

Trends in musician's psychology

Claudia-Ligia ŞUTEU¹

Abstract: *Musician's psychology is a long-time subject, the beginning of studies dating back to Antiquity. Interpretation is a constant with a series of variables, analyzed in experiments and studies. Whether it's about emotions and the impact of multimedia on the psyche, musician's psychology is an area that raises questions and ideas. The frame of the interpretative act and the musician's perception can have a profound effect on the interpretation itself. It is necessary to study the many researches, there being a series of opinions that can improve and benefit the artist, who must not remain a mere performer, being the analyst of his own works, but also his own psychologist, who will permanently work on fortification of the psyche of performance.*

Keywords: *musical psychology, anxiety, interpretative research*

1. Introduction

There are multiple studies made on musical performance. An important study in the research of the psychology of the artistic act was made by T.W. Adorno (1941, 19-45). This was concluded by the competitors of international music competitions and found that although competitors with less success showed an anxious behavior and reported a more emotional sensation than successful competitors, they did not seem to show any more excitement (as measured by the galvanic response of skin, body temperature and heart rate). The distinguishing feature of successful competitors was an increased excitement during the performance compared to the previous performance. In contrast, weaker competitors showed a small difference between pre-performance and performance. Adorno (1941, 37) supports the assumption that successful competitors are able to mobilize excitement beneficial to their performance.

The best-known example in the psychology of the interpretative act is the phenomenon of “trance on the stage”, an unpleasant state of nervousness with effect before and during public performance, experienced by many musicians, also extensively studied by the researcher Davidson. This state may have physiological correlations that are extremely harmful to motor control (for example, muscle

¹ PhD Candidate, Transilvania University of Braşov, claudiasuteu@yahoo.com

tremors, excessive sweating (Davidson 1998, 309-325) required in many situations of interpretation. Since the physiological correlations of the tract seem to be mainly the result of the sympathetic nervous system and because they correlate very often, the imminent feeling of the musician is confirmed. Thus, anxiety increases further if this creature can not be broken by the use of drugs that inhibit the sympathetic nervous system (Davies 2011, 134-148), not affecting the central nervous system (Gabrielsson 2010, 549-571). In one of the investigations, it was concluded that a suitable drug for this purpose would be one of the beta-andrenoceptor blocking drugs, such as oxiprenol (Gabrielsson et al. 2003, 156-223).

2. The current context of interpretative and psychological research

Today's musicians and their psyche are struggling with dramatic changes in the socio-cultural landscape and implicitly in the musical profession, which is undergoing rapid transformation. Such a changing cultural life leads to a movement into the musician's career, suggesting more flexible paths and an increased need for transferable skills. Musicians tend towards the idea of their own employee, more than a stable job, preferable to life, making entrepreneurship very important. The career of a musician often combines a series of forms and deviations from the basic profession, all of which also affect the psyche to some extent.

The study, such as that conducted by the researcher Juslin, concluded that artists of the present must operate in different cultural contexts, in roles routed and must correspond to the current environments. They tend to internationalize. At the same time, the number of musicians who are provoked to collaborate with other fine arts practitioners has grown significantly, crossing various sectors of the music field (business, health, educational projects, etc.). Thus, society's expectations from musicians are in continuous grinding and growth, advancing excellence and becoming increasingly difficult to access. Artistic quality increases substantially.

The Bologna process has brought about a number of changes in the university environment as well. The issue is how the future professional musicians and the institutions that train them will deal with the new challenges. A group of researchers from the Prince Claus Conservatory in Groningen and the Royal Consulate in Hague (Juslin et al. 2008, 513-5560), worked together to better define the idea that musicians are learning a lifetime. Juslin said that this could have repercussions on the psyche of the instrumentist (2008, 538). It understands the concept of lifelong learning as a dynamic one, whose key features may be critical to new creative and adaptive educational approaches for musicians. Lifelong learning improvement and its implementations are investigated in this study at various levels, ranging from educational organizations, curriculum, to teachers, students and graduates. This

involves creating adaptive learning environments in which students of a music university are able to function optimally in an ever-changing professional age.

In order to trace bridges between the musician who wants to improve and promote his interpretative and multimedia act, I mention the opinion of researcher (Leder et al. 2004, 489-508). It analyzes multimedia from a musical point of view, as it considers it very important in the interpretative act. An interesting parallel is traced by Schachter et al. (1962, 379-399) who analyze Leder's perspective. Special is the role of music in the context of "multimedia", receiving attention as a relevant sociological artifact of contemporary culture, placing its mark on the musician's psyche. As Schachter states in his analysis, Leder's text seeks to initiate an analysis of musical multimedia in relation to the psyche. Moreover, the practice of combining music and drama / theater dates from the early millennia, from the Greek dramas of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, and can be traced along the evolution of Western civilization, represented by the sacred drama of The Middle Ages, then to the Renaissance, the Baroque opera, Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, and the development of the soundtracks of the twentieth-century films (Konečni 2007, 31-40). Since the 1950s and the intensification over the past two decades, music researchers and psychologists have begun to investigate, from an empirical perspective, the relationship between what is heard and what can be seen - sound and image, and impact on the psyche (MacDonald et al. 2005, 321-338). In the field of perceptual psychology, the interaction between aural and visual sensory modalities is well documented (Juslin et al. 2002, 3-21).

3. Empirical studies of musical psychology

The coordinates of the interpretative act could acquire new values when the artist is able to adapt to new techniques and means of work. Empirical studies investigated intermodal relationships in valid ecological contexts that were initiated in the mid-twentieth century but which did not attract attention until the late 1990s. Using the "drop the needle" technique, Peretz discovered that music strongly influenced the individual, when combined with either a theatrical representation or a video recording (Peretz et al. 1998, 379-388). We compared the types of music that engage the audience more strongly, concluding that documentary music using major seventh agreements will individually influence the music of a horror film that uses a repeating figure based on agreements reduced by seventh (Peretz et al. 1998, 11-141).

3.1. "The Congruence - Associationist Model"

Augustin, in a study that Chamorro uses as an empirical basis for his own model of musical psychological multimedia and his knowledge, found that information

provided by a musical sound background affects the judgment of the attributes of the personalities of the studied subjects. Based on the results of the investigation, the authors proposed a paradigm to explain the interaction in sound, psychic, and geometric forms in motion, resulting in “The Congruence - Associationist Model” (Augutin et al. 2012, 319-337). Chamorro wanted to expand the model and to clarify the relationships that appear at different levels between the sensory modalities. Chamorro's text is divided into two parts. The first half of the book provides a theoretical foundation for the theme proposed by the author. The organizational structure is extremely clear and provides the reader with a functional and concise analysis method, with examples and their practical application. In order to demonstrate the audio-visual power of the musician's psychic, Chamorro deconstructs some significant examples with overflowing creativity. Congruence of audio and visual components is an element that plays a defining role in Chamorro's paradigm and instrumental performance (Chamorro-Premuzic 2007, 175-185).

In the interpretative act, the sound changes the perception (Chamorro-Premuzic 2007, 186) and the harmony between sound and image is particularly important. Chamorro's text, Augustine's Audio-vision, and a wealth of other theoretical and empirical papers related to multimedia experiences have made a triumphant triumvirate on which to start discussions and draw conclusions about multi-modal experiences and their impact on psychology instrumentalist.

3.1. The biological side of music psychology

As regards the biological side of the interpretative act, the latter and the continuing training of the performer, both can have repercussions on health. A number of theories have been developed and studies have been made that also address this aspect of the musician's psychology. Response to stress is a natural reaction of the body that evolved to prepare us for extreme physical activity (Sandstrom 2013, 216-228), usually in the face of a major environmental threat or threats inside it. In both animals and humans, this increases the chance of escaping danger and, as such, is vital for survival (Balkwill et al. 1999, 43-64). The probability of one thing being repeatedly triggered and life-threatening can interfere with our ability to function normally. This not only has emotional consequences but reduces our control over activities that require precise motor skills. This is most evident in performance-related stress (such as the trance), which is common in music, a field in which it has been intensively studied (Davies, 2003).

Stress related to the interpretative act can be divided into two components. The former is known as the state of anxiety, meaning it is triggered by certain types of situations. The way the individual behaves in these situations will depend on his psychological traits. Those who appear to be the most vulnerable have anxiety as a trait, having a predisposition to find the experience of being interpreted as threatening rather than challenging or stimulating (Oatley, 1996). Studies show that

anxiety occurs most often to self-absorbing performers and low self-esteem. Stress can be acute, that is, a short-term response to isolated events. However, it can also create conditions in which the body is maintained for long periods of time (days, weeks or months), and this can have serious health consequences. Other research shows that for many musicians, the origin of stress is found in the workplace, where they spend much of the first half of the day. People in higher positions will in large part cause a state of tension and, implicitly, stress (Nyklicek et al. 2003, 304–321). Ironically, tyrant behavior can come from a sense of insecurity caused by the failure of superiors' expectations or exigencies. Chronic stress can also be a self-generated symptom of anxiety as well as a trait resulting from a sense of mismatch. The sufferer may feel that his performance does not meet the existing standard, or colleagues can criticize his or her skills, whether or not this has a basis. Although stress is associated primarily with one's own mind, it can also be generated by other causes.

4. Research studies of performance anxiety in musical psychology

Performance, whether musical or sporting, may be experiencing a degree of stress. Response to stress prepares the body's metabolic systems for activity and is therefore necessary for top performance. If the sensation on the stage is too relaxing or lethargic, the performance will remain fairly fragile, even if the soloist is technically competent. For truly excellent performance, not only all the resources related to the physical aspect of the performance are necessary, but it is also necessary for the soloist to be alerted or loaded from a mental point of view. Therefore, we can imagine a relationship between the theoretical level of stress and the quality of performance. The latter increases with stress to a certain level, beyond which it will decrease as the physical symptoms of stress become more and more harmful (Mas-Herrero et al. 2014, 1-6). As we become more experienced, acquiring strategies to meet the challenges (Zentner et al. 2011, 494-521), the physical symptoms of performance-related stress may or may not decrease, but the way we respond or exploit these changes to our advantage will surely not deteriorate.

5. Conclusions

Interpreters intend to produce a specific listening experience for listeners. They therefore want to check whether the results of their actions are in line with their intentions, and if not, take corrective action. How much do you do this? A major technique used to try to answer this question involves disturbing normal feedback by providing delayed auditory feedback (DAF) (Davidson 1998, 307-330). Auditory feedback plays an essential role in determining the nature of vibrato, which occurs

when subjects are forced to sing a sustained note. Both the amplitude and the frequency of the height change progressively when the auditory feedback is delayed from 10 seconds to 50 seconds (LeBlanc et al. 1996, 49-59). Thus, vibrato is largely the result of the operation of a control loop that serves to keep the voice in a certain note. When DAF is absent, the sound traverses the distance between its highest and lowest value (half-cycle). If each reversal to the center note is the result of a control adjustment, these adjustments must be made every 10 seconds.

Lazarus (1976; 1978) argued that such vibration control should be more and more strongly disturbed by DAF for more than 10 seconds (LeBlanc et al. 1996, 1023). However, the conditions under which DAF is presented are crucial to determining whether the subject will use it to control its performance. For example, subjects are less likely to do so if they can still hear their own instant hearing feedback (LAF), or if DAF is distorted. Performance quality is affected by the level of excellence of the performer and adequate training, but it can also be affected by psychological factors such as self-perception, persuasion and self-efficacy, but also the previous experience of anxiety in interpretation (Marvin et al. 1999, 389-408). As confirmed over time, performance anxiety can negatively affect the quality of interpretation, especially for female musicians. Studies conducted by professional interpreters and students of higher education have indicated that performance anxiety is one of the most frequently reported problems, being a critical issue for 15% to 25% of musicians.

I conclude by drawing a strong link between the above-mentioned aspects, emotions, anxiety, but also external factors such as multimedia and socio-cultural conditions. They all contribute to the psyche of the performer, and then find themselves in the personality of the performer and in the quality of the artistic act.

6. References

- Augustin, M. D., C.C. Carbon, and J. Wagemans. 2012. "Artful Terms: A Study on Aesthetic Word Usage for Visual Art Versus Film and Music." *i-Perception*, 3:319-337.
- Adorno, T.W. 1941. "Theory about the Listener." *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, IX, 17-48. New York: Institute of Social Research.
- Balkwill, L.-L., and W.F. Thompson. 1999. "A Cross-cultural Investigation of the Perception of Emotion in Music: Psychophysical and Cultural Cues." *Music Perception* 17: 43-64.
- Chamorro-Premuzic, T., Furnham, A. 2007. "Personality and Music: Can Traits Explain How People Use Music in Everyday Life." *British Journal of Psychology* 98: 175-185.
- Davidson, R. J. 1998. "Affective Style and Affective Disorders: Perspectives from Affective Neuroscience." *Cognition and Emotion* 12: 307-330.

- Davies, S. 2003. *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, S. 2011. "Infectious Music: Music-Listener Emotional Contagion." In *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Peter Goldie and Amy Coplan, 134-148. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gabrielsson, A. 2010. "Strong Experiences with Music." In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, ed. by P.N. Juslin, and J.A. Sloboda, 547-574. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gabrielsson, A. 2011. *Strong Experiences with Music – Music Is Much More Than Just Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gabrielsson, A., and S. Lindström Wik. 2003. "Strong Experiences Related to Music: A Descriptive System." *Musicae Scientiae* 7: 157-217.
- Juslin P.N., and D. Västfjäll. 2008. "Emotional Responses to Music: The Need to Consider Underlying Mechanisms." *Behaviour Brain Science* 31(5): 559-575.
- Juslin, P.N., and M. Zentner. 2002. "Current Trends in The Study Of Music And Emotions." *Musicae Scientiae*, Special Issue: 3-21.
- Konečni, V. J. 2007. "Music and Emotion: An Empirical Critique of a Key Issue in the Philosophy of Musi." In *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference "Person – Color – Nature – Music"*, pp. 31-40.
- LeBlanc, A., W.L. Sims, C. Siivola, and M. Obert. 1996. "Music Style Preferences of Different Age Listeners." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 44(1): 49-59.
- Leder, H., B. Belkel, A. Oeberst, and D. Augustin. 2004. "A Model of Aesthetic Appreciation and Aesthetic Judgments." *British Journal of Psychology* 95: 489–508.
- MacDonald, R., D. Miell, G. Wilson. 2005. "Talking about Music: a Vehicle for Identity Development." In *Musical Communication*, ed. by D. Miell, R. MacDonald, and D.J. Hargreaves, 321-338. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Marvin, E.W., and A. Brinkman. 1999. "The Effect of Modulation and Formal Manipulation on Perception of Tonic Closure by Expert Listeners." *Music Perception* 16: 389-408.
- Mas-Herrero, E. et al. 2014. "Dissociation between Musical and Monetary Reward Responses in Specific Musical Anhedonia." *Current Biology* 24: 1–6.
- Nyklicek, I., J.F.Thayer, and L.J.P.Van Doornen. 2003. "Cardiorespiratory Differentiation of Musically-induced Emotions." *Journal of Psychophysiology* 11: 304–321.
- Oatley, K., and J. Jenkins. 1996. *Understanding Emotions*. Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Peretz, I., L. Gagnon, and B. Bouchard. 1998. "Music and Emotion: Perceptual Determinants, Immediacy, and Isolation after Brain Damage." *Cognition* 68: 111–141.

- Peretz, I., D. Gaudreau, and A.M. Bonnel. 1998. "Exposure effects on music preferences and recognition." *Memory & Cognition* 15: 379–388.
- Sandstrom, G.M., and F.A. Russo. 2013. "Absorption in Music: Development of a Scale To Identify Individuals With Strong Emotional Responses To Music." *Psychology of Music* 41: 216-228.
- Schachter, S., and J. Singer. 1962. "Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional state." *Psychological Review* 69(5): 379-399.
- Zentner, M., and T. Eerola. 2011. "Self-report measures and models." In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, ed. by Juslin, P.N., and J. Sloboda, 187-223. OUP.
- Zentner, M., D. Grandjean, and K.R. Scherer. 2008. "Emotions Evoked by the Sound of Music: Characterization, Classification, and Measurement." *Emotion* 8: 494-521.