



How does it strike you? Obtaining artist-directed feedback from the audience at a site-specific performance of a Monteverdi opera

John Sloboda

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

London, UK

Acknowledgments

- Dr Melissa Dobson
- Andrew Lawrence-King
- Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Rationale

- Limited audience feedback in live classical performance.
- Research on listener response typically does not involve those making the music.
- Involving musicians in the design of questions asked of listeners is a manageable and useful step.

Approaches to listener research

	Dominant Model	This research
Object of study	Performers or listeners separately	Performers and listeners in interaction
Focus of study	Individuals and their internal processes	Group processes, involving artists, audiences and researchers
Data-gathering context	Controlled/closed (e.g. pre-recorded music in lab, experiments, questionnaires)	Open (live music performance events, semi-structured group discourse)
Primary agenda	Researcher-led	Artist-researcher collaboration

Previous research

- “Angel of Death” project. (McAdams et al. 2004)
- Single work
- Composer as collaborator
- Technically complex data gathering and mediation

Previous artist-led work

- Liz Lerman's (2003) Critical Response Process
- multi-step, group system for giving and receiving useful feedback on creative processes and artistic works-in-progress
- Used in pre-public phases of the work
- No published research about it

The current programme

- A range of different works
- Involves performers as well as composers
- Focuses on public performances
- Immediate verbal feedback from audiences to musicians

Research process

- discovering artistically relevant questions which can be validly posed to audience members
- collaboratively devising appropriate means of collecting this data
- jointly reviewing the outcomes of the event, and the audience data
- obtaining reflective feedback from those involved.

Date/Location	Event	Artistic collaborator/data collected
July 2011 Guildhall School	(A) “For Summer is a come O and Winter is a gone O” World premiere, chamber ensemble conducted by composer.	Composer/ Questionnaire Post-concert discussion
November 2011 Guildhall School	(B) “Movers and Shakers” Workshop to explore potentials of music-related movement for audience members during a Bach solo violin suite performance.	Directors, performer / Audience questionnaire, Post-concert discussion
February 2012 Guildhall School	(C) “The Seven Deadly Sins” Staging of Kurt Weill’s Ballet Chante, with orchestra and singer/actors.	Directors. performers/ Post-concert discussion
May 2012 Wallace Collection	(D) “Combattimento” Site-specific staging of Monteverdi’s one-act opera with orchestra and singer/actors.	Directors, performers/ Post-concert discussion
June 2012 Queen Elizabeth Hall	(E) “Debut Sounds” A London Philharmonic Orchestra concert of new works by young composers.	Composers/ Post-concert discussion

COMBATTIMENTO

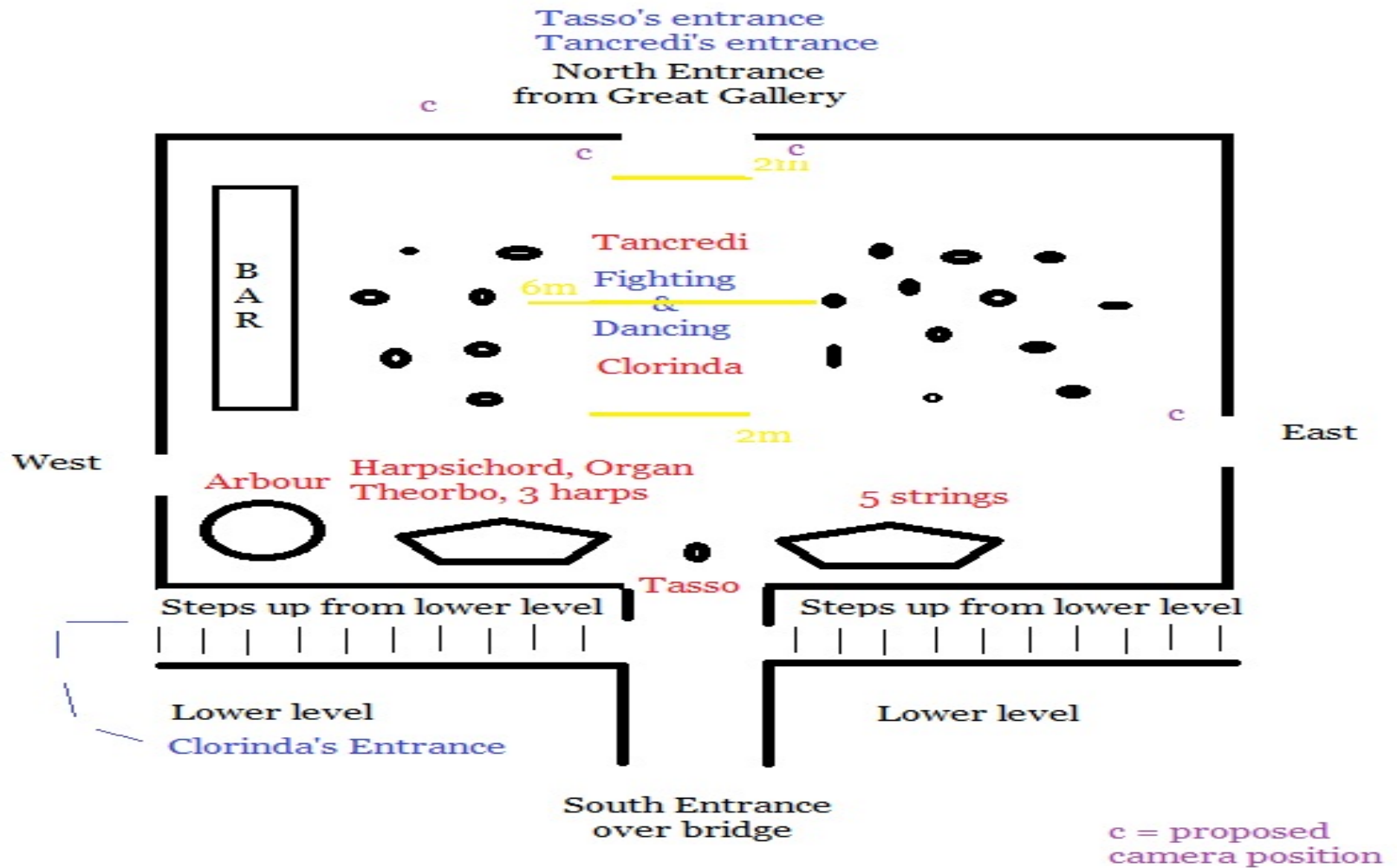
Three layers of research

- Historical musicology (ALK)
- Audience emotional response (JWD)
- Audience/performer interaction (JS)

Main Questions from ALK

- 1. How did you experience the emotional mood of the piece – what emotions did you notice or feel? Did you notice any changes between emotions? When and how did these changes take place? When did it change most/most often?**
- 2. Did you follow the story, or ‘message,’ in the instrumentals, dances, and combat? Were there any times where you felt confused or lost? Were there moments where you felt surprised?**
- 3. Which emotions did you notice at the end of the combat? Religious, happiness, sadness, hope, despair, triumph, love? Did Tancredi win? Did Clorinda lose? Did you feel that “you” or “your side” won or lost?**
- 4. We’d like you to imagine you had chosen to watch a DVD of this production, rather than coming to a live event. Would the experience be different, and if so, how?**

Wallace Collection Courtyard



General themes

- Novelty of experience for most performers
- Sharpening of rehearsal process
- Size and formality of exchange
- “Not answering the question”
- The death scene and the baptism

Specific exchange 1

- The baptism

Audience member “why is it that you chose for there to be no physical contact at that point, between Tancredi and Clorinda. What was the dramatic impulse behind that choice, that mode of baptism?”

ALK response: historical fidelity to illustration
wish not to obscure Clorinda’s face

Performer response: deeper engagement with artistic issues

Specific exchange 2

- The programme note

Audience member. “had I read the programme note before the performance I might have seen the whole thing differently”

ALK response. “in the room there were various sets of people who were insiders in different ways, and he was not. And felt himself an outsider”

Discussion

- Conservatoire location allows both observation and shaping of practice
- Need to balance academic rigour with maintaining artistic independence/integrity
- Artist inexperience with post-concert discussions resulted in researcher-led process
- Events like this help artist-research collaboration

Thank you

- John.Sloboda@gsmd.ac.uk

References cited:

- Dobson, M. & Sloboda, J.A. (2013, in press). Staying behind: Explorations in post--- performance musician–audience dialogue. In K. Burland & S.E. Pitts (eds.), *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience*. Ashgate/SEMPRE Studies in the Psychology of Music series
- Lerman, L. (2003) *Critical Response Process*. New York: Liz Lerman Dance Exchange.
<http://www.lizlerman.com/crpbookLL.html>
- McAdams, S., Vines, B. , Vieillard, S., Smith, B. & Reynolds, R. (2004). Influences of large-scale form on continuous ratings in response to a contemporary piece in a live concert setting. *Music Perception*, **22**, 297-350.