

From work to workshop: Extending the social basis of compositional and performance processes towards collectivity

Alexis Porfiriadis

composer-improviser, Greece
alexisporfiriadis@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper offers a case-specific, critical evaluation of composition and performance made on the basis of devised graphic and action scores. In the presentation, I will be drawing on original scores created and performed collectively during a series of undergraduate University modules and summer workshops convened over the last few years in Greece.

The participants (composition and musicology students in the former case, as well as amateur musicians and non-musicians in the latter) are called to create, alone or in groups, their own graphic or verbal scores and to use them as guides to improvise collectively. In the context of a prose notation and improvisation workshop, composition and performance are detached from the work-centred, authoritative, and often quite solipsistic assumptions of the high modernist European model of "expert music-making". Participants are encouraged to operate outside the contingencies of tonal, modal, or other prescriptive musical languages, focusing instead on an ad-hoc development of structural tools and instructions, a close exploration of timbre, time and space parameters, and developing their personal, unique awareness of the transitional space between controlled and free improvisation, and between individuality and collectivity. The resulting sonic vocabularies are often highly compatible with the groundbreaking, but predominantly author-centred, innovations of the post-1950 European and American avant-gardes. However, the vocabularies fostered here are not developed in response to a singular production-oriented aesthetic, but as extensions of a predominantly social, and hence potentially more sustainable basis instead.

This paper examines such extensions in relation to current and historical perspectives on experimental music and free improvisation, and assesses their present aesthetic, political and educational implications.

CV

Alexis Porfiriadis has worked as an ad-hoc special instructor in the Department of Music Studies, Aristotle University Thessaloniki, teaching Improvisation since 2005. He studied composition (MA - Postgraduate, Music University of Graz, Austria) and was awarded several scholarships, among them the Music Award of the City of Graz (2002) and the State Scholarship for Composition of the Republic of Austria (2003). He has also been awarded the Molinari Quartet's International Composition Competition's Third Prize (2005). In 2007 he co-founded the improvisation and performance collective *6daEXIT* with music department students, and in 2008 the free improvisation trio *Seul à 3* with Danae Stefanou and Natassa Mountzidou.