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‘Autoethnography as Critically Engaged Practice: Methodological Concerns and Case Studies relating to Notation, Genre and Aesthetic’

**Music Diaries International Workshop Festival
7 July 2021**

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Ethnography and Autoethnography

- *Ethnography*: the study of peoples, social and cultural practices, values and environments, in the form of writing.
- *Autoethnography*: turns the lens on the researcher themselves and their own cultural milieu, practices, values and ideologies. Sometimes (wrongly in my opinion) conceived primarily as a *method*.
- Ethnography commonly employed as a strategy by ethnomusicologists.
- Classic ethnographies grew from immersion within the cultural environment being investigated, then detailed analysis of the data found.
- But now the term is used to denote almost any research with data sourced from living participants.

Anonymous (ethnographically sourced) senior UK musicologist on ethnomusicological work

‘The best ethnomusicologists I have worked with have strong critiques of authenticity narratives, skepticism about the general way the ethnographic method is conducted, read books (including historical writing and writing about history) and use various kinds of theory that pervade other kinds of humanities scholarship. The worst simply show what look like lovely holiday snaps, give a pseudo-literary, ‘atmospheric’ narrative about their trip, and quote their interlocutors at length, nodding sagely.’

Autoethnography - definitions

- Karl G. Heider, 'What Do People Do? Dani-Autoethnography', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 31/1 (Spring 1975), pp. 3-17.
- David M. Hayano, 'Auto-Ethnography: Paradigms, Problems, and Prospects', *Human Organization* 38/1 (Spring 1979), pp. 99-104.
- Stanley Brandes, 'Ethnographic autobiographies in American Anthropology', *Central Issues in Anthropology* 3/1-2 (1979), pp. 1-15.

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- Stanley Brandes, 'Ethnographic autobiographies in American Anthropology', *Central Issues in Anthropology* 3/1-2 (1979), pp. 1-15.

John Van Maanen, 'An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography', in Van Maanen (ed.), *Representation in Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA, London and New Delhi: Sage, 1995), pp. 8-9

1. Confessional ethnographies
2. Dramatic ethnography
3. Critical Ethnographies
4. Self- or Auto-ethnographies

Autoethnography - definitions

Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Boechner (eds.), *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* (Walnut Creek, CA, London and New Delhi: AltaMira Press, 1996).

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Art: I think we can break free from the quagmire of these messy distinctions by becoming more pragmatist. We need to ask, "What do we want ethnography to do? How can other people use our work?" Michael Jackson urges ethnographers to see the binaries science/art and fact/fiction as mutually necessary and inextricably connected. If we tie ourselves down to rigid rules, we lose the flexibility of adopting different discursive strategies depending upon our circumstances and purposes. Jackson's emphasis on the rhetorical demands of ethnographic research helps avoid the temptation to trivialize important differences between art and science. To make science more artful doesn't mean art and science become one and the same activity (*A phone rings, interrupting the conversation.*)

[....]

Art: Maybe there needs to be more screaming about the atrocities people experience. We admit that education can hurt, especially when it makes you question your values and behavior. The way I look at it, well, some of these personal narratives are written by people who have suffered in silence for too long. I mean, our polyglot world includes child abusers, and drug pushers, and homeless people, and harassers, and racists, and wife beaters, and people with HIV and Alzheimer's and on life support. Many people live in a world where death is just around the corner and life feels worse than the alternative. Hey, there's a hell of a lot to scream about even in polite society.

Carolyn: (*Stands abruptly and looks around the room*) Where did Sunya go? I'm going to scream if Sunya is peeing on the floor again. Sunya! (*Suddenly Sunya bounds into the living room from the hallway, water dripping from her face. The other dogs awaken and start looking for toys.*)

Autoethnography - definitions

‘...a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context Both a method and a text, as in the case of ethnography.’

Deborah E. Reed-Danahay, ‘Introduction’, in Reed-Danahay (ed.), *Auto-Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), p. 9.

Analytic Autoethnography

Leon Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography' *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35/4 (August 2006), p. 375.

...ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.

Key features:

(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status; (2) analytic reflexivity; (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self; (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self; and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

My definitions

1. Ethnography of a community of which the research is a part.
2. Self-documentation, often for cathartic or therapeutic purposes.
3. Self-documentation accompanied by wider contextualisation and critical self-reflection.

3 can be called *self-critical practice and critical writing on practice*.

For performers, simply *critical performance*.

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For performers, simply *critical performance*.

‘The conscious and deliberate *exploration* of an artist’s aesthetic universe is how I define “artistic research.” It is obvious that, since artists are the only ones who have unmediated, direct access to their own aesthetic universe, artistic research can only be performed by those artists themselves.’

Bart Vanhecke, ‘A New Path to Music: Experimental Exploration and Expression of an Aesthetic Universe’, in Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore (eds.), *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), p. 94.

Documentation of Practice – other problems

- Diaries and obsessive documentation. Some things can be charted better with hindsight.
- Wider value of documentation for its own sake?

See also <https://ianpace.wordpress.com/2015/12/16/those-300-word-statements-on-practice-as-research-for-the-raeref-origins-and-stipulations-academic-butt-covering-or-more-problematic/>

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- Ethnography mostly consisting of unexpurgated documentation (maybe organised into bureaucratic boxes) with minimal interpretation or critical analysis - self-legitimizing. Stronger rationale needed.
- Documentation of ‘collaborative process’.

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Some examples of collaborative process documentation

Within the existing literature, the collaborative practice's ability to affect the individual is regularly reflected on: nevertheless I was surprised at the length to which this particular collaboration developed my own understanding of my instrument. My excitement at this process of discovery had an element of the childlike to it as I playfully explored new aspects of contemporary technique. Firstly, this process drastically reduced the distance between the composer and the instrument: included in my exploration, X was able to join in my excitement and able to include the results of this in the piece. Secondly, there was an increased feeling of intimacy with the work. I was invested in the project in an even more committed way, as it had expanded my own understanding. The details of this process will be further explained and explored below.

Some examples of collaborative process documentation

Music notation (whether in the score of the sketches) was the principal field of exchange and negotiation. In any working session, members of the quartet had to ensure that they grasped the intention behind Y's demanding writing, could track potential errors or problems in notation, and at the same time could find a fingering that would enable them to deliver an acceptable performance on the fly. Conversely, in the immediacy of hearing the musicians' sonic production, Y had to judge the degree to which it matched her intentions, and to decide whether any shortcomings either were a temporary consequence of the sight-reading process or stemmed from a more serious misunderstanding that needed her intervention. Every plenary session therefore displayed its fair share of mutual analysis through reading and listening, sometimes leading to substantial interactions and verbalizations that would break the forward momentum of the rehearsal and call for decision-making

Notation

Ian Pace, 'Notation, Time and the Performer's Relationship to the Score in Contemporary Music', in Darla Crispin (ed.), *Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth-Century Music* (Leuven: Leuven University press, 2009), pp. 151-192.

- Rejection of 'positivistic' model of notation as indicating a singular result, then stylisation, interpretation is an added extra.
- Fundamental question of how one *reads* notation.
- Notation instead delineates a range of possible practices by a process of exclusion and difference.
- No 'right' way to play a triplet, but there are some ways which would definitely be 'wrong'.

Notation

- Developed this model out of frustration with positivistic assumptions about notation and scores in existing performance cultures, and which also informed some theoretical writings, such as those of Roger Marsh or Roger Heaton, or some of the empirical musicology of Nicholas Cook and others.
- To simply ‘hear what one writes’ assumes some singularity of what is ‘heard’. Removes the performer from the equation.
- Myopic model of performance, resembles some of Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt’s polemics from the mid-1920s on the virtues of mechanical instruments.

...tempo 10

tutta la forza

fff

ff

mf

mp

molto marc.

fff

fff

ancora cresc.

fff

subito

ff

ff

This page of musical notation is a complex score for a piano concerto, likely by Franz Liszt as indicated by the 'L' logo. It features multiple systems of staves, each containing treble and bass clefs. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns, including triplets, sextuplets, and various time signatures such as 6/4, 7/4, 3/2, 5/4, and 7/6. Dynamic markings are prominent throughout, ranging from 'tutta la forza' (all the force) to 'fff' (fortissimo), 'ff' (fortissimo), 'mf' (mezzo-forte), 'mp' (mezzo-piano), and 'subito' (suddenly). Other markings include 'ancora cresc.' (still crescendo), 'ten.' (tension), and 'molto marc.' (very marked). The notation includes numerous slurs, ties, and ornaments, indicating a highly technical and expressive piece. The page is numbered '2' in the bottom right corner.

Ian Pace, *Das hat Rrrrasss* (2018)

59 momentarily synchronised with piano 11

you are quite ri-dic - u - lous

f poco a poco cresc.

f poco a poco cresc

60

16:11

The musical score is written for a voice and piano. The vocal line is in a soprano or alto register, with lyrics 'you are quite ri-dic - u - lous'. The piano accompaniment is in a 4/4 time signature. The right hand of the piano plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a more complex, rhythmic pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'f poco a poco cresc.' and 'f poco a poco cresc'. The tempo is marked 'momentarily synchronised with piano'. The score is divided into two systems, with measures 59-60 and 61-76. The first system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second system begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) and continues with a 16-measure phrase marked '16:11'.

Ian Pace, *Das hat Rrrrasss* (2018)

19

95

6:5

dep - u - ty played a - long.

f (upper part) 9:7

mf (upper part) 10:7

p (lower part)

(L.H.) 7:4

L.H. 9:8

17 16

Sylvano Bussotti, *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959)

V_b) piano piece for David Tudor 1
(Tutto nell'orbita del pp, sempre)

The score is written on three systems of staves, labeled 1, 2, and 3. Each system has two staves, MD (Melodic) and MS (Melodic-Sonic). The notation is highly complex and abstract, featuring many lines, dots, and symbols. The score is divided into three sections by brackets, with durations of 30'', 15'', and 45'' indicated. The date 1.5.1959 is written at the bottom right.

Section 1 (30''):

- MD: C_4 , A_4 , C_5 , F_5 , B_5 , F_5
- MS: G_4 , A_4 , C_5 , F_5 , B_5 , F_5

Section 2 (15''):

- MD: E_5 , D_5 , C_5 , B_4 , A_4 , G_4
- MS: F_4 , E_4 , D_4 , C_4 , B_3 , A_3

Section 3 (45''):

- MD: E_5 , D_5 , C_5 , B_4 , A_4 , G_4
- MS: F_4 , E_4 , D_4 , C_4 , B_3 , A_3

1.5.1959

Sylvano Bussotti, *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959)

7 vedi NOTE

XIV piano piece for David Tudor 4
disegno del 1949
adozione pianistica: 27.3.1959

1 { S
M
P

2 Battuto
Muto
Coperchio
Tastiera

3 { sequenza
frequenza
timbro
durata
intensità

4 { u

o

il
piano
dentro

5 (♩ .)

6 {

Michael Finnissy, derivations from Johann Strauss II, *Geschichte aus dem Wienerwald*

Johann Strauss II, *Geschichten aus dem Wiener-Wald*, op. 325.
From Introduction

Più Lento **Moderato**

p *pp*

a *b* *a'* *b'* *c* *d*

Second Waltz

Walzer

p

a' *b''* *c* *d'*

Michael Finnissy, *Strauss-Walzer. 3. Geschichte aus dem Wienerwald*

a'' *b'''* *c'* *d''*

7:5 *7:5* *7:6* *7:6*

a'''

Further derivations

a'' *b''* *c'* *d''*

3:2 *5:3*

Michael Finnissy, derivations from Johann Strauss II, *Geschichte aus dem Wienerwald*

Strauss, First Waltz



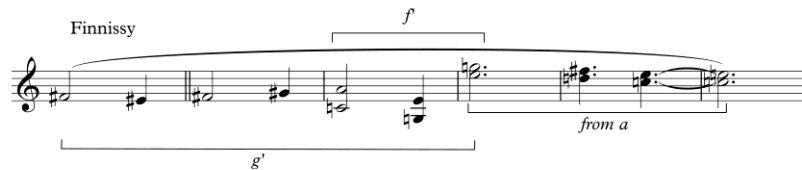
Finnissy



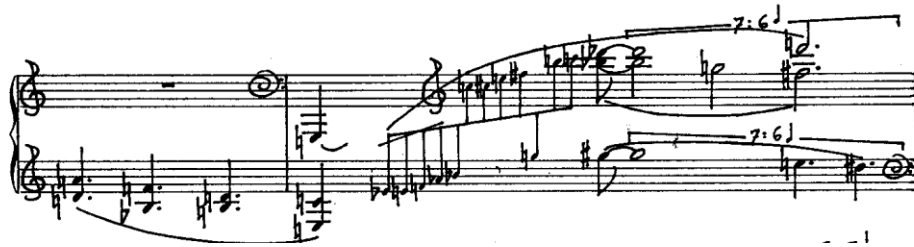
Strauss, Fifth Waltz



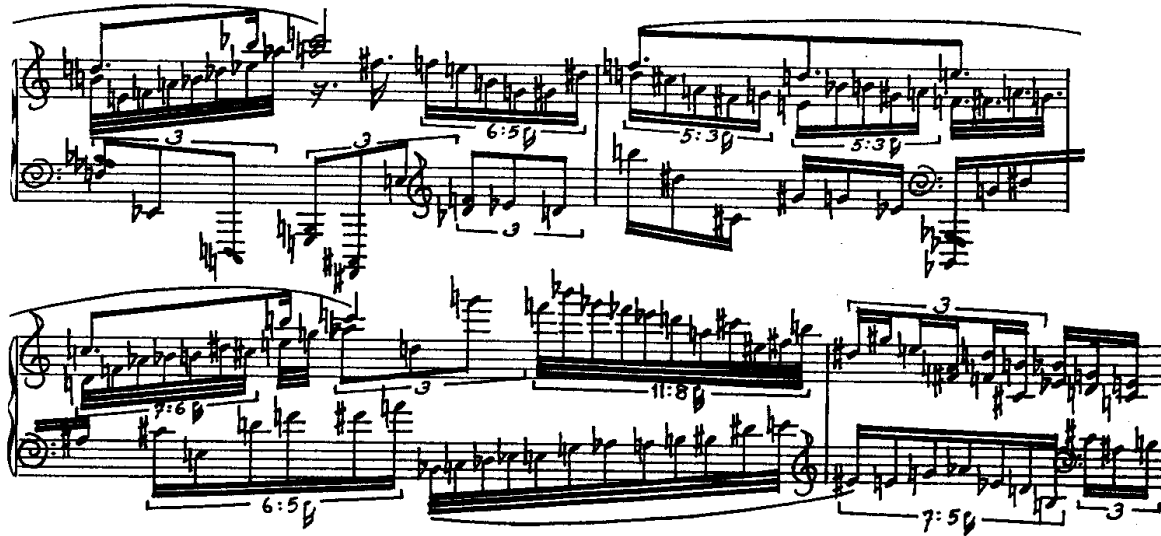
Finnissy



Michael Finnissy, *Strauss-Walzer* No. 3, 'Geschichte aus dem Wienerwald'



Michael Finnissy, *Strauss-Walzer* No. 3, 'Geschichte aus dem Wienerwald'



Michael Finnissy, *Snowdrift* (1974)

precipitato, velociss. e piano

(P1.) molto ped.

sub. ppp

9:8 (JJ)

5

pppppp quasi insensibile

ppp

on the attack

(P1.)

just before the low B^b

just after the cluster

(A)

7:5 (2,2)

precipitato, velociss. e p

pp poco accentuato

loco

retake G: silently then pedal-change

pochiss. pp

quasi insensibile pppppp

cresc. molto

7:4 (fp)

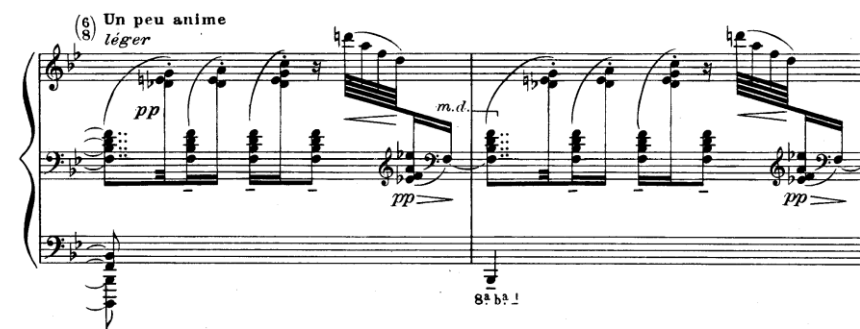
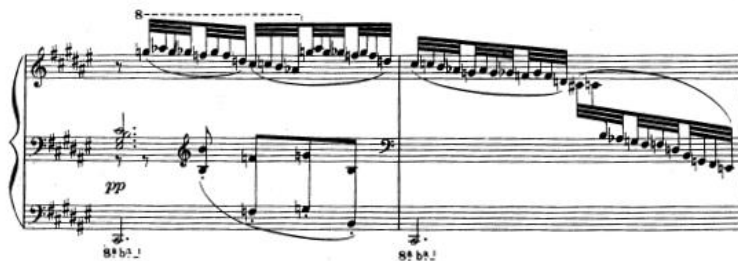
(P1.)

5:3

(C)

Claude Debussy, *Préludes*, Book 2 (1911-13), No. 7

‘....La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune’



***“Concord, Mass., 1840-1860”* (1916-19, rev. 1920s-40s)**

Main 'Emerson' lyrical theme.

Main Emerson lyrical theme.

Musical score for the Main Emerson lyrical theme. The score is written for piano and includes the following dynamics and performance instructions:

- pp* (pianissimo)
- p* (piano)
- rit.* (ritardando)
- pp* (pianissimo)
- f* (forte)
- slowly*
- faster*
- cresc. and faster* (crescendo and faster)

The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with a piano introduction marked *pp* and *p*, followed by a *rit.* section. The second system features a *pp* section, a *f* section, and a *slowly* section. The third system includes a *f* section, a *cresc. and faster* section, and a final section marked *gradually faster with more and more action*.

und Juchelle: System mit einem und einem Nationen