
Rehearsal Analysis of Finnissy's Third String Quartet

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Michael Finnissy's Third String Quartet

- Background
- Overall aims:
 - to develop new procedures and methodologies for studying rehearsal processes through the analysis of 'discourse communities'
 - to develop a model to represent ways in which professional musicians communicate during rehearsal
 - to discover how the playing is indicative of the transformation of talk into play

Research context

‘Musical communication is an emergent property of social groups in complex interaction [...for which] we need a theory of communication as a fundamentally social and collaborative activity.’

R. Keith Sawyer 2007, 57.

Research context

- Social conversation (general topics related to friendship, jokes, etc.)
- Nonverbal social interaction (related to non-musical issues, and including physical contact, gestures, degree of proximity, looking behaviors, etc.)
- Musical conversations (discussions about technical or expressive points in the music)
- Nonverbal musical interactions (gestures demonstrating a musical purpose: passages, etc.)
- Musical interactions (dynamics, timing profiles, and when the music starts and stops)

Davidson 2004, 68.

Research context

‘Talk locates emergent processes of making meanings, and it is as social engagement and accomplishment that talk must be studied.’

Feld 2005 (reprinted from 1984), 93.

Methodologies:

- Ethnographic approach:
 - Empirical material:
 - field observation (and notes) of rehearsing
 - interviews

- Anthropological approach:
 - setting
 - time
 - discourse
 - social relations
 - culture

The setting

Kreutzer Quartet

Violin I
Peter Sheppard
Skærved

Violin II
Mihailo
Trandafilovski

Viola
Morgan Goff

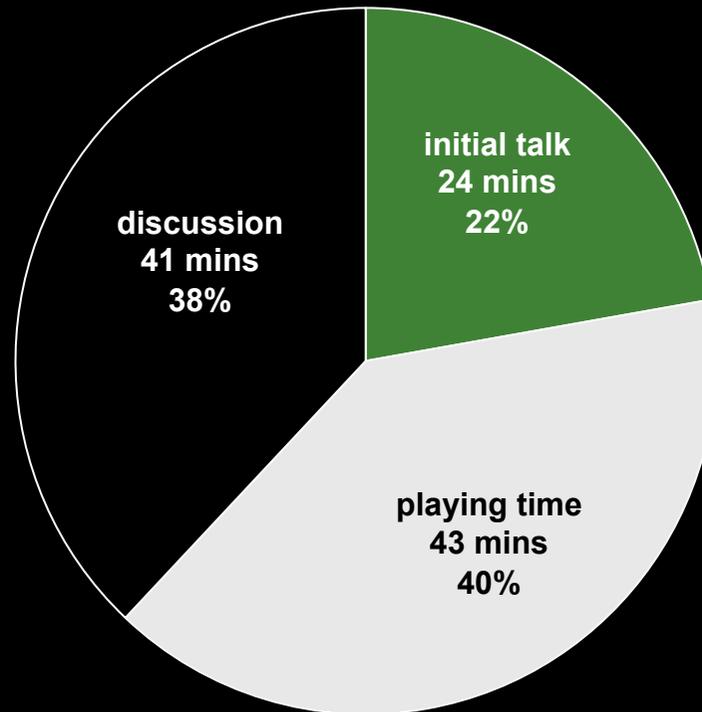
Cello
Neil Heyde



The flow of the rehearsal

- Arrival of players
- Arrival of composer
- Talk
- I: Playing and discussion :I
- Leave-taking

Use of rehearsal time



Talk quantified

1st violin: 29.45%

2nd violin: 8.73%

Viola: 10.67%

Cello: 25.52%

Composer: 25.58%

Ways of talk

Personal talk – relating to personal experience

Small talk – which relates to work as a musician – “shop talk”

The above ways of talk are not directly related to the specific rehearsal, whereas the category

Score talk relates to the specific piece they are going to play.

Personal talk

All: Hello Michael

1st violin: How are you?

Composer: I've got a terrible cold coming...

1st violin: Oh, I'm sorry. (12)

Small talk

Cello:[...]... You know I've got to play this bit of Bach in front of this Kounellis painting?[...]It's actually slightly awkward, so I've been doing a bit of practice, but...I thought it was just three days over the weekend, but now they want me to come early morning this day and work that...There's a proper concert fee every time.

Viola: Wow (5)

Small talk

2nd violin: Yeah, a chamber orchestra

Cello: Richard? Richard's very good. Orchestras always love Richard. [...] Now, orchestras always love him, because he treats musicians really well, and stops the rehearsals early.

Viola: Yeah? A way to any musician's heart. Definitely.

Cello: No, he's a lovely guy. He really is. (6)

Score talk

Composer: Neil? Six of 1.

Cello: Yep.

Composer: The two Fs, one should have a *forte* on it: the first one. And the next one should have a triple *forte* on it, and it stays triple *forte* until it dims. to *p*.

Cello: Okay.

Viola: Oh yeah, I'm assuming it's the same for me Mihailo's got a *forte* crescendo.

Composer: Yes, well, wherever you'd like to go from, but...

Viola: So, start on the *forte*, yeah?

Composer: Yes.(20)



The image shows a page of a musical score for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The score begins at measure 16. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Vln. I part starts with a *fff* dynamic and a crescendo hairpin, followed by a 4:3 triplet. The Vln. II part starts with a *f* dynamic and a crescendo hairpin, followed by a *fff* dynamic and a *p* dynamic. The Vla. part starts with a *fff* dynamic and a crescendo hairpin, followed by a *p* dynamic and a 6:5 triplet. The Vc. part starts with a *p* dynamic and a 3:2 triplet. A red box highlights a specific passage in the Cello part, which consists of a series of eighth notes.

Reference talk

Musicians and particular musical pieces

Musical genre which is less specific references to pieces –
or more general categories, but often including some
kind of interpretation

Musical language which refers to shared linguistic
categories either in Italian or German

Musicians and particular musical pieces



Cello: Where's that from?

Composer: Um?

Cello: Is that from somewhere in particular?

[loud turn from 1st violin on violin]

Composer: They're from the f...I was just cutting bits out of the '0' and 1 and 2 of Bruckner's symphonies.

Cello: Okay.

Composer: So it's somewhere in one of those.

Cello: [laughter] So, the ones we all know really well. (73).

15

169

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

no accidental

D# B b c4

Musical genre

Viola: Are we still going 'baroque-y'?

Composer: 'Baroque-y/ Furtwangler'

Viola: Oh, I thought when it was slurred we were going fully legato.

Cello: Furtwangler/Bach

1st violin: No, even then there's a certain prolotion of the...(73)

1st violin: When it's not, when it's separate then even more Classical, so that:
'Deem-ta-dah' (73)



Handwritten musical score for Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The first measure is marked 158. The Vln. I part has a handwritten 'G tied' above it. The Vln. II part has a circled '1' above it. The Vla. part has a circled '1' above it. The Vc. part has a circled '1' above it. There are several boxed annotations: a box with '14' above the Vln. I staff, and two boxes with '1' above the Vla. staff. The score is written in black ink on a white background.



Handwritten musical notation for Vln. I, showing a circled 'Vln. I' and a circled '1' above a short musical phrase.

Musical language

Dynamics



Quality talk



Composer: So, what does this sound like?

Viola: Great!

Cello: It sounds fantastic! We've been really enjoying this.

2nd violin: Sounds like your music. (14)

or

1st violin: That was right that time.

Viola: That was right that time?

1st violin: That was fine, absolutely. Two [fig.] 10.(67)

Social relations

Composer / player interaction

Composer / first violin interaction

Quartet member interaction

I and we



Cello: Yes, exactly. I think we made another movement out of this piece, because we said: 'well, what if we do this one really quietly as well?' And she goes: 'oh, yes, that's a good idea' (8).

Challenges

 **1st violin:** The best thing is that you write this music that's really difficult, [...] [laughter]

Cello: didn't we say last time: 'we'll never get that right', but now we've got the parts, it's easy.

Viola: Much more comfortable. (70)

2nd violin: No, it's not possible

Cello: What do you mean it's not possible? [...]

1st violin: '*Not possible*' is not in my vocabulary. (73)

Innovations



Conclusion

Rehearsal talk is a way into a deeper understanding of musicians' working lives and meaning making. It works to create a musical performance in which the communications and reflections during the rehearsal may be understood in relation to how they have made an impact on the playing, whereas the social relations and the discourses constitutive of the musical performance can only be heard during the actual rehearsal.