

# Introduction

## DARLA CRISPIN

Darla Crispin is Director of the Arne Nordheim Centre for Artistic Research (NordART) at the Norwegian Academy of Music (NMH), Oslo. A Canadian pianist and scholar with a Concert Recital Diploma from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, and a PhD in Historical Musicology from King's College, London, Darla specialises in musical modernity, and especially in the music of the Second Viennese School. Her most recent work examines this repertoire through the prism of artistic research in music, a process which has been reinforced through her work as a Research Fellow at the Orpheus Research Centre in Music (2008-2013). She is sought after for her experience in the developing field of artistic research, currently serving on the International Advisory Board of PARSE (Gothenburg) and as a regular advisor for the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. Crispin's publications include a new book co-edited with Bob Gilmore, *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology* (Leuven, 2014); a collaborative volume with Kathleen Coessens and Anne Douglas, *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto* (Leuven, 2009); and numerous book chapters and articles. She is currently working on a book entitled *The Solo Piano Works of the Second Viennese School: Performance, Ethics and Understanding* (Boydell & Brewer).

## ANDERS HULTQVIST

Anders Hultqvist is a composer, sound artist and Professor of Composition at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg. Besides writing for different orchestral, chamber music, electro-acoustic and sound art settings, he has since 2005 been involved in different artistic research projects concerning musical interpretation and sound in city spaces. The research projects "Transmission, Urban experiments in sound art and sonic space" and "Into noise" were operated by the research group USIT—The Urban Sound Institute. He is currently involved in the artistic research project "At the conceptual limits of composition: A shrinking emptiness – meaning, chaos and entropy", which explores certain topics concerning the creation of meaning in musical and literary composition.

Examples of publications relating to earlier research projects are *Sound and Other Spaces* (with C. Dyrssen, S. Mossenmark and P. Sjösten: Bo Ejeby Förlag, 2014) and *Musikens frihet och begränsning. 16 variationer på ett tema* (ed. Magnus Haglund, Daidalos, 2012). Two of Hultqvist's more recent chamber music works include *Entropic Pleasures* (2015), composed for Ensemble Mimitabu, and *Disembodied* (2012), written for KammarensembleN. For more details see <http://andershultqvist.com>.

## CECILIA LAGERSTRÖM

Cecilia Lagerström is a director, researcher and Professor in Dramatic Performance at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Cecilia has a background in laboratory theatre and performance studies (PhD 2003). She has been directing performance work in theatres and other venues for many years, and several artistic research and development projects in academic contexts. Since 2005 Cecilia has been active in the development of artistic research in the field of the theatre in Sweden, and she is the representative for research in the dramatic arts at the Academy. She is also regularly commissioned as a lecturer, opponent, committee member and adviser in artistic research contexts in different Nordic countries.

As an artist Cecilia is an active member of the artist-run space Konstspidemin (The epidemic of art) in Gothenburg, where she is involved in international work and has her working studio. Cecilia's art and research work deal with site-specific performance, physical performance training, performative writing and walking as art. During 2013-2016 she is conducting the project *GängART*.

**T** HIS COLLECTION OF articles takes as its unifying theme the opposed but reciprocal artistic operations of repetition and renege; each of the contributors deals in some way or other with how one, or both, of these principles functions in the area of artistic practice with which they are concerned. While, there may arguably be differences between the durational and the non-durational arts in the way repetition and rebuttal are treated, the essays assembled here suggest that such differences are less significant than might be imagined. At the same time, the inclusion in this collection of texts that discuss both the repetitive and the idiopathic aspects of performance reminds us of the importance of interpretation, in addition to creation, along the spectrum of artistic activity.

Repetition is in fact an obvious prerequisite in many art forms, and especially so in the performing arts. In these, it may even be considered a basic requirement for the creation of a piece as well as its performance; the concert or performance is carved out by being rehearsed, or repeated, over time, and it is presented for an audience time and again, night after night. And each time it must be recreated.

This specific condition of repetition may also be what constitutes the art form's "problem" or dilemma. How can the performer recreate the pre-determined pattern "as if it were for the first time", with new clarity and poignancy? What happens in the meeting between repetition—which represents a familiar past—and a new situation, *an event*—with its inevitable

demand for the present moment? To encounter a familiar pattern or figure is also, for many artists, a way to create a confrontation between oneself and the pre-existing material on the one hand, with that which is not the same, with new meaning, on the other.

Bruce Brubaker's article presents the performing artist's processes of grappling with this confrontation. Recalling, in the manner of presentation, the writing experiments of John Cage, Brubaker leads the reader through the reiterative processes that beset performers of composed (as opposed to improvised) music. Repetition is at the core; not only of the processes of learning and presentation, but also of the compositional material itself. In the cycle of presentation and re-presentation, the paradox is the demand for novelty: the exceptional experience. Existing neither in the printed score nor in the repetitive performance processes of concert-giving, this quality lies at the border between repetition and renege without, in this case, disrupting the boundary between the two.

Irrespective of the medium in which it is employed, the dialectic between repeating and renegeing can manifest itself in art at a wide variety of levels: it may be a principle that drives the unfolding processes of an individual work; it may fuel an artist's creative or performative appetite as they progress from one work to the next; or it may characterise an entire artistic genre in terms of its relationship with the audience among which it is disseminated.

At times of extreme polarisation between artist and audience, repetition and renege may be wielded combatively, pulling

and pushing expectation in a way that deliberately destabilises the relationship between producer and receiver. In his pamphlet of aphoristic “*Le coq et l’arlequin: notes autour de la musique*” (1918), Jean Cocteau proclaimed that:

*En effet le public aime à reconnaître. Il déteste qu’on le dérange. La surprise le choque. Le pire sort d’une œuvre c’est qu’on ne lui reproche rien—qu’on n’oblige pas son auteur à une attitude d’opposition.<sup>1</sup> [Indeed the public likes to recognize. It hates to be disturbed. Surprise shocks it. The worst fate a work can suffer is not to attract any kind of reproach—for its author not to be obliged to take up an attitude of opposition.]*

At other times and in other contexts, an artist may use the balancing of repetition and renegeing as part of his or her own creative self-stimulus. For example, the composer Witold Lutosławski described his approach to successive works as one of creating a series of “once-only conventions”.<sup>2</sup> For the duration of each work, a set of rules would apply, generating coherence—and, as part of this, elements of repetition – within the frame of the work in question. But before commencing the next work, these rules would be renounced and a new set generated, ensuring that the challenges of each successive work remained finitely fresh and *sui generis* in key respects, however much a certain stylistic continuity remained an inevitable component of his output.

The sense in which individual artworks are simultaneously unique to themselves and symptomatic of themes that echo across works, and even authors, is encapsulated in the

concept of iterability, used by Kristina Hagström-Ståhl in her essay documenting her experiences directing August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* and Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. In the performance of canonised works, patterns of iterability usually become evident and questions on authenticity rise to the surface.

This leads us to broader questions about reproduction and documentation. In contemporary discourses of artistic research such issues are constantly in the foreground. The possibilities to document “live” art and performance have been variously questioned, challenged and developed. Still, we see in these debates variations of scholar Peggy Phelan’s claim from the 1990s that performance, in an ontological sense, is non-productive and only lives in the present. There is a strong conviction that performance can never be saved, recorded or documented as it then becomes something *other* and the performance “becomes itself through disappearance”.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, documentations are continually being realised and new formats developed by performing artists and researchers, as well as ideas that documentation itself has a performative character. To document a performance produces an event as *a performance*, to refer to scholar Philip Auslander,<sup>4</sup> which can in turn generate new artistic results.

In Annette Arlander’s report on her work with recreating and revisiting the same site and thereby her earlier project, *Animal Years* and *Year of the Horse*, her way of repeatedly documenting the landscape (and in some sense the act of viewing the landscape) also constitutes a mode of artistic expression and a tool for artistic research. Her way of creating slowness

and working with the temporality of the images suggests less anthropocentric and more ecological approaches to creating art, where the environment rather than the individual artist is given primary agency. Perhaps repetition, as a method in itself, can liberate and better expose variations in explored materials as well as different ways of seeing and defining the artistic subject.

The last decade's strong interest in re-enactments in various artistic fields may reflect an increased commitment to historical processes, but also to the development of a systematic methodology of repetition. Re-enactments give the prerequisite for a re-contextualisation of what is repeated, enriching the exploration of contemporary issues through the use of recurrent structures.

In this sense, repetition may be a way of looking more closely at "something", as well as expanding the perception of this "something"; however, it can also work as a means of distancing or estranging. Removing something from its specific context (or even enlarging that context to include non-specific perspectives) implies a de-contextualisation and/or a re-contextualisation. It may cause us to pause and to consider a familiar phenomenon or object with new eyes, as well as breaking automatic patterns and everyday monotony (which could be compared to Bertold Brecht's famous notion of the *Verfremdungseffekt* [estrangement effect]).

The artist and director Janez Janša, who has been heavily engaged in actions of re-enactment in his artistic practice, discusses the kinds of resonance that were created when three

artists changed their names to "Janez Janša", the name of the Prime Minister of Slovenia at the time. Jansa shows in his article how the repetition and proliferation of the name Janez Janša created something he calls "collaterality", or collateral effects, and how the name-change triggered reactions in various contexts. By doing the same—repeating a name—separate providers produced difference. In this way, borders between art and cultural contexts were, in many respects, dissolved and the art project opened up to a wider social and political arena.

Iterating concepts and objects in this way works as a means to push forward the process of exploration to reach towards something we didn't know that we didn't know: it becomes a strategy for "affirming misunderstanding" as opposed to what Barbara Alves—drawing upon Isabelle Stengers—terms "faithful communication". Setting in motion iterations that can produce more indeterminate and more interesting outcomes by using a chaotic strategy, and where the outcome is therefore the product of dissipative structures, is a key feature of this process of affirming misunderstanding.

The trope of iteration can be seen as a metaphor for the construction of memory. For Ioana Popovici, the re-iteration of memories is done differently within a professional community than how this process takes place within the public at large: "Professional recollection is prone to imparting memories through mentorship, making individual repositories of architectural recollection heavily dependent on general professional consensus on value, reinforced through reiteration."

But we can also look at repetition as a way of seeing what the preceding repetitions were not able to realise. As Kaja Marczewska writes, echoing Derrida, repetition may be a manifestation of “a desire to re-appropriate the text actively through mastery, to show the text what it ‘does not know’. [...] Hence, everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity.”

Many artists iterate their practice and, in turn, re-iterate the practice of iteration—repetitions of iteration across many registers—and thereby generate embodied knowledge processes. But these processes can, of course, become stale if not monitored in an active way. The question is always: when does iteration become artistically productive and when is it just doing something once again; on what level of originality is the repetition worked out?

Perhaps the level of relative concealment of the artistic “material” at hand is what alters according to different historical settings, and from one artist/composer to another. Appropriation, citation and even theft have always been active ways of working for all types of artists. One could say that if the artist conceals her techniques and influences she is considered more original, maybe even more “authentic”, but if she repeats the “historical” material as the “material” of the artefact at hand, she might be considered as eclectic or a plagiarist. As Kaja Marczewska points out in her article, citing Walter Benjamin, “in the age of post-mechanical reproduction the work of art becomes ‘designed for reproducibility’ rather than for the aura of its manifest singularity. This is not to say that a propensity for originality is abandoned [...] rather, the

attitudes to originality alter as technologies develop.”

The kinds of performative practices exemplified in this collection of articles create an effect; they *do* something in the world and accentuate the performative force that art can embody. The growing confusion in the arts regarding the use of notions of “performance” and “performativity”, not least in the performing arts, is addressed and clarified in Barbara Bolt’s concluding essay on performativity and the issue of a performative research paradigm. Bolt underlines—drawing on Judith Butler—that performativity involves repetition rather than singularity. Artists actually always work—and deal—with conventions and stylistic patterns that recur. But as she points out: repetition is never repetition of the same—it is repetition of *difference*. It is in the act of repetition and re-iteration that disruptions can take place, and something “new” may emerge. As Bolt claims “This is the ‘stuff’ of research”.

1. Cocteau, Jean. *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*. Paris: Stock. 2009. p. 71.

2. As discussed, for example, in Nicholas Reyland. Notes on the Construction of Lutosławski’s conception of Musical Plot. *Witold Lutosławski Studies*. 2008. p. 12.

3. Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge. 1993. p. 146.

4. Auslander, Philip. The Performativity of Performance Documentation. In *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, Amelia Jones and Adrian Heatfield (eds.). Bristol/Chicago: Intellect/The University of Chicago Press. 2012.