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Beyond the Work-concept: a case study of shared authorship in music

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Introduction

In this presentation we address ethical and theoretical challenges to joint work based on the division of labour in the creation of notated works. These challenges arise from the regulative force of the work concept, as Goehr has pointed out: “[regulative concepts] indirectly suggest to the participants of a practice that only certain beliefs and values are to be held and only certain kinds of actions are to be undertaken” (Goehr, 2007, p. 104). Following the Work-concept, the division of labour traditionally works in tandem with the belief that “to be true to a work is to be true to its score” (Goehr, 2007, p. 231) implying that the musical work is the score and therefore meaning is created exclusively by the composer. Within this framework, the performer is obliged by a contractual agreement to obey notation in order to re-create a pre-existing meaning.

Even though composer and performer may agree on acting outside the constraints imposed by this vertical model and engage on a more dialogic working dynamics, the very presence of notation and what it stands for in the culture of Western Classical Music seems to imply a top-down process. Roe (2007) problematizes the weight of notation as a limiting factor in collaborative work, arising from the belief in notation as the conveyor of the composer's intention.

While notation is central to the work concept, granting the musical work with an enduring quality, there is, on the other hand, a growing consensus in the literature that the score is not the musical work. Among these voices, Carl Seeger, Roman Ingarden, and José Bowen have emphasized not only notation's necessity of aural mediation, but brought into question the issue of the identity of the musical work as sound. Östersjö considers performance “the final constructive phase of a musical work” (2008:85); for Kanno, “there are some contemporary composers who consider that a new work is fully complete only when there is a recording that accompanies the score”. This brings us to a crucial power shift from composition to

performance, for a musical work only endures if it becomes a part of culture as a sonic object. For that end, it needs to rely on a performance practice, which has its starting point in a first performance or recording of a newly composed work (Domenici, 2012). Considering this, I would like to propose a provocative interpretation of the concept of joint work as defined by the Copyright Act as “a work prepared by two or more authors with the intention that their contributions be merged into inseparable or interdependent parts of a unitary whole” to encompass both the score and its performance in the context of our case study. This provocation is not intended to claim to the performer the right to authorship in the traditional sense, but to bring into focus the importance of performance for the resulting piece of music.

In analysing our notes, we have come to realize that our case study presents some challenges in regards to how each of us perceived our respective roles in the process and how we each perceived the impact of our exchanges on compositional and performative processes. Even though in our case study the dynamics of joint work pointed to a break down in hierarchy at many points in the process, our individual perceptions of the process, and, consequently, how we frame it theoretically remained distinct. This distinction is particularly evident in our understanding of the term “collaboration”. While Alan is concerned with differentiating among forms of working together based on the separation of tasks, I, on the other hand, focus on the interdependency of our tasks and the reciprocal influence of our interactions on our decisions, finding it hard to distinguish between “collaboration” and other forms of working together on the basis of the separation of tasks and decision making. For that reason, we have chosen to address the sections of this paper as individual voices.

1. Challenging old paradigms: a performer's ethical reorientation, by Catarina Domenici

After six years of systematic research on composer-performer interaction, I became aware of the fact that so much of the performer's role has been based on obligation - obligation to the composer, to the work, to the score, to the cause of new music. The kind of contractual obligation implied by the work-concept's vertical model tends to overlook the performer's pleasure, his/her artistic autonomy, and his/her relationship with the public. I have also developed a growing awareness of the relationship between meaning and motivation and pleasure to perform based on my observation of the new works I chose time and time again to perform in public, as opposed to works that I have only performed at the premiere. I realized I felt alienated when the composer did not want to express any meaningful connection to his/her work or share his/her meanings with me - the old dictum ‘my music speaks for itself’

or 'my music does not express anything'. To me, one of the most rewarding aspects of working with living composers is the opportunity of sharing the process of creating meaning. For that reason, I have decided to break away from what Taruskin (1995) calls "the modernist ethics of musical performance", which is based on the performer's subservience to the composer and the work. So, instead of assuming the traditional role of the performer as a technical consultant assisting the composer on the proper or best way to realize his/her intentions, which is well documented in the literature pertaining case studies involving notated works, I have decided to include my own needs in regards to meaning, aesthetic value and pleasure to guide my actions. It is from this position that I have engaged with the notated musical ideas of Alan throughout our collaboration.

This position is not a comfortable one, but I considered it a necessary, risk, considering Alan and I do not share a common aesthetic, as it became evident in the development of our joint work. Throughout our collaboration I had in mind Bakhtin's concept of Architectonics, which is defined by Holquist as "the general study of how entities relate to each other" (1990: x). The concept arose from Bakhtin's preoccupation with I-other relations: "A whole is called 'mechanical' when its constituent elements are united only in space and time by some external connection and are not imbued with the internal unity of meaning. The parts of such a whole are contiguous and touch each other, but in themselves they remain alien to each other" (1990:1). Considering the aesthetical gap in our relationship, as well as the presence of an invisible third person, the compositional process, building an internal unity of meaning was not an easy task; it was something that had to be constantly negotiated, both in regards to our roles and to the music being produced.

Acting outside the ethical constraints prescribed by the work-concept can be challenging both personally and socially. However, considering the immense power performers have in determining the social life of a piece of music, as he or she exercises the choice of playing this and not that particular work in public, and that a performance tradition only develops overtime through several performances and recordings, it seems that an ethical reorientation that encompasses the performer's pleasure, artistic autonomy, and the relationship with the public is long overdue.

2. Shared artistic creation and the work-concept, by Alan Taylor

Both in my long-term artistic practice as a composer, and as a result of my more recent studies of the subject, I have come to the conclusion that shared artistic creation does not sit comfortably with the work-concept. I would to like to explore this question of the dissonance

between the experience of sharing the work of creating music, and the work-concept.

As a composer who has always worked with musical performers or other artists when composing. I have never felt comfortable with the idea that my pieces were musical works, with all that implies in terms of the status of the score and of the music itself. Pieces I have written were all written for particular people and likely to be performed in circumstances of which I was aware at the time of writing. I therefore did not perceive them as emanating from my '... unfettered genius ...', to quote Beethoven. (Beethoven, in Goehr 1992:225)

I have also long been acutely aware that my imagination does not operate in isolation but, following Bakhtin (1981), that I imagine in dialogue with, and stimulated by, my experience of music, my life-experiences, and the environment of which I am aware. I call this dialogic artistic creation. While I am usually initially unaware of the source of musical ideas and structures which come to mind, I can generally identify where they have come from, or what provoked them, subsequently.

I therefore do not see myself as being the sole originator of my music, but as an interpreter and a filter. This is particularly the case when working with others, where comments and suggestions of theirs, the nature of the people and their own range of experiences, or even simply their presence, have a fundamental effect on the music imagined and notated.

I suggest that this experience, of working with others, and of dialogic artistic creation, does not sit easily with the work-concept, in two ways:

A. That musical works emanates from one composer's imagination.

This is clearly not really the case if more than one person made an imaginative input into the music, even if one person, the composer, did all the notational work. Even so, it is hard to avoid the expectation that one person is the composer, and few pieces of music are presented as authored by more than one person. I would therefore suggest that music composed as a result of a process involving more than one person may still come to be perceived as a work of an individual composer, even if it was not conceived in those terms.

B. That the musical work has no social function, and exists divorced from the

society and circumstances in which it was written

This is described by Goehr as the separability principle (Goehr 1992:170). I suggest that if music is composed through a process involving more than one person, then it will have a social, or extra-music, function built into it. Since all those involved will need to feel committed to the resulting music, it will tend to lean towards the communication of things which they can share to some extent at least, and therefore arise from the society of which they are part. Otherwise the outcome would risk being meaningless to some of the participants.

I suggest therefore that, in these two ways, tensions exist between of the work-concept and the music written when a number of people have been involved in the creative process.

3. Modes of joint working, by Alan Taylor

In my studies of joint artistic creation, I have found it valuable to draw distinctions between different modes of working together. I was provoked into doing this by an awareness of the variety of meanings given to the work 'collaboration' in the literature. I have found it valuable to define different forms of joint working more precisely, and to analyse cases of joint working in using the resulting terminology.

Dobson (2009) describes some examples of the uses of the term collaboration:

When discussing collaboration we could be talking about anything from independent parallel working, characterised most extremely by Cage and Cunningham's work, by cooperation where each member of a group performs a distinct role independently, or a much more involved approach perhaps seen when musicians improvise and perform Jazz. (Dobson 2009:6)

I suggest that this wide usage of the term collaboration is an impediment to research on the subject. It can make it difficult, at times, to understand precisely what kind of working relationship a writer is describing, since different forms of working relationship may be described by this same all-encompassing term.

In the attempt to analyse exactly how two or more people create together, and what the relationship between them is, it would seem best to begin by analysing the different forms which working together can take. We can then see if there are a variety of forms of relationship, and of terms to describe them, and examine the effect that these differences have on the art created.

The first point concerns the question of artistic invention, or imaginative input. The

imaginative contributions made by separate participants may relate to separate tasks or separate parts of a combined art-work. Alternatively, they may all contribute to the whole of the art-work, or may all contribute to the same part.

John-Steiner (1997), for instance, distinguishes co-operative relationships in which '... each make specific contributions to a shared task ...' (John-Steiner 1997:12) from collaborative relationships where '... participants see themselves engaged in a joint task ...' (John-Steiner 1997:13).

Hart (2008) refers to several examples of artists working together, describing the relationship between the visual artists Gilbert and George as '... a kind of co-operative individualism ...' (Hart 2008:37). The two artists make separate imaginative contributions, but present the artistic outcome together as a combined art-work or set of art-works.

Following these authors, I would suggest that the term collaboration should be used only for cases where the imaginative tasks are shared rather than divided between participants.

The other important question concerns decision-making. Participants may take decision together, agreeing between them on the imaginative ideas contributed. Alternatively, one or more people may decide on the contributions of others.

For example, Hayden and Windsor (2007), who were studying collaboration in musical composition, identified three different forms of relationship between composers and musical performers:

Directive: in which there is a hierarchy and the composer instructs the performers.

Interactive: in which there is negotiation between the partners, '... but ultimately, the composer is still the author.'

Collaborative: in which '... the development of the music is achieved by a group through a collective decision-making process.' (Hayden and Windsor 2007:33)

They drew these distinctions after analysing a series of case studies of their own work. In the first two types of relationship, there is a decision-making hierarchy, with the composer as the decision-maker. The difference between the two is that in the second, interactive or consultative, type the performers make contributions to a shared imaginative process.

In their collaborative type, all participants make imaginative inputs, and also the decision-making hierarchy dissolves with decisions being taken together.

Again, following these authors, I would argue that the use of the term collaboration should be

limited to the description of relationships where decision making on imaginative inputs is shared.

One can therefore distinguish two dimensions – hierarchy and division of labour – and use them to distinguish four types of working relationship.

Table 1. Forms of working relationship

Division of labour - tasks divided between participants	Yes	<p>Hierarchy in the working relationship</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Hierarchical working.</p> <p>Tasks are divided between the participants. One or more participants decides on the contributions made.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Co-operative working.</p> <p>Tasks are divided between the participants, but decisions on the contributions are taken together as equals.</p>
	No	<p>Consultative working.</p> <p>The participants contribute to the same task. One or more people decide on the contributions.</p>	<p>Collaborative working.</p> <p>The participants share both the tasks themselves and the decisions on the contributions.</p>

This framework can be used as a basis for the critical interrogation of accounts of artists working together. I have found that many of the activities writers describe as collaborative would be better described as examples of one of the other forms of working together. I have also found this framework productive in analysing my own practice, and in examining the effect the nature of the working relationship has on the music written.

I would like to emphasise that I am not suggesting that any one form of working relationship is superior to another. To describe a relationship as co-operative or consultative, when one of the participants might have described it as collaborative, is not to seek to downgrade that relationship, but to understand better how it operates through describing it more precisely.

4. Playing the devil's advocate or a performer's view on collaboration, by Catarina Domenici

Considering the forms of working together exposed above, I would like to propose that composer-performer collaboration in Western Classical Music is being thought of and defined only from a compositional perspective. In other words, the role of the performer in the context of joint work continues to be considered according to the presence and relevance of notation, and to the degree of participation the performer has on compositional decisions. According to this framework, collaboration can only exist when composer and performer take up the role of the other as well, the most obvious example being the case of improvisation in which the separation between notation and sound ceases to exist. This one directional approach, from composition to performance, in the categorization of distinct forms of working together preserves its affiliation with the traditional paradigm of composer-performer relations by assuming both a sequential and a vertical relation from notation to sound. For example, Hayden and Windsor directive category seems to imply a passive performer, one who executes the composer's idealized performance by complying with the composer's instructions without asking or raising questions, which could eventually lead to revisions and/or changes, minute or otherwise, in the notated score. Furthermore, it does not account for the performer's personal contribution to the musical work *as sound*, revealing a strong affiliation with the belief in the musical work as synonymous with the score, thus disregarding the role of musical performance for creating the sonorous identity of a musical work. My experience has shown that musical performance was equally important to the score in creating the identity of a musical work. Let's for a moment just imagine what our notion of Messiaen's piano works would be like without the performances and recordings of Yvonne Loriod. Can we truly recognize a piece by Messiaen if the voicing of the chords is all 'wrong', or if the pedalling is not adequate? And how do we know that the voicing and the pedalling are not appropriate for a Messiaen work?

Reading and interpreting musical notation always requires a context, and that context, as Seeger (1958) well reminds us, is an oral/aural one. Grier adopts a similar position on the interdependence of written and aural systems: "Although some of these [notational] systems have become quite complex, they never completely replace the oral/aural communication of music, which supplies its own processes in a potentially powerful symbiosis" (Grier, 2012:89). Moreover, all the nuances, as defined by Bowen (1993), which escape the precision of musical notation, what Seeger calls "the space between the notes" such as character, timber, voicing, pedalling, rubato, phrasing, micro variations in dynamics, and which ultimately constitute what we perceive to be fundamental elements of a composer's style, are more often than not worked out jointly in the context of contemporary music practice. Taking into consideration

musical performances that emerge from that context, we can wonder how much of the performer's "grain of voice" (Barthes) and "expressive intonation" (Bakhtin) might actually be taken as constituents elements of the *composer's* style (Domenici, 2012).

The exploration of new sounds, new musical languages and new instrumental techniques often rely on collaborative work. However, in this context the role of the performer has been defined in literature as a consultant, implying a more impersonal nature of composer-performer exchange based on technical counsel. I suppose one can argue that in many cases the composer's idea has not been altered or transformed at all in the process, that the changes made could be considered minor adjustments or an improvement of the realization or expression of that idea. This conclusion naturally leads us back to Schoenberg's distinction between style and idea, in which style is conceived as a manner of presentation of an idea, "the surface expression of an underlying idea", and the idea as the "original content of a masterpiece" (Dudeque, 2005: 35). The problem with this distinction is its alignment with Cartesian dualism. As such, it is based on the separation between notation and sound, carrying an evaluation of mental or intellectual work over the physical work grounded on the materiality of the instrument and the performer's embodied knowledge.

Joint work can potentially challenge the traditional vertical paradigm by interrogating the theoretical distance between written and aural processes in the creation of new works. Such distance frequently does not exist *in practice* in such a context. The categorization of forms of working together according to the presence/absence of separation of tasks operating in tandem with the separation between notational and aural processes seem to preserve an affiliation with the work-concept ideology. By focusing on the impact of the participants' actions/decisions on the *written* music, while dismissing the role of musical performance in shaping the identity of a piece of music and creating a context for future readings and interpretations of the score, it confirms notation's privileged status. Moreover, even when compositional and interpretive tasks are divided, joint work often creates a common ground upon which choices and decisions are made. Perhaps, considering the degree of interaction between written and aural processes, regardless of the division of labour, can prove a valuable ground upon which to construct other forms of categorizing working relationships in Western classical music beyond the tenets of the work-concept.

5. The stages of our working relationships: the composer's point of view, by Alan Taylor

I would like to describe the several stages to our working, making reference to the way in which we worked, and referring to the types of relationship described above.

I would characterise the overall pattern of our working as co-operative. There were two separate tasks involved in producing the resulting music, notating musical ideas and interpreting them. We carried these tasks sequentially. Notation was written, then it was played. It was then rewritten or a draft developed from a sketch, and it was played again. Final notation as produced, and then it was performed. The outcome, of music heard by the audience, was the result of this sequential, and co-operative, process.

Our working process followed several stages, and the nature of our working relationship changed more than once.

1. Trying to develop a concept of the piece - remote communication

We began working together in July 2013, and communicated initially by email and later through Skype. The first stage was for me to suggest some musical material. Catarina responded that it depended on what I did with it. I later sent a verbal description of how they might be developed, describing an affective scenario using the material. She did not respond directly, but made it clear that she wished to see notated sketches rather than verbal descriptions in order to respond.

During this stage I was seeking engage in a collaborative discussion in order to develop a concept of the piece, prior to beginning notational work. I have shared similar processes with other performers. Catarina wanted to respond to notated musical ideas. We were establishing the nature of our working relationship at this time, a process which was made more protracted by the limitations of the communication methods we were using.

2. Developing sketches

I then produced a series of sketches as possible ways of implementing the verbal description of the piece I had developed. Catarina's response was that they did not make good use of the piano, might alienate an audience, and that she found them hard to engage with as a performer.

I concluded that it would be hard to make a success of the concept of the piece I had developed in a way which Catarina could engage with, and I abandoned the approach.

I then developed three further sketches. There were drafted without a prior concept of the piece, but were produced within the context of the many things which Catarina had said in recent Skype conversations about writing for the piano and her need to engage with the music as a performer. They were therefore the outcome of the operation of my subconscious imagination, but its operation within the context of a particular performer and of discussions

with them.

3. Workshopping sketches and drafts

I then travelled to Brazil. On the first full day, we workshopped the three sketches. Catarina asked questions and made comments. This led to a clarification of the potential and direction of the sketches, and afterwards I made alterations to them.

The process here was consultative. I presented notation. Catarina interpreted it, and made comments. It was left to me how to respond to the comments. However, there were signs of a pattern of behaviour which became more important subsequently. Because she had made detailed comments, I did not feel that I was free simply to decide whether to take account of them or not, since to fail to do so would have seemed like consulting in bad faith. I felt an obligation to respond to, or incorporate, every comment or suggestion in some way at least.

I then wrote complete drafts of each of the three pieces over the next three days, and we workshopped one draft piece each afternoon. Again, the process was consultative, with Catarina asking about the poetic of each piece – that is, she was consulting me on their interpretation – and making suggestions for revisions or pointing out passages which needed attention. I was therefore also consulting her about the draft notation, and recording many questions and suggested changes.

However, in the last workshop, which dealt with a draft of what is now the first piece, we entered into a very detailed discussion of possible amendments, with suggestions made, counter-suggestions made, and agreement reached on changes. I suggest that here the hierarchy which exists in a consultative relationship was breaking down, and we were, albeit briefly, collaborating.

4. Completing the workshop process

I returned to London with the three draft pieces, and notes of a large number of questions and suggestions for changes. I worked through these in relation to the first two pieces – again, feeling that I had an obligation to take every point made seriously and to address it, and sent revised drafts to Catarina.

The third piece was more problematic, since the sketch I had written in Brazil had been less satisfactory. I therefore rewrote it completely, sent it to Catarina, who still felt there were problems. I then rewrote it completely again, this time with a more satisfactory outcome.

During this time I was, essentially, completing the process we had begun in Brazil. I wrote the notation, and sent it to Catarina for her response. I was consulting her, and making changes to

the third piece in response to her comments.

We then moved into a phase of completing the notation, and here our working pattern began to change. As Catarina started to work on the pieces with a view to performance, she identified a couple of relatively short passages which she thought needed further work. I made changes and sent revised versions. However, in relation to one 4-bar passage, we spent an hour discussing possible changes on Skype, with suggestions and counter-suggestions made, and agreement reached on how to amend the passage. It was left to me to work out the exact notational solution, but, again, I did not feel free simply to make decisions, but felt an obligation to take account of everything which had been said and proposed.

I suggest that during this discussion, on a short passage, we began to collaborate in the re-composition of the passage. The need for a whole hour on four bars, and even then not completing the process of agreeing the exact notational changes, shows how difficult and slow it would be trying to work out and agree notation with another person for a whole piece.

5. Developing a performance

The final phase consisted of the development of a performance. Catarina made recordings of the pieces and sent them to me. I sent back comments, and she then sent me revised recordings. During this stage, she was consulting me. The interpretations of my notation remain hers, but she asked me my opinion in developing them.

6. Our working relationship: the performer's point of view, by Catarina Domenici

In comparing our notes, I find a disagreement in the way we perceived ourselves in the process. While Alan tends to see both of us as consultants, I tend to see us as collaborative partners, for I consider the reciprocal influence of our exchanges on the score and the performance regardless the preserved division of labour. From my point of view, the categorization of distinct forms of working together follows a Bakhtian perspective in which the degree of openness to the other's perception, point of view, situatedness, and so forth is the factor to be considered in assessing a working relationship. That relationship can range from mechanical to meaningful, according to the degree of alienation or complicity between the participants. It also considers the degree of interaction between notational and aural processes. Following this, I can see why Alan would choose the term consultant, for throughout our work together the term "compositional process" was used to set the limits of negotiation in our relationship, meaning that there was a pre-conceived order or structure which was not shared and only Alan was aware of. In this regard, I find it particularly

interesting that when dialogue concerned the verbal exchange of general ideas and concepts at the beginning of our process I was seen as a collaborator, but once those ideas were rendered in musical notation, I became a consultant in Alan's view, pointing to the privileged status musical notation still occupies in Western classical music.

According to my previous experiences from other case studies, I find that simply talking about the concept of a piece does not lead to musical collaboration necessarily, especially in cases in which composer and performer do not share a common aesthetic ground. To me, *musical* dialogue could only take place after a first *musical* proposition. And that was what precisely happened during our workshop sessions at Porto Alegre, which consisted of playing through the sketches, making comments, and exploring possibilities through improvisation, especially in the case of the second piece, where measures 5 and 6 of the final version of the piece originated from an improvised continuation of the first sketch, which was only four measures long.

In developing a performance for these pieces, I followed an established protocol in working with living composers by developing a performance following precisely Alan's indications, recording those performances and sending them to him to be analysed and discussed. I raised some interpretive issues based on my perception of the degree of effectiveness of the performance before an audience, which were then negotiated with Alan. Those observations prompted some changes such as a slower tempo for the second idea of the third piece, which is not notated in the score and remains a performance practice, as well as some micro nuances of dynamics in the first piece. This latter piece required much debate between us, for I found it difficult to conciliate the marking *scherzo* with Alan's tempo indication of dotted quarter note equals 80 in creating a convincing character for the piece. Only after experimenting with a much faster tempo, which contributed to the creation of a meaningful discourse in performance, I was able to slow down the tempo while retaining musical sense.

Conclusions

You are about to hear the first performance of the piece. It is music which developed through an extended process of joint working. We have analysed the way that working took place. The working relationship went through a number of distinct stages, and the relationship took different forms at different points. In places we pushed against the boundaries commonly experienced in composer-performer working, and came close to sharing the notational process at certain points.

One thing is clear. Neither the resulting score nor the performance can be presented as

the work of one person. Both would be different in many details, and conceptually, without the other partner's involvement.

However, we are still faced with the expectations arising from the work-concept. One name is placed on the piece as the composer, though the programme note refers to the detailed process of working with the other. It is hard to escape this, since to name the creator of the music as a 'third voice' not identifiable with any one of the participants would be to run counter to so many expectations. Even though it is music which arose out of the particular context of two specific people working together, other people may encounter it as performers or listeners, and so regard it as a musical work.

While it may well be performed by other people, to us it appears to be inseparable from the context in which it originated. The piece is different both in conception and in detail from how it would be had it been written by a composer working alone.

The very fact of working together on the piece meant that the piece is one in which both of us could engage. It must necessarily connect in some way with shared experiences and understandings.

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