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New Music Festivals as Laboratory of Musical Creativity: a comparative perspective on Warsaw Autumn, Festival d'Automne à Paris, and Wien Modern

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FWF research project:

New Music Festivals as Agorai: Their Formation and Impact on Warsaw Autumn, Festival d'Automne in Paris, and Wien Modern Since 1980

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Two sets of key terms :

- “Creative class” and “creative city” (R. Florida, A. Reckwitz)

- “Creative cooperation” and “collaboration” (V. John-Steiner)

Andreas Reckwitz (2012) *Die Erfindung der Kreativität. Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung*

(pp.12 and 13, translat. S. Heilgendorff)

"Finally the societal orientation towards creativity is obvious: In the transformation of the urban and in the reshaping of built-up space in Western metropolises. Many metropolises between Barcelona and Seattle, between Copenhagen and Boston since the 1980s are—through spectacular architecture—in the process of reinventing themselves through restoration of city districts, the new foundation of cultural institutions and specific work on appealing atmospheres. It is not sufficient any more, that cities fulfill their basic functions to provide housing and places of work as it was valid for the classic industrial society. It is expected that they undergo a permanent aesthetic self-renewal, which repeatedly can captivate the attention of inhabitants and visitors—they want to be and are supposed to be creative cities. Creative work, innovative organizations, the self-developing of an individual, creative cities—they all participate in an encompassing cultural ensemble, which perpetuates the production of the new and nourishes the fascination with the creation and perception of new kinds of novel objects, events and identities.

[…]

Indeed the idea of creativity is certainly not an invention of post or late modernism. Nonetheless from a sociological perspective on the genesis of modernity as a whole she was essentially limited to cultural and social niches from the last third of the 18th century to the second third of the 20th century."

Vera John-Steiner (2000, last reprint 2006)
Creative Collaboration
(Oxford Univ. Press)

Creative cooperation and collaboration

- "Cooperation": participants in cooperative endeavours each make specific contributions to a shared task. However, their level of involvement may differ, as well as their sense of intellectual ownership of the resulting product. (p. 12)

- "Collaboration" can be a more fully realized equality in roles and responsibilities in collaborative activities in which the participants see themselves engaged in a joint task. (p. 13)

Agents involved in creative processes at new music festivals

- Curators/festival directors
- Composers (and where applicable other artists)
- Musicians (and where applicable other artists)
- Organizational and administrative staff
- Sponsors/financers
- Staff at venues
- Press

Processes of the creation of a new work at new music festivals

- Shared activities by curators and artists:
  - Interaction/communication with several people and institutions (location, budget, aesthetics, production, PR, exchanges/ cooperations/co-productions)
  - Collaboration
  - Initiative
- Additional responsibilities of composers and where applicable other artists:

  The creation of the new project's material (scores, choreographies, texts, visual images, costumes, staging etc., etc.)
- Additional responsibilities of the participating performers (musicians and other artists):

  The realization of the new "work" (learning the piece, rehearsing the piece, performing the piece)

Rubato ma glissando

The sound installation/performance project *Rubato ma glissando* is a good example of creative collaboration between one composer, one visual artist, and one curator. As a commission of the Festival d'Automne à Paris in 2008, this work shows how a long-term friendship can stimulate creativity.

The original idea of this collaboration came from Josephine Markovits, the musical director and curator of Festival d'Automne à Paris, who asked her long-time friends Annette Messager and Gérard Pesson if they would want to work together on a new open project. She provided them with the best conditions to enable collaboration: namely, freedom to conceive a new artistic project for the 2008 Festival edition, autonomy to choose further artistic collaborators and musicians, a sufficient budget, and a remarkable performance space. In the words of Gérard Pesson, "the Festival d'Automne à Paris, which is unique, creates not only a favourable space, but also listening, and quality artistic and professional accompaniment: the ideal conditions for creation." (Interview with the composer, 4 December 2013)

The result of this collaboration was *Rubato ma glissando*, the first and the only Messager/Pesson collaboration so far. This work is metaphorically based on the Pinocchio story: the musicians costumes and gestures make them seem like puppets, as if they were controlled with ropes from somewhere above. *Rubato ma glissando* is conceived as a dramatic and non-narrative sound performance, thought for a specific space and atmosphere.

Rubato ma glissando, Chapelle des Récollets (workshop, June 2008, © FAP)

We would like to thank Josephine Markovits and Gérard Pesson for their time and for the visual material presented here

Rubato ma glissando

Gérard Pesson, composer
Annette Messager, visual artist
Joséphine Markovits, curator/festival director for music
Commission and world premiere: Festival d'Automne à Paris

Six musicians:
François Lazarevitch (flutes/musette)
Ivan Solano (clarinets)
Nicolas Chedmall (horns)
Caroline Delume (guitars)
Sylvain Lemêtre (percussions)
Elena Andreyev (cellos)

2007: First meeting of Messager and Pesson
2008:

- Workshops of Pesson with the musicians (studio Opera Bastille)
- Main workshop at the Chapelle des Récollets (Messager, Pesson, Markovits and all the people participating in the final performances)
- Creation: 25-28 September (four performances per day: 20h, 20h45, 21h30, 22h15), Garden and Chapelle des Récollets

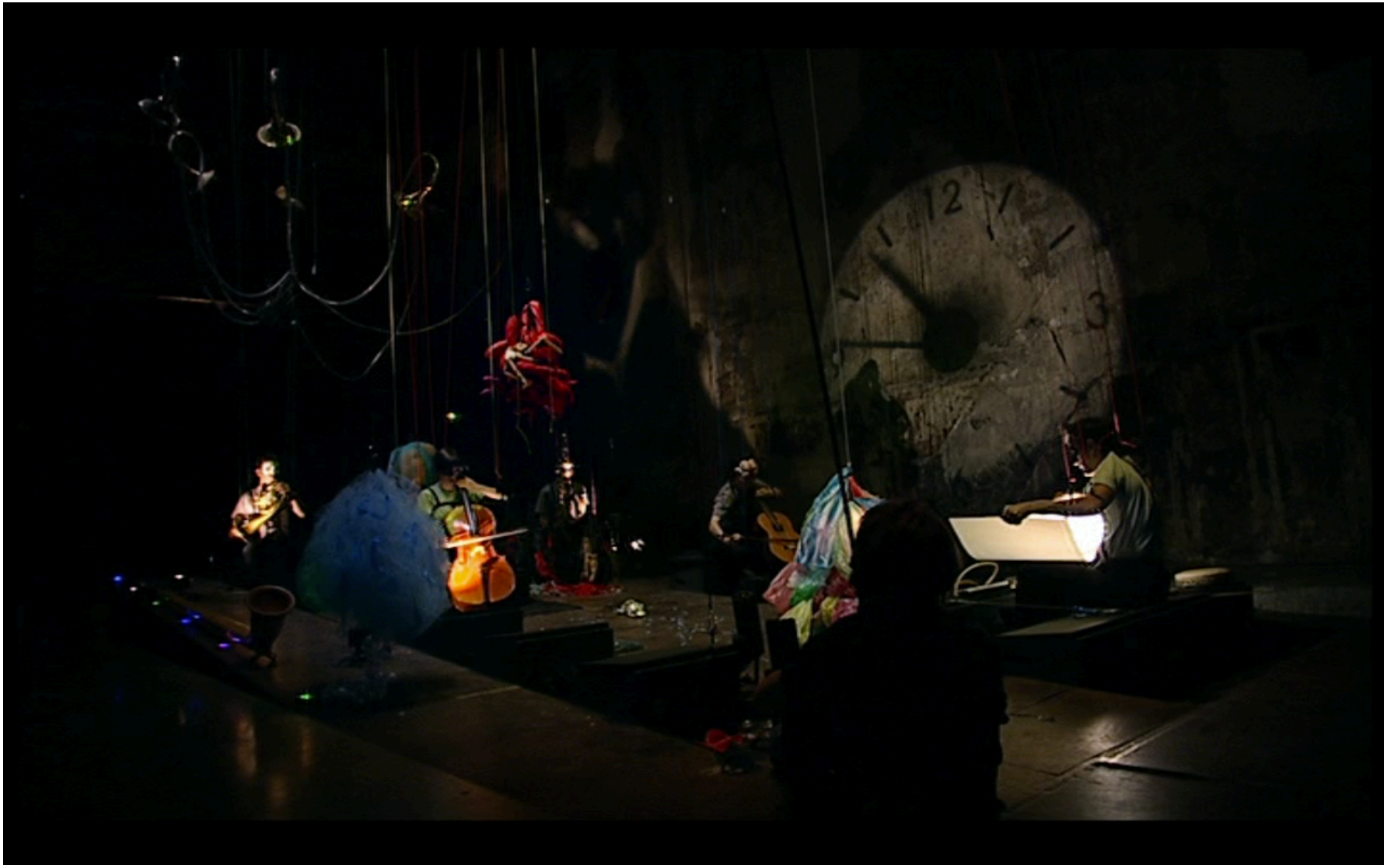
Rubato ma glissando, Chapelle des Récollets (workshop, June 2008, © FAP)

Rubato ma glissando

We will analyse two aspects of this work in order to illustrate how creativity was deployed in a complementary way. First, with regards to the musical material, Gérard Pesson conducted several workshops with musicians in order to hear musicians' instrumental and technical proposals and to draft sequences.
After these initial sessions, Pesson finalized the sequences and performance instructions, but also left some freedom to musicians to improvise short solos. The final musical form is thus structured in 13 sequences, alternating fixed sounds with solo improvisations and instructions for performance.

Gérard Pesson explains:
"For *Rubato ma glissando*, Annette brought the main elements, and my role was to create a kind of abstract [non-narrative] prompt book, which would express the sounds, inseparable from the visual image and lights. I had no preconceived ideas about musical form, except that I did not want to write "concert music", a closed music. There are riggers, technicians, so we had to give the musicians flexibility. Although the music is obviously timed, the score is an alternation of written parts and others that are designed, but unwritten – given as instructions."
(FA website, http://www.festival-automne.com/uploads/Publish/evenement/193/Bible%20Pesson%2010%20sept.pdf

Rubato ma glissando, Chapelle des Récollets (performance video, 2008, © FAP)

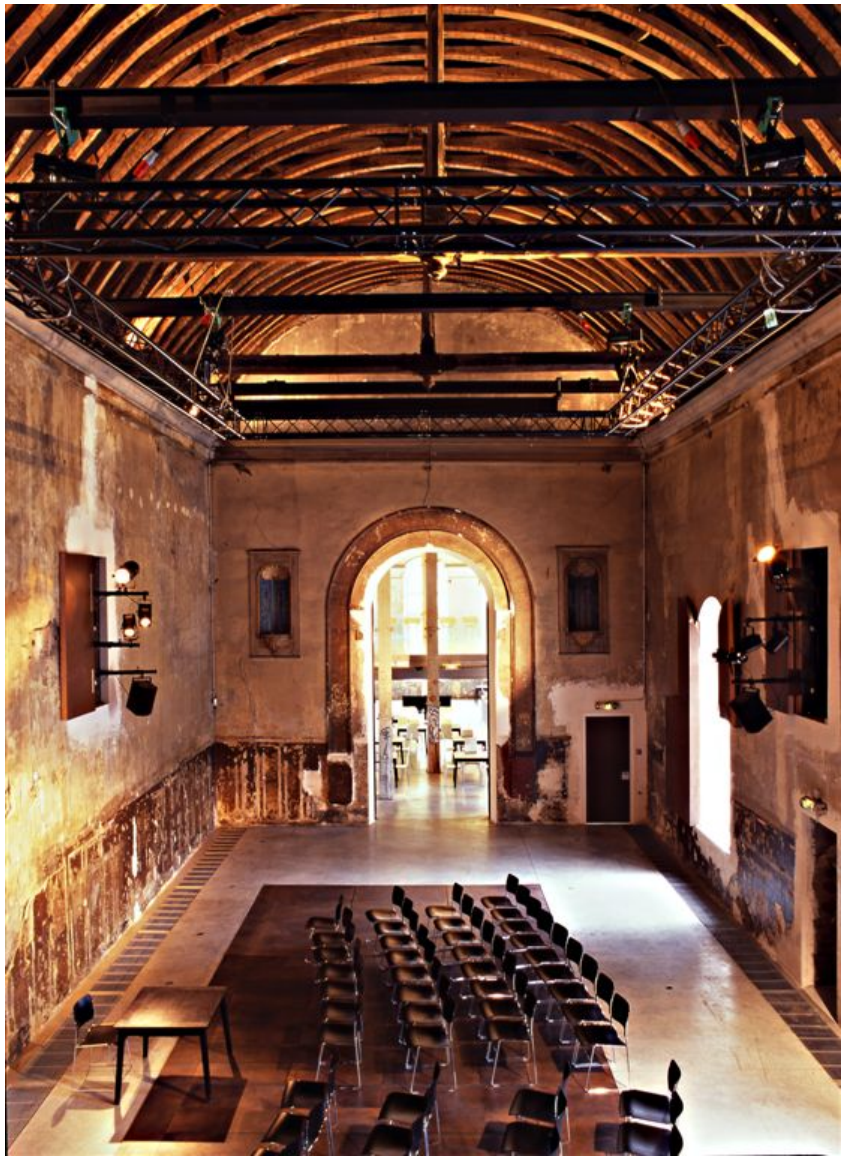


Rubato ma glissando

The second aspect we will analyse is the relationship between the space and the performance.
Annette Messager conceived an extended performance space that included not only the chapel stage but also the outside garden.
She placed objects around the garden in order to guide the public inside the chapel, where the musicians were already beginning to play, breaking the silence. The time and space of the performance both had indeterminate boundaries which surrounded the public. The lights, the space and the timing were carefully planned, as was the case in stage machinery once used in theatres.

As Messager explains:
"As I always like to do, I tried to work with the place (which in this case is very beautiful, a bit run down, not very large, constraining, but also mysterious and rather magic) not to transform the place's architecture, but rather to emphasise it. In this regard, the light - which is often short-changed in exhibitions – was the object of serious work."
(FA website, http://www.festival-automne.com/uploads/Publish/evenement/193/Bible%20Pesson%2010%20sept.pdf)

Chapelle des Récollets *(Maison de l'Archtecture en Île-de-France*, Paris)
(http://www.maisonarchitecture-idf.org)



Messager installation in the Garden of Récollets (© FAP)

Rubato ma glissando

Rubato ma glissando was presented from 25 to 28 September 2008, four performances per night. The characteristics of this work were shaped by the conditions of the commission provided by the festival. The festival in this sense functioned as a privileged place in which an unusual project could be creatively developed.

As asserts the stage director, and long-time collaborator of Festival d'Automne à Paris, Robert Wilson, "festival structures can be laboratories, showcases for works that are not seen in commercial boulevard theater. Festivals are different from a normal run in the theater. It is an event that happens at a special time and the presentations of the works become very special. It is not something that's happening every day." (Email questionnaire, 6 December 2013)

Rubato ma glissando, Chapelle des Récollets (performance video, 2008, © FAP)

Conclusion:
New music festivals as special places/spaces in a creative environment

Possible positive aspects:

Festivals:

- are important to enhance creative work and artistic collaboration
- provide interactive space
- can practice certain types of commissions
- can productively accompany artistic work and the experience of it
- can support members of the audience in their personal and creative development
- can create and participate in new friendships, trust, lasting friendships, and trust

Possible negative aspects:

- Dominance of the curator/director, because they have the financial and organizational ressources
- Power of the institutional structure
- Tendency to strict frame works (it can affect even the aesthetics)

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Festival d'Automne à Paris

Wien Modern

Warsaw Autumn

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