

Music composition as dialogue: A participatory process of democracy

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Disciplinary background A. Aesthetic Philosophy and Communication Studies. Modernism brought upon a pursuit for innovation. The abstraction within Modernism might delight listeners with novel soundscapes but may also be deemed disorienting by those seeking clear goals and, as such, reduce opportunities for a truly dialogic exchange.

Disciplinary background B. Music Composition and Neurosciences. When listening experiences present minimal stylistic consistency between them, it becomes difficult to anticipate the music's development. The satisfaction derived from successful anticipation sustains participatory listening.

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to provide an overview of a first system of polyphonic music composition, theory and analysis that relies on Bakhtin's dialogism as well as on research in cognitive sciences to create music dialogue that encourages inclusiveness, participation and collaboration by accounting for how listeners anticipate, experience and perceive music.

This new approach to polyphonic writing gives prominence to unique and distinct voices that collaborate within a multicultural tapestry where imagination, anticipation and cohesion serve to invite participation, and where the merging of voices does not arise from juxtaposed monologues but, rather, from the temporal unification of unique and distinct parts forming a multi-level narrative of reflexivity. Examples will be shown to this effect. In addition, this personal method of composition aims to supply tools that other musicians can opt to employ when endeavouring to enhance inclusion and participation in music. The presented framework also serves as a method of music analysis to explore collaborative social models where distinct instruments or musical voices are treated as individuals within a collective. This method accounts for how listeners typically form auditory streams according to research in music perception and cognitive sciences, and proceeds to the deliberate handling of musical parameters (interval size, timbre, temporal relations, contour and motion, harmonic relations, dynamics, etc.) in order to produce a given effect or a type of dialogue. Its main characteristics are a deliberate regard for structural and textural weight as well as the consideration of harmony as relational, dynamic and developing.

Interdisciplinary implications. Musicology has recognised that unveiling the power of music begins when considering it an integral part of identity and society. What then can be said of the converse relation: identity and society as scored within the music itself? In other words, what do power dynamics within the music reveal, and how does one compose participatory dialogue as an invitation to communicate and participate in a gesture of democracy? By examining the many ways that balance can be achieved within music dialogue, inclusion and social collaboration become focal points to better understand power relations and negotiations within the music and between ourselves.

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