

Sound of the Audience: Music Together and Make Sense of Noise

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Abstract: *In spring 2017 I took part in an experimental music theatre project, “Sound of the Audience”, conducted by The Lab Station, a center for experimental stage art in Copenhagen. My participation as a composer stimulated a reflection upon music and how musical expression and musical meaning may be seen as emerging from mutuality and togetherness. The aim of this article is to contribute to the theoretical and philosophical discussion about the nature of music and music experience. Further, I explore in which way sound plays a role in the emergence of music. The music-making that took place in “Sound of the Audience” can be seen as evincing the way a musical practice can evolve and unfold from the togetherness and auditory awareness within a group.*

Keywords: *musical meaning, sound, togetherness, mutuality, shared life*

1. Introduction

Avant-garde music has for more than a century explored the territory between musical sound and noise. Futurist composer Luigi Russolo in *L'arte dei Rumori* (1913) stated that music must breach the confines of musical sound and accept the sounds—the noises—of the modern world; of cities and machines. He constructed a collection of instruments called *intonarumori* (“noisemakers”) for which he composed a series of pieces that were performed at concerts, allegedly with great scandal. John Cage challenged our musical perception in another radical way. His piece 4’33” consists of a fixed amount of time where nothing is played. You are invited to listen to whatever sound there is in your environment and in yourself, and that is the music. Many have regarded Cage’s music as *anti-music*: if any sound can be music how can there be music at all? How do we distinguish music? Cage’s own interpretation was the opposite. That any sound can be music is more pro-music than anything! As Cage (1958) put it: there will always be music, we just have to listen!.

Parallel to Cage’s musical experiments, the advent of sound recording and sound engineering made it possible to emulate and manipulate sound electronically. It became possible to *compose sound*—structure sound itself. This and, not least, the massively growing possibilities for disseminating mediated sound by physical media, mass media and digital media, has been seminal for our music perception in ways we have probably yet to understand (Katz, 2010). To

convey his musical ideas, however unconventional and groundbreaking they were, Russolo still needed instruments for somebody (some *body*) to play (“*tocar*” = *touch*, is the Spanish word for “*play*”). And somebody must come and listen.

Philosophy has pondered the nature and meaning of music for ever. The experiments of Russolo and Cage, among other artists, have questioned conventional notions about what music is and can be: can noise be musical sound?—can any sound be musical? But the way music-making and music dissemination itself has developed now compels us to explore these topics from other angles. Music is more and more regarded as a product or a commodity that the individual acquires and consumes, but to comprehend what music is we need to examine how music functions *in us* and, not least, *between and among us*.

In spring 2017 I took part in an artistic experiment called *Lyden Af Publikum* (Danish for *Sound of the Audience*, SOA in the following), conducted at and by The Lab Station, a center for experimental stage art in Copenhagen, DK. My participation in SOA as a composer fostered theoretical and philosophical reflection upon the relationship between musical expression and the bodily founded experience of mutuality and togetherness through sound within a group.

The aim of this article is to develop these reflections and particularly investigate which role *sound* and sonic expressivity play for the emergence of music in a community. Different theoretical conceptions are combined and held together with the experiences from SOA, and I suggest that this may shed new light upon our understanding of music and musicality. I draw especially upon theories and findings from the philosophy of music (Small, 1998; Benson, 2003), cognitive research (Lerdahl & Jackendorff, 1983; Sloboda, 2005) and developmental psychology (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Stern, 2004, 2010).

After a short description of the project, SOA, there is an outline of the theoretical approach, the theoretical conceptions invoked, and how they are combined to form a theoretical hypothesis. This theoretical framework is applied, explored and substantiated in an analysis of the experiences from SOA—my own experiences and recollections, as well as experiences and reflections that have appeared in my conversations with another participant in the project. The theoretical considerations and analytical results are summarized, and finally, I shall broaden the discussion and suggest that these results may inspire a discussion about music and music-making from a broader historical and societal perspective.

2. Sound of the Audience – Background and Realization

Idea

In the early twentieth century, the Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold wanted to investigate the role of the audience at a theatre performance, as he called the spectators the *fourth creator* of a performance (in addition to the writer, the director and the actor.) He catalogued audience response in 20 categories, attempting, apparently, to allow himself to analyze how spectators in the theatre, rather than simply expressing approval or disapproval, take active part in co-creating the performance. (McAuley, 1999, pp. 238–239)

The ideas of Meyerhold inspired artistic directors at The Lab Station, Lotte Faarup (Lotte in the following) and Øyvind Kirchhoff (Øyvind) to undertake a dramaturgic experiment: what if things were turned around? What if the spectators in the theatre were the performers? How could something like that be dramaturgically constructed and how would it play out?¹

¹ The idea itself may seem as self-evident as it is far-fetched and absurd, but it is characteristic of the way The Lab Station works as a platform

It seemed obvious that the performers should not be professional stage artists but similar to a normal, ordinary audience. Consequently, the piece should be executed as a piece of *Social and Community Theatre*² and involve locals from the borough of Vesterbro in Copenhagen, where The Lab Station is located. Participation should be open to anyone, and prior musical experience was irrelevant. The project was eventually to become part of Caravan Next, a network and festival across Europe for Social and Community Theatre.³

Lotte and Øyvind realized that the piece could not have a traditional script. It needed to be based upon sound and action; thus in essence, a piece of music performed by a choir of people constituting “an audience”. They knew me from my work as a composer with experimental music theatre and asked me to collaborate. Together we decided to involve Erik Jakobsson (Erik), conductor, to lead the rehearsals. I entered the project when the artistic idea was formulated in detail, and the plan for the realization—recruitment, rehearsals, performances—was set. My role in the project was as a participant and a composer and, occasionally, as a conductor.

Compositions

Two pieces were planned to form the core of the performance: “Moskva 1920” (“Moscow, 1920”) and “København 2016” (“Copenhagen 2016”). “Moskva 1920” was based on Meyerhold’s catalogue of audience behavior. The material for “København 2016” was an extensive catalog of noises and actions recorded (by memory and description, not actual sound recordings) by Lotte and Øyvind, in theatre performances they had attended in Copenhagen during autumn 2016. On my suggestion, Lotte made a dramaturgic sketch for each piece.

Moskva – 1920

- Der har vi jo Emil! (Oh, there we have Emil!)
- Hvad fanden handler det her om.. (What the heck’s this all about?)
- Det bliver stort... (It’s going to be grand..)
- Den der kender jeg! (That one I know!)
- Hold så kæft! (Now shut up!)
- Det finder jeg mig ikke i! (I am not going to take this!)
- Bare jeg ikke er ved at blive syg... (I hope I’m not getting ill...)
- Suverænt... (Superb...)

København – 2016

- Hvornår er det slut? (When is it over?)
- Hvad laver han? (What’s he doing?)
- Er det sjovt? (Is that funny?)
- Jeg kan ikke se noget... (I can’t see anything...)
- De sveder... (They’re sweating....)
- Hun er dygtig... (She’s smart...)
- Jeg er træt (I’m tired)

for action-based dramaturgic research: the aim is not to produce groundbreaking, interesting performances but rather to try in practice what happens when you question the most basic or obvious assumptions about how theatre works.

2 See, for instance, <http://www.socialcommunitytheatre.com/en/>

3 <http://caravanext.eu/>

I made two compositions based on these dramaturgic sketches that would be the starting point for our work. Below, under “analysis”, I will go into further detail about the compositions and their musical function in the process.

Process, rehearsals

When rehearsals started, the choir consisted of 40 members, women and men from all social layers, of different ages and from different parts of the greater Copenhagen area. Some participants had some musical experience from singing in choir, and others had no formal musical training at all.

We rehearsed every Friday afternoon from late February to the end of May. A few members left the choir along the way, and a few others joined. Erik led rehearsals with the task of first and foremost of teaching the choir the piece. I assisted and conducted a few of the rehearsals myself. Lotte directed and instructed the choir regarding expression, physical gesture and appearance.

Performances

Three performances were organized: one informal ‘dress rehearsal’ at The Lab Station and two performances in the playhouse at the Royal Theatre during the Copenhagen Stage experimental stage art festival. The choir was positioned like a theatre audience at the performances, the idea being that they mirrored the actual audience. Part of the performance was also the choir’s entrance, which simulated the entrance of an audience in a theatre. In the Royal Theatre it eventually appeared more like an act, since the actual audience by far outnumbered the choir and the hall needed to be illuminated as for a normal performance.

Below is a link to a documentary about the project in Copenhagen, with clips from the performances. Additionally, there is a link to a video of a Performance of ‘Moskva 1920’ made in Turin in October 2018. The piece was recreated as part of a conference about the Caravan Next Project at The Social and Community Theatre Centre of the University of Turin. Locals from Turin were invited to take part in the choir, Lotte and I led the rehearsals which took place over four days, and I conducted the performance.⁴

3. Theoretical Approach: What Is Music and When Is Music?

The theoretical hypothesis which will be applied, explored and substantiated in an analysis of the experiences from SOA is that music begins in bodily founded awareness of mutuality, situated in a context of communality. Music emerges from this awareness as a shared experience of togetherness that can be re-experienced and shared.

As philosophers of music and music education—Elliott (2015) and Small (1998)—have pointed out, in order to comprehend music, as it actually takes place in the world, it is sensible to regard it as *process* rather than *matter*: music is *social action* and *activity* more than it is a *thing* or a collection of objects (musical *works*). Small has invented the term *musicing* to suggest that the word “music” itself is radically to be regarded as a verb rather than a noun:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (Small, 1998, p. 9)

⁴ Documentary from Copenhagen. 2017. <https://vimeo.com/222439272>; Performance of “Moskva 1920” in Turin. 2018. <https://vimeo.com/299920415/9e5358f910>

There is a circularity in this quote, of which Small himself was most certainly aware: he aims to redefine the notion of music and does so by referring to musical *practice*—the practice of performing musically. Music is something we *do*, rather than something we *have* (and do something with). This definition opens up the questions about music’s nature and meaning, because it is now no longer a question of what music *is* (in itself), but a question of what it means that we *do* it. How and why do we perform musically? What does it mean, that we are musical creatures? Part of Small’s answer to that is, that musical performance is a ritualistic behavior by which “..relationships are brought into existence between the participants that model, in metaphoric form, ideal relationships...” (Small, 1998, p. 96). This offers questions for further consideration: *what* it is that is brought into existence; how is the “metaphoric form” constituted, what is the character and essence of the relationships brought into existence, and what is the connection between the relationships and the metaphoric form? Small develops it further by stating that the relationships are “established in mythical time” and that “Mythmaking, like ritual, are deeply embedded and probably ineradicable forms of human behaviour...” (p. 99)

Other approaches to music may, however, elaborate this differently and further: music psychology and cognitive research examines music as a mental faculty in relation to, or parallel to, language. Serafine (1988) argues that music must be seen as a form of cognition: every musical experience is grounded in cognition, and the development of musical cognition is an intrinsic feature of the human mind. Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff (1983) demonstrated how musical experience can be seen as rooted in a structural perception similar to linguistic grammar: the tonal structures unfold in a way that the mind recognizes and understands. Moreover, says Sloboda (2005), an essential feature of musical structures is that they are *dynamic*, and that this indicates a semantic content in music. It is common to say that music may have meaning in a grammatical sense, but it has no semantic content—as in “For I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all...” (Stravinsky, 1936, p. 53–54). John Sloboda challenges that notion: maybe the dynamic experience, the sensation of force and movement, is the semantic content of music. The dynamic experience is, says Sloboda, an indispensable part of music understanding, and this suggests that music ultimately refers to “the physical world in motion” (Sloboda, 2005, p. 170).

Daniel Stern’s (2010) concept of *forms of vitality* expands this notion, as it connects dynamic experience to an essential feature of the way human beings understand each other. He asks: “How can empathy, sympathy, and identification be explained without in some way capturing the exact movement characteristics of a specific person..?”, and answers: “For identification based on faithful imitation one also needs the ‘how’—the other’s ‘dynamic movement signature,’ their form of vitality.” (Stern, 2010, pp. 4–13). In other words, the dynamic experience of inner motion in oneself and others is crucial for human interaction, and the dynamic experience of music can be a way in which we, through our bodies, communicate what is inside us. Other research in developmental psychology (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) has shown how essential human traits such as empathy and communality may have a connection to musicality. Malloch and Trevarthen have developed the concept of *communicative musicality*. They say that

“...we move with rhythm, and this movement simultaneously makes up the measure of time from ‘inside us’; we tell one another measured stories with emotionally expressive grace – with what we call musicality. This musicality communicates, because we meet as actors first who detect the source of human movements in their form, subjectively – before we debate, explain, reason the imaginative and hopeful stories that our minds

make up as reconstructions of objective reality 'out there'." (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 8)

Although this may not suffice to explain music as a phenomenon, it broadens the perspective upon how musical performance establishes relationships (Small, see above) and why we *music*: in musicking, we are attuning ourselves to each other and finding out, who we are. This may indicate the nature of the "metaphorical form" (Small, 1998, p. 96 – see above). Maybe that *is The Music*. If we grant that the "measured stories" (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, 8 – see above) can assume shape as sonic time-pieces that may be remembered and re-told, this may hint at why there *is* such a thing, or such a 'matter', as music in our world; and why, when we perform musically, there is an accompanying feeling of the presence of *something*—a thing or matter that emerges among us. When Sloboda says, music may refer semantically to "the physical world in motion" (Sloboda, 2005, 170) this is true but may not be the whole truth. Maybe music first 'refers' to motion *inside* us: a vibration or tension, because we want to be together, yet cannot escape that to be who we are, we also need to be *selves* with sensations, feelings, experiences and opinions of our own. It is our human fate to "debate, explain, reason..." (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 8 – see above), yet we never cease to *music*. We pursue the experience of expressing ourselves together through our bodies, musicking, and ameliorate the potential solitude inherent in selfness.

From a phenomenological point of view, Benson (2003) interpreted this ceaseless musicking that is an inescapable part of human life as *the improvisation of musical dialogue*. Music is an eternal dialogue between musickers—that is everybody who take part in music (which, ultimately, means every human being). The piece of music is, says Benson, an "ergon within the Energeia" (Benson, 2003, p. 125): it is never a monad or an ideal object but rather a coagulation or convergence within the dialogue.

Sound

The question remains, what role *sound* does play? Does music(ing) also necessarily *begin* with sound, or is musical sound—the sound of music—contingent and coincidental? In other words: could there equally well be music without sound? I am not just proposing this as a philosophic puzzler along the way. Two brief examples may show that it is a relevant question in this context.

*Composer Dieter Schnebel (1930-2018) has experimented with graphic scores, that are meant to be 'read' rather than performed and listened to. The 'performance' takes place in your own mind as you (try to) imagine sounds in motion.*⁵

*Jeppe Ernst (b. 1985) puts the question of music and sound to another kind of trial, writing music where there is no sound, neither real nor imagined. The music is notated with conventional music notation, with indications of durations, action dynamics, tempo, etc., but the notes themselves do not necessarily denote sounds. They may denote different kinds of touch – padding the head, stroking the cheek, etc. – and the music is performed by touching. Or they may denote "events" – actions, imagined incidents, possible or even impossible sensations or thoughts ("something cold, something warm, a bird on the sky") – and the performance is to perform the actions or, again, to read the score and imagine. The music comes to resemble a massage. Or a guided meditation.*⁶

⁵ <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/werke/mo-no/>

⁶ <http://www.edition-s.dk/composer/jeppe-ernst>

Both these examples show that there may well be music even if there is no sound. On the other hand, the fact that music in most contexts *is* intrinsically connected with sound, makes it improbable, that sound does not play a fundamental role in our musicking. In one sense music most probably *does* begin with sound. Sound is a way we connect, as Trevarthen (1979) has demonstrated, and that particular way of connecting probably forms the basis of musicking. There may be an obvious bodily foundation of music in the fact that sound probably is the closest we can come to touching each other without physically touching: it is the transmission of actual vibrations. In another sense, however, music is not the sound. It is, in essence, according to what Dissanayake (2000, pp. 19–50) says, the pursuit of the mutuality and togetherness that the sound may come to stand for. Musicking may be seen as immersing in sonic expression with no other purpose than being together and sensing being-together. Once we have started doing it—musicking—music emerges and there *will be* music, like there is music in our everyday world at all times. Music may then be represented, as in a musical score, constructed, reconstructed or imagined, as in our imagination, in other media (touch, action, visual signal)—or with emulated sound. I shall come back to this last aspect in the final discussion.

4. Analysis: Sound of the Audience – Music Creation Through Shared Experience and Togetherness

Several actors from different backgrounds were involved in the creation of SOA. The idea came from Lotte and Øyvind. They asked me to collaborate and relied on my composition skills and experience of working with music theatre. Erik played a crucial role as he shaped the composition during rehearsals, not only by working with the sounds and actions but also by modifying the compositional structure itself in order to increase and encourage freedom of expression. The participation of the members of the choir made the piece. Among them and with them, the piece emerged as it was meant to be.

Musical structure, sensation and comprehension

As I had been left with two catalogues with descriptions of sound and action, I felt as if I had to start from scratch, when I began composing. One limitation was that the performance in total should last approximately 45 minutes. As we wanted to leave time in the performance for some improvisation regarding the choir's entrance and exit, this meant that each piece must last no longer than 20 minutes. Scrabbling for something to get me started, I suggested that Lotte make the dramaturgic sketches (see above, 2). These enabled me to imagine the two pieces as two small operas. I could conceive the pieces as series of scenes with different musical content and overarching musical structures. The compositions are musically quite conventional. They are based on composition techniques such as linear counterpoint, variation, development, iterative processes, augmentation and diminution, repetition and recurrence. The composition tool is traditional music notation and the compositions are presented as musical scores where particular motifs denote particular actions with resulting sounds as described. Below are pages 1, 2, 3 and 8 of 'Moskva – 1920'. The compositions themselves underwent a lot of changes during rehearsals. Suggestions from the participants were considered. Some of the structural ideas in the score eventually turned out to be hard to remember or too complicated to carry out, and needed to be modified.

Lyden af publikum!
Meyerhold/Moskva 1920

108

I *altr. program* lak *altr.* lak *p* Hvad fan-den hand-ler det her om?

II *altr. program* lak *altr.* lak

III *altr. program* lak *altr.* lak

5

I *altr. program* lak *altr.* lak Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

II *altr. program* lak

III *altr. program* lak

9

I Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

II Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

III

18

I om?

II om? Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

III det her om?

31

I *p* Der har vi jo E - mil!

II *altr.* lak Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

III *altr.* lak *altr.* lak

35

I Der

II *altr.* lak Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om?

III *altr.* lak

2

32

I Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her om?

II Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her

III

34

I Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her om? *pp* Hvad fan - den

II om? *pp* Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her om? *pp* Hvad

III

36

I hand-ler det her om? Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om? Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her

II *pp* fan - den hand-ler det her om? Hvad fan -den hand-ler det her om? Hvad fan - den hand-ler det her

III *pp* Hvad fan - den hand-ler

8

48

I *mf.* Der har vi jo E - mil.

II *altr.* lak *altr.* lak

III *altr.* lak *altr.* lak

50

I *mf.* E - mil, E - mil, E - mil, E - mil. Der har vi

II *altr.* lak *altr.* lak

III *altr.* lak *altr.* lak

Individuelt accelerando p? "Hvad fanden handler det her om?"

54

I *ff* Subito meno mosso

II *ff*

III *ff* *p* *Gaspignati / raggionando*

The score will make immediate sense to someone familiar with musical notation. This has to do with the sheer fact that the score maps (simple, intelligible and established) musical structures (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983). Erik could grab the score, read through it, and form an idea about how it was to be executed. He knew a lot about what he was supposed to instruct the choir to do, and even how it would “feel”, without having any particular notion of how it would eventually sound, or what the choir precisely would be doing. (Just as I had no definite idea of how the sounds and actions would be carried out once we started to rehearse.) The score signifies *music* because it represents a structure that adheres to certain rules: a musical structure. It maps a piece of mental architecture that unfolds in time.

The structure is also *dynamic* (Sloboda, 2005, p. 170). Without listening or playing, reading the score itself opens up an experience of a certain flow, not only a succession of events but actual motion, best described as local undulation and a global build-up of energy or power: intensification, achieved through “densification” of the occurrence of events, and action dynamics (variation and build-up of force in the way actions and sounds are carried out).

Returning to our composition: it is possible to read the score and thereby comprehend the musical structure, but only because reading (and understanding) the score also involves some dynamic sensation. In practice, when people read through musical scores they are commonly seen micro-conducting with small hand movements, the mouth is shaped as for humming, or even the facial muscles may be twitching slightly as if to execute, with some part of one’s body, the motion of the music.

Sound and music. Emergence of the piece: togetherness.

Still, though, there is no sound! I have until now only written about a musical score and how to comprehend a musical composition from a score. Following the theoretical discussion above, one might ask: when there is no sound, is there a piece of music (theatre)? In our context we had a piece of musical structure that was to become a piece in which a particular kind of sound, ‘audience noise’, would play a crucial role. But the score—the musical structure—had no sounds in it. Neither does a score for, say, a Mozart symphony, for that matter. We may have come to see the symphonic score as signifying musical sound, but in fact it does not. It signifies a musical structure with signs that indicate certain performative *actions*. By convention and tradition we can have a strong imagination of the sonic result of the actions. The score for SOA adhered to no convention that could form the basis of such a sonic imagination. Although the structure itself was meaningful, intelligible and musical, it was, in a sense, sonically void. One could ascribe tones to the notes and make a piano rendering of the score. I have made a piano version of the first 8 pages of ‘Moskva 1920’ (link to sound file below⁷.) It could have been made with other instruments, such as non-tonal (percussion) instruments, or even with non-musical sounds to make it sound less conventional, but still, it would not come close to our idea about what SOA could be or what it became. The musical structure now has sound, but the result is boring. We have provided the structure with sound, but for a trained score reader it was probably more interesting to read the score than to listen to what we had now.

According to Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983) and Sloboda (2005), the score—the structure in itself—is music in a semantic sense. Providing it with sounds does not really make it into a musical experience. The piece, as music, only emerged as what it was to become when we started rehearsing. We provided the structure with the *Sounds of the Audience*, but there is more to it

⁷ <https://www.dropbox.com/s/whryj2qi3nvr7al/lyden%20af%20publikum%20pianodemo.mp3?dl=0>

than providing sound. It does not suffice to say that given a functional musical structure, we added the (sonic) content. There was a score, there was a musical structure, but still, no one really knew what the piece was or could be.

Foregoing my work on this text, I asked Malene, a member of the choir in SOA, for a conversation in which I could gain her perspective on the process: how did she experience meeting us, the professionals; how did she experience the collaboration and togetherness of the group; and—in particular—how did she recognize the piece coming into being. Malene works in pedagogy, and she sings in an amateur choir, ‘Verdens Sirener’ (Sirens of the World) where women of different nationalities share their musical roots by singing each other’s songs. During the project she had strong commitment and interest in the artistic ideas and the process. Our conversation is analyzed from a phenomenological approach, inspired from Dahlberg (2006) and Van Manen (1990, p. 39): “A good description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way...”.

I asked Malene, at which point during the process she recognized and comprehended the overall form of the piece. (In the following, quoting Malene, I have allowed myself to highlight keywords).

*Malene: ... I could not, today or even just after the performance, recreate the whole progression of it.. I did not have it all in my head...” She said. “But I remember... we [Malene and her boyfriend] had been away for some weeks [and unable to attend the weekly rehearsals] and then, when we came back, we noticed that something had developed. Things had a **contour**: “This makes some **sense**. At the first rehearsals I thought ”This is really silly. I wonder if anything will ever become of this...” Also, I hadn’t quite realized that it was something we were eventually going to perform... It was when we came back, after having been away, I could sense that this **is something**. It has a form...*

Speaking with Malene, something became very evident to me, of which I had only had a vague impression during rehearsals: the participants in the choir had no perception of an overall musical structure. Even if some of them had been able to read the score, they did not “get it” at any time. They were to learn everything by heart. I am not sure if Erik and I, during the initial rehearsals, were fully aware of this abysmal gap between the choristers’ impression of what was going on and ours. They had been told that there was a score—a composition—and that our work together would culminate in a theatre performance, but still, from their point of view they were taking part in a theatre experiment about audience noises. How could they, by any means, recognize that they were learning a piece of music? Erik and I, were conducting musical rehearsals, part of which was to experiment and find the right actions and sounds.

The gap was bridged with confidence and trust. Initially every rehearsal started with everyone introducing themselves. Later, when the group was established, rehearsals were often rounded off with a common meal or a drink. Malene pointed out there was something in the way the introductions were conducted—by Lotte and Øyvind—that set the atmosphere in a particular way. Rather than asking where people lived, their age, what they did for a living, or their civil status, Lotte and Øyvind would ask people to share things like “what is your favorite music?”, “which kind of weather do you like?”

Malene: *There was something fantastic about those questions... That was clever: asking about something that did not categorize or stigmatize. It made it possible for us to see each other in another way... I have no idea what people were doing in their daily lives. But we got to **know each other as humans**. The way we **were together as humans** was fantastic: **being experimental together**. That was funny, because we all did something together....*

In the atmosphere of confidence and trust it was possible for us to create the piece together.

Malene: *... it said: "Here's room for anyone"... That hasn't really anything to do with **sound**. But on the other hand, if we did not feel confident we wouldn't dare to experiment with sound. We wouldn't be able to express **ourselves**... In a way we could be like clowns. That was also reflected in the performance. It was something "clowny"*

Musicking. Immersing your self into the common body and letting it dissolve for a while: our music.

The feeling of doing something together and having fun together remembered as also connected to the *piece* itself: doing *some thing* together.

Me: *What made it "clowny? Was it the sounds?*

Malene: *"No, the sounds were just human sounds... it was really because it was in a **work**... That we were doing it **together** and **at the same time**. We were like an army of people doing the same... sometimes many things in a mishmash. And then all of a sudden we stopped..."*

So far as the piece came out as a complete aesthetic experience it rested upon the co-creation of the choir. It perhaps took a while for them to realize that we were making a piece of music theatre—a certain progression, that eventually would make sense as a performance. The whole set-up was peculiar in the sense I mentioned: Lotte and Øyvind had conceived the idea as a piece of (music) theatre but relied on Erik and myself, and the choir, to form a coherent piece of music, Erik and I had a piece of music in mind, although we did not really know what kind of piece, the participants in the choir were primarily in it because it felt enjoyable to be together and joyous to experiment together with sound and action, but they sensed an energy.

Malene: *If you think back, you miss it... the **energy**... of performing... but mostly of **being together as humans**...*

The *energy* of being together is connected to the *energy* of performing. As we were together, in the rehearsals, little by little, things fell into place. The sounds themselves became stable and consistent. Transitions became clear. The sounds came together. Everything became more and more transparent and obvious, and in the end we had something that was *some thing*: **our** piece. We did not just feed 'sounds of the audience' into a given musical structure, and even if some people rarely sensed that what we were making was music, we were actually making music. We were *musicking* together.

Following Small (1998), SOA may be seen as an example of how a certain community of practice becomes a musical practice, how it evolves. Although, in SOA, our perceptions of what was going on and where it was heading were different due to our different roles and backgrounds,

we *musicked* together, and music—musical meaning—began to evolve, not from the musical score and the composition, but primarily from our being together. True, in our context there was an inspirational, driving force behind it: the composition, the imminent performance, and, not least, Erik and myself and our musical ambitions on the choir’s behalf, but we still had to develop our sonic language and the sensible doing-together—or rather, let it happen.

As we went with the flow—the good energy Malene mentioned—things started to make sense. Things began to *mean* something:

Malene: *I did not have an overall perception of the piece, but within the different sections I had a strong feeling of what was coming next. Even today, when I hear bottles clinking in a certain way, I can’t help hearing a cough inside my head... [because the succession of bottles clinking and coughing was a recurring phrase in the piece København 2016]. In that way certain phrases and passages got stuck in the head... like it **meant** something very particular to us. Although it didn’t really mean anything...*

During our conversation she and I constantly used the phrase “*Ja, det var stort!*” (“Yes, it was grand!”)—a sentence from Lotte’s dramaturgy (see 2 above) that I chose to put in the score for ‘København 2016’ as a recurrent spoken phrase in the piece. Malene’s experience reveals how music, musical meaning, is something that may happen when people are together. The succession of ‘bottle-clinking and cough’ was a small piece of sonic structure in time, which in our community became meaningful. The tiny sonic time-structure was inaugurated as shared experience, and would then eventually become a piece of mental structure. A similar thing happened with “*Ja, det var stort!*”. It is a sonic structure that has a formal, linguistic, semantic meaning—a proposition—but in SOA, through our *musicking*, it became something else. Tossed around in our voices it became a piece of sound, stripped of its semantic content and imbued with new meaning; *our* musical meaning.

The way we musicked in SOA—with awkward noise and behavior—stressed, as I see it, how musicking and music may be seen as a mutual quest to overcome or ‘live with’ a tension that is inherent in being human. We want to be together with our sensing, expressive bodies, but we must also be ‘selves’. To be selves we must “debate, explain and reason” (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 8), but, still, we are also always musicking humans. We take part and re-create music every time we listen and let music flow through our mind and body, and we are all very familiar with musical sounds. The sounds that sound ‘nice’ are stimulating and comforting, call forth emotions and bring us together. But most of us are not aware that we are *musicking*, and that it is our musicking that makes musical sounds sound nice. Most of the participants in SOA were probably no more aware of their own musicality than that they like music and probably use music in their life. A lot of them could perhaps not themselves make music with musical sounds, their voices would be rough, or they might not be able to carry a tune, but the sounds we played with were not musical sounds from the outset. Our sounds were not nice. They were the kind of sounds that would most often lead to reprimanding counteractions: “We ourselves, our selves, do not approve of what your body is doing. So you, yourself: make your self make your body stop doing it. Now!”. Even more so, those sounds became *our* musical sounds. Musicking does not begin with musical sounds but with mutual listening and careful attention. The sound-making together in a shared, communal and safe space, allowed us to be together as bodies paying attention to other bodies and attuning ourselves to one another. We “...told one another measured stories with emotionally expressive grace and met as actors first who detected the source of human movements in their form, subjectively” (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 8)

Performance and remembrance

What then, again, about *the piece*? The professionals, Lotte, Øyvind, Erik and myself, had had a piece in mind all the time. One could possibly say the piece was merely a conclusion that we drew: “This is what we have been doing, here we exhibit a slice of a certain corner of reality!” I think, however, that this is not how it was. Doing the piece and performing it, we all put something of ours into the world: something we had created together and now could share with someone—from our sounding bodies to the resounding bodies of the audience-audience.

*Malene: The first time I truly realized what this was about was at the first viewing. And I thought “who on earth will care to look at this?” I say, we’re having fun, but will anyone else think it’s funny?” But then I could see my neighbor’s four year old son, who I had invited. He was laughing out loud.... People could sense that we’d had fun. It was not just the **piece** itself, it was that inter-play that did it... that it worked as a **performance**.*

Me, proposing tentatively: *Yes – every performance has something vulnerable: “Are we going to get this right?” But this performance was fragile at another level: “Will it make any sense to anyone..?”*

*Malene: Yes – will it in any way convey the **energy** that we want it to... but it did!*

In SOA the whole idea of someone performing *for* someone else was to be questioned, because the normal division between performers and spectators was blurred, but the performance was none the less a performance. We showed something that we had done to other people. The obviousness and simplicity of the whole artistic idea itself made it accessible. It was ‘clowny’ and funny for the ‘audience-audience’ to see the ‘choir-audience’ perform with sounds and actions that normally are annoying and unwanted. The accessibility and the amusement lay not only in the familiarity of bodily gesture and funny noise and action, however, it was accessible because it was a piece of music. The sounds and actions came through as a true endeavor to make sounds and actions come together in a work, no matter how rough and awkward those sounds and actions were. Our shared experience—the time we had spent together—could be shared, because the energy of our work for togetherness was embedded in the performance. It exemplifies how music, as Benson (2003) says it, can be understood as an eternal flow of dialogue, and how, consequently, the piece can be seen as an ‘*ergon within the energeia*’ (Benson, 2003, p. 125): it is a ‘piece of work’ within the eternal flow. The performance was not a rendering of a composition; it was ‘a piece of work’ by which we shared ‘a piece of work’ we had completed by being together and letting our bodies sound. The fragility I referred to in the conversation above, showed that every performance necessarily entails the ambition of bringing something to life. As Brandt puts it “Since the performer creates ‘something’ and thereby could fail or succeed to give birth to it, the meaning immanent in the something is saved by the performance; a feeling of a precarious, fragile transcendent intentionality quite naturally accompanies the aesthetic display.” (Brandt, 2009, 39). The performance came to stand as a token of shared life that could be shared. The piece was something—*some thing*—that might be shared again and again, and every instance of sharing would bring new life.

5. Conclusion: Musical Creativity and Aesthetic Experience as Shared Life

SOA was a very special collaboration between theatre and music professionals and a group of people with little or no musical or artistic training. The idea and concept called for a particular approach, which rested totally on the involvement and co-creation of everybody. We, the professionals, were driving it, but we did not have a fixed goal or final solution. The piece had to emerge among us. To be able to express yourself with sounds and action that you would normally not consider musical sounds, to sense the others, and to be together in a trustful and playful environment, created an unusual situation in which the participants could express themselves musically without a specific musical purpose—maybe even because there was no apparent musical purpose. This makes it possible to see SOA as an example of how musical practice evolves within a community of practice. The impulse that here, at the Lab Station, in this project, we would play around with the annoying, disturbing, unwanted, involuntary ‘Sounds of an Audience’, evolved into what one could call a musical language: a certain way of musicking. Our work culminated in a musical performance. The piece came to life and we may say we had co-created a work, a piece of music theatre. The piece itself is “*ergon within the energeia*”—it is a coagulation within the flow of energy, that was our work together and, ultimately, our being-together. As such it could be shared in performance, from the sounding bodies of the choir-audience to the resounding bodies of the audience-audience.

SOA is an example of how music begins as musicking, which can be seen as bodily founded mutual awareness of mutuality: a shared inner experience of the energy of being together. From this music may emerge as a transcendent experience of “*measured stories told with emotionally expressive grace*” (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009, p. 8) or as a ‘a piece of work’ we have completed and shared and may share with others: “*ergon within the energeia*” emerging in the ceaseless musical dialogue (Benson, 2003, p. 125). *Sound* is not music’s content nor meaning, and there may well be music without sound, but SOA also demonstrates how a connection between sense of mutuality, sound, and temporal and bodily dynamic expression (what Stern calls *forms of vitality* (Stern, 2010)) may be a precondition for musicking and hence music.

6. Discussion

In our digital age, music has become transcendent in a new and unexpected way. Music can, as mediated sound, be enjoyed as a solitary experience—without bodily movement, expression of voice or the touching of instruments—in the presence of no one but yourself. It has become a product, a sound-product, to an extent that we may ask: is that ‘sound’—for our minds and bodies? Is there a risk that we are, little by little, numbing our musical perception and musical thinking? Musical sound-products have in a short time become omnipresent. It seems as if humans crave them just because they exist. Trying to undo this would probably, already, be comparable to overturning the agricultural revolution, but while ‘the sound of music’ seizes the space, the lack of mutual embodiment may leave us with musical sound-products that we can have and enjoy and that satisfy a demand, but that are never truly our music. When John Cage encouraged us to liberate our musical minds, let sound be sound, and let music happen, that was surely not what he wanted. Russolo, when he constructed his noise machines, did not just want to make spectacular sounds. He wanted to reclaim music, from what appeared to him as stagnated convention. Making music together, as in SOA, can also, from a pedagogic perspective, be seen as the possibility of reclaiming musicality in a world overloaded with musical sound; to do something that you can do yourself. To be your own voice and your own sounding body—together with others.

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