonances between pianistic practice and the acting methodology of Michael Chekhov. Second, questions pertinent in the research context and in the art world are addressed, ranging from how the pianistic application of the methodology may be approached, to questions surrounding the creation and conceptualisation of a holistic process in the preparation and performance of repertoire. Third, experimental and hermeneutic methods have been employed, which together serve to reveal and articulate the knowledge embedded in and developed through the artistic processes under investigation.

I adopt the terms 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' proposed by Donald Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1992) to differentiate between the

modes of experimentation, reflection and contextualisation involved in this work. The first and second research questions encompass the experimental component of the project and, as such, constituted reflection-in-action. The third research question was addressed through critical reflection, constituting reflection-on-action. This was carried out in the final stage of the research. Within these broad methodological brushstrokes, a more integrated and nuanced interplay between methods occurred, with both reflection-*in* and reflection-*on* action utilised throughout the research.

I shall outline the methods, categorised loosely into reflection-in and reflection-on action, before addressing Borgdorff's fourth point on documentation and dissemination.

1.6.1 Reflection-in-action

Doctoral concert series

The preparation and performance of five doctoral concerts constitute an important component of the experimental aspect in this project. The concert programmes and performance details are included in Appendix A. The performances, individually and as a series, were sites of investigation and knowledge production. In acknowledging the potential afforded by live performances for knowledge production about creative processes, I share Doğantan-Dack's view that "it is the live performance that illuminates the path leading to it rather than the other way round" (2012, p. 37). Therefore, each concert constituted in-action and on-action reflection, in a non-linear process that moved between various activities over the duration of the research period. These activities included:

- Performing the doctoral concerts
- Performing informal practice concerts
- Workshopping repertoire-in-progress with friends, teachers, composers
- Collaborating with composers and other artists
- Practising (encompasses a range of experimental methods)
- Keeping a practice journal
- Participating in Michael Chekhov workshops
- Reflecting on performances and preparation process
- Analysing recordings of my performances and rehearsals
- Analysing recordings of Rautavaara piano works

Other performance activity

The doctoral concerts and their preparation processes were significant components of the project, and were viewed as 'lab experiments', in which I experimented with and reflected on creative processes. However, these concerts were only a small part of my overall performance activity over the lengthy research period. Considering my creative process more broadly as the site of investigation for this research project, I recognise that all the performance activity undertaken during the research period interacted with and influenced this research, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Research into one's own practice must acknowledge that a substantial and unquantifiable range of prior knowledge, skills and experiences are brought to the project from its outset, and necessarily shape it. Rink notes that the performer's 'informed intuition' (or 'acquired intuition') is developed through the host of diverse activities over a musician's lifetime and plays an important role in guiding the performer's practice (1990). I have endeavoured to articulate instances where prior experience has clearly shaped the research direction or approach, such as my personal history with the music of Rautavaara in Chapter 3.

1.6.2 Reflection-on-action

Apart from the reflective methods included above as part of the larger umbrella of experimental methods, a distinct 'reflection-on-action' process was undertaken in addressing the third research question, reproduced here:

> How may the performing musician's creative process be conceptualised to reflect the role of the embodied imagination?

This question was investigated toward the end of the research period and involved:

- Critically reflecting on the evolution of my practice over time
- Contextualising embodied research findings within the current music performance discourse
- Contextualising embodied research findings within current creativity studies discourse
- Critically reflecting on the existing frames through which performers' creative processes are viewed within scholarly and practitioner literature
- Drawing connections between Chekhov's non-linear, synergistic conception of creative action, 4E cognitive models of creativity, and my embodied research findings

1.6.3 Documentation and dissemination

Finally, the research findings have been articulated and disseminated in a way that reflects the embodied nature of the research and the range of experimental and hermeneutic methods used. To allow the reader a better understanding of the non-linear nature of the experimentation central to the research process, the dissertation moves flexibly between reflective narratives of embodied practice, critical reflection, and interdisciplinary contextualisation. The approach can loosely be categorised as autoethnographic. Video examples are included Chapters 2 and 3 to demonstrate the embodied research findings in real musical contexts.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 addresses the first research question on the ways in which the Chekhov technique may be applied to pianistic practice. It introduces key principles and elements of the technique that I have found most resonant with musical practice. It contextualises the Chekhov work within music literature and demonstrates a pianistic application through video examples. Chapter 3 addresses the second research question by applying the Chekhov technique to a real musical context. It explores the ways in which various types of knowledge may be navigated and synthesised by the Chekhov approach in the preparation of the first movement of Rautavaara's Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon.* Chapter 4 takes up the notion of musical creativity as collaboration and adopts a 4E model drawing on embodied cognitive science. It outlines a new conceptualisation of the musician's creative process as 'embodied imaginative collaboration'. Chapter 5 summarises the project and points to opportunities for future research.

2 Michael Chekhov and pianistic practice in dialogue

The non-actor reads the lines while the actor reads between the lines, sees beyond the characters and the events of the play. These magic "beyond" and "between" places make up that kingdom in which the talented actor lives and moves freely.

(Chekhov, 1991, p. 71)

This chapter explores the ways in which the Chekhov acting technique may be applied to piano performance. It discusses several overarching Chekhovian principles before introducing technical components that I have found most beneficial to my pianistic practice. Each component is briefly defined, placed into dialogue with relevant literature, and demonstrated through videos of excerpts from selected repertoire.[11] Throughout this and the following chapters, I use abbreviations for right hand (RH) and left hand (LH).

A note on the video demonstrations

The Chekhov technique is a holistic system comprising many interrelated and interdependent components. For an experienced practitioner, the technique acts as a dynamic synergistic system in that the activation of any one component triggers the activation of the others. To preserve the holistic nature of the technique, and to demonstrate its application to piano performance as authentically as possible, I have not attempted to demonstrate the Chekhovian technical elements in isolation. While this chapter discusses each element in turn, the videos demonstrate application to real musical contexts in which the elements work together simultaneously. For this reason, videos are referenced under multiple subheadings to draw the reader's attention to specific but interrelated elements within the performances. Repertoire excerpts are drawn from solo works performed in my doctoral recital series and were recorded at the time of writing.

Video 2.1 Beethoven: Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1
Video 2.2 Beethoven: Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 2
Video 2.3 Rautavaara: *Närböläisten braa speli* (from *Pelimannit*)
Video 2.4 Rautavaara: *Kopsin Jonas* from (from *Pelimannit*)
Video 2.5 Sibelius: *Kyllikki*
Video 2.6 Ravel: *Oiseaux tristes* (from *Miroirs*)

[11] All videos referenced in this chapter are accessible at www.aurago.net/playing-in-the-creative-state

2.1 Overarching concepts

First, the Chekhov work is *psychophysical*. Chekhov viewed the body and the psychology as interdependent parts of one human organism. Movement (which is central to all aspects of the technique), is never mechanical or gymnastic, but always practised with the full participation of the actor's inner life to develop "extreme sensitivity of body to the psychological creative impulses" (Chekhov, 2002, p. 2).

Second, the *imagination* leads the creative process. The guiding role of the actor's imagination and the rejection of the affective memory (the use of emotional memory from the actor's personal experience) in the actor's work process are defining features of Chekhov's work, setting it apart from the Stanislavsky 'system' (Kirillov, 2015). Unlike Stanislavsky, who placed the actor at the centre of the character (asking 'what would *I* do if were this character, in these given circumstances?'), Chekhov sought to create distance between the actor and the character, allowing the character to develop in the actor's imagination, which in turn leads the actor's behaviour.[12]

Because musicians in the domain of Western Classical Music (WCM) inherit complex and morally charged debates about the role and creative agency of performers, it is important to clarify Chekhov's views on the actor's creativity. Within the current music performance discourse, the idea of avoiding the affective memory and creating distance between musician and music may easily be interpreted as an attempt to limit the musician's creative freedom. But this could not be further from Chekhov's aims. Chekhov viewed the imaginatively embodied actor as the very essence of the theatre. Developing a character imaginatively, rather than drawing on personal experience, was for Chekhov a way for actors to liberate themselves from their usual tendencies, habits, and the limitations of personal experience. Chekhov saw 'experiencing' (as opposed to imagining) as enslaving the actor in her own personality, which "simply excretes its own passions in the form of temperament" (in Kirillov, 2015, p. 49). The imagination expands the actor's artistic vista and helps to realise what Chekhov believed to be the actor's true role in the theatre: that of an empowered creative artist. Chekhov believed that the "image has the ability to experience in a *special way* […]. When an actor begins to act, the image experiences through the actor: he simply becomes a captive of the image, giving himself up to it" (in Kirillov, 2015, p. 49).

[12] Kirillov (2015) offers an in-depth discussion of Chekhov's involvement in and subsequent breaking away from Stanislavsky's system, and the development of his imagination-led approach.

György Sebők's teaching shared these views:

> If you insist on presenting your own "understanding", you may communicate less than the music has. It is like building a skyscraper and putting the roof on the skyscraper too soon. This is the danger of finding consonances with one's own inner world and presenting the results as "one's own" version of the piece. Maybe you have to be willing to live in a house without a roof.
>
> (in Tomes, 2018, p. 142)

Thirdly, the Chekhov work is *relational*. All elements of the technique invite a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness to interactions of all kinds. Importantly, this is not limited to interactions that occur between people, objects, or within the actor's psychophysiology (or embodiment). There is a deliberate awareness in the Chekhov work that the actor moves in *space*, constantly interacting with the air. Chekhov's attentiveness to the air resonates with Timothy Ingold's writing on the tendency to ignore the air in our conceptualisation of the material world:

> In such fields as anthropology, archaeology and material culture studies, for example, it has long been conventional to think of the 'material world' as comprising the two broad components of landscape and artefacts. Much attention has been paid to the ways in which people engage with the things of this world, to the apparent capacity of things to act back, and to the so-called 'hybrid agencies' that are formed when persons and things combine in the production of effects. In all of this, however, no-one has given a thought to the air. The reason for this omission, I believe, is simply that within the terms of accepted discourse, air is *unthinkable*.
>
> (Ingold, 2015, p. 70)

Ingold suggests that, as "we can no longer suppose that all such relations take the form of interactions between persons and things", a new conceptualisation of the material world that includes the air — "the very condition of interaction" — is needed (p. 70). Cornford (2020) discusses the synergies between Chekhov and Ingold in relation to the Chekhov work on atmospheres, pointing to Chekhov's exploration of gesture as a way of capturing the dynamic inner movement of trees (p. 84). These synergies highlight the universality of Chekhov's approach. He was always receptive to creative impulses in his interactions with people, the space, the air, natural forms, and even inanimate objects.

Finally, Chekhov believed that all art comprises four essential pillars that he called the 'Four Brothers'. These are the feelings of *ease, form, beauty,* and *the whole.* The feeling of ease is a way of moving and being that is free from undue muscular tension or effort. Even when playing characters who hold great tension in their bodies or need to exert enormous physical effort in their on-stage business, the

manner in which the actor experiences this effort can (and should) be easeful. This concept is directly applicable to music performance and has been an important part of music pedagogy (see for example Bruser, 1997; Mark, 2003). Sebők believed that developing a feeling of ease brings musicians closer to embodying the music. In opposition to the feeling of ease is the feeling of effort or 'work', which Sebők discussed in his teaching:

> Playing the viola is work in your mind, and work is always against something. Yeats's line, "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" is an answer to almost all questions. If you cannot tell the dancer from the dance, then there is no work. There are of course measurable energies being spent, but they are not work.
>
> (in Tomes, 2018, p. 142)

The feeling of form as one of the Four Brothers is distinct from the way the term 'form' is used in musical contexts to describe compositional structure. Chekhov's sensitivity to form springs from an embodied understanding of forms contained in the human body and in the material world. Dealing with form is central to the pianist's work in some immediately apparent ways: the piano itself is a solid and strong form, and the hands are always expressive in their ever-changing forms in relationship with it. Doğantan-Dack (2015) utilises these two forms as investigative tools in an embodied exploration of pianistic *cantabile.*

Chekhov practitioner Lenard Petit (2020) suggests that the feeling of beauty is best approached by way of the other pillars, in order for it to arise naturally. I have found this advice to be helpful. Chekhov observes the beauty of the manual labourer's movements and of the flying hammer, of the worker's complete absorption in the task at hand (Chekhov, 2002, pp. 55–56). This offers insight into Chekhov's conception of beauty, which may be understood as the embodied quality of a thing simply being itself — not demonstrating or showing off, but simply radiating itself.[13] In music, there are many instances where a brutal or ugly sound is desirable. But even aggressive or jagged sounds or gestures may be beautiful (in the sense of being authentically themselves) if they are enacted with feelings of ease, form and the whole.

A feeling of the whole is an experience of connection with the temporal and spatial entirety of an artistic process or work. In music, this concept seems to align

[13] In an episode of the British television series *Landscape Artist of the Year*, I recall artist and judge Tai-Shan Shierenberg remarking appreciatingly on the quality of authentic "tree-ness" in the painting of a tree by one of the contestants. It is this sense of a thing being completely itself (while simultaneously possessing the other three pillars of ease, form and the whole) that I believe Chekhov means by beauty.

with Rink's conception of 'basic shape' in performance as a "musically defined impulse, a gesture at the highest structural echelon, a 'gut feeling' about the course of the music that one of bringing forth" (Rink, 2017, p. 355). In his search for language to best capture this perception of a higher order shape in music, Rink's language is strikingly resonant with Chekhov's notion of 'psychological gesture' (discussed in section 2.6). Rink's examples of the musician's contextual perception of the whole work within the flow of performance illustrate the feeling of the whole:

> The executive role of such a gist in shaping a performance can be gleaned from the types of self-talk that musicians engage in while performing. For example, "I'm rushing this section" (i.e., in relation to the whole), or "the climax will collapse unless I ramp up the volume" (i.e., to give it contextual weight and significance).
>
> (Rink, 2017, p. 355)

2.2 Centres (ideal, imaginary)

The centre is a point in the body from which all movement flows and is the "source of inner activity" (Chekhov, 2002, p. 7). To awaken it, Chekhov asks the actor to imagine a point located within the chest and to explore simple movements of the body while maintaining a connection with this 'ideal centre' as the energetic source of each movement. An inner impulse generated by the actor's imagination and beginning within this centre precedes the actor's *actual* physical movement, with the body effectively *following* the imaginative movement. This grounding aspect of the Chekhov technique brings connection, grace and pleasure to all movement, infusing the actor with presence on stage.

In the Chekhov Studio London workshops with Graham Dixon, warmup exercises using centres were practised at the beginning of each day to awaken the psychophysical connection and 'tune' the body for imaginative work. Other elements of the technique were introduced in these warmups too, using the ideal centre as a foundation. These included expanding and contracting the body using full-body movement, exploring the embodied sensations associated with the six energic directions in space (discussed in section 2.7), and experiencing the quality of radiating (2.5). Throughout each of the exercises, we were encouraged to be attentive to our inner/outer tempo and our relationship with the air, and to explore the movement of our inner life as we changed the tempo of our movement.[14] Dixon cautioned us against colouring or layering our movement with feelings or

[14] Ted Pugh's masterclass, *Waking up the instrument*, demonstrates similar warmup exercises. See MICHA (2007).

atmosphere during these exercises, but to instead establish an easeful and reliable home base as the foundation upon which colours and feelings could be introduced later.

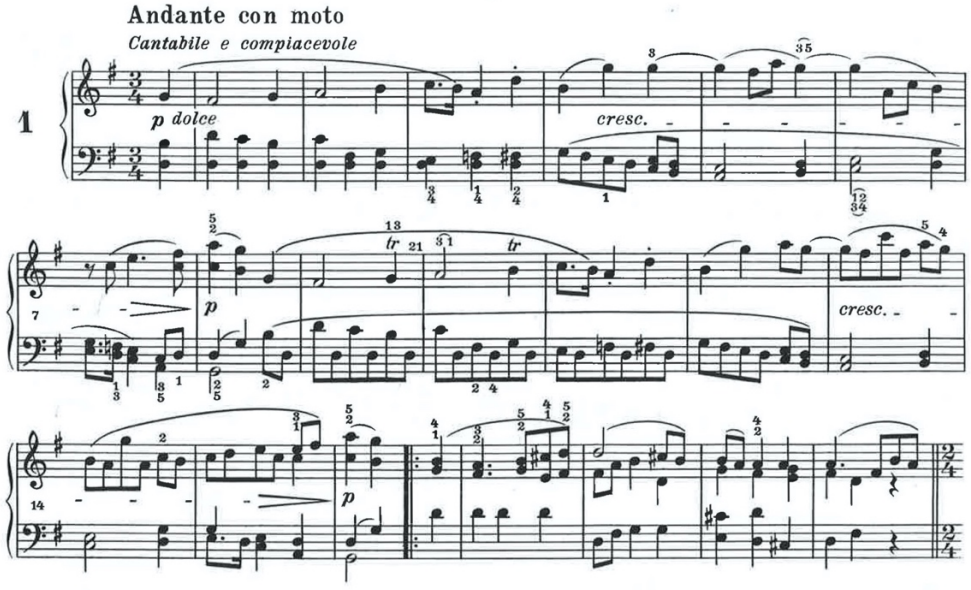
By the end of the warmup exercises, each participant had established what Dixon called an 'ideal artistic neutral' state, an immediately accessible state of openness to the sensation of movement, even in stillness. The body felt more transparent, more sensitive and receptive to impulses from the inner life and the outside world. The image of the body as a transparent medium is shared by mezzo-soprano Dame Janet Baker, who likens being a professional singing artist to a sheet of glass:

> What does concern me as a professional, is […] being like a sheet of glass, which one tries, through integrity and work and keeping up the professional techniques, [to] keep clean. You keep your glass clean. No streaks! And then if you're lucky, something from this area I've just been speaking of, this total absorption in what music does to you, something of that *can come through* you as a personality, as a human being, which is really nothing to do with you, it comes from somewhere else. You provide the grounding and the groundwork for it. And if you've done that properly, this magic *can* come through, and *that* is what the audiences feel, and other people feel. That's the power of music. It's not you as a human being, it's the power of getting yourself out of the way, in a sense, but also just thinking about the process of transmitting music like a medium.
>
> (in DiDonato, 2013, beginning at 28:25)

Later in the Chekhov work, 'imaginary centres' — which can be imagined in any part of the body, and with great specificity — are used as a technique for developing characters. The location of the imaginary centre influences the way one experiences movement and thus plays upon one's inner life and visible physicality, as it "affects qualities of movement, direction in space, weight, posture, rhythm and inner sensation/experience" (Fleming & Cornford, 2020, p. 186). Placing an imaginary centre in the head, or the feet, or even the tip of the nose, can be a powerful entry point to a character. Chekhov identified three archetypal centres: the head (which he identified as a 'thinking' centre), the chest (the 'feeling' centre) and the legs and feet (the 'willing' centre) (Chekhov, 1991, pp. 52–53).

The opening of the Beethoven Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 (Video 2.1, Figure 1) demonstrates my use of the 'ideal' centre. These visionary miniatures of late Beethoven demand of the pianist extraordinary sensitivity of listening and touch, depth of expression and, perhaps most challenging of all, simplicity. The chest centre affords a physical, emotional and imaginative openness that I find ideal for this music.

Figure 1 Beethoven, Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1, opening bars (Wiener Urtext Edition, 1973)



I adopt the 'will' centre for the powerful first movement of Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 2). Imagining all movement flowing from my feet, legs and lower back gives me a feeling of power and grounding and I am able to inhabit the weighty and 'epic' nature of this musical narrative without undue physical tension.

In Rautavaara's *Närböläisten braa speli* (Video 2.3, Figure 3) I imagine energy flowing from all centres equally. I arrived at this 'expanded' imaginary centre after much experimentation, trying to find an effective way of capturing the unbridled exuberance of these folk fiddlers' arrival. The large, awkward chords of the opening present challenges to small-handed pianists like me, and these physical challenges can easily lead to technical caution and the frequent 'preparation' of chords.[15] Caution and hand preparation works against the feeling of ease and abandon that characterises this piece. Imagining all areas of the body open, with energy flowing from the body in all directions, is helpful in achieving greater technical ease in the large chords, but more importantly in creating a full, ringing sound and embodying the exuberant character of the music.

[15] I refer here to the tendency among small-handed pianists to physically prepare the hand for chords rather than 'dropping' or 'grabbing' them with freedom of movement. In this movement of *Pelimannit*, the keys themselves may sometimes be used to pry the hand open and achieve the required stretch, making preparation necessary. But in many cases, small-handed pianists (I count myself among them) prepare unnecessarily, out of caution.

Figure 2 Sibelius, *Kyllikki*, opening bars (Breitkopf & Härtel, 2002)

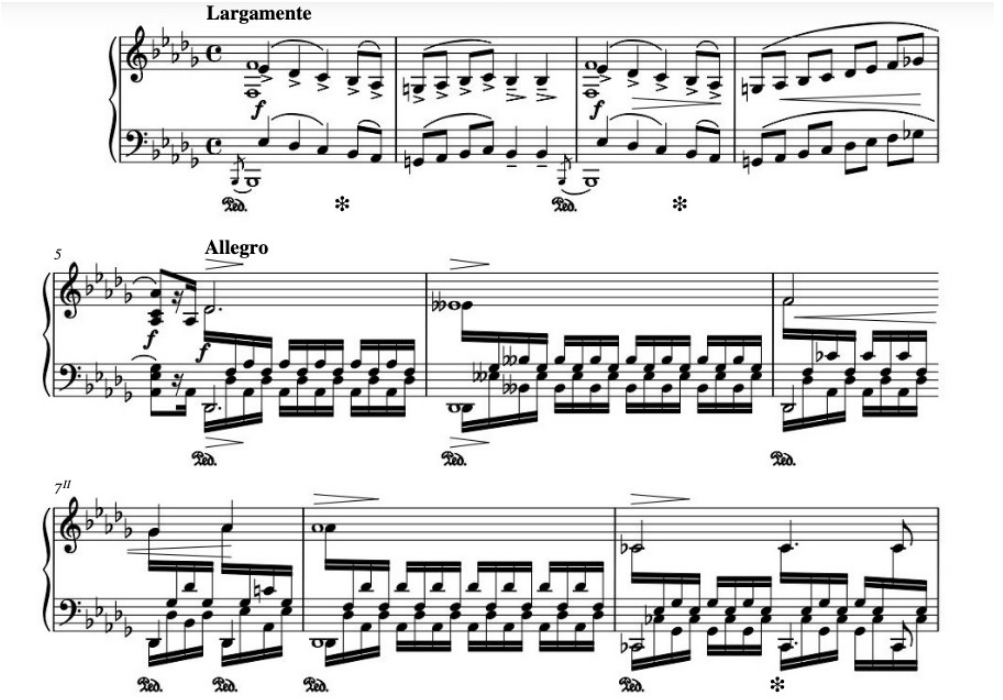
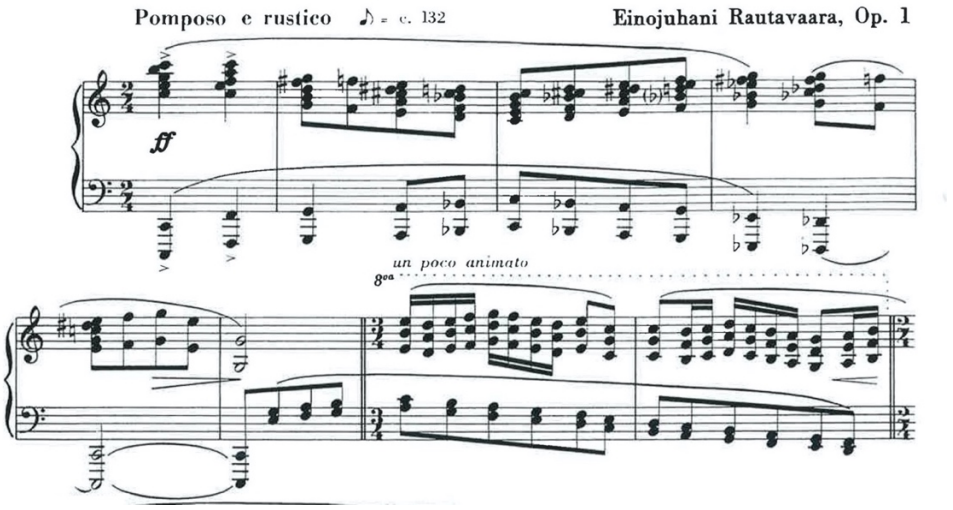


Figure 3 Rautavaara, *Närböläisten braa speli,* opening bars (Edition Fazer, 1958)



2.3 Energetic body

The energetic body is not a term used by Chekhov, but the concept underlies all the psychophysical movement exercises of the technique. Leonard Petit uses the terms ‘energetic body’ and ‘life body’ interchangeably, while Graham Dixon prefers the term ‘movement body’. I have found ‘energetic body’ useful in my practice as it connects more readily to a feeling of energetic movement that flows from, through, and beyond the physical body. All these terms refer to the form of “inner energy that we play with while practising the technique” (Petit, 2020, p. 33).

In *The Pianist’s Talent*, Harold Taylor (1994) presents the following experiment to demonstrate the psychophysical nature of coordination:

> Place a matchbox or other small object on a table in front of you and try to pick it up as slowly as possible. The harder you concentrate on slowing down the operation, the more conscious you will become of increasing mental and physical tension.
> Now repeat the experiment in this way:
> Imagine yourself as a detached observer of the operation. Instead of concentrating directly on the task in hand, merely *see* the arm moving slowly out from the body, merely see the hand closing over the matchbox and so on.
>
> (p. 31)

Taylor observes that the “apparently dissociated manner of performance” allows for greater coordination:

> In the first method of performance, concentration on the end to be gained interferes with the radar-like workings of the kinetic mechanism, inducing contracting tendencies which manifest themselves as a deterioration of the posture. In the second method of performance, where one refuses to concentrate directly on the end to be gained, this kind of interference is reduced to a minimum […].
>
> (p. 31)

This apt description by Taylor of the “radar-like workings of the kinetic mechanism” — optimised when a kind of detachment is employed in performance — highlights the value of the energetic body. Chekhov adds to this by radiating movement through the energetic body that precedes the movement of the real body (as described in section 2.3 on centres). The actor’s movement sensation is activated by the movement of the energetic body, which *leads* the physical body. This allows free, unhindered movement of the physical body. Furthermore, the energetic body radiates by extending and sustaining the movement into the space

beyond the actor's physical form. To apply the energetic body to the matchbox exercise above, the actor first imagines the energetic body (a kind of 'energetic arm', identical to the actor's real arm) moving slowly toward the matchbox. The real arm then follows the movement, coolly observed by the actor. The energetic hand picks up the matchbox, followed by the real hand. This picking up may be pure (using the actor's home base, or clean glass), or it may be coloured with qualities of movement (moulding, flowing, flying, radiating) or sensations (caution, tenderness, delight, etc.). Any quality, colour or sensation is first imagined in the energetic hand and then followed by the real hand. This process continues until the movement is complete and the energetic arm is released.

Sebők spoke about something similar in his teaching. He observed that because of pianists' seated position at the instrument, "[t]heir wave of movement goes from their head to the piano stool and stops. But there should be a longer wave which goes right down to the ground" (quoted in Tomes, 2018, p. 153). And:

> 'Don't play from the shoulders; find a longer wave and play from the bottom of the back. Energy comes from somewhere in the body, and if, as a metaphor, you imagine the energy coming from a low point in the body, you'll lift your arm from somewhere low too. You will play with the whole person, and even one note will sound important if the whole person plays.'
>
> (p. 159)

For the opening of Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 2), I use the energetic body in conjunction with the 'will' imaginary centre to achieve this 'longer wave' of energy. In section 2.2 I described how imagining energy originating from my feet, legs and lower back offers power and grounding to my playing of this weighty opening. The energetic body is a counterpart to this, the embodied imagination creating a wave of movement that precedes the physical body and continues the movement beyond my physical contact with the keyboard.

In each of the video examples, the energetic body functions in the same way. In conjunction with the imaginary centre and the six energetic directions in space (discussed in 2.7), the energetic body connects inner and outer movement. The mechanism by which the myriad kinds or qualities of movement may be accessed — the *how* of movement — is discussed next.

2.4 Qualities of movement

The qualities of movement constitute a practical technique for exploring sensation, feeling, and atmosphere by layering distinct qualities onto action. Put simply, the qualities are the 'how' of movement. The four basic (or archetypal) qualities —

moulding, flowing, flying, and radiating — bring embodied awareness to the interaction of the body with the air and help to stimulate imagination, sensation, and feeling. These qualities correspond to the natural elements earth, water, air, and fire, and can be combined and explored with limitless variety (Chekhov, 1991, 2002).

The qualities of movement are particularly well-suited to piano playing, each one corresponding to familiar kinds of pianistic touch. I find that the value of the Chekhovian qualities (over more emotive or descriptive language often used in teaching) lies in their openness. The qualities of movement are not tethered to particular emotional or atmospheric states nor to specific characterisations. Further, each quality invites the performer to imagine touch not in relation to single notes, but to groups of notes that form musical shapes and gestures. Even if the pianist has not yet identified groupings, shapes or gestures through score-study or practice, experimenting with qualities of movement from an early stage in the preparation process offers an imaginatively embodied method for these and other musical features to emerge intuitively while playing. I shall discuss each of the qualities in turn. I make specific reference to the piano, but musicians of all instruments are invited to apply the qualities of movement to their own discipline.

2.4.1 Moulding

Moulding is characterised by a feeling of resistance between the body and the air. One can imagine sculpting clay or carving through a large body of water. It is a strong quality associated with the feeling of form. This quality is related to Lev Oberon's 'sostenuto' touch, and Boris Berman's 'in' touch, which is "based on a slow immersion in the keyboard: the action continues even after the sound has been produced, as if the moment of attack were ignored" (Berman, 2000, p. 5). The moulding quality also aligns with Doğantan-Dack's observations of the 'grasping' or 'grabbing' motion of the hand in rendering pianistic *cantabile*:

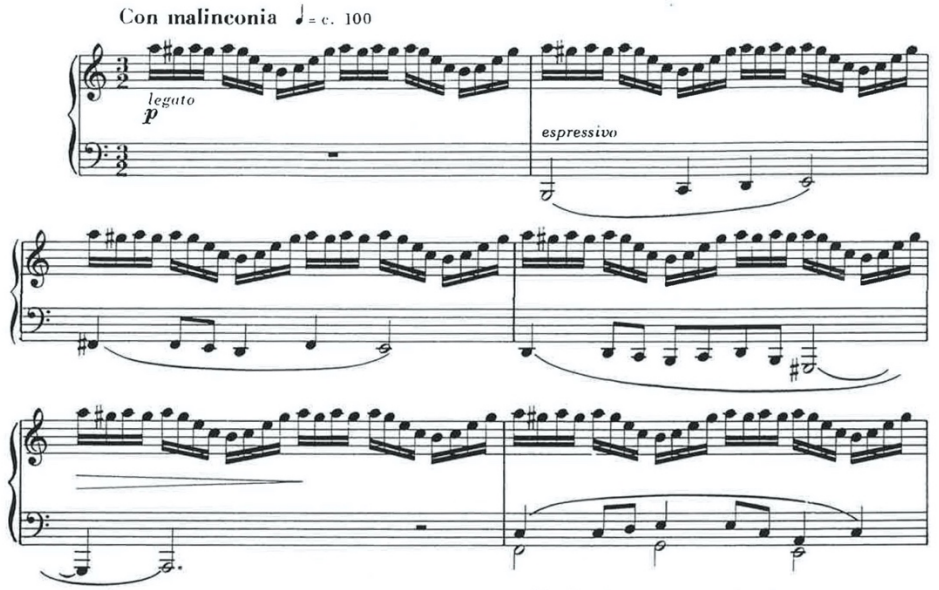
> In order to be able to achieve, comfortably and with ease, in a slow-to-moderate tempo, the transfer of pressure and constancy of touch across a number of keys, the singing hand assumes, *before* starting the cantabile delivery of a single-line melodic unit, a posture resembling the readiness of the hand for grasping an object: the main difference is that in this case the 'object' to be grasped and held is in a state of continual spatio-temporal emergence.
>
> (2015, p. 185)

For the opening of Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 2) I use moulding for the weighty *largamente.* Moulding is felt equally by the two hands and arms, which work together as a single unit. I maintain the moulding quality in the *Allegro* from

bar 5, to continue the feeling of weight and density created by the low register, sustained outer layers and the undulant inner semiquavers. Here the outer parts of each hand (toward the fifth fingers) feel heavier and mould deeper and more slowly than the inner parts. The fifth fingers, carried by the arm, sculpt the melody (RH) and harmonic anchoring (LH) as if in slow motion. This deep, slow moulding is rooted in imagining and listening: imagining the precise quality of the long notes before their onset, and listening through their full value ensures that they are really played *as* fully inhabited long notes.[16] The semiquavers shift between moulding and a combination of moulding/flowing according to the harmonic tension (which invites more engaged moulding) and release (which invites flowing) and the unfolding shaping of the outer layers.

Moulding is used differently in Rautavaara's *Kopsin Jonas* (Video 2.4, Figure 4). Here the two hands play different roles, with a mysterious ostinato in the treble (RH) and a sombre and sustained melody in the bass (LH). To effectively conjure these clearly differentiated types of musical material, each hand/arm employs a different quality of movement. The LH adopts a moulding quality while the RH plays with the quality of flowing.

Figure 4 Rautavaara, *Kopsin Jonas,* opening bars (Edition Fazer, 1958)



[16] Sebők drew this distinction in his teaching, making the astute observation that "[s]ome people play long notes. Other people play short notes and hold them" (in Tomes, 2018, p. 145).

Often, the qualities of movement are combined. In the opening of the Beethoven Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 (Video 2.1, Figure 1), I use a combination of moulding and flowing in the RH, while the LH uses flowing. The balance between moulding and flowing in RH depends on the characteristics of the instrument, the acoustic, the tempo, the use of the pedal, and the manner in which I shape the melody in the moment of performance.

2.4.2 Flowing

Flowing is characterised by a fluid, easeful relationship with the air. Graham Dixon calls this quality 'supporting' to reflect the sensation of the air supporting the body as it moves. Unlike the sculpted, solid forms that characterise moulding, flowing movements are continuous, without beginning or end.

As mentioned above, I use flowing for the RH in Rautavaara's *Kopsin Jonas* (Video 2.4, Figure 4). The quality of movement (flowing) is combined with the energetic body (which precedes the movement of my actual hand/arm) and flows from my ideal centre while connecting with the energetic directions 'up' and 'back' (directions in space are discussed in 2.7). These elements work together to create the mysterious atmosphere of the forest, and the illusion that there is no beginning or end to this whispering ostinato. It is as though this atmosphere began long ago, and my body simply joins in as the piece begins.

In Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 5), I change from moulding to flowing at bar 22. This moment stands in contrast to everything that has come before in terms of weightiness, density, accentuation and resistance. The inner semiquavers now shimmer rather than heave, and the melody floats rather than carves through the air. These musical changes are achieved intuitively through embodying an overarching flowing quality of movement, while maintaining a balance within each hand that is weighted toward the outer fingers.

In Ravel's *Oiseaux tristes* (Video 2.6, Figure 6), I use flowing as a 'base' quality of movement upon which I play with subtle combinations. Slight changes in the mix of qualities of movement in relation to directions in space can help to achieve the nuanced layering demanded of the pianist in this work. Flowing serves as a unifying quality for the whole, much like a painter's base colour works to unify a painting.

Figure 5 Sibelius, *Kyllikki*, bars 20–24 (Breitkopf & Härtel, 2002)

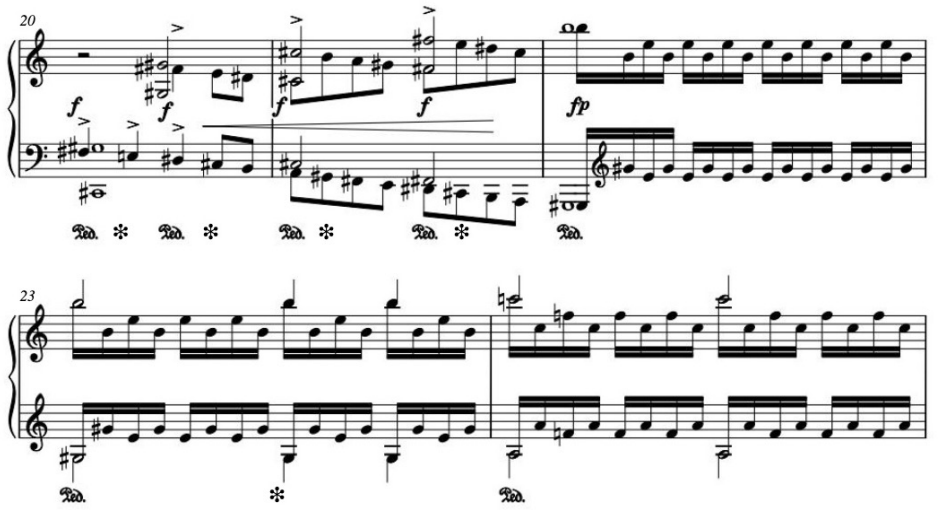
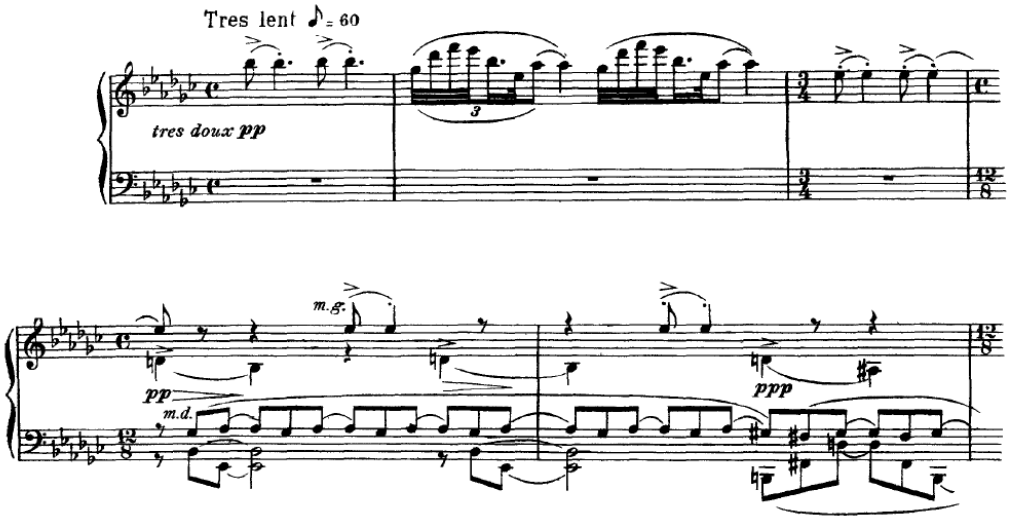


Figure 6 Ravel, *Oiseaux tristes*, opening bars (Dover Publications, 1986)



2.4.3 Flying

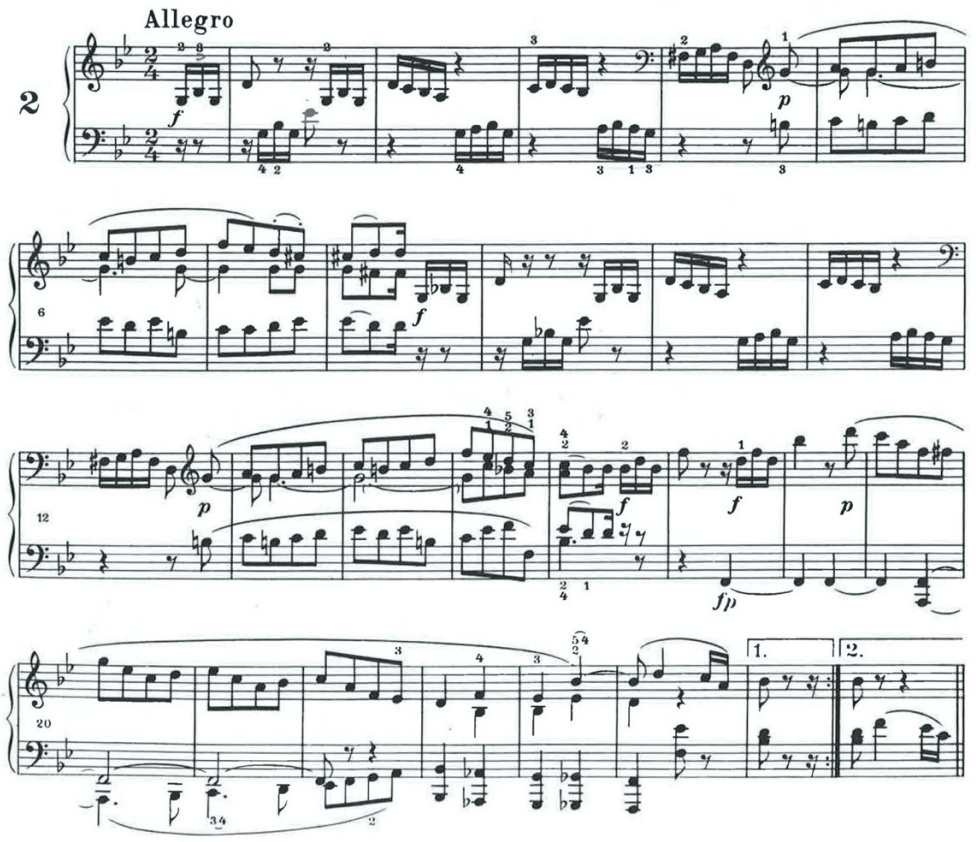
Flying is characterised by a reaction to impulses from the air. For this reason, Dixon refers to this quality as ‘impulse’, which I find helpful. However, for the sake of clarity I maintain the Chekhov term as I frequently refer to impulse in other contexts unrelated to qualities of movement. In flying, the sensation of the body is one of complete lightness and responsiveness to impulses from the outside world. One might imagine, for example, the body as a leaf blowing in the breeze.

Like moulding and flowing, flying may be combined with other qualities of movement. Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 2 (Video 2.2, Figure 7) provides a good example of this. The quick changes in the melodic material, register, phrasing and dynamics point to strong impulses *between* these changes that the performer must identify and receive anew each time. For bars 1–4 I use a combination of flying and moulding to achieve the energetic semiquavers alternating between the hands. From the upbeat to bar 5 (and more precisely in the split second *before* this upbeat, with the musical impulse to change quality) I switch to flying/flowing. Similarly, in the split second before the upbeat to bar 9, I respond to the impulse to change and return to flying/moulding. Identifying impulses in such miniscule crevices (in this case between fast-paced semiquavers) may seem tedious, but this is where the value of the Chekhov work comes into its own. The very opening of the music gives us a clue: how is the initial impulse generated? In all music, the first impulse happens in the silence that precedes the first sound; an important part of the performer's preparation is to discover the precise nature of that first impulse. In this case, the music does not begin on the downbeat but an upbeat. The combination of clues here — the stream of energetic semiquavers in the middle register, the rapid alternation of hands, the tonality, the tempo and dynamic — all point to a strong, energetic impulse from the air that propels the pianist into action. Connecting with the quality of flying and the energetic body (in addition to any other Chekhov tools that the pianist finds intuitively helpful) helps respond to these impulses anew each time.

2.4.4 Radiating

Radiating is associated with fire. Mentioned earlier in relation to the energetic body, radiating is responsible for sending the energetic body's presence out beyond the physical form and sustaining its message. Radiating is a kind of energetic *reaching*; it heats and illuminates the air in its path. Radiating has a fundamental role in the Chekhov technique and should be active at all times on stage regardless of the other qualities of movement being utilised. For this reason, I discuss radiating in relation to its natural counterpart, 'receiving'.

Figure 7 Beethoven, Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 2, opening bars (Wiener Urtext Edition, 1973)



2.5 Radiating and Receiving

According to Chekhov, radiating should be present at all times in our work as performers. Every movement, every sound, every moment of stillness or silence, should radiate out from us into the space, to our musical partners on stage, and to our audience. Radiating gives our movement and sound a presence and a communicative power that can be received and felt by others. When we attend a performance and experience atmosphere emanating from the stage, or feel that the performer communicates meaningfully to us even in the softest whisper or the slightest flick of a finger, we are in the presence of the quality of radiating. It shares a symbiotic bond with its counterpart 'receiving'. In order to radiate, we must first *receive* the space, our collaborators, the atmosphere, and our audience. In music performance, receiving extends to our instrument, the moment-to-moment unfolding of sound, and the impulses (inner and outer) that impel sound

to begin (out of silence or out of another sound), to be sustained, to cease sounding, or to be interrupted by another sound or by silence.

In the Dixon workshops, it was relatively easy for participants to understand the concept of receiving when working with a partner on an improvisation or a scene. A good actor listens and fully receives her scene partner, allowing sensations to awaken during the receiving and then changing over to respond (or radiate) in a way that is truthful to what has just been received. In music, we can readily apply receiving and radiating to processes within chamber music or any collaborative forms of music making. In the Dixon workshops, the main challenge arose when working on monologues, where the ideas and impulses the actor needs to receive must occur within her own embodied imagination, or from the environment (but not from a scene partner). How can we truly receive when we already know what the next line is, and when we don't have a scene partner or stage action to provide external impulses? This is precisely the challenge raised by Tomes (2018), who questions how the pianist can remain fresh and spontaneous with repertoire honed through diligent practice. And it points to a pervasive problem within WCM of persisting with methods of practice and performance preparation that may not be fit for purpose if our goal is to bring music to life in performance.

Much of our work as musicians involves refining our execution of the music we play. In other words, we spend much of our time on the delivery, or on the *giving* of the music. We often forget that in order to bring a musical idea to life, we first must receive the idea — and all importantly, that this needs to happen *every time* we play it. It is not enough to discover an idea in the learning stages of a piece of music, refine its execution through practice and then deliver it in performance. A living performance involves the discovery of musical ideas in the moment of performance, so that there is a real and living connection between the space, the atmosphere, the instrument, the performer, the audience and the emergent music in each moment. If we realise that this is what the magic of performance is all about, it makes sense to practice giving and receiving together, so that receiving becomes a natural part of our music-making. We need to adopt methods of practice that lead to the kind of music making we are aiming to achieve.

In Dixon's workshops, receiving and radiating were explored through ball exercises. Participants formed a circle and passed a ball freely to one another, slowing the receiving/radiating gesture down so that it could be experienced and analysed in detail. The simplicity of the exercise highlighted the complexity of the task. Many factors (including physical habits, tension, doubts, momentary lapses of concentration, self-consciousness) inhibited the actors' free and natural movement. The exercise revealed that passing a ball involves three phases: receiving, changing-over and radiating. First, we intuitively measure the distance

between ourselves and the other person through receiving. We receive our partner, their distance from us, their stance and readiness to accept the ball. This is a kind of embodied measuring that we do naturally, without analytical calculation.[17] Once we have received the ball, there is a changeover to throw, during which nothing more can be received and our course of action is set. Consider the conductor's upbeat. All the information about the downbeat to follow — its precise placement in time, the kind of attack, the dynamic, the atmosphere — is contained in the upbeat. The moment of changeover, which occurs toward the top of the beat (the moment before it comes down), is a split-second hiatus during which no information can be altered and no new information transmitted. At the point of changeover, everything about the downbeat is inevitable. We can also observe the changeover in our own respiration. When we inhale, we receive oxygen into our bodies, and the moment before we exhale is a tiny moment of changeover, a little hiatus that can only lead to exhalation.

Sebők also used the breath to illustrate the importance of receiving when we play, as well as the importance of understanding that the manner in which we receive affects the meaning of the ensuing sound:

> 'When we breathe,' he said, 'we inhale before an important remark. But the depth of inhalation doesn't depend on the length of the sentence; it depends more on the importance of the statement. The more important, the deeper you inhale.' He mimed taking an enormous breath and then saying 'I love you' to the student. Then he took a quick gulp of breath and said 'I love you' again. Although 'I love you' was only three words, it was clear that its emotional import required a long 'upbeat' in the form of breathing in. Not much breath was needed to say three little words, but if the speaker only took a little breath, then the three words sounded trivial. It was astounding. The parallels with music-making were obvious.
>
> 'Emotion should precede the notes because if it doesn't, the music just "runs empty"', he said. 'And not just emotion, but *attitude* should precede music. You can't make a gesture and then decide what you meant it to say.'
>
> (Tomes, 2018, p. 141)

The ball exercise demonstrates the immense range of possibilities afforded by receiving, changing-over and radiating. Receiving a ball thrown with great force, we feel the impact of that force as it vibrates through us. But after the natural ramifications of the impact subside, we have complete freedom as to how we change-over and give the next ball. We may quickly change over to deliver an equally forceful ball. Or we may draw out the receiving, transforming our

[17] John Rink refers to this ball-throwing intuition in his argument for 'informed intuition' as a valid and important form of musical analysis (1990).

movement into a different quality and changing-over to throw a slow, gentle ball. Once we are attentive to receiving, changing-over and radiating, we start to notice it everywhere in our daily lives, from breathing, to having a conversation, to playing sports, to driving a car. And we find it everywhere in music, too.

Musicians are often told that we must project our sounds to be heard in large concert halls. This often leads to unnecessary muscular tension, an unnatural or forced sound, and a lack of flexibility and nuance in the music-making. I have found that by thinking of playing not as 'projecting' sound but rather as receiving the space and radiating back into it, I am able to maintain ease and nuance in my playing while being heard at the back of the hall. Each of the video demonstrations for this chapter is full of examples of receiving and radiating. When analysed closely, each moment of a performance may be understood in terms of receiving, changing over and radiating. These processes may be enacted in such quick succession that they appear to be occurring simultaneously. The beginning of each video demonstrates a different receiving/changing-over/radiating scenario, with my approach varying in response to the nature of the musical material and its originating impulse.

2.6 Gesture, and Psychological Gesture

Chekhov saw gesture as "a way of capturing the dynamic or experience of movement underlying all experiences or forms in the world" (Fleming & Cornford, 2020, p. 187). Gesture creates powerful undertones to an actor's performance, even when the actor appears outwardly still. An absence of gesture is immediately felt in empty words or lifeless actions. Gesture can be seen as closely related to the Four Brothers (feelings of ease, form, beauty, and the whole) in its striving for easeful authenticity of movement. As Godøy and Leman (2010) observe, "not all movements can be considered to be genuine gestures. In order to call a movement a genuine gesture, it is required that this movement is in some way a carrier of expression and meaning" (p. 5).

In music, as in the Chekhov work, the term 'gesture' is used in a range of ways, from describing the visible physical movements made by musicians as they perform (Davidson, 2007), to the musical shapes and associated expressive meanings contained within, or afforded by, music itself. Certain musical genres may have particular underlying gestures associated with them (the stoic processional gesture of a funeral march, or the dizzying whirling of a *tarantella*, for example), which may correspond more closely to the Chekhovian 'psychological gesture' discussed shortly. Writing about gesture in relation to her pianistic practice, Doğantan-Dack describes a kind of organic synthesis of musical elements, expression, and movement that occurs during the learning process:

> the performer does not come to know the rhythmic-melodic forms they express in sound separately from the physical gestures and movements required to bring them about. Any gesture made to deliver a unit of music will inevitably unify the structure and expression, as well the biomechanical and affective components, which theory keeps apart.
>
> (2011, p. 252)

I would agree that gesture is a largely intuitive part of the musician's practice, and that we hold tacit embodied knowledge about the rhythmic-melodic forms routinely encountered at the piano. But I would caution against any assumption that expression or meaning *automatically* emerge from our delivery, regardless of whether we consciously conceive a given unit of music as a gesture. Our glimpse into Sebők's teaching studio in Chapter 1 offered examples of both meaningful and meaningless gesture, demonstrating how empty a gesture may be, even if it is well-executed in any outwardly measurable sense. In Sebők's meaningful demonstration of gesture, he was outwardly still, but the playing was filled by an internal energetic movement that gave the playing a beautiful elastic sense of inevitability. This internal gesture was absent from the subsequent unconvincing versions, regardless of how much physical 'gesturing' was shown by the torso and head.

Meaningfulness of gesture was of paramount importance to Sebők, who advised his students that a "sound is something you mean […] Don't let your hands be independent of you" (in Tomes, 2018, p. 139). This is an idea he expanded in an interview published in *The Piano Quarterly* in 1976:

> I think there is a very big and important difference between truth and lie, but not in the ordinary sense of the word. For example, if I play a phrase the way I mean it, in a muscular and psychological peace with myself, then I told the truth. If my bad physical habits or the shortness of my thumb made me play the phrase another way, then I told a lie, the same kind of lie as a false smile. If only my facial muscles are smiling, then it's a lie. And if only the muscles of my arm are playing the phrase, then it's a lie, too. But I think it should be part of practising to discover the truth, or at least to detect the presence of the lie.
>
> (in Tomes, 2018, p. 140)

Sebők is making two important points here. First, that bad physical habits inhibit true receiving and result in a gesture whose meaning is distorted by the limitations of the pianist; and second, that a strong psychophysical (or embodied) connection underlies all truthful gesture. These ideas are perfectly aligned with Chekhov, who advises actors to start practising gestures by using full body movements, before reducing and eventually dropping the outer physical movement entirely (1991,

2002). This process ensures that when the outer movement is dropped, the essential 'meaning-carrying' element of the gesture remains strong in the inner movement. A performer may look outwardly still but embody a dynamic internal gesture.[18]

Being attentive to gesture as energetic movement can guide the performer's intuitive work on subtleties of touch and timing, which must work together with the overarching principles of receiving and radiating described earlier. Before a gesture may begin, the performer first receives and responds to an impulse that contains all the embodied information about that gesture. Or put another way, all gesture is impelled by an impulse, and it is the sensitivity of the performer in responding to that impulse that determines the truthfulness of the gesture in the moment.

At this juncture I wish draw another distinction, this time between gestures such as the ones mentioned above (the performer's energetic movement associated with a musical unit or phrase) and 'psychological gesture', a significant and distinctive feature of the Chekhov technique. The psychological gesture "expresses the entirety of a character's psychology and experience in the embodied imagination through a movement of the whole body" (Fleming & Cornford, 2020, p. 187).[19] A differentiation between 'local' and 'meta' gesture may be helpful. In a local gesture (such as the small musical units described by Doğantan-Dack) the melodic contour, rhythmic construction, performer's physical approach and emergent expressive meaning are aligned: the musical unit, and everything associated with bringing it into sounding image, *is* the musical gesture. A psychological gesture, on the other hand, is an imaginatively constructed gesture that applies to a whole musical work, or a movement or self-contained section within a work. Encapsulating the core energetic movement of the whole, the psychological gesture does not necessarily represent the energetic properties of each local gesture within that whole, but rather expresses what the performer imagines lying beneath the surface to bind them all together.

Cook (2013) describes Alfred Brendel's "expressive croaking" as he teaches a string quartet masterclass, observing that it

> seems to come from deep within Brendel's body. There are of course elements of iconicity between what he sings and what he wants to hear, but overall the one stands for the other though a more complex form of

[18] The great Italian pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli comes to mind, whose recorded performances are masterclasses in economy of movement and truthful inner gesture.
[19] Joanna Merlin's masterclass on the psychological gesture demonstrates how actors may develop and utilise psychological gestures in the rehearsal room. See MICHA (2007).

> representation: it makes me think of a caricature, in the sense that a particular, salient element is drawn out and foregrounded, writ large.
>
> (p. 317)

What Cook is describing is Brendel's expression of gesture, or perhaps more accurately, Brendel's gestural manifestations (in this case through the voice, although physical gesture is likely to have manifested as well) of expressive meaning. Drawing on Cook's observations, Rink reflects that the demonstrably expressive sounds that musicians make are "best understood as visceral, as primordial" (Rink, 2020, p. 83). As the inner lives of musical works interact with the embodied imaginations of performers, an expressive and energetic movement that seems to come deep from within the work begins to reveal itself. These visceral, primordial responses to music may be distilled into a Chekhovian psychological gesture that helps the performer to galvanise an essential or underlying meta gesture for a given musical work.

In the Beethoven Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 (Video 2.1, Figure 1), I discovered that the psychological gesture of 'unfurling' enabled me to connect to the sensitive unfolding nature of the music. For the first movement of Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 2), I use a forward and downward 'pushing' psychological gesture. And in Rautavaara's *Närböläisten braa speli* (Video 2.3, Figure 3) I use the psychological gesture 'expanding'.

2.7 Six energetic directions

Six energetic directions underlie all movement work in the Chekhov technique. Gesture, for example, boiled down to its essence, is about the direction of energetic movement within space (Mitchell, 2020a, 2020b). Similarly, the qualities of movement, the energetic body, and receiving and radiating all involve the movement of energy that may be categorised into three polarities: forward and backward, upward and downward, and expanding and contracting. Full participation of the inner life in the six energetic directions gives the performer a gateway into sensations (Petit, 2020).

The video excerpts demonstrate my use of the energetic directions in conjunction with other aspects of the technique. For the opening of Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1, I combine the forward and upward directions with my imaginary centre, the energetic body that flows from that centre, the qualities of movement moulding/flowing, and the psychological gesture of 'unfurling'. In performance, I am not conscious of each of these aspects in isolation. Connecting to any one of them instantly activates all the others.

In the Beethoven Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 2 (Video 2.2, Figure 7), the directions in space change rapidly in response to flying impulses. For bars 1–4 I use the forward and downward directions, combined with the imaginary centre (feet, legs), the energetic body that flows from that centre, and the qualities of movement flying/moulding. In Rautavaara's *Kopsin Jonas* (Video 2.4, Figure 4), I use the upward and backward directions for the RH (in combination with the RH's quality of movement flowing) and the downward and forward directions for the LH (along with the quality of movement moulding). Ravel *Oiseaux tristes* (Video 2.6, Figure 6) offers endless possibilities for the exploration of energetic directions in space. My use of flowing as a 'base' quality of movement works in tandem with receiving/radiating, the six energetic directions and gesture to explore the ever-shifting energetic movement of the musical material. Over the course of the piece, all six energetic directions are explored in subtly shifting combinations (for example, up and forward shifting to up and backward, down and backward shifting to up and backward, etc.).

2.8 Atmosphere

Atmosphere is a feeling or quality that belongs to a particular space, event, or time. For Chekhov, atmosphere is "the heartbeat of every piece of art", and the "lifeblood of each performance" (Chekhov, 1991, p. 35). It is also a sensory medium through which performers and audience relate, rendering performance a "mutual creation of actors and audience" (p. 28). Ingold observes that "if the medium [the air] is a condition of interaction, then it follows that the quality of that interaction will be tempered by what is going on in the medium, that is, by the *weather*. Such, indeed, is our experience" (2015, p. 70). This observation is shared by Chekhov, who draws an important distinction between the individual feelings of people or characters, and the qualities of the atmosphere in which those personal experiences play out. A group of people, each experiencing individual sensations and feelings, may enter a church — but the atmosphere of the church remains its own. Chekhov's offers a simple but powerful observation: atmosphere is not something we create through emoting or through personal connection — it works upon us.[20]

Chekhov encourages actors and directors to work with atmospheres from the earliest stages of work on a play:

[20] Ragnar Freidank's masterclass explores this elusive quality through practical exercises and experiments, demonstrating how atmospheres can simultaneously be created and 'work upon' the actors. See MICHA (2007).

> Frequently when a writer starts a project he may not have any definite plot or details, but simply a desire to create out of a certain Atmosphere: tragic, humorous, dramatic, melo-dramatic, mystical, and so forth. This general Atmosphere, this "musical key," inspires him during the initial stage of his work. Characters, details, situations, and often, as we have said, the plot itself gradually occur before his mind's eye while he lives in this Atmosphere. But although we know about this process, rarely do we pay enough attention to it. When we fail to use Atmospheres consciously, an initial and important grip on our part is lost. Atmospheres at the beginning of an artistic endeavour are like a seed that contains the potential of the whole mature plant.
>
> (Chekhov, 1991, p. 31)

In performance, a sensitive interplay takes place between performer, space, instrument, audience and musical work. Who creates the atmosphere? As I shall discuss in Chapter 4, it is my view that all elements work together (they collaborate) as creative agents to create the atmosphere of a performance. This interplay is highlighted in the very first moments of a performance, in which the distances between silence and sound — between an everyday atmosphere and a special performance atmosphere — are most pronounced. The performer imagines the atmosphere, not as a personal feeling but as an objective 'weather' that works upon the space and everything/everyone within it.

In the moments before beginning Beethoven's Bagatelle Op. 126 No. 1 (Video 2.1, Figure 1), I imagine the air being clear, light, a fresh fragrance wafting through the space. This pure, transparent atmosphere plays upon me as I begin the piece. By contrast, in the moments before beginning Sibelius' *Kyllikki* (Video 2.5, Figure 2), I imagine the air as thick and heavy, making it hard to see even a few feet in front of me. This rather dark atmosphere plays upon me as I begin, and the thickness of the air demands a quality of moulding to push through it. I try not to adopt these atmospheres as *feelings*, but simply as the objective properties of the air that surrounds me. Rautavaara's *Kopsin Jonas* (Video 2.4, Figure 4) is similarly dark, but without thickness or heaviness. Here the atmosphere is quiet and mysterious. Another dark forest is conjured in Ravel's *Oiseaux tristes* (Video 2.6, Figure 6), which the composer described as "birds lost in the torpor of a very dark forest during the hottest hours of summer" (Bruhn, 1997, p. xxvii). In both sombre forest scenes, I remind myself that there is nothing personal about a forest. This creates the necessary distance to allow the atmosphere to work upon me, thus enabling me to respond truthfully to impulses as they arise. But here is where the sensitive interplay between agents and elements is highlighted. *Not* imagining (and therefore not connecting with) atmosphere in the moments before beginning a piece immediately robs the performance of atmosphere. Atmosphere does not simply appear and work upon us unbidden. It must be *imagined*, first by the performer, then by the audience.

2.9 Improvisation

Chekhov believed that the only means of true creative expression and freedom in any artform is improvisation.

> If an actor confines himself merely to speaking the lines provided by the author and executing the "business" ordered by the director, and seeks no opportunity to improvise independently, he makes himself a slave to the creations of others and his profession a borrowed one. He erroneously believes that both author and director have already improvised for him and that there is little room left for the free expression of his own creative individuality.
>
> (Chekhov, 2002, pp. 35–36)

The performer is encouraged to improvise from the earliest stages of preparation on the given material, to work intuitively and to explore with playfulness and joy. Chekhov saw every role as an opportunity for the actor to "improvise, to collaborate and truly co-create with the author and director" (p. 36). Rather than getting stuck in intellectual analysis (concentrating on the 'what' and the 'why' of action) before the work of embodiment has begun to bear fruit, Chekhov encouraged actors to use 'how' as a key question in improvisation. By questioning how a phrase is shaped, how the hand moves through space or how an atmosphere plays upon us, we naturally open the way for improvisation. To return to where we started, these are the magic 'beyond and between' spaces — between silences and sounds, between phrases and between notes — that the performer embodies. All of the video demonstrations in this chapter are both products and examples of improvisation in WCM using the Chekhov approach, all guided by the question 'how'.

3 Toward synthesis: preparing a musical work

> *A word does not start as a word – it is an end product which begins as an impulse, stimulated by attitude and behaviour which dictates the need for expression. This process occurs inside the dramatist; it is repeated inside the actor. Both may only be conscious of the words, but both for the author and then for the actor the word is a small visible portion of a gigantic unseen formation.*
>
> (Brook, 1972, p. 15)

This chapter discusses the preparation of a musical work for performance, examining the ways in which the Chekhovian principles and technical elements introduced in Chapter 2 may be integrated into the musician's creative process. I introduce the various contextual considerations and layers of influence that must be navigated by the performer in preparing a musical work, and explore the potential for the Chekhov technique to play a synthesising role in this process. My preparation of Rautavaara's Piano Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon* serves as a case study. To keep this chapter within a reasonable scope, I focus on the first movement.

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to Rautavaara's Sonata No. 2 and an outline of my personal history with the piece. Sections 3.2 through 3.4 discuss several of the primarily 'disembodied' knowledge types, processes and influences that come to bear on the development of a performance. These include familiarity with other works by the same composer (3.2), performance tradition as established by a lineage of practice and disseminated through live performance, recordings and writings (3.3), and the composer's own wishes (in this case, the composer offered feedback on my performance in a recorded interview) (3.4).[21] Finally, Section 3.5 addresses key sections of the first movement, exploring how the different types of knowledge discussed may be synthesised into a holistic, embodied creative process. Video examples illustrate the discussion in Section 3.5. The score of the first movement is provided in Appendix B.

3.1 Einojuhani Rautavaara: Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon*

The Piano Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon* (1970) is one of a cluster of works that marked a pivotal moment in Rautavaara's creative life. The Piano Concerto No. 1

[21] In my discussion of the various 'disembodied' knowledge types and processes in 3.2 through 3.4, I deliberately refrain from using Chekhovian language in an attempt to clearly delineate these from the embodied and synthesised approaches undertaken in Section 3.5.

(1969), the two piano sonatas (1969–70) and the set of six piano études (1969) boldly announced Rautavaara's rejection of a modernist musical language he found stifling, and embraced a lusher, more romantic idiom. This shift also saw Rautavaara return to the piano (his own instrument), after a hiatus of over ten years.

Like many of Rautavaara's works, the second sonata was born out of extra-musical inspiration: in this case, a combination of words that seemed to beg for musical realisation. Rautavaara writes:

> The magic words 'The Fire Sermon' stuck in my mind, repeating themselves like a mantra. There is no conscious link, however, with T.S. Eliot's poem of the same name or Buddha's famous sermon. All three movements observe the principle of continuous growth and the initial idea grows in extent, density and strength until the texture cracks (often into clusters), becomes dissonant, dissolves into a fog of sound or, as in the concluding fugue, goes overboard from pathos to trivial irony for a fleeting instant. The mysticism and devotion of the First Sonata have here given way to pessimism, to a repeated and frustrating struggle.
>
> (Rautavaara, 1999)

The principle of continuous growth manifests with relentless intensity in the outer movements, the lyrical central movement seemingly offering respite only to undertake its own unstoppable struggle. The economy and potency that characterises Rautavaara's piano music is exemplified in the second sonata, its vast expressive scope traversed with great concision. Pianistically it is a comfortable and enjoyable work to play, with moderate technical demands and the writing allowing for a full exploration of the piano's sonorities. It is perhaps for these reasons that the work has become such a popular and frequently performed work within the Finnish piano repertory (Mali, 2009).

My connection to the work began as a twelve-year-old, when I heard the newly released Naxos recording of Rautavaara piano works performed by Laura Mikkola (Rautavaara, 1999). I was mesmerised by the powerful atmosphere and drive of this music. I went on to study the work and perform it many times in my early teens, returning to it in 2010 when I was a graduate student in the USA. My conception and understanding of the piece as well as my pianistic approach had evolved considerably over the intervening decade, but I retained the visceral connection with the work's powerful atmosphere. Upon moving to Finland in 2011, I took up the work again and performed it on several occasions in Finland, Denmark and Poland between 2011 and 2013. In 2013, I played the work for Rautavaara at his home and recorded our discussion. At the time of writing this

chapter, I am returning to the work once more, twenty-two years after my first contact with the piece.

3.2 Familiarity with other works by Rautavaara

Developing a familiarity with other works by the same composer is invaluable for performers. It facilitates deeper understanding of that composer's imaginative world, compositional concerns, and creative trajectory. For pianists, a knowledge of the genres in which a composer feels particularly at home can be enormously helpful in guiding pianistic decisions (for example, approaches to colour and texture). Rautavaara's orchestral, operatic and choral music stand out as areas in which his musical vision seems particularly fulfilled. As Rautavaara expressed in our recorded interview (see Section 3.4), his fondness for legato is a consistent feature in his orchestral and vocal music. The long, pliable legato lines that sit so naturally for strings and voice, as well as the characteristically lush and sonorous orchestral writing, may serve as imaginative guides in the pianist's creative process when preparing Rautavaara's piano music.

Knowledge of a composer's other works for the same instrument can also be instructive in determining the precise character or rhythmic feel of a work. As we shall discuss in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, the main areas of contention in the performance of Rautavaara's second sonata are the interrelated aspects of rhythm, tempo and character. In laying the groundwork for these discussions, let us take as an example the 2+3+2 rhythm that underlies the first movement of the second sonata and appears in many other works of Rautavaara.[22] Gaining an understanding of Rautavaara's treatment of this rhythm in each context may prove helpful in determining the specific character of the second sonata. For the moment, I will focus on a score-based (i.e., disembodied) comparison between works composed around the same time, namely the Étude No. 6 *Fifths,* the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1, and the second movement of the Sonata No. 1 *Christ and the Fisherman*. I shall build upon this score-based comparison with embodied processes when I synthesise the various types of knowledge into a holistic creative process in Section 3.5.

Like the opening of the second sonata, the Étude *Fifths* is cast in 8/8 and characterised by continuous quaver movement and both hands occupying the bass register (see Figure 8). The alternation of hands is also identically constructed, with the LH articulating the first of each rhythmic cell group. Another common feature is the chromaticism in both works' pitch construction: the étude's C#

[22] Rhythms made up of groupings of 2 and 3 abound in the music of Bartók (eg., *Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*), which Rautavaara greatly admired.

movement to and from D and B# creates a similar narrowness, although a key difference is that here the music is based on the interval of a 5th (the fifth built upon C# acting as the étude's tonal centre). Notably, this perfect 5th is an anchor in both hands: the LH plays it first, followed by three articulations of the interval in the RH an octave higher. The second sonata does not contain any shared pitches between the hands in its opening, which creates a greater sense of harmonic friction. Also distinct from the second sonata, the étude's LH is punctuated by a slur within the bar, leading to a staccato on the first note of the final rhythmic cell. Pedal amplifies this shaping, clearly marked to lift with the staccato dot. The dynamic is *p*, rather than the *pp* of the second sonata, and there is no descriptive tempo or character indication, only a metronome marking. This too differs from the sonata. Rather than providing a metronome indication for the whole bar, Rautavaara opts to assign his metronome to the dotted crotchet, here M.M. = c. 160. This is the mathematical equivalent of the second sonata's semibreve = M.M. c. 60; however, identifying the dotted crotchet as the rhythmic unit immediately has a different effect on the performer's imagining of the piece.

The études served as studies for the Piano Concerto No. 1, whose third movement is also comprised entirely of the 3+2+3 rhythm. Figure 9 illustrates its opening measures.

Figure 8 Rautavaara, Étude *Fifths*, opening bars (Fennica Gehrman, 1972)

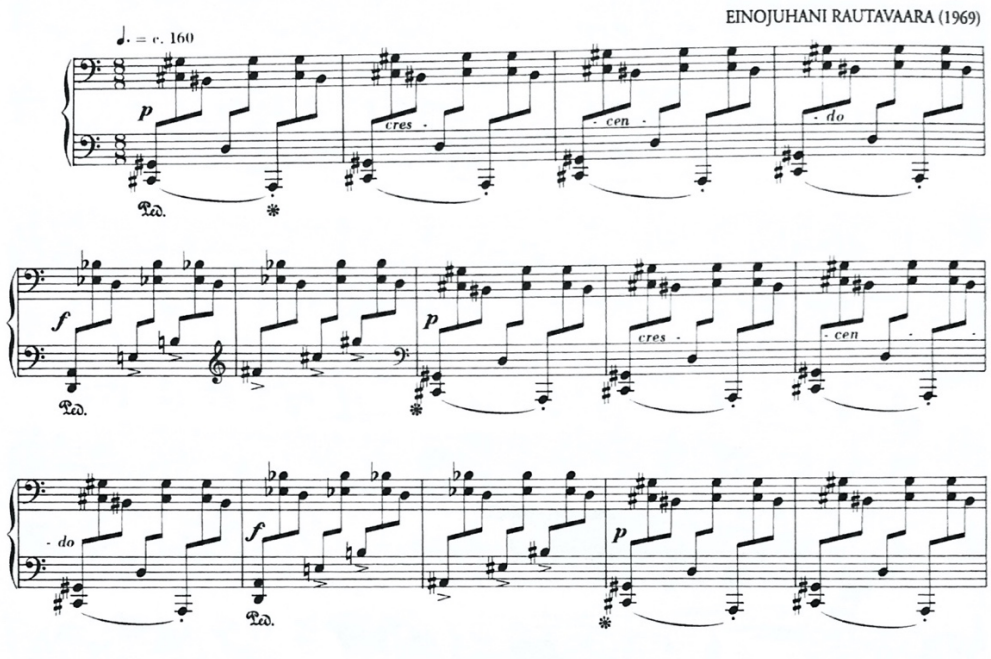
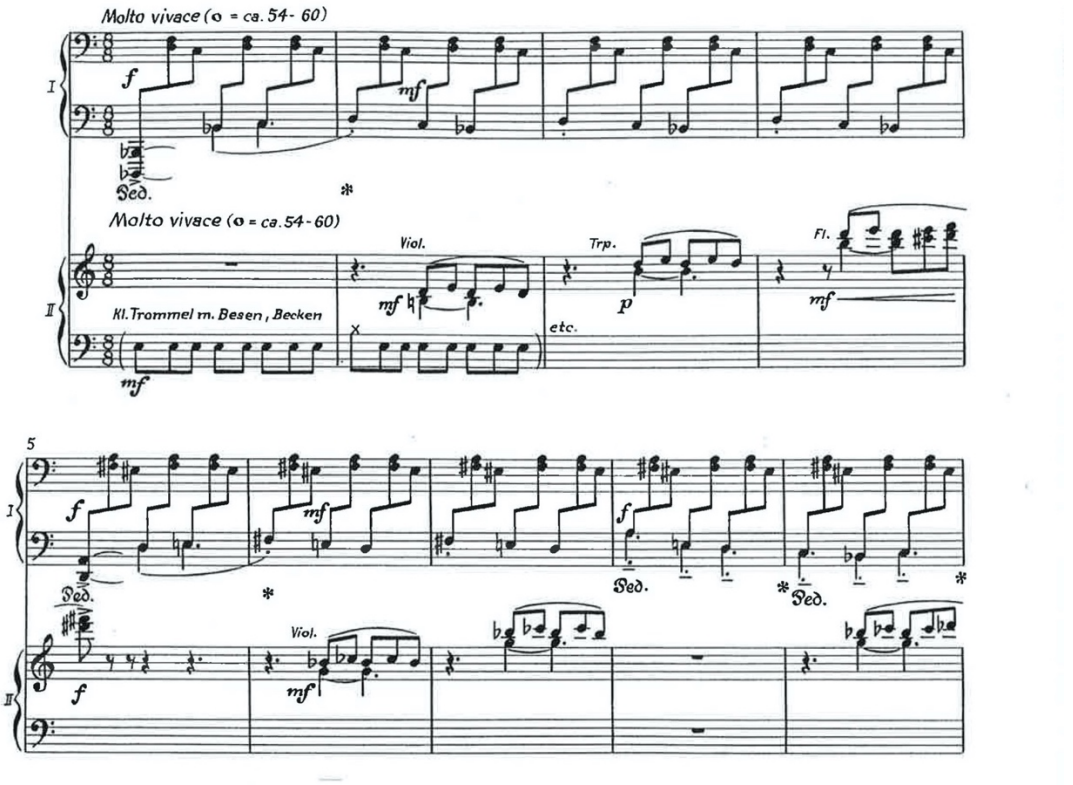


Figure 9 Rautavaara, Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movt., opening bars (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1972)

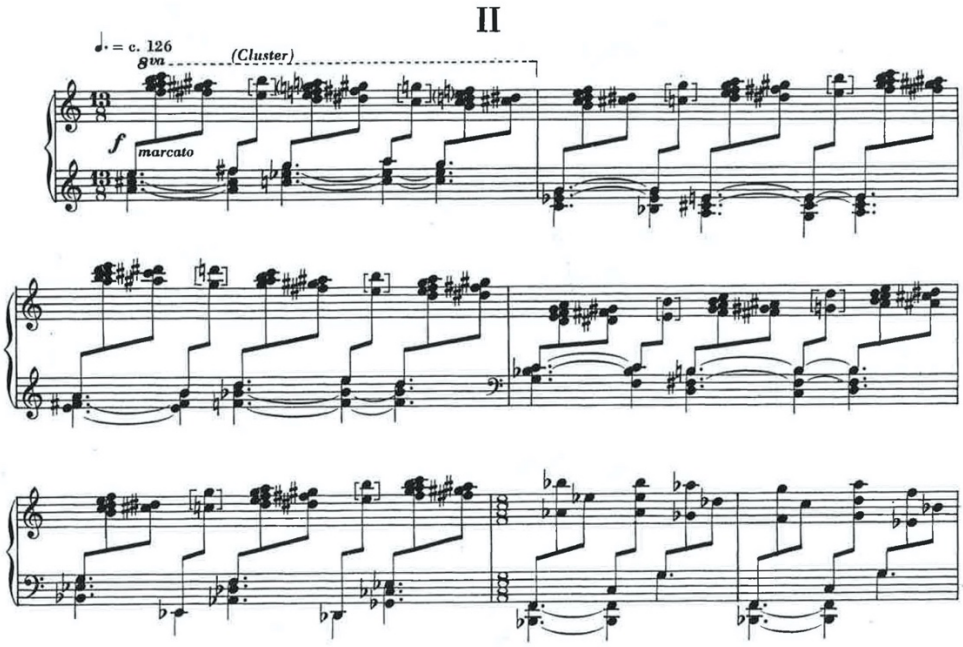


Its similarities with the étude and the second sonata are immediately apparent: the 8/8 metre, bass clef for both hands, and the LH punctuating the first quaver of each rhythmic cell. Like the étude, the RH is anchored around an interval (this time a minor third), followed by a lower neighbouring tone. Unlike the étude and the sonata, the tonal language in these opening measures (considering the piano part in isolation) is diatonic rather than chromatic. Also new are the accents and open slurs signalling the gong-like effect of the opening low B-flat, and the double stemming in the second and third rhythmic cells of bar 1, outlining an ascending diatonic melody. A three-cell slur is consistent with the étude, but its placement differs, now beginning at the second rhythmic cell and ending over the bar line, with a staccato producing a lifted effect on the downbeat of bar 2. While the first four bars of the étude are an exact repetition of material, with a crescendo to the onset of new material in bar 5, the concerto sets up a different pattern: bar 1 serves as a strong (*forte*) 'kick-off' for the four-bar phrase, with bars 2–4 repeating the

same material *mf*, before the next kick-off and a new tonal centre in bar 5. Like the sonata, the concerto's third movement has a descriptive tempo indication, here *molto vivace*, and the metronome marking takes the semibreve as its metric unit, semibreve = M.M. c. 54–60. This indication places the concerto in the same tempo range as both the étude and the sonata.

Finally, let us briefly examine the opening section of the second movement from Sonata No. 1. In both works discussed above, the 3+2+3 rhythm is used to create an exhilarating dance-like finale movement. The tempo structure of Sonata No. 1 differs from that of the second sonata and first concerto, straying from the typical fast–slow–fast mould and adopting a moderate (*con gravita*)–fast–fast–slow structure. As seen in Figure 10, the rhythmic cells are compounded in bars 1–5, creating strings of 3+2+3+2+3 within each 13/8 measure. From bar 6, the music switches to familiar 8/8 territory with 3+2+3 in each measure.

Figure 10 Rautavaara, Sonata No. 1, 2nd movt., opening bars (Fennica Gehrman, 2006)



Aside from metre, other differences between the first sonata and the other works under discussion are apparent. Firstly, register. Instead of beginning in the bass, both hands here occupy the treble. The pitch material is also quite different, with full three- and four-note chords or clusters in each hand. Each three-note rhythmic

cell is double-stemmed in the LH and tied over to the following two-note cell, thus creating short triadic anchor points. The dynamic is *forte*, Rautavaara indicates *marcato* in bar 1*,* and the tempo indication is different from that of the étude, concerto and second sonata. Notably slower, this movement bears a metronome speed of *dotted crotchet = c. 126.* The first five bars function as an introduction to the dance-like 8/8 in bar 6, which feels like an arrival point. Circling around the anchor points in a symmetrical pattern (first bar LH ascending, RH descending, which is balanced by the reverse in bar 2, etc.) the music makes its way down to the movement's tonal centre of B flat (interesting that this movement shares a tonal centre with the concerto) in bar 6. Looking at the 8/8 material once it arrives, striking differences can be observed between this and the other works discussed. The LH material is repeated, similar to the étude, but now moves up in perfect fifths from its Bb/F tonal centre, casting a distinctive shape per measure. The RH's function is the main difference, its role now melodic as opposed to purely amplifying rhythm and colour. The first of each RH group is comprised of a major 9^{th} and carves out a five-bar melody with a descending trajectory.

Simply observing the score away from the piano illustrates the extra density, and melodic and textural complexity of this movement compared to the other works. But receiving this information *while playing it* instantly highlights important characteristics that are not apparent without an embodied experience of playing. In Section 3.5, I discuss the ways in which an embodied exploration of each of these works' opening bars allows the essence of the characters and atmospheres for each work to 'drop in', thereby helping to specify the character of the first movement from Sonata No. 2.

3.3 Performance tradition

In the opening chapter, I alluded to an emerging performance tradition in Rautavaara's piano works. In her doctoral thesis *Musical Works in the Making*, Marjaana Virtanen (2007) addresses this phenomenon in a comprehensive discussion about the various layers and dynamics of agency in the preparation, performance, and performance practice of Rautavaara's piano concertos. The performer studied in Virtanen's research is Laura Mikkola, a champion of Rautavaara's piano works who has recorded many of the solo works and the piano concertos. Her recordings played an important role in disseminating Rautavaara's music to international audiences in the late 1990 and early 2000s. Mikkola's recordings present exhilarating performances of Rautavaara's music and highlight the extremes of atmosphere and character in these works. These recordings were instrumental in forming my initial conceptions of Rautavaara's music as a young pianist. From my experiences of teaching Rautavaara's works in Australia, Finland and the USA, I have not yet met a student who has not been influenced by

Mikkola's recordings in their preparation process. Although anecdotal, this highlights the possibility of a dominant performance tradition emerging during a composer's lifetime. It is notable that Mikkola's interpretive choices diverge considerably from the scores in relation to the tempo and rhythmic treatment of fast movements. Let us briefly examine these, paying particular attention to the 3+2+3 rhythm in the works discussed in the previous section.

Mikkola's tempo for the opening of the second sonata sits within a range of semibreve = M.M. 76–80 (Rautavaara, 1999).[23] A distinctive feature of her recording is the uniform dynamic and articulation between the hands in the first four bars, which has the effect of veiling and smoothing out the 3+2+3 rhythm. At the onset of bar 5, Mikkola highlights the expansion of pitches and the shift to *due corde* by sharply accenting the B in the left hand. The next notes to stand out in the texture are all the left-hand pitches in bars 9–10, which Mikkola highlights. This highlighting draws attention to the 3+2+3 rhythm for the first time. This effect is rather fleeting, and before and after these two bars the effect created by Mikkola is one of buzzing energy; a listener who is unaware of the underlying rhythmic structure would not be able to pick it out, but there is a sense of instability and volatility in this buzzing, which is created by the irregularity of the rhythmic cells. Where the LH rhythm is amplified by double stemming of a melodic outline and pedal (as in bars 38–39 and 42–43), Mikkola prioritises melodic projection and depth over rhythmic precision, and the 3+2+3 rhythm is undefined, sounding more like a flexible quick 3-in-a-bar. The significantly faster tempo adopted by Mikkola in this movement makes it impossible to render the transition to bar 78 (the whirling explosion) in the same tempo, so here Mikkola halves the tempo, effectively executing bars 78–81 as *minim = semibreve*. This is a distinctive feature of the performance tradition that accompanies this work, which shall be discussed a little later on.

Mikkola's tempo in the Étude *Fifths* is consistent with that of the second sonata, sitting at semibreve = M.M. 76–80. Here her treatment of the 3+2+3 rhythm is again flexible, creating an exciting and whirling dance with a quasi 3/4 feel. In the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1, too, she adopts a similar tempo range of M.M. 78–80. There are more occasions of clarity in the 3+2+3 rhythm, perhaps owing to the necessity to collaborate with the conductor and orchestra and align these rhythms (this synchronisation is notoriously challenging in this movement), but the tendency is again to iron-out this rhythm and play in a flexible 3-feel, which is at odds with the approach of the orchestral instruments (the percussion, for example, must articulate each of the quavers together with the piano). In the

[23] This recorded performance is also accessible on YouTube at https://youtu.be/8wSNSk97hEY

first sonata, Mikkola's tempo is again faster than Rautavaara's indicated metronome, now at semibreve = M.M. 70–74. Mikkola's tempo here is slower than that of the other works, but faster than Rautavaara's marking by a consistent margin. Mikkola may slow her tempo in response to the thicker textures of the first sonata, but still pushes the tempo to its upper physical limit. Interestingly, the rhythmic groupings are clearer in this work, probably due to the fact that the density and melodic nature of the RH content creates greater presence of the quaver 'off-beats', therefore fortifying the overall rhythmic integrity of the movement.

Mikkola is not the only pianist to adopt faster tempi in these works. Izumi Tateno's tempo for the second sonata is semibreve = M.M. 74–76 with similarly blurred rhythmic groupings (Rautavaara, 1987). Of the numerous performances available online, most are as fast as or faster than Mikkola, with the fastest being pianist Garam Cho, who adopts a near-unintelligible tempo.[24] The recording that comes closest to Rautavaara's indicated metronome marking and also highlights the 3+2+3 rhythm most clearly is the work's most recent commercial recording by Erik T. Tawaststjerna (2019). Tawaststjerna's tempo sits between M.M. 62–65, falling well within Rautavaara's indicated *c. 60* range. Tawaststjerna's loyalty to the *il ritmo marcato* instruction is striking, with the rhythm consistently brought to the fore. He prioritises this LH outline over clarity of the RH, treating the RH quavers as more atmospheric, and often blurring them or grouping them closer or further away from the LH than a consistent quaver pulse might dictate. Although our focus here is on the first movement, Tawaststjerna's treatment of the third movement is noteworthy, being by far the closest to Rautavaara's tempo indication and also capturing the essence of the movement's character described by Rautavaara in our recorded discussion (see Section 3.4).[25]

Tawaststjerna's recording is an exception. The tendency among pianists to adopt a significantly faster tempo than that indicated in the score is noted in *Pianists' Edition: Finnish Works for Piano* (Mali, 2009), in which notable Finnish pianist Juhani Lagerspetz comments on the second sonata:

> Traditionally, the piece is played considerably faster than the composer's metronome markings indicate. Rautavaara gives the duration of the work as 11 minutes, but no performance usually lasts longer than about eight minutes. Tempo changes are also not always quite what is written. There are certain points in the score where it is marked that a whole note should become a half note and vice versa (e.g., measures 95–102 in the first movement), but such

[24] Garam Cho's performance is available at https://youtu.be/4_GyjzKBjXc
[25] Tawaststjerna plays the movement at crotchet = M.M. 116–18, whereas Mikkola plays significantly faster at crotchet = M.M. 180

> changes are traditionally also made in certain places where the composer for some reason has not indicated them (e.g., measures 78–81 in the first movement, and the last nine measures of the entire sonata). This is because continuing in the same tempo at those points would be impossible or senseless. (p. 80)

Lagerspetz confirms that the traditions surrounding the performance of the second sonata are firmly established. Further, he considers adhering to the composer's indicated metric relationships impossible or senseless. As we shall discuss in the following sections, these relationships are in fact possible and may be considered meaningful if one adopts Rautavaara's metronome indications. Interestingly, Lagerspetz does not seem to consider this a viable option, illustrating the extent to which the performance traditions have been accepted.

Mikkola acknowledges that her tempi tend to be faster than the indicated metronome markings in fast music, and somewhat slower than indicated in slow music, but states that although her choices have on occasion surprised Rautavaara, he has always come around to her way and given "his blessing" to her interpretive choices (in Virtanen, 2007, p. 141). This triangulation of agency between composer, score and performer when constructing performances presents a fascinating case when considering the ways in which performance traditions are formed, and the authority they tend to assume once established. Virtanen points out that this "merging of agencies" has implications for performers, who "might very well ponder whose intentions the performers are eventually realising when they perform a work" (p. 145). She then goes on to say:

> Although being faithful to the composer, the score and the performance tradition may be in conflict with one another, they can become inseparably connected after a while. For example, if a pianist were to play Rautavaara's First Piano Concerto after hearing some of Mikkola's numerous performances of it, as well as her recording, there would be a "performance practise *[sic]*" to lean on. But if this performance practise *[sic]* were followed, whose intentions would the pianist be realizing? Rautavaara's, of course, but certainly also Mikkola's, because her interpretational choices are not always congruent with the score's indications.
>
> (p. 146)

Re-evaluating Mikkola's recording at the time of writing, it is interesting to observe how my response has changed over the course of some twenty-two years. I still admire the drive, conviction and many pianistic qualities of Mikkola's playing and appreciate the sense of urgency and connectedness of the narrative arc she crafts between sections. But I now interpret Mikkola's performance as divergent from the essence of the work in its outer movements, *as I conceive it*. I

must emphasise that I do not consider Mikkola's performance 'wrong' in any sense of the word; Mikkola's recording captures a highly effective and authentic intersection between Rautavaara's composition and Mikkola's distinctive pianism and vision. Moreover, as her interviews with Virtanen make clear, Mikkola received the composer's blessing in forming her interpretations and was doing so in pursuit of her intuitive sense of truth as to the works' characters. I simply make these observations to highlight the flexibility of the musical work (in concept and in practice), and the real and vital role performers play in shaping listeners' (and other performers') experiences and conceptions of them.

Virtanen also points to a possible factor in the divergent interpretive choices of Mikkola: that of pianism, or the embodied experience of the pianist in playing the music (p. 150). Virtanen is right to consider the influences of embodiment upon interpretive solutions. The present study has drawn my attention to the large extent to which embodiment factors into the formation of habits, mannerisms or other pianistic/performative traits that, without careful attention, may seem to be considered interpretive decisions. Conversely, being finely attuned to one's embodiment and approaching the creative process with a posture of 'receiving' rather than 'delivering' may allow the performer to discover musical works in wholly unexpected ways and depart from their usual tendencies. Mikkola's creative process lies outside the scope of my research and it would be wrong to speculate on it. Suffice to say that embodiment is a real and often overlooked factor in performance choices of all kinds in the practice room, on stage, or in the studio. The way the music *feels* to play, and the way it interacts with instruments, spaces, performer physiques and personalities, are all legitimate and ever-present realities in the choice-making in which we engage when playing. This is an area in need of further research.

3.4 The composer's wishes

When studying the music of a deceased composer, performers search for clues to the composer's intentions through scores, recordings, writings, letters, interviews, composer biographies, and by studying historical and cultural context. One of the privileges of studying the music of living composers is that we can add one more activity to this list: we can speak with the composer about their music.

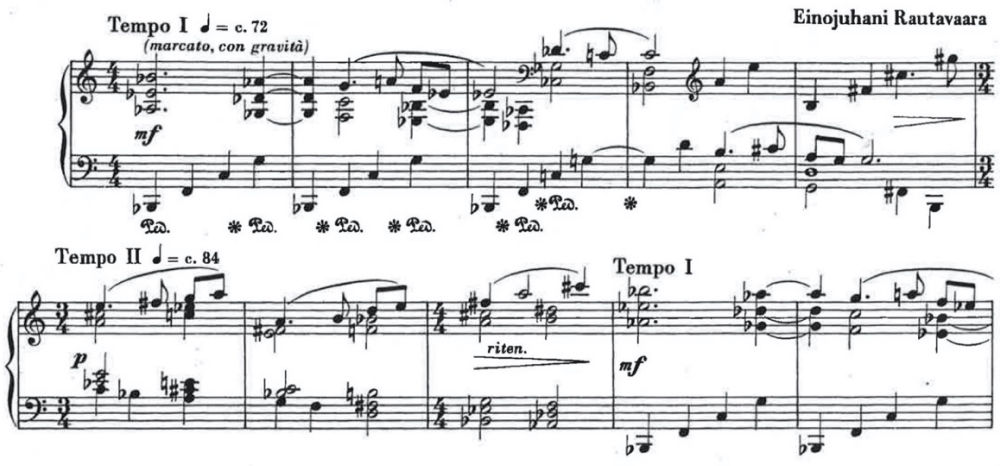
In 2013 and 2014, I had the opportunity to play a number of piano works for Rautavaara, including the two sonatas and the études. The following is an account of our meeting that took place on 5 May 2013, at which time I played the two piano sonatas and the short later work *Fuoco*. This meeting took place in preparation for my first doctoral concert, and I played the pieces for Rautavaara in the order in which they would be performed in concert, beginning with Sonata No.

1, followed by Sonata No. 2 and *Fuoco*. Rautavaara's wife Sini facilitated the visit and participated in the conversation. I recount excerpts from our discussion relevant to the first movement of Sonata No. 2.

> After my performance of Sonata No. 1, Rautavaara spoke about the importance of legato in his music. He asked for the sections marked *Tempo II* (bars 6–8, 17–26 etc.) in the first movement to be "as legato as possible" (Figure 11). Later on, when discussing the third movement, he emphasised the legato quality again:
>
> ER: As legato as possible, everywhere. I am fond of legato. I even — in the orchestra piece — when rehearsing it, I started to require legato from the trombone player … down there, which is quite impossible. And he tried, poor man! [laughter]
>
> (Rautavaara, personal interview,17:36)

That Rautavaara would ask for a true legato here is a valuable insight because the score does not specifically indicate this. The slurs show the bar-long phrase, but the inner and bass voices are unslurred.

Figure 11 Rautavaara, Piano Sonata No. 1, opening bars (Fennica Gehrman, 2006)



My rendition at the time was rather legato, but not 'super' legato; listening back to the recording of my playing and Rautavaara's feedback, he was clearly asking for a lush legato suggestive of orchestral strings. The third movement contains no slurs, and legato is not specified. But again, the most important quality for

Rautavaara here is achieving a rich, completely connected legato between the chords. I had these comments in mind when I went on to play the second sonata. I made sure to make the chant-like melody in the first movement and the lyrical RH melody in the second especially legato.

I asked Rautavaara about the lack of written dynamics in the second movement, and whether the natural shaping I brought out was what he had in mind. He liked the logic of my dynamic shifts, going on to say:

> ER: Composers have a tendency to always think that it's quite clear how it should be played… but it's not so…On the other hand, I like to leave it up to the performer to create.
>
> (Rautavaara, personal interview,13:00)

It is interesting to reflect on this room for the performer's agency in the context of the discussion that immediately followed my performance of Sonata No. 2. My tempo for the first movement was deliberately restrained; I remember that my aim at the time was to play it within the ballpark of Rautavaara's metronome indication, and to make the rhythm crystal clear. Listening back to this performance, my tempo for the first movement was M.M. 62–64. I did pick up more speed than I intended in the third movement, with a tempo of approx. M.M. 136. I now include the post-performance discussion on the first movement:

> ER: Have you checked this? [referring to metronome]
> AG: Yes, I have, this is a bit slower than how I play…
> ER: The reason, is that, if you play it like everybody always does – plays too fast – what you lose is the rhythm [taps out a clear 3+2+3 rhythm on the table]. You see? And it becomes [taps a muddled version] something like that. And I think that is a great pity.
> SR: So many people have played it for you, and it's always very difficult.
> ER: The same thing, every time. Whoever plays it.
> [we fetch the metronome and set it to 60 BPM. I play the opening again, at exactly 60]
> ER: Yes!
> AG: This tempo?
> ER: Yeah! One still hears it, very clearly. Of course, it's very easy to… it feels going forward with this tempo, but…
> AG: Yes, but I shouldn't get carried away…
> ER: Yes. And here, legato as possible [pointing to the chant-like melody at bar 51] And, this ought to be *unbelievably* slow. [pointing to the end of the first movement, molto sostenuto] So when you have [sings the molto sostenuto melody slowly, with great pauses in between each chord]

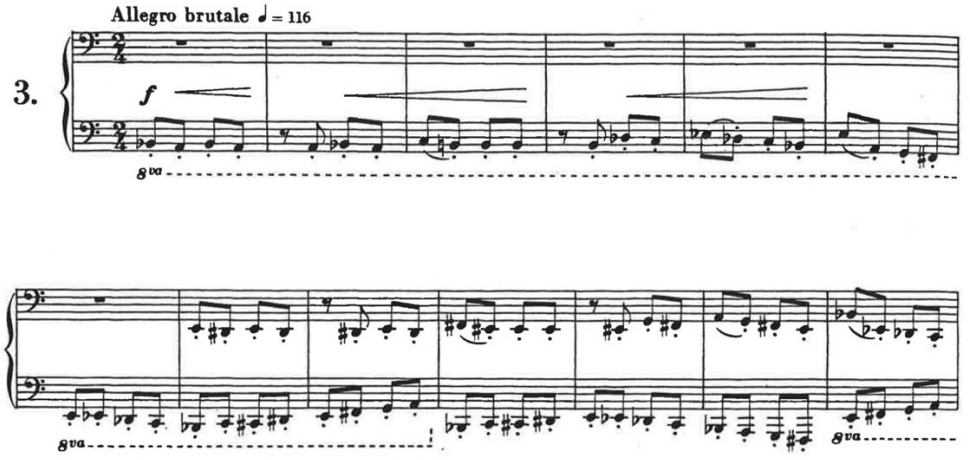
AG: So, you really mean this 2/1… [referring to the tempo relationship in the score]
ER: I *really* mean it
AG: OK
[He asks me to try it. I play from the return of the flickering material at bar 103 and try to maintain a 2/1 pulse. When I reach bar 124…]
ER: Slow! Even slower!
[I change my approach to listening to how the sounds want to linger, to the resonances, letting them fully ring without thinking at all about timing. I have a hunch this is the effect Rautavaara is after.]
ER: Bravo, bravo! It ought to be that every note would be your *last word* in this world. It expresses really, what the heck will come now? So, it is straightaway a tense atmosphere… As if it were *pain* to take this chord. As if you were always dying [makes a gesture and sings to demonstrate the pain and effort of each chord]
AG: Yes, this really changes it
ER: Yes
[We compare editions, and I observe the addition of 'molto sostenuto' above this final section in the later edition.]

(Rautavaara, personal interview, 31:07)

In our discussion on the second and third movements that followed, Rautavaara repeatedly emphasised the importance of the stated metronome markings to the character and atmosphere of the music. Singing the theme of the third movement by way of demonstration, with dramatic *crescendi* slamming right into the rests, he described its character as "fearless and hopeless" (Figure 12). Without reference to the metronome, his vocal demonstration matched precisely what he had marked in the score forty years earlier: M.M. 116. This internalisation of the tempo points to a deep connection — at least in Rautavaara's conception of the work — between character, atmosphere and tempo. These are not isolated elements; they are interrelated.

If I had gone into this visit with any doubt as to the strength of Rautavaara's convictions about the tempo and character indications in the second sonata, this meeting removed every last trace. Hearing his insistence that the intense strength of character derives from following the tempo and expressive indications to their full value (and even stretching beyond if the moment calls for it) gave the work even greater gravitas. It was clear that over four decades after its composition, Rautavaara's convictions about this work had not changed. I was faced with a fascinating split between the established performance tradition (acknowledged by the composer as 'too fast') and the composer's written indications and verbal convictions.

Figure 12 Rautavaara Sonata No. 2, 3rd movt., opening bars (Fennica Gehrman, 1972)



The following section describes my creative process for the preparation of the first movement. The three 'disembodied' layers of knowledge discussed thus far (knowledge of other works by the same composer, performance traditions, and the composer's wishes) are by no means the only ones that can be integrated into the process. The scope of this dissertation does not allow me to examine keyboard symmetry[26] or harmonic language, for example, or undertake an investigation of individual musical elements as per Rink's 'performer's analysis'. But these three areas shall suffice in demonstrating how the Chekhov technique may be used to synthesise various types of knowledge into an embodied creative process leading to a performance.

3.5 Putting it all together

Two video examples accompany this discussion. Video 3.1 demonstrates the opening of each of the works discussed with regard to the 3+2+3 rhythm. Video 3.2 is a performance of the first movement of Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon*, demonstrating the performative results (in that particular live moment of performance) of the creative process described below. The practice session described in this section took place immediately before Video 3.2 was recorded. I

[26] Brandon Paul (2008) has written about the role of keyboard symmetry in Rautavaara's piano works.

hope that this brief discussion of key moments and findings, in tandem with the video demonstrations, shall demonstrate the Chekhov work in action.
I must first introduce one more piece of Chekhovian process — 'flying over' — which I adopt in my practice described below. Flying over is a rehearsal technique developed by Chekhov in which the performers move through the entire play or performance to develop an embodied sense of the whole (Cornford, 2020). Chekhov believed this should be done early in the rehearsal process, so that actors develop a birds-eye-view of a performance. He also saw flying over as a way of achieving a sense of ease and playfulness with the big, difficult moments of a play (a tragic climax, for example). By exploring qualities, atmospheres, gestures and images (focussing on the 'how' rather than the 'what' or the 'why') early in the rehearsal process, actors are set free from fear and may establish a playful and creatively empowered approach to their work (Chekhov, 1991, 2002). Further, it is not necessary to rehearse the work sequentially; the play may be rehearsed out of order, for example beginning at the end or at a climactic moment deep in the play before jumping back to the opening. Chekhov encouraged actors not to be tethered to their first ideas, reminding them that "[y]ou can start with something which seems to be the climax, and then when you discover the real climax you can discard the old one. All this gives much freedom – you are not compelled to keep to your first vision" (Chekhov, 1937, 28 October). Peter Brook echoes this, describing his rehearsal process as "putting yesterday's discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us (1972, p. 17).

Returning to this work after nine years, I deliberately approach it with the aim of discovering the music with new eyes and ears. For clarity, Chekhovian terms are italicised in their first appearance within each section to follow.

3.5.1 Opening, bars 1–51

The sonata begins with a stream of quavers grouped into rhythmic cells of 3+2+3 situated within a tight range in the bass. The alteration of the hands is clearly defined: the LH plays the first note of each rhythmic cell, the RH plays the notes in between. This 3+2+3 ostinato runs through the majority of the movement. Before playing, I use *receiving* to take in the information in the score (the tempo, metre, dynamic, pedal, the notes, etc.).[27]

[27] In his workshops, Graham Dixon spoke about the difference between 'receiving' reading (in which the actor takes *in* the text, absorbing the words like a sponge) and a more common kind of reading in which the actor projects preconceptions onto the text thereby closing off new imaginative possibilities.

My exploration is guided not by 'what' or 'why' questions, but Chekhov's favourite question and the gateway to creativity in performance, 'how'. I explore various *qualities of movement* and in so doing make a discovery that holds a clue to the character of this movement. The quality of *flowing* leads to a quick *outer tempo*[28] due to the pleasurable feeling of ease in the hands. But this quick outer tempo and the easeful and unhindered blur of notes creates a slow *inner tempo* (the inner movement life of the music). With no friction within the bar, and with one bar flowing effortlessly into the next, the inner tempo feels surprisingly calm. On the other hand, a *moulding* quality instantly puts the brakes on the outer tempo by creating resistance between body and air, and between finger and key. With this comes a friction within and between each rhythmic cell in the bar, producing a quicker inner tempo. These differences occur not just in sound but in my inner life; in the former I feel inwardly calm as if gliding in slow motion, and inwardly active and filled with energy in the latter. Relating these embodied findings to the established performance traditions of playing this movement extremely fast (3.3) and the composer's wishes to play it more slowly in service of the character (3.4), I now have a developing embodied understanding of the contingent nature of not just tempo and character, but of tempo in a richer sense (comprising inner and outer tempi), quality (the 'how' of movement) and character.

I compare the experience of playing this opening material with other works of Rautavaara that feature the 2+3+2 rhythm, integrating the score-based comparisons discussed in 3.2 (see Video 3.1). My aim is to discover the key differences in character between these four works so that the specific character of the second sonata may emerge. I use qualities of movement, *gesture* and *atmosphere* to lead this exploration, with the score-based comparisons present in the background. This embodied comparison leads to the following findings:

- The Étude (Figure 8) is dance-like and rustic. The LH digs into the downbeats and lifts off energetically at the onset of the final rhythmic cell of each bar. But along with this dance-like swing is a tension that seeks release. I find a 'squeezing' gesture through the first four bars, as if the material is being squeezed through a tight space before finding freedom in bar 5.

- The third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 (Figure 9) is more vibrant and joyful than the étude. I discover openness and lightness in the B-flat major tonal centre, and from the melodic line arced out in the left hand, which lifts off the downbeat of bar 2. I find a gesture of bouncing into the downbeat of bar 1 (a big preparatory impulse occurs prior to the sound, as

[28] *Outer tempo* is what musicians would consider 'tempo', measured in beats per minute.

if preparing to bounce a ball), with bars 2–4 rebounding freely. There is an ecstatic quality to this movement.

- The second movement of Sonata No. 1 (Figure 10) is stickier and heavier than the other three works, although it shares the dance-like feel of the étude and concerto. Gravity seems to be working more strongly on this movement than the other works, and I have a sensation of moulding some dense and resistant material that wants to dance. Its release is granted at bar 8, but this dance is more grounded and texturally rich than the étude and concerto.

- By comparison, the Sonata No. 2 is decidedly *not* dance-like nor joyful. Its character stands quite apart from the other three works as volatile and dangerous. Although *pp* at its opening, the friction, instability, and potential for explosion are palpable. Rather than bouncing or lifting off, the quavers in this sonata flicker with immense internal energy.

Informed by these findings, my work on the opening becomes more focussed. I now have a strong sense of the character of this movement as volatile, dangerous, energetic and relentless. I find that a combined quality of *moulding/flying* affords both the deliberateness of touch and the quick reactions to impulse that the music demands. This quality naturally leads me to an outer tempo of semibreve = M.M. 60 and along with it, a quick inner tempo of immense energy. I find that imagining all movement originating from my legs, pelvis and lower back (the 'will' *imaginary centre*) helps to channel the kind of relentless drive that underlies the friction within each bar. I also find that the *energetic directions* of expansion and contraction are used in a particular way that further reinforces the volatility of the music: expansion is drawn out (crescendo hairpins in bars 15–16, 19–20 and 24–25) but contraction happens suddenly (*subito p* after each hairpin). The moulding/flying quality combined with expansion creates an electrifying effect.

In this opening section, my creative process has synthesised my embodied experience with knowledge of other works by Rautavaara and the composer's wishes. It has led me to diverge from the established performance tradition.

3.5.2 *Cantabile*, bars 52–77

This section sees the introduction of a *cantabile* chant-like melody moving in semibreves atop a rich bar-long bass of open fifths and octaves and an inner layer comprised of the flickering 3+2+3 ostinato that continues uninterrupted from the preceding bars.

I explore this section using the *qualities of movement*, settling on a *moulding/floating* quality for the RH melody and the bass, and a *floating/flying* quality for the 3+2+3 rhythm. The transformation of quality from moulding/flying to floating/flying for this rhythmic ostinato actually takes place in the preceding bar (bar 51) with the first *diminuendo* of the piece. The ostinato recedes in dynamic but maintains its energy; this energy would not be as active in pure floating, but the addition of flying keeps the hands alive and responsive to impulses. The character undergoes a shift here with the introduction of long phrases and a soothing melody that counteracts the danger of the primary material. But there is also a sense of unity: the flickering does continue, as does the sense of a slower outer tempo and active inner tempo. I also find that maintaining the *'will' centre* and feeling energy flowing from my legs and pelvis is very effective in remaining grounded, and in creating some emotional distance between me as performer and the powerful atmosphere and feeling of the music.

I intuitively feel connected to the *energetic directions* up and forward, which makes me curious to know what energetic directions I had been imagining in the opening. Directions had not been a primary tool in my work on the opening, but that is something that I could go back and explore as part of an embodied process.

I also discover a shift to moulding/flying in bars 70–71 and 75–77 where the texture cracks open, and the 3+2+3 material explodes in surges up and down the keyboard.

3.5.3 Explosion, bars 78–102

As noted by Lagerspetz (in Mali, 2009), a normative performance of this sonata sees a tempo change (minim = semibreve) in bars 78–81. In my process, I leave this information aside for now. As the *fff* at bar 78 is a clear arrival point, I practise the transition into it to develop an embodied understanding of its shape and meaning in context. From the second half of bar 76, the material no longer surges up and down the keyboard but emphatically repeats itself three times, the hands two octaves further apart each time. From the third time, the hands remain in their respective registers, and for the first time in the sonata we depart from quavers as the smallest note value: the RH dispatches streams of semiquavers while the LH carves out an accented version of the chant-like melody from the previous section.

In my embodied approach to this section, I synthesise *qualities of movement*, a *feeling of the whole*, *gesture*, *centres*, the *energetic body*, knowledge of Rautavaara's other works, and my conversation with Rautavaara. Releasing the quality of *flying* slightly from the mix at the midway point of bar 77 and using more of a *moulding* quality from bar 77.5 to 81 creates a powerful effect. It links

bars 77 and 78, rendering the *fff* and the change of note values and musical material at that point a natural and inevitable development from what has come before. This creates a strong feeling of the whole, as it relates the *fff* bars not just to the *cantabile* section that immediately precedes it, but to the very opening of the movement and to the section that follows it. Gesturally, I feel a tsunami of energy accumulating, reaching its tipping point and finally engulfing the instrument and the space. My *imaginary centre* offers a powerful flow of energy, and the *energetic body* allows that energy to *radiate* through the instrument and out into the space. Knowing Rautavaara's orchestral writing, I can imagine how he might have orchestrated such a climax — streams of energy created by hundreds of individually indiscernible pitches in the strings and winds, and powerful low brass for the melody. My meeting with Rautavaara also informed me about his fondness for legato in many places, even when not explicitly marked.

All these factors combined give me such a strong embodied sense of this climactic passage that performance tradition recedes even further from my mind. Playing at Rautavaara's specified outer tempo (semibreve = M.M. 60) with the key characteristics of friction and volatility that I have discovered, this climax is able to come about without any obvious tempo change at bar 78. The weight and density of the material naturally calls for a slight broadening, but this is well within the ballpark of the basic tempo, and, thinking orchestrally, completely natural. Once more, my embodied approach leads me to diverge from performance tradition.

3.5.4 Ending

From bar 103 to the end of the movement, I synthesise *receiving/radiating*, *qualities of movement*, *centres*, the *energetic body*, *energetic directions*, and insight gained from my meeting with Rautavaara. I have not yet discussed the ways in which I use receiving/radiating with the instrument or the space; in fact, this process is occurring on a moment-to-moment basis throughout the practice session and the performance. The final page of the movement offers ample opportunity to explore this aspect of performance.

At bar 103, the opening material returns *pp,* unexpectedly interrupting the sweeping *appassionato* section that precedes it. I *receive* the way the instrument responds to my touch, carefully judging (not just intellectually, but in a fully embodied sense) the precise weight and speed of touch in response to the feel and the sound as I play. I revert to the *moulding/flying qualities* of the opening, once more tapping into the slower *outer tempo* and the fast *inner tempo* that gives this movement its relentless inner drive. Receiving the instrument does not happen in a vacuum — the instrument behaves the way it does in collaboration with the space

(more on this in Chapter 4). Receiving the instrument also means receiving the space. As I depress the pedal incrementally beginning in bar 107 to shape the enormous crescendo leading to *fff* and the final *molto sostenuto* coda, I receive not only the feel of the pedal and the precise degree to which the dampers lift, but also the way the sound resonates in the space. I do this by maintaining a connection with my *'will' imaginary centre*, with all movement flowing from the legs and pelvis to keep me grounded and connected to the determined, fearless nature of the music. This grounding allows me to maintain physical *ease* (one of Chekhov's *Four Brothers*) despite the friction and struggle in the character of the music. This physical ease facilitates a degree of emotional distance from the action so that I can judge as objectively as possible the sound in the space. I am at once fully immersed in the action — listening with my whole body, receiving and responding to impulses in each moment, and radiating with my whole body — and listening as if from a distance.

At the *molto sostenuto*, I recall Rautavaara's advice to play as slowly as possible, as if I could die before the next sound comes (see Section 3.4). Rather than simply trying to play as slowly as possible, or to induce a real emotional experience of despair (my former approach, which led to enormous amounts of physical tension) I call upon Chekhovian technical elements that will allow me to play this section as if for the first time. Receiving and radiating is enormously helpful here. Really receiving the impulse to play, which means connecting with the space, listening with the whole body and allowing the impulse for the next sound to really 'drop in', places me in a collaborative relationship with the instrument, space, sound, audience, and music. Rather than delivering an idea, I am receiving and radiating the ideas in each moment. I combine this with qualities of movement, dropping the flying quality completely and utilising pure moulding for maximum depth and weight. I maintain the 'will' centre to keep me grounded (I have used this for the entire movement), and I also make use of the energetic body, imagining waves of energy flowing through me and preceding my physical body, then sustaining the movement with a moulding quality beyond my physical body. It is through this sustained, moulding energetic body that I listen to the sound in the space and wait for the next impulse. Finally, I use the energetic direction of expansion for this entire page, which helps create the auditory illusion that the sound is growing and sustaining through long chords. The illusion works because imagining energetic expansion through long notes affects the way each *next* note or chord is approached.

As seen in Video 3.2, the process described above led to a performance that diverges quite substantially from the established performance traditions for this movement. But I hope that this chapter has made clear that whether my performance decisions adhered to or diverged from traditions, composer's wishes,

score, etc., is not the point. My aim in this research is to develop a methodology for music performance within WCM that is alive to the moment. Cultivating a sensitivity to aliveness means that any performance, regardless of where it falls on the spectrum from normative to radical, may be judged not by its place on that spectrum but by the degree to which the performer's embodiment (and by extension the listener's) of the music is enacted.

4 Embodying music through imaginative collaboration

...the truly awakened imagination is in constant, fiery activity. What did the great masters of the past do while observing the ripening of their images? They collaborated with them through their fiery "gaze", their creative urging attention. ... Thus they worked consciously hand in hand with their images.

(Chekhov, 1991, p. 4)

Through the embodied working methods described in Chapter 3, a web of imaginative and collaborative processes between musician, instrument, space, score, composer, and performance practice(s) has emerged. In this chapter, I develop the idea of collaboration further. I contextualise the Michael Chekhov work within current creativity research from embodied cognitive science and discuss the ways in which it intersects with a 4E (embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive) model of creativity. Finally, I suggest a new conceptual model for music performance that reflects the primacy of the body and the embodied imagination in musical practice, situating the Chekhov technique as a methodology for musical embodiment.

4.1 A glimpse at the creativity story so far

The study of human creativity encompasses a diverse range of perspectives, models, and approaches. Two basic orientations toward creativity characterise much of the research thus far.[29] The first understands creativity in terms of products and artefacts deemed creative against various criteria. The second understands creativity in terms of the processes undertaken by individual creative agents (Sawyer, 2003, 2006). An example of the first is Margaret Boden's (2004) distinction between personal-psychological creativity (P), whereby a product or idea is novel and valuable to its creator, and historical creativity (H), which produces products or ideas that are historically original (p. 71). Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) distinction between big-C and small-c creativity operates along similar lines, whereby big-C creativity is recognised by the relevant domain(s) or field(s) of knowledge, and small-c creativity is not recognised by the domain but is considered creative on a personal scale. The notable difference between the two

[29] An in-depth overview of creativity studies as it relates to music performance is beyond the scope of this dissertation and has been conducted by numerous scholars. See for example Sawyer (2003, 2006), van der Schyff et al. (2018), and van der Schyff & Schiavio (2022).

lies in whether wider recognition from the domain is intrinsic to defining Big-C, or H-Creativity. In Boden's framework, creativity is determined H-creative if the product or idea it yields has (as far as we know) arisen for the first time in history. She does not place importance on the adjudication of the idea/artefact's value by experts within a domain. Csikszentmihalyi, on the other hand, argues that acceptance and recognition from the broader domain in which the novel idea or artefact arises (or to which it contributes) is necessary in determining Big-C Creativity. Citing the example of Van Gogh, Csikszentmihalyi argues that Van Gogh's big-C Creativity came into being following his death. During the artist's own lifetime — before his work was recognised by the artistic domain — he practiced small-c creativity. As Cook (2018), Sawyer (2003, 2006) and others have pointed out, while these and the many approaches of this type are useful as far as offering frameworks for categorising creative outputs go, they shed little light on the unfolding activity or experience of creativity as it happens — that is, on its processes.

A process-focussed view on creativity was pioneered by Graham Wallas (1926), whose seminal work proposed a creative process comprising four stages (preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification). More recently, Finke et al. (1992) proposed the 'Geneplore' model to describe the alternating phases of generative and exploratory activity that lead to creative outcomes. With roots in cognitive psychology, the authors view creativity as an outgrowth of the thinking process, as "neither a random process nor one that is predetermined but as a highly structured activity that can often result in surprising and unexpected outcomes" (p. 115). For practitioners, considering creativity in terms of multi-stage processes is valuable in planning, conducting and reflecting on creative work. But what the process-driven frameworks do not account for are the dynamic, collaborative features of creativity, and the role of the body.

Recent work has addressed the social features of creative processes, viewing creativity not in terms of individuals working alone, but as involving multiple agents. Keith Sawyer's work on group creativity in music performance (2003, 2006) has shed light on the socially distributed nature of creativity and identifies three key characteristics of creativity in ensemble contexts. First, creativity is *improvisational*, in that it occurs in the moment-to-moment interaction between musicians. Second, the interactional nature of creativity makes it *collaborative* — creativity cannot be attributed to any individual musician alone. Thirdly, creativity is *emergent*. Contingent upon the group, it is an unpredictable phenomenon that cannot be explained in terms of the group's individual components (Sawyer, 2006).

Some of the most interesting work emerging from creativity studies draws on embodied cognitive science and ecological dynamics. It highlights the complex 'synergistic' nature of the interactions and processes that make up creativity in action (van der Schyff & Schiavio, 2022; van der Schyff et al., 2018). Embodied, ecological views on creativity offer rich possibilities for musicians to conceptualise processes associated with creativity as dynamic and non-linear. Recognising the central importance of the body in such processes and adopting a synergistic view of the body's roles within creative practice, musicians may align their conceptions of creativity with their actual embodied experiences of practice, thereby substantiating, strengthening, and deepening the embodied dimensions of practice. This paves the way for new avenues of embodied practice research, and the development of new practice methodologies. Applying a 4E model (embodied, embedded, extended, enactive) to music performance is particularly useful in this regard. In the following sections, I shall unpack these embodied, ecological views of creativity, placing them in dialogue with the embodied practices and processes described in the two preceding chapters, practitioner accounts, and perspectives from music performance studies.

4.2 '4E' musical creativity

Without entering into the intricacies of the rapidly developing field of embodied cognition (a field far from my own), a few words on its underlying assumptions will help set up the music-centred discussion to follow. The 'embodied mind' thesis (Varela et al., 1991) views cognition as dependent upon the body and its sensorimotor capabilities, rejecting the Cartesian dualist view of cognition that arises from a disembodied mind. Proponents of embodied cognition argue that cognition springs not from the brain alone, but from the dynamic interactions that occur between brain, body, and the biological, psychological, and cultural environments in which they are embedded (pp. 172–173). The 4E model brings together these four approaches to cognition. Cognition is *embodied*, as it is dependent on the experience of having a body with sensorimotor capacities; it is *embedded* within the contingent environment(s) in which the body operates; it is *extended* beyond the individual and may include human and non-human agents such as instruments, tools, and technologies; and it is *enactive*, as it depends upon dynamic interactions within the body-brain-environment ecology (Newen et al., 2018).

Musical creativity in performance can be considered in terms of the 4E model. Viewing musical creativity as an emergent property enacted through "circular, recursive, non-linear interactions between a range of components within a complex, evolving, musical ecology", the 4E model is useful in understanding the interplay between the "personal (corporeal-emotional-neural), social, cultural, and

technological domains" that give rise to it (van der Schyff & Schiavio, 2022, p. 495). Importantly, creativity is synergistic in nature in that each component is interrelated, entangled, simultaneously influencing and influenced by all other components within the musical ecological system.
I shall briefly discuss each 'E', unpacking its relation to music performance.

Creativity is *embodied*

Readers who have come this far will be in no doubt as to my views on the primacy of the performer's body in music performance. Not just a physical apparatus charged with the execution of musical ideas, the musician's body is the receiver and generator of a constant flow of impulses. Indeed, it is impossible to describe the experience of performing without describing processes that all centre around the body. In performance — at least the kinds of enlivened performances we strive for — the whole body becomes a listener, an actor, a thinker-in-action (Montero, 2016).

In an example offered by van der Schyff et al. (2018), a bass player asked to improvise on a novel instrument will not begin by merely "thinking" about musical material to be developed; rather, "improvising is intrinsically related to the actual ways the fingers hit the strings and how the instrument "responds" to the performer's intentions (i.e., what it "affords" in real time, as the improvisation unfolds), and how the entire body "feels" – how it facilitates and resonates with such activity, dynamically" (p. 5). The foundation for this unfolding, interactive process involving musician, instrument, environment, and the sounding musical materials being produced is the musician's embodiment.

Creativity is *extended*

The extended dimension of cognition and creativity was proposed by Andy Clark and David Chalmers' in their seminal philosophical essay *The Extended Mind* (1998). Clark and Chalmers posit that cognitive processes extend beyond the brain and the body and include the participation of human or non-human agents such as tools and technologies. Therefore, they view the mind as residing not only inside the brain, or in the body, but extending beyond it into the physical world. To illustrate this, Clark and Chalmers offer a thought experiment in which two fictional characters travel to a museum. Otto has Alzheimer's disease and uses the written directions in his notebook to function as his memory, while Inga remembers the directions by using her internal memory. The authors argue that Otto's notebook serves as an extension of his mind as it is always accessible and immediately endorsed by him. Along similar lines, Richard Feynman explains (in Clark, 2008) that his notebook plays an integral role in his cognitive processing.

For Feynman, the notebook does not merely serve as a *record* of his thinking but rather as *part of his thinking* because his thought work takes place outside his head, with pen and paper. These examples point to a continuum of function from thinking onboard (Inga's internal memory) to thinking offboard (Otto's notebook serving as memory, and Feynman's as thought work). Nicholas Cook (2018) relates this to musical performance, pointing out that by the same argument, "thinking with notes is onboard while thinking with instruments is offboard" (p. 116). Instruments do not just reflect or make audible our touch or intentions, they respond and, as Cook puts it, they 'talk back' to us. The bodily experience of our improvising bass player above is wrapped up in how the instrument responds to his input.

Instruments can also behave as extensions of our perceptual apparatus. Merleau-Ponty (2002) presents his famous example of a blind person using a cane to navigate their environment to highlight the continuity between corporeal, neural, and environmental domains. Is the cane merely a tool, or does the immediacy, sensitivity and reliability of the relationship render it something more — an extension of the user's cognition? Merleau-Ponty argues the latter. Through dedicated practice over many years, professional musicians develop intimate relationships with their instruments. Like the blind person and their cane, acute attunement to one's instrument can give rise to extended perceptual processing. Brought blindfolded into a room, playing a few notes on the piano would tell a pianist a great deal about not just the instrument but the room: its size, its dominant materials, the height of its ceiling, the approximate placement of the instrument within the space, possibly even the humidity level. Instruments can also help us to perceive things about ourselves. As I write, a pianist friend and colleague has contracted the COVID-19 virus. Feeling 'a little off but not too bad', it was only playing the piano that taught her about the precise heaviness of her limbs and the subtle deterioration of her spatial awareness. The piano, through her intimate relationship with it developed over decades of practice, revealed to her details about her physical condition about which she would have otherwise been unaware. The idea that instruments, spaces, and scores (as well as various immaterial elements such as lineages of practice and historical knowledge) may behave not only as extensions of the performer's mind but as 'nonhuman agents' in collaboration with performers shall be discussed in Section 4.4.

Creativity is *embedded*

Embodied minds do not exist in a vacuum. They are embedded in "broader physical and socio-cultural systems that shape and are shaped by the agents who inhabit them" (van der Schyff et al., 2018, p. 6). Embedded cognition draws on the theory of affordances developed by psychologist James Gibson in his work on

ecological psychology (1966, 1979). The term 'affordances' describes the possibilities for action that are perceived to be offered by an object or environment. An upright piano, for example, offers the pianist a particular set of possibilities for action in terms of touch, tonal variety, treatment of resonance, pedalling, etc. A concert grand offers a different set of possibilities. The same instrument affords different possibilities to different individuals; the range of possible action available to a beginner pianist is different to that of a professional pianist.

But the concept of affordances can also be applied to our socio-cultural environments, and to the ways in which we (consciously or unconsciously) interact with them. Let us briefly look at two contrasting examples of current performance practice research: Neal Peres Da Costa's historically informed 'Reimagining Brahms and Schumann' project, and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's 'radical performance' work. Peres Da Costa aims to create performances that re-imagine works "in the context of the palette of expressive practices that Brahms and Schumann and their close circle were known to enjoy and expected in a 'beautiful' rendition."[30] To that end, he has developed a process of early recording emulation, whereby an early recording (ideally the closest recorded performance to the lineage of practice associated with the composer in question) is imitated and eventually emulated by the contemporary performer.[31] All discernible details of performance — from the precise asynchrony of the hands (rhythmic displacement of melody from accompaniment) to fluctuations in tempo and *rubati* — are copied as closely as possible. The aim of this imitative first stage is to reach a more creative second stage at which these performative characteristics are internalised to the point at which they can be applied to other (perhaps unrecorded) works of the same composer or period. Leech-Wilkinson's 'radical performance' proposal, outlined in his article *Classical music as enforced Utopia* (2016) and discussed more thoroughly through his website and open-access digital book *Challenging Performance* (2020), aims to bolster the performer's creative agency in rejection of what he sees as unfounded moral responsibilities to (predominantly) dead composers.[32] Performers are encouraged to deliberately disobey scores and normative performance trends, to explore potentialities afforded by musical works far beyond those imagined by their composers or by obedient performers. The first

[30] Taken from the project summary accessible at https://www.sydney.edu.au/music/our-research/artistic-research/reinvigorating-nineteenth-century-performance.html
[31] The process of early recording emulation is described and demonstrated in Neal Peres Da Costa's 'About Music' lecture at the Sydney Conservatorium (2015), accessible at https://youtu.be/K1KiGdia5TY
[32] The online book is accessible at https://challengingperformance.com/

movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight* sonata, put though the radical performance treatment, comes out *allegro agitato*; the moonlit elegy is now a violent storm.[33]

In offering these two examples, my aim is not to evaluate the merits or pitfalls of either approach, but to reflect on what they highlight about the embedded nature of our creative pursuits, their contingency on affordances of our present socio-cultural environment, and the ways in which these factors play upon and underwrite our creative actions. Richard Taruskin (1995) has famously pointed out that Historically Informed Performance (HIP) is a product and symptom of late twentieth-century modernism and as such may be considered a modernist performance practice as much as a historically informed one.[34] At the core of Taruskin's position is an understanding of the necessarily embedded nature of creative practice, regardless of what that creative practice claims to seek or achieve. Both Peres Da Costa and Leech-Wilkinson — compelled by a historical bent or otherwise, and regardless of where their performance outcomes lie on the normative to radical spectrum (and we would need to define what we mean by these terms, as these too are embedded) — are firmly embedded in our 21st century digital age in their values, aims and methodologies. Both make use of all the technologies and resources that our current socio-cultural environment affords.

Audiences, too, are an important part of the socio-cultural environments in which we make music, and their expectations (or their expectations as we imagine them) come with affordances of their own. Consider Mozart, describing in a letter to his father the performance of his 'Paris' symphony, in which "the audience, as I expected, said "hush" at the soft beginning, and when they heard the forte, began at once to clap their hands" (in Cook, 2018, p. 71). As Cook points out, Mozart is composing not just the notes, but also the audience's response to the notes. That audience — both the real one and one Mozart imagined as he was writing his symphony — is part of the broader physical and socio-cultural system within which every musician, during every period, and in every place, is embedded. Mozart's imagined audience shaped his creation, and in turn, Mozart's creation shaped his environment.

Creativity is *enactive*

From the examples offered so far, we have seen that creativity arises from the continuous flow of meaningful interactions between embodied organisms, other human or non-human agents within our environments, and those environments

[33] The 'new' *Moonlight* sonata performed by pianist Ji Liu is accessible at https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-23-1/

[34] See Butt (2002) for an extensive discussion of issues surrounding historical performance practice.

themselves. These interactions are improvisational, ever-changing, and are based on bodily and environmental affordances in the moment. We have touched on the ways in which musicians may interact with instruments and performance spaces (extended creativity), and the socio-cultural environments in which they operate (embedded creativity). These relationships shall be discussed in more detail in the following section, as we shift our focus to the ways in which creativity in music performance is enacted.

4.3 Chekhov's chart of inspired acting

In her preface to *On the technique of acting* (in Chekhov, 1991), Mala Powers includes a reproduction of Chekhov's chart for inspired acting (Figure 13). This chart — which Chekhov considered an encapsulation of his technique — provides insight into Chekhov's holistic approach. Not all the components of the technique have been included in this dissertation; this is deliberate. I have focussed on aspects that I believe intersect most fruitfully with music performance, and (for the purposes of the present study) specifically solo performance. Immediately apparent is the circular, non-linear construction of the image, with 'inspired acting' at its centre. Chekhov saw the components of the technique as interconnected light bulbs; when one light bulb is illuminated, it activates all the others and enables 'inspired acting'. Arrows point outward and inward to represent constant interaction between the actor and the principles/technical components.

The non-linear, dynamic and synergistic nature of Chekhov's technique aligns with the embodied and ecological views of musical creativity outlined above. Further, the Chekhov chart is compatible with a 4E model of creativity. First, embodiment is of fundamental importance to the technique — all technical elements call upon it and, through practice, enhance it. Second, creativity is extended through interactions with the space (atmosphere, radiating and receiving, qualities of movement, directions, gesture) and other people (ensemble). Third, it is embedded within the conditions and socio-cultural world of the play (style, composition) and those of the creative team (director, designers, other actors, etc). Fourth, it is enacted as the embodied actor and her environment interact and actively play upon one another.

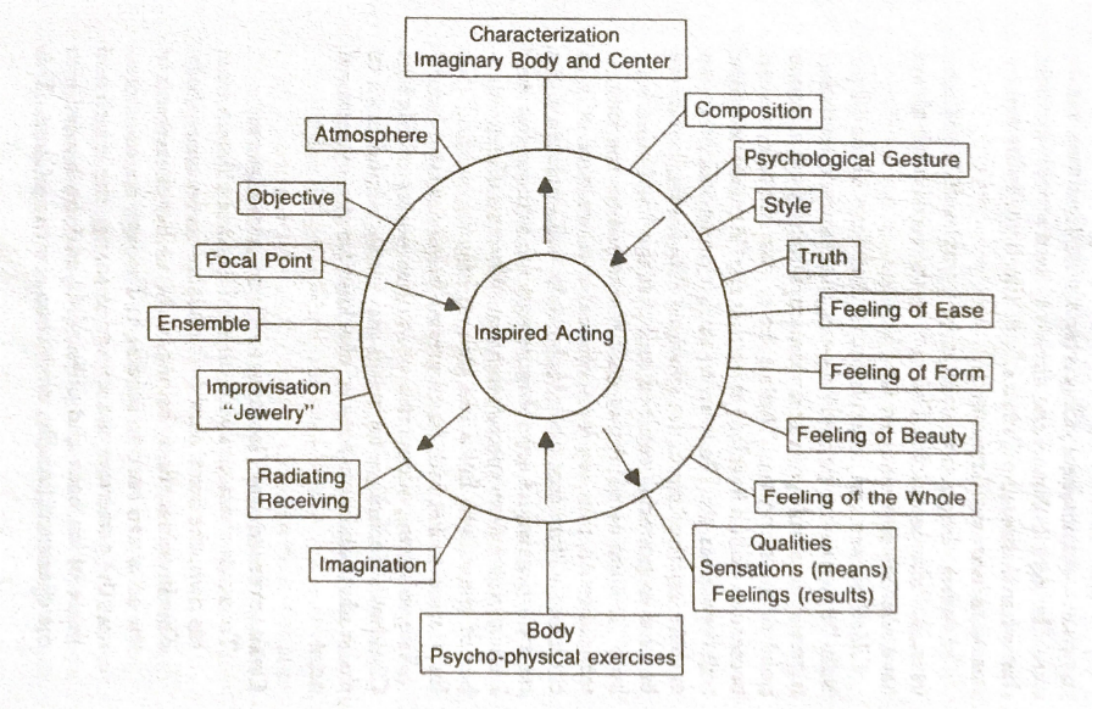


Figure 13 Chekhov's chart of inspired acting (in Chekhov, 1991, p. xxxvi)

4.4 Embodied Imaginative Collaboration

Drawing together the various strands of thought introduced thus far, I wish to build upon the Chekhov chart of inspired acting and tailor it to the performing musician. With growing understanding of the collaborative dimensions and possibilities within solo music performance, the broad dynamic interactions at play in musical creativity, and the importance of embodiment to creativity, there is now a need for a new conceptual model that includes the particular components, techniques, and processes of an embodied musical practice. Writing from the perspective of the performer, I feel the need for tools, techniques and methods for embodiment and a conceptual model of music performance that illustrates how these techniques interact. I hope Chapters 2 and 3 have achieved the former. The remainder of this chapter sets out to achieve the latter.

I suggest an Embodied Imaginative Collaboration (EIC) model for music performance. Figure 14 illustrates the circular, non-linear and synergistic nature of EIC, similar to the Chekhov chart of inspired acting. But unlike Chekhov's chart, my model aims to differentiate the technical elements (or 'tools' of the method) from the external dimensions (by which I mean external to the musician's body) with which the musician collaborates. Within the middle ring are technical

elements that have been described in Chapters 1 and 2. The outer ring represents the external dimensions such as instruments, spaces, audience, etc. Further, these dimensions are loosely categorised in terms of their role within the 4E model of musical creativity. For example, understanding that instruments may be part of the musician's extended cognition/creativity allows us to view their role not only as 'instrumental' but as agents in the thinking/creativity itself. Aspects such as historical knowledge and lineages of practice (which encompasses aspects like performance practice) are part of the embedded dimension of creativity; they form the larger context within which the EIC operates. I take this idea further, however, by suggesting that musicians may also imaginatively collaborate *with* the embedded dimensions of creativity. This collaboration is facilitated, enhanced and deepened via the Chekhov techniques/processes represented in the middle ring.

I shall begin with an outline of the overarching principles before discussing key elements in turn.

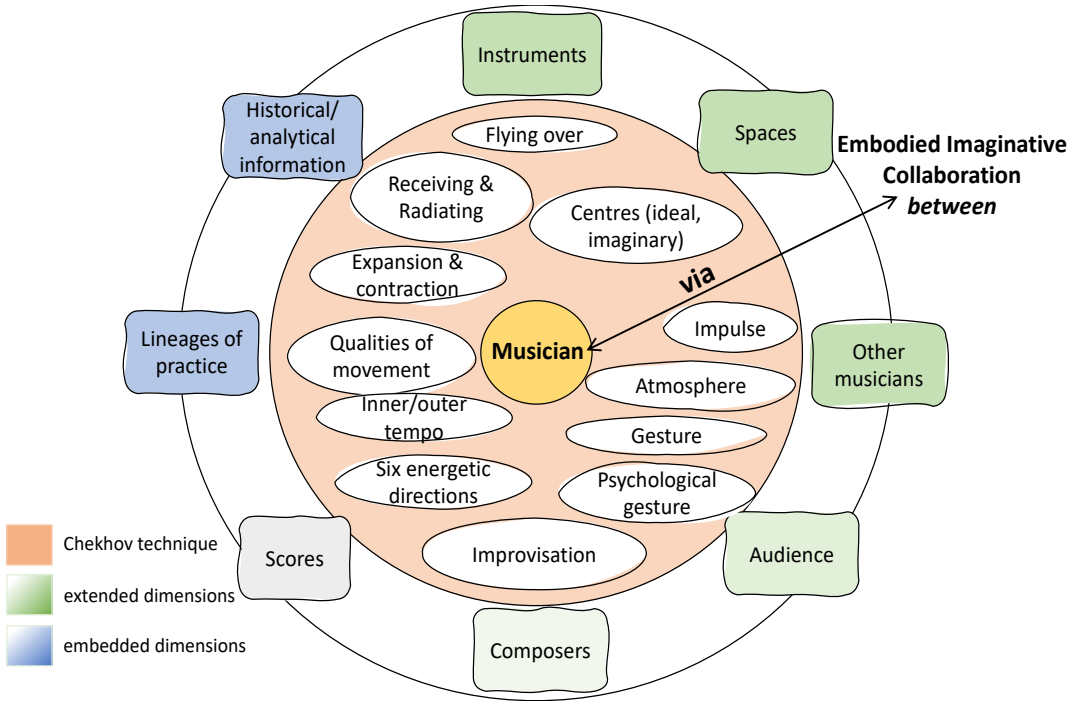


Figure 14 Embodied Imaginative Collaboration

4.4.1 The musician's practice is embodied

During Chekhov's lifetime, a Cartesian dualist view of a distinct and separate body and mind was the dominant cognitive paradigm. In creating a psychophysical technique that exercised the already existing but unawakened connections within the human organism, Chekhov was in effect undertaking practice-led research in the domain we now call embodied cognition. Today the body is experiencing a renaissance in research across a variety of domains, and music performance is no exception.

For practising musicians, the importance of the body reveals itself to us each time we play. But here I wish to make explicit a distinction that I hope has been developing throughout this dissertation, between recognising the importance of the body in playing, and developing an *embodied practice*. Recognising the importance of the body is of course a necessary starting point, but *how* do we understand that importance, and how far does that importance extend? Is it through our bodies that we develop the physical techniques to produce musical performances? — and as such, is not the body essential to the expression of musical meaning? Yes, no doubt: without well trained bodies, we cannot make music at a high level. But this is understanding the body only instrumentally, as a means *through* which we play music (the body only as a 'clean glass'). By embodied practice I mean something more.

From an instrumental view of the body, it does not necessarily follow that we recognise or develop the immense scope of 'bodily knowledge' that is available to us. What Chekhov calls psychophysical (and I call embodied), is an acute sensitivity to the myriad impulses, sensations, qualities, atmospheres, gestures, etc., that involve the full participation of the physical body and the imagination. If I walk with a quality of moulding, what happens to my inner life? What sensations, feelings or imaginings are aroused? If I imagine an energetic hand leading my real hand as I lift it off the desk, what happens to my physical movement? Practising the Chekhov exercises reveals imaginative and bodily knowledge — embodied knowledge — that is left untapped in mainstream training systems that favour knowledge of the disembodied kind. Playing the opening of Rautavaara's second sonata and feeling the friction, the struggle, the flickering of the semitones and the energy of the rhythm vibrating through my body; receiving impulses and responding to them in the moment; listening to where a phrase wants to go and sensitively calibrating sound and movement in response — these are examples of embodied knowledge leading practice.

In the final chapter of *The Thought of Music* (2016), to which I shall refer frequently in making the case for EIC, Lawrence Kramer suggests that performers

actively collaborate with scores. In doing so, the performer's embodiment interacts with the music (score and sound) and vice versa in the production of meaning. He suggests that this collaboration is most apparent in music of aesthetic simplicity, such as the sublimely simple passages of Beethoven and Schubert:

> music so spare in its texture and character that its expressive value has little basis in its immanent qualities and must come instead from the way it is played, the way its playing records the embodied subjectivity of the player. This is music that does not impart meaning to or through the performing body, but instead *receives its meaning from the body.*
>
> (p. 153, emphasis added)

And later:

> what one hears is not the music abstractly regarded, but the musical translation of feeling to the body's action and from the body's action to sound. This is music that makes audible the translation of sensibility to embodiment. More exactly, it reduces the music to that translation, exposing the process on which music in general is thought to rest.
>
> (p. 161)

To this I would only add that the translation (or movement) also works the other way, and that the process is not a linear one. Embodiment can translate to sensibility just as sensibility can translate to bodily action and sound. This cultivation of sensitivity to the seamless movement between imagination to sensation to bodily action (in all directions) is what I mean by embodied practice. I suggest this is what Chekhov means by the 'creative state'.

4.4.2 The musician's practice is imaginative

Trawling through my musical memories as performer, listener, student and teacher, I cannot think of a meaningful or moving musical moment in which the imagination was not enacted. On the other hand, I have frequently experienced moments (even whole performances) in which the playing has seemed just fine, everything in its place, and yet I have felt that something important was missing. In such moments, almost without fail, I have found the imagination to be inhibited, overlooked or undeveloped in some way. What do I mean by imagination? Let us look at some examples.

In a 2018 masterclass at the Royal Opera House, Joyce di Donato works with a student on the recitative *Thy Hand, Belinda*, from Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* (ROH, 2018). The recitative, like its famous aria *When I am laid* (also known as *Dido's Lament*) is full of pathos and expresses the desperate state of

mind that results in Dido's suicide. There is a fascinating moment in this class when, after some discussion about the performance, the student re-starts the aria. After just a couple of notes, DiDonato stops her:

> JDD: Yeah, but *you* have to initiate [the pianist's] chord. Not by anything other than feeling it. You can't react to it.
>
> (ROH, 2018, at 42:40)

The student indicates that she understands DiDonato's remark and begins the performance again. The difference is astounding. What just a moment earlier was a rather perfunctory beginning of a recitative is now something utter compelling. Now, we as audience are drawn into the performance and into the music. Something within us *moves*.

> JDD: *That* establishes you with presence, as Dido; as an artist, not as a student. That's a huge difference. You can't manufacture it, and you can't fake it; you have to feel it. But it *has* to be there.
>
> (at 43:23)

The wonders of YouTube allow us to analyse these two beginnings. In the first, we see the singer waiting for the piano to start, hearing her cue, then preparing to sing. Musically, the onset of the opening words ("Thy hand") does not establish a connection with the colour or atmosphere of the piano's opening chord; the two repeated notes that correspond to these words make a rather abrupt entrance. In the second, we see the singer inhabit an atmosphere in the moment *before* the piano begins. She looks connected, switched on; she now has, as DiDonato describes, artistic 'presence'. But this is not just a visual impression, there is a significant difference in sound. The vocal entrance is now musically connected to and seems to emerge from the atmosphere. The two repeated notes of the opening now unfold in a sensitive relationship with silence, with the piano chord, and with each other — no longer abrupt, these notes now form the opening of an expressive musical phrase. What did the singer do? She inhabited the atmosphere of the music before it began. How did she do this? By engaging her *imagination*. What's more, the atmosphere she created within a split second of being instructed to begin her performance again was *specific*; it was not a generic atmosphere of pathos, nor was it the singer's neutral home base (the Chekhovian 'ideal artistic' neutral). To achieve the specific and avoid the generic in performance, a finely developed and enlivened imagination is an indispensable tool.

One more example demonstrates the power of the imagination. Here Sebők is speaking about conveying the different meanings of silence in music:

> GS: Usually silence precedes music, and you have to feel how much time you need to get a collective atmosphere in the hall. There are moments of silence *within* a piece, as a part of the piece itself. Those silences depend on what happened before. The Liszt sonata, for example, begins with one note, silence, the same repeated – a 'G' – and then the piece begins. You can play these two notes as if the piano tuner was testing the instrument: there is one note, nothing, another note, and nothing again. Or you can play as if the first note already tells the story of the piece. It is the birth of the piece. It's not a raindrop falling by accident.
>
> (Blanchon, 2009, at 28:04)

What is the difference between a meaningless repetition of notes and the unforgettable, enigmatic atmosphere generated by great performances of this opening? The former is literal and empty, the latter full of meaning. From where does this meaning arise if not from the imagination?

In Chapter 2, we saw how each of Chekhov's technical elements brings together the imagination and the physical body. To move my hand in a moulding quality, I must first imagine the quality of moulding. But at the same time, moving my hand in a moulding quality activates the imagination — as mentioned above, this movement goes in both directions. To enact the energetic body, I must first imagine that there is an energetic source of movement that moves just ahead of my physical form; likewise, the physical sensations aroused by the energetic body stimulate the imagination. To match the decay of one note on the piano seamlessly with the onset of another, I must first imagine that sound; and here too, the physical sensations aroused by inhabiting the first note right to its end and calibrating the second in one smooth gesture inspires the imagination. In each case, the imagination and the physical body work together in a dynamic coupling.

In the flow of great music-making, the imagination, listening and embodiment function as one dynamic organism in constant movement. The body listens to the sound just produced, simultaneously inhabiting the sound being produced in the moment and imagining the next sounds. But it does this not as a closed system but as an open system constantly interacting with its environment. This brings us to collaboration.

4.4.3 The musician's practice is collaborative

In the epigraph I have chosen for this chapter, Chekhov describes the artist's process of developing work in terms of collaboration. Fuelled by a "truly awakened imagination", the artist works "consciously hand in hand with their images" (1991, p. 4). Although in its most literal form collaboration occurs

between people, we have already seen some of the ways in which this notion may be extended to describe interactive processes that take place between humans, instruments, tools and technologies. And in this sense, Chekhov's use of the word 'collaborate' to describe the process of an artist developing images born of the imagination is not merely poetic. As Cook (2018) has noted, artists often describe their creative processes in similar terms, with many composers, writers, and visual artists describing their creations as interlocutors (pp. 133–134). Artists do not only initiate, generate, or drive creative processes but also listen, receive, and respond to external elements, including their own emerging creations.

The EIC model illustrates the various types of imaginative collaboration that take place during embodied musical practice. The central ring represents the Chekhovian technical elements from which the musician may freely choose to ground and inspire the collaboration. Two of these (improvisation and flying over) are descriptive of process in addition to being technical elements.[35] Within these processes, any of the technical elements may be used. For example, one may choose to improvise using moulding (a quality of movement), or the upward direction (an energetic direction in space) or the gesture of grasping (a psychological gesture). Flying over is effective when undertaken with the elements receiving/radiating and impulse, but can be practised using any combination of elements. All of Chekhov's technical elements are embodied and imaginative tools: connecting to any of them simultaneously calls upon and coaxes the musician's experience of embodiment, and with it the imagination.

The following discussion focusses on the diagram's outer ring, loosely categorised into extended and embedded elements of musical creativity.

Instruments

Instruments 'talk back' to their performers (Cook, 2018). For pianists, a major part of our job is not just the ability to respond quickly to how our instrument is talking back to us on any given day or in any given acoustic, but the ability to quickly respond to a *different* instrument each time we perform. Through experience, we learn that force and stubbornness are not effective means of persuasion when it comes to pianos (or anything else, for that matter). To form a happy and harmonious bond with a piano we need to listen to it, learn how it behaves, and how it wants to be played. With openness, sensitivity and flexibility, we can listen to the piano 'talking back' and imagine our way through a rewarding musical

[35] As explained in Chapter 2, improvisation takes on a dual meaning in the Chekhov work, acting as both a process and an underlying principle.

conversation with and through it. In this way, the piano is not just an extension of our mind but also an active partner in our music making — a collaborator.

In Rautavaara's mysterious *Kopsin Jonas* (Video 2.4, discussed in Chapter 2), the instrument tells me just how lightly and through which pianistic touch it can conjure the whispering forest. The instrument tells me just how deep my LH moulding touch should be and how it should be sustained. The whole instrument tells me just how deeply to depress the sustaining pedal and when and how to change it. My job is not to force it to respond to the way I know how to play it, or the way I want to play it, but to listen to it and work with it. Worlds apart in character, Rautavaara's second sonata (Video 3.2, discussed in Chapter 3) requires just the same intimate instrument-musician relationship. From the opening flickering, the instrument tells me how it wants to be played. The piano's resonance tells me how long to hold the *molto sostenuto* chords at the end of the first movement. But the instrument is not only collaborating with me. The instrument behaves (by which I mean sounds and feels) the way it does because of its interaction with the space.

Spaces

Let us add this layer to our job as pianists: we not only enact embodied imaginative collaboration with different instruments each time we perform, but with spaces too. The same instrument in a different space will behave differently. And even in the same space and with the same instrument, a change in the piano's position or the materials within the space will change the acoustic properties of the space and bring about significant behavioural changes in the piano. The space, therefore, becomes an integral element within the synergistic system of EIC.

While playing, I often feel as though the instrument and the space merge into one. With a fully immersed and listening body, I simultaneously experience the space through the instrument, and the instrument through the space. The way the space plays upon the instrument — its ever-present hum (there is never complete silence in a space) and the precise distance from this hum to the quietest sound, the way the sounds speak, intermingle, hang in the air and decay — are perceived through the instrument. And the way the instrument (and of course the music) plays upon the space — the way the air seems to move, become still, at times thicken, at times clarify; the shifts of energy and atmosphere as sounds transform it — is perceived through the space. Does the space become an instrument, or another performer? In a fully embodied state of creativity, these roles become blurred.

In concerts, the space is occupied by another important element in our synergistic ecology: the audience.

Audience

How often do we consider the audience in our solitary practice and in our musical training? From my experience and observation, the answer seems to be quite seldom. And yet how profoundly the presence of the audience affects us in performance. When mentioned in music performance training, discussion of the audience is often related to issues of performance anxiety (how can the performer feel at ease, open, spontaneous in the presence of that anxiety-inducing audience?). Performance anxiety has developed into a domain unto itself and has been addressed by many performance psychologists across sports and the performing arts. But here I do not intend to address performance anxiety directly, or even side-on. I am interested in how an imaginative and collaborative outlook can reshape our understanding of performance, and with it our relationship with our audience.

No two audiences are the same, this every performer knows well. Audiences (individually and collectively) contribute significantly to the way performances unfold, are shaped, and to the meanings they generate. Kramer's notion of 'music as collaborative action' includes the audience in the collaborative act:

> The performer will encounter chances, opportunities, options, to shape meaning – decisively here, with nuance there – together with the question of what means are available to bring particular meaning to life or to choose some over others. As interpreting collaborators, the performer and the listener act in much the same way, although their points of concrete intervention will not always be the same.
>
> (2016, p. 164)

And elsewhere:

> What, then, does it mean to listen, in the sense borne by the phrase "really listen"? For one thing it means to understand that the auditory exceeds the acoustic. We continue to hear beyond the ear. What sounds also resounds: re-sounds in new media. To listen is to participate in this resonance. To participate makes possible a relay that extends the resonance further.
>
> (2018, p. 197)

Kramer's idea of the audience as collaborators in a relay of extended resonance is a beautiful one. It helps to shift our interaction with audiences away from delivering musical works *to* audiences, toward more inclusive and creative modes of participation and co-creation. Just like instruments and spaces, I have found the Chekhovian technique of receiving enormously helpful in developing an openness and receptiveness to audiences. And as with instruments and spaces, this receiving

mode must be practised during the preparation process. It cannot be expected to manifest magically during performance.

Composers

When musicians in WCM collaborate with composers, we usually do so either through, or toward the production of, musical scores. In working with scores, we are of course working (by extension) with composers.[36] Placing scores to the side for a moment, there are several ways in which we may collaborate with composers. In my doctoral concert series, I have experienced three types of composer-performer collaboration: two in an actual sense and one in a purely imaginative sense. For my fourth concert, I collaborated with Tiina Myllärinin on her new piece, *Risonanza IV*. We workshopped ideas and experimented with sostenuto pedal effects and harmonics. My pianistic knowledge was called upon in the compositional process, and my input during rehearsals made its way (in both tangible and intangible ways) into the development of the piece. A different kind of composer-performer interaction occurred with two of the other living composers in the concert series, Einojuhani Rautavaara and Liza Lim. In both cases, I met with the composers, played their works for them, and received useful insights and performance suggestions. In both cases, the works had pre-existing performance histories and had been recorded by various pianists. A third kind of composer-performer collaboration (this time wholly imaginative) occurred in the case of a fourth living composer, Olli Mustonen. I did not have the opportunity to meet with the composer to workshop the piece, but I did watch a video recording of Mustonen performing the piece on a live radio broadcast. This third example presents the interesting case of a composer's own playing being a primary source in the 'lineages of practice' component of our musical ecology.

In each of these three cases, regardless of whether real-life, real-time collaboration was possible, embodied imaginative collaboration *did* occur. Rautavaara's verbal insistence on following the prescribed tempi, or his sharing of the personal turmoil that inspired and is expressed through the music, did not *in themselves* lead to a meaningful, embodied performance. The same can be said of Lim specifying the layering of tonal colours within her intricate textures or speaking about the gesture of certain dance-like elements in the music. These composer insights are gold-dust for the performer, but again, they do not in themselves create a great performance. Imitating every nuance of Mustonen's own recording of his work — after all, who could be more authoritative than the composer himself? — would not necessarily

[36] Mieko Kanno (2012) has explored the ways in which musicians in WCM have a tendency to treat composers 'as if they were dead' by tethering interpretative decisions to composer's scores, even in the presence of living composers.

lead to an embodied performance. There is no direct line from instruction or information to meaningful performance. In each of these cases, the translation of composer insight to meaningful, embodied performance relies on the performer's ability to collaborate imaginatively with that insight. As such, we begin to understand embodied translation as a primary task of the performer.

By now it should come as no surprise that in my view, achieving meaningful and living performances of music by dead composers rests on just the same process. This brings us to scores.

Scores

> *Scores are visual maps of acoustic possibility. The performer neither humbly "follows" the score nor proudly appropriates it. The performer imagines the score. What makes this different from any other act of imaginative response is its medium. The performer imagines the score in sound.*
>
> (Kramer, 2016, p. 176)

In developing his argument that performers collaborate with scores, Kramer examines the ways in which Schubert's Moment musical No. 2 invites, demands and is made meaningful through this collaboration. Schubert's sublimely poised simplicity makes a very clear case for it, but I suggest that all music does this. In Chapter 2, several examples were drawn from Beethoven's Bagatelles Op. 126. These concentrated, enigmatic pieces share the potent and simple expression of the Schubert *Moments Musicaux*. As pianist Jeremy Denk observes during an online masterclass at the San Francisco Conservatorium, "these pieces don't play themselves" (SFCM, 2020). As Denk works with a student to enliven the music, he encourages imaginative collaboration with the score. He encourages the student to receive the beauty of the phrases, to let the melodic gestures blossom when and how they wish, to imagine character and atmosphere with great specificity (nothing generic!) and to connect all this with the body — to search, to push the colours to their full potential, to find something special in the sound each time. Rautavaara's second sonata, as we have seen in Chapter 3, calls for collaboration too. How would the pent-up energy that fills nearly every rhythmic cell of the first movement manifest if left to 'play itself'? Paradoxically, in taking collaborative action — in *doing* — the performer must also receive, listen, and *refrain* from doing. As pianist Maria João Pires explains:

> the approach to a composer is wanting to listen, instead of wanting to do. If I have a conversation with you, I should listen to what you have to say, otherwise there's no conversation. And then I can talk with [you]… and music

> is somehow the same. You have to be silent, listen, understand, and then you can collaborate and do.
>
> (Krishnamurti, 2016)

Earlier in this interview, Pires talks about the need for developing a flexible technique for 'doing', a technique that adapts to each moment, fully alive in an ever-changing, unfolding collaboration. All scores call for collaboration, and

> all performance exceeds the letter of the score. It is impossible not to. Exceeding the letter while incorporating it just is the act of performance. Understood collaboratively, the score is part of a relay from one medium of musical production to another. The relay spirals through inscription, embodiment, and apprehension from no single point of origin or end.
>
> (Kramer, 2016, p. 156)

This is the synergistic musical ecology at work, enacted through the performer's embodied imagination.

Lineages of practice

> *"My story goes a long way back. It goes further back than I had anything to do with. My music is like that. . . . I got it from something inherited, just like the stories my father gave down to me."*
>
> (Sidney Bechet in Kramer, 2018, p. 106)

As discussed earlier, each of us exists within a physical and socio-cultural environment with and within which we interact. Schiavio et al. (in press) have proposed the idea of 'extended musical historicity' to describe "the complex interplay of felt, imagined, and predicted shared experiences" that we each relate to "a broader (past, present, or future) social ecology" (p. 1). Each time we imagine a score into sound, we are participating in and interacting with a social ecology across time. For this reason, I have deliberately favoured the open term 'lineages of practice' over 'historically informed performance', 'style' or 'performance tradition'. Recalling our earlier discussion on the embedded nature of creativity (see Section 4.2), we must recognise that each step in the evolution of performance practice, convictions and conventions is a product of the socio-cultural environment and social ecology of that time and place, reflecting its accepted paradigms, its dominant discourse, its values and tastes, and using its available technologies. Thus, I adopt a neutral term that encompasses the gamut of ways in which we engage (consciously or unconsciously) with various lineages of practice.

The concept of extended musical historicity is a useful one, highlighting the ways in which "even in solitary musical activity, rich, multi-levelled histories of social participation underwrite every set of human actions and, to varying degrees, guide the meaningful experiences that arise in a given musical situation" (Schiavio et al., in press, p. 7). Recognising that lineages of practice underwrite our music-making and the meanings we construe from it, I suggest that performers may also take a pro-active role in imaginatively collaborating with these lineages.

A contemporary example of an established lineage of practice was discussed in Chapter 3, whereby a normative performance of Rautavaara's Sonata No. 2 diverges from the score, most notably in basic tempo and tempo relationships. In diverging from this established lineage of practice, my performance may be viewed as radical — though, ironically, it adheres to the score. My intention here is not to convince my reader or listener that my musical decisions were the right or best ones, or that other musicians should adopt similar approaches when performing this work. Rather, I want to highlight the importance of embarking on an imaginative creative process (a collaboration) that perhaps emulates, perhaps diverges from, but certainly always questions and explores the lineage of practice in question. I explored the significantly faster tempo adopted and advocated by prominent pianists using the Chekhov tools, discovering how this tempo interacted with qualities of movement, inner and outer tempi, atmosphere and character. Through this exploration, I discovered the counterintuitive effect of outer tempo upon inner tempo, and how a precise balance of moulding and flying helps to create an inner energy that naturally establishes itself at the composer's prescribed tempo. Had I decided to adopt a faster tempo *because* that is accepted practice — or, conversely, had I decided to follow the composer's tempo indication simply because the score (and Rautavaara himself) told me to — *without* going through the process of embodied exploration, I believe the playing would have lacked liveness and depth. I certainly would not have learnt as much about the music in the process. My performance would have been the delivery of a series of decisions, rather than a constantly evolving process of embodiment.

Historical/analytical information

Just as we can play and collaborate with lineages of practice, so too can we collaborate with knowledge gleaned from historical research and analysis. As a teacher and examiner, I often hear student performances that demonstrate a certain degree of historical, stylistic, or analytical knowledge that has not been imaginatively processed (or translated) to embodiment. Execution or emulation of musical details without an imaginatively embodied connection to an underlying gesture or inner life leaves the performance sounding academic and unnatural. One of the most fascinating aspects of teaching is tackling lifeless playing by helping

students to develop a kind of musical truth radar (Sebők's musical 'fake smile' comes to mind) for themselves, and a method for receiving, internalising, and translating any information or knowledge derived from teachers, lineages of practice, historical research or analysis, through their own imaginative process. Doğantan-Dack emphasises the need for musicians to develop personal approaches to processing analytical knowledge, arguing that

> music-theoretical and analytical concepts and knowledge become useful, and inspirational, for the performer only if and as they are given personally meaningful practical applications; merely possessing such knowledge is inconsequential unless musicians entertain personal ways of exploring their interpretative implications in practical contexts.
>
> (2017, p. 133)

In Chapter 1, I used the example of a single note, and then a single musical phrase, to highlight the complexity of those activities when considered in terms of an embodied practice. I claimed that embodying a phrase may be seen as a process of allowing that phrase to open to its potential through the performer's experience of embodiment. The EIC model may help to illuminate the multidimensional nature of the interactions at play. The potential of the phrase and of the performer's embodiment are mutually contingent. They emerge moment-to-moment through the unfolding collaborative process between the performer and that musical phrase, and involve the instrument, the space, perhaps an audience, a score and a composer. These interactions are embedded within, and also interact with, a broader physical and socio-cultural environment that includes lineages of practice, historical or analytical knowledge, the musical discourses and paradigms of the performer's time and of times past. The intertwining of collaborative agents enacts meaningful, living performance. When delineated academically, the process of playing a phrase can become overwhelming in its complexity. But the actual practice of embodiment is not an intellectual exercise. This is where the Chekhov technique comes into its own — as a simple, practical method by which to activate the performing musician's creative state.

5 Endings

To draw this work to a close, let us return to a passage I introduced in Chapter 1, in which Susan Tomes (2018) recalls a familiar frustration from her student days:

> Sebők once accused me of sounding as if I was 'reciting an emotion I had learned by heart' when I played a sad movement of Beethoven. I *had* learned the emotion by heart and didn't see how I could have done otherwise. It was my aim to understand the sad emotion and communicate it to the audience. I had thought about what kind of sadness it was and what kind of tone to use to express it. So I was frustrated when he said it didn't sound as if I was sad now. Actually what he was asking for is one of the hardest things to achieve in performance, and few people achieve it.
>
> (pp. 158–159)

In Chapter 1, I made the case for considering the work of the performing musician as essentially the same as that of the actor. The actor embodies the character, and the musician embodies the music, each finding life and creative freedom in the magical 'in between' spaces within their respective disciplinary 'script'. I argued that the words (the verbs) we use to describe the performer's role really matter in that they determine the performative aims — and therefore the methodologies — that we adopt in our work. I began laying the groundwork for my case by discussing the significant ontological shifts precipitated by the performative turn in the latter half of the 20th century. As the paradigm of reproduction was called into question, so too was the ontology of the musical work, which shifted from being a fixed object inhered in the score to a more open, porous concept, one that describes a musical phenomenon that emerges and unfolds through performance. With all this in mind, Tomes' student-day language reveals a lot. It highlights an assumption that musical works contain (or express or constitute) emotional states which may be 'learned by heart' and 'understood', suggesting a fixed view of the musical work that must be 'communicated to' the audience. As Tomes points out, her aim *was* to deliver a preconceived emotion that she had carefully thought about and refined through her practice. What else could she have done?

Tomes provides a clear example of the ways in which our ontological assumptions intersect with our performative aims, and these with our methodologies for practice, which in turn determine the nature of our performances. If our aim is to reproduce fixed musical objects in performance, it logically follows that we shall employ reproductive methods. It is then little wonder that our performances are not alive in the moment. What Sebők was asking Tomes to do — to sound as though she was sad *now* — is tremendously challenging (and I would suggest can

only happen by chance) *if* her practising methods were reproductive rather than embodied. If experiencing the moment is our aim, then we need to find a methodology for experiencing the moment. This research project has been a quest to discover and develop such a methodology.

'I need your help.'

So begins Michael Chekhov's memo to the reader in *To the Actor* (2002), in which he highlights that embodied knowledge may be attained only through practice. Chekhov's technique of acting is a methodology for embodied practice that reaches across disciplinary lines. It affords such interdisciplinarity because it distils universal techniques that underlie all performance: a listening body; sensitivity to the embodied experience of movement; an awakened embodied imagination. The techniques, processes and methods I have discussed in this dissertation are, as Chekhov acknowledged in his memo to the reader, abstruse and only partially understood through reading alone. The video examples provided in Chapters 2 and 3 aimed to address this challenge and provide demonstrations of the approach in real musical contexts. But as Chekhov points out, there is no substitute for understanding through doing, through practice. Deepening practice through an active engagement and collaboration *with* process and *with* technique is key to Chekhov, who called upon actors to not only learn and practise the exercises as he taught them, but to invent new ones, to play with the technique, to take it to new places. At its core, the Chekhov work is about movement. And so, the technique itself is not fixed but is always moving, evolving, finding its meaning and purpose and method in the time and place of those who practise it. This quality of collaborative play inherent in the Chekhov technique lies at the heart of the imaginative and collaborative approach for music performance I have proposed throughout this dissertation.

I have already described the ways in which Chapter 1 lay the groundwork for an embodied approach to music performance. Chapter 2 explored the intersections between Chekhov and pianistic practice. It did this by identifying key Chekhovian principles and technical elements, contextualising them within practitioner and scholarly literature from music performance, and exploring these through experimentation at the piano. A focus on energetic movement proved valuable in deepening pianistic understandings of, and approaches to, touch, gesture, atmosphere, and impulse. Chapter 3 focussed on the ways in which the Chekhov process may be utilised in a real musical creative process in the preparation of repertoire. The chapter drew on my experience of performing Rautavaara's Piano Sonata No. 2, my familiarity with other works by Rautavaara, the performance traditions surrounding the sonata that became engrained during the composer's lifetime, and my discussions with the composer about the piece. These aspects

were framed as layers (or types) of knowledge that I navigated and synthesised in preparing the first movement for performance. I explored how a Chekhovian embodied creative process may be used to play with these different types of knowledge, leading to new insights about the music and a performance responsive and alive to the moment.

Chapter 4 drew on recent music creativity research rooted in embodied cognitive science to explain the dynamic, synergistic and non-linear characteristics of musical creativity. Building upon the work of Dylan van der Schyff, Andrea Schiavio and colleagues (2018, 2022), Cook (2018) and Kramer (2016, 2018), I proposed a new conceptual model of music performance. The Embodied Imaginative Collaboration model places the performing musician within a dynamic and synergistic system comprising instruments, spaces, audiences, composers, scores, and lineages of practice. It suggests that meaningful, creative, living performances emerge from the performer's embodied imaginative collaboration with each of these aspects or dimensions of music performance, and that the Chekhov technical elements serve as a method by which to enact the imaginative collaborative process. As a whole, the model is an adaptation and a musical translation of Chekhov's 'chart of inspired acting', in which he illustrates the circular and dynamic nature of the processes involved in enacting inspired action.

During this dissertation, I have shifted between writing about my discipline of piano performance and music performance more broadly. These shifts have been deliberate. There are undoubtedly aspects of the musical creative process that apply broadly to musicians of all instruments. But there are areas in which I have been cautious to limit the scope of my writing to my area of expertise, for example in discussing piano-specific approaches to touch, or in reflecting on the experience of collaborating with instruments. These areas invite further research to investigate the conceptual and practical approaches to embodiment most suitable to other instrumentalists and singers.

This work opens the way for further research into the ways in which Chekhov-inspired and embodied, imaginative and collaborative processes may be utilised or developed in other forms of music making such as composing, ensemble playing and directing, and devising new musical and interdisciplinary work. Instrumental music education is an area I have brushed against but not directly addressed in this research. The ways in which embodied, imaginative and collaborative approaches may be embedded within music education in individual, ensemble and interdisciplinary contexts is a rich area for future study. Above all, it is in the spirit of play in which I began that I offer this research to readers in the hope that it might spark curiosity, exploration, and creative fulfilment.

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Appendix A Doctoral Concert Programs

Concert 1
The Infinite: Rautavaara & Beethoven
Aura Go, piano

Monday 13 May 2013
Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016)	Piano Sonata No. 1 "Christus und die Fischer"
	i. --
	ii. --
	iii. --
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)	Six Bagatelles Op. 126
	i. G major – Andante con moto
	ii. G minor – Allegro
	iii. E flat major – Andante
	iv. B minor – Presto
	v. G major – Quasi allegretto
	vi. E flat major – Presto – Andante amabile e con moto – Tempo I
Einojuhani Rautavaara	Piano Sonata No. 2 *The Fire Sermon*
	i. Allegro molto
	ii. Andante assai
	iii. Allegro brutale
Intermission	
Einojuhani Rautavaara	Fuoco
Ludwig van Beethoven	Sonata No. 32 in C minor Op. 111
	i. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato
	ii. Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

Concert 2
Rautavaaran Maailma | Rautavaara's World
Aura Go, piano

Wednesday 8 October 2014
Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016) — Etydit (Études) Op. 42

i. Terssit (Thirds)
ii. Septimit (Sevenths)
iii. Tritonukset (Tritones)
iv. Kvartit (Fourths)
v. Sekunnit (Seconds)
vi. Kvintit (Fifths)

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) — Ten Pieces Op. 58

i. Rêverie
ii. Scherzino
iii. Air Varié
iv. Der Hirt
v. Des Abends

Magnus Lindberg (b. 1958) — Jubilees

Intermission

Aarre Merikanto (1893–1958) — Kuusi pianokappaletta (Six piano pieces) Op. 20

i Melodie
ii. Pan
vi. Kuutamo (Moonlight)

Einojuhani Rautavaara — Seitsemän preludia pianolle (Seven preludes for piano) Op. 7

i. kimmoisasti vasaroiden (elastically hammering)
ii. kyllin hitaasti (slowly enough)
iii. hermostuneesti mutta rytmissä (nervously but in rhythm)
iv. koraali ja muunnelma (chorale and variation)
v. fugato
vi. väristen (shivering)
vii. alla finale

Esa-Pekka Salonen
(b. 1958)

Dichotomie

i. Mécanisme
ii. Organisme

Concert 3
In my beloved's garden: Rautavaara and Sibelius in Song
Aura Go, piano
Jenni Lättilä, soprano
Juha Kotilainen, baritone

Thursday 5 November 2015
Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016)	Die Liebenden
	i. Liebes-Lied
	ii. Der Schaunde
	iii. Die Liebende
	iv. Der Tod der Geliebten
Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)	Kyllikki (Three Lyric Pieces), Op. 41
	Kyssens hopp, Op. 13 No. 2
	Våren flyktar hastigt, Op. 13 No. 4
	Under strandens granar, Op. 13 No. 1
	Die stille Stadt, Op. 50 No. 3
	Necken, Op. 57 No. 8
	Jag är ett träd, Op. 57 No. 5
	Sehnsucht, Op. 50 No. 2

Intermission

Einojuhani Rautavaara	Matka
	i. Kuljin matkan aamupuolella yötä
	ii. Mitä on silmäluomisesi takaa syntymässä
	iii. Kuljen yli kevätlumisen puistikoiden
	iv. Yö on syvä
	I min älsklings trädgård
	i. I de storna skogarna
	ii. Mellan gråa stenar
	iii. Lyckokatt
Jean Sibelius	Nocturne, Op. 24 No. 8
	Norden, Op. 90 No. 1
	Morgonen, Op. 90 No. 3
	Sommarnatten, Op. 90 No. 5

Kaiutar, Op. 72 No. 4

Einojuhani Rautavaara Arias from the opera Aleksis Kivi:

Ikävyys
Sydämeni laulu

Concert 4
In the changing light: colour poems for piano
Aura Go, piano

Friday 19 May 2017
Camerata Hall, Helsinki Music Centre

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016)	Pelimannit (Fiddlers)
	i. Närböläisten braa speli *ii. Kopsin Jonas* *iii. Jacob Könni* *iv. Klockar Samuel Dickström* *v. Pirun polska* *vi. Hypyt*
	Music for Upright Piano
Tiina Myllärinen (b. 1979)	Risonanza IV (2017) *world premiere*
Väinö Raitio 1891–1945)	Nelja värirunoelmaa pianolle (Four colour poems for piano), Op. 22
	i. Haavan lehdet *ii. Punahattaroita* *iii. Kellastunut koivu* *iv. Auringonsavua*

Intermission

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)	Nuages Gris, S. 199 Bagatelle sans tonalité, S.216a En Rêve – Nocturne, S. 207
Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)	Miroirs
	i. Noctuelles *ii. Oiseaux tristes* *iii. Une barque sur l'océan* *iv. Alborada del gracioso* *v. La vallée des cloches*

Concert 5
Soul Bird
Aura Go, piano

Saturday 12 June 2021
Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music and Performance, Monash University
Presented via unedited video due to COVID-19 travel restrictions

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016)
Ikonit (Icons)

i. Jumalanäidin kuolema
ii. Kaksi maalaispyhimystä
iii. Blakernajan musta Jumalanäiti
iv. Kristuksen kaste
v. Pyhät naiset haudalla
vi. Arkkienkeli Mikael kukistaa Antikristuksen

Peter Sculthorpe (1929–2014)
Night Pieces

i. Snow, Moon and Flowers
ii. Night
iii. Stars

Djilile

Liza Lim (b. 1966)
Summer (Sema), from the *Four Seasons* after Cy Twombly

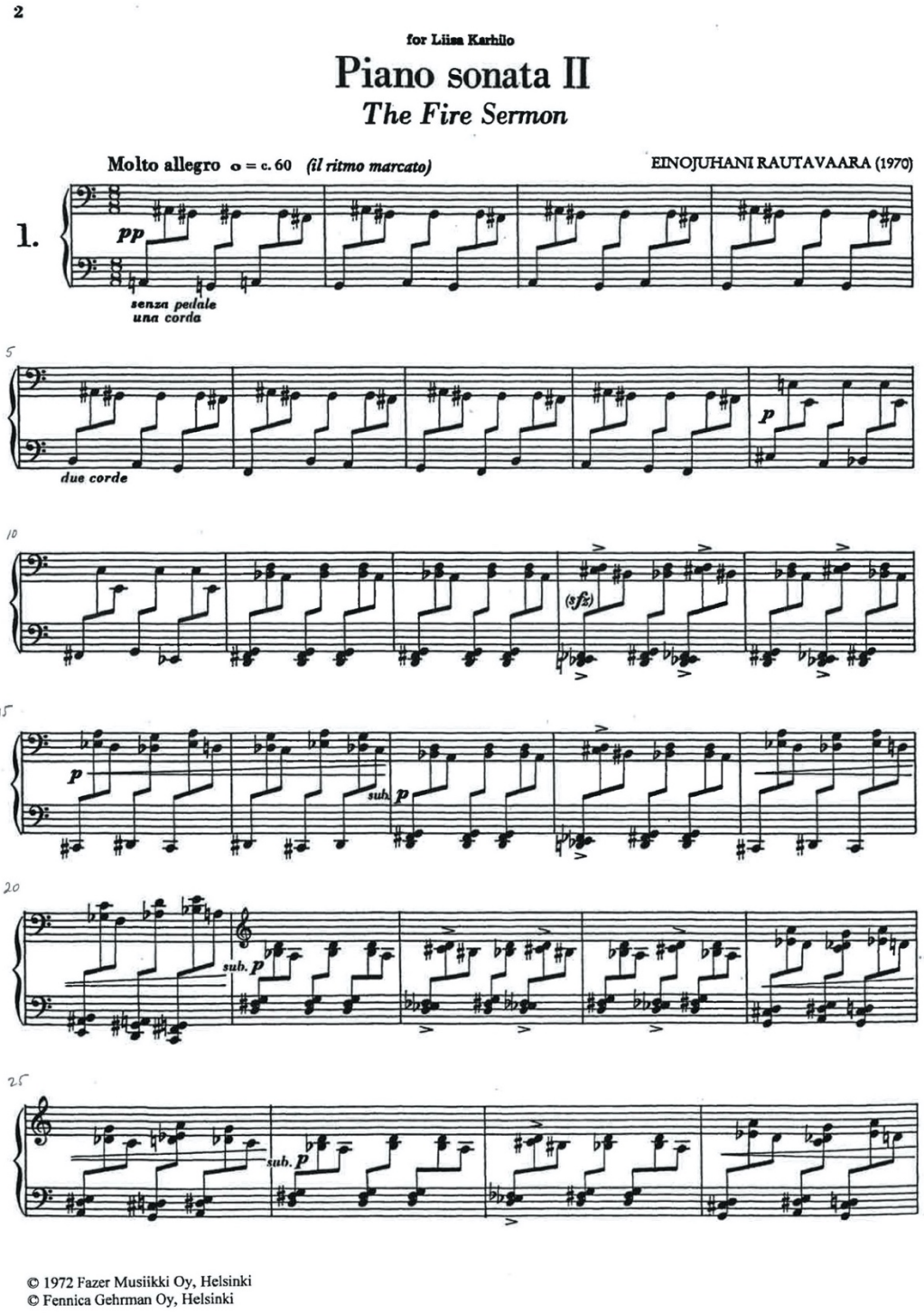
Olli Mustonen (b. 1967)
Sielulintu (Soul Bird)

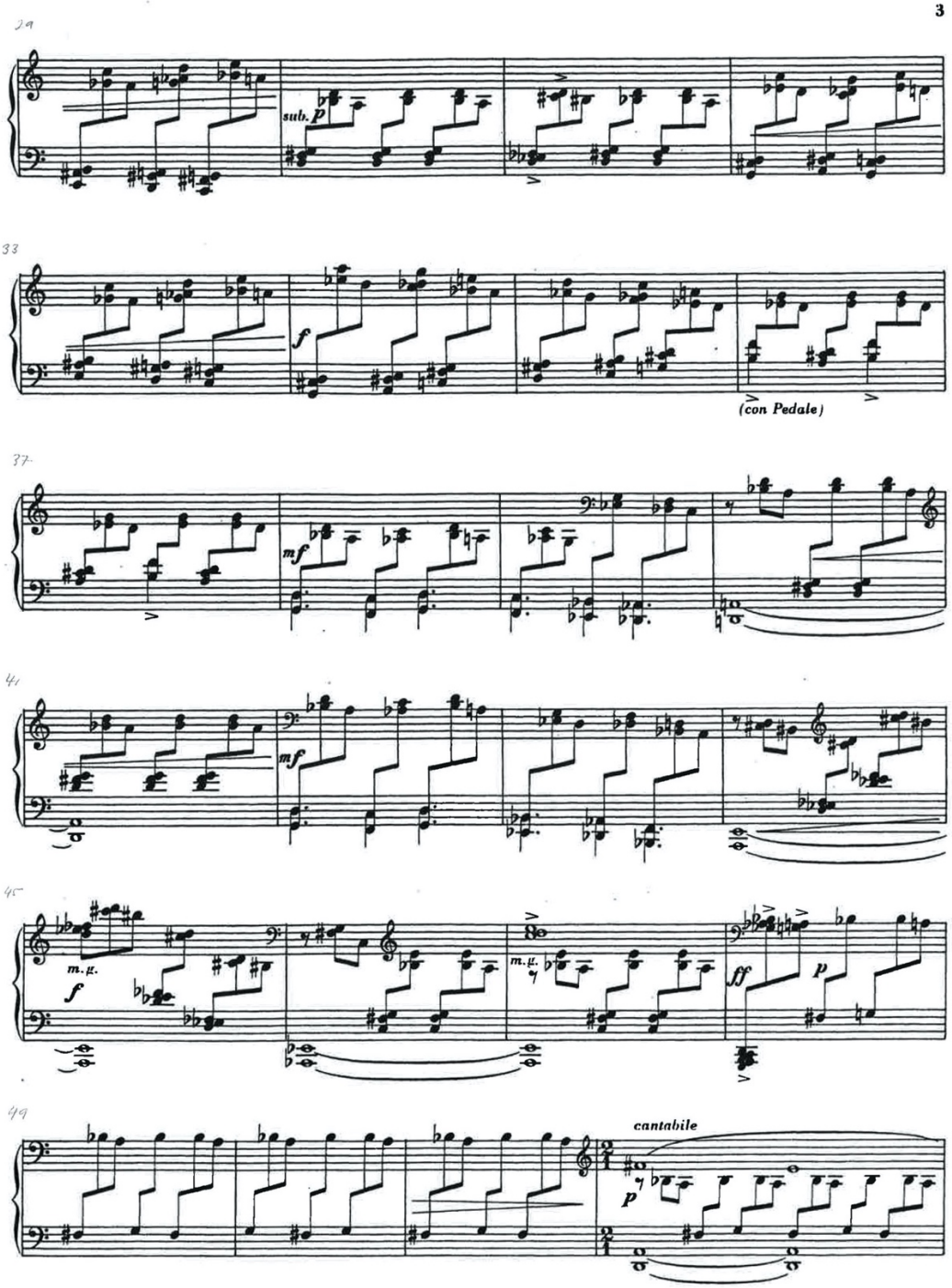
Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)
La Colombe, from *Préludes* pour piano

George Crumb (b. 1929)
A Little Suite for Christmas, A.D. 1979

i. The Visitation
ii. Berceuse for the Infant Jesu
iii. The Shepherd's Noël
iv. Adoration of the Magi
v. Nativity Dance
vi. Canticle of the Holy Night
vii. Carol of the Bells

Appendix B Rautavaara Sonata No. 2, 1st movement

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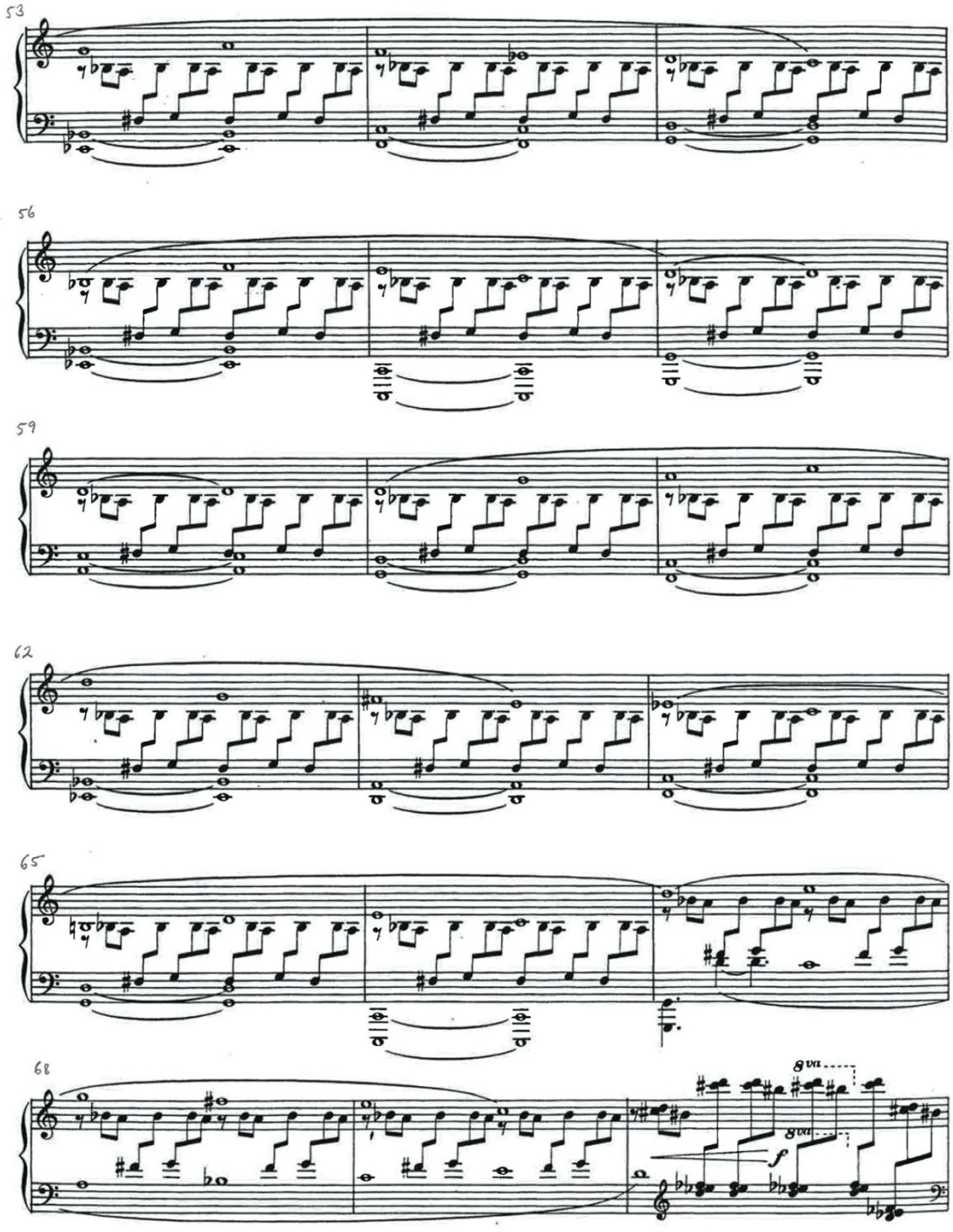
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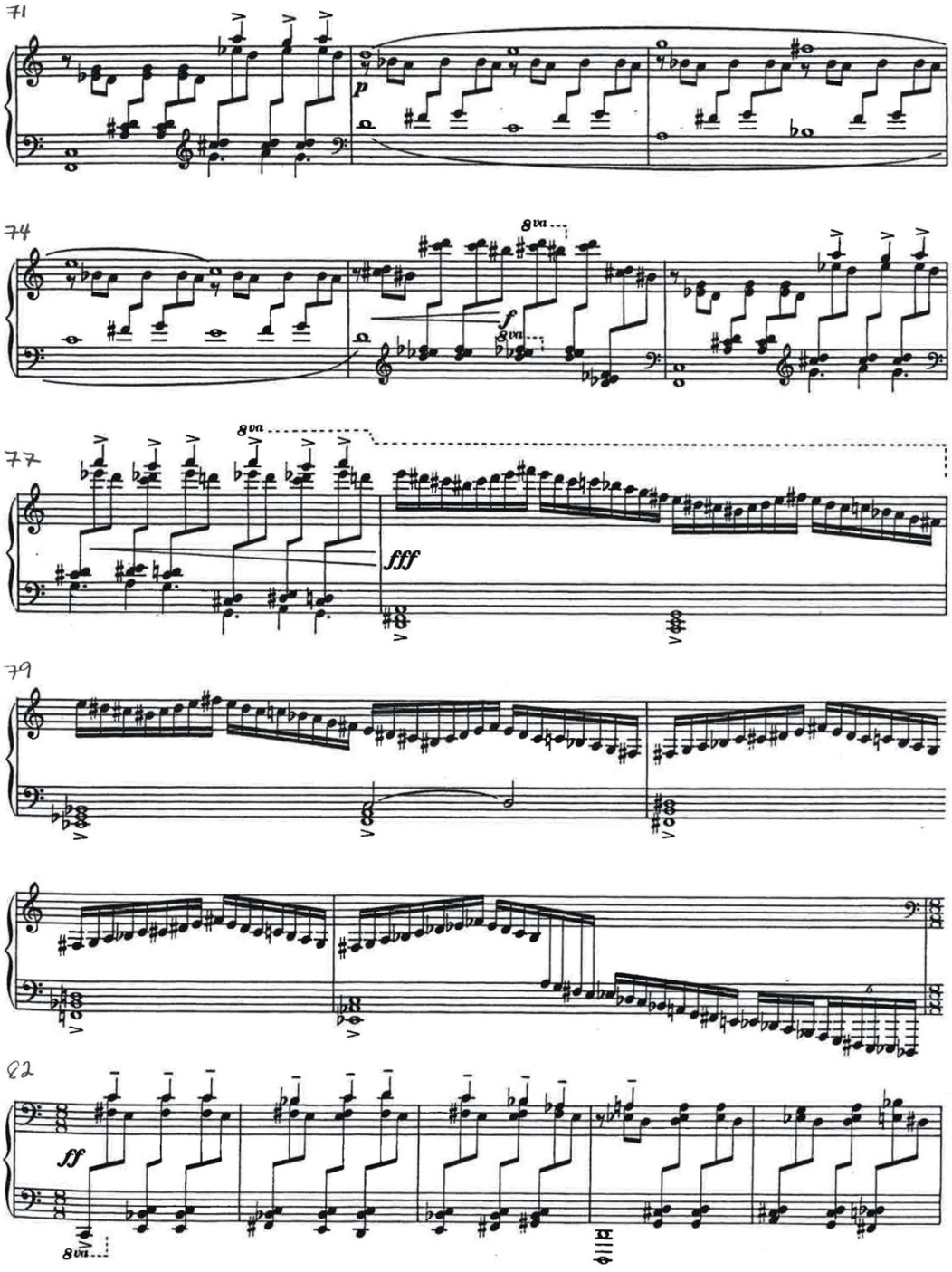
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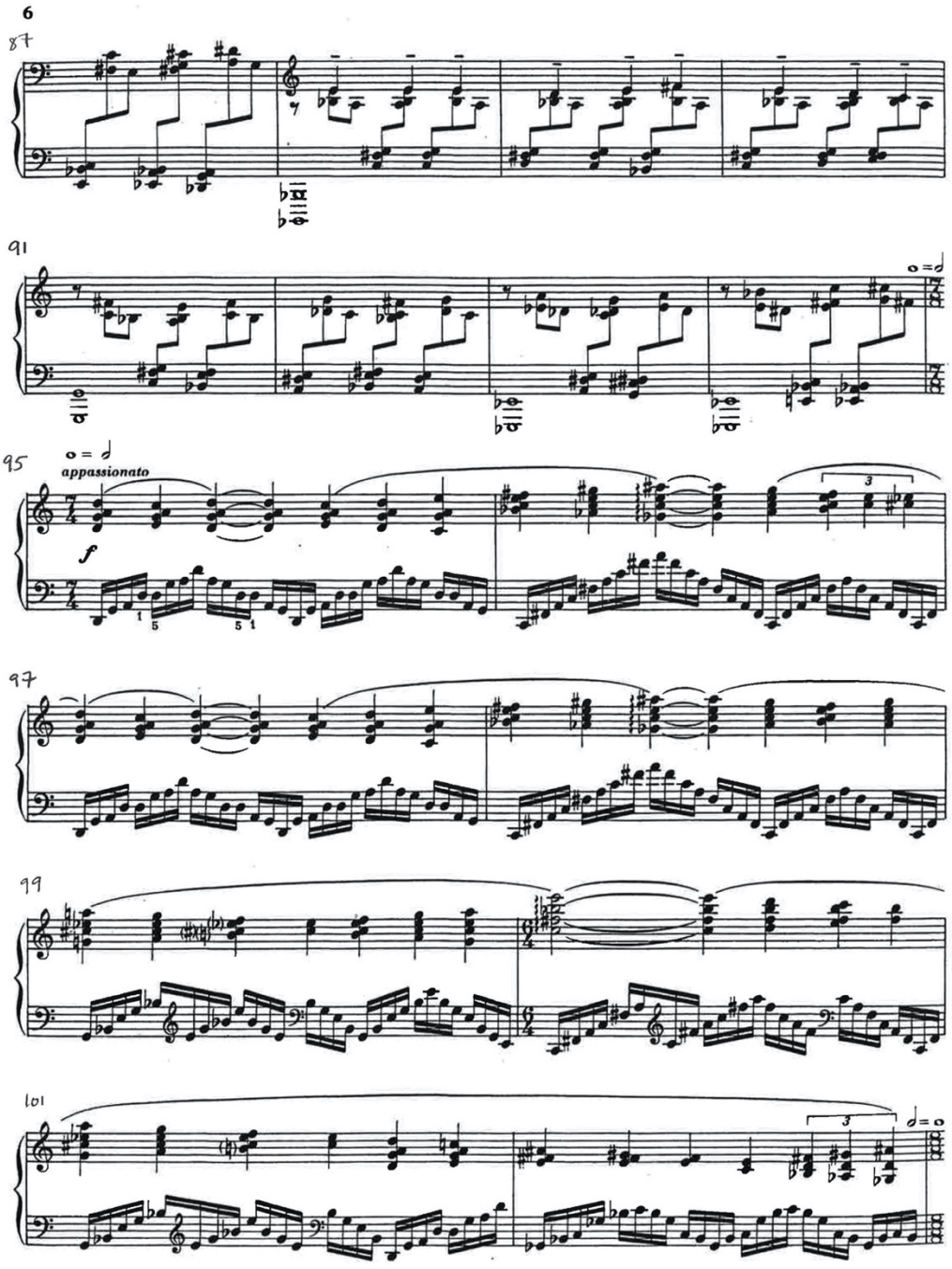
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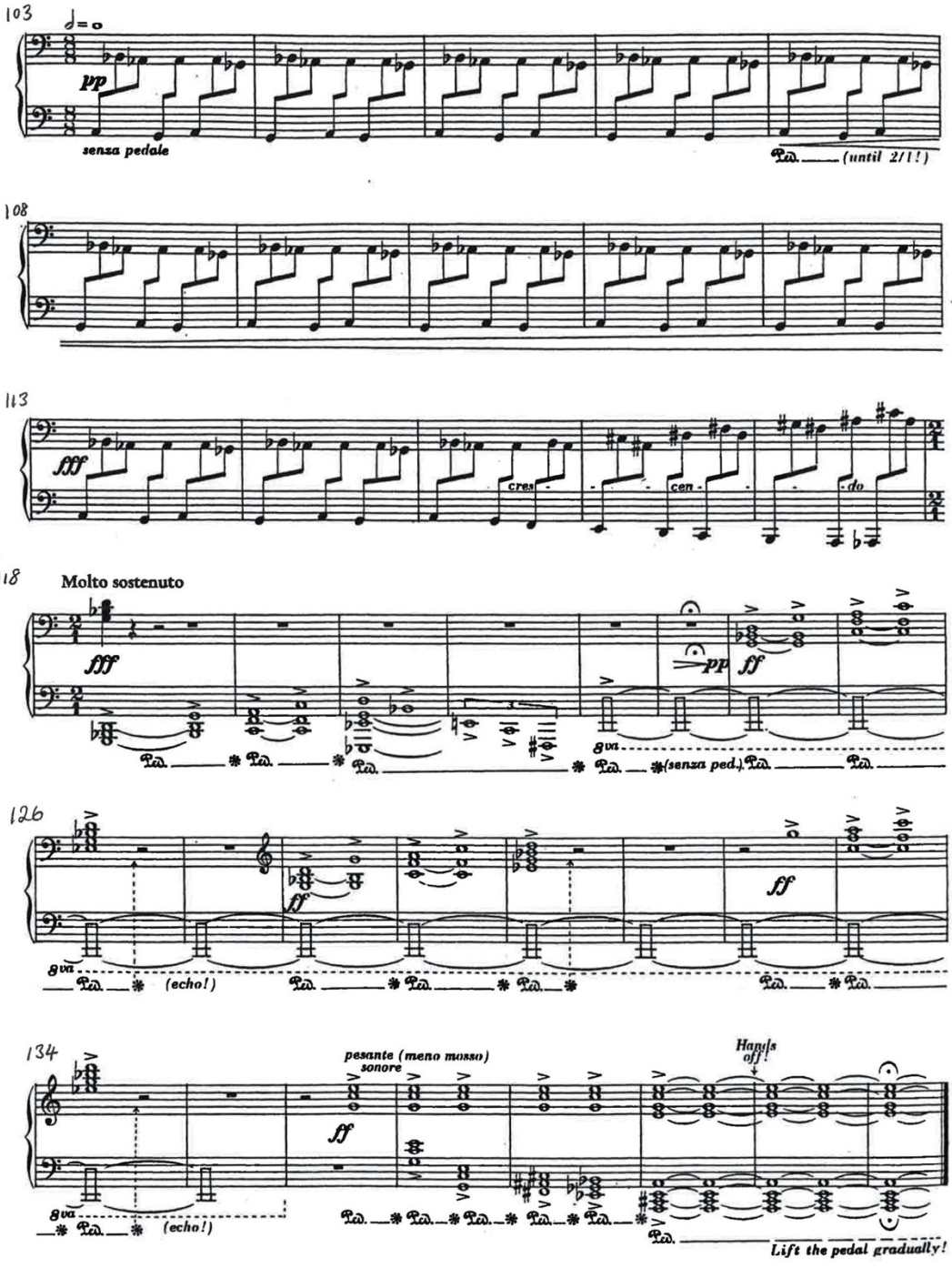

Playing in the Creative State is the first interdisciplinary research project to place the psychophysical acting technique developed by Michael Chekhov (1891–1955) in dialogue with music performance. Pianist Aura Go investigates the ways in which the Chekhov technique may be applied to pianistic practice to enliven the musician's engagement with repertoire, awaken the embodied experience of movement, develop the imagination, and open the door to a 'creative state' for music-making characterised by freedom, play, and connection to the present moment.

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