



## Pursuing a Libidinal Music Pedagogy

Master's Thesis

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## Foreword

Gender. Vehemently discussed, ignored, politicized, defined, deconstructed. Feminism. Femininity. Masculinism. Masculinity. Some writers chose not to brandish the words altogether. Others sit in the middle of a highly political and polarized discourse. One thing is unavoidable: once your eyes are open to the representations of and debates over gender, you begin to see them everywhere, both in the written word as well as in the visual language of photography and illustrations<sup>1</sup>. Besides the non-stop flow of journalistic writings and commercial images, the amount and richness of academic discourse is overwhelming, and of course the two are continually informing each other.

In the midst of this enormous abundance of information, I have during the past couple of years been gleaning as much as I can process. My approach has been, of necessity, interdisciplinary<sup>2</sup>. I have been following courses in music pedagogy, psychology, philosophy offered at the Koninklijk Conservatorium. I have been delving into the politics of representation as well as the eros and pathos of female representations of sexuality in courses at the University of Utrecht. I have been looking at some relevant articles regarding the biological foundations of music as well as music psychology. I have been gathering articles on music and children and technology. I have been reading seminal works of feminist musicologists, historians and educators, works recommended by friends and teachers, works picked up from the Internet. I want to emphasize that this has been both a well-thought-out and hit-or-miss personal process. But in documenting this process, I enter again, unavoidably, into a political or ideological arena. This personal, situated growth affects not only my own individual work in the field of music education, but also gives me an idea of where music education can possibly be led and gives me a drive to be part of the 'steering mechanism' guiding future developments. And as I later learned, helping others reach this self-awareness, this ability to situate oneself and gain the skills to become a creative agent is exactly the goal of feminist pedagogy.

Our gender, whether we like it or not, influences all aspects of our lives. And gender-related issues intersect all levels of musical (inter)activity. Trying to extrapolate and focus on individual aspects of gender, especially as related to current pedagogical practices has proven to be an extremely complex activity for me. On the one hand there are the actual numbers of males and females who take part in various musical activities, ranging from amateur to professional, ancient music to avant-garde, teacher to performer<sup>3</sup>. There is the fact that Western music has historically been gendered (mainly as feminine), which creates different patterns of acceptance or resistance for males and females in their relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Some titles found from June through August 2004 during my infrequent dips into the NRC: *Mannen: stop met huilen als u ook kunt vechten!* door Cornel Bierens, 5 en 6 juni 2004; *Laat dat hoofd maar thuis: Bijzondere verzameling vrouwonvriendelijke spreekwoorden* door Stine Jensen, 9 juli 2004; *Hoe vrouwendurf, verlangen en ondergoed veranderen. De wereldflirtkaart volgens Marlies Dekkers*, door Ellen de Bruin, 22 augustus 2004; *Allemaal juffen: de feminisering van het basisonderwijs zet door*, door Maaïke Looijen en Guus Valk, 21 en 22 augustus 2004. From TIME, February 23, 2004: *The New Arab Woman* (primarily about film producer Inas El Degheidi, Sheika Mouza in Qatar and Queen Rania of Jordan) by Jeff Chu, Amany Radwan and Scott MacLeod. A cover story from the *intermediair* of December 11, 2003: *Waarom zij wel? Hebben we eindelijk een paar topvrouwen komen ze uit het buitenland* door Roos Kuiper en Daphne van Paassen. Approaching it from the more popular side, from the Sp!ts of June 25: *Dulce heeft draai gevonden* door Magreet van Beem (Dulce Wanga, known as DJ Dulce, one of the few top female dj's, has stopped performing and has opened her own second hand clothing shop), *Taakstraf voor drie rijke krengen* door Anna Teresa Bellinzis (over the new Dutch serie *Bitches*), *De eerste dj-boyband ter wereld* door Liesbeth Strobbe, and of course a photo of the most recent woman-woman kiss at the MTV awards (this time it is Paris Hilton and Carmen Electra). But now I'm digressing a bit.

<sup>2</sup> A few quotes from Diana Relke's, *Feminist Pedagogy and the Integration of Knowledge*:

. . . . We learnt history, textual criticism, biography, and the recovery of manuscripts; we learnt linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and myth to broaden our grasp of the work of women writers.

Many female sociologists and historians underwent a similar process of interdisciplinization when they became feminist scholars. The introduction of a gender perspective into gender-blind disciplines demanded it. (paragraphs 9/10)

. . . . Feminist art historians have shown feminist sociologists better ways of doing sociology, and feminist psychologists have suggested new theories for the reading of women's literary texts. This is disciplinary interdependence and mutual fostering, a phenomenon that goes a step beyond integration. (paragraph 11)  
"All knowledge," as the poet bpNichol has written, "is to know the ledge you stand on." To extend that play of meaning, all of us – whether we ac/knowledge it or not – stand on a ledge overlooking the precipice of our own incompetence and incorrectness. That ledge is the dangerous place where real interdisciplinarity begins. (paragraph 20)

<sup>3</sup> My intention is not to set these pairs up as opposites of each other. Rather, looking at the different ways in which musical activity can be categorized. Most musicians take part in a wide number of varying activities in which gender plays various roles. For example, the female teacher faces different societal constructs than the same individual as a performer. The baroque musician who also plays jazz steps from one milieu to a quite different one, milieus in which gender-related expectations are also different.

with music. Broader societal definitions of acceptable gender roles also play a part, such as the view of society toward male and female careers. The intrinsic meaning of music can also be described as gendered, both relying on and creating dominant perceptions of gender (i.e. gentle, slow string music is feminine while loud, fast drum music is masculine). And surely the list could go on.

In considering gender historically, one faces the fact that gender is a continually shifting set of attributes, which means that Baroque music might now suggest more feminine delineations than at the time it was being written and performed or an originally 'masculine' instrument such as the violin becomes more commonly played by (and thus related to) females. Certain puzzling situations and seeming paradoxes arise due to the intersection of all these areas of gender. Authors writing about music and gender attempt to solve different problems often relating to seeming inconsistencies. For example: music as an amateur practice is intrinsically tied up with femininity, or feminine accomplishments. Women have thus been greatly encouraged to practice music. Why then are there so few women who appear as composers and conductors? Just examining these few sentences means one must examine the relationship music/woman. One must critically examine societal expectations of women as well as the actual training received by men and women within the educational environments available to them. One must consider actual cases of women composers and conductors, and one must also inspect the social value placed on the activities taken part in by men and women.

I choose the term libidinal, due in part to a personal interest, and in part to my experience in the course "Women's Representations of Eros and Pathos" at the University of Utrecht (spring 2004). In reading Audre Lorde's 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power'<sup>4</sup>, a nerve was struck. My being began vibrating in resonance to her words: "The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling." This relation of myself to my libidinal power, my power of expression, outside the constructs projected upon me, this lack of knowing what to do my energy (which is also in part my sexual energy, or the energy of my sex), this tracing of restrictions due to sex, the confrontations with societal expectations of a piano teacher is something which I can trace back during my whole relationship with music. My mother who (unbeknownst to me) asked my piano teacher not to teach me Brubeck when I was about twelve years old because she wanted me to play music that was 'fitting' for my church environment.<sup>5</sup> My years of accompanying church choirs, playing music that did not appeal to me. Writing in my diary that a musical career was good, because I could give lessons out of the home. The comment a teacher made to me after three years of conservatory study in Utrecht, that I was 'either hot or cold' and another teacher who said that it is as if my mind and body were not always connecting somehow. The comment a relative stranger made 'well you are just studying music *pedagogy*' with all the negative connotations of the word (i.e. you are just giving music lessons, not really practicing music as an art). And then there were the openings where energy seemed to flow: My involvement with PIPO<sup>6</sup> at the Hague which centered on helping children experience music with their whole bodies and my transference of this knowledge to my own piano students. My first experience in free improvisation with an ensemble that I had put together by putting out flyers in 500 student mailboxes. My trying different forms of improvisation and constructing a work using the voices of women in my environment and realizing that creating and playing with sound changes your whole approach to music.

A libidinal music pedagogy. By relating the autobiographical information in the paragraph above, I have now situated myself in regards to this topic. I've learned from my interactions with feminist critical thinking that experiential knowledge is valid, even necessary, and that to pose myself as an objective critic is a futile exercise. However, I think and hope that what I have to say will be more than just the release of autobiographical frustrations. What I have read and experience leads me to believe that we as pedagogues could do much more to create our own libidinal music language, our own living, generative music. And pedagogy, as a 'feminized' field, is one area in which insight and an attitude of critical self-reflection could lead to rewarding growth and changes for women, men and the field of music.

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<sup>4</sup> In *Sister Outsider* (Freedom CA: The Crossing Press, 1984)

<sup>5</sup> My mother told me this story over dinner when I was about twenty-five. Tears immediately began streaming out of my eyes, and I was not quite sure why. It was not so much about Brubeck, but about what he represented: the rhythmic, jazzy, improvisational side of music. She had denied me that without even telling me. And how did that affect my teacher's relation to me, if he could not teach me music he loved?

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.koncon.nl/> - the tab de allerkleinste.

Finally, apart from the specific content of this paper, and speaking perhaps on a 'meta' level: what feminism has been for me, giving me an incredible ideological and creative boost in my ideas and activities, might be given another name by another teacher of music. Whatever name it is given, I do think it would benefit any teacher of music to reflect on the way gender, race and class have informed and do inform our entire system of music education and to allow this to influence the way they approach their students and the current music situation.

# 1. Introduction

Seeing how music and musical practice helps to construct the body in the diverse areas of human interaction with music (performing, practicing, watching, composing, directing, listening, moving, etc.) can reveal some old patterns and perhaps offer new ways of being.

I will be examining our Western music tradition from a perspective that continually refers to issues of gender and the role gender has played in forming our traditions of music-making (both creating and reproducing), what this tradition considers as important or 'belonging' to music (making), and who makes music within this tradition and how. I will be considering the Western music tradition because it is the one I am the most at home with. However, my observations will also 'problematize' this Western music tradition, because I feel that the traditional way Western art music is taught fails to teach students to think critically about the role of music and sound in their lives, develop independent musical ideas or be aware of current musical trends within the field. Thus, it does not, in my opinion, adequately meet the needs of children today, children who will be offered much new music to consume. This is not a completely new topic. Radical pedagogical ideas such as those by Murray Schafer have been creating waves and ripples since the sixties. However by connecting the background of feminist pedagogy with research done in the area of gender and music, and relating it to my concept of creating a libidinal power within the feminized area of music pedagogy, I hope to broaden the conceptual playing field and challenge us to find new ways of being and expressing music.

In the first section of this paper 'Libidinal music pedagogy: avoiding essentialism and dichotomies', I focus on the idea of libido, touching on Sigmund Freud's Lecture 33 on 'Femininity' (first published in 1933), Luce Irigaray's 'reply' in 'Psychoanalytic Theory: Another Look' (1981), and Audre Lorde's 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power' (1984). Here I lay the groundwork for what I mean with the term 'libidinal pedagogy', relating it specifically to the problematic woman/libido. I then touch upon some ideas regarding a possible feminist aesthetics of music found in 'Recovering Jouissance: Feminist Aesthetics and Music' by René Cox Lorraine<sup>7</sup> and Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*<sup>8</sup>. At the same time I make explicit the problems with trying to formally state a 'female aesthetics', which will always work to essentialize the nature of women. However, if I did not state some other ways of viewing or interacting with music, some 'alternatives', I lose the reader and run the risk of being evasive. Plus, in presenting my ideas of possibilities for 'doing it differently' within music pedagogy, I take the same risk of being essentialist in my view of my own nature and the nature of women. Due to the concrete, practice-related nature of pedagogy, this is a risk I must take. The reason I choose libido, sexual energy, is because this is a subject which fascinates and puzzles me, and it is an area which I believe to lie at the heart of many other problematic dichotomies: 'active/passive', 'mind/body', 'public/private'. These are all dichotomies which have been criticized within works about music and gender. We can all agree that the practice of placing men in the first half of the equation and women in the last half is limiting for both parties. Current practices seem to break up the dichotomies to some extent, although there are surely traces in everything we do. In bringing these dichotomies to light, I face the problem that I seem to further establish them. My goal is to expose these dichotomies and then go beyond them, dismantling them even further in my own practice.

Section two 'Music as 'feminine': the domestic piano and problematizing the mind/body split' draws mainly on the work of Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*<sup>9</sup> and Lucy Green's research on gender in British secondary school systems presented in *Music, Gender, Education*.<sup>10</sup> I trace Victorian constructs of woman/music, relating it to the instability of the male identity, constantly exposed in its intrinsic fe/maleness, especially through contact with music. Here I point out the 'creation' of the woman/music problematic by men – a creation that makes it very difficult for women to present themselves, especially while performing music, as something other than virgin or whore, the Madonna or Harlot. Although men have also faced similar problems being stigmatized as musicians, it remains that men, as the sex occupying dominant positions of power, have been the ones to create the 'language' of Western art music (and jazz for that matter), a language which in many ways is connected with the libido, the creative

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<sup>7</sup> In *Women & Music: A History*, (Ed.) Karin Pendle (Indiana University Press, 2001, first edition 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Specifically the chapters 'Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman's Voice in Janika Vanderveld's *Genesis II*' and 'This Is Not a Story My People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson' (University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Full title: *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> (Cambridge University Press, 1997).



(sexual) energy of the male. What is a woman to do when faced with the hyper-virtuosity of Liszt or Paganini. Should she 'prove her own masculinity' in the way these artists seem to be doing? Drawing on qualitative data from Lucy Green's book, I ask if the mind/body split seems to be at work in the musical activities of girls and boys in British public schools.

Section three 'The creation of genius and a look into the traditional treatment of women composers in historical, musicological writings and critical reviews' will investigate the construct 'genius' and look at the way the productive works of women have been ignored or dealt with in the practice of speaking about music and passing on the history of western music. In this section, I draw from the work by Jill Halstead, *Women Composers*, and refer again to the qualitative data collected by Lucy Green. If one considers the composition of music as a primarily libidinal process, this information should make it clear that the creative flow of women has been at a serious disadvantage. I will also make the link to our current situation by presenting some of the various ways women composers can be presented on the Web, a situation which offers women composers today more independence and freedom to profile themselves. However, the difficult question remains whether women should try to evolve out of their position as minority or use it to the greatest advantage possible. I am of the opinion that, in any case, music institutions are not doing as much as they could to educate students about the historical presence of women in music and this is something that should be changed in a structural way.

In section four, 'Musical (con)texts', I will take a look at the regulatory function of written music, especially as connected with the need to establish control over women playing music. I turn again to Leppert's *The Sight of Sound* for pictorial examples. I also refer to the chapter 'The musical mind in context: culture and biology'<sup>11</sup> in John Sloboda's book, *The Musical Mind*, tracing some differences between a musically literate and a musically illiterate society and the advantages and losses attached to a dominant reliance on text and musical notation. Finally, I extrapolate ideas regarding the evolutionary 'usefulness' of music in the article by Ian Cross 'Music, Cognition, Culture, and Evolution'<sup>12</sup>. The 'transposable aboutness' of music may be of fundamental importance to the way music functions as a tool in human interaction. Although Cross' article is not specifically about notated or improvised music, what he touches upon is certainly more in the direction of primary musical instincts (protomusic), which I relate to improvised music. These ideas prompt me to investigate the context of the 'piano recital' and suggest some ways the teacher can create her own contexts to present the music, providing the depth of stories or fantasy, creating more of a playful situation in which music functions as one element in a complete story.

In the second part of my paper, 'A few handholds on the current situation', I make the transition to the current pedagogical situation. In trying to relate gender to the current situation of pedagogical practices, I face the problem that I cannot 'see' myself in the immediacy. I do not have the ability or language to analyze my current situation, what combination of forces are at work on me and how I work to promote, undermine or avoid those forces. However, I will reflect on a few topics relevant to my current ideas of music pedagogy in a series of short paragraphs. First 'Examining the hierarchy of musical worth: composing, performing, teaching', which briefly examines valorizations of musical activities; second 'Feminist pedagogy: gender, race and class', a means of intervention and destabilizing hierarchies; and finally 'The death and resurrection of the piano', an apologetic for the piano, opening up new ways of viewing the instrument.

The final part of this work turns back to the beginning and connects the ideas worked out above to map out two critical areas where I can develop my creative energy, my libido, within my teaching practice as a private teacher of piano, focusing most specifically on the areas of improvisation and the use of technology.

In the first section of this final part, 'Listen, listen, listen: opening space with improvisation' I lay a philosophical claim that improvisation is perhaps the most important 'space' where musical energy (do I dare use the term 'libido' again?) and personal expression can be developed. Improvisation can cross the Cartesian divide from both sides<sup>13</sup>, and perhaps annihilates altogether this metaphorical gap, chasm,

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<sup>11</sup> Full title: *The Musical Mind: The cognitive psychology of music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 239-268.

<sup>12</sup> In Robert Zatorre and Isabelle Peretz (eds.), *The Biological Foundations of Music*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, (Vol. 930, June 2001) 28-42.

<sup>13</sup> Did music begin in the mind, or is it related to the movements of the body and the 'natural' expressions of the voice which have formed the mind's understanding of pitch, of rhythm? With improvisation, the body also generates actions, sometimes apart from

hiccup of the synapses. Improvisation is theory, form, expression in action and body and brain are working together in an inextricable dance. Here I will detail one approach I am experimenting with my students right now, building up from rhythmic motifs and using two CD's: *The Wassoulou Sound* and *Zap Mama*<sup>14</sup> as inspiration. I also look at my own experiences with improvisation, both in the lessons provided by Rolf Delfos as part of my masters degree in the Hague as well as in a group, the Creative Music Environment, which assembled for my concert in December 2004.<sup>15</sup> I will also look more closely at examples from the work of Pauline Oliveros, Malcolm Goldstein and Murray Shafer.

The second section 'Considering and applying technology' touches on two topics. The first is that of technological tools to aid the instrumental teacher. As we enter a new phase (the third?) of capitalism – multinational or consumer capitalism, 'associated with nuclear and electronic technologies'<sup>16</sup>, it becomes important for music teachers to be equipped to critically use the music software that is offered them. Children are and will be immeasurably better at technology than we are. Instrumental methods and books will eventually become extinct as they cross-breed and digitalize<sup>17</sup>. Inspired by the essay, 'A Cyborg Manifesto' by Donna Haraway, I make a plea for the active development of technological tools as well as ideas regarding these tools by and for teachers and students of music. I believe it is not unrealistic to think that conservatories could be generative structures for technological ideas and tools in all sorts of combinations. However, we must become better trained to think outside of the 'software' box, not to mention the 'field of music' box. Regarding my own practice, I present the small-scale production of CD's and the use of student recordings to make student-guided larger scale works as ways of both making your own job easier and motivating students to think about musical creativity. The second topic has to do with modern compositional practices which tie in with the production and manipulation of electronic sounds. I personally find this a rich and exciting area of musical growth, and wonder what implications this might have for music pedagogy in the future. I am not equipped to speak eloquently on the subject, since I have just taken my first steps of exploration into this area. However, due to the revelations one receives about music through the process of moving closer to the decisions required in the act of creating music, I make a plea for more interaction between students of pedagogy with the composition and/or sonology departments within the conservatories.

By opening up those forces of creation in my own life, seeking out that which interests me in the areas of composition, performance, improvisation and technology, I am mapping out a way for myself that does not fit into any of the traditional dichotomies, becoming, always becoming, a libidinal pedagogue of music. As a teacher, one is constantly a becoming-musician, working out musical activities with your students. Together the teacher and student are mutual becoming-musicians, becoming-music. And in the process, the students help you, the becoming-teacher. Your students will constantly put you in the situation 'how do *you* teach *me* music', and you will both be constantly working this out, with love, energy, vitality and passion.

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the active steering of the mind. Music then comes 'from the body'. The mind then can steer and lead, but the body can also 'make decisions', reworking the ideas of the mind into musical pattern more comfortable for the body.

<sup>14</sup> *The Wassoulou Sound: Women of Mali* (Stern's Africa, 1994) presents music from a singing tradition in southern Mali, where women make up 90% of the singers. According to the inset, the songs have less to do with hierarchies of birth and wealth than with personal concerns, moral dilemmas, love, everyday problems and how to deal with them. The music of the first album, *Zap Mama* (Cram World, 1991) under the artistic leadership of Zairian/Belgian Marie Daulne, was inspired in part by her experience with the pygmy people and their music. The music has a strong ideological basis and is performed by an ensemble of women's voices with Jean-Louis Daulne as "Human Beat Box" and David Weemaels as percussionist.

<sup>15</sup> I have now formed the group FreeQ with three other musicians, two of whom I met through this CME ensemble.

<sup>16</sup> Derived from a very useful paper on Postmodernism found on the Web by Dr. Mary Klages, Associate Professor of the English Department of the University of Colorado in Boulder. See Works cites.. Also connected with the very graphic 'informatics of domination' outlined by Donna Haraway in her *A Cyborg Manifesto* in: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* in 1991.

<sup>17</sup> or become digitalized cross-breeds, or cross-breed digitally...

# Part One

# 1. Libidinal music pedagogy and feminist aesthetics: avoiding essentialism and dichotomies

Unleashed and raging, she belongs to the race of waves. She arises, she approaches, she lifts up, she reaches, covers over, washes ashore, flows embracing the cliff's least undulation, already she is another, arising again, throwing the fringed vastness of her body of high, follows herself, and covers over, uncovers, polishes, makes the stone body shine with the gentle undeserting ebbs, which return to the shoreless nonorigin, as if she recalled herself in order to come again as never before. . . . She has never "held still"; explosion, diffusion, effervescence, abundance, she takes pleasure in being boundless, outside self, outside same, far from a "center. . . ."

Hélène Cixous<sup>1</sup>

When we hear or read the word 'libido', what images, what sounds come to mind? What do we see? What do we hear? In this section I trace the concept of libido by touching on works by Freud, Irigaray and Lorde. Against this backdrop which should expose the traditional resistance against women claiming their own libidinal energy, I wish to present my idea(l)s of a 'libidinal music pedagogy'. I then present the concept of 'feminist aesthetics', linking this to the subject of creativity, which in my mind is intrinsically bound up with a modern, living pedagogy. On the one hand I run the risk here of essentializing the female nature, which leads to sidelining and often the devaluation of women's activities. However, I feel that attention toward different ways of conceiving music can create a freeing of energies and awareness of constrictions. I also wish here to expose some dichotomies which an embracing of a feminine libido could blur or diffuse.

In his Lecture no. 33 'Femininity'<sup>2</sup>, Freud examines the 'woman problem'. I wish to bring out two relevant concepts: libido and sublimation. Of libido, Freud says:

We have called the motive force of sexual life 'the libido'. Sexual life is dominated by the polarity of masculine-feminine; thus the notion suggests itself of considering the relation of the libido to this antithesis. [. . .] There is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and the feminine sexual functions. To it itself we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional equation of activity and masculinity, we are inclined to describe it as masculine, we must not forget that it also covers trends with a passive aim. Nevertheless the juxtaposition 'feminine libido' is without any justification.<sup>3</sup> [. . .]

A man of about thirty strikes us as a youthful, somewhat unformed individual, whom we expect to make powerful use of the possibilities for development opened up to him by analysis. A woman of the same age, however, often frightens us by her psychological rigidity and unchangeability. Her libido has taken up final positions and seems incapable of exchanging them for others.<sup>4</sup>

In these statements we come against four concepts or assumptions: sexuality can be represented by the dichotomy masculine-feminine, which are opposites (no spectrum is suggested here); the libido of women has passive aims (suggesting that that of the man has active); 'feminine libido' is an anathema (although he fails here to offer any rhetorical or clinical support of this statement); and the (masculine) libido of the woman becomes fixed at a young age, implying that there is small chance of life-long development for woman through a flowing of her sexual or creative energies.

Regarding sublimation, Freud theorized that in the process through which the male child represses his sexual urges toward his mother and overcomes the psychological trauma of taking on a gender identity different from hers, he becomes better at sublimating his desires – investing sexual energy into objects,

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<sup>1</sup> Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing, Introduction by Sandra Gilbert (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 90-91. Quoted in *Women & Music: A History*, (Ed.) Karin Pendle (Indiana University Press, 2001, first edition 1991), 10.

<sup>2</sup> In S. Freud: *New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 2 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, first ed. 1933), 145-169.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

mental and physical accomplishments<sup>5</sup> – than females, who have a less exacting task due to the fact that they do not have to take on a different sexual identity than the mother. Freud himself says 'We also regard women as weaker in their social interests and as having less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men.'<sup>6</sup> So, this leaves women both without a feminine sexual drive and also lacking the advantage of being driven to express their (weaker) sexual energy in other, socially accepted ways. I am not equipped to address the physiological claims of libidinal superiority of testosterone<sup>7</sup>. However, Freud is obviously not making a physiological analysis here. The claim he is making is cultural in nature. This belief in the lack of a female libido and sexual frigidity was already imbedded in Victorian perceptions of women<sup>8</sup> and is presented here with an ease of stating the obvious.

In the chapter 'Psychoanalytic Theory: Another Look' in *This Sex Which Is Not One*,<sup>9</sup> French philosopher Luce Irigaray points out in a few sentences an intrinsic flaw in Freud's analysis. In discussing female homosexuality, she asks "What is the purpose of this misreading, of this condemnation, of woman's relation to her own original desires, this nonelaboration of her relation to her own origins? To assure the *predominance of a single libido*, as the little girl finds herself obliged to repress her drives and her earliest cathexes. Her libido?"<sup>10</sup> Here Irigaray points out that Freud's own analyses were based on the repressions of these 'drives and cathexes' which he abundantly discusses in his analysis of women. If one reads 'drives and cathexes' as sexual energy, libido is thus already a part of the life of a very young girl, according to Freud's own analysis. In her conclusion, she attaches sublimation to the contract of marriage, that which for women takes the place of work contract, thus becoming both the area where sublimated desires can be channeled as well as in some cases the cause of additional repressed desires. Here she also brings discussions of the sexual nature of women into the political arena, suggesting that psychoanalysis was so blind to the sociopolitical position of 'the woman' that they have little right to discuss 'her' sexuality: "psychoanalysis ought to wonder whether it is even possible to pursue a limited discussion of female sexuality so long as the status of woman in the general economy of the West has never been established." In Halstead's chapter 'Sex, Gender and Music' in *The Woman Composer*, she reveals that Freud's concept of sublimation and the resulting advantage of the male is still alive and strong in the 1990's. For example, psychoanalytical theorists Liam Hudson and Bernadine Jacot write of the creative drives of men and women, building on Freudian-based thinking. They term the separation of the boy from his mother 'the male wound' and say in their book: "Once experienced, the wound generates needs and tensions in the male mind for which there is no direct female equivalent."<sup>11</sup> The implicit suggestion is that males will thus always have a larger drive to create, directing their sublimated energies outward, than females.

The point that I am trying to make here is that libido is more than the drive for sexual intercourse. It has been historically firmly linked to the (im)possibilities of the woman to pursue her loves, her desires, her creative life-work, to say what she wants to say rather than being said. I would now like to make a connection with the chapter in Audre Lorde's book *Sister Outsider*, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power'.<sup>12</sup> Although she does not use the word libido, the meaning that she attaches to the word erotic underlies the whole concept which I am here introducing. Lorde attaches the erotic to a depth of feeling, a freedom of joy, an intuition that is suspect in the history of male/female interactions. She also clarifies and broadens the meaning of erotic, differentiating it from the pornographic (which suppresses true feeling) and attaching it to the work we do. Women who are empowered through a trust in their own satisfaction and joy, rooted in their erotic feeling, are dangerous, so eroticism has been limited to the sexual, leaving women unsatisfied in their work and contact with others.

The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we

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<sup>5</sup> Here I am indebted to Halstead's analysis in her chapter 'Sex, Gender and Music' in *The Woman Composer*, (Ashgate, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Freud, 169.

<sup>7</sup> It is common knowledge that both men and women have the hormones testosterone and estrogen (in differing proportions), and that these regulate the development of bodily characteristics as well as sexual functioning and drives.

<sup>8</sup> The analysis of the problems faced by women in that time would not have taken into account other factors for women such as lack of individual choice/agency and the heavy restrictions on female activity, factors which probably caused symptoms such as depression in a large number of women.

<sup>9</sup> (New York: Cornell UP, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Irigaray, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Hudson and Jacot, the *Way Men Think: Intellect, Intimacy and the Erotic Imagination*, (London: Yale UP, 1991), viii., quoted in Halstead 219.

<sup>12</sup> (Freedom CA: The Crossing Press, 1984).

can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves. [. . .]<sup>13</sup>

Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives. And this is a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe.<sup>14</sup>

The whole article is full of energy, detached from the connotations of compulsory heterosexuality<sup>15</sup> and the contract of marriage and attached to the loves and life-work of a woman performed with awareness and joy. What do I find the most satisfying about my work as a teacher? Is it when the student plays the required repertoire faultlessly and with the correct articulation and body movements (playing well according to pianistic conventions), or is it when the student expresses joy and interest in what she is doing, when she takes initiative in choosing music, discussing how music might sound, working with the musical materials? I do appreciate it very much when a piece of music we are working on is played pianistically well. However, a deeper joy comes when the student listens carefully to what they are doing and begins to work independently with the music. So my question becomes, what type of piano/music pedagogy might stimulate these responses in the students, which is also tied into whether or not I am listening carefully to what I am doing and whether I am working independently with music.

The quotes mentioned above were part of my process of 're-claiming' libidinal energy for women. For me, this is directly linked to the (more political aspect) of being given or assuming for yourself the space to create, to develop your own language, specifically in the area of music. I would like to lay down 'what I mean right now' with libidinal music pedagogy. I do not see this as a rigid, inflexible structure, but one which will change as I grow and change. Libidinal music pedagogy is:

- invested with love, deep attention and energy
- dynamic, interested in current musical developments and seeking connections between music and other expressive arts
- constantly asking 'what is music?' and opening ears to the sounds all around
- organic, not afraid of mutating, cross-breeding, evolving<sup>16</sup> or cyber-morphing
- working to break down the barriers between music students (becoming-musicians) and the act of creating music
- critically attentive to its own exclusionary nature

I will briefly discuss each of the points above, and they will be mentioned and made more practical in the rest of the paper. Considering the first point 'invested with love, deep attention and energy', these are certainly general qualities that any pedagogy might include. The word 'love' does not come up much, perhaps, due to a desire to avoid the connotation of romantic love or with a fear of trivializing the word. However, I do not wish to ignore the word 'love' or leave it out, silencing the love that I feel for my students and that I think many teachers feel for their students. Including the concept is a challenge for us to think about the relationship we have with our students, with music, and to challenge ourselves with the question "if I do not love what I am doing, why am I doing it?"

The second point, 'dynamic, interested in current musical developments and seeking connections between music and other expressive arts' is attached to the choice of musical activities with a serious look at the types of musics children are listening to, are exposed to and can identify with. With the majority of music on television or the radio, the sound is usually a full ensemble. Popular music is exciting, often containing innuendoes of sexuality which are on the one hand limiting, but on the other can provide children approaching puberty a means for expressing and exploring sexual feelings and development. I am trying to drive a wedge and create a space for myself between the dusty sonatina books and the consumption of mass produced music. Is my goal that every student should continue to play piano for the rest of their lives? I have conflicting feelings. The instrument for me does not 'matter', but I do want my students to have a fulfilling relationship with music for the rest of their lives, and I do think that the piano can be a tool for them to achieve this. But, only if the teacher is constantly working to make the repertoire relevant

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<sup>13</sup> Lorde, 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>15</sup> Adrienne Rich's groundbreaking concept in 'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence', in *Blood, bread and poetry* (New York: Norton & Co, 1994) 23-75.

<sup>16</sup> Read Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy for a mind-altering confrontation with ideals of genetic integrity.

to the condition of the student, or works with the student to create their own mode of expression that is also deeply rewarding for the student. In this paper I will present ideas such as soundscapes, electroacoustic music, and musical experiences coming from other cultures as ways to provide a stream of musical inspiration as well as opening students' musical horizons.

The third point, 'constantly asking 'what is music?' and opening ears to the sounds all around', has a more ecological function. Inspired by Murray Schafer's *The New Soundscape* (1969), I was lead to think about what kinds of sounds normally considered to be outside of music which would have an affect on music (i.e. the sounds of the car and the tedious act of driving inspires music with a 'driving' beat loud enough to be heard above the motor of a car; and church bells were clearly designed for cities before the large increases of traffic noise). Listening as a skill can be related to more than music, increasing an awareness of your environment, awareness of the sounds that provide inspiration, awareness of the sounds that cause you to stop listening (due to pain or repetitiveness or general discomfort). I believe students who learn to listen, to listen deeply and well, will probably develop a more sensitive (implying open, but also implying an awareness of what causes them and others pain) relationship with their environment as well as being more likely to create music in response to their environment.

The fourth point, 'organic, not afraid of mutating, cross-breeding, evolving or cyber-morphing', is related to Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991). She traces three crucial boundary breakdowns: between human and animal, between animal-human (organism) and machine, and between physical and non-physical.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, transgressing these boundaries is associated with 'high technology' and scientific culture (i.e. the insertion of computer chips into our bloodstreams). On the other hand, technologies can be dispersed and used to disrupt power and raise awareness (i.e. giving digital camera's to impoverished children and drawing attention to the images of their 'digital eyes'). As I see it piano/music pedagogy is one that is very much looking back at its own tradition, relying on the techniques that have been built up over the centuries and one that is very likely to be wary of using the available technology in developing skills or creating new musics.<sup>18</sup> Considering a 'hybrid' music, considering a 'noisy' music, considering an 'improvised' music, considering an 'electronic' music, considering creative technological tools as a way of adding extra limbs to teachers and students. Do we fear these because of a fear of a loss of identity? Or do we *really* think that traditional approaches to instruments are the best we can offer our students at this moment in time? If teachers and pedagogues do not become involved with technology, they are missing a chance of being part of the development of new ways of learning, meaning that they are going to become consumers of technology (because it *will* be produced) that may not have their or their students' best interests at heart.

Considering the fifth characteristic, 'working to break down the barriers between music students and creating music', I would like to emphasize that one of the best activities a music pedagogue can take part in is creating music (See Part 3: 'Listen, listen, listen: opening space with improvisation'). Since libidinal pedagogy is not only interested in looking at the past, at reproducing our musical heritage, but is also interested in the polyvocal network of musics that are springing up right now, and wants to equip becoming-musicians to be actively involved in creating new musics, the libidinal pedagogue will, as role-model, as musician-in-action, always be interested in the act of creating music. The teacher as well as the student are becoming both musician and composer.

And the last point, 'critically attentive to its own exclusionary nature'. Making, promoting and performing Western art music is a predominantly white, European, elitist activity. We all know that. We cannot change the past. Our Western 'classical music' tradition will always be there (with its now seen as racist and sexist idiosyncrasies), just like Chinese opera of the 14th century will always exist. Any attempts to

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<sup>17</sup> Haraway, 149-155.

<sup>18</sup> Conservatories, a large 'producer' of music teachers, can either react to an identity crisis by holding onto and raising the standards of traditional music production, or they can change to adapt to the needs of the society. Institutes may feel that they must set themselves apart and justify their existence by laying claim to certain types of music and certain ways of making music. This is a natural process, a resistance to accepting 'contradictory, partial, and strategic' (Haraway, 155) identities. What I would like to highlight here is that the privilege of a dominant, normal identity is something women and non-Western ethnic groups have not experienced. Only allowed into institutions in the last one hundred years, women face a struggle against 'unity-through-domination' and 'unity-through-incorporation', and there are significantly fewer people of color in a conservatory than women. (Haraway, 157) If conservatories were really to face change to the full extent, causing them to accept a loss of identity, causing them to allow the entrance of women and ethnic groups within their walls, we would have very different conservatories. And we would have very different piano/music teachers.

deeply include women and other ethnic groups, implying also their ways of making music<sup>19</sup> will threaten the identity of Western art music. I ask myself: how responsible do I feel to protect or preserve the identity of Western art music within my own musical practices? Do I want to take the risk (to my musical identity) of forming inter-cultural alliances, of stepping outside my normal pool of students and activities, of allowing other musics and ways of experiencing music in?<sup>20</sup> When I say 'forming inter-cultural alliances', I do not mean that we are to have the noble idea of bringing our enlightened music to the minority groups in this country. On the contrary, I believe that contact with other ways of making music, experiencing music, should deeply change me and my students, helping me to become a better musician. How often do we prepare our students to take part in musical festivals organized and centered around music from another culture?<sup>21</sup> I am the last person to point the finger here, as I have instigated far too few activities to bring my piano students in contact with other musics, other ways of experiencing music. Which is exactly why I introduce this point, as a reminder of the implicitly exclusive nature of what I do and as a reminder to work toward what might be possible.

I would like now to refer to a feminist aesthetics of music, drawing on 'Recovering *Jouissance*: Feminist Aesthetics and Music' by Reneé Cox Lorraine.<sup>22</sup> The other forms and ways of constructing music she mentions have given me insights into other ways of thinking about music and the music-making process. I personally feel an affinity toward the type of written and musical text that she describes. Stretching the connotations of composing toward more feminine should create more room for different approaches to musical creation. Cox Lorraine sets the stage for discussing feminist music aesthetics by discussing another established style of creation, that of writing, referring to the style developed by certain French feminists. The quote by Cixous opening this section is an example of this style of writing which is called *écriture féminine*. Of this style, Cox Lorraine says:

Cixous asserts that feminine writing is impossible to define and cannot be theorized, enclosed, or encoded. Words used to describe such writing are gestural, rhythmic, spasmodic, heterogeneous, process oriented, immediate, fluid, and elastic. A principle of continuous growth, proliferation, and development replaces expression as product or object. Boundaries melt. Frequent repetitions and conjoined phrases produce a cumulative effect. There are backtracking and stumbling, phrases are rephrased, meanings are shifted. There is resistance to the finite, the definitive, the highly structured; to closure, final-state description, and resolutions of ambiguities; to hierarchies; to dualities, the two-term, dialectical process in which "conflict is held in check."<sup>23</sup>

Cox Lorraine says further:

Kristeva believes that the source of such writing is the rhythmic, presymbolic play of mother-infant communication in the infant's preoedipal stage of fusion with the mother (a fusion with the other that lovers seek to recapture). Gestation and maternal nurturance break down the oppositions between self and other, subject and object, inside and outside.<sup>24</sup>

During a recent performance by Compagnie Marie Chouinard in Arnhem, I was stunned by the exquisite use of fantasy languages used in Canadian choreographer Marie Chouinard's group piece 'Chorale'.<sup>25</sup> The dancers were sliding themselves across the floor toward us, sitting, legs spread, hands reaching out. One after the other they burst out into short monologues of highly expressive 'language' and gestures. The individuality of each language, the feeling that they were saying something which could never otherwise be said, was deeply touching. Pauline Oliveros uses these nonverbal sounds in her *Deep Listening Chorus*. She says "Nonverbal sound making is a way to express emotions and to explore the unknown.

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<sup>19</sup> This is also a very complex issues. I mean more than just including a gamelan in the orchestral score. I mean thinking about the results of changing an orchestra or the music so that both comply to the way of making music of Indonesian ensemble music. Add a female Indonesian composer and Indonesian performers, and would the music still be Western art music?

<sup>20</sup> Ironically, music is often thought to be a tool in bringing people together, yet it is effectively used for developing and maintaining barriers. The quarter tones of Arabic music can cause toes to curl, and the thumping of Dutch carnival music can effectively say 'you are not welcome.'

<sup>21</sup> The international conference over music and diversity held in Utrecht this last November (2004) would have offered me the opportunity to experience both multi-cultural music cooperation as well as an exploration of what I will present as 'feminine' characteristics of music: [http://www.musicianswithoutborders.nl/nederlands/mid\\_conference\\_programme.htm](http://www.musicianswithoutborders.nl/nederlands/mid_conference_programme.htm) (Last viewed, 26 March, 2005). I was unfortunately unable to attend.

<sup>22</sup> In *Women & Music: A History*, (Ed.) Karin Pendle (1991, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> Performed in Arnhem 26 February, 2005.



Most everyone participating [in *Deep Listening Chorus*] feels a sense of release which carries over to other activities and helps to activate the imagination or simply refresh the mind.”<sup>26</sup> I have experienced this 'motherese' or non-verbal language in speaking to my own son, and experienced it as a relief, an other kind of communication.<sup>27</sup> Cox Lorraine says of music in relation to *écriture féminine*:

If music is expressive of this presymbolic stage, it is potentially highly disruptive to the symbolic order of language, the "Law of the Father." [. . .] A music similar to *écriture féminine*, in contrast, would engage the listener in the musical moment rather than the overall structure, would have flexible form, and might involve continuous repetition with variation, the cumulative growth and development of an idea. Such music would serve to deconstruct musical hierarchies, and the dialectical juxtaposition and resolution of opposites would disrupt linearity and avoid definite closure. In sung music, vocalization would be relaxed and would make use of nonverbal or presymbolic sounds.<sup>28</sup>

The music of Meredith Monk is a good example of what is described here. Her music is repetitive, with constant changes in the repetition, with relaxed vocalization and abundant nonverbal sounds. Vocal artist Sheila Chandra's 'Speaking in Tongues' pieces<sup>29</sup> are hypnotic and challenging. She uses the onomatopoeic syllables which form the training of Indian drummers, before they pick up the drum, as the basis for her vocal material. She says "I have discarded the calculation and the rigid time cycles and use the technique to achieve a purely emotive collage of sound. I'm breaking up patterns and throwing you off the beat, being as mad and chaotic as possible, yet I'm also keeping you hooked using the psychology of the rhythm."<sup>30</sup> The pieces are through composed and contain bits of other types of sound materials (such as advertisement jingles) with the goal of keeping the listener from accepting the sounds simply because they think they are traditional. So her music becomes an inextricable mixture of (a)rhythm, a cappella voice and technology, based on (non)traditional elements. I have also been inspired by the first two CD's by *Zap Mama*, under the artistic guidance of Marie Daulne.<sup>31</sup> Everything about this music thrills me, the strong voices, the incredibly varied (verbal and nonverbal) sounds they produce with ease, their laughter, their powerful ideological backing for their music, and the invigorating, swinging, complex rhythms. From their 1991 album: "Most of the songs on this album were inspired by traditional African and European melodies [. . .] Through the body, the breath, the respiration, the vibration of the vocal chords, and without the support of elaborated instruments, the pygmies keep on conveying to those willing to approach and listen the beauty and purity of one of the most ancient African cultures." These recordings form for me one 'ideal' of musicianship, of music-making, one which probably exerts much influence on the type of improvisations I am now working on with my piano students. Am I trying to say that these first two albums of *Zap Mama* are 'women's music'? Yes and no. 'Yes' in that it is written and sung by women, 'yes' in that it reflects women's situations and concerns<sup>32</sup> and includes traditional women's music, a step not often taken by a male artist. 'No' out of respect for the artist, who says 'When I describe my music, I say I do music'.<sup>33</sup> 'No' in that her a cappella vocal style, which conceals a mastery of the technology of layering sounds, problematizes the stereotype: feminine = simple, not technical. 'No' in the sense that her music reflects her cultural upbringing and experience as a Zairian/Belgian as much as, if not more than, her 'femaleness'. I do not want to suggest that women should or do write only 'feminine music', and men should or do write only 'masculine music'. There will be women who do not find their musical ideas reflected here at all and there will be men who do. Cox Lorraine points out that this fear of essentializing the nature of music - of saying that certain styles or ways of making music are rooted in the

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.deeplisting.org/pauline/writings/roots.html>. Paragraph 17.

<sup>27</sup> David Schwarz writes of 'the sonorous envelop' as a fantasy space; the music surrounding, supporting and enveloping us brings us back into being into a fantasy womb in which boundaries between inside/outside disappear. He suggests minimal music (referring to John Adam's *Nixon in China*) as being a type of music well suited to creating this 'sonorous envelope'. Crossing boundaries in and out of this fantasy space creates different sensations for the listener. In 'Music as Sonorous Envelope' in *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (London: Duke UP, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Sheila Chandra *The Zen Kiss*, (1994 Moonsung Productions/Real World Records Ltd.) 'Speaking in Tongues III' and 'Speaking in Tongues IV', Tracks 2 and 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, From the CD insert.

<sup>31</sup> *Zap Mama*, (cram world, 1991) and *Zap Mama, Sabsylma* (cram world, 1994)

<sup>32</sup> Some examples are 'Ndje mukanie' including a chant by young Zairean women celebrating procreation (1991 album), 'Mizike' based on a young girls' song accompanying themselves beating the rhythm in the river water (1991 album), 'India' written for abused children, (1994 album) 'Réveil en Australie' adapted from an Aboriginal women's chant (1994).

<sup>33</sup> From an interview by Jené Watson at RootsWorld: <http://www.rootsworld.com/interview/zap.html>, last viewed 26 March 2005.

biology of the woman - has caused many studies of music to avoid these types of generalizations about 'women's ways of composing'. She suggests, however, that "Being able to identify with women's musics [ . . . ] (and women's musics would always be multiple, subject to time, place, and collective disposition), could empower some women in somewhat the same way that various styles associated predominantly with African Americans (soul, rap) have empowered and united some members of that group," and suggests that the risks are worth taking.<sup>34</sup>

'Empowering' and 'uniting' women. To what end? My goal is not that women should dominate men in the field of music, occupying higher positions and being more highly esteemed. No, my hope is that in bringing out some of the underlying gender-assumptions in our musical tradition, by highlighting the difficulties women have faced with being included within the Western music tradition, by talking sometimes about an other way of making music, that we will be motivated to think once again about the borders that have delineated 'music' for us as teacher-musicians. Further, I hope that highlighting some other approaches may inspire creativity. Any widening of the field (and I focus on stretching creativity toward the 'feminine' side) provides more options for musical expression and exploration. By suggesting that pedagogues should be more involved in the creation of music, it may seem that I am trying to shift this feminized field of 'music pedagogue' into more masculine delineations, from 'reproducers of music' into 'producers of music', a traditionally male-dominated field. Again, my answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. I do hope more teachers will be inspired to take steps in creating their musical voice. Yet, I do hope women and men may find recognition and a feeling of 'ah-ha' with artists who step outside of the traditional 'ways' of being a composer. Such a shift will inevitably change both the field of pedagogy as well as the concept of 'composer', implying a 'no' to a 'unity-through-incorporation' into the field of composition as it is presented now (within institutions). Creating music may take on more feminized characteristics, such as: considering the intent of the performer and the affect for the listener as valid components of musical performance and musical meaning; considering the validity of healing dimensions of music; allowing for less control of a performance or encouraging audience participation. Maybe 'composing' will come to have less and less predominantly masculine delineations, and that is a change I am completely in favor of.

Finally I close with a brief consideration of the dichotomies that would be affected by a move toward the appropriation of a feminine (and female) libido. What are the dichotomies that are undermined by the idea of a feminine libido? Three that have long influenced societal perceptions of women's nature and place are: active/passive, public/private, mind/body. Reflecting on these oppositions in turn: acting from our creative libidinal energy, we would feel freer to actively seek satisfaction in our work, loves, recreations; we would be freer to invest our energies in activities for a broader public; our minds and bodies would be more freed to interact, the mind structuring the fantasies of the body and the body enacting the fantasies of the mind. These dichotomies have long histories in the ways they have influenced the relationship between women and music. There is the Romantic ideal of woman which defined her as passive muse, inspiring the active creativity of men. The strong social stigmas attached to women performing publicly and the moral obligation she felt to stay at home and nurture her husband and children effectively blocked much public female artistry.<sup>35</sup> The emphasis on composition as a mental task and the emphasis on the bodies of women has made it difficult for women to enter into the composing field as well as putting them into the uncomfortable position of more overt bodily display while performing<sup>36</sup>. By claiming and taking full responsibility for our creative, libidinal energies, we will be releasing men from the thankless task of determining what we are and what we should do with ourselves. Men could be freed to explore more passive, private, bodily activities, also releasing opportunities for greater creative expansion. The 'home' can be a haven of pleasure, peace and love. It is a pity that the trend has always been to drive men out. I am also not suggesting that all activities should have strictly 50% female, 50% male participation. All-women activities as well as minority-women activities (and vice-versa) both present their own challenges and pleasures.

Finally, I will try to bring together the various intentions I have with pursuing a 'libidinal music pedagogy' and writing this paper on it. First, as stated earlier, I wish to reclaim the word 'libido' for women, including an appropriation of creative powers (female sublimated sexual energies) for women as well as

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> See Jennifer Post's 'Erasing the Boundaries between Public and Private in Women's Performance Traditions', in Susan Cook and Judy Tsou (eds.) *Cecilia Reclaimed* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Although male performers also display their bodies, and some overtly do, there remains a difference in the way the director of the orchestra in his tuxedo and the female violin soloist in her evening gown display their bodies. See 'Threatening femininity: women composing/improvising' in Lucy Green's *Music, Gender, Education* (1997).

the sociopolitical freedom to exercise these creative powers, flows of energy. Secondly, I hope this paper will be an encouragement for these energies to be freed within the feminized field of music pedagogy. I do realize that there are many music pedagogues who have devoted a good deal of their lives to creating music and to encouraging others to create music<sup>37</sup>. I wish to join myself to this group of pedagogues who go beyond the reproduction music and who advocate a pedagogy in which the teacher and student are both creating, using (my primary focus here) the tool of improvisation as well as opening their ears to technological innovations. By introducing the topic of 'feminine aesthetics' and a discussion of feminine music and compositional tactics, I wish to stretch the concepts of musical composition (both process and product) in such a way that reduces the traditional masculine delineations of composing. And by looking at some examples of men and women who use improvisation, technology and composition to express musicianship crossing through the dichotomies mentioned above (and by revealing my own interests in these areas), I wish to highlight a way beyond these dichotomies. I should reiterate here that I draw from my own personal experience<sup>38</sup> as a musician and as a private teacher of piano lessons. However, it is my hope that my story, presented in the context of a thesis paper within the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, will become one of the many forces working to open up more ways of being as women and men within the field of music pedagogy.

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<sup>37</sup> Try a Google search with keywords: 'improvisation, creativity, music pedagogy' and you will find a number of articles dedicated to the subject.

<sup>38</sup> Which includes growing up as an amateur pianist and choir accompanist in a church environment in America; two academic years giving group and individual lessons at the 'National Music Conservatory' in Amman - working there with the British system 'The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music' as well as developing a method for the teaching of (a sort of combination of Western and Arabic) music in the public elementary schools; studying history and theory of music and singing in the choir for a year at a Regional Conservatory (Boulogne-Billancourt) bordering Paris; studying piano for four years at the College of Higher Vocational Education in the Arts in Utrecht; and finally working on a post-graduate music pedagogy degree at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague. Thus, my professional training has taken place primarily in the Netherlands.



## 2. Music as 'feminine': the domestic piano and problematizing the mind/body split

The concatenous fury enacted against women *and* music is the product of an awareness that both women and music exceed meaning, to the extent that meaning is "given" to both under conditions of patriarchy. The stakes over meaning could hardly be higher.

Richard Leppert,  
*The Sight of Sound*<sup>1</sup>

In this section I will be looking at the historical, and still very much active, tendency of our culture to view music and (especially amateur) music-making as a female activity. This is a different topic than whether the music itself works, following culturally accepted norms, to represent masculinity or femininity.<sup>2</sup> This is also separate, yet related, to gender issues related to the creation and documentation of our musical heritage. Certainly, the musical language of Europe has been developed, written and passed down to a large extent by men. However, music itself is often, whether in poems, metaphors in prose, or visual representations, very much linked with 'woman', linked with the otherness of woman, and as a corollary, posing a threat to the identity of man. A symbol (established in Victorian times), linked with the femininity of music and the controlled place of women/music, is that of the domestic piano as a center of family domesticity and harmony, making it a symbol of the 'angel in the house'. This symbolism interests me in particular, as it may form a barrier for boys (and certain girls for that matter) to express themselves on this instrument, or create underlying tensions within the student/piano relationship that would be worthwhile for the teacher to be aware of. The family piano, at home in the living room, subject to the surveillance of the parents, provides no challenge, no exciting, subversive context (compare this with the bar room piano or with the grand piano played outside in snowy industrial scenes by Alicia Keys). Who wants to grow up playing piano in the living room like their mother? In line with this, I will also investigate some other trends that I have noticed regarding the 'family piano' by analyzing some personal anecdotes. I will also present data provided in Lucy Green's book *Music, Gender, Education* (1997),<sup>3</sup> related to how the sexes find their way, establishing their gendered identity, within the arena of school music. Finally, I examine the way in which the mind/body split is held up as a dichotomy at the foundation of and helping to create a gendered experience of music. Referring to Green's data, I question whether this concept is still relevant as a basis for understanding the current trends related to the use of music to establish and maintain a gendered identity.

I would like in the first instance to turn to Richard Leppert's book, *The Sight of Sound*, in which Leppert focuses on the analysis of visual 'texts' representing musical practices. In his words: "My subject is the body as a palimpsest in musical practices – the discourse of the historical, gendered body in the visual representation of sonority. That is, I shall be concerned with the sight of the sound producing body and the discourses of power, knowledge, desire, and identity that the musical body encodes."<sup>4</sup> Leppert investigates pictorial images – representations of music being played, objectified (collections of instruments), listened to, even non-musical representations on the bodies of instruments – in order to discover underlying tropes about music: how the image would have been understood in the culture in

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<sup>1</sup> Leppert, 230.

<sup>2</sup> Susan McClary discusses this in detail in *Feminine Endings*, pp. 7-17:

Beginning with the rise of opera in the seventeenth century, composers worked painstakingly to develop a musical semiotics of gender: a set of conventions for constructing "masculinity" or "femininity" in music. The codes marking gender difference in music are informed by the prevalent attitudes of their time. But they also themselves participate in social formation, inasmuch as individuals learn how to be gendered beings through their interactions with cultural discourses such as music. Moreover, music does not just passively reflect society; it also serves as a public forum within which various modes of gender organization (along with many other aspects of social life) are asserted, adopted, contested, and negotiated. 7-8.

And Halstead (p. 239) includes a discussion of masculine and feminine stereotypes in music with a table with 'Suggested polarities of musical male/female opposition' taken from Phillip Tagg's 'An Anthropology of Stereotypes in TV Music?', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 71 (1989), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge University Press, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Leppert, XXVI.

which it was produced and 'consumed' and what that says about how the viewers thought about women and music. One of the main threads running through Leppert's work is the way representations project onto women/music the extremes of moral perfection and debasement as well as their active corollaries: to produce moral perfection and to cause moral debasement. The following quotes set the stage for music represented as female/other, music as that which penetrates into (masculine) society, causing it to disintegrate. Men were often charged to be wary of music (repressing music both outside and inside) or take control of it, bending it to their will. Because the work is by a Dutch painter, I would like to begin with part of Leppert's analysis of the work by Dutch artist Jan Miense Molenaer, *A Music Party (Allegory of Fidelity in Marriage)*<sup>5</sup> (See Appendix 1)

In the Low Countries in the seventeenth century, as elsewhere, art music was a suspect practice among the upper classes on two grounds. First, there was growing uncertainty that music making, whether solitary or social, was appropriate to this social class, especially men. Indeed, art music was well on its way to being classified as a female activity, though this cultural principle would not gain full precedence for another century. Second, and closely related, art music (indeed, all secular music) was viewed suspiciously in Calvinist theology, though the extent of that suspicion has often been overstated. While in one sense, then, the practices of art music registered themselves as exercises of sonoric order mirroring social order, in another they signaled precisely the opposite, a threat to that order. The reasons this is so depend on two competing sets of criteria. As order, a desideratum whose terms were defined by the dominant classes, the sonorities of art music could only mean in opposition to the music of the lower classes, the Dutch peasantry. Lower-class music, directly or indirectly, was theorized as disorder, a sonoric and social threat *from outside* [. . .] Art music as disorder, by contrast, located the enemy as a threat *from inside*; its terms were no longer those of class difference but became those of gender distinction within the upper social strata. Music was potentially effeminizing; it was a specific threat to masculine identity. And worse, when confined to women's practice, its specific relation to physicality and to sexual arousal was perceived as a challenge to husbands' authority.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly is a quote by Philip Stubbes, English pamphleteer born about 1555, from *The Anatomie of Abuses* (as Leppert suggests, the attack is not very original, reflecting common perceptions of 'modern' amusements):

But being used in publique assemblies and private conventicles, as directories to filthie dauncing, thorow the sweet harmonie & smoothe melodie therof, it estraungeth the mind, stireth up filthie lust, womannisheth the minde, ravisheth the hart, enflameth concupisence, and bringeth in uncleanes.<sup>7</sup>

Taken from the 'Recovering Jouissance: Feminist Aesthetics and Music' by Cox Lorraine. Certain modes, associated with goddess worship were always considered suspect and in need of restraint. Men were admonished to avoid lengthy contacts with these modes due to their insidious power to corrupt.

Authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Clement, Basil, and Boethius associated manly music with reason, restraint, and order, whereas music associated with women or effeminacy was thought to give rise to sensuality, excitement, passion, or madness. Socrates warned that music in the Mixolydian and "intense Lydian" modes, which were associated with women and goddess worship, would give rise to drunkenness, softness, and sloth.<sup>8</sup>

Men are charged to be wary of the music which lies in them, the softness, the sensuality, the madness which may rise up and take over. Men are charged to defend the fortress of their masculine identity, a constructed identity grounded in the need of dominant powers to maintain control, build stable societies based on fear. Does music penetrate the male stronghold, entering from outside? Could it not be that music and everything it represents, is already within? Is it not this which infuriates Stubbes and his contemporaries: that 'maleness' is not pure or impenetrable. That there is no such thing as 'maleness', rather fe/maleness? That males have a desire for femininity and vice versa.

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<sup>5</sup> 1633, oil on canvas, Leppert p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Leppert, 7.

<sup>7</sup> From *Philip Stubbes's Anatomy of Abuses in England in Shakespeare's Youth, A.D. 1583*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, vol I (London: New Shakespeare Society, 1877) pp. 169-70. Leppert, 88.

<sup>8</sup> In Karin Pendle (ed.) *Women & Music: A History*. (Indiana University Press, 1991, second ed. 2001), 4.

To pry this aperture, created by desire, further open, I would like to refer to a vivid visual representation: a painting on the inside of the lid and sides of a concert grand built by Alexandre Charpentier in 1902<sup>9</sup> (see Appendix 1). This instrument was designed for public performance and not for family entertainment. The inside of the lid has a painting of reclining, naked woman being washed over by a golden flood of water. Her hands are raised in a symbolic warding off of attack, but her leg is raised to allow the water to flow between them. She is, in Leppert's words: 'Madonna and whore.'

The visual-sonoric pleasure enacted on the piano's lid will be paid for by the death of the one who provides the pleasure. She is Woman; she is Music. But, ironically, the death of the woman ends the auditor-gazer's pleasure. Once the lid is closed, like that of a coffin before burial, the sight of her body and the waves of sound washing over her are sealed off, so that the loss is ours.<sup>10</sup>

What Leppert wishes to emphasize is that the rhetoric created around the dangerous nature of women/music lures the creator back into its constrictions of desire and repression. According to Leppert, Man, through his representational work, created 'music' and 'woman' and terrified himself by this music/woman, which he then had to violently suppress. This creation 'is' not music or woman, but a projection of himself, his own desires (including the desire to control). After the symbolic death, he longs once again for this complete 'music/woman' temptation which overwhelms him and which is made even more attractive by the fact that he feels he must resist and eventually kill 'it' again, a cycle of desire, temporary surrender and inevitable violence.<sup>11</sup> Music and woman are caught up in a representation of otherness, an otherness that needs to be completely controlled.<sup>12</sup> What interests me here and throughout this discussion of music as feminine is how this translates into the need to control music practices, to control the situations in which children listen to or play music. Where does this unhealthy fear of the sensuality/sexuality of music come from, and how has this affected women's historical participation in music? How has that served to work toward erasing the body in Western musical practices, perhaps most extensively in how we perceive the creation of music as being a mental process? Toward the end of his book Leppert quotes from Plato and political philosopher Allan Bloom. Leppert says:

I have suggested in this study that the suspicious relation between the categories "woman" and "music" are fundamental to the social construction of both women and music, but also to the category "man." By far the most consistent suspicion, in fact fear, about music in the West, going back to Plato (*The Republic*) and continuing to this moment in the anxieties of Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*), revolves around music's connection to the body, notably its sexual parts, and the closely related paranoia that the sexuality awakened by music and becoming addictive (Bloom's word) will weaken men, make them womanish.<sup>13</sup>

He then quotes Plato:

Then when any man lets music flute his soul away, and pour flooding into his mind through his ears, as though through a funnel, those sweet and soft and mournful melodies which we have described, till he spends his whole life piping and cloying himself with sound, that man at first tempers the spirited element in him, as steel is tempered, and makes it useful instead of useless and hard; but if he continues without ceasing to beguile that element, after a time he begins to dissolve and melt it away, till he pour out his spirit in a stream, cuts as it were the sinews of his soul, and makes it "a feeble warrior."<sup>14</sup>

And Bloom:

But rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire – not love, not eros, but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored. [ . . . ]

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<sup>9</sup> Its case was painted by the art nouveau artist Albert Besnard (Nice, Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret).

<sup>10</sup> Leppert, 148-150.

<sup>11</sup> This creation of music/woman as desirable and (always) threatened by the very ones who have created her as an object of desire can be witnessed in Bizet's *Carmen* and Berg's *Lulu*.

<sup>12</sup> I do question the assumption that projected desires and the accompanying lust/hatred are singularly male characteristics. Most children (male or female) create for themselves wild fantasies of desire purposefully directed toward that which they cannot have (which also does not actually 'exist', in the sense that their want exceeds the object, their want also becoming in the process the 'goal' or the desired sensation). However, I do agree that the locus of power on the side of men has made it more possible for men to act out their fantasies on a larger scale and thus create the cycle of violent domination that has characterized the political and social interaction between men and women.

<sup>13</sup> Leppert, 219.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans. A. D. Lindsay (New York: Dutton, 1957), p. 118 (Book III/411), Quoted in Leppert, 219-220.

Young people know that rock has the beat of sexual intercourse.<sup>15</sup>

Is it that the desire associated with sexuality/sensuality causes Man to doubt his own complete/fullness of his masculine identity which then causes him, through need, to question the integrity of this identity? If we take Leppert's analysis to its furthest conclusions, then women and music are no longer necessary in the equation. 'Man' is terrified of his own sexuality (which he projects onto his woman/music creation) because this sexuality opens up a need, a desire.<sup>16</sup> This hatred, then (prompted by the urge for his own male identity with all the accompanying privileges), which actually becomes a hatred of parts of his own nature, opens up a vast territory which could actually be already saturated with love, the terrifying (according to Leppert, primarily sexual) love/need for music/woman *in himself* which approaches murderous dimensions in its ability to break open the fortress-identity of the culturally identifiable man *as separate from woman*.<sup>17</sup>

Lucy Green has another explanation for the antipathy of men toward the (not identical, but related) idea of how man reacts to woman controlling music:

In their unattainable, idealised otherness, music and woman are to be dominated, their qualities to remain ephemeral and therefore still fascinating, but not threatening, to the integrity of man. For him – the author of the poem, the listener who gazes at the singer, man the composer – for him the idea that one absolute otherness – woman – can turn around and control the other – music – is intolerable. Part of musical delineation includes the notion of the mind behind music, and part of the notion of mind is that it is masculine. The woman composer is by definition always already involved in challenging her possession of some of the defining characteristics of femininity itself. The fact of her metaphorical, delineated display of mind conflicts with her natural submission to her body. It is therefore music's cerebral properties, its delineation of a masculine mind, that have denied woman the untrammelled freedom to compose.<sup>18</sup>

In her analysis, she places more emphasis on the 'masculine' desire to control and retain power rather than on the fear of sexuality. She also places the responsibility of the limitation of 'woman's freedom to compose' on the cerebral properties of music, on music's delineation of a masculine mind. Has Man presented such a discouraging conceptual wall that women have not been able, en masse, to consider themselves as active musical agents? Or have women accepted their own assumed limitations by accepting and confirming the cerebral delineations of music as well as their own supposed lack in this area? What if we were to challenge these cerebral properties of music by focusing on more intuitive, open and embodied music? Might that not then be a better way of opening space for male and female composers/music participants who are discouraged by the apparent cerebral complexity of music? Would it be unthinkable to organize dialogical bodies within conservatories designed specifically to encourage female composition, to address the historical (and anecdotal) experience of women musicians with the idea of stimulating a wider definition of musical language, including the feminine libido? Could this be done without falling into the traps of having such 'support structures' automatically suggest that women are inferior, needing special help? I am perhaps here diverting from pedagogical practices and more towards women's compositional practices. One of my goals, however, is to present the music lesson as a place where music is created, and in this sense if more women (music teachers) turn to composition, to musical creation, then the whole system of music pedagogy will change, becoming more exploratory, reflecting the pursuits of the composer/educators in the field.

The following quote by Susan McClary claims that emphasis on the cerebral, rational process of creating music was an instinctive reaction by male composers in order to 'masculinize' their profession. She also refers to other trends, such as non-participatory music and modernist music, as reactions to this fear for the effeminacy of music:

Throughout its history in the West, music has been an activity fought over bitterly in terms of gender identity. The charge that musicians or devotees of music are "effeminate" goes back as far

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<sup>15</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Filled Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 73. Quoted in Leppert, 220.

<sup>16</sup> I don't mean to exclude homosexual love here. Due to the expectations of society that a man will find his love/object in the body of a woman, the disgust at this female love/object combined with the (in the past) pressures of society can create a more complex spiral of (self)hate and rejection of sexuality for the homosexual in a 'repressive' society. Read Leppert's discussion of Tolstoy's 'The Wife Murderer' (1888) involving the 'The Kreutzer' sonata for violin and piano by Beethoven, pp. 168-177.

<sup>17</sup> Is this becoming part of the body of literature on the 'Man problem'?

<sup>18</sup> Green, 88.



as recorded documentation about music, and music's association with the body (in dance or for sensuous pleasure) and with subjectivity has led to its being relegated in many historical periods to what was understood as a "feminine" realm. Male musicians have retaliated in a number of ways: by defining music as the most ideal (that is, the least physical) of the arts; by insisting emphatically on its "rational" dimension; by laying claim to such presumably masculine virtues as objectivity, universality, and transcendence; by prohibiting actual female participation altogether.

[. . .] Linda Austern and Richard Leppert have demonstrated that one reason the English have produced so little music is that they – more than their German or French neighbors – have long associated music strongly with effeminacy. The English effectively prevented themselves as a society from participating in musical culture, except as connoisseurs and consumers, and Anglo-Americans have followed suit.

Likewise, the polemics that proliferate around moments of stylistic change are frequently expressed in terms of sexual identity. Early Romanticism, for instance, was in part an appropriation of what the Enlightenment had defined as subjective, "feminine" imagination, and the battles over the relative status of structure and ornamental excess, between rationality and irrationality in early nineteenth-century music were understood as battles *over the proper constitution of the bourgeois male*. Similarly, the turn from late Romantic hysteria and popular music to the refuge of rigorous Modernism is a gesture partly informed by the desire to remasculinize the discourse.<sup>19</sup>

I will use the reference to the 'bourgeois male' as a way to turn the discussion to the family piano, which has its roots in Victorian domestic culture. I would like to briefly discuss Victorian values regarding music-making and the family piano. In my opinion the struggles of the last century to extract ourselves from the modes of thinking of this time are perhaps only now filtering to the arena of amateur music-making, especially as related to the piano. The movement from the farm, with the established working roles of the male and female, to the city, created a (desperate) need for establishing new gender identities that would provide stability for the dislocated men and women. Industrialization created new wealth. 'Science' was both shaped by societal norms and was a powerful force in controlling the imaginations of society, producing socially accepted means of classification and analysis by which, for example, phrenologists could label criminals and prostitutes<sup>20</sup> and doctors could treat women suffering from 'hysteria'. The need for this new upper/middle-class to both establish themselves as powerful members of society as well as distance themselves from the aristocracy led to a curious attraction toward and repulsion from displays of wealth, which certainly involved the practice of music as a leisure activity. The music education of the early twentieth century to which Halstead refers in her chapter 'Education, Opportunities and Professions', is an extension of this practice by which young women became accomplished, thus becoming a more 'valuable' marriage partner in the whole social bartering system. In this sense music was not an activity taken part in purely because of the pleasure it could afford the participant. Music was a task to be learned within the guidelines of socially accepted genres. Music was a *specifically female task* to be carried out in the process of moving up the social ladder and finding a suitable partner. Daring musical experimentation would not have been encouraged.<sup>21</sup>

In the chapter 'Sexual identity, death, and the family piano in the nineteenth century', Leppert shows how the keyboard played at home is often placed, using textual or pictorial representations, within a context in which the activity of making music (on it) is both valorized and seen to be inferior to the activities of the male. The keyboard was the place in which the wife could perform her 'text' as educator and nurturer (See

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<sup>19</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 17-18. Emphasis mine.

<sup>20</sup> See Sander L. Gilman's 'The Hottentot and the Prostitute: toward an iconography of female sexuality' in: *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell UP 1985) 76-107.

<sup>21</sup> Halstead, *Woman Composer*, 30. Remnants of this way of thinking, music as one more part of a child's education, can be traced a bit in the current system in which students go to (or decide to secretly skip) their thirty minute lesson at the music school, where they finish grade level books and are motivated by stickers and diplomas. I realize this is a very delicate subject, and I am completely in favor of music as a stimulant for general development: good for memory, coordination, concentration, etc. And I abundantly use stickers and, sometimes, diplomas. However, if music does not engage the imagination of the student, if it remains a soul-less typing on the piano, it loses its most powerful elements, that of being an outlet for personal expression. I realize in the day-to-day work of teaching students the skills to play the piano, this can sound a bit idealistic. However, I think that teaching children to listen, to improvise, to elaborate on songs and to make stories about what they play can break through the 'duty' of playing the instrument. (See section on improvisation).

'Musical (con)texts'). Moving toward the last century, Craig Roell describes the symbolism of the piano in America, also making the link between the piano and feminine ideals:

The piano became associated with the virtues attributed to music as medicine for the soul. Music supposedly could rescue the distraught from the trials of life. Its moral restorative qualities could counteract the ill effects of money, anxiety, hatred, intrigue, and enterprise. Since this was also seen as the mission of women in Victorian society, music and women were closely associated even into the twentieth century. As the primary musical instrument, the piano not only became symbolic of the virtues attributed to music, but also of home and family life, respectability, and women's particular place and duty. Indeed, most piano pupils were female, and both music making and music appreciation were distinctly feminized. The glorification of the piano was no mere fad; it was a moral institution. Oppressive and opulent, the piano sat steadfast, massive, and magnificent in the parlors and drawing rooms of middle-class homes, serving as a daily reminder of a sublime way of life.<sup>22</sup>

Lucy Green makes the observation:

[. . .] keyboards have been indispensable aids to entertainment in the home; and their capacity to provide melody, harmony or counterpoint with the greatest of readiness has made them invaluable resources for the tuition of children. [. . .] involvement in all these practices – that is, singing, domestic musical entertainment and children's music education – has not only been common for women, but is also on a symbolic level affirmative of femininity.<sup>23</sup>

I would like to interject some of my own personal experience with the family piano. The past seven months I have been working with practice CD's which are designed to present varied repertoire, to serve as a memory aid and to serve as 'play-along' CD's. An additional benefit which the use of the CD's has provided and which I did not expect, was that I have come to gain greater insight into what types of instruments my students practice on at home. More than half of the students had a piano that was in such bad shape that it could no longer be tuned, so that any 'playing-along' became an exercise in poly(micro)-tonality. Although I do sympathize with the amount of money that the instrument and lessons cost, I was rather shocked at the sad state of the pianos (some *may* have a rather nice sound, just slightly lower than 440). Another surprise I have faced is the way making room for music (in the sense of music as noise, not music as piano/furniture) is something which parents need to be made aware of. The 'silent piano' is an interesting phenomenon.<sup>24</sup> In a recent conversation with the mother of a potential student, she said something to the effect of: "Well, a silent piano is good, because then we [i.e. she and her partner] could watch television while he is practicing." I carefully explained to her that her son would need at least some time every day just for himself to make music, which actually involves producing sound that others would hear. Music is the projection of sound. Children who make music make noise, and should be allowed to make noise. Music produced on dilapidated pianos, music produced silently, music as a controllable, orderly force in the lives of children; are these reflections of the current musical situation? Are these reflections of the desire for a controllable, a tame, a regulated, a non-disruptive practice of music?

Green focuses on the ways in which music can be experienced (even used) to either confirm or challenge ideas of gender differences.<sup>25</sup> She distinguishes between two aspects of musical meaning. The 'inherent musical meanings' would be the meanings experienced within 'the music itself', the materials of which

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<sup>22</sup> Roell, Craig. *The Piano in America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) p. 5. Quoted in Leppert, footnotes, 264.

<sup>23</sup> Green, 59.

<sup>24</sup> I have one myself. It is a normal, acoustic piano with a lever that can be pulled with the effect that a bar is moved forward which prevents the hammers from reaching the strings. The hammers still move, however only a soft ticking is produced by the instrument. The player then puts on headphones, turns a switch on and receives a sampled piano (or other) sound with dynamic gradations and length of a played note being 'read' by a laser under the keys. My instrument has proved itself useful during difficult periods with neighbors, however the silent function is quite detrimental for tone-forming as well as the psycho-motor task of 'projecting' sound.

<sup>25</sup> An interesting research report entitled 'Music and Testosterone' by Hajime Fukui revealed that thirty minutes of relaxed, listening music experience significantly lowered testosterone levels in men and raised them in women. The study concludes 'Therefore, decreased testosterone levels in males would avoid confrontation, and increased testosterone levels in females suppress sexual behavior. This theory is convincing if we recall that in music throughout the world [. . .] music and certain sounds function to ease tension or strain, strengthen social bonds, bring pleasure or ecstasy, and bring cohesiveness among people. Music is used empirically and universally in various social situations where stress, tension, and anxiety exist, such as ceremonies, funerals, war, and even banquets.' *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 930, June 2001, p. 451.

being organized in such a way as to have some kind of relationship for the listener.<sup>26</sup> A second area she terms 'delineated meaning', and says 'By this expression I wish to convey the idea that music metaphorically sketches, or delineates, a plethora of contextualizing, symbolic factors.'<sup>27</sup> Due to these two, qualitatively different, categories of musical meaning, listeners or participants may experience a variety of reactions to different music. For example, while a young boy may enjoy the graceful sounds ('inherent musical meanings') of Debussy's *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, he might be reluctant to show his enjoyment or play it himself because of its delicate (i.e. girlish) timbre (delineations). According to her model of gendered musical meaning and experience (see Appendix 1), the boy would thus experience ambiguity in his reaction to the piece. The teacher might then use the fact of Debussy being a male composer to reconcile the boy back to the idea of playing the piece. In this way the boy would be reassured that this music does not jeopardize his maleness, due to the fact of it being composed by a male. While Leppert would seem to suggest that women would have a more natural relationship to music, due to the feminization of music, Green suggests that it is paradoxically difficult for women to experience a fully celebratory response to music because of the masculine delineations of the vast majority of music (i.e. the fact that Debussy was the composer of the music in my example). Both opinions stand if one considers the 'feminization of music' to apply to the controlled practice of music in amateur settings and the 'masculinization of music' to apply to music being used as a powerful tool of self-expression at the professional level.

One of the common dichotomies revealed (and often deconstructed) by writers is that of the Cartesian mind/body split and its relation to gendered musical practice. The assumption of women as 'natural' beings, trapped in (unable to transcend) their bodies and make full use of the powers of the mind has also been a deep-seated belief that has made the idea of women being technically powerful, able to rationally construct and mentally manipulate musical works<sup>28</sup> an anathema. Composition, by women, interrupts patriarchal conceptions of femininity. According to Green, "the idea of a woman mentally manipulating or controlling music is incommensurable and unacceptable, because women cannot be understood to retain their dependent, bodily femininity at the same time as producing a cerebral and potentially autonomous work of genius."<sup>29</sup> Susan McClary speaks of the paradox of music, where it is both associated with cerebral activity, yet also assumed to engage the body. She suggests that one of the reasons women were so forcefully excluded was that otherwise men might have had no place at all within music:

Music is an extremely powerful medium, all the more so because most listeners have little rational control over the way it influences them. The mind/body split that has plagued Western culture for centuries shows up most paradoxically in attitudes toward music: the most cerebral, nonmaterial of media is at the same time the medium most capable of engaging the body. This confusion over whether music belongs with mind or with body is intensified when the fundamental binary opposition of masculine/feminine is mapped onto it. To the very large extent that mind is defined as masculine and body as feminine in Western culture, music is always in danger of being perceived as a feminine (or effeminate) enterprise altogether. And one of the means of asserting masculine control over the medium is by denying the very possibility of participation by women. For how can an enterprise be feminine if actual women are excluded?<sup>30</sup>

Leppert and Green both relate this mind/body split to the separations (and degrees of separation) between 'classical' and 'popular/jazz' music. Leppert relates this to the traces of Victorian ways of thinking in current practices:

In Victorian times, given the extreme historical, economic, and social changes engendered by the successes of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, and the Industrial Revolution, the rewriting of history is wrenchingly self-conscious and disingenuous. But for all its fictive and conflicted character, it establishes an explanation of reality that retains currency in our culture, especially in contemporaneous musical life in the extreme split between a highly eroticized, embodied popular

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<sup>26</sup> Again, she emphasizes the 'learned' nature of these inherent meanings: 'Inherent meanings are neither natural, nor essential nor ahistorical: on the contrary, they are artificial, historical and learnt.' Green, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Green, 7.

<sup>28</sup> This mental 'conception' of quasi-architectural musical forms is a typically Western construct and is probably possible thanks to the development of a discrete notational system. See Sloboda's *The Musical Mind*, pp. 242-243.

<sup>29</sup> Green, 113.

<sup>30</sup> McClary, 152.

culture and a profoundly cerebral elite culture: between, if you like, Madonna or Prince on the one hand and – name your composer among usual suspects – on the other. The Victorian realization of the Cartesian divide is today nowhere more disturbingly evident than in Western musical life, though its consequences continue to be inadequately theorized.<sup>31</sup>

And Green shows how improvisation creates an area in which the divide is seen to be bridged:

Contrastingly, with reference to music that delineates less of a separation between composition and performance, the mind is delineated not as an isolated vessel but in conjunction with the body. Here, it is Charlie Parker's ability to translate his personality or his ideas into music through the manipulation of the saxophone that is applauded. Beethoven's body has little to do with the mainstream delineations of his symphony, delineations whose very existence is anyway denied by classical music discourse; Parker's embouchure, lungs, fingers have a lot to do with the delineations of his jazz, and are even celebrated as salient features of the total musical meaning.<sup>32</sup>

So, classical music would seek to engage the mind, popular music would engage the body, and music that does not have the strong barriers between composition and performance (such as jazz improvisation), links the two. I would like to turn to the practice of music education, looking at some of the vast qualitative data that Green provides and tracing these mind/body and classical/popular music dichotomies to see if the evidence reveals a splitting between the sexes in the way that might seem to be suggested: girls=body, thus girls=popular music; boys=mind, thus boys=classical music. Green did questionnaire research in 1992, "involving music teachers from seventy-eight state secondary co-educational schools in the North, South and Midlands."<sup>33</sup> I have selected the data (both from questionnaires as well as transcripts of conversations) making the most explicit references to popular and classical music or the mind/body split.

*Which group prefers to engage in classical music(s)?*

- Girls. Classical music seems to affect the feminine principle of anima as outlined by Jung. . .
- Girls. Particularly higher up the age range. Respond more easily to emotional stimulus.
- Girls. I think the boys tend to prefer loud, electronically produced sounds, with that constant electronic drum beat in it!<sup>34</sup>
- Girls. Again – classical music is 'cissified' by a lot of contemporary youth programmes so it is difficult for teenage boys to step out of their macho role<sup>35</sup>

*[Interview] Three Year 9 girls (age 13-14):*

- LG: Why do you think that they think they'll get cussed or teased?
- Because music's, like, not a particularly big, macho, tough thing to do really.
- In our class I think there's probably more boys that like it, but don't want to admit it.<sup>36</sup>

*Which group prefers to engage in popular music(s)?*

- Boys. Interest developed within school through recording studio.
- Boys . . . In the later years (e.g. at GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education (music)] level) boys veer to Pop Music performance – with the willingness to imitate performers/styles on guitar, drums, keyboard. At this stage girl performers tend towards classical orchestral performances *or* pop 'vocals'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Leppert, 229-230.

<sup>32</sup> Green, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Her research asked general questions regarding the perception of '*which group [boys or girls or both] is the most successful at: Playing and instrument, Singing Composing, Listening, Notation-reading and -writing' and 'Which group generally speaking prefers to engage in: Classical music(s), popular music(s) and Other world music(s)' She also added space for open-ended questions about gender and music, providing insight relevant to the way they answered the questions. Her goal was not to obtain quantitative data, but more importantly to get a feel for teachers' perceptions and to hear the relevant discourse around gender and music in the areas mentioned on the questionnaire. Green, 148-149.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-178.

- Boys. We have a few good guitarists, drummers and a bass guitarist at this school who are all boys. They like rock, and heavy metal music especially. Some girls perform pop songs from time to time, but the boys play popular music more often.

- Boys. Boys have more interest in technical equipment and electric guitars etc.

- Boys. Popular music has a large degree of image projection – Boys seem to identify with alter-egos and thus respond well. Rock music with its sexual emphasis and aggression seems to complement the image many boys seem to need.<sup>38</sup>

- Boys get frustrated just listening & prefer to be actively involved in *doing* – sometimes playing along – but mainly creating own groups. Much stereotyping here! In spite of encouraging both.<sup>39</sup>

*Which group is the most successful at playing:*

- Girls. Girls are more reliable; remember lessons, instruments, times. Practise harder.

- Girls. Apply themselves to practice, more organised, not so easily influenced by peers or other activities i.e. sport.<sup>40</sup>

- Girls. Girls seem generally keener to learn and produce completed performances. Many lads tend to mess around with equipment.<sup>41</sup>

- Both Equally . . . Boys choose to play drums or guitar more than girls, probably because of the rock band idea, some of them want to be rock stars!

*Which group is the most successful at notation?*

- Girls. Most of the girls have learnt music from a classical standpoint – A good number of the boys have come to music at GCSE through involvement in a rock band & so their notational experience is not so great.

*Which group is the most successful at composing?*

- Both equally. Less social stigma, if we can call it that. Boys also tend to form 'pop' groups etc. and suddenly they become interested in advanced chords etc. Quite often, then, the boys veer to that side of things whilst the girls tend to stick to the more traditional output.<sup>42</sup>

- Boys. The boys seem on the whole to be excited more by the concept of hands-on creativity, although *only just!*

- Both equally. Boys tend to be more keen on electronics and music, girls more notation/written based. . .

- Both equally . . . the boys are more comfortable with the technology required to compose more experimentally. Despite my best efforts, the boys tend to monopolise computers, multi-track recorders, sequencers etc. and girls mistrust the technology.

*Which group is the most successful at singing?*

- Girls. Past Year seven [i.e. age 11-12] – boys seem reluctant to join in with general sing: Part of the development of awareness of the 'male' role in society. However Boys have no qualms about 'singing' rap or ragga as it represents most of their 'macho' values.<sup>43</sup>

*Which group is the most successful at listening?*

- Girls. Sitting still for any length of time is quite hard for most adolescent boys and Music is no exception. Even if it is music they like (again, rap, ragga) they tend to 'move to the music' rather than listen.<sup>44</sup>

*Further comments*

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<sup>38</sup> Green, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 173.

- . . . Boys tend to be more interested in Technology and percussion – a number of boys are working hard at these activities.
- With the advent of MUSIC TECHNOLOGY – Music (at GCSE especially) has become less of a 'feminine' activity/option choice . . .<sup>45</sup>

*Four Year 7 girls (age 11-12):*

- LG: Do you think that boys feel the same about the music lessons as you?
- No, because boys don't like singing because they think it's girls' jobs, and they don't like listening to music and dancing because they think it's girls' jobs.
- The things that boys normally like, I think, is playing the instruments, and mucking around.
- They like all the big ones, and mucking about with the instruments, just banging them and that.

*Four Year 8 boys (age 12-13)*

- All the girls like playing along with music, and like, when they're doing it I like to show them how to do it, like, show them how to play a tune when they do it wrong.
- LG: Are you saying the girls need your help more?
- We're not saying that, but sometimes the girls don't know what to do and like, the boys have always been there for them.
- We give the girls help.
- They are rather able.
- Yeah.
- Except they're not using their ability.
- LG: You feel you're using your ability more?
- We can't because it's not our kind of music.
- LG: But you would if you could?
- Yeah, but we always get in trouble because when, like, they try and do it I try and whisper across to tell them what to do, but she [the teacher] always shouts at me.
- Very true, very true.<sup>46</sup>

This collection of data, besides being in some cases quite amusing, seems, in most instances, to directly contradict the idea that girls would be more connected to their bodies and boys more to their minds. To me, the quotes paint a picture of girls who are thoughtful, organized, better at notation (a cerebral activity) and more likely to play classical music. The boys are more physically reactive to music (banging around, fooling around), more reliant on composing through doing (a more embodied type of composing) and more likely to play popular music. What shift has taken place here? Does the mind/body dichotomy play a role at all, or are signifiers of mind/body relationships sliding all over the place, and does this then give us other insights regarding gender and teaching practices? Interestingly, technology, which might seem to be equated with mind/male seems to aid an experimental or intuitive type of composing, one done by ear and evolving with experience.

Green suggests that the categories of 'classical' and 'popular' music have shifted for young people, now suggesting, respectively, 'music which is offered in school' and 'music which is outside of the accepted boundaries of school music'.

Whereas girls were seen to use music to express their feelings, to be cooperative and persevering in their musical practices, boys were understood characteristically to denunciate the majority of musical activities that are on offer in the school. The teachers saw this denunciation as being expressed in several ways, of which four notable ones are as follows. First, boys prefer sport to music, a choice between the two being a frequent necessity in schools where they often compete

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 174-175.

for extra-curricular time. Secondly, boys create and succumb readily to heavy peer-group pressure against school music. Thirdly, they lay emphasis on what is musically 'fashionable' or 'in at the moment', which by definition does not include music that is in the school curriculum. Fourthly, they avoid certain musical activities for the reason that these are seen to be 'cissy' and 'un-macho'.<sup>47</sup>

[. . .]

I now wish to point to a construction of 'classical music' in contradistinction to 'popular music' which is arrived at *by virtue of gender*. The terms 'classical' and 'popular' are used by pupils as well as teachers, not so much as signifiers of particular *musical styles* or only as currency in the measurement of 'what counts as music' in school, but also as connotations of particular *gendered musical practices*. Further, these gendered associations actually enter into the delineations of the music itself, such that 'classical' and 'slow' together form an affirmative feminine delineation, whilst 'popular' and 'fast' form a delineation that is interruptive for femininity and that is concomitantly more inviting to boys.<sup>48</sup>

Thus 'classical' music, music representing the tradition once strongly inhabited by cerebral, male composers and musicians, is now being reproduced by girls. The girls are seen to take on and display some of the cerebral characteristics of the music (reproduction through diligent study and the mastery of notation). In turn, 'classical' music loses its connection with men and becomes associated with girls. I would like to relate this back to the tradition of women being trained in music as part of becoming 'accomplished' members of society as well as to the tendency for society to devalue activities that are excelled in by women. The school system is now the bastion for 'classical music', which is now a form which represents established (i.e. old-fashioned) norms of society. In other words, girls have now established themselves in a system of (equal opportunity) schooling that was once denied them and are excelling. Because girls are performing well in school, the shift of attention by the boys (who are seeking to differentiate themselves) becomes outside of the school. And a (reality-producing) myth is created that the appropriate place for radical innovation, for creativity, is thus outside of the school, outside of 'classical' music, which was once the center of innovative (male) creativity and music production. This, because activities of males are *by definition superior* to those of females. If this underlying way of thinking is not challenged, then girls will always be trailing along, entering the supposedly powerful arenas of male occupation, only to find that the 'important work' is being done elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

Since females are regarded in many ways as inferior to males, they are less valued socially. The practical consequence of women's position is that anything in which they dominate is automatically devalued in the eyes of society. This has occurred in a number of occupations, as women have increasingly become part of the workforce. The social devaluation of music education could be seen as in part due to female domination at the lower levels. Music has always been an essential part of female socialization and training; accordingly, it has held little value in male academic circles. The depreciation of music's relevance to education because of women's traditional involvement in it stands in contrast to the wide social appreciation of the male 'intellectuals' who dominate the music profession (composers, conductors, critics and professors).<sup>50</sup>

It is not so much that we develop gendered identities, but the fact that the activities of women are seen as less valuable, this is the underlying 'problem'. Gender is one of the most basic, first identified and last forgotten, physical distinctions between human beings. In the search, struggle for identity, gender is an obvious distinction that can be grasped onto. Gender-distinct characteristics (always a construct) will be developed in the process of maturing, and the tendency is for the sexes to polarize. In other words, the average young person looks at what the members of the opposite sex are doing and avoids it or creates an 'opposing' activity.<sup>51</sup> In this process, group cultures are developed which will never fit the needs of any

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<sup>47</sup> Green, 168.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Halstead makes mention of the fact (one of many) that the job of bank teller in England was in the beginning well-respected and well paid. As the work was transferred to women, salaries and prestige dropped. See pp. 128, 134.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Studies looking at levels of masculinity and femininity in men and women show that humans with higher intellectual ability, or development, tend to show more androgynous tendencies. Thus, more intellectual girls will be more masculine and vice versa. See Halstead Chapter 2, 'Music and Personality'.

one individual. It will never work to 'school' girls to work effectively in a masculine model. The target will always be moving, like magnets repelling each other. Green is very careful to point out:

The implications of gendered musical delineations have little surface relevance to truth-value: it is not that all boys are 'really' more sexually assertive, confident or active in music, or that all girls 'really' prefer slow, 'classical' music and fear electronic instruments. Whether such appearances are the case or not for any particular individual, the point that I would like to illuminate is that pupils and teachers collude with each other in the perpetuation of the gender politics of music: the construction of a gendered discourse on music that aids in the regulation of gender and sexuality, linked to the reproduction and production of historical musical practices and musical meanings.<sup>52</sup>

So, what hope can a private piano teacher have of opening up space within which children can feel free to develop in a non-stereotypical way, where activities of both sexes are appreciated? First of all, I do not consider it my duty as a teacher to try to make my students conform to a 'non-gendered' stereotype (an impossibility). I see it more my task to help them incorporate music as part of their gendered identity, *at the same time* challenging their conceptions of gender identity so that they can more honestly relate to their own enjoyment of an activity regardless of the way it might be perceived by others. I certainly sense how they (some more than others) react toward music with an awareness of how their musical activity will be seen in the context of their school or wider circle of friends. It requires sensitivity on the part of the teacher to challenge the existing stereotypes that would limit the student's musical experience. The opening section of my paper in which I introduce the concept of a female libido, a female creative energy and a feminist aesthetics forms an important backdrop. Considering another type of music, working yourself into an improvisational tradition, validating your own creative energies and seeing creative energies in all your students should all help to break open stereotypes based on mind/body and 'classical'/pop' stereotypes. The teacher must consider herself as role-model as this may be the most important way she influences her students. Now I would like to present a few ideas that I have used to combat presenting myself as teacher of a feminized practice.<sup>53</sup>

First, as the last sentence suggests, the teacher must look carefully at herself. What I am proposing is an attitude of critical reflection with an awareness of how you might 'gender' your teaching practice. I had the experience last year of watching my niece perform in a dance production by her beloved teacher. There were no boys in the performance, and when I asked a mother why her son was not taking part, she looked at me as if I were crazy. Amidst all the frilly dresses, braided hair and sweeping music (sometimes spunky, but in this setting, never macho), there was not the slightest room for a young boy to enter and still experience himself as a male (especially an American male). 'Dance' had been created, due to the specific persona of the teacher, as a thoroughly feminized experience.<sup>54</sup> Another humorous example is given in Green's book in which one of a group of four year 8 (age 12-13) boys says: 'I like playing the drums but it's just that we never get a chance to express ourselves. It's just xylophones, xylophones. We would like to play drums, we would like to play guitar, we would like to play lots of things.' [. . .] 'all Miss plays is xylophone, and I got bad grades because I didn't want to play it; when everyone had to do a tune I didn't want to play it.'<sup>55</sup> The music teacher who does not want to create an exclusive masculinized or feminized environment must stretch herself, finding opportunities to operate within an environment less comfortable to her.

The two (musical) experiences that are the beginning of my exploration within unfamiliar realms of music are lessons with Rolf Delfos in improvisation and my experience finding a composer and sonologist to create a work for my concert December 2004 and working with the Creative Music Environment (CME) a 'free improvisation' ensemble at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague. Rolf, whether it is conscious or not, confronts the stereotypically feminine characteristics of the music pedagogy students he works with. There is often a resistance by students, including me to this (exaggerated?) 'macho' approach stemming from jazz delineations. However, it has taught me to open my ears to other ways of being, of experiencing rhythm, of 'filling' the silence with music, and I now listen differently to improvised music. In the other instance, I jumped into the world of free improvisation and electronic music with my eyes wide open.

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<sup>52</sup> Green, 186.

<sup>53</sup> And I might consider myself successful since 5 of my 11 young piano students are boys. However, I now continually see ways in which I can intervene and allow more for my own 'fe/maleness'.

<sup>54</sup> My niece has currently switched to gymnastics. . .

<sup>55</sup> Green, 181.



Descending the stairs to the 'Technical Service' ('Technische Dienst') in the conservatory, one has, as a female pedagogy student, the clear feeling of coming into a different realm. (See 'Listen, listen, listen: opening space with improvisation' for a short description of my experience with the CME ensemble as well as my role as a member of the ensemble FreeQ). Both these experiences were, I believe, critical in helping me develop a less restricted perception of music and to reconsider classical music as one of many streams of modern music. I am not suggesting that each music teacher should copy my experience. However, I do think that teachers who do not wish to create a mono-gendered environment should seek out experiences or learning situations that they would not normally be involved in, along the complete spectrum of gendered musical practices.

Research shows that in making a choice of musical instrument, children are very much affected by the gender of the person playing the instrument (especially when a female is playing a typically male instrument, such as the tuba, and vice versa). A female teacher will never be able to provide boys a 'male' role model by herself. I have begun organizing workshops and in one case, asked another (male) musician to work with me. In this way, the female teacher can also, with her male colleagues, present a male role-model on the piano (and vice-versa, of course).

Although the music teacher may be specialized in a certain performance practice (such as classical music), she will have to make a decision whether she will limit what she offers within the lesson situation to that practice or not. My experience is that only a small amount of piano students are actually interested in learning to play classical music, and most are definitely not interested in having a career as a classical musician. I ask myself, then, if I consider the worth of classical music so high that I should exclude all other types of music (some teachers may indeed have this opinion), or if I can give my students the beginning training they need to remaining functioning pianists using a variety of genres, developing listening and rhythmic skills, and remaining focused on the piano as a producer of many different kinds of (musical) sound depending on your goal. An interesting exercise with regard to musical genre and gender might be for the teacher to examine whether she makes pre-determined choices of repertoire for her students based on gender. For example, does she choose blues for the boys and dreamy tunes for the girls? My experience with making a CD of musical examples is that the teacher can then ask the student to select their own musical material, expecting some challenges to her own preconceived ideas. I also see how my CD made eight months ago already needs to be changed, expanded. Ideally we would be able to provide children with listening or play along examples directly over a website (See the section 'Considering and applying technology'.)

When suggesting repertoire, which is easily perceived in the case of boys as too 'sweet', I usually try to fit it to the situation of the student as much as possible. While providing a varied selection of music on (now two) CD's, I also continually ask my students what they would like to play.<sup>56</sup> A few of the songs they were singing and listening to at school were already familiar to me. Others that have proven successful, I found on Liedbox from Teleac<sup>57</sup>, a website support of children's television in the Netherlands. Obviously, knowledge of popular music and improvising schemes are helpful. I want to emphasize that this is an ongoing search which will continually change as the teacher develops and comes into contact with different students. Students will introduce you to the wonders of Alicia Keys, Chipz, Robbie Williams, if you ask them. I am not trying to skip over this lightly by saying 'figure it out for yourself'. What I seriously suggest is (continually) deepening your understanding of the (gendered) musical worlds in which your students operate and being equipped to use the knowledge of these worlds within the lesson environment.

Another area you can challenge is related directly to the idea that girls use music as a means of expression (body), while boys are more interested in the technique (mind). All students should be challenged to express themselves with the music they are working on. Relate the music to their current mood or experience. Challenge boys to relate a delicate or melancholy song to a tender or sad moment that they must certainly at one time or another have experienced. If this does not work, the mood of the music might be projected onto another imaginary person whom they might then relate too. There is a certain vulnerability felt by all students when asked to express themselves with the music. Even extrovert students (in the lesson environment) are often shy to tell a story in public with their music. When I

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<sup>56</sup> I should add here that I am teaching beginning students, all of whom have had less than three years of piano lessons. My beginning repertoire includes many songs, folk, popular and jazzy. I work also with blue's schemes and other simple improvisational schemes (Listen to CD).

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.teleacnot.nl/sites/liedbox/> (Last visited 6 April 2005).

challenge them to expose themselves through a serious attempt to tell a story with or about the music, they often take on a hyper-fake television personality (with a manipulation of voice) or laugh and withdraw into a helpless stance. However, I make it standard practice, even with small pieces, to make a story of it, so that they (and the audience if present) will know there is something to be listened to, and the student will know there is focused listening.<sup>58</sup> All students should also be challenged to examine the building blocks of the material they are working with (this might be called theory). One of my most cognitive students was a girl who quickly and seemingly effortlessly absorbed the ideas of chords and inversions and could relate the concepts to music played by ear or notated. Musical skills do not sit in the mind or in the body. Musicality is an understanding both based upon and made manifest through bodily movement. Green observes that '[e]xceptionally competent pupils, who can skilfully manipulate the inherent meanings of the music they perform, are more readily able to cross the music/gender divide than are most pupils. [ . . . ] They can perform the 'music itself', without so much fear of challenging the symbolic construction of their gender either in the experiences of their listeners or in their own experiences.'<sup>59</sup> I believe that children who start music at a young age have the double advantage both of starting before gendered peer pressure is very strong as well as having a head start on learning to control the instrument well enough to 'cross the divide' (i.e. do what they want to do) with more ease and confidence.

As this paper progresses, I will present more ways in which the piano, when used as a tool for exploration and improvisation, becomes less of a tamed, domestic pussy cat. Music lessons as a practice for women and children, music as a feminine force to be contained and controlled, technology and musical exploration as something boys do, these are the stereotypes that I think we as libidinal music pedagogues should push against.

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<sup>58</sup> Of course, this should not be applied indiscriminately.

<sup>59</sup> Green, 187.

### 3. The creation of genius and a look into the traditional treatment of women composers in historical, musicological writings and critical reviews

In his artistic struggle, the genius actually comes dangerously close to losing his masculinity, which is based on his isolated individuality and rationality, and succumbing instead to a feminine creative passion. But at this very point, where the male becomes feminine, where the solitary becomes universal, and where the rational becomes creative, the woman is excluded. [ . . . ] Thus whereas the most well-received women composers were, at the height of their achievement, recognized as masculine, the most successful men composers alone attained the pinnacle of genius, where they could be praised for qualities normally seen as feminine.

Lucy Green  
*Music, Gender, Education*<sup>1</sup>

It is perhaps an interesting exercise to trace one's own awareness of intellect, talent and social prowess. Many children in the Western world are first confronted with their own ranking on a regional or national level through the administration of assessment tests in school which become gradually more important through puberty. These tests give a sort of black-and-white indication (often in the form of percentages) of 'intelligence' on a handful of subjects. However, it is only much later that the young adult is able to critically assess this assessment and reflect on the means and measurements used. Slowly, in maturation, in confrontation with different circumstances and levels of success, often in comparison with others, the enormous complexity of status, intelligence and success becomes clearer as well as the shortcomings of these tests. Often the tests reveal more about what type of knowledge and 'learning' is deemed important in a society and less about how well an individual might function in that society. Outside (and above?) this quality of 'intelligence' stands the concept of genius. There are no percentages, no attempts at black and white indications. One might ask the question "am I a genius?" only to realize that no foolproof answer exists. In reading anthologies, histories or biographies about major actors of the past, one senses a sort of consensus regarding who is a genius and who is not. However, the whole concept of genius is also fluid and tied to certain cultural values or trends, changing over time. As the quote above suggests, the concept of genius, especially since the beginning of the previous century, includes the feminine while excluding females.<sup>2</sup> Using the research presented in Lucy Green's *Music, gender, education*, I will expose some ways that our conception of genius might be linked to perceptions of students' (compositional) creativity and how the students themselves view their own creativity.

The student who studies music to become a professional will always confront the concept of musical genius. She might not be able to pinpoint the exact moment or precise manner the concept of genius arose. It may seem that she has always been aware that there are geniuses in music. These geniuses made great contributions to the historical progression of music. They were visionary and combined an enormous prowess in the technique of composition with a deep and passionate spirit. They created music of great scale that demonstrated both their command of form as well as deep emotion. The (professional) student of music is confronted with a history, a list of names of Europeans who made contributions to the flow of canonized music. Although this list contains composers who were quite diverse in their creative output and of many different nationalities, there will be most likely no women in the list. The student will probably not notice this. The production of western music is so deeply and indisputably linked with male creation, that the absence of females seems normal.

The young Otto Weininger who had just received his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Vienna published an influential study in 1903 entitled 'Sex and Character' which discussed the problem of female genius. He is often quoted on this topic, probably because his work contains ideas that were heatedly

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<sup>1</sup> (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 103-104.

<sup>2</sup> There is also an intrinsically racist basis for the concept of genius. However, the quotes I include here refer to the exclusion of women from the concept of genius.

discussed in turn-of-the-century Vienna and which reflect some deeply rooted beliefs of our not-so-distant past. I quote the following from samples of his articles found on the internet:

There is no female genius, *and there never has been one* . . . and there never can be one. Those who are in favour of laxity in these matters, and are anxious to extend and enlarge the idea of genius in order to make it possible to include women, would simply by such action destroy the concept of genius. . . . How could a soulless being possess genius? The possession of genius is identical with profundity; and if any one were to try to combine woman and profundity as subject and predicate, he would be contradicted on all sides. A female genius is a contradiction in terms, for genius is simply intensified, perfectly developed, universally conscious maleness.

The man of genius possesses, like everything else, the complete female in himself; but woman herself is only a part of the Universe, and the part can never be the whole; femaleness can never include genius.<sup>3</sup>

As this quote reveals, a male can become perfectly developed (implying that he also incorporates that which is female). A female cannot incorporate the male without becoming an aberration, a distortion of what is normal. However, the fact that females needed to be so forcefully excluded says much about the instability of gender in this time and the insecurity of the European intelligentsia. The reoccurring confirmation that 'geniuses' often produced works of a distinctly feminine nature created a fissure in the whole concept of the exclusively male genius. The fact that such convoluted arguments, such as those of Weininger mentioned above, could carry weight (even until today) is an indication that society was (and is) wrestling with the sociopolitical necessity of denying women the title of genius while facing the philosophical difficulty of justifying this.<sup>4</sup>

Jill Halstead points out other characteristics of genius that proved problematic for women composers. The creative male, bringing forth something out of nothing, might be considered a type of god, and '[t]he position of 'pseudo-god' is, again, one of immense contradiction for women. It stems from patriarchal religious and philosophical traditions which have been further reinforced by the historical 'evidence' of women's lack of (or inferior) cultural contribution.<sup>5</sup> She goes on to point out how the rejection of social codes in order to reach a productive, transcendent, spiritual state was much more difficult for women to achieve. Due to woman's restricted role as nurturer and bearer of children as well as supporter of her husband, she could not easily withdraw into undisturbed periods of work or perform the public work a composer would need to do in order to create and bring a work to a wider audience.<sup>6</sup>

To turn the topic toward music pedagogy, what affect might this tradition of exclusion of women from achieving canonical status have on the way teachers approach girls and boys? What affect might it have if boys are seen as being the carriers of the seeds of genius for the human race? What affect might it have that Western music, historically, delineates a *masculine mind* and a *male composer*?

Could it be, as Green suggests, that our entire experience of listening to and taking part in music would be differently colored due to gender? When looking at the mirror of musical history, boys would see their gender reflected back. They "hear themselves reflected and at best, celebrated as activators, as controllers, as potential or actual performers or composers, of the music, in the music. But for women this resonance is to some extent blocked. The gender of a female performer in many contexts, and of a female composer in most contexts . . . becomes an object of interest, an overt, and often problematic, part of the musical meanings themselves."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Last viewed March 1, 2005 at <http://www.theabsolute.net/ottow/sexcharh.html#tg>. I am fascinated by this site, which seriously regards Weininger as a hero and advocate of absolute truth. I was even more surprised to find a more 'academic' site which also suggests that his 'misogyny' was simply the use of 'male' and 'female' to express metaphorical concepts <http://faculty.washington.edu/vienna/philosophy/weininger/biography.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> In her book, *Gender and Genius*, Christine Battersby reveals more of this paradox, that of the inherent femininity of the great male mind, that reached its heights in the Romantic concept of genius: "Woman's inferiority had been rationalised by the writers of the Aristotelian tradition as a deficiency of judgement, wit, reason, skill, talent and psychic (and bodily) heat. Women had been blamed for an excess of passion, imagination, sexual needs and for vapour-inspired delusion and irrationality. But if we look at the aesthetic literature of the late eighteenth century, we will see that the greatest males (the natural 'geniuses') were being praised for qualities of mind that seem prima facie identical with Aristotelian femininity [. . .] A man of genius was like a woman [. . .] but was not a woman." Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius* (London 1989), 8. Quoted in Halstead, 58.

<sup>5</sup> Halstead, *The Woman Composer*, 197.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>7</sup> Green, 137-138.

Green's field work involved collecting qualitative data from students, teachers and directors of English secondary school music programs.<sup>8</sup> From the vantage point of the teachers, Green discovered that the area of composing was one of the few in which the teachers felt that boys did as well as or even better than girls. 'The main features of boys' success in composition were depicted as their imagination, exploratory inclinations, inventiveness, creativity, improvisatory ability and natural talent. These qualities were explicitly described as lacking in girls, who were instead characterised as conservative, traditional and reliant on notation.'<sup>9</sup> Girls are seen as turning in neat work. They defy authority less. They progress steadily, more predictably. Boys are characterized as turning in late work, or work thrown together at the last minute. They step outside the parameters of the class. They defy authority. And they are generally seen as displaying the seeds of 'real' genius, the ability to think outside of boxes, the 'cool' nonchalant behavior of the expert. Boys are allowed to be 'naughty', to be late, to show deviant behavior, to act out, because these are all signs of their underlying 'competence' which does not rely on diligence or hard work. Girls who exhibit non-compliant, anti-establishment behavior have less space to maneuver. Do they 'mess around with equipment' with the boys, smash around on the drums and experiment with the electronics?<sup>10</sup> Or are they forced into isolation or mute compliance because they do not 'fit in' with the mostly acquiescent nature of the other girls?

This similitude and the harnessing of misbehaviour to creativity is denied to girls. Their music, unlike that of boys, is largely associated with being good or conformist; their musical practices allow for the expression of enabling and cooperative attitudes . . . Those girls who do not conform to school music in this way cannot, like their male counterparts, simulate genius: they are, rather, offered the opportunity to appear as the symbolic harlot in the vocal performance of certain categories of popular music, or they are, in the extreme case, denied any active instrumental involvement in any kind of music at all. . . . For girls, by contrast with boys, being 'good' at music within the school walls usually means being conformist. A disruptive girl cannot at the same time cope with being 'good' at instrumental performance, because at the moment that she is good at the performance, she denies either her deviance or her femininity. Whereas for boys deviance can contribute to the similitude of genius, for girls it blocks them from instrumental performance at all. Only exceptional talent, as I noted earlier, can override this problem.<sup>11</sup>

I have not conducted any field work in actual classrooms in the Netherlands. I have the suspicion that Dutch girls in general are less conformist and rule-following than the picture of girls in British schools presented by Green. Certainly on contemporary Dutch television shows, girls are often shown physically competing with boys or presenting themselves as competent in skills such as mathematics. Green points out that British boys who have a desire to pursue music seriously and diligently also face enormous counter-pressure from their friends who may see their desire to sing or play an instrument well as being feminine. I have addressed these issues to some extent in the previous section. Certain shifts have certainly taken place in the way classical music is experienced by boys and girls. As classical music has been appropriated by schools, and girls, many boys are shifting toward other genres in the understandable attempt to differentiate themselves, creating pressure for all boys to conform.

Although the private lesson environment differs somewhat from the school situation in that one is not dealing with the dynamics of large groups of students, the student brings all these experiences of the classroom with her into the lesson environment, and I believe these may be crucial areas where a teacher can perform positive intervention. I ask myself if I create an environment in which it is natural for all students to compose and improvise at an early age. Do I provide examples of compositions by women so that women composing is also seen as a natural activity? Do I allow my female students to exhibit anti-authoritative behavior, or do I push my female students to conform more to the role of the compliant

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<sup>8</sup> She did questionnaire research in 1992, 'involving music teachers from seventy-eight state secondary co-educational schools in the North, South and Midlands.' Her research asked general questions regarding the perception of '*which group [boys or girls or both] is the most successful at: Playing and instrument, Singing Composing, Listening, Notation-reading and -writing*' and '*Which group generally speaking prefers to engage in: Classical music(s), popular music(s) and Other world music(s)*' She also added space for open-ended questions about gender and music, providing insight relevant to the way they answered the questions. Her goal was not to obtain quantitative data, but more importantly to get a feel for teachers' perceptions and to hear the relevant discourse around gender and music in the areas mentioned on the questionnaire. Green, 148-149.

<sup>9</sup> Green, 196.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-191

student? Do I provide repertoire that is attractive to the male student (allowing him to maintain his 'cool' status) while at the same time providing a solid musical basis? These last two questions may seem to be far removed from the idea of genius, yet these areas are just a few which might be linked back to our own preconceptions of gender and genius.

I would now like to turn to the closely related topic of how women composers are treated in historical, musicological writings and critical reviews. This section forms an important backdrop against which our current practices and society can be seen. The question I raised earlier, 'why do we not notice it when women composers are excluded from the history classes?' is an important one. Why does this exclusion seem so natural? Why are many students so uninterested in the topic of why one half of the European population not have a voice within our most highly revered history of music-making, and whether that can really be simplistically ascribed to 'biological' reasons? Some of these answers can be found through exploring the traditional mediums of passing on our musical heritage.

The information I have been exposed to has been, admittedly, limited, as it comes almost exclusively from the book *The Woman Composer*, written by Jill Halstead and published in 1997. In the first section of her book, Halstead presents various research performed in the areas of psychology (aptitude and personality), especially related to concepts of masculinity, femininity, creativity and composition. In the center of her book, she presents case studies of nine British female composers, tracing their experiences as composers within their society. She also explores the constructs of the status of genre and delves into the ways in which women composers and their works have been treated in history books, musicology and contemporary (now historical) critiques of the music written by the women she highlights.

Halstead first makes a case for the fact that musicologists, traditionally presenting themselves as objective observers (describing music that is 'universal', abstract and transcending cultural influences), are not immune to prejudice and discrimination. This runs parallel to the discussion of musical canon in Bergeron's and Bohlman's book, *Disciplining Music. Musicology and Its Canons* (1992) which traces the canon as a central axis of control in musicology and music history, restricting the motions of the free and 'objective' scholars. The canon "promotes decorum, ensures proper conduct. The individual within a field learns, by internalizing such standards, how not to transgress. [. . .] Like rehabilitated prisoners (bleak thought), [Trained] scholars] learn how to negotiate their field of scholarship – how not to commit crimes – by yielding to the law of that field, measuring their activity accordingly."<sup>12</sup> The discipline musicology is commonly seen by critics both inside and out to be extremely conservative, forming (in line with elitist conceptions of 'high art'), a disciplinary force influencing how music is understood and presented to young professional musicians and the public at large.<sup>13</sup>

In many ways the activities of women composers becomes a 'minority' activity for which there is just not enough time in the history and analysis classes of the institutes of classical music in Europe. Halstead defines three different approaches which, in their tenacity, provide a "pattern of consistent opposition to women composers' inclusion in the mainstream":

First, they have been completely ignored by some writers, thus rendering them 'invisible'. Second, many writers who do cite women composers then define them only in terms of how much they reveal or camouflage their 'femininity', this quality itself being a sign of inferiority. In such instances, women composers are usually measured on a scale using sex, temperament and nature as the essential reference points to 'understanding' their work. Third, women composers have most recently been marginalized as a minority 'interest group' producing generally inferior works.<sup>14</sup>

Halstead warns that although many books covering even the more modern 'history' of Western music pay lip service to the importance of women in music today, the actual paragraphs in which the women composers or their music is discussed are minimal. 'For example, Paul Griffiths' *Modern Music: The Avant-Garde since 1945* (1981), cites no women composers. In the same author's *Concise History of Modern Music: Debussy to Boulez* (1978, reprinted 1992) there is merely a very brief reference to Ruth Crawford-Seeger.<sup>15</sup> She goes on to warn that "When subsequent generations turn to musicology to learn

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<sup>12</sup> Bergeron and Bohlman, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Eva Rieger, 'Dolce Semplice? On the Changing Role of Women in Music' in Gisela Ecker (ed.), *Feminist Aesthetics* (London, 1985), 137). Quoted in Halstead, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Halstead, 140.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

what was contributed, developed and valued in twentieth-century musical life, women composers will be seen almost as insignificant as they were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”<sup>16</sup>

The second point she makes is that when they are included, there is a tendency for the writers to fall back into sexual aesthetics in which the work itself is not discussed. What is discussed is rather whether the work in its style, its genre, its mood, its scope reflects the gender of the composer or not. Although this also takes place to some extent with male composers<sup>17</sup>, such references form much more the substance of references to and criticisms of women's compositional work. “If a woman composer writes delicate, refined, melodic music in a small form, this immediately 'confirms' beliefs about her feminine temperament of which such musical expression and content is an extension. However, if a woman composes music that is dramatic, large-scale and intellectual in character, this only 'proves' that she was adopting a masculine style in order to step beyond the limitations of her sex.”<sup>18</sup>

This 'double bind of sexual aesthetics'<sup>19</sup>, places women in a position where they are denied fair evaluation. A quote by Camille Saint-Saëns illustrates this perfectly:

Women are curious when they dabble seriously with art. They seem preoccupied above all else with making you forget that they are women and displaying an excessive virility, without realizing that it is precisely that preoccupation which betrays the female.<sup>20</sup>

As does this 1947 review of a concert featuring works by the British composer Ruth Gipps (b. 1921):

Miss Gipps does not make the mistake of trying to beat male composers at their own game, but instead makes the most of the virtues of her own sex. There is a distinctly feminine grace and delicacy about all her work [. . .]<sup>21</sup>

A later book of the same title, Peter Pirie's *The English Musical Renaissance* (1979), contains another example of this type of criticism:

Elizabeth Maconchy had won a prize for a string quartet in the 1930s [. . .] Her style is somewhat crabbed; like many women composers she seems to be trying to outdo the men in stern and dry music.<sup>22</sup>

Another trend is to label less mainstream, even militant, female composers as being oddities, eccentric. They are represented as being embarrassments or inferior role-models, all implying a certain deeply embedded judgement about the proper roles of women.

The general picture of the woman composer that emerges from these two lives, [Smyth and Lutyens], probably the most well-known women composers of their day, is not encouraging [. . .] Elizabeth Maconchy [. . .] would seem a more positive source of inspiration than most, because she has successfully combined composition with more ordinary living.<sup>23</sup>

What is this 'ordinary living' that is expected from a 'well-behaved' female role model? Would this type of phrase be used at all for male composers? The portrayal of women composers as outcasts carries over into the way younger composers view them. In an interview with Halstead, Rhian Samuel (b. 1944) made the comment 'I have always been aware of women composers [. . .] Not that they were considered normal; they were considered absolute freaks, but they did exist.'<sup>24</sup>

I would like to connect this train of thought back to the concept of genius. Alan Blyth of the *Daily Telegraph* made the following comments about the music of Minna Keal, who due to familial pressures

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>17</sup> Such as with the effeminacy of Chopin, his weak constitution and delicate style of playing, or with references to the homosexuality of Tchaikovsky.

<sup>18</sup> Halstead, 142-143.

<sup>19</sup> Halstead attributes this concept to Diane Jezic, author of *Women Composers: A Lost Tradition Found* (New York: The Feminine Press, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, *Harmonie et mélodie*, third edition (Paris, 1885), Quoted in Halstead, 143.

<sup>21</sup> Editorial, *The Strad*, January 1947, quoted in Halstead, 148. Halstead says, 'In direct contrast to Maconchy, Gipps' work can express only her 'feminine grace and delicacy'. If she deviated from her femininity, she would obviously be 'trying to beat male composers.' p. 148.

<sup>22</sup> Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London, 1979), 177. Quoted in Halstead, 143.

<sup>23</sup> Marie J. Counter, 'The role of stereotypes in the relationship between composers and society: an enquiry into the extent to which the composers output is affected by environmental pressures, with particular emphasis on the perspective of women composers' (Dissertation, London University, 1990), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Rhian Samuel, interviewed by the author on 29 June 1993, transcript, p. 18, quoted in Halstead, 145.

stopped composing for forty-six years, only to return at the age of eighty and write a symphony full of dissonance and explosive anger which was performed at the Proms<sup>25</sup>:

I wish I could acclaim [it] a master piece. Unfortunately, Keal's 30-minute extravaganza [. . .] sounded like one of those large-scale aggressive symphonies that were written in their dozens a quarter of a century ago [. . .] It needs a genius to say something new on the subject. As it happens, just such a genius [John Tavener] was present in the evening's second half.<sup>26</sup>

Halstead's analysis:

In one paragraph most of the implicit discriminatory beliefs about female composers are exposed. The terms 'masterpiece' and 'genius' are traditionally loaded descriptions which have most definitely been categorized as male. Keal is criticized for not being 'original' enough and for being only 'one of many' from a fashion long passed. As in the previous review of Elizabeth Maconchy's work, the critic is at pains to imply that whatever the actual merits of the composition, it is not original and therefore cannot really be 'great' music worthy of serious consideration. The comparison of Keal with John Tavener (b. 1944) is not coincidental; the glaring gendered stereotypes of male genius, female non-genius, are vividly counterposed.<sup>27</sup>

In investigating my own personal experience, I realized that I had been studying music in a professional training system for five years before I received information regarding the possibly discriminatory nature of the field. I do not have a wide knowledge of what is happening within all the conservatories in the Netherlands. However, from my experience there seems to be a general lack of information offered within institutions training professional musicians which would reveal such patterns of discrimination due to gender. Perhaps I have been naive or over-enthusiastic, but I have often been rather surprised by the reactions of fellow students (all female) to my enthusiasm over the subject of women composers and women in music. I have faced condescending reactions, like small laughs or smiles seeming (to me) to indicate that my conversation partner understands that I cannot really be serious about the topic of women composers, and that they understand that I am just taking part in a silly, self-indulgent activity. I also face the reaction that this cannot possibly be interesting, because women were not good or interesting composers. The vast and complex documentation of discrimination is impossible to convey in a few sentences, and many students seem to have no background of experience in the history of women in music. I believe an opening up of discussions of gender and the discriminatory nature of Western musical history within, especially the history departments of, but also in composition or pedagogical departments of, conservatories might help all female students to have a clearer understanding of their position as women in music. By examining female role models, women would be able to better understand some problems that what women have faced (i.e. family, pregnancies, discriminatory environments) and have a wider range of tactics for pursuing their own desires within music. I do believe there have been great changes since these quotes (which date mostly around the 1950's), as I will document this shortly at the end of this section. So, the effects of these revolutions are being enjoyed by all of us. However, I am still puzzled and dismayed by the lack of recognition by other women that this change was not (only) enacted by sympathetic male politicians who suddenly experienced profound insights. Rather, it was enacted by the sometimes forceful, always confrontational lifework(s) of many, many women. Diane Relke expressed this phenomenon, this disappearance (often fairly quickly) of major activities by women:

This was brought painfully home to the feminist academics who developed the first women's studies curricula. They began by creating knowledge out of their own experience – as activists for new divorce legislation, equality rights, abortion reform, constitutional change. They also began to investigate the past. What they discovered is that it had all been done before. The massive impact, the enormous centrality of the first wave of the women's movement, the one which, after almost a hundred years of struggle, climaxed in the enfranchising of women across the Western world had sunk with hardly a trace. A whole tradition of knowledge, a century of feminist process, had somehow been reduced to the content of one sentence in the history books of the 'fifties' and 'sixties': "Women got the vote in 1918." Period.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> According to their website now 'The World's Greatest Classical Musical Festival' at the Royal Albert Hall and BBC 3. Keal's work was also recorded in the studio for broadcast. (Last viewed March 18, 2005 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/>)

<sup>26</sup> Alan Blyth, 'Late Developer', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 1989, quoted in Halstead, 204.

<sup>27</sup> Halstead, 204.

<sup>28</sup> Relke, Diana. *Feminist Pedagogy and the Integration of Knowledge: Toward a More Interdisciplinary University* (University of Saskatchewan, 1994), paragraph 20. (Last viewed 27 February, 2005: <http://www.usask.ca/wgst/journals/conf3.htm>)



The quotes mentioned above are of course selected to prove a point. However their popular nature – appearing in well-read newspapers, magazines and respectable musicological works – would suggest that these were wide-spread, common beliefs about women and ways of 'dealing with' the rather unhandy fact that these women were driven to create, were driven to invest in their own creative energies, whatever the cost. This presents a rather troubling, even embarrassing, problem for the writers who wish to cling to established beliefs about women: that their creative drive should be satisfied in the act of bearing children and nurturing their families. Because I find it so poignant, I would like to relate here one more quote (by a female journalist, 1989) about the composer Minna Keal, mentioned earlier:

This birdlike lady – 4ft 11in in her size three shoes and weighing just seven stone – is now 80 [. . .] She is now at the Albert Hall, her face aglow, a tiny figure in a blue trouser suit. [. . .] As a slightly dazed-looking photographer put it at the Proms rehearsal of Minna Keal's symphony [. . .] 'I didn't think little old ladies wrote music like that [. . .]'<sup>29</sup>

This creative energy, bursting out of a petit, old woman, was so distressing (see the quote by Blyth mentioned above, dismissing the symphony) because it completely burst open all previous conceptions of 'little old women', women whose libido surely should have been so dried up that they would not experience the urge to create, certainly not such a massive, public work.

For me, 'libidinal creative energy', does not have to do with the adjectives attached to the music of women, for example, 'light', 'delicate', 'grace', 'forceful', 'crabbed', 'stern' or 'dry'. These are all labels placed upon the creative works of women by outside observers, and reflect the common stereotypes associated with gender (interesting how the word 'dry' can be traced back to Freudian ideas of the frigidity of women, their fixed libido). While these descriptors might be related to the inner process of composing insofar as the composer is interested in how their works will be interpreted by the critical public, I am not so interested in attacking these outside descriptors. I am interested in the inner drive for creativity where what matters is that the artist is as free as possible to express her creativity, whether 'angry', 'explosive', 'intense', 'gentle', 'tender', 'hypnotizing', etc.

What kind of self-reflection do these quotes cause? What kind of action do they suggest? What change do they make in the way I view the world? On the one hand they have made me very curious to hear more works by women composers, to investigate what is available to be heard. I am also more eager to introduce works by women composers to my piano students.<sup>30</sup> This means taking the time to look up women performers, to listen to their music. This means taking the time to find printed works by women composers, to take the risk of buying them and studying them. Because I was curious at the current state of music reviews of women composers, I searched the Web for more modern reviews of performances of women composers. In Appendix 2, I have printed the results of two journal reviews as well as compilations of reviews to be found on the websites of one Canadian classical guitarist and one San Franciscan composer. I have also included extracts from interviews with two prominent American female drummers: Terri Lynne Carrington and Allison Miller.<sup>31</sup> The language is very different from that of the reviews mentioned above, however there are traces of condescension for the 'neglected female composers'.

Finally, I have looked into the Web as a modern source for profiling and promoting women composers. The Web allows for much more independence on the part of composers and musicians. Whoever takes the time (and has the money or expertise), can profile themselves extensively without being dependent on a publisher or circle of music critics. The diversity and quality of sites found was encouraging. Below is a list with different types of sites and one or two actual examples.<sup>32</sup>

1. There are national and international organizations promoting women's activities in music on all levels:

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<sup>29</sup> Eithne Power, 'Life Begins at 80!', *Radio and TV Times*, 21-27 October 1989, 10, quoted in Halstead, 150 and 203.

<sup>30</sup> At the moment I have Four Recital Pieces by Ursula Mamlok that I am eager to try with some of my students (once they can play well enough!). Other works by L. Boulanger, Schonthal, Beach, Clarke, Crawford-Seeger are waiting for me to find the time to study them!

<sup>31</sup> For names of women performers and a look at an all-woman big band, read *Berkeley: Montclair Big Band amplifies talents of female jazz musicians* by Andrew Gilbert, (Special to The Chronicle, Friday, March 4, 2005)

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/03/04/EBGTOBGA2D1.DTL> (last viewed 28 March 2005).

For a short discussion on women instrumentalists on stage in jazz bands, read *Sexism in the cellars* by Sholto Byrnes (The Independent, Online Edition 10 February 2005)

[http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/low\\_res/story.jsp?story=609442&host=5&dir=227](http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/low_res/story.jsp?story=609442&host=5&dir=227) (last viewed 28 March 2005).

<sup>32</sup> All sites last viewed 2 and 3 March, 2005

International Alliance for Women in Music

<http://www.iawm.org/>

Dutch organization promoting women performers and composers (who have now lost their subsidy, See Appendix 2)

<http://www.vrouwenmuziek.nl/>

2. There are WebRings, a group of voluntarily interlinked web sites whose owners registered with the organization:

Women Composers WebRing

<http://f.webring.com/hub?ring=womencomposerswe>

3. There are sites with referenced to women composers created by prominent musicians and/or ensembles:

Diane Ambache, which is also the name of a musical group, writes of women composers

<http://www.ambache.co.uk/women.htm#New>

4. There are personal sites of women composers and their organizations:

Andrea Clearfield, composer and pianist and hostess of a salon in Philadelphia

[http://www.internationalopus.com/Andrea\\_Clearfield/index.html](http://www.internationalopus.com/Andrea_Clearfield/index.html)

Deep Listening, a program of the Pauline Oliveros Foundation

<http://www.deeplisting.org/>

5. There are sites devoted to promoting female participation in pop and jazz music:

The Female Musician

<http://www.femalemusician.com/>

6. There are music labels that specialize in women composers:

Leonarda Productions a/k/a Leonarda Records

<http://www.leonarda.com/>

7. There are music labels that have a section specialized in women composers:

Lorelt, Lontano Records Limited (Women Composers)

<http://cgi.lontano.plus.com/lorelt/cds?page=women>

8. Topics relating specifically to women composers can be found within large online stores:

Search Amazon or for Women Composers

<http://www.amazon.com/>

Although one might make the claim that some of these venues serve to push women into a minority position, outside of the mainstream channel of western art music, the position of minority might provide in the long run some advantages. One scenario of the future in music is that in the process of globalization a few large music producers will take control, and the world will listen to a select number of musicians, filtered through the politics of mass production and subject to the whims of dominant music labels and majority public opinion (although this seems to be turning the topic more toward popular music, the same processes are at work within Western art music and the production of Western art music hero(in)es). In another scenario, cheaper small scale production gives the local musician the possibility of bringing her music to her public, thus breaking down of the power of 'big business'.<sup>33</sup> The reality will probably be a mixture of the two, full of contradictions (such as a small-scale studio using mass-produced, globally uniform recording equipment or a 'big name' going to a small, isolated island to find a certain 'indigenous' sound), with mass production intersecting personalization. Skills in promoting yourself as a musician,

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<sup>33</sup> See Paul Thèberge's 'The Network Studio: Historical and Technological Paths to a New Ideal in Music Making' *Social Studies of Science, Special Issue on Sound Studies: New Technologies and Music*, Ed. K. Bijsterveld and T. Pitch, Vol. 34 No. 5 (Sage Publications: Oct. 2004) 759-782. '[T]he increasing technical quality of the recordings produced in such modest facilities and the speed with which low-cost recording equipment has been diffused throughout the world, have also created the conditions for a different kind of 'technoscape' – one that encourages largely independent, autonomous forms of local production rather than necessarily contributing to the dominant networks of power described by Castells (2000). This has become as true in the industrialized nations, where independent music production (now aided by alternative distribution networks such as the Internet) has continued to proliferate, as it is in many underdeveloped nations. Indeed, in what may seem the most unlikely places in the world – from Africa to Oceania, Asia to Latin America – individual musicians are using low-cost studio technologies to cut and paste the sounds of global pop with local musics, thus living out the contradictions of 'global' and 'local', of culture and identity in a (super)-modern world on their own terms.' 773-774

making your own musical partnerships, defining your own sound and having the capacity to record yourself independently should prove an advantage in this environment.<sup>34</sup>

I am not suggesting that this type of small-scale music production and promotion automatically means that music practices will become more inclusive, more available for all peoples. Individual opportunities are influenced by a number of factors of which gender is only one. Race, social class, education levels of the parents may play a stronger role than gender in whether or not you have the financial and technical means of producing your own music. I do believe, as stated in my sixth point (a libidinal pedagogy is one that is critically attentive to its own exclusionary nature), that each music teacher should spend some time considering possibilities of expanding her contacts to people outside of her 'normal circle'.<sup>35</sup> I personally hope to involve myself in the movement toward more locally-produced music – toward a culture of living local music environment in which participants are equipped to improvise and perform 'their own' music in 'their own' contexts. However, I do not want to place this in opposition to globalization. I am aware that I am taking part in a trend which has its roots in globalization and the distribution of mass-produced tools that make small-scale production possible. Not to mention that 'their own' music could be a wonderfully eclectic mixture of all sorts of musics, enjoyed thanks to global communication methods. Taking part in music will always be both local and global. Perhaps I could better say that I am interested in seeing how I can help students harvest the various musical tools they are interested in and use them for their own purposes. In connecting these ideas to gender, I feel that when there are so many opportunities opening up for musicians to take advantage of modern communication means to make fruitful connections with other musicians, to create an online profile and to produce music, women musicians should take advantage of these situations as an opening unlike any other provided for us in the last millennia.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> According to Jacques Attali, amateur composition is reconciliation between work and play, creating pleasure outside of the economics of exchange. See 'Teaching a Supplement' in the online dissertation *Deconstruction in Music* by Marcel Cobussen [http://www.cobussen.com/proefschrift/600\\_education/650\\_education\\_from\\_modernism\\_to\\_postmodernism/652\\_teaching\\_a\\_supplement/teaching\\_a\\_supplement.html](http://www.cobussen.com/proefschrift/600_education/650_education_from_modernism_to_postmodernism/652_teaching_a_supplement/teaching_a_supplement.html) (Last viewed 28 March 2005).

<sup>35</sup> For example, I live in a pre-dominantly white neighborhood. Thus my students are predominantly white, middle-class, Dutch students. Do I keep looking outside of this circle, considering volunteering to give music lessons at a more multicultural school, for example?

<sup>36</sup> The amount of cybercommunities set up by women, and the influence of women in (pop) culture productions, suggests that many women are taking advantage of the opportunities. Amber Kinser. *Negotiating Spaces For/Through Third-Wave Feminism* in *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Indiana University Press, 2004) 124-153. Online version, Paragraph 31.

## 4. Musical (con)texts

### 5. The String Quartet

[. . .] Why fidget? Why so anxious about the sit of cloaks; and gloves—whether to button or unbutton? Then watch that elderly face against the dark canvas, a moment ago urbane and flushed; now taciturn and sad, as if in shadow. Was it the sound of the second violin tuning in the ante-room? Here they come; four black figures, carrying instruments, and seat themselves facing the white squares under the downpour of light; rest the tips of their bows on the music stand; with a simultaneous movement lift them; lightly poise them, and, looking across at the player opposite, the first violin counts one, two, three——

Flourish, spring, burgeon, burst! The pear tree on the top of the mountain. Fountains jet; drops descend. But the waters of the Rhone flow swift and deep, race under the arches, and sweep the trailing water leaves, washing shadows over the silver fish, the spotted fish rushed down by the swift waters, now swept into an eddy where—it's difficult this—conglomeration of fish all in a pool; leaping, splashing, scraping sharp fins; and such a boil of current that the yellow pebbles are churned round and round, round and round—free now, rushing downwards, or even somehow ascending in exquisite spirals into the air; curled like thin shavings from under a plane; up and up.... How lovely goodness is in those who, stepping lightly, go smiling through the world! Also in jolly old fishwives, squatted under arches, oh scene old women, how deeply they laugh and shake and rollick, when they walk, from side to side, hum, hah!

“That's an early Mozart, of course——”

“But the tune, like all his tunes, makes one despair—I mean hope. What do I mean? That's the worst of music! I want to dance, laugh, eat pink cakes, yellow cakes, drink thin, sharp wine. Or an indecent story, now—I could relish that. The older one grows the more one likes indecency. Hall, hah! I'm laughing. What at? You said nothing, nor did the old gentleman opposite.... But suppose—suppose—Hush!”

The melancholy river bears us on. When the moon comes through the trailing willow boughs, I see your face, I hear your voice and the bird singing as we pass the osier bed. What are you whispering? Sorrow, sorrow. Joy, joy. Woven together, like reeds in moonlight. Woven together, inextricably commingled, bound in pain and strewn in sorrow—crash! [. . .]

Virginia Woolf  
*Monday or Tuesday. 1921.*

This section is both about musical texts as well as the contexts which serve to provide music with part of its meaning. Western society has for centuries depended on the exchange and the relative stability of (the dominant) meanings of printed texts. The ability to understand and manipulate texts, to produce dominant texts is intrinsically linked to power relations.<sup>1</sup> In the Western art music tradition, musical literacy has always been a necessity for the professional performing and/or composing musician. Music, on the other hand, has also always been a bit suspect due to what Ian Cross, in the field of evolutionary musicology, Faculty of Music at Cambridge, terms its 'transposable aboutness', its relative inability (when compared with words) to produce stable meanings. Examining again some pictorial texts offered in *The Sight of Sound* by Richard Leppert, I would like to consider a few examples of the ways in which societal powers have tried to control the 'aboutness' of music as well as the way notation might be read as a controlling factor within society. Using insights from John Sloboda's, 'The musical mind in context: culture and biology'<sup>2</sup> I examine some differences between the music of a musically literate and a musically illiterate

<sup>1</sup> Literacy is one of the key components of a democracy. Illiterate peoples are assumed to have fewer political tools and less chance for economic growth.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Musical Mind: The cognitive psychology of music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 239-268.

society and the advantages and losses attached to a dominant reliance on text and notation. Finally, I extrapolate ideas regarding the evolutionary 'usefulness' of music in the article by Ian Cross 'Music, Cognition, Culture, and Evolution'<sup>3</sup>. The 'transposable aboutness' of music may be of fundamental importance to the way music functions as a tool in human interaction, serving as a playspace where a single musical activity can have different meanings for each of the participants. Although Cross' article is not specifically about notated or improvised music, what he touches upon is more in the direction of primary musical instincts (protomusic), which I relate more to improvised music. I notice a searching in myself here. Certain ideas have remained buzzing in my head. If I put it into words, I am looking for another type of music making, one that is less reliant on notated musical texts, one that is more actual, one that puts me and my students more in touch with ourselves, our bodies, our inner ears. When we read the musical texts of another, we may be deeply inspired, touched, exalted. However, it remains that when we rely on notation, we are experiencing the music channeled through another body, through another inner ear. All the ideas here lead me to understand better my own frustrations with the domination of notated musical texts. These ideas also push me to investigate the phenomenon of the 'piano recital', to look at the function of these recitals and to consider other performance contexts that may produce a more holistic, fulfilling experience for the performers (including the teacher) as well as the public.

I would like to turn back to the painting mentioned in the section 'Music as Feminine' by the Dutch painter Molenaer (See Appendix 1)<sup>4</sup> as an opening for a discussion of musical text and control. Leppert proposes that the three musicians in the middle are most likely not real musicians ('functionally nonpersons')<sup>5</sup>, but have an allegorical or metaphorical function. He says of the female musician occupying the center of the painting:

Nevertheless, as the man standing behind her and watering down his wine most clearly indicates, it is her responsibility to maintain *mesure*. The woman concentrates dutifully on her partbook – literally a text, the *word*, so to speak, by which her metaphorical (musical, temperate) duties are *prescribed*. Her duty is to control her sexual drives, which are visually acknowledged and even foregrounded. Word and image, in other words, conspire to define her duties, just as the terrace beneath her feet delineates a black and white regularity, a predictability.<sup>6</sup>

The sound that the musicians make here, if it is to distinguish them from the fighting peasants on the left, must be controlled. It must aspire to something higher, more disciplined. Who keeps the measure? The woman. She first must control herself, her own passions, in order to keep the other musicians entranced by her 'virtue'. To what does she look, where does she fix her eyes? What object manages to symbolically control the woman, a heroic feat? A book, a musical text. What does this text in turn symbolize? Powers of church, of the aristocracy to script society, to fix meaning, even musical meaning, to channel the desires and energies of the people, giving them some degree of stability and safety in return.

In his picture, the partbook occupies the exact center of the composition because by the seventeenth century the life that art music ideally replicated was itself a "scored" experience, not an "improvisatory" one. The woman holding the partbook, [. . .] encompasses in her body – torn between "reason" and desire – both the reward promised for observing this order and the cost of gaining it: society, constructed according to a set of rules not wholly, or even particularly, in her interest.<sup>7</sup>

The way she has her eyes fixed on the music also reminds me of the many scenes of music lessons in which both teacher and student are gazing intently at the sheet music.

Musical instruments were often painted with scenes or texts that worked to concretize, tame or contextualize the illusive meanings of the music they produced. "The writing on these instruments is the sign of anxiety about unanchored meaning in a culture given, even in early modernity, to spasms of increasing classification and the felt need to control every semiotic parameter, including the sonic."<sup>8</sup> In relation to keyboard instruments, Leppert says, "I want to establish that domestic keyboard instruments generally – the virginals, harpsichords, and fortepianos that precede the Victorian piano – were, from

<sup>3</sup> In Robert Zatorre and Isabelle Peretz (eds.), *The Biological Foundations of Music*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, (Vol. 930, June 2001) 28-42.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Miense Molenaer, *A Music Party (Allegory of Fidelity in Marriage)* (1633), oil on canvas, Leppert p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Leppert, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 120

their earliest histories, subject to the gaze, richly discursive 'texts' to be *read*."<sup>9</sup> What Leppert points out through his analysis of paintings and inscriptions, both on instruments as well as in paintings where music is depicted, is that there was a need to use pictorial and written text to fixate the meaning of music. The painting or words on the instrument would provide a more solid background of meaning that would control or curb the instability of musical meaning.<sup>10</sup> Thus, layers of representation were built around musical practice in order to create a more stable musical context and (re)establish gender distinctions among the people who played, listened to and looked at the instruments.

One example is an Italian virginal (I assume from the mid to late 17th century) that has the inscription "Io da le piaghe mie forma ricevo"<sup>11</sup> (I receive form from the blows [I receive]). Leppert says 'In this instance the virginal, anthropomorphized as Woman, is made woman by the violence imposed on her. Music is posited as harmony, but harmony is produced by a beating. Aestheticized as music, Woman's very being is articulated as a deferential masochism in the face of sadistic revenge.'<sup>12</sup> On one hand, I do not think this idea of objects becoming beautiful due to the hard (violent) work enacted on them can be restricted to being a male concept. Women were also busy pounding dough, grinding grain, piercing cloth, and the woman or man behind the virginal would probably have both been just as pleased to 'beat the music' into obedience, in the same way that they 'formed' children who were disciplined, compliant, 'harmonious' members of society. If one modernizes the meaning of this inscription, the object is understood to work deeply on the subject, to mold and change her as well.<sup>13</sup> The woman who beats the virginal/music into submission is also enacting a beating upon herself. Both she and the instrument are involved in a mutual disciplining of each other, a disciplining encouraged by society. Once again, experimentation and self-expression would not have been stimulated. And this is certainly still a current idea – the musician must submit herself to the instrument, submit herself to the music, submit herself to the regimes of the greatest musical texts in order to achieve the highest levels of performance.

Another example is a virginal by Gabriell Townsend, (1641) with a painting depicting Orpheus taming the animals with his lute. When music is set against the lid, the painting of Orpheus is covered by the musical text, and the woman on the right hand side, who was looking back at Orpheus, now looks back at the sheet music, providing a reminder that artistic creativity is the prerogative of men.

The thoroughness of male dominion is such that the arts themselves are fully incorporated; the woman virginalist is left to perform what men have written out for her. [. . .] Thus, the early history of musical notation, closely tied to the political desire to codify, to establish "universal" norms in the medieval church, must be understood in light of the darker histories the practice embeds. The relation between musical notation and surveillance is closer than the history of aesthetics has preferred to consider. To express this matter still more scandalously, musical notation was developed to give people orders to follow. That indisputably great music is tied to the long history of notation does not lessen the social price of this accomplishment, which is not inconsiderable.<sup>14</sup>

What is the 'social price of this accomplishment' that Leppert refers to? What have we relinquished by focusing so much on the 'great' composers, by gradually learning to improvise less and less within the Western art music tradition? How the piano pedagogue answers these questions will certainly affect how she approaches her instrument, the repertoire she offers, the skills she teaches. What function should amateur music-making play in our society? Should students only be exposed to the finest, the highest quality works that our heritage can offer? Should students be encouraged more to experiment with the goal of individual expression? If more people had been encouraged to compose rather than reproduce in the history of Western music, would there have been considerably more variety in the quality music that we now cherish? Is this the 'social price', a reduced number of 'masterpieces'? Or is the 'social price' a music that is objectified, placed outside of quotidian practice, musicians incapable of creating their own musical texts, so that when we gather for an event, we are not equipped, we would not think of making the music ourselves?

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<sup>9</sup> Leppert, 119.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Cross calls this music's 'polysemic nature, its multiple potential meanings'. I will discuss this more in this section.

<sup>11</sup> McGeary, "Harpichord Mottoes," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 7 (1981) p. 23, motto no. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Leppert, 122-123.

<sup>13</sup> One example of research investigating how music acts on us is: 'The Brain That Plays Music and Is Changed by It' by Alvaro Pascual-Leone in *The Biological Foundations of Music, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 930, June 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Leppert, 133.

John Sloboda, in 'The musical mind in context: culture and biology'<sup>15</sup> suggests that notation 'enables the construction of complex and lengthy forms where relationships spanning many hundreds of notes are planned in detail. It also enables the use of devices such as inversion or retrogression, and strict counterpoint.'<sup>16</sup> He says further: 'In general the forms of oral music do not match those of literate music in 'architectural' complexity [. . .] Rather, we find a preponderance of 'chain' structures where the same kind of short element is repeated, with variations, over and over again [. . .] such complexity tends to be due to elaborations *within* sections rather than relations *between* sections.'<sup>17</sup> Oral music has complexity through elaboration, rhythmic variations or shifting polyrhythms (to name a few techniques), however it does not display the relationships (inversion or retrogression, augmentation, diminution, etc.) which seem to suggest that music is a sort of geometry, which you can turn upside-down, multiply or divide. As I understand it, these 'mathematics' with music might produce *aurally* less satisfying results (i.e. they result in complexities which make the lines of the music less accessible), but which can be greatly appreciated when the musical text is viewed and understood *visually*. This reminds me of the Concerto for nine Instruments Op. 24 by Webern which I played a few years ago. None of the students (including me) were able to grasp the structural sense of the music by ear and were reliant on the teacher to painstakingly point out the musical building blocks and their connections, which needed to be verified by examining the musical text, and only afterwards through listening to verify this primarily textual understanding.

These thoughts provide interesting insights into what kind of music it makes sense to offer to music students. If, due to an over-dependence on the visual (notated music), ears are not trained to identify, remember or make connections between simple melodies, does it make any sense to try to teach longer forms to students who can read music, but cannot make the aural connections<sup>18</sup>? Classical music at its very worst is a stream of unrelated musical ideas with no controlling ear guiding the structure to give it coherency and form.<sup>19</sup> So, why don't we consider also developing a more improvisatory musical language for children, less interested in developing their eyes and more interested in building their ears by stepping away from the immediate 'goal' of classical music and turning toward the more natural building blocks: parent-child sound and dance interactions, rhythmic and melodic repetition with variation, and improvisation? (See: 'Listen, listen, listen: opening space with improvisation'.)

I find it a useful exercise to try to consider the original functions of music, trying to go back to the idea of why we humans might possibly be programmed to make music from a very early age. Although this will always be a speculative action, I believe it can give us direction in our musical choices, make the way we offer music more relevant. Although you may rightly offer the critique that this is another culturally-based way of thinking (i.e. 'lets go back to the primordial music'), I would like to offer one 'evolutionary-based' explanation of music that has influenced me. In an article by Ian Cross, 'Music, Cognition, Culture, and Evolution'<sup>20</sup>, he advocates some definitions of music in which he tries to reconcile the 'culturally

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<sup>15</sup> From *The Musical Mind: The cognitive psychology of music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 239-268.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 246, 247. He also makes clear, and I agree, that notation is only one influence on form, and other societies with notation develop different forms than that we come across in our Western art music tradition.

<sup>18</sup> The tradition of learning to play the piano starting from the vantage point of note-reading (beginning with whole notes on C, whittling the length down to eighth notes while gradually broadening the amount of different tones) is a process that has no relation to what children experience as the music they have been hearing, singing and dancing to from their first weeks of life. The over-dependence on visual input has a tendency to reduce or cancel altogether the dependence on the ears, with perhaps an exception being children who already have the habit of listening carefully to music and to themselves. What still seems to be forgotten in prevalent forms of current music tuition is that music is an aural activity, with the development of acute listening skills and auditory memory as top priority. In the beginning, the visual fixation on notes can form a barrier interfering with the direct relation of motor skills to sound production. The problem that is raised of when and how you might introduce note-reading has been well-discussed and documented in the last five years of PIPO research at the Conservatory in the Hague. Starting from the assumption that music is an aural activity, I consider it important to start with music that does not exceed that which a child can process and remember aurally. Later, notation may expand the memory of a student. However I believe that if a child wants to have a more satisfying relation with music, one that is not reliant on blind faith in the music notation they have before their nose, their ears and musical memory need to be developed enough for them to be able to remember melodies, coordinate the two hands independent from notation, and manipulate the musical material they are comfortable with.

<sup>19</sup> The tools to provide this music with form, energy and 'meaning' (the power to say *something*) are also a series of interpretive conventions which are open to challenge. Delay of resolution in order to build up tension, rubato being brought back into more strict rhythms, the presentation of 'opposing' themes which then clearly need to come into conflict with each other and reach some sort of resolution. These are not 'neutral' performance practices, but a libidinal language that centers historically around sexual tension, conflict and resolution through the reinstatement of a dominant, or at least intact even if severely wounded, theme. See McClary, *Feminine Endings*.

<sup>20</sup> In Robert Zatorre and Isabelle Peretz (eds.), *The Biological Foundations of Music, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, (Vol. 930, June 2001) 28-42.

specific' character versus the 'universal' nature of music; while music plays extremely different cultural roles, the widely divergent types of music would (whether they are appreciated or not) be recognized *as music* by the majority of humans. Many of the views promoted regarding the evolutionary benefits of music claim that music as we know it is a mental exercise 'gone wild' which has no direct adaptive value for the species.<sup>21</sup> However, anyone who has seen how eager children are to sing and how this occurs parallel to the development of language, might think that the two are evolutionary equals. Creating a link back to the *jouissance* mentioned in the beginning of the paper, I would like to present the following description of the work of Ellen Dissanayake<sup>22</sup>, internationally recognized in the fields of bio-musicology, developmental and evolutionary psychology, discussing music's possible function in the evolutionary process.

Dissanayake sees the mature expression of music in human culture as intimately linked to the characteristics of mother-infant interaction. She views music [. . .] as "multimodal or multimedia activity of temporally patterned movements" that has "the capacity to coordinate the emotions of participants and thus promote conjoinment." She suggests that features of the musicality of mother-infant interaction might lay the foundations for a "grammar of the emotions" that can be expressed in mature musical (and other artistic) activities. For the developing child, the musical characteristics of mother-infant interaction are of critical importance in the acquisition of capacities for "social regulation and emotional bonding;" these characteristics also provide the elements in the "musical play" of later childhood that will equip the adult with the predisposition and capacity to engage in the structured interactions of ceremony and ritual as well as in specifically musical behaviors. However, other significant and functional roles have been proposed for music in individual development and in the development of capacities for social interaction; music can be both a consequence-free means of exploring social interaction and a "playspace" for rehearsing processes that may be necessary to achieve cognitive flexibility.<sup>23</sup>

I have for a while been making a shift in location as teacher in the piano lesson. Consider the teacher sitting away from the piano, listening. The teacher takes on the role of the observer, the clinical diagnostician. The teacher says 'play your homework', and listens critically, then gives advice. Sometimes she will play a passage herself to highlight the words she is saying. While this may work to some extent at conservatory level, I have come to realize that it is completely ineffective when dealing with children. Sitting at a critical distance does not create the social interaction, the 'playspace' that children need. Constant musical dialogue, constant playing with, musical repeatings are necessary. I saw a short clip on children's television<sup>24</sup> one morning in which a tall man and a small boy were standing behind nearly identical tall cylindrical drums. The man would play something and the boy would play it back. The man would play again, and the boy would play it back. This was going on and on, and slowly you could hear the sharpening of what the boy was playing. Slowly it was taking shape, resembling more and more the rhythm and sound of what his model drummer was playing, in the way that words take more and more recognizable shape in the language development of children. This was a big lesson for me<sup>25</sup>. I have recently acquired a long piano bench where at least three of us can sit comfortably. I am no longer sitting mainly in my chair, directing from a distance. I spend a large part of the lesson time playing together with my students. We work on the language of music together, and it helps to solve many of the communication problems that teachers of music can battle when trying to express actions into words. A

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<sup>21</sup> Cross: 'Indeed when music has been viewed from an evolutionary perspective, it has often been viewed as contingent, at best exaptive, a view most clearly exemplified by Steven Pinker and endorsed by others such as Barrow and Sperber. For Pinker, music is, famously "auditory cheesecake;" while music in his view is bound to the domains of language, auditory scene analysis, habitat selection, emotion, and motor control, it does no more than exploit the capacities that have evolved to subservise each of these areas. Music is thus "exaptive," an evolutionary by-product of the emergence of other capacities that have direct adaptive value. [. . .] Sperber goes furthest in condemning music as an evolutionary "parasite," though he explicitly disavows serious intent in formulating that view. Nevertheless, he does suggest that music is a human activity that arose to exploit parasitically the operation of a cognitive capacity to "process complex sound patterns discriminable by pitch variation and rhythm" that was originally functional in primitive human communication but that fell into disuse with the emergence of the modern vocal tract and the finer shades of differentiation in sound pattern that it afforded.' Cross, 35.

<sup>22</sup> Author of the books *What is Art For?* and *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why*. I have unfortunately at the time of writing this paper, not read her original works.

<sup>23</sup> Cross, 37. Taken from Ellen Dissanayake's 'Antecedents of the temporal arts in early mother-infant interactions' in *The Origins of Music*. Wallin, Merker & Brown, Eds. (MIT Press. Cambridge, MA, 2000). 390.

<sup>24</sup> Teleac, SchoolTV. The date was somewhere early in 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it was also a cultural lesson, as the man and the boy looked African and the setting did not seem to be in Europe, although I do not know in what country the video was made.



colleague of mine is successful in teaching silent (not talking) piano lessons in which the music played back and forth forms the dialogue. I do believe there is a time when we can show respect for the student by sitting back and attentively listening. However in the process of learning, the student seems to react more positively to the give and take which more resembles parent-infant interaction.

Music's significance can change according to the context in which it is played. The same group of notes or rhythms may be used for a variety of purposes in a variety of contexts. Cross uses the term 'polysemic' to describe this characteristic of music. 'In other words, music has the capacity to lack consensual reference; it can be about something, but its aboutness can vary from context to context and even within context.'<sup>26</sup> Cross goes on to further link the polysemic nature of music to the function music can fulfill in allowing certain aspects of social interaction to be tested, thus 'justifying' music's omnipresence in every culture. "For each child in a group ostensibly involved in a cooperative musical activity, that musical activity can mean something different, yet the singularity of the collective musical activity is not threatened by the existence of multiple simultaneous and potentially conflicting meanings. Music provides for a child a medium for the gestation of a capacity for social interaction, a risk-free space for the exploration of social behavior that can sustain otherwise potentially risky action and transaction."<sup>27</sup> The type of musical activity which Cross is referring to here, is a participatory musical activity, one in which all participants have a role. This 'risk-free space', I believe is not one in which half of the group are passively sitting, analyzing and critiquing the other half and the music they are making. The children are for the most part losing themselves in the musical activity and reacting in a way that releases actual emotions, however at the same time feeling safe to do so within the boundaries of the musical activity.

Cross goes on to attach the 'transposable aboutness' of music, which he links to this metaphorical stance and the development of specifically human cognitive capacities: music as an environment which explores metaphor, and metaphor being a defining element of the cognitive flexibility of our species.

It is conceivable that music's "transposable aboutness" is exploited in infancy and childhood as a means of forming connections and interrelations between different domains of infant and childhood competence such as the social, biological, and mechanical. To give a crude example: the arc of a ball thrown through the air, the prosodic contour of a comforting utterance, the trajectory of a swallow as it hawks and insect, the pendular ballistics of a limb swung in purposive movement, might, for a child, each underlie the significances of a single musical phrase or protomusical behavior on different occasions. Indeed, these heterogeneous incidents may be bound together simultaneously in the significance of that phrase or behavior, the music thus exhibiting what I have called elsewhere a "floating intentionality." The floating intentionality of the music can provide for the child a space within which she can explore the possible bindings of these multidomain representations. Hence one and the same musical activity might, at one and the same time, be about the trajectory of a body in space, the dynamic emergence or signification of an affective state, the achievement of a goal and the unfolding of an embodied perspective. All these "aboutnesses" exist not in respect of objects but events, ongoing structures in time, and music or protomusical behaviors afford the opportunity to explore the cross-domain mappings that the representation of temporal sequences of object-states as events makes available.

In this view, music, or protomusical behaviors, subserve a *metaphorical* domain or perhaps more appropriately, underpin a metaphorical stance, acting to create and to maintain the cognitive flexibility that marks off humans from all other species. It could be that the emergence of protomusical behaviors and their cultural realization as music (and, for the matter, dance) might themselves have been crucial in precipitating the emergence of the cognitive flexibility that marks the appearance of *Homo sapiens*.<sup>28</sup>

Besides providing me, as a music teacher, with the justification that my job is extremely important in maintaining the 'cognitive flexibility' of my species, I very much appreciate how these quotes change the emphasis from music as mode for displaying competence within a culturally-appreciated domain, toward an emphasis on music as underlying, as well as helping to develop, certain motor-skills and the cognitive development which helps us to function more optimally (i.e. more like an advanced *Homo sapiens*). Although these quotes refer to the development of very young children, I think it is important to turn back

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<sup>26</sup> Cross, 32,

<sup>27</sup> Cross, 37-38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

to these foundations of musical development in order to question the premises of how I teach music. I wonder if most children experience piano lesson and piano recital environments as a 'consequence-free means of exploring social interaction', a 'risk-free space' and a 'playspace'. Do I place music in a social context or encourage individualistic growth? Should I as a music teacher try to contextualize the shifting meanings of music? What kind of contexts, if any, do I choose to give to the performance of music<sup>29</sup>?

Let us now consider the typical piano recital, the space in which the musical activity of piano students is shared and appreciated. In the typical piano recital, children of varying ages and abilities play a string of longer or shorter pieces (usually arranged from the simplest to most difficult) with various levels of self-awareness and nervousness that accompanies playing before a group of adults and friends. The audience are expected to sit, remaining quiet and passive observers and listeners. What are the advantages of this situation? On the one hand, children are confronted with the thought that many parents and peers will be listening to them, which causes a flurry of disciplined piano study and noticeably improved performance results. Children get to hear wider repertoire and in some cases hear others playing the same music they have been busy with. Children can experience the pride that comes with accomplishing a difficult task, managing the nerves and/or keeping going despite mistakes. In fact, the piano recital might be considered a ritual, a ritual in which musical development is given a place to be celebrated.

On the other hand, what does that traditional model communicate to children about what is important in music making? I have noticed that children preparing for their first recital often try to figure out what the expectations are. They know that family and friends will be coming. They ask questions such as "it is not so bad if you make a few mistakes, right?", which clues me into the fact that they have probably already been talking about their fears with their parents. What does the context of the active performer and the passive audience convey? On the one hand, that the music they are making is worth being listened to with full attention. But, that full attention on the music puts extra weight on the perfection of the music. In a sense, the music is naked, and both the child and their music are quite exposed. There is a large amount of pressure not to make mistakes.

What I have instinctively done to help the student with the nakedness of the music is to ask the performer to create a story around the music. A couple of times we have had a theme for a whole recital with a story connecting the pieces (created in part by my students and in part by me.) The music is weaved together, the music thus becoming one dimension, diffusing the pressure. Other moments I have created metaphors. A song about a buffalo is played three times in three different places, with a story about the buffalo family. Seeing as children are coming from a background in which song goes with action and none of the elements within their fantasy play world are separated<sup>30</sup>, I find it more natural to put music back into a

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<sup>29</sup> I would like to briefly touch upon the creation of contexts by and for women in relation to music. The trend of the last century (perhaps especially strong in America) for women to be relocated according to the changing work opportunities of their partner, to be isolated within the home taking care of the nuclear family, has made it more difficult for women to develop long-lasting, culturally rich connections. (See, for example Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence', in *Blood, bread and poetry* (1994). Women have a long history and are still active in providing music within certain (ritualistic) contexts, such as birth, marriage, death. The book by Sophie Drinker, *Music & Women*, published in 1948, creates a vivid picture of goddess worship and rituals in which women formed the spiritual authority and guidance. (A more modern work is Kimberly Marshall, ed. *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions*. (1993.)) Although her work might be challenged for its sometimes loose scholarship, it does reveal several documented traditions of women leading musical rites as well as expose the reversal of this practice and a stripping away of the spiritual authority of women. Because death was seen as a passage from this life into another, it was also women's duty and privilege to wait at the funeral, in order to expedite the 'birth' into the afterlife. Only later did the 'lament' become appropriated by men as a replacement for the traditional role of the females at funerals. In his discussion of the music of Diamanda Galás, whose work reflects her intense contact with Maniot lament in the Greek tradition, Schwarz paraphrases the work of Holst-Warhaft (*Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*. (1992.): "as women's roles in rites of mourning were being restricted in Athens, Delphi, and Keos from the sixth to the fifth century B.C., the funeral elegy and tragedy emerged as male-dominated forms of literature." There is a long tradition of women's musical practice of providing music within community contexts, musics that were expressions of spiritual authority, which could channel the energies of groups in a powerful way, however these practices have been displaced or repressed in the history of Western music. For an example, look at the history of regulations within the Catholic church, desperately trying to prevent women from making music (Bowers, 'The emergence of women composers in Italy 1566-1700' in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150-1950* (1986).

<sup>30</sup> In the introduction to his book *Sound and Silence: Classroom Projects in Creative Music* by John Paynter (Cambridge, at the University Press, 1970), he reflects on the tragedy that children who have experienced the connections of words, action, visual symbols and music as a whole are suddenly required at the age of five to put them into separate categories. He says, 'As teachers we must try to see our subject, not as collections of highly-developed disciplines, but rather as areas of experience which embody some of the most fundamental human reactions to life.', 3-4.

context in which it is one element of many. Some criticisms may be that I or the child are making the metaphor explicit. Why not let the audience come up with their own story, or just hear the same piece played in three different places? Why does the teacher need to control the 'transposable aboutness' of music? Is this not what I was critiquing in the beginning of this section?

I am indeed walking a fine line here. My relationship with music, which influences how I teach, is bound up with musical intent. Especially when beginning with very small pieces, limited skills, I am constantly creating musical 'scenes' for my students, or asking them to create such scenes. Perhaps you could say that I would like to develop musical fantasies, where children hear worlds within a piece of music. This extra-musical information may be superfluous, however it does in my opinion change the way a piece is played. One good example is a piece called 'Storm' (Listen to CD 'S plays Storm'). After a week of practice with this piece, the child usually comes in and plays it rhythmically correct but an insensitive touch. I then have the choice to ask them to play it very lightly, or I can create a scene in which they are in bed in the middle of the night, awake because it has been storming. The storm has just drifted by, and they hear the silence, the deep, deep silence. Usually, with this intent, the child plays the piece with just the 'right' touch, meaning one that conveys for them the intent of the piece, usually convincing for the listener. If the child cannot play it in a way that communicates this intent, then we look at the physical reasons for this; intent first, then technique to convey this intent. In the recital situation, by choosing to say 'listen to the three different skaters in this winter piece' rather than saying 'listen to the three types of accompaniment for this piece', I am choosing to create a scene in the minds of the audience rather than to direct them to a technical skill. By choosing to say something at all, I *am* trying to direct the listening of the audience, to give them the expectation that they will hear something (is it inside or outside of?) the music, and to let the performer know that a certain effect can be aimed for. Perhaps a better option, one that is less limiting, is to ask the audience to listen carefully and discover for themselves what they have heard in the music. In this way the audience will become involved, meeting the music half-way. This play of intent and reception of intent is constantly going on when both performer and listener are engaged with the music that is being played. Creating different situations where you can discuss intent and reception of music can create ever deepening understanding in the student of the performing process, ever widening perceptions of how music is experienced by different people, and the ability to play with intent. For me, intent is part of the magic of music-making, and playing with intent should give the performer more autonomy.

What is perhaps not considered creatively enough is that when a teacher creates a piano recital, she is assuming her power to create a magical context in which the music that the children have worked on will be played. She may also choose to relinquish this power, giving it with more or less guidance into the hands of the children, or use traditional models without much thought. One idea that might give greater coherency to the piano recital, that would put the music in a multi-sensual play environment, and that could deepen their experience with musical intent, is to model the production of recitals more after the production process that the director of a musical sets into action. First, the participants are aware that they are all going to be part of one show. After they have agreed upon the overall story-line and their individual roles, they are then left to work on their own part. In the end, the parts are put back together to create a whole again, and the performers are left with a feeling of building something together, of creating a musical event. Plus the performers, if given greater and greater autonomy, would build skills not only in the area of music making but also in organization, as well as 'saying something' both with performance content as well as performance context.

One could carry this idea much further, involving students of other instruments and creating a real multi-media musical drama. The teacher would need to use her full range of creative skills, guiding musical choices, arranging music, coaching ensembles. A protest might be: what does this have to do with developing the finest nuances of piano playing, the correct touch and articulation? I would say that in a particular context which tells a story and which involves other participants, much could be said about not playing too loudly, not playing legato when the idea is that the music is 'on its tiptoes'<sup>31</sup>, and the result would be a greater awareness than when the piano teacher says for the forty-ninth time in the piano lesson, 'but look at the music, there are little dots under the notes' or 'it says *f* the first time and *pp* the second time!'

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<sup>31</sup> This is an example an eight-year old piano student gave when I played some staccato chords.

Another idea might be to construct a whole concert around certain improvisational building blocks which allow for audience participation, directed by the pianists themselves. (More in 'Listen, listen, listen: opening space with improvisation'). And yet another idea might be to let the students create a pre-recorded sound track which would then be combined with live, composed and improvised music. I am not saying that there is not a place for pure, beautiful piano music which focuses more on the sound of the instrument and the skill of the players. What I do think is that this may prove to be an unrealistic goal when operating within a culture of young students playing on less-than-optimal instruments with little understanding of the 'high culture' of piano playing. Piano teachers could take the opportunity to stretch themselves and their talents into all areas of musicality to create memorable musical contexts for students and parents.

Finally, I cannot help but ask myself: outside of the context of the piano recital, when will this music be played? What relationship does the piano recital have with an active musical life? What is the musical future of the students when there are no longer piano recitals? I have recently shocked a couple of piano students by asking them "where would you like to play this piece, or for whom would you like to play this piece?" After looking at me in bewilderment, they answered "for my mom and dad", or "for my grandma." I said "Good! Play it for them!" I wish to pursue this area further, creating the connection for the students between what they do in the lesson and what they could do with that outside, besides practice. Besides piano recitals which tell stories, which have a 'sound track', which generate full audience participation, I would like to hear a musical performance that has a life of its own, rather than being forced into an artificial construct of 'piano recital'.

In her paper 'Early Musical Development of Lester Young, Joe Pass, Charlie Parker and Bill Evans - How they learned to improvise', Kathy Dyson points out several characteristics of the childhood experiences of these four outstanding jazz musicians. The three points that I find relevant here are: having access to informal educational environments in for example, record shops, jam sessions, musician's homes, gigs and so on; participating in jam sessions provided a way of practising and honing performance skills without the usual commercial pressures; learning from mentors and peers within the jazz community.<sup>32</sup> Crucial to the development of young jazz players is that they were exposed to and allowed to take part in a living musical environment. The environment formed a great part of the motivation for as well as providing the (sometimes hard) lessons in what it means to become a jazz musician. I should be careful not to insinuate that this environment was particularly healthy.<sup>33</sup> As Dyson points out, all the musicians suffered from various drug and/or alcohol addictions probably related to the pressure of performing, often all night.<sup>34</sup> What I would like to point out is a block that many private piano teachers come up against: their students do not have access to a thriving, living musical environment outside of the lesson situation. The piano teacher could construct performances to have such a musical impact and require enough levels of participatory preparation that they could to some extent make up for this poverty of our Western culture. However, performance situations outside the supervision of the teacher would be more exciting and would require more independence on the part of the becoming-pianist.<sup>35</sup> Many children take the initiative to perform at school performances. Other podiums could be searched out by the teacher. One of my dreams has been to create a non-profit center where children can make use of rooms with instruments and recording devices to make their own music. It is perhaps a bit naïve to think that children could work without any supervision. However, I deeply agree with the statement by Murray Schafer from *The Rhinoceros in the Classroom*: 'in a class programmed for creativity the teacher must plan for his own extinction.'<sup>36</sup> Going beyond the piano recital, the music teacher should always be pointing her students to contexts outside the music lesson where they can share their music with others and equip them to take part in the musical contexts that they find the most meaningful.

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<sup>32</sup> (Leeds Jazz Conference Paper, April 2004), 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> The environments have also not been traditionally open to women performers in a role apart from lead singer. See Green, 'Women instrumentalists in jazz and popular music', 73-81dJ

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> See 'Teaching a Supplement' in the online dissertation *Deconstruction in Music* by Marcel Cobussen for thoughts on the learning in and out of schools and the 'end' or end-in-itself of taking part in out-of-school music activities.

[http://www.cobussen.com/proefschrift/600\\_education/650\\_education\\_from\\_modernism\\_to\\_postmodernism/652\\_teaching\\_a\\_supplement/teaching\\_a\\_supplement.html](http://www.cobussen.com/proefschrift/600_education/650_education_from_modernism_to_postmodernism/652_teaching_a_supplement/teaching_a_supplement.html) (Last viewed 28 March 2005)

<sup>36</sup> (1975), 12.

# Part Two

## 1. A few handholds on the current situation:

I have been approaching and re-approaching the immediate connection between feminism and music pedagogy many times, approaching from many different angles, reevaluating myself, reevaluating the situation, yet it was difficult to choose a particular 'problem' to 'solve'. What am I looking at? Is it the history of western art music, rooted in Europe, rooted in racism, sexism and 'classism'? Is it trying to determine the gendered relationship children might have with music, a subject that would require vast amounts of carefully collected field-work, which may still not produce answers?<sup>1</sup> Is it questioning and reevaluating what I can offer my own piano/music students considering my uneasy relationship with my own classical music training and my continual love/hate relationship with the domestic(ated) piano? Is it trying to look at my own practice to see where I might discriminate, an impossible task because one cannot create enough distance to provide a clear analysis?

The complexities of the human mind, the deep mystery of what it means to learn and the many facets through which learning, growth, development can reveal itself makes the process of developing a personal pedagogy incredibly complex. Analysis of the brain is becoming more and more possible, however the epistemology behind such analysis is also undergoing serious changes and rethinking. Writings of ten years ago within the field of brain research are now outdated. Models of learning styles are also being systematically re-evaluated.<sup>2</sup> One can quickly get the feeling that there are few certainties relying on past models. How can I see my current situation clearly, see my own current experience, the motions in my field and my interactions with my students in a clear light? This is an impossibility. I do not have the tools and the oversight that will come only in retrospect.

A historical approach such as I have already presented seems much easier. There is much insightful literature about practices of the past, and the past can be more easily analyzed through the contrasting perspectives of the present. Critical historians can reveal the intricacies of past perceptions and representations of gender and relate them to societal movements. Musicologists can find the fissures, the colors, the diversity within the great, impregnable myth of European art music. However, I am seeking to write a paper on (music) pedagogy. Pedagogy should be one of the most contemporary, the most visionary of all disciplines. Pedagogy seeks to inspire, guide, open doors for the next generation of productive, creative human beings. Pedagogy looks forward. Pedagogy must be relevant. And what we want to be so radical, so visionary, can easily seem obvious or be quickly reduced in practice a few sidesteps outside of the norm.

My concern in line with the 'right now' of pedagogical practice is where I fit in at the edge of this musical history where the pillar of the Western classical music tradition is fragmenting into light and planes, is dissolving into digital sounds and merging with so many other sources of music and noise. Which parts can I hold onto, embody, which make me realize both myself as a creative being as well as the bearer of a certain tradition? Here I would like to touch on three diverse areas, political and practical, which have already changed me and my perception of (music) pedagogy, some of which, if inspiring change on the institutional level, might open up areas of further growth and creativity in the field of music pedagogy.

But first, a repeated summary of what for me characterizes libidinal pedagogy. Libidinal pedagogy is:

- invested with love, deep attention and energy
- dynamic, interested in current musical developments and seeking connections between music and other expressive arts
- constantly asking 'what is music?' and opening ears to the sounds all around
- organic, not afraid of mutating, cross-breeding, evolving or cyber-morphing
- working to break down the barriers between music students (becoming-musicians) and the act of creating music

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<sup>1</sup> I am very much in favor of increasing the amount of empirical research on pedagogical practices (avoiding falling into a purely positivistic approach). See Jennifer Gore *Who has the Authority to Speak about Practice and How Does it Influence Educational Inquiry?* (Australia: The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, speech given probably in 1997, see <http://www.aare.edu.au/97pap/gorej305.htm>) She argues that in refusing to systematically observe the phenomena they are trying to understand, philosophers of pedagogy undermine the authority with which they can speak about practice. Thus, due to the speculative nature of pedagogical theories, policies are less likely to be changed.

<sup>2</sup> See LSRC (The Learning and Skills Research Center) reference *Should we be using learning styles? What research has to say to practice*. Co-authors Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall, Kathryn Ecclestone (2004) <http://www.lsda.org.uk/pubs/dbaseout/download.asp?code=1540> (Last viewed 29 March 2005)

- critically attentive to its own exclusionary nature

### **Examining the hierarchy of musical worth: composing, performing, teaching**

Although individual musicians might express it in different ways, there exists a generally accepted hierarchy of musical activity<sup>3</sup>. A composer of music would be the most respected. She has made 'her own' music, has the ability to take the building blocks of sound and shape them to her will. Performing musicians spend hours practicing and rehearsing her music. Audiences gather to listen and appreciate. A performer of music would come in a close second (in the case of very popular performers, becoming more important to the marketing of the music than the composer). She has spent long hours and has developed the ability to present the music through the medium of her instrument, conveying an understanding of what she wants to say with the piece while always giving deference to the composer and to the stylistic context of the music. A teacher of music would also be respected. She has gained the skills to perform on her instrument (although in the case of teachers outside conservatories, most likely outside of the most esteemed circles both in classical and jazz performing circuits), and she has the knowledge of how to give beginning musicians a love of as well as the necessary skills for music making. Although there are many musicians who are any mixture of performer/composer/teacher, I think I am not exaggerating when I say that to produce a swelling of admiration, a musician would more likely introduce herself as a composer or performer, even if teaching took up more of her time. I do not have the tools to deeply examine this hierarchy at this point in time. However, I would like to ask some questions and make some observations.

What I wonder is why the activities are as isolated as much as they are within the current conservatory environment. If we agree that composing requires the deepest thinking about what music is and the deepest intimacy with musical language, then why are more pedagogues not flocking to the composition department? I should make clear here that I am not speaking of searching for prestige or the rank that calling yourself a composer brings. I am speaking of another side of the 'hierarchy'. For me composition (and here I would bring creative improvisation as a related skill) requires a different way of thinking about music and interacting with music than does reproduction of music or the teaching of the reproduction of music. Questions such as 'what is music', 'which sounds would I like to work with', 'how can I give the sounds I choose a form', 'do I want to express something with my music, and if so what?', etc. are all questions which, if considered over a lifetime, would deeply change any musician/pedagogue, giving them musical insights that would strengthen their understanding of musical material and thus how they present it to their students. I realize that not everyone will experience the desire to compose. There are amazing performers who are fulfilled artistically by interpreting and performing the works of others.<sup>4</sup> I think many performers, even if they have no desire to compose, would agree that some of the most exciting (or revealing) moments of their musical life occurred when they performed the work of a living composer whom they appreciate, preparing the piece in conjunction with the composer herself. I do agree that there should be certain requirements for someone to try to attain a degree in composition, and I do realize that the majority of pedagogy students would not match these requirements. Plus, there may be composition courses available to all students, however the skill-levels and time investment required are too high barriers for the music pedagogy student.

I would think, though, that it might be possible and desirable to create courses in composition for instrumentalists as well as music pedagogues, giving them the opportunity to jump into composing in the way that improvisation is currently being offered to all students. (One could also argue correctly that improvisation is a first step in composing.) Another idea might be to team up pedagogy students with a composition student and have them work out a compositional problem together. For my concert, I sought out and worked with a composer, settling on the idea that he would create a piece showing the relationship between notated music and improvisation. Although the result was, of course, different from what I expected, I learned a lot about working with an ensemble, the difficulties of translating a

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<sup>3</sup> This analysis is perhaps most correct within a conservatory of Western music environment, although there is also much criticism (by players) of the worth of student compositions. In the jazz world, for example, it would break down, seeing that the performer is more important, creating new versions of jazz standards that become the new standard of innovation. However, in that sense the performer is also the 'composer'.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to go against the whole premise of this paper. However, I am very happy that there are performers in all traditions who 'preserve' or continually recreate that tradition with great skill and devotion. Again my problem is how to approach teaching the piano to modern children in a way that encourages creativity and thinking expansively about music rather than squashes any creativity entirely.



conceptual idea into a musical realization and making a production work technically (the greatest part was delegated. See Appendix 3 for a brief history of the CME performance). By seeing the process occurring and taking part in the process of setting a brand-new musical work on the stage, the barriers were lowered for me to try it myself in another context. These kinds of skills could be perfectly applied to trying out a new kind of piano (violin, cello, drum, etc.) recital which I spoke about the section 'Musical (con)texts'. In fact, the pedagogy department might be the best place where divisions between composition/performance/teaching could be blurred, creating teachers who are living examples of creative musicians.

### **Feminist pedagogy: gender, race and class**

As a music pedagogy student, I sometimes ask myself. 'Is there such a thing as music pedagogy?' I have the impression that there are many music teachers with very good, pertinent ideas, tips and teaching practices<sup>5</sup> (and this paper adds to this body of eclectic and individualistic music teaching styles), but I have never come across a clear description of what music pedagogy really entails. Is music pedagogy the whole body of widely differing practices of teaching music? How can the term 'music pedagogy' in this sense be used to help us to get a conceptual grasp on how to teach better? And for that matter, what is 'pedagogy'? Is it 'the work of a teacher; the art and science of teaching; instructional methods and strategies' as one website seems to suggest?<sup>6</sup> If so, is there then nothing outside of pedagogy that can serve as guiding principles for pedagogy? Brian Simon<sup>7</sup>, educationist, historian and campaigner for comprehensive education, posed the question in the early 1980's 'Why no pedagogy in England?' and made the observation 'the most striking aspect of current thinking and discussion about education is its eclectic character, reflecting deep confusion of thought, and of aims and purposes, relating to learning and teaching – to pedagogy'.<sup>8</sup> 'Pedagogy' seems to be a collection of practices. 'Good pedagogy' seems to always require a modifier (both grammatically as well as implying a modifying practice). Because I was engaging with feminism(s), at some point in my research I thought, is there such a thing as 'feminist pedagogy' (or more correctly, 'feminist pedagogies')? I typed it in on the web and came across a site<sup>9</sup> which led me to a number of articles available on the subject. These were not published books, but a number of talks, assignments, documentation of study groups, personal statement papers and anecdotal evidence. I came across the many voices (albeit filtered) which internet makes possible to come into contact with. All of the articles applied or examined feminist pedagogy within a university-level setting. At the end of this section, I will briefly examine the relevance for myself as a piano teacher.

Although the topic of whether or not it is possible (or desirable) to create a unified pedagogical approach in any field is outside the bounds of this paper, the articles did give me a grasp of what 'feminist pedagogy' is and how it might be applied and encouraged. Feminist pedagogy is a philosophical approach to teaching which stands to some extent outside of the subject being taught, providing principles which serve to guide various aspects of the teaching practice. Feminist music pedagogy would thus entail certain principles which would guide how music is taught, regardless of the style. Here follows some of the statements found in my search:

From bell hooks' 'Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy':

My favorite teacher in high school was Miss Annie Mae Moore, a short, stout black woman. She had taught my mama and her sisters. [ . . . ] Miss Moore knew that if we were to be fully self-realized, then her work, and the work of all our progressive teachers, was not to teach us solely the knowledge in books, but to teach us an oppositional world view - different from that of our exploiters and oppressors, a world view that would enable us to see ourselves not through the lens of racism or racist stereotypes but one that would enable us to focus clearly and succinctly, to

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<sup>5</sup> One example is Susan Hallam's *Instrumental Teaching: A Practical Guide to Better Teaching and Learning* (Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=&oi=define&q=define:Pedagogy> for an entire list (Last viewed 1 April 2005).

<sup>7</sup> He was also the founding president of the The History of Education Society at Cambridge.

<sup>8</sup> A reprint of the article occurred in 1999 'Why no pedagogy in England?' In J Leach and B Moon (eds) *Learners and Pedagogy*, 34-45 (London: Paul Chapman/Open University). I came across these quotes in the report mentioned above: LSRC (The Learning and Skills Research Center) reference *Should we be using learning styles? What research has to say to practice*. Co-authors Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall, Kathryn Ecclestone (2004), 46.

<sup>9</sup> Created by Penny Welch (July 2000) from the University of Wolverhampton in England. (last viewed 23 March, 2005 <http://pers-www.wlv.ac.uk/~le1810/femped.htm>)



look at ourselves, at the world around us, critically--analytically--to see ourselves first and foremost as striving for wholeness, for unity of heart, mind, body, and spirit.<sup>10</sup>

From Sara Pace's 'Feminist pedagogy and Daedalus Online':

Feminist pedagogy, very generally, is "part of a social movement aimed at challenging and changing the current social order," and the feminist teacher is one who willingly facilitates collaboration and accepts challenges and questions from her students concerning the boundaries of her pedagogy (a feature which is informed by issues of social rights). Feminism in the writing classroom has much the same goal--to destabilize traditional hierarchies of teacher authority by engaging students in collaborative discourse (through writing and discussion), related to current social issues in their own lives.<sup>11</sup>

In 'Using a Feminist Pedagogy as a Male Teacher: The Possibilities of a Partial and Situated Perspective', Steven Schacht discusses his attempts as

"a white, heterosexual male to adopt a feminist pedagogical stance in the various courses I teach. Using a feminist pedagogical approach not only involves inclusively centering the social categories of gender, class, race, and sexual orientation in all classroom discussions, but also recognizing all class participants' experiences and perspectives to be equally necessary in the creation of classroom knowledge. [. . .] By adopting a feminist pedagogy, I have learned that the classroom is a place where knowledge can be actively derived from a multitude of voices. I have also discovered that experientially based classrooms can be settings where new understandings are made possible about the active roles each of us plays in the maintenance of our oppressive society."<sup>12</sup>

From Elizabeth Sayrs' 'Feminist Pedagogy in Graduate Music Classes'

Feminist pedagogy concerns itself with both course process and course content, recognizing that the two are interdependent. Course process includes both the literal classroom climate, as well as the way that knowledge is constructed. Many of you probably know several feminist teaching methods [. . .] these include cooperative learning, the use of examples that grow out of students' own experiences, an awareness of authority issues, the legitimate use of emotion and experience, and an emphasis on the dialogic rather than the monologic.<sup>13</sup>

Feminist pedagogy uses the tools of constantly making the participants aware of the social categories of gender, class, race, and sexual orientation with the aim of revealing and deconstructing patterns of oppression (and ultimately revealing alternative ways of being). It works to break down the (negative) hierarchy between teacher and students, allowing students to question the lesson materials and offer their personal experience as a place to start with learning. Feminist pedagogy also strives to give students a 'voice' through investigation of their personal experience and a critical look at how they are affected by societal norms. Feminist pedagogy works to give the student tools to understand the workings of the institution in which she takes part, asking questions such as why some types of knowledge are valued and others not, challenging methods of assessment, examining the dominant ways of speaking within a field (is it formalistic, experiential or emotive?).

Feminist pedagogy can also get caught up in seeming contradictions. If I am placed as a female teacher in the role of the nurturing, all-accepting mother, how do I also claim respect and assert the necessary authority while not falling back into an authoritarian style of teaching? How can one make the class inclusive while trying to maintain (recognized) high standards? How can one claim to open a space for all perspectives while taking a clear stand against racist or sexist points-of-view? Do we really want each student to develop their own 'voice', or do we want them to develop a 'feminist voice'? Could feminist pedagogy not simply be called good pedagogy or radical pedagogy?

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<sup>10</sup> , in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. (Boston: South End Press, 1989). (Found online 27 February, 2005: <http://www.chss.montclair.edu/english/classes/stuehler/engl105/hooks.html>)

<sup>11</sup> In *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 6.1 (Spring, 2002) 104-110. paragraph 2. See also Fisher, Bernice Malka. *No Angel in the Classroom: Teaching Through Feminist Discourse* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 27.

<sup>12</sup> (Plattsburgh State University of New York, 2000). (Last viewed 27 February, 2005: [http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue2\\_2/schacht.html](http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue2_2/schacht.html))

<sup>13</sup> (Baton Rouge, LA, Nov. 1996). (Last viewed 27 February, 2005: <http://home1.gte.net/esays68/FemPed.html>)

Although the contradictions may seem to undermine the importance of feminist pedagogy, I believe that it is precisely through stating and examining these contradictions that makes this pedagogy so relevant.<sup>14</sup> Not accepting the status quo, always challenging the materials, challenging even the relevance and usefulness of this particular focus that makes the pedagogy so alive, creates a deliberate instability that should produce constant change and growth. Many teachers feel safe in a classroom situation with hidden, accepted norms. Yet, the classroom is likely to reproduce, as a sort of microcosm, the dominant stereotypes or assumptions of the society which supports its existence. Exactly that approach of 'let us take a look at what we are all doing here' is appealing to me. I also like to ask my students questions like: "do you *really* like this piece?", "wouldn't you rather be outside playing right now?", or "what would you like to learn about this piece" as ways to break through the expectations that I know their purpose for being in the lesson, or that I know what they need or want to learn. Of course, they usually give the polite or expected answer, but pushing them further, playing with the expectations will give them a push to take more initiative in the learning situation, which always produces faster and deeper learning results.

I would like to touch on three questions pertinent to me as a piano teacher arising from issues addressed in the literature (see Bibliography, section 'Feminist (Radical) Pedagogies'):

By listening to my students in the choice of repertoire, allowing them to contribute to guide their own learning process, am I not running the risk of reducing the quality of the musical output? I do not automatically expect that students will find my choice of music appealing. Sometimes a great deal of time is spent in the lesson finding repertoire that the student likes. Because the students at first cannot read music (a situation that can go on for a year or more, until they show interest in learning to read music), I give them CD's with musical examples they can listen to. I also point out websites<sup>15</sup> where they can find a variety of music. Otherwise they are welcome to bring their favorite CD, and I will work to create a playable version of the piece.

What is not negotiable is: they must pick a piece, and we agree to work on it together. I have reached the point where I almost refuse to pick a piece for the student. I will make suggestions, and I will be persuasive. A sour face is for me the stimulation to challenge them to become actively involved in their own repertoire. The same goes for playing accompaniment. I will offer them different types of accompaniment with the stipulation that they choose one. Children, especially with the current child-rearing practices which allow for more independence and more freedom, will just not learn what they are not ready to learn. The teacher and the student are always engaged in a sort of struggle to find interesting and motivating materials. My experience is that giving choice in the area of repertoire ensures more attentive playing and faster learning of the material.

Is the goal of making each student a creative musician (using the tools of standard repertoire, improvisation and technology) realistic, seeing that it goes against the norms expected of a piano teacher, and will I not at some point need to go back to 'doing it the traditional way'? The quote at the end of Murray Schafer's book *The Rhinoceros in the Classroom* came to mind when considering this question:

I do not know whether my work is taken seriously or not. I have done a lot of guest lecturing in universities or schools and have been aware that I have often been brought in as a diversion from the tedium of routine. Schafer makes whoopee for a few days, after which the class gets back to the serious business of blowing the clarinet.<sup>16</sup>

I have had enough experience now taking the risks of jumping into improvisation and other forms of composition with young students to realize that they are all eventually open to it. Even those who resist can usually be lured into duo improvisation and end up smiling. Already I notice that many of my piano students are coming with ideas of their own, such as a small composition, clear improvements in improvising on certain patterns or an extension of a piece of music that they have been working on. The

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<sup>14</sup> Not to mention the fact that no other pedagogy I have come across is so devoted to combating the misuse of power based on racial, sexist and class divisions and constructs.

<sup>15</sup> Such as such as <http://www.teleacnot.nl/sites/riedbox/> (Last visited 6 April 2005) mentioned earlier. Or Kidsplace, a rather commercial site, <http://home.zonnet.nl/mulder847/kinderen.html>. (Last visited 6 April 2005).

<sup>16</sup> page 59. Schafer's classroom work (up to the seventies), as I understand it, was rather somewhat fourfold: taking the primary aspects of music and exploring them, thus producing new musical works or discovering basic musical principles; asking the students to listen carefully to environmental sounds and to consider the impact of man on the quality of our 'soundscapes'; introducing other perceptual elements into the act of making music (he mentions vision, taste, smell, touch, movement, gesture, psyche and soma, p. 59); encouraging expertise in the areas of acoustic and electro-acoustic sound production. For more about his compositional work, visit <http://www.philmultic.com/composers/schafer.html> (Last viewed 29 March 2005)

attentive listening that takes place when they are allowed to play on the open strings of the instrument is priceless. I choose to make a leap of faith with the belief that radical ideas may produce small lasting change and safe steps will most likely produce no change at all.

What do gender, race and economic class have to do with piano lessons? I hope I have in the first section provided the answer to the relevance of gender in music and in developing a relationship with music. Considering race and economic class, one can fairly quickly make the observation that piano lessons in the Netherlands are populated predominantly by white, middle-to-upper-class children. However, the question of whether this is a problem to 'solve' becomes quite complex. As I have revealed, the domestic piano is primarily a Western, bourgeoisie phenomenon (which has surely made its mark in other areas of the world). Am I convinced enough of its musical worth as an instrument to make the claim that all ethnic groups in the Netherlands should participate equally in learning to play the piano? Not at all. I am open to the idea that there may be non-European children who have a latent affinity and love for playing the piano, just as there may be young Europeans who have a latent affinity and love for the skratji, tablah or 'ud (oud), but who never get the chance to play them because of the separations between groups and musical experiences. I think the only way I can discover the relevance of crossing race and class divides is by seeking out positive areas of multi-cultural interaction. Only by seeing how music is offered and experienced in different cultural contexts, such as in classrooms or festivals, can one discover possible links between 'what I do' and what is happening in the environment around me. I perhaps also need to be careful to point out that I do not wish to reduce music to a simple tool to help build understanding between different racial groups. Music has a life of its own in many different contexts and cultures and should not be reduced to its usefulness. What I do wish to suggest is that the musical world of the piano teacher as well as her students could be enriched by looking beyond their cultural bubble<sup>17</sup>. This may seem obvious, but this point is certainly not often mentioned in piano method books.

### **The death and resurrection of the piano**

Related to the fact that the piano is connected to a European and North American tradition which can be argued to be outdated, I would like to face the charge that the piano has outlived its usefulness. In Appendix 3 I have reproduced the Epilogue of Murray Schafer's book *The New Soundscape* (1969)<sup>18</sup>. The Epilogue is an ode to the slumbering pianos in suburbia.<sup>19</sup> I quote the beginning and the end here:

For the past two hundred years the piano has been the focal point of all musical studies: the piano as *Ersatz* orchestra, the piano as tool of accompaniment, the piano as commanding and heroic soloist in its own right, the piano as arch-symbol of a distinct era of music making and of the institutions concerned with its promulgation. [. . .]

Breathe history into our ears.

For the activity has moved elsewhere, and you are too big to be carried there . . .

Farewell slumbering piano . . .

You have stated your case well.

Let now others state theirs.<sup>20</sup>

So, here I am, more than thirty-five years later, still giving piano lessons. And to make matters much worse, I in principle, do not give piano lessons to students who own a keyboard instead of a piano.

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately I cannot speak more from personal experience in the Netherlands. My two years teaching music in Amman, Jordan was an exercise in importing Western music, with British-based Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music exams and examiners flown in from England. I did get to witness a number of local artists performing traditional music, musicals, pop music, Christmas choral performances, etc. I hope to deepen my knowledge of what is happening in Arnhem once I am finished with my studies. I have enjoyed performances at The World Cultural center, RASA, in Utrecht, which provides diverse musical experiences by artists from around the world.

<sup>18</sup> The purpose of this book was to "direct the ear of the listener towards the new soundscape of contemporary life, to acquaint him with a vocabulary of sounds he may expect to hear both inside and outside concert halls." (p. 3) The presence of electronically reproduced music, the impact of a noisy environment, the dynamic thresholds of sound and the future of our environmental symphony are all considered or highlighted in this book which contains a collage of attention-getting facts, dialogues with students and assignments.

<sup>19</sup> Please note, in reading the entire Epilogue, the extremely feminine (and degrading) metaphors for the piano in Schafer's detailing of composer – piano relationships.

<sup>20</sup> Schafer, 63-64.

Despite my call for technological advancement, I still tie myself down to the ‘decorated hearse’<sup>21</sup>. Let me try to explain myself, which should also prove to be a clarifying activity for myself.

In the first place, the keyboard and the piano are essentially two different instruments. Touch, or the way of producing the desired effect, on the two instruments are completely different. This has to do with the different way sound is produced, the attachment of mechanism to the key (or not), the actual vibration of strings controlled by the damper pedal which affects the way sounds merge, etc. I have not had enough experience with the keyboard to be able to use it with any of the control I have with the piano. Yes, I could become more skilled on the keyboard. Perhaps that will happen one day. At this point in time, however, I am much more enamored by the acoustic sound of the piano (even if it is not in the best of shape), than the digitally reproduced piano sound of a keyboard. The feel of the mechanism moving, the feel of the hammer hitting the string, the vibrations of the string setting the air in motion. . . I have never experienced sensations anywhere close to the same from an electronic instrument.<sup>22</sup> An electronic keyboard does have the potential for producing many different types of (digitalized) sound, as well as of course forming an optimal interface for the computer. However, an electronic piano attempting to reproduce the sounds of the piano, does not for me form a technological advancement. It is a technological convenience: cheaper, more portable, can be played with headphones. It forms a technological imitation of the piano, which perhaps reduces the beauty of what can be achieved with electronic sounds by putting them into the constraints of trying-to-be-a-piano and does not come close enough to imitating the sound of an actual piano to make it a desirable substitute.

The piano can be used to make more magical sounds than what is typically attempted if the exposed strings and the wooden body of the piano are played creatively (see Appendix 3 ‘Extended techniques’). With extended techniques, the sounds of the piano can be greatly expanded to become expressive in other ways, more like sound effects. The piano player can experience a slight respite from the straight-jacket of the twelve equally-tuned tones, the over-dependence on intervals and interval relationships which will inevitably suggest any of the languages (including atonal) that have been developed for *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*. Children will immensely enjoy the sounds that can be created when the string is caused to vibrate using the hand instead of being hit with the hammer, when a knock on the piano is echoed by the sympathetically vibrating strings. In that sense, ‘average’ piano technique could be much, much further developed, to include stroking the keys, combinations of key and hand, simple string preparations, playing with metal-covered fingertips, etc. Finally, to repeat a very old argument, the piano is one of the few instruments in which both melodies and harmonies and polyphony can be played simultaneously using as many fingers as you have. Certainly one would still be working within the confines of the twelve tones<sup>23</sup>. However, the piano remains a tool on which almost all traditional repertoire (even if written for other instruments) can be played, one which can reproduce all songs and folk music based on diatonic scales and one upon which techniques can be expanded to include a variety of beautiful and still relatively uncommon sounds.

I am afraid it becomes very difficult to remain out of the trap of ‘the piano as ideal musical teaching tool’, and here I come to the question of whether or not I really want to ‘break’ with all musical traditions, to try to avoid creating with my students music that reflects any sort of musical tradition whatsoever. No, I am not yet interested in making this break.<sup>24</sup> I very much appreciate the beauties of the tonal system and tonal relationships. And as I have stated many times, I desire to create a connection between the music children enjoy and what they play on the piano, whether that means letting them choose repertoire which reflects their interests or working toward improvisations that allow them to produce their own music. All music is related in some ways to a musical tradition, traditions which are always evolving and mutating. The piano

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<sup>21</sup> Schafer, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Google search ‘Piano vs. Keyboard’ for many discussions on this topic. For a more detailed argument along the same lines as mine, see <http://www.concertpitchpiano.com/DigitalVsAcoustic.html> (Last checked 29 March 2005)

<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough, all scales discovered by ethnomusicologists are based on a series of intervals of unequal lengths, helping to create a sense of knowing ‘where you are’ within the scale. The  $n(n-1)$  number of pitches allows for the same pattern of intervals to be created in different places, with only one change in note (for example the relationship between C and G major or c and g melodic minor), thus creating scales that are more or less related to each other. The diatonic scale within a series of twelve divisions 4(4-1) is the simplest scale which follows this pattern (with the corollary that the pentatonic scale is usually based on a subset of the full diatonic scale). See John Sloboda, ‘The musical mind in context: culture and biology’ in *The Musical Mind*, 253-258.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps, like David Tudor, I will eventually make the break from the piano, but I need a few more years for that. See <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/lmj/collinslmj14intro.html> for the article *Composers inside Electronics: Music after David Tudor* by Nicolas Collins (Last updated 2 Sept, 2004, last visited 1 April 2005)

has shown itself to be adept within jazz and popular music idioms as well as being flexible enough to be included in avant-garde ensembles.<sup>25</sup> Is the piano a dinosaur facing extinction, or can the piano evolve with musical concepts that consider the universe as a symphony? The answer that I would like to give is that the piano, which produces such beautiful and flexible acoustic sounds, as well as having increased possibilities of sound production through manipulation by electronic interface still has much more room for growth. And, to turn the argument personal (which should surely be allowed in a paper influenced by feminism!), I deeply enjoy the tactile, percussive elements of the piano. When I look at what Schafer suggests instead of the piano – ‘the guitar, the saxophone, the potentiometer’<sup>26</sup> – and consider the possibilities that can still be opened up for the piano with improvisation, extended techniques and electronic manipulation, I would still much rather play the piano.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See for example a website for improvisers (including pianists) in the Bay area: <http://www.bayimproviser.com/artists.asp>.

<sup>26</sup> Schafer, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Besides, who wants to play music outside in this climate?!



# Part Three

## 1. Listen, listen, listen: opening up space with improvisation

Deep listening is . . .

listening in every possible way                      to everything possible to hear  
no matter what one is doing.

Such intense listening involves                      the sounds of daily life  
of nature  
of one's own thoughts                      as well as musical sounds.

Deep listening is a life practice . . .

Pauline Oliveros<sup>1</sup>

How does one, as a classically trained musician, begin creating the kind of environment where children can learn to improvise and enjoy improvisation? Is it enough to add *All About Blues* and *Junior Jazz* by Herman Beftink to your stack of music books<sup>2</sup>? I will first address the idea of a 'method for learning improvisation', discussing also the difficulties of trying to teach improvisation without having years of experience improvising (within a certain idiom). Given that within some institutions, there is a movement toward improvisation for all musicians<sup>3</sup>, the phenomenon might arise that a new practice/genre of improvisation may develop, one that is multi-faceted, matching the musical interests of (semi-)professional, classically-trained musicians, one that also blossoms within the music lesson situation. Does this practice have a chance? Or is it doomed to the garbage bin of dusty pedagogically-correct-thing-to-do ideas? Inextricably tied with improvising is listening. In thinking about listening, I realized that there are many different modes of listening, and the way we (as music teachers) listen will greatly affect how effectively we are able to teach improvisation. In discussing some of these multi-faceted modes of listening, I will make connections with the work of Pauline Oliveros, Malcolm Goldstein and Murray Schafer. This background of different types of listening will also be intersected with stories of my experiences with improvisation. These experiences include improvisation in and out of lessons by Rolf Delfos at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague; with the Creative Music Environment (CME) ensemble, assembled in the Hague; and FreeQ (Free Quartet), an extension of my contacts in the CME. Tied in with my participation in this group is my search for an improvisational idiom that deeply moves me, inspiring me to devote myself to improvising. Here I am also continually compelled (ideology inextricably bound with personal interest) to search out female artists to serve as musical role-models. The reason I include improvisation in this paper on a libidinal music pedagogy is because improvisation plays a critical role in a modern, living pedagogy. Throughout this section, I will repeatedly refer to the creativity which can be inspired by improvisation, and my personal experiences should shed some light on gender issues within improvisational practice. Finally, I will end with my current experimentation with piano students in developing their own improvised music, one which is based on my admiration of the artist Marie Daulne and the first two CD's of *Zap Mama*. This is my first experiment in building my own repertoire of

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<sup>1</sup> This text comes up slowly on the homepage of the website for the Deep Listening Foundation <http://www.deeplisting.org/> (Last visited 1 April 2005).

<sup>2</sup> I have learned much from these books with their attractive yet simple pieces and gradual progression. However, as I will explain later, they must become part of a larger improvisatory context.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example Radical Pedagogy (2002) *Teaching Large Ensemble Music Improvisation* by Susan Allen (Associate Dean School of Music California Institute of the Arts) [http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue4\\_1/01\\_Allen.html](http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue4_1/01_Allen.html) (Last visited 1 April 2005). See also article by Scott Price (University of South Carolina), 'Playing the Improvisation Game', in *Piano Pedagogy Forum* v. 1, no. 3 (1 Sept 1998) <http://www.music.sc.edu/ea/keyboard/PPF/1.3/1.3.PPFpp.html> over the decision by the National Association of Schools of Music to require improvisation as part of the undergraduate curriculum. Although I do not have an overview of the situation in the Netherlands, the two conservatories which I have attended, in Utrecht and the Hague, have begun offering improvisation more seriously for all performance students. In the UK (GSCE), listening, performing and composing are the main subjects, however improvisation is also included as an 'allowable' skill. See <http://www.fullpitcher.co.uk/creativeexams.htm> for a rather depressing vision of the state of improvisation. Audrey Podmore speaks of the 'great dearth of musicians and compositions sympathetic to classical improvisation at an elementary level'. Of course there is a 'great dearth'. Which student with a bit of self esteem would want to learn classical improvisation?!?



improvisational activities for students, geared toward collaborative music-making and performance, based on my personal musical loves and interests and built from original material created by the students.

On the subject of improvisation methods and the use of such methods in real life, I would like to quote Derek Bailey's<sup>4</sup> book *Musical Improvisation, its nature and practice in music* (1980):

In the face of the possibility that no improviser anywhere has ever learned to improvise from a book, or other documentary source, the argument usually offered to support the publication of these manuals is that while 'great' players can somehow suddenly appear fully endowed with every necessary skill, more ordinary players have to find more ordinary means. [. . .] An ability to improvise can't be forced and it depends, firstly, on an understanding, developed from complete familiarity, of the musical context in which one improvises, or wishes to improvise.<sup>5</sup>

Derek Bailey consistently insists on the importance of preparation and practice in learning to improvise. However, this skill is not learned through books, but from experimentation, trial and error, and very importantly, emulation. In order to acquire skill within a certain improvisational idiom, it is beneficial to develop an 'unquestioning idolatry' of the admired master/player as well as the music within a certain idiom. The student then slavishly devotes herself to copying the idol, and at a certain point will develop the ability to say something in her own way, while remaining within the idiom.<sup>6</sup> Coming from the jazz perspective (one of the most practiced improvisatory traditions now in Western music) Kathy Dyson's paper *Improvisation and the Brain: A Musician's Perspective*<sup>7</sup>, refers to Paul Berliner's ethnomusicological model from his *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994).<sup>8</sup> His work reveals that young players often begin (in the early days of jazz, using the phonograph as a tutor) by copying their musical idols, playing and replaying solos until they could play them up to speed. She says:

By learning in this way, novice improvisers were able to develop useful skills in a number of different areas. Firstly, remembering motif, phrases and later whole improvised solos, they developed aural memory. Secondly, they absorbed the mature style of their favourite idol and in a sense learned a lot about the way they developed ideas. They also copied the sound and phrasing of the player – initially grasping only the outlines and gradually being able to follow all the nuances and perhaps even the breaths of the player.<sup>9</sup>

She then goes on to describe how English alto Nigel Hitchcock began by transcribing Charlie Parker solos as a child of eight – by ear, at normal playing speed! No one had told him that it was difficult, and a childlike feeling of fun is deeply imbedded within the experience of improvising for him.<sup>10</sup>

When looking at becoming fluent in jazz, the classical musician may feel initially at a loss. There seem to be no shortcuts to becoming experienced, although all those years of training with the instrument are of course an enormous benefit. However, the road to expression in jazz may seem to steep and too much like stepping into another fairly long, disciplined process of studying with all the big names and hard-core technique. I have been hoping to encourage music pedagogues such as myself to build a 'new' language, a feminine, libidinal language, one that incorporates improvisation. Can the classically trained musician 'find herself' in jazz? If not, where can she turn? The few paragraphs above seem to suggest that improvisation 'requires' a tradition and experts who can pass on their skills. Yet, every improvisatory tradition must have some, no matter how vague, period in time when it began to develop as an independent genre. Perhaps a strategy for us classical musicians is to find a style that that fascinates us, work ourselves into it and then change it to make it our own. The approach also fits in with what Berliner has observed during his intense study of the field of jazz: imitate, assimilate, innovate. Would a new genre be born, or would it be multi-genres, always changing, always with a new personality? This

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Bailey is a guitarist who was central in the free improvisation scene starting around the middle of the last century, playing with almost all musicians associated with free improvisation. See <http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/mbailey.html> (Last viewed 1 April 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Bailey, 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, see especially the sections on Indian music and Flamenco, 15-29.

<sup>7</sup> Dyson, Kathy. *Improvisation and the Brain: A Musician's Perspective* (Psychiatry Department Paper Sheffield University, April 2004).

<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive study of jazz musicians based on interviews with fifty players. This is also in line with what Dyson reveals in her own paper: *Early Musical Development of Lester Young, Joe Pass, Charlie Parker and Bill Evans – How they learned to Improvise* (Leeds Jazz Conference Paper, April 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Dyson, *Improvisation and the Brain*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

requires much listening, searching. Which music do you love and could spend hours listening to, like the eight year old Nigel? Is it free improvisation, jazz, Irish folk music, avant-garde, big band? What vibrates you, turns you on, causes your creative juices to flow? Without loving a certain improvisational sound, how can you help your students really love to improvise? Bailey says, 'the important thing is to have an objective, the recognition of which can be intuitive, so strongly desired as to be almost a mania.'<sup>11</sup> Of all people, music teachers should realize that without motivation, students take much longer (if ever) to learn a skill. What I would suggest is that without love for a certain improvised musical sound, a teacher is not going to improvise to the extent that she can inspire her students as a living model. Improvisation should become also for the teacher a means of expression, not just the 'politically correct' thing to do.

One cannot speak of improvisation, without speaking of listening. How many of us who work with music a great deal of our time, still love listening, still utilize the capacity to open up, to take in with full alertness 'what is happening' with the musical sounds we hear? Listening, both passive and active. Passive in the sense of remaining open, waiting, letting the sound in. Active in the sense of meeting the sound with your . . . with your . . . With what? Is it your mind, which will then categorize the sounds (whether rhythmic, intervallic or gestural) and appreciate the relationships between them? Is it an emotional response, which can be triggered by the gestures or conveyed intent of the performer, the beauty of the sound or with memories and fantasies that the music triggers? Is it a physical response, triggering you to dance or sing? Is it something which is a combination of all these responses as well as exceeding them? I suggest that learning to listen to improvisation, which involves helping students learn experimentally, is a new skill for classically trained music teachers. In the coming paragraphs, I would like to touch on five different 'types' of listening: intent listening to/in the environment, critically listening to/in through-composed music, critically listening to/in improvisation according to an agreed-upon schema, non-critical listening within musical exploration, critical listening to/in free improvisation in order to create an interesting work in real time. By 'critically', I mean a type of listening that is interested in creating a change, a change according to some aesthetic parameters. Now I am moving into the treacherous area of "what is better, this sound or that, this musical line or that, this groove or that?" Ah, I believe even improvising is (never, sometimes, perhaps often, depending on your style) about making choices<sup>12</sup> and then listening whether you have done what you wanted to do and making further decisions/revisions from evaluation that new point. The aesthetic choices may be considered arbitrary, personal, imposed or based on consideration for a certain tradition. For example, Sheila Chandra, mentioned earlier, decided to compose her 'Speaking in Tongues' pieces because she did not want, during performance, to fall into a rhythm that would spoil the chaotic effect. She chose the aesthetic of chaos and then took the steps she deemed necessary to best realize this, according to her perspective. Outside of these 'types' of listening, there is an experienced difference between listening to your own music as it is being played (while performing) and listening to someone else playing music (as teacher or coach). I try to convey this difference of listening modes through the use of 'to/in' above. There exist also the distinctions of non-critical/critical listening to other members of an ensemble while performing through-composed, schematized or free improvised music. This involves reacting to the musical gestures of the other players in the moment of improvising and/or considering the structure of the piece and means of improvement. Do I have the right to categorize listening? I realize that this description of listening activities is not conclusive, and the listener will often be engaged with multiple types at once. However, I do believe that classically trained musicians focus perhaps only on number two of the five listed above. Thus, by categorizing, I hope to create an awareness of and an opening to speak about other listening situations. I will move a bit freely between my own experience practicing improvisation and as musical coach, trying to keep within the framework of mutual (teacher and student) learning, especially because I realize that I have much to learn about listening in improvisational contexts, both as performer and teacher.

### **Critically listening to/in through-composed music**

I would like to begin with the form of listening that most commonly occurs in the music lesson: 'critically listening to/in through-composed music'. Everyone who has had years of music lessons with different teachers will know that each teacher listens in different way. Teachers are paid to listen critically.

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<sup>11</sup> Bailey, 16.

<sup>12</sup> One could argue that producing a particular squawk on the saxophone for thirty years, one time per day, without attempting any change in the sound is an choice. Most likely, even if it was not desired (also an intent), there would be some kind of development in the relationship with (I hesitate to say growth or progression in) the squawk.

Teachers (hopefully) deeply listen to their students in order to guide the student toward listening to themselves (a monumental task) and to offer diagnoses that will help the student build the physical, mental and emotional power to perform music well within a stylistic (interpretive or performance) context. Some will be keen to the physical weaknesses of the player. Others will focus most strongly on developing a proper legato, pedaling, bowing, fingering, breathing, etc., based on the demands of the piece and the commonly accepted interpretations. Others will focus on rhythmic weaknesses. Others will focus on what the player wishes to say with the piece and will direct all technical helps toward those ends. Most teachers will agree that no matter what their particular emphasis is, technique cannot be separated from the intent of the performer (the meaning or shape the performer wishes to give to the piece), and the strength of intention also affects the building of technique. Perhaps this critical listening is somewhat like the diagnostic gaze of the doctor. In a negative sense, this gaze can cause the patient to become a collection of different parts that can be exposed for examination. During this process, the patient might lose the sense of being an integrated being.<sup>13</sup> In a positive sense, this type of listening, paired with appropriate advice, can be used to help the student develop their musical muscles much more efficiently. Listening is a vital practice for a musician. Listening is also, physically and mentally, an incredibly challenging task. When a teacher is listening to more than two hours of students, how can she possibly keep from falling into the traps of listening according to a certain routine, which may be very limiting but is necessary for survival? How much time in the education of a musician/teacher is devoted to discussing the multifarious ways of listening to music and the misunderstandings that can arise when people listen in completely different ways and then try to communicate about music?

One of the main tasks of a music teacher is to create a culture of listening. If the student cannot listen to what she is playing, she will not be able to implement or evaluate the implementation of the teacher's advice. If the teacher cannot listen well to the student, no effectively helpful communication can take place either. Unless there is a desire within the student to hear the sound of the piano, the desire to hear herself play the piano, the ear and mind will not be open to the music she is producing. One of my students had the habit of immediately beginning to play, showing little interest in what she was doing. It seemed to me as if it was a task she was carrying out with little enjoyment. I asked her to play the piece silently, and only when she really, really wanted to hear the sound of the piano should she hit a note. She began and played the piece one time through, completely silently. I asked her to play again and only sound a key when she really, really, really wanted to hear the sound of the piano. That time she played silently until the last two notes of the piece. She seemed a little surprised by the sound of the last two notes. I am not sure if it was what she was expecting or not. I asked her to tell me if she got tired of hearing herself play piano, and she could then play silently again. For the rest of the lesson she played with much more interest, more awareness. She had the choice not to make noise. I remind students to play at home like they are performing, with themselves as audience. If they are not even listening to themselves while practicing, it means that absolutely no one is listening at all, and that seems to me to be a waste of time. These are just two examples. There is a fine line between critical listening and open listening with a desire to shape the musical moment. If children listen too critically (also implying here a fear of failure), they will become blocked. If they do not listen at all, then their music will have no core, no energy. It takes much continued effort and different tactics to help students develop the habit of listening attentively when they play, perhaps especially when playing through-composed pieces, which can easily become a poorly-controlled automation, including habitual errors.

### **Intent listening to/in the environment**

Perhaps there is a poverty of listening in general. I would now like to turn to the topic of 'intent listening to/in the environment'. I believe opening your ears to the richness in sounds in your environment and helping children reclaim their intense listening capabilities can awaken creativity and musicality. Murray Schafer has been called a 'soundscape theorist'. His work *The New Soundscape* (1969) was intended to "direct the ear of the listener towards the new soundscape of contemporary life, to acquaint him with a vocabulary of sounds he may expect to hear both inside and outside concert halls."<sup>14</sup> Schafer's work has the overt intent of creating a listener who also critically listens to her environment, becoming sensitive to sound pollution and participating in activities (political if necessary) which would help to shape and

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<sup>13</sup> There are moments when the student may wish for this kind of critical listening. However this kind of listening can also cause a student (especially an older one) to 'lose the music' or to become so caught up in the imperfections of the separate parts of their own playing, triggered by their perception of the critical ear, that they cannot remain with the flow of the music anymore.

<sup>14</sup> Schafer, 3.

control the (over-)production of (Schafer calls it Lo-fi) noise. In this sense, his ideology, with the goal of shaping the soundscape, differs from that of John Cage, who was less concerned with controlling and more with opening ears to the chance sounds, the randomness and omnipresence of sounds around us. Much theoretical work is occurring in the area of listening, environmental awareness and art, work that goes beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>15</sup> What I would like to focus on here is the idea of a Soundwalk for music students in order to help them re-open their ears to ambient sounds, to develop a greater capacity for listening and openness for sounds which might inspire creativity.

According to sound ecologist Hildegard Westerkamp “the essential purpose of the soundwalk is to encourage the participant to listen discriminatively, and moreover, to make critical judgments about the sounds heard and their contribution to the balance or imbalance of the sonic environment.”<sup>16</sup> Since I am dealing in my practice with children mostly ten years old and under, I would like to focus a little less on ‘critical judgments’, and more on the pleasure of listening, the respect for the environment that listening entails and the inspirations for creation that can come up with active, open listening. How can a soundwalk be made a meaningful activity for children?<sup>17</sup> The idea is that the participants remain silent during certain periods so that they move outside their own mental activities and noise in order to better absorb and process the sounds around them. This might be called reducing the barriers between self and environment through an open listening. I will here present my idea of a soundwalk for my piano students in Arnhem, to be tested this coming May, 2005.

I think that the children should be prepared to listen to environmental sounds (perhaps best if the preparation is done in advance of the soundwalk). This can be done by having them sit in a group, quietly listening for a few minutes and then discussing (or not) what was heard. Another idea might be asking them to write down (or draw if they cannot write) everything which they can hear. Perhaps it is a pity to introduce the very cognitive activity of writing into the process. The noise of the writing will come into the description (which can actually be interesting), and I think that writing (or drawing) is a way of maintaining focus. The listening is channeled through a constant process of revealing/translating what is heard. The group can then share their lists with each other, which should give a good indication of how the participants direct their listening and what sounds are more obscure.

The walk might begin on the gravel road parallel to the Boerderijweg on the edge of park Sonsbeek<sup>18</sup> in Arnhem, leading toward the middle of the park, toward the flowers (and hopefully insects!) of the Steile Tuin, toward one of the waterfalls or water park, and back outward, toward the center of the city. The walk will be punctuated by moments of stopping and quiet listening (with eyes closed), of writing (i.e. a poem with sound as central theme or details of what you hear), discussion of the difference between listening while in motion (a moving sound space) and listening while sitting in one place, an attempt at forming the sounds we ‘collect’ into a kind of collage that we make ourselves (including a discussion of where it would be best to perform this ‘concert’ in the park), and discussion of the various levels of sounds made by nature, humans and technology (i.e. engines) in the various places.<sup>19</sup> A collage of found and (by us) reproduced sounds could be made and worked into a piece which might be published on the Sonsbeek website, a sort of statement of appreciation for environmental sound diversity. I should be careful here to be clear that I am not trying to recreate the nature/culture dichotomy.<sup>20</sup> No, we would not present ourselves as champions of the pure sounds of nature. The soundwalkers would lose themselves to some extent in the natural environmental sounds, however the environmental sounds would also become

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<sup>15</sup> I give here just a few examples from a search on the Web. For a compact article about her work on listening and the soundscape, with reference to Cage, Schaeffer and Deleuze (“nomadic listening”, borrowing from the idea of nomadism by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Milles Plateaux*), see *Rethinking Music and the Listening Experience* by Fátima Carneiro dos Santos (Faculty member of the Arts Department of the State University of Londrina (UEL)). [http://www.mikropol.net/volume7/dos\\_santos\\_f/dos\\_Santos.html#Fátima](http://www.mikropol.net/volume7/dos_santos_f/dos_Santos.html#Fátima) (Last visited 3 April 2005). See the World Soundscape Project website <http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html> (Last visited 3 April 2005). See composer, radio artist and sound ecologist Hildegard Westerkamp’s website <http://www.sfu.ca/~westerka/index.html> (Last visited 3 April 2005).

<sup>16</sup> For more information and guides to soundwalks, see <http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio/handbook/Soundwalk.html> (Last viewed 3 April 2005).

<sup>17</sup> For some introductory ideas about listening and very essential exercises with the basic elements of music and reproduction of sound, see Schafer’s *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course* (Toronto: Clark & Cruickshank, 1967)

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.parksonsbeek.nl/sonsbeek.html> for a map of the park. (Last visited 3 April 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Schafer, *The New Soundscape*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> For an article speaking of “Natural soundscapes or sonic eco-architectures [. . .] in effect being grafted as ‘virtual realities’ onto the flesh of Culture”, and warning against an all-encompassing form of sound ecology in *Notes Towards Sound Ecology in the Garden of Listening* by Virginia Madsen [http://www.sysx.org/soundsite/csa/eis2content/essays/p11\\_not.html](http://www.sysx.org/soundsite/csa/eis2content/essays/p11_not.html) (Last visited 3 April 2005).

lost in the culture of recording and reproducing. However, I am open to the ‘discovery’ that dominant mechanized sounds can have a negative influence on the ability to perceive the subtle diversity of more natural sounds and vice versa.

One of my most treasured memories is of a moment in the afternoon at summer camp. I was about eleven years old, I think. We were given a piece of paper with questions and asked to find a spot to answer the questions. I chose a spot next to a bubbling stream of water – glistening, chattering, crystal-cold water. I remember letting my senses open up and experiencing a creative flow in writing about the event.

Although it is maybe optimistic to think that I can recreate this same experience for my piano students (and I will be prepared for the contingency that someone will be sent home if they continually disturb the process), I do believe that this soundwalk will change the way my students listen to the world around them. Listening for me implies a sensitivity, an openness, a respect, one that could make our interaction with nature, with other humans and with technology much more sustainable. Perhaps soundwalks would catch on, and would be a small contribution toward making the world a more livable place.

### **Critically listening to/in improvisation according to an agreed-upon schema**

I would now like to turn to ‘critically listening to/in improvisation according to an agreed-upon schema’. Here I focus on improvisation which occurs above a fixed harmonic schema, with melodic improvisation according to scales, chords and accepted chromatisms. Here I would like to turn to my experience in the lessons of Rolf Delfos, saxophonist best known in the jazz sextet the Houdini’s and Auratones, and instructor at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. These lessons in improvisation are provided (and required) for all students in the music pedagogy Masters (tweede fase) program.<sup>21</sup> Lessons began in a relaxed atmosphere, with improvisational clapping, simple harmonic schemas and rhythms, and melodic improvisations based on various chords and scales. Certain schemas were taken home and worked on in the lessons, and students were asked to come with their own material, ideas to introduce to their students or ideas for the group to work on together. One area that Delfos constantly worked on was rhythm. The rhythms we produced often fell into the dotted rhythms of classical music and did not swing. I am still not sure if I can swing. This rhythmic ‘hearing’ requires an immersion, as mentioned earlier, in the jazz music idiom. The rhythms required a certain mixture of drive, yet laid-back attitude that certainly carries a different energy than what I have been used to. Delfos has the tendency to use a coaching style which seemed to be trying to de-sissify us, referring to our pointed Efteling hats (in Dutch culture the hats the little dwarfs would wear with their peppy, lively, dotted-rhythms music). This mirroring of our playing style proved confronting to me and some others. I seriously felt that I was swimming in the search for a connection between my own bodily/learned experience of rhythm and what was expected of me. This flip-flopping between a gut feeling for rhythm and a not-so-convincing production of what I assumed to be expected of me lasted for more than two years, probably also due to my non-effective practicing habits.<sup>22</sup>

In the lesson situation, because none of us performers came from a jazz background, we could not really inspire each other to reaching new heights within the idiom. An attitude could quickly develop of ‘this is not going to work anyway’, with too high a reliance on the coaching by Delfos. Also, I do think the strong macho image of jazz (sometimes exaggerated by Delfos - purposefully?) can be confusing for female students from the music pedagogy department. I have the feeling that we do not know what to do with our bodies and feel out of place or defensive, and that this feeling is not discussed openly or dealt with in a

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<sup>21</sup> My own experience was rather broken as I missed one trimester the first year giving birth to my son and one trimester the second year due to scheduling conflicts with a course in Utrecht. My overall study time was also extended by two trimesters, so I had the (dis)advantage of working with two different groups of students. The disadvantage was due to the fact that I did not form a tight improvising group with my fellow students the first two years. The advantage was that I was able to see how more students functioned within and reacted to in these lessons.

<sup>22</sup> My own practicing was sporadic and sometimes rather uninspired. As pianist, you must develop the coordination to play a solid rhythmical accompaniment (with a sense of swing!) with the left hand and improvise with the right. A large degree of rhythmic hand-independence is required. This involves a listening in order to control both the hands, a flexibility of listening which only comes after a large amount of drill in which one of the hands can operate almost automatically (usually a left-hand chord pattern). Although I am now much further than I was with simple patterns in the left hand (such as simple blues, tango, calypso and ostinato bass lines), much work would be required in order to make the more complex harmonic changes (required from common jazz standards) in combination with interesting rhythmic work. I found myself moving between working on the rhythmic bass line or working on certain patterns or drills with the right hand. Without having an enjoyable music-making context, this quickly turned into pure drill (like trying to play all octatonic scales, series of fourths) or too-often-stopped repetitions.

more productive way. Without discussion, this switch to swing seems imposed from outside according to some arbitrary standard, and that can generate resistance. I think that this was not due to an unwillingness of the participants, but because we just do not know how to make the switch without losing our musical autonomy. Of course, hours of practice and devoted listening would have probably helped all of us make the switch to swing. Perhaps percussion lessons would have given us a more grounded and embodied feeling for jazz rhythms. And I think that seeing at least one female example would have certainly helped. By this, I do not mean that we as females should incorporate the macho elements of jazz. In fact, a female jazz performer might help reveal and thus deflate the exaggerated aggressiveness and ‘strutting cock’ mannerisms of the jazz podium. What I would like to say is that if we are expected to learn something within a jazz idiom, we should be given the time and the training which would help us to embody the music in our own way. This also means much searching until a certain style is found that the players can identify with. To be fair, Delfos did work seriously with our own non-jazz-based ideas for improvisation, however there was a strong push toward working within a jazz idiom within the lessons.

Have I now strayed a bit from the topic of listening while discussing rhythm? Perhaps a good question would be: is rhythm heard or is it felt in the movements of the body and in the movements of the body with the instrument? How much does a difficulty with a certain rhythm have to do with listening and how much does that have to do with bodily experience? I think that a hesitancy to express the groove with the body did play a role in hindering us from really swinging. Is this related to gender, or is it more related to the way the classical instrumentalist is trained to use her body with her instrument? I think it is more of the later. Although I never had the opportunity to see a male in the lessons with Delfos, I think he might have experienced the same difficulties, perhaps even more severely due to the even greater hesitancy of men to dance and move to music in Anglo-North European cultures. In fact, this is again one of those rather tragic paradoxes. In our culture, in informal situations, women are more likely to dance, while on stage, all one sees are male instrumentalists gyrating and swinging (or playing jazz in a highly intellectual way). There is perhaps no ‘solution’ other than societal change and more women and men taking the risks of stepping around gender limitations. Ways of hearing and expressing rhythm is different within every type of music, and between every performer.<sup>23</sup> The music produced by students who do not exhibit anything that you as a teacher recognize as a feel for rhythm can be very disturbing and frustrating. In line with my work with my students on improvisation now, I am asking them to improvise a rhythm. Rhythms are often produced that are repetitions of a number of hits on the drum, however one would find it fairly impossible to dance or move to them. Listening to the rhythms your students produce in this way might be one window into understanding their conception of rhythm. Like the suggestion I made that we get involved in percussion lessons, I believe that unless a student is given a basis of basic, bodily understanding (i.e. moving, dancing) of certain rhythmic idioms, they will continually produce music on their instrument that is considered arrhythmic.

In thinking about what I have learned about improvising melodically in the lessons, the most important things were: not getting stuck in a single type of melodic improvisation (usually this entails getting stuck in a certain rhythmic pattern which then quickly becomes predictable), do not be afraid to start after the beginning of the schema or to repeat notes, work on short, punchy melodies as well as melodies that extend longer than a couple of bars, do not be afraid of silence and work on finishing a phrase in a way that gives the next phrase a new impulse. However, all these characterize something that one can not hear in the inner ear if one does not have a long background of dealing with improvised music (both listening and producing it). I would like at this point to refer to an important skill for the improviser who wishes to guide her performance with her inner ear: the ability to rapidly find and play a heard interval on the instrument. In other words, an imagined auditory stimulus creates an almost-instinctive, highly-trained, reaction on the instrument. In her paper *Improvisation and the Brain*, Dyson refers to this skill in a number of ways. In speaking of her own improvising experience, she says: “The optimum feeling of improvisation is therefore being free to choose exactly what to play the instant before and it being right for the moment and consonant with everything going on around.”<sup>24</sup> In the section on motor learning she says:

Clearly in the case of musical improvisation the movements of the limbs [ . . . ] are directly related to imagined or sung auditory sounds [ . . . ] These particular motor pathways relate a sound to a

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<sup>23</sup> There might be some professional performers who feel that Delfos does not swing at all, either, according to their standards.

<sup>24</sup> Dyson, 2.

space and indeed a great deal of the practice of improvisation involves feeling for and finding on an instrument, a heard interval.

This is apparently not dependent at all on a theoretical understanding of the music being played. Instead, the melodic improviser develops a sense of what sounds right in a certain rhythmical and harmonic context by listening extensively to music within the idiom and spending hours reproducing the music of others or certain jazz standards. On the basis of this extensive sound experience and embodied musical practice, she then seeks out new and individual ways of expressing the music. David Sudnow's account of how he learned to play jazz "rejects the notion that internal theoretical knowledge guided by cognitive processes informs body movement and suggests that body movements 'learn' where to place themselves in relation to spatial, [. . .] and in this case auditory parameters and feedback."<sup>25</sup> The question of what is the body's task and what is the brain's becomes very hard to distinguish. In Sudnow's account, as he was coming closer to becoming an expert jazz player, his playing became a mixture of visual or conceptual patterns and heard ideas. Finally, his hand began reaching for notes without him making the conscious decision. Ear (auditory imagination) and hand become an instinct, set in motion, usually with the desire to produce something at least fairly original, in the process of creating music, or communicating with music. Some of my best moments in practicing were when I was softly singing with my playing, letting my voice and my ear guide my hand. This takes time, but the integration of mind and body produced, at least in me, a much better feeling than simply (and usually too quickly) running off some worked-out, cognitively understood exercises. The mind/body separation becomes erased in the practice of improvising.

I am still trying to work out how to teach improvisation within a certain schema to my students. (Listen to CD 'Students improvising within a schema'.) For the most part, I do not say very much, just encouraging them to try a larger range of notes, try two hands, try answering one hand with the other, giving little sounds of encouragement when it really swings. I do enjoy jazz, but experience a lack of time to really work on it. And my deepest improvisational interests lie elsewhere, free improvisation. If I do not develop more with jazz, then I cannot see my students progressing beyond an elementary understanding of blues schema's and other simple bass ostinatos with pentatonic riffs. I do not mean to say that my students and I do not enjoy these simple schemas. We do! However, students who wish to specialize more in jazz should be sent on to another teacher after a few years.

I would like to include one more anecdote. In the context of these lessons by Delfos, toward the end of our period of working together and with the goal of working out a piece for performance, I formed an ensemble two other music pedagogy students, a cellist and recorder player. The recorder player suggested *Circle Songs* of Bobby McFerrin<sup>26</sup> as a model for the improvisation. Interestingly enough, this music fits in quite well with descriptions of a feminist aesthetics of music mentioned in 'Libidinal music pedagogy and feminist aesthetics: avoiding essentialism and dichotomies'. As the CD title suggest, the music is based on repetitions, circles of wordless songs with a chantlike structure, constantly changing, constantly returning. In the CD inlay McFerrin says "I've always felt that singing a song without words makes one song a thousand songs because the people who hear it can bring their own stories to it." Singing for him is a community experience of prayer and meditation. After we had selected one track to use as inspiration, and after we had examined and worked on the harmonic and melodic musical material, we sat down to our first rehearsal where we would decide 'what to do' with the material. Paper and pens came out, and a schema was to be written down. It did not feel right to me, so I intervened with something like "so, here we are with our papers and pens again. If I don't have something more like a story, a combined visualization of the music which I can share with you, then when we sit in Studio III to perform this, I am going to be completely dry, relying on this schema and my technical skills, which are not so great anyway." The others agreed, and we created a sort of 'vision' of what was going to happen in the piece. We were nomads. The beginning would be the sands and winds of an early desert morning. Then we would start moving toward a city. At the city we would be surrounded by a bazaar with riotous noises. Then we would pass by a woman mourning. And then peace would descend again. Although the linear nature of this story is in contradiction to the circular nature of the *Circle Songs*, and the climax in the middle rather predictable, we were able to work with this 'schema' in a much more intuitive way with room for continual changes, sometimes quite large ones, each time we played it together. Interestingly enough, one of the students commented "don't tell Rolf about this idea. He will only laugh at us." We never told him, so I do not know if he would have laughed, and he was positive about the fact that we

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<sup>25</sup> Dyson, 12, referring to David Sudnow's *The Ways of the Hand*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978)

<sup>26</sup> 1997 Sony Music Entertainment



were (finally) working together. But the fact that we were not to reveal our secret is quite revealing: a type of musical structuring that we could all relate to, which worked for us, was thought to be silly and a bit shameful within a jazz context.<sup>27</sup> Was it too soft, too non-structured, too non-formalized?

Was it a negative experience, this clashing of two worlds: pedagogy students and jazz department? No, not at all, in the sense that every step outside the area in which we feel safe can reveal habitual ways of being and can create the challenge of experimenting with another means of expression. However, I do think that in the beginning of the course, an open discussion of what it means to work within a jazz idiom, or the possibility of not working within a jazz idiom, would have been clarifying for many in the group. Also, a goal, stated from the beginning, that students should form their own improvising groups, actively searching out performers to listen to and emulate, might have led to more motivation, more independent work and thus more growth. The tendency as a music pedagogue is to remain hanging in the idea of ‘what kind of materials can I develop for my students?’ I think that the first job of the teacher is to develop an improvising passion and from that passion experience personal growth in improvising. Then she can investigate her own progress, using that as a model for her own teaching.

### Non-critical listening within musical exploration

Is there an other type of listening, one that lets go of preconceptions and musical goals and listens to the music as it is at the moment? Is there a ‘non-critical listening to/in musical exploration’? Is this a desirable type of listening for a music teacher to develop, seeing that the *raison d’être* of the teacher is to guide the student’s musical ears? But then we assume that there is a musical mold and that the student must be fitted into that mold by the teacher. Without such a mold are both the piano teacher and the student to wander around in a non-progression of musical mish-mash and infantile bangings on the piano? Is that not what we as music teachers are so afraid of, that someone will catch us and/or our students in the middle of unbridled pingling and banging, squeaking and squawking? How would it really be if the teacher could shift between more critical or diagnostic listening and a different kind of listening, which takes joy in the discoveries in the musical mo(ve)ment?

Musical exploration, immersing oneself in the musical moment, letting go of the urge to stand outside of the music/sound, critique it or shape it into some preconceived idea of what it should be. However, this place of focusing only on the musical moment, is a very, very difficult place to be for musicians. Music *should* have form. Music *should* be interesting. Music *should* convey a musical idea. Music *should* have some kind of development. In his book *Sounding the Full Circle* (1988)<sup>28</sup>, violinist, improviser and composer Malcolm Goldstein is always going back to the vibrating body, the musical moment. An extremely sensual writer, he brings us back to our sensing experience. In the section ‘The Gesture of Improvisation’ (1982), containing thoughts, reflections and questions regarding percussion music, one finds a glimpse of the core of this type of musical practice:

Explore the sound of a single stroke. Hear clearly the sound – its articulation, the overtones of its center and the resonance following – to experience its particular presence; with awareness of the physical gesture that creates/is at one with the sound.

Use various objects/instruments (wood, skin, membranes, metal, paper, etc.) to be sounded using various objects to articulate the sound, including your own hand(s).

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<sup>27</sup> Or is it another secret? When I look at my motivation to work in this way, what comes up is a desire for intimacy. I wanted to be with my partners on a musical adventure, which might change, but we would stay with each other because we had agreed on where we were going. I experienced the schema as something that would separate us, that would stand in between us and our adventure. Is this a feminine approach to music? It was, for me, certainly an approach based on my desire for an other type of relationship with my playing partners, a desire also to be with them in the music. And I did enjoy the sensual nature of our playing together. This is an intimacy that improvisers experience, which can cause excitement as well as homophobic reactions. Like football players, male (and female) jazz musicians may keep a layer of aggression over their playing in order to veil the homosocial desire and pleasure it reveals. (The concept ‘male homosocial desire’ comes from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. See Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 179.) This desire for and display of the pleasure of musical intimacy is intrinsically tied with how we are allowed to express ourselves as gendered beings. Women taking visual sensual pleasure in playing with each other, in breathing, moving, beating together. Oh dear!

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.mcgill.ca/improv/mgoldstein/sounding/> for a copy of his book. (Last visited 30 March 2005)



Hear the silence after the sound,  
with awareness of your body  
within that silence.  
Then another stroke, etc. . . .

Hear the sound as responsive to/at one with the  
energy, of the stroke rooted in the body/needs  
in the presence of the person (you) at that moment.<sup>29</sup>

Is there place for this type of sensual appreciation of sound, which is completely involved in the moment? I believe that this type of enjoyment, of exploration of sound, removed from fear of failure, is at the heart of the renewal of creativity. Without allowing for ‘accidents’, for surprising, unintended sound production, with rule upon rule about ‘correct sound production’ the possibilities of sound output become increasingly limited. This type of open, sensitive, appreciative exploration of sound is something which is lacking in the typical conservatory education, and thus often in the background of music teachers. How would our practicing, our music-making change if we took time every day to take pleasure in new sounds, in free exploration? I took out the vertical panel above the keyboard so that the strings would be exposed and gave each of my students a wooden mallet to hit or stroke the strings and a glass bottle to hold or rub against the strings as they vibrated. It was beautiful to see how some of them became completely absorbed in listening.

In April of last year, I put five hundred flyers in the mailboxes of students at the conservatory, asking if they would like to take part in a Creative Musical Environment (see Appendix 3 for a short description of the process of organizing a performance given by this group, CME). I received eight responses, and in the end, six students gathered for our first free improvisation session late in October 2004. For me, this was an amazing experience. It was the first time in my whole life of making music with other people that I was not trying to reach some preconceived goal. I was not thinking critically about anything, I was just responding to the musical moment with sound from myself or my instrument. I was continually making decisions, but the decisions were caught up in the moment of listening, caught up in the musical energy of the moment. Afterwards, I felt like I was flying. However, the feeling can quickly change to doubt. This was a thrilling participatory experience, but was the music worth listening to? I still do not have the answer to this question. Listeners are often searching for some familiar pattern of melody, form, rhythm, which they can hold on to, and which gives them the feeling that they understand the music. Listening to this music made in the moment would require an other type of listening, one also lost in the sounding moment. As a listener, this requires a feeling of letting go, being willing to experience whatever is happening, to go with the music without letting expectations be raised or disappointed. Like trying to let thoughts go while meditating, this proves to be very difficult. However I do believe that this type of uncritical listening/exploration is important for musicians, to be turned to in all stages of musical development. It requires a release of fear of failure, a concentration on only what is happening. Perhaps most importantly, this can be a moment of meditative appreciation for sound, providing the body and mind with peace and focus.

### **Critical listening to/in free improvisation in order to create an interesting work in real time**

The opening quote of this chapter is by Pauline Oliveros, who has devoted her life to developing a culture of listening. Her work emphasizes attentional strategies and improvisational skills. Myth and ritual, meditative and physical consciousness-raising form the context of much of her music making.<sup>30</sup> The Pauline Oliveros Foundation was founded in 1985, with creativity forming an essential part of the mission statement:

Founded on the conviction that creativity forms the vital spirit of public and personal growth, the Pauline Oliveros Foundation fosters the creation of innovative art and associated technologies, and cultivates a global perspective in the arts and education through the practice of Deep Listening®.

[ . . . ]

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> See the website for information over Deep Listening® projects, performances and retreats under <http://www.deeplisting.org/> (Last visited 3 April 2005).

Deep Listening is a philosophy and practice developed by Pauline Oliveros that distinguishes the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the voluntary selective nature of listening. The result of the practice cultivates appreciation of sounds on a heightened level, expanding the potential for connection and interaction with one's environment, technology and performance with others in music and related arts.<sup>31</sup>

Her online article, *Quantum Listening*<sup>32</sup>, contains many insights into her ideology of listening, however, the optimal way to understand her work would be to explore her compositions or go to a retreat. Unfortunately, I have only had the time to enter her compositional work by reading some of her articles. However, I have been able to listen several times to *Suiren*, performed with Stuart Dempster, and Panaiotis, from the album *Deep Listening* (1989)<sup>33</sup>. This work imbues me with a deep sense of calm and alertness. Reading her online work *The Roots of the Moment*<sup>34</sup>, I was struck by a sense of connection with her ideas and compositional strategies. In *The Roots of the Moment* she says that her way of composing, which does not have written notes and which requires participants to invent pitches and rhythms with the help of recipes or metaphors, is either highly respected or dismissed as not being real music by other musicians. She says:

The central concern in all my prose or oral instructions is to provide attentional strategies for the participants. Attentional strategies are nothing more than ways of listening and responding in consideration of oneself, others and the environment. The result of using these strategies is listening. If performers are listening then the audience is also likely to listen.<sup>35</sup>

In the same article is a description of a piece for voices or instruments, *Three Strategic Options*<sup>36</sup>, which would form a very challenging basis for another workshop with a small group of students, using percussion, piano and voice. I consider it a free improvisation based upon a schema, a schema based on specific types of performance timing. Instructions:

Listen together. When you are ready to begin choose an option. Return to listening before choosing another option. Options are to be freely chosen throughout the duration of the piece. The piece ends when all return to listening together. 1) Sound before another performer 2) Sound after another performer 3) Sound with another performer. If performing as a soloist substitute sound from the environment for another performer.<sup>37</sup>

She goes on to explain the shift of attention with each option. The first option could be considered competitive, the second requiring patience, and the third requiring an alert and intuitive listening in order to begin and end together. (Some training in listening, such as that gained in a soundwalk, would certainly help the students feel free and competent to work together on such a piece.) I believe a group of three students with teacher would provide a manageable number of sound sources, with the option of beginning with only the first two ways of sounding in order to make the task less complex. In the beginning, the young participants would probably be so intent on their own decision-making and playing, that they would not be able to listen well to the other players, much less to the 'composition' as a whole. A tendency of inexperienced players is to rush due to an over-eagerness to play their own 'part'. This consuming attention, which in the end restricts the listening ability, is exactly what is worked on in this process. The players must always consider each other before they play. By recording the work and listening to it, the teacher could bring the attention of the participants back to the 'observer' level, where the participants could better hear themselves in action and in relation to the other players. Through repetitions of playing and listening, students could grow in a listening awareness of the other players, allowing them the time to make their contributions while simultaneously carrying out the tasks of

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<sup>31</sup> See website <http://www.pofinc.org/index2.html> (Last visited 2 April 2005).

<sup>32</sup> *Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)*, (Plenum Address International Congress on Culture and Humanity in the New Millennium: The Future of Human Values Chinese University, Hong Kong, January 2000) (Last viewed, March 1, 2005 [http://www.deeplisting.org/pauline/writings/quantum\\_listening.pdf](http://www.deeplisting.org/pauline/writings/quantum_listening.pdf)).

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.epitonic.com/artists/paulineoliverosstuardempsterandpanaiotis.html> (Last viewed 2 April 2005). a work recorded in October of 1988 in which she, Stuart Dempster, and Panaiotis were strapped into harnesses and lowered into an empty two million gallon water cistern. There are no electronics, just whistling, a garden hose, the human voice and the cistern's 45-second natural reverberation.

<sup>34</sup> *The Roots of the Moment: Interactive Music*, (a journal of new and experimental composition, number 1, April 1995) (Last viewed, March 1, 2005 <http://www.deeplisting.org/pauline/writings/roots.html>)

<sup>35</sup> Paragraph 7.

<sup>36</sup> Not yet tried with my piano students!

<sup>37</sup> Paragraph 5.

planning a musical task to perform and when to perform it (always in combination with the sound production of the other players).

I would now like to turn to a fantasy of Malcolm Goldstein's:

Once upon a time, I imagined a piece of music in which I invited several musicians to my house to play some music. When they sit down to begin, and finding no music, they ask, "Where is the music? . . . to which I respond, "*You are the music.*"

At the time I smiled at the idea, but later, as it lingered in my mind, I came to recognize the radical implications even within its simplicity.<sup>38</sup>

The sheets of music are replaced by musical bodies. A completely embodied music. Would this be possible? Would it be possible or desirable to remove oneself from all musical texts? Texts meaning more than the musical notes, but also all the musical patterns that have been inscribed on our mind/bodies. In examining these questions, I would like to discuss my experience within a free improvisation group in which we are the music. Along the way, I will touch on the last of the five types of listening: 'critical listening to/in free improvisation in order to create an interesting work in real time'. I should say here that I am nowhere close to a coherent theorizing about what is happening in the group. I am not sure I will ever want to. I do think that the types of musical problems that are faced are very essential questions that any musician desiring to create music might want to consider. Also, my role as 'embodied music' in the group challenges me again to look beyond my own gendered stereotypes as well as to stand up for my way of experiencing and expressing music.

A group of four players, myself included, who were involved in the CME ensemble and my concert in December 2004, decided to go further together and form the group which is called FreeQ (Free Quartet). The group consists of Helen Thomson, soprano and sonologist; Ronald Boersen, violist and sonologist; Emlyn Stam, violist; and me, Sharon Stewart, pianist. My personal goal was to discover more sounds, different techniques, different ways of making music on and off the piano, to learn more about interactive music and electroacoustical techniques and to work on all this within a group with the objective of performing. We have been rehearsing together since the end of January. Our practices have consisted mostly of action/reaction type free improvisations, trying different schemas for free improvisation, experimenting with interactive music processing developed by Ronald and Helen, and discussing all these different processes. A great number of basic musical issues have come up in combination with questions. Questions of musical value: how did that last improvisation go, was it satisfactory, for whom, for whom not, for an imaginary audience? Questions of musical development: how do we improve as a group, and what group or individual practice techniques could be used to improve? Questions of performance process: do we use aleatory techniques, can we give different members in the group the role of the conductor at different times and how, how do we feel about audience participation? Questions of human/machine interaction: is the computer simply a tool or is it considered an equal member of the ensemble? What have also surfaced are great differences in discussing the music produced in such a musical experience: does one speak in formalistic terms, emotional terms, expressions of intent? Does one speak of the form, the interaction among players, the enjoyment of the players, the uniqueness of sound color, the creation of a certain mood, the power of emotional conviction? How do we react to a teacher who says: "action, reaction is the simplest form of improvisation. Action, reaction tends to fall into a predictable pattern and becomes boring for the listener. I want to hear more, how you can follow a musical thought. I want to hear a difference between two compositions." Although I am talking here of the most confusing first stages of working together as a group, these questions, involving ways of talking about, valuing, shaping, developing and experiencing music, will always be there. There will be no final resolutions, only a growing understanding of each other and our ways of making music.

And all these questions show that we are listening critically to what we are doing, developing as a group our musical aesthetics, which may change from one performance to another, one piece to another. Is it possible for us in FreeQ to remove ourselves from all musical texts, inscriptions that shape our actions? Is 'free improvisation' really free? I do not think so. We have all been involved for years in different types of music, mostly classical or experimental, and this has shaped our bodies, our ways of playing our instruments, our instinctive ways of shaping musical ideas. Even 'free improvisation' has a tradition and

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<sup>38</sup> Sounding the Full Circle, 27.

practice in Europe<sup>39</sup> of at least a few decades. I am already trying to listen to more of this music to get a feel for what works for me and what does not. It is through this listening, as mentioned earlier, that I hope to grow, get new ideas, new inspiration for working on the sounds I make. Besides Pauline Oliveros, some women in the field (of experimental music, going beyond yet related to free improvisation) who have caught my attention are: Ellen Fullman, sculptor and creator of the Long String Instrument; Zeena Parkins, harpist and sound artist; Ikue Mori, performer and ‘wizard’ with drum machines; and Laurie Anderson, multi-media recording and performance artist<sup>40</sup>. By listening and experiencing more music and performance situations, I can get a grasp of what is possible, as well as develop my own language for the musical or performance choices that I would like to make. From discussions on technique within the group, I am being led to try out more atonal patterns on the piano, because that matches the taste of some members. This means a more concentrated focus on intervals and intervallic relationships, which means a developing of my inner ear – instrument connection, as mentioned earlier, with a certain sound goal, a goal based on conventions or rules of the organic musical system we are building up. Even the interactivity of the computer might be considered a kind of text, a program which shapes the music, even if it is in random or unexpected ways. It is clear in the group that we are interested in forms beyond action and reaction, and we turn voluntarily toward musical texts to give the music another layer of form, structure, development, intent, etc. Some examples are: musical graphics and schematics presented by Ronald, poetry provided by me, and “because a circle is not enough” (a concept/structure for improvisation concerned with repetition as process and with alternating manners of focus/attention) taken from Goldstein (See Appendix 4) and modified for our use. These texts serve to provide a focus or musical path that can give security by forming a point of reference and measure of difference (change from one performance to another). So, no, I do not think that free improvisation leads toward a musical utopia of freedom from text.

How does one listen in such a group? The process of listening becomes extremely rich. Given that the basis is ‘free improvisation’, criticism at all is immediately suspect. If someone says for example ‘it was not good because there was no form’, then they first need to explain what they mean by form, why they feel that is necessary and why they did not hear that. Others can then offer their own suggestions. A critical type of listening requires that the performer both remain in the moment, offering inspiring, challenging or complementing musical ideas while at the same time keeping a sort of imprint of the total musical experience in their head. This encourages a certain type of musical memory which I hope will develop with practice. Recording devices can help greatly, allowing the players to take more the role of an audience. Listening well can provide power. The player who can best recreate in words what happened in the improvisation will probably be given the most credibility when she offers advice. I have been confronted by the fact that I listen very intuitively, more interested in the group dynamics than the music (perhaps the two are for me inseparable). I will call this a listening for intent, listening and playing with a

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<sup>39</sup> See and listen on the European Free Improvisation Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/> (Last visited 4 April 2005). Refer again to improvisers from the Bay Area <http://www.bayimproviser.com/> (Last visited 4 April 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Besides Pauline Oliveros, some women who have caught my attention with their ideas and music are Zeena Parkins who “has also extended the language of the acoustic harp with the inventive use of unusual playing techniques, preparations, and layers of digital and analog processing. Zeena makes use of anything within reach as a possible tool with which she can enhance the sonic capabilities of her harps. She accurately describes her harp as a ‘sound machine of limitless capacity’ [ . . . ] She has blurred boundaries between improvised and composed, acoustic and electric, digital and analog, and processed and concrete sounds to create many of her pieces. She achieves this engagement of contrasts by using instrument blending and morphing, the recombination of cut-up sounds to form odd and breathtaking soundscapes, and scoring and formal constructions derived from extra-musical sources.”

(from her Biography <http://www.zeenaparkins.com/html/mainframe/bio.html> Last visited 5 April 2005).

Ellen Fullman’s Long String Instrument is a 90 foot instrument with 100 strings at waist height. Three people play it, bowing it with rosin-coated fingertips. <http://www.deepmedia.org/ellenfullman/production/bio.html> To listen, go to: <http://www.epitonic.com/artists/ellenfullman.html>. (Last visited 5 April 2005).

This artist fascinates me, but I need more time to grasp what she is doing. According to one review, Ikue Mori “uses drum machines more creatively, uniquely and innovatively than just about any techno artist you could think of. [ . . . ] Ikue ups the ante by shaping, stretching and shifting beats and rhythm so much that it’s nothing like you’d think of to back up other instruments”. (See <http://www.furious.com/perfect/ikuemori.html> for interview, Last visited 5 April 2005). Mori moved from Tokyo to New York in 1977, beginning her career playing drums for the seminal “no wave” group DNA, an influential group which broke up in 1982. She then began improvising live and recording with experimental musicians, most notably John Zorn. By 1985, she had completely abandoned the standard drum set in favor of her own unique drum machine/sampler set-up. Her signature instrument evolved into a highly customized arrangement of three self-programmed drum machines which she could trigger simultaneously to perform live, as well as for use recording.

I am hoping at some point to see Anderson live, as I think there is no other way to truly experience her work. See <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/anderson/> (Last visited 5 April 2005) for a website with many images of her work.

feeling for the intentions of the other players. The first few times, my feeling was “we are not listening enough to each other”. However because I could not word this in concrete musical terms, the other players had no musical grounds by which to understand my ‘feeling’ and thus were skeptical about altering their behavior. If I had chosen to say it in more formalistic terms, it would have been something like: “we are filling the silence with seemingly equally spaced noises, endlessly going on. There are no spaces for silence, and the shaping of phrases do not seem to coincide with the beginning or endings of the phrases of the other players or join together to form one larger phrase which would have a body of its own.” This has caused me to reflect on my own intuitive listening style, one which is more concerned with how I feel when I improvise. If I were to turn it to a compositional style, this focus on intent might become dialogic, with a script of intent<sup>41</sup> rather than playing with the physical parameters of the sound produced (i.e. intensity, duration, frequency, attack, etc.). This type of music would certainly be just as concerned with the relationships (and a depiction of the relationships) of the physical musicians as it is with the music. I will have to investigate this in the future, also exploring this as an interesting way in which to play with expected musical gendered identities.

In ‘feminist theory, music theory, and the mind/body problem’<sup>42</sup>, Susan Cusick suggests a theory of musical bodies which would examine different musical texts from the viewpoint of the performer’s experience playing the music. She says about an embodied music theory:

If ultimately musical performances can be deciphered as simultaneously individual and social enactments of power (control of the self and control of tools; cooperation with, support of, domination of one’s companions), then we might learn a great deal about how the norms of gender pass sideways through society by watching them pass through such bodily actions as musical performance. Indeed, we might discover implicit as well as explicit gendering attached to certain musically performative acts, from which we could learn enormous amounts about how music teaches or (possibly more importantly) unteaches gender. For music draws its performers’ (and possibly its listeners’) bodies into enacting physical and psychic intimacy with [ . . . ] music’s body, sound itself. These enactments of intimacy allow for play with the power dualities implied by our contemporary gender system. Thus, it may be that we will discover that much of the pleasure in music is afforded by the opportunity it gives us to play ourselves free of gender’s rigidities.<sup>43</sup>

What does she mean “play our selves free of gender’s rigidities?” Should women take on the dominant technological roles, and men the submissive natural roles? Perhaps. Music allows us to stretch our identities, express a range of physical skills and powerful emotions. In the roles of its members, the group FreeQ has already to some extent played itself free of gender’s rigidities. The soprano is a sound artist, already breaking down the image of the singing woman as being non-technical. I am playing the piano, which is a fairly non-gendered role.<sup>44</sup> Violas, the instruments of Emlyn and Ronald, are not typically dominant, with their warm sound and a tradition of a supporting role, gendering them somewhat traditionally as feminine. Ronald is also a sound artist, which might be seen as a more typical role for a man, associated with technology. However, the combination of viola and electronics is slightly more unusual. Helen, Ronald and I are interested in composing (providing performance ideas) for the group. Emlyn is interested in playing. The role playing could go much deeper and more subtle, related to the musical texts we play, perhaps experimented with in something like the composition idea I mentioned in note 41. I envision this as a process of discovery for myself as well as something which hopefully will happen in cooperation with the group.

There are three areas that I would like to briefly explore regarding about the balance of power within the group FreeQ. The one has to do with levels of experience with technology, the second with performance and improvisational experience and the third with using the dominant ways of talking about music that

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<sup>41</sup> One example might be: The violas are caught in miserable isolation. They keep saying the same things over and over, in endless pleading. The soprano tries to cut through their desolation, using different tactics to break up their obsessive focus of their misery. The piano makes a mockery of the three with echoes and mimicking of the different voices. Slowly the soprano becomes involved with the obsession, and the three slowly diminish into nothing while the piano and the interactive electronics build into a huge wall of sound.

<sup>42</sup> In Krims, A. (ed.) *Music/Ideology: Resisting the Aesthetic*. (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 37-55.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>44</sup> Fun experiments would be to stretch myself on all ends of the gender spectrum, to work on the aggressive, explosive, clinical sides of the instrument as well as to expose the sensual sides, with full-arm playing techniques and undulating motions and touches.

are accepted in the conservatory environment. Because both Helen and Ronald are experienced with processing signals and designing interactive musical interfaces, they can make decisions in this area beyond the expertise of Emlyn and me. We, and I think I can speak for Emlyn, are not equipped (yet) to evaluate what they do on a technical level. In this sense, Emlyn and I will not be able to make equal contributions to the group as far as the actual content of the sound processing. However, we will certainly be able to express opinions as to the way electroacoustic sound is included as part of the performing/composing process or on the quality or nature of the sound. These opinions might be expressed in a form of a desire (i.e. "I would like a fuzzy, non-articulated sound field that seems to hang over us like a mist" or "I would like a delay of three seconds with a sharp explosion of sound") based on our increased familiarity with the music, what is possible and the aesthetic choices that come from this. Or expressed as a willingness, or not, to allow the electronics to take a leading role or become dominant in a piece. Our level of participation will also depend on our own interest and the willingness of Helen and Ronald to share their knowledge and the decision-making. Considering performance and improvisational experience, the other group members have performing degrees, while I will have a teaching degree. I notice that this creates some hesitancy within me to initiate ideas or take leadership in decision-making about what we will rehearse. I think that this is more an internalized limitation which I impose on myself, which I hope will be with reduced with the freeing of more time to focus on the contribution that I wish to make. I notice that especially Emlyn and Ronald, who have had extensive performance experience, are quicker to make judgments like 'this is Bartók', or 'this is Shostakovich', connections which I would not immediately make. This type of knowledge carries a certain power, because such a statement implies that what is being done is not original, a copy of another composer. And as I mentioned earlier, experience in improvisation equips you to hear more things, and this hearing and expressing what you have heard gives you the power of credibility when making suggestions for improvement.

Finally, perhaps the most obvious revelation of power for me was in (non)accepted use of language to discuss music. As I mentioned earlier, I have an intuitive way of experiencing and thus talking about music which I find hard to translate into more formalistic descriptions. Speaking in terms of gendered dichotomies, my intuitive/feminine way of expressing music resists translation into a formalistic/masculine way of describing music, mainly because this formalistic way is always leaving out some important part of my experience. One expression that popped out of my mouth was: "It was like you were occupying the left side of my body." (Helen was sitting and singing very close to me, on my left-hand side.) This can be interpreted as being 'flakey' or a bit 'new-age'. Apparently, which actually surprised me, these types of comments were not at all appreciated by some members of the group. Perhaps it seems to be musically useless information. However, this was how I experienced the musical situation. Perhaps if we examined it further, we could work on ways of positioning ourselves that would add or take away from this feeling of being filled with each others musical sounds, and perhaps this would be an important dimension of each piece, our bodily proximity, our positioning in respect to each other. In this sense, an exploration of the intuitive would lead to a practical decision that would add another dimension to each piece. Ronald told me that he used to express music in more 'flakey' ways, but that it has been drilled out of him in order to survive within the culture of the conservatory, specifically the sonology department. Although I do not have concrete first-hand examples of the types of language used to describe music within the sonology department, it was clear from his description that a formalistic way of describing music is dominant with a corresponding disregard for other ways of expressing music. If I compare this type of language to the language of Goldstein's *Sounding the Full Circle*, it is clear that we are talking about two very different worlds of reproduction of experience, musical emphasis, and descriptions of musical process. I experience the formalistic way of speaking about music as leaving out a very important part of the intuitive, feeling way that I experience making music. Thus, I do not want to submit to changing completely the way I talk about music. On the other hand, I do appreciate that it is important that other members of the group understand what I am trying to say and are able to translate this into concrete musical action. Again, one runs into the problem of saying that this intuitive way of expressing musical critique is feminine. My concern is that these ways of expressing are being suppressed because they are considered feminine. I want to point out my slight hesitancy to include this small description of the social processes, the way we enact power within this improvisational group I am a part of. This type of social analysis might be considered a betrayal of the inner workings of a group. However, I believe that one should not be afraid to talk of power structures, as an (always incomplete and situated) analysis of these structures might also offer the opportunity to act in different ways. Playing with power, playing with musical expectations, embodying other ways of being. I believe this can give

improvisational groups and their music an extra dimension of creative inspiration as well as a way to grip the audience's attention, helping us and them to listen in a different way.

### **An experiment in building music with my students**

As I mentioned in the first section 'Libidinal music pedagogy', I am enamored by the first two CD's of *Zap Mama*, under the artistic guidance of Marie Daulne.<sup>45</sup> While looking through my CD collection and considering which music I really love, these two CD's were on the top of the pile. One characteristic of their music is rhythm: layers of invigorating rhythms produced by percussion or the singing of short repeated lines. Because rhythm is often such a problem with students, I decided to use this as inspiration and start from a repeated, internalized rhythm (which the students invent) that can be combined with other layers of rhythm (the inventions of other students), gradually adding invented harmonies and improvisational parts. In the lessons, I gave each of my students a drum and asked them to beat their own a rhythm. When they were in groups of two<sup>46</sup>, I asked one of them to start with a rhythm and the other to join in (on her own drum) so that they sound like one drum. (Listen to CD 'improvised drum rhythms.')

At this point almost all my students have two rhythms that they have improvised. These rhythms will be 'their' rhythms and will form the basis of the improvisation. First we play the rhythm repeatedly on the drums. Then we transfer the rhythm to two notes on the piano, their choice. This can happen in many different ways (for example a d d a, d a a a, d d d a, etc.) and can happen in a changing, flexible way. Then they add other notes or motions for the rhythm in an exploratory way so that chords or clusters of sound are created. Two of my students are at the point where they have created a certain schema with their rhythms so that the two rhythms are repeated in a kind of alternating pattern. (Listen to CD 'created chord schemes with improvisation')

This is the point I am at currently. The next step is asking them to define an area of improvisation so that their partner (see note 46) can improvise on their rhythms. Because the piano cannot begin to recreate the flexibility and expressiveness of the voice, I will also ask them to come up with a chant that can be sung with the music or to introduce a certain sound to be played on percussion or on the strings or the body of the piano (extended techniques). If all goes well, to take the idea further, I will add complementary rhythms from other students which they can play along on percussion instruments to increase the rhythmic texture. My hope is that my eleven piano students will have eleven self-built improvisation schemes which they can play with their partners with extra layers of rhythm in a recital in June. In my wildest dreams we will ask the parents to participate by clapping the rhythm or chanting. In this way I want to create a rhythmic community experience that will get these Dutch people (the parents) out of their comfortable listening roles and let them experience what their children are doing. We almost certainly will not reach the artistic levels of *Zap Mama*, and the musical inspiration may no longer be recognizable, but I hope at least that everyone will wake up and start making music together. In this setting, improvised music can work to break down barriers of passive audience/active performer, hierarchy parent/child, involved music teacher/observing parents. In a sense I am looking to break down these social barriers and introducing a new way of experiencing music in the piano recital.

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<sup>45</sup> *Zap Mama*, (cram world, 1991) and *Zap Mama, Sabsylma* (cram world, 1994)

<sup>46</sup> I structure my lessons so that each student has a partner. One student comes for the first twenty minutes, then their partner comes and they have a twenty minute lesson together, then the first student leaves, and the last student has a twenty minute solo lesson .



## 2. Considering and applying technology

The relationship between gender and technology has been extensively researched and theorized about in the last decades.<sup>1</sup> The research typically investigates (office) workplaces or professional fields, technical universities, laboratories, subcultures of technology such as Webgrrls (female) or hackers' groups (male). In the process of getting my Masters in Music Pedagogy at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, I had one ICT course that lasted one trimester. Outside of this course, the combination music and technology was rarely discussed, apart from using tools like Sibelius to make worksheets for students. In this educational context, as well as in my four years of training as a pianist at the College of Music in Utrecht, new and innovative uses of technology seem far removed from the daily life of the music pedagogue. I am self-employed with my own private piano practice in Arnhem, and interaction with other colleagues within my field still comes mostly within the context of the conservatory environment rather than in a 'workplace' such as a music school,<sup>2</sup> so in that sense I am not in a work culture in which I am offered or required to work with certain technologies. My desire for technologies comes from a desire for tools that will make my work more efficient and effective. In the first part of this chapter, I will speak of certain technological tools that I long for. In this section I will use thoughts found in Michael Hamman's 'From Technical to Technological: the Imperative of Technology in Experimental Music Composition' (2002)<sup>3</sup> and Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' (1985)<sup>4</sup> while constructing my own observations about gender and technology through my experience as a music pedagogy student and as a music teacher in the Netherlands. I also refer to quotes from Judy Wajcman's *Feminism Confronts Technology* (1991), and Juliet Webster's 'Information Technology, Women and their Work' (1997)<sup>5</sup>, which gave me insights into the way technology is a social tool, created by and framing relationships and interactions. My premise is that if pedagogues and musicians are not the ones making tools for learning about and creating music, then all the products that are produced (and they will be produced!) will come from the commercial sector, with the likely result that safe products rather than daring or innovative ones will be marketed and sold. In the second part of this chapter, I will briefly discuss observations made of my piano students working with a creative music environment offered on the Web; my experience working with the music software MAGIX to make the piece Sirens, my first experience working with technology to create a piece of music; and a project in Norway to introduce children to electroacoustical music. This area of music and technology, electroacoustic music, fascinates me. Although this may initially seem like a very male-dominated genre of music, the ways of working with music which have been developed may be surprisingly related to a feminist music aesthetic as well as serving to break down traditional definitions of music masterpieces. Here I refer to an article by Simon Emmerson 'Composing strategies and pedagogy'<sup>6</sup>.

What I reveal in the coming paragraphs is my desire to have certain technological tools that would make my teaching practice more effective and more pleasurable (being able to spend more time in the lesson playing rather than on repetitive tasks)<sup>7</sup>. But whether or not these tools will be developed and whether or

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<sup>1</sup> Three books which I have briefly reviewed online are: Wajcman, Judy. *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), Grint, Keith and Rosalind Gill. *The Gender-Technology Relation: Contemporary Theory and Research* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995). And Berner, Boel, ed. *Gendered Practices: Feminist Studies of Technology and Society* (linköping, Sweden, Department of Technology and Social Change, 1997). These have been summarized by Krista Scott at <http://www.stumptuous.com/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> My work for the Project Inleidend Piano Onderwijs, mentioned a few times earlier, which involves investigating how piano/music can be taught to young children (4-6) brings me into regular contact with other piano teachers in a work/project environment.

<sup>3</sup> In *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 40(1), (Winter 2002). <http://www.shout.net/~mhamman/papers/>. (Last visited February 27, 2005) See his website <http://www.shout.net/~mhamman/index2.html> (Last visited 6 April 2005).

<sup>4</sup> In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 127-182

<sup>5</sup> In Berner, Boel, ed. *Gendered Practices: Feminist Studies of Technology and Society* (linköping, Sweden, Department of Technology and Social Change, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> In Clarke, Eric and Simon Emmerson (issue eds.), 'Music, Mind and Structure', Nigel Osborne (ed.) *Contemporary Music Review*, (Vol. 3, 1989) 133-144.

<sup>7</sup> On the website for Center for Children and Technology appeared a study in which men and women were asked to "imagine futuristic technological devices. Our purpose was to explore the symbolic aspects of technology by asking individuals to elaborate on their less-than-conscious associations to technology. Specifically, the adults were asked to write a reply to the following scenario: If you were writing a science fiction story in which the perfect instrument (a future version of your own) is described, what would it be like? The task was modified slightly for the adolescents, and read as follows: If you were writing a science fiction story about the perfect school computer (a fabulous machine), what would it be like?" For results, see Appendix 5.



not my individual desires will be considered are issues based on the power structures imbedded in the culture of technological production as well as the economic consideration that software is very expensive to produce. Software is standardized to appeal to the largest number of buyers possible, and according to Hamman (composer, theorist, writer, software design engineer<sup>8</sup>), “humans are only minimally involved during the formative stages of software design.” Undistributed source codes and software license agreements make it difficult to customize or share software. “The end result of all this is that software tools carry huge ideological and epistemological payloads that the human user must accept, silently or otherwise. [. . .] Such environments produce little in the way of pleasure – the tool, rather than being a ‘liberator’ of human beings, becomes an agent of repression, forcing the user to succumb to a normalizing view of her/his task environment.”<sup>9</sup> Certain ‘creative’ musical tools provide the user with a very limited number of choices which are fun to work with, but might be considered conflicting with the goal of developing ‘original’ music. When a student working with ‘Band-in-a-box’<sup>10</sup> pulls a certain drumbeat from the sound files, pastes it onto one track, copies another solo over it, adds some more percussion and a few riffs, is she making music, or just exhibiting non-musical computer skills? At what point would she be making music, and who can judge?<sup>11</sup> Many of the programs where a musician can develop her own sounds, manipulating sound waves by setting parameters for certain sound options within a software environment (Hamman mentions CSound, Modalys and Herbert Brun’s Sawdust<sup>12</sup>) are only, in practice, accessible to those who have long experience in the field (although it is conceivable that versions for amateurs could be developed), and as Hamman points out, these programs are a large step away from the process which precedes the distribution of such software: creating the correct algorithms and efficient data structures and implementing these correctly as program code in order to create useable and varied sonic representations. Before every tool for ‘creating’ music gets to the end user, a large number of decisions have been made as to the types of sound available, the ways sound can be manipulated and the interface the user will use to create what she would like to create with what is available. Electronic sound environments do not immediately create unlimited possibilities. And they are developed within companies or institutions that “have their own social organizations that strongly affect the nature of technology development,”<sup>13</sup> a topic I will touch upon later with its implications for the gendering of technological interaction.

On a slightly different subject, my online searches for tools for playing the piano led to a majority of sites marketed for an audience who wished to learn to play piano without a teacher<sup>14</sup>. Learning at a convenient time, pacing your own work, the advantage of paying less than for ‘real’ piano lessons were all cited. These types of packages are made (in this way) commercially interesting, whether or not the users actually end up working successfully with the program. I, as a piano teacher, am not interested in

<sup>8</sup> See his website <http://www.shout.net/~mhamman/index2.html> (Last visited 6 April 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Hamman, ‘Technological Determinism’, paragraphs 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> I do not remember where I have briefly worked with Band-in-a-Box before. I think I remember a slight feeling of (elitist) distaste. However, I could ask the question why does my improvisation experiment seem to me to be superior? Read the following description: “Band-in-a-Box has a significantly more complex user interface than the other programs[. . .]. Nonetheless, creating your song form couldn’t be easier. A Title Bar shows the song name, a musical style, a key signature, a tempo, and the range of measures that define a chorus length. Clicking on the numbers enclosed in parentheses lets you set the starting measure of your chorus. Measures preceding the start time play only once, automatically defining an intro section, and you can set a tag or coda or let the program automatically generate a two-bar ending. You can assign Part Markers for any group of measures to either an “a” or “b” substyle.” See [http://cmpg2003.emusician.com/interactive\\_composition\\_sftwr/](http://cmpg2003.emusician.com/interactive_composition_sftwr/) (Last viewed 5 April 2005)

<sup>11</sup> Consider the composer/performer Ikue Mori, mentioned earlier, who is a wizard with her own wildly creative use of drum machines, of all things!

<sup>12</sup> CSound (Vercoe 1988), Modalys (a software synthesis and music composition system based on modal synthesis),

<sup>13</sup> Hamman, ‘The computer and the construction of representation’, paragraph 1.

<sup>14</sup> Some of the many examples: Free online: <http://www.classicalsource.com/links/pianolessons.php>, <http://www.learnpianoonline.com/lesson1/page8.html>, *The Jazz Piano Masterclass* (CD ROM): <https://www.adgproductions.com/ssl/productdetails.asp?CATALOGNO=ADG626&searchFor=music+software> More popular music style, online <http://www.pianobychords.com/> Piano lessons for Kids (with Dan Delaney), online and with membership <http://www.pianoforkids.com/PianoForKids/default.asp#trialfree> *Piano Coach*, CD-ROM with over 400 lessons <http://www.musiccoach.com/pro/piano-lessons/piano-coach/index.htm> . There were no sights like this in Dutch that I could find. (Last visited 9 April 2005). Another common feature is very theoretically-oriented sites with long texts about music theory and a notation-based approach to music. (i.e. <http://www.dolmetsch.com/theoryintro.htm> is an example of a thorough, but extremely text-filled site. Teoría was more interactive <http://www.teoria.com/>. See <http://www.emusictheory.com/learning.html> for listing of more sites. (Last visited 9 April 2005).) As should be clear, my interest is more in musical sound, learning through learning first to manipulate sounds. I am also interested in programs by which students can play with sound, creating music that is not based on traditional music theory systems. Plus, I have mostly young, Dutch speaking students for which this software is completely inappropriate.

software that removes the teacher completely, although for some tedious tasks, I would rather not be present. I find the student-teacher relationship extremely important for young people, plus diagnosis and individualized advice is impossible with such programs (although they can and are being made more capable in these areas). Why would this type of do-it-yourself packages prove to be so much more marketed than products that might serve as tools for piano teachers, tools that would take over specific tasks that are difficult to perform in the limited time of the piano lesson (two important examples are for me ear training and learning to read music notation)? I assume it is because of the fact that teachers are not demanding these kinds of helps. Teachers perhaps seem so uninterested in technology that they do not prove to be an interesting market for producers. The Bulletins and Journals of the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA), Dutch affiliate, which I received this past year (2004), give a listing of new sheet music, piano literature (a new book over pedal use, wow), CD's as well as the EPTA Documentation and Study Center (Documentatie- en StudieCentrum) where many relics of living and dead Dutch pianists can be looked at and through. Apparently one of the most important organizations for piano teachers in the Netherlands places very little importance on the use of new technologies in music.

Use and involvement in the social structures that surround the creation, development and use of technology provide some amount of power, always partial, always limited.<sup>15</sup> If one compares the students of the composition department or sonology department, each with their own laptop, with the students of the pedagogy department, who tend to complain about the one ICT course they are required to take, the difference in knowledge and use of computer technology is astounding. It becomes clear that there are very big differences in how technology is approached and used. Considering what I have said about the masculine delineations of composing as opposed to the feminine delineations of music pedagogy, one might track a clear link between use of technology and the gendered delineations of the field.

Before I discuss the tools I am envisioning, some dreams of a technologically well-outfitted lesson environment, I would also like to reveal some questions that have come up for me, for example: "is it o.k. to use the computer as a tool of surveillance over the musical progress your piano students?", "are you promoting virtual experience (playing piano on the computer screen) over real experience (playing a real piano), and is the knowledge transferable?", "aren't you just using computers to help children learn the same old things, only faster?" I do not want to use computers and recording devices blindly. I want to think about them so that I can use the resources in the best way possible, to promote creativity and enjoyment in music within a dynamic (community) musical environment. I also want to have some voice in the software that is being made for me and my students, and I want to make my own technological tools. For me, continually questioning my relationship with technology is a good process and one that sharpens my intents and skills in use. However, I also am willing to question the very ability to stand outside my relationship with technology in order to question it. We are constantly doing technology, and constantly losing ourselves in technologizing. Even as I write this paper, I am being led and guided and directed by the computer I am working on<sup>16</sup>. One can question the very separation of humans/machines. What part is me and what is the technology? Am I speaking of my computer here, my piano, my CD player, my musical instrument(s)? Fifteen years ago, Donna Haraway wrote in 'A Cyborg Manifesto':

The second leaky distinction is between animal-human (organism) and machine. Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine. This dualism structured the dialogue between materialism and idealism that was settled by a dialectical progeny, called spirit or history, according to taste. But basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not

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<sup>15</sup> See Andrew Feenberg's (Canada Research Chair in Philosophy of Technology in the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University) article 'Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power and Democracy', asking for an extension of democracy into the technically mediated domains of social life. <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/feenberg/Subinq.htm> (Last viewed 8 April 2005).

<sup>16</sup> In the middle of writing this paper, I have switched to a new computer, dubbed by my partner the 'Big Dell'. With this comes Windows XP and a big, new screen. Slowly I notice how the computer starts curving itself around my past actions (around me or around our experience together?). Task bars subtly begin changing shape based on my 'preferences'. Websites that I have visited are a different color, forming a cue for my memory, which I can then thankfully rely on. Misspelled words are corrected. The computer asks me if I would like to move some music to the library. I do not have the time, but I appreciate the offer. I feel cushioned, supported. My preferences are being taken care of. But the world in which I am writing this paper is also controlling, guiding me. It is also a limited world, this software, shaping me and my decisions, giving me a limited view of what is possible. I am also discovering that when trying to get a feel for the 'current situation' (i.e. the last ten years), books begin to lose their importance. More and more references to websites filter in. Slowly all books disappear. I am changing tactics. The tactics are changing me.

man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.<sup>17</sup>

Haraway goes on to suggest that the individuals who have never had the privilege of being the dominant identity (the measure of man) against which difference is revealed, must take advantage of a shift in perspective, where the “final imposition of a grid of control” shifts toward a world “about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.”<sup>18</sup> In this shift from an “organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system”<sup>19</sup>, in a time where no bodies are sacred, where all components can be interfaced if the proper standard, the proper code, can be found, everyone must learn to operate within a sea of shifting relationships and shifting constructions of home, work, family, neighborhood, nation, school, bodies.

There is no ‘place’ for women in these networks, only geometrics of difference and contradiction crucial to women’s cyborg identities. If we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions. There is no way to read the following list from a standpoint of ‘identification’, of a unitary self. The issue is dispersion. The task is to survive in the diaspora.<sup>20</sup>

How many of my skills as a piano teacher am I willing to give away to a computer? Would I be willing to work my physical presence out of the equation? Do I believe that a computer can perform some functions better than I can? The moment you start thinking about using new technological environments, you are drastically changing your dimensions as a music teacher in challenging and sometimes frightening ways. If you seek contact with other teachers, around the world, you will be changing yourself as a teacher through these contacts. If you seek to rework your lesson plans so that they can be published on a website, your way of teaching will also change. If you go online, your online presence can be viewed by everyone with the necessary technology. If you link to online websites for learning to play the piano, potential students may prefer them rather than contacting you. If you make play-along CD’s, the way you accompany your students in the lesson situation will also change. If you record your students, they will play differently, and if they listen to themselves they will have a different perspective of their own piano playing. If students have an online music profile, they will think quite differently about themselves as a piano student/young music artist. Interactions with (new) technologies have a serious effect on our self-perception as well as all the skills we have built up in years of practice, just as all the developments of the piano (because the piano itself is of course highly technological) had serious affect on playing technique, musical compositions, role of the piano in ensembles, types of performances, etc.. So, in attempting to ‘simply’ discuss how I use or would like to use technological devices in my lesson environment I am also talking about how I am/will expand(ing) and mutat(ing). Perhaps I am also practicing survival as a piano teacher through my use of technology.

### **Creation of listening/play-along CD’s and student recordings**

First, I would like to look at how I use (or envision using) technology as a way to reinforce the learning of traditional skills on the instrument. I will start with my use of CD’s. As mentioned earlier, I have created these CD’s in order to give my students an idea of different types of beginning piano repertoire so that they would be challenged to listen and choose for themselves. Parallel to this, I wished to give them an idea of how beginning piano music sounds, by itself. It is not so sexy. No pop voices, no drum beat. I was also motivated by a very practical reason. Because the piano lessons I give are forty minutes per week, and we do so many other things, like move to music, improvise together, talk about the piano, and because (importantly!) I do not teach them to read notes in the beginning, children can quickly forget melodies, rhythms, almost everything about the song. The CD serves as a musical memory, as a sort of connection with what they did in the lesson once they are home. What I have learned, as I have alluded to

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<sup>17</sup> Haraway, 152.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

earlier, is that the playing with the CD is no easy task. Many pianos cannot be tuned to the same pitch as the CD. Some CD players are not in the same room as the piano. Some children do not have unlimited access to CD players. Children forget to listen to the CD. Children get frustrated because the CD goes too fast. (For an explanation given to children who were asked to try to learn five songs from a CD, See Appendix 5, *Een liedje leren met behulp van een cd*). However, I will keep on using CD's, if only to remove the excuse, "ik wist echt niet meer hoe het ging." "I really didn't know how it went anymore."

There are many ways to expand this use. At the moment I have been working on developing my own CD's rather than searching for commercially produced play along CD's. I did this partly for ideological reasons, fighting in my own way against becoming immersed in commercialized music production. What I do not want is some glossy, sugary, sterile CD where the student plays pop song melodies with digitalized accompaniment. I want the CD to open up ideas for creativity, not put the student into a cage of playing a melody endlessly the same way. What I do enjoy very much is the websites Liedbox by Teleac,<sup>21</sup> which has a wide selection of children's songs. I also enjoy helping students play with or translate onto the piano a CD of music by an artist that they enjoy listening to. What is the difference for me? Qualitatively seen, the music is perhaps not much better (perhaps even less interesting) than the music on a typical play-along CD. The difference for me is that with these kinds of websites or with the CD's that they choose themselves, the music was written for children to enjoy, for entertainment (I don't intend to get sidetracked on the negative commercial reasons for making the music), and they relate to it in this context, forming opinions, choosing to listen to it.<sup>22</sup> The music has a 'life of its own, so to speak'. When they choose to translate this music to the piano, they will be learning much about the many layers of the music, the difference in personality it gets on the piano, the difficulty but also the magic of carrying over these layers of fantasy, musical context on their own instrument. They will be able to sing along, learning about accompaniment, pop style. They are not taking part in a pre-digested, something-you-can-do-so-you-don't-have-to-think-anymore musical activity. What could be very good is a play-along CD with a jazz band where the student can work on improvising within a certain scale or mode. In fact, I am considering trying to find one of these CD's for my own enjoyment/growth.<sup>23</sup> I, the student, hope to develop my ear for shifting harmonies, work on my melodic development, get an ear for more jazz rhythms.

I also make various recordings, on minidisk, during the lessons. In this way, I can track students' growth and keep a record of songs that they write or improvise (more of this in the section on creative possibilities). Recordings also help to give students an accurate picture of how they are playing. Because it is still a novelty, all the students react with increased stimulation to do their best, and they very much enjoy listening to themselves, often giving critical comments. Here, also, the technological tools could be much better. Imagine if students could bring their own practice CD's on which new pieces could be added each lesson (this used to be possible with tape players). Or, even better, forget the CD. Imagine if you could just record parts of the lesson (during the lesson) directly onto the student's workplace within your website as a teacher. Imagine if in the course of the week you could easily record a nice accompaniment directly onto a student's workplace for their immediate use. This technical possibility should not be so far away. What would this technology be doing? It would greatly increase the teacher's flexibility and reduce the amount of time spent on unnecessary recording. All songs would not need to be chosen at the beginning of the year with the hope that they are popular. For the student, playing along with a newly chosen song would be just as possible at home as in the piano lesson, hopefully increasing motivation to practice. Recordings could provide an auditory history of the student's progress. Instead of only looking back at the music they have played, they could actually listen to how they played the music. Students and teachers quickly forget some interesting moments of composition/improvisation if the work is not written down. In trying to capture every musical moment in digital form, do we enter the trap of living life as a sort of large documentary process, forming a sort of archive of ourselves in the search for immortality?<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.teleacnot.nl/sites/liedbox/> (Last visited 6 April 2005). For younger children: <http://www.leukeleerzameliedjes.nl/> (Last visited 9 April 2005).

<sup>22</sup> See a forum discussing the 'Lied for Azië' by Dutch artists for the tsunami victims in December 2004: <http://www.bokt.nl/forums/viewtopic.php?sid=&f=80&t=358411> (Last visited, 6 April 2005).

<sup>23</sup> When I have the time to do more music instead of reading and writing about it. Thanks Marcel for the tip on Jamie Aebersold!

<sup>24</sup> For an interesting perspective on the preservation and passing of time within the context of film, see <http://www.bcholmes.org/film/sansoleil.html> B.C.'s Film Studies: Sans Soleil 'The Deleuzian Memory of Sans Soleil' "Deleuze proffers an image of time as always splitting, like a hair, into two parts: the time that moves smoothly forward, or the 'present that passes'; and the time that is seized and represented (if only mentally), or the 'past that is preserved'. What Deleuze, following

On the one hand, I think that such documentation can be very interesting for the student, giving them a much clearer picture of their strengths and weaknesses and the whole process of learning to play the piano that they are involved in. On the other hand, I can imagine that at some points it would be very nice just to let the moment slide away, to wither or change in the way we are used to with our human memories (one would no longer be able to cherish that unbelievably wonderful performance at the age of seven in the same way, for example).

### Software for note-reading and ear-training

Two additional areas where I as a teacher would be very appreciative for good software are in the rather 'boring' areas of note-reading and ear-training.<sup>25</sup> I realize that I am now referring again to the traditional skills of mastering the recognition of discrete tones based on Western notation, both in notation and by ear. Students often want to be able to know how to read music. But this is a skill which requires much private work, practice, and (as musically possible) drill. This type of interesting and motivating software is as far as I know, not available in Dutch. I would consider these two areas to be great helps for the private music teacher, but much thought would need to go into the design so that the reference is always real, interesting music, not just drill. For ear-training, a situation similar to the one that the jazz musicians, discussed in the section on improvisation, sought out would be perfect. Perhaps an ideal situation would be that students could choose their own music and have a sort of software coach that would help them work out the piece that they find interesting on their own instrument. Are we a long way from being able to do this? Perhaps, perhaps not. The great advantages of this is that the computer is a wonderful tool for helping the student repeat tasks. The Rosetta Stone<sup>26</sup> software for learning language is a very good example of this capacity by the computer. I have tried the introductory package. The user engages in an endless stream of constantly varying, constantly developing language growth. The computer will repeat pronunciations as long as the participant is interested. When young jazz players wanted to hear a solo over and over, they turned to the phonograph. Such extended time with the live player would have been impossible.

Concerning ear-training and improved development and listening skills, when I was in America in October 2004, I made contact with Dr. Billie Thompson who has worked long to develop a software system for the Tomatis Sound Training (See Appendix 5). The Tomatis system is one that seeks to help people (often with learning and communication disorders) through a program of listening (with special earphones with bone and air conduction and filtering possibilities) combined with speaking or singing activities, or tactile activities such as drawing, painting, puzzling. A software version with training program is now available. This is another area which I am very interested in, as the approach is more holistic, addressing fundamental listening problems rather than just focusing on building a skill. A child who has a hard time hearing properly would only become frustrated by such ear-training activities. I am also very interested in how this technology could change how I hear. This is a very intimate use of technology, as it claims to affect not only learning and language abilities, but also self esteem and socialization. It is technology helping us become more skilled in being human.

For note reading, which I can not imagine is really fun for anyone, I assume the rewards would need to be more in an interesting, game-like setting, with of course many good musical examples. One fun program which I find does good work in combining pitch discrimination with (first) a global recognition of notated pitch is *Music Ace* by Harmonic Vision<sup>27</sup>. Because I wanted to see how children would interact with certain music software packages, on three different occasions, seven students came to my house and worked an hour with the Music Ace demo, (the first three lessons) or the Doodle Pad. (See reports in Appendix 5). Although I am not trained in evaluating software, I could see that the software is 'perfectly made': smooth, no bugs, entertaining. What was clear to me was that the students were challenged by and enjoyed the games. It was also clear that they were learning to think about pitch differences, realizing that pitches close together were more difficult to discern. The pitch games (related to notation, but in a subsidiary fashion, as the students see the notes moving to their places, but are not required to answer any

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Bergson, refers to as the actual image and the virtual image are the two aspects of time as it splits, the actual corresponding to the present that passes, the virtual to the past that is preserved."

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.musictheory.net/> go to Interval, scale, chord trainers for endless drill. Big Ears is another online interval ear training <http://www.ossmann.com/bigears/index.html>. In Dutch you have *De Klankenkraker* (Horen en benoemen van intervallen en drieklanken voor beginners, gevorderden en profs), a software by publisher A. W. Bruna.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.rosettastone.com/home> (Last viewed 7 April 2005).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.harmonicvision.com/> (Last visited 6 April 2005).



questions about notation) are not related to pieces of music, but are rewarding due to the game challenge. The children were busy in groups of at least two (one was three), so that was an extra reward for playing well. In a solitary context, I wonder if they would find it as interesting. Further, I have not heard from any of my students that they have downloaded the demo and worked further with the games at home. I wonder if any program like this could be so intrinsically motivating that students would do it on their own, or if assignments will always be necessary.

In the section on musical (con)text, I may have given the impression that I am not interested in teaching my students to read music because of the history of musical notation as form of hegemonic control. However, I do very much appreciate being able to read music and to read it quite easily, and I also hope that my students develop the ability to read any music that they would like to play. However, I have come to the realization that I cannot (in my limited time) teach my students to read music. I can give them some tools, of course, and set them on the way, but the process of learning to read is one that takes much, much practice and internalization by the student. I would greatly appreciate some help in this area. This is an area where the stimulus of the computer environment and the ability of the computer to repeat tasks as long as the student is interested could be of great help.

### **A Website and music available online**

Considering the area of increasing practice motivation and communication, the plan is to make a website for my private piano practice, Hands-on-Piano. Here I could keep track of the pieces students are busy with, I could give tips for interesting sites about music, results of work on note-reading and ear-training software (for example) could be displayed. This site could be a place where my students profile themselves as budding artists (profiling is an important skill in the digital world). Photo's and recordings from lessons or recitals could be looked at and listened to. I was even thinking of including a middle-of-the-week check, where I could answer questions and make sure assignments were completed. However, this led me to thinking about the computer as a tool for surveillance. Perhaps there should be places where I, the teacher, cannot come. Is the computer time for children play time? Is it work time? The line between work and play is constantly dissolving with children engaged in what we call learning. However, I do think that (at this point in our evolution) extended time behind the computer is not healthy in the long run with most children. I hope to have a website running by September, for the beginning of the new season. However, I want to make my website a tool for communication, for stimulating musical activities, which perhaps includes surveillance.

Last year I was completely taken over by the desire to have access to a huge online database of printed music, sorted by style, age appropriateness, skill level, theme, language (if there is text), etc., so that if you were to sit behind your computer and type in that seven year old Arthur wants to play a song about bumblebees that you would get a number of options to choose from, and you could buy one for ten cents or so. I enjoy the atmosphere of a music book, however the chance is great that a student plays three of the ten songs and then does not use the book any more. I do believe that notated and performed music should be digitalized and made to flow more freely than it already does. However, I realize that it would take a monumental effort to move the center of focus away from piano books (with established publishers, stores, markets, etc.) toward digitalized music sources.

### **Moving toward a culture of developing and using new creative music technologies**

The question that will occupy me after graduation is: "how can I set in motion the necessary forces that will create new technologies that can be applied to music education in a way that I (and other music teachers) find help us do our jobs more pleasurable and more effectively?" Before I discuss what I see as a need for music pedagogues to spend more time thinking and working on the development of creative tools for making music using new technologies (in combination with old technologies), I would like to discuss the nature of technology which makes it difficult for the uninitiated to enter and influence the way technologies are developed.

Judy Wajcman is Professor of Sociology in the Demography and Sociology Program at the Australian National University.<sup>28</sup> In the introduction to her book, *Feminism Confronts Technology*, she states

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<sup>28</sup> She is also a Centennial Professor in the Gender Institute and Sociology at the London School of Economics, and an Associate Fellow of the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick Business School. She has previously held posts in

“women’s exclusion from, and rejection of, technology is made more explicable by an analysis of technology as a culture that expresses and consolidates relations among men.”<sup>29</sup> Technology is not just tools. It is a structure, a social structure which both develops tools as well as forming a framework around which human relationships are built. ‘Talking about computers’ is a way of talking which implies a certain language, certain social codes, certain knowledge, certain experience, certain humor. This way of talking is typically associated with men. Of course there are many different dimensions to the way these social structures can be developed, and they are not completely homogenous. I would like to refer briefly to my personal experience here. When my minidisk fell and broke at the end of last summer, I went to the Technical Service of the Conservatory (Technische Dienst) to loan a new piece of equipment for a few days. In descending the stairs of the conservatory, walking past rooms filled with wires, buttons, electronic devices, going toward the service counter, with assorted electronic gadgets in seeming chaos spread throughout the room, I had the distinct feeling that I was entering another realm. I was speaking in Dutch, which limited me, but I was also experiencing difficulty due to the fact that I did not have the vocabulary to express my needs. Because I was aware of this fact, I could observe myself with a sense of humor and not get lost in embarrassment or frustration. I could not name the plugs. I could not explain in the proper language what kind of microphone I had. On two other occasions, in the context of dialogues with music pedagogy students, when I suggested that we go to the Technische Dienst, they did not know what I was talking about. I wonder how many music pedagogy students realize that The Royal Conservatory of the Hague has one of the best equipped sound experimentation centers in Europe, (with a ‘noble’ lineage which can be traced back through Varèse, Schaeffer, Stockhausen, etc.<sup>30</sup>), and I wonder how many music pedagogy students might be interested in experimenting with the equipment if they were offered the opportunity. For a look at the way this environment is profiled, look at the website page for Sonology at the Conservatory.<sup>31</sup> Everything, the image, the language, the experience, creates a culture of technology in music that can easily give one the feeling of being an outsider.

In her article ‘Information Technology, Women and their Work’, Juliet Webster, from Trinity College in Dublin, notes that women “are notably absent from the design of technologies, and from decision-making concerning their implementation.”<sup>32</sup> Women in general are considered external to technology use and creation, or they are considered unskilled users. The lack of interest in technology, the lack of experience in technology, the lack of a social climate in which technology can be discussed and created, these characterize the field of music pedagogy as I have experienced it in the Netherlands. And I would argue that this is one characteristic that places music pedagogy in the situation of being a feminized field. Again I do not want to argue that we should claim technology as a means of asserting our power, of becoming dominant, focused on the sex-appeal that technical tactics can provide. However, I would argue that for survival, and not merely survival, but for a fun, challenging, possibility-filled survival (such as what Haraway suggests for her Cyborgs), we should look toward the connections between music pedagogy and the field of musical creation, sound art, electroacoustic music, etc. However, I want avoid the claim that adopting certain technologies can provide the answers. No, but the developing of a live social context in which technologies can be suggested, discussed, developed, one that takes on the political challenge of becoming an active member of the global discussion regarding technology. I do think that this can provide results that benefit music pedagogues and their students.

Following are a few brief examples of work I have done in three areas. The first is observing how children reacted in to *Creating Music* by Morton Subotnik<sup>33</sup>. The second is my experience with the music software MAGIX, and how I am considering using this as a tool to work with my students in creating

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Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Sydney, Vienna, Warwick and Zurich. See <http://demography.anu.edu.au/People/staff/judy.php> (Last visited 10 April 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Wajcman, 22.

<sup>30</sup> From the website:

Het INSTITUUT VOOR SONOLOGIE werd in 1960 als onderdeel van de Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht opgericht. In 1986 verhuisde het Instituut naar het Koninklijk Conservatorium te Den Haag. Veel van de oorspronkelijke studio-inrichting was afkomstig uit de historische studio van het natuurkundig Laboratorium (‘natlab’) van Philips in Eindhoven, waar Edgard Varèse in 1957 zijn legendarische “Poème Électronique” (voor de Brusselse wereldtentoonstelling 1958) had gecomponeerd. Ons Instituut plaatst zich dan ook in de traditie van geavanceerde ‘elektrische’ kunstmuziek die teruggaat tot de studio’s van de Franse Radio (ORTF, 1948, Pierre Schaeffer) en de Keulse WDR (1951, Eimert, Stockhausen, Koenig). [http://www.koncon.nl/public\\_site/220/SOmain.html](http://www.koncon.nl/public_site/220/SOmain.html) (Last visited 10 April 2005).

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.koncon.nl/public\\_site/220/SOmain.html](http://www.koncon.nl/public_site/220/SOmain.html) (Last visited 10 April 2005).

<sup>32</sup> In Berner, Boel, ed. *Gendered Practices: Feminist Studies of Technology and Society* (linköping, Sweden, Department of Technology and Social Change, 1997). 151.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.creatingmusic.com/> (Last visited 6 April 2005).

their own musical work. Finally is a consideration of a website geared toward women and technology, which offers a very interesting program which has been spread through the Scandinavian countries, designed to link children with electroacoustic composing practices.

### **Creating Music by Morton Subotnik.**

Six times a total of nine different students (three came back twice) worked under my observation with this site. On this site, you can arrange colored dots to make music by four different digitalized instruments or with percussion ensemble; you can play various games, organizing balls to make a small song; you can learn about variation and canon through the process of creating and manipulating your own material with the help of different options; you can manipulate speed and dynamics and reverse the playing of Beethoven sonata's; you can work with a cartoon conductor, etc. (See reports in Appendix 5).

Interestingly enough, the students were often enthusiastic about the atonal music they produced. They found especially the visual elements quite interesting, and I think most were making some links between the visual and the auditory feedback. However, there are a few irritating bugs in the program, like crashes of sound at the beginning of playback, difficult editing, sudden freezing of playing apparatus. Children seem to lose motivation not so much due to the bugs, but more due to a difficult interface (if a dot is made where the child does not want it, they have to go through a series of four clicks, changing modes, in order to correct the 'mistake', for example). The musical clips also did not fit smoothly together in many places which seriously reduced the auditory rewards for some of the creative work. However, the site is one of the only ones I came across dedicated to musical creativity, and I enjoyed my attempts at making music on the site, which was quite different than what I would have composed on the piano or on paper. This site is one of the few where children can create music without relying on musical notation. In that sense, free drawings are translated into musical sound. However the sound offered is stereotypically digitalized (i.e. digital piano, clarinet, trumpet, etc.) and in that sense not offering much creative freedom.

### **Working with MAGIX Studio 2004 deluxe**

In May of this year, I wrote a piece for the course *Women's Representations of Ethos and Pathos* offered by the Department of Women's Studies in Utrecht, coordinated by Sandra Ponzanesi. Within the course we were exposed to various women artists and their representations of passion, sexuality, sensuality, morbidity, mortality, as well as examining feminist historical perspectives of the way the symbol of 'woman' has been treated in art. I will not go into details of my ideological framework and inspiration when I wrote the piece. (If you are interested, see Appendix 5 for a lengthy explanation). This work was undertaken on my own initiative, outside of the conservatory environment, although a teacher of mine had introduced me to the software MAGIX. So, I was left on my own to figure out the tool and to get it to do what I wanted it to do. What I would like to emphasize here is that it was my first time working with modified sound and this software program. With MAGIX, I was working with sound files which I had recorded and which I could layer within the software program, changing dynamics, reverb, echo, room size, stretching, cutting, copying, pasting, etc. I was left in the situation of maneuvering within a digital world that tries to reproduce acoustical effects of technology that have been developed for the music industry over the past century without being familiar with the 'real-life' models in the first place. I was left to rely on my intellect to work out the various possibilities rather than on instinct developed by dealing with real electronic equipment. Because I was not 'loaded' with expectations, I was not necessarily disappointed by the digital results, and perhaps through trial-and-error and experimentation, I came up with non-traditional or original results. It was through this process that I created the work *Sirens: Prelude and Poetry*. (Listen on CD) This work was much more intuitively produced, a composing style that appeals to me very much. Sounds could be layer, slightly shifted, modified. The *Prelude*, a collection of songs sung by women in my environment, is a collage that could be endlessly changed, endlessly added to. The two areas which I found important in providing me the stimulation to try this creative work were: the fact that I would have a (fairly non-critical) audience who would be highly supportive of my efforts and the ideological motivation due to my feeling that more women should create music.

I thoroughly enjoyed producing this work, and I hope to extend these ideas to my students. At the moment I am collecting sound material from their lessons. With a series of workshops with MAGIX, I hope the coming year to help students create with them sound collages representing samples of the pieces they have played, created and improvised the last six months, with the opportunity to manipulate the sounds to create effects. The layout of MAGIX is at the moment not appropriate for young Dutch



children, which is why the project discussed in the following paragraphs very much interests me, as I see it as a way in which the same type of technology, perhaps even more creative, is being developed for use by children.

### **CD-ROM project in Norway**

Even further on the path of electroacoustical music: in Norway, a CD-ROM project, DSP – for children, has been developed to give children the skills to make their own electroacoustical music<sup>34</sup>:

The task of promoting an understanding of the long neglected field of computer music in Norway necessarily involves tutorial programs for children. This is in keeping with the Ministry of Education's reform program, which clearly states that "technology shall be used in conjunction with music education," and that "students shall compose as part of their music education." This CD-ROM project is targeted for students from eleven to sixteen years of age, although the material is presumably of interest to students at higher levels as well.

A principally electroacoustic composition project for children, "Breaking the Sound Barrier," has been a part of the Norwegian contemporary music scene for several years, and is organized and developed by Nor-Concerts. The project has suffered from a lack of relevant composition tools for the children, however, and NoTAM's CD-ROM will hopefully provide an anchor for this important mediation network that is realized in the form of various art music festivals throughout the country. "Breaking the Sound Barrier" serves as a link between Norwegian professional and non-professional music communities, and a revitalization of this potentially exciting project is crucial in order to maintain its aesthetic relevance as a creative program for children. The national distribution of the project is secured through a collaboration with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), which considers "Breaking the Sound Barrier" a foundation on which to build interactive concerts and interactive radio.<sup>35</sup>

The first image of the computer interface reminded me of the MAGIX interface, but simpler and with graphic icons instead of text. The tutorial texts looked fantastic:

The History of Electroacoustic Music, What is Sound (simple acoustics, frequency and amplitude), Sound in the Environment, Harmonics and Spectra, Sampling (how sound is represented in the computer), Synthesis (musical signal processing), Working with Sound vs. Working with Notes, Algorithmic Composition, Composers' Section, Cross-Disciplinary Common Characteristics, Real-Time and other Performance Technology, Technology in Pop/Rock Music, Computer Music Animation of Movement through Spectra.

All tutorial texts are hyperlinked to short explanations, illustrations, sound examples, etc.<sup>36</sup>

This is exactly the kind of project that interests me.<sup>37</sup> As I hope I have made clear in this brief sketch, there is much, much room for experimentation, exploration and theoretical development in creating liaisons between computers and creative music-making. Hopefully in the coming years a movement will develop which will put music conservatories in action as places where students think about the relation between computers and music and where ideas and concrete plans (in the form of software, projects, giant music portal, etc.) are developed. I believe that these types of projects could and should take place in the Netherlands with the active involvement of music pedagogues who are interested in the connections between music and technology and who have experience with teaching music in the field.

Finally, I would like to turn to the question 'why electroacoustical music?' In February of this year, I saw an extremely gripping dance performance. The opening, *Étude #1*, was a marathon solo in five parts, choreographed by Marie Chouinard, orchestrated in real time processed sound by composer Louis Dufort,

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<sup>34</sup> My thanks to Ida Vujovic for directing my attention to this site for WOW/EM: Women on the Web / ElectronMedia. <http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~wowem/> (Last visited 6 April 2005). This site gives historical, practical information and provides many links. for women interested in technology and the arts.

<sup>35</sup> 2 Background <http://www.notam02.no/~joranru/DSPforChildren.html>, (Last visited 6 April 2005).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 CD-ROM Contents.

<sup>37</sup> From the website: "The CD-ROM presented at the ICMC 1997 is version 1.0, and NoTAM will most likely produce a version 2.0 in 1998 to fine tune and incorporate suggestions from young users for added material and new DSP programs. The CD-ROM has already proven successful as a tutorial tool in Norway, and international distribution with translated versions is under consideration." I have not been able to track the project further, but there should be some kind of report detailing the user response.

and danced by Lucie Mongrain.<sup>38</sup> I will mention a couple moments that are relevant here. A solo dancer would step onto a mat in the middle of the stage. By her movements, the scraping of the shoes over the dance floor, she would start electronic echos of sound (I believe the microphones were in her shoes), which then began to live a life of their own, building up. Scraping metal, large flapping sheets of metal, crunching sounds like being in a rain of scrap metal in the middle of a junkyard. These were the images in my head, but I have no idea if the sounds were actually sampled from 'real' metal, or if they were digital waveforms built and manipulated by two men controlling the live electronic on their laptops behind me. (I was one of the few people to turn around and look at them, gazing intently at the dancer, poised for action). At certain points when the noise was becoming unbearable (my feeling, anyway), the dancer would sweep her arms and gather it into a ball, swoop, in front of her. The noise would implode and stop as if contained. She would march around the mat, and then step back on, to again dance be danced by the music. At times, the music would take her over, causing her to twitch and convulse. For me, this is an amazing metaphor for our still uncertain relationship with the sound technology that is available. The sound is begun by us, we who think we are fleshly organisms. We are the dancer dancing the sound. We start the primal sound, foot scraping over floor. But we are also the technology, the digitalized noise that takes over, picking her/us up, shaking her/us, making her/us a flopping and twitching doll, which we all look at (ourselves) with a mixture of desire and fear. We want desperately to control like that, to be controlled like that, yet it disgusts us as well, the flopping body parts disgust us, the industrial noise disgusts us. We are confused. Is this the foot scraping the mat, or is it our own uncontrolled fantasies and dreams of the foot and the mat. Can everything which seems so real, so everyday, rise up by our own imaginations to immerse, entertain and consume us? Ah, the pleasure and the anguish.

So, 'why electroacoustic music?' Because, as I try to illuminate in the sketch above, I think that it is the only music that can express the tensions, the fears, the passions, the musical needs of our current society. It is not because technology follows an autonomous and pragmatic linear progression, moving continually to higher levels of achievement<sup>39</sup> that digitally processed sound is so gripping. No, because digitalization is now the tool which consumes us and our time, it is the most gripping tool that can be used to express (in sound) whatever it is we want to express regarding our (which part of us?) confrontation with these consummation(s).

I am now listening to *Varèse's Poème électronique*.<sup>40</sup> There is a common expression that comes up when speaking of new or exploratory music. The musician is 'trying to make the music they hear in their head.' I appreciate this goal, but also am a bit suspicious of presenting the sounds of electroacoustic music as the sounds which have been developing in the minds of humans, which can finally, thanks to computers, be expressed. I would think that it is more probable that the majority of the sounds which composers become enamored with were first heard and then imagined. Yet, with the advance of digitalized information in the form of sound and images, the age of the dominance of the written notation and notated music is reaching a close. Sound can be created through the construction of wavelengths from scratch. A set of structure formulae can be established which then can be applied on various parameters of the composition. The shift takes place from a composition being constructed as architecture to one that is 'grown' from out certain rule applications, listening to output, adjusting the design model or the input and then listening again. The technology becomes an integral part of the compositional choices.<sup>41</sup> Michael Hamman is composer, theorist, writer, software design engineer.<sup>42</sup> I quote again from Hamman's *From Technical to Technological: the Imperative of Technology in Experimental Music Composition*:

The means and ends of compositional production arose together, each determining the unfolding of the other. This principle constitutes one of the most important empirical insights generated by early electroacoustic music: that the relationship between the particularity of a technology and the

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/nacnews/viewnews.cfm?ID=568&cat=catDance> (Last visited 5 April 2005).

<sup>39</sup> See Michael Hamman's *From Technical to Technological: the Imperative of Technology in Experimental Music Composition*, Perspectives of New Music, Vol. 40(1), (Winter 2002). (Last visited February 27, 2005: <http://www.shout.net/~mhamman/papers/>).

<sup>40</sup> "Edgard Varese composed Poeme Electronique for the Phillips Pavilion at the World Fair in Brussels in 1958. At this exhibition, the music was played on 425 speakers, placed all around the pavilion. The 480 seconds of music were played alongside projected images ( photographs, paintings and montage ) as well as text by Corbusier. It was perhaps the first piece of "surround sound" and certainly of multimedia as we understand the term today." Thanks to an unknown author at <http://www.ipsden.u-net.com/course/EM3.html> (Last visited 6 April 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Hamman, section: 'the computer and the construction of representation': paragraphs 8-10.

means by which musical structures might be conceived and realized were understood to be mutually determinative. [. . .] Interpreted hermeneutically, technical difficulties encountered in the studio were not something to be ‘overcome’ in order to insure preservation of older musical traditions. Rather, those difficulties were themselves understood musically inasmuch as they both framed – and were framed by – musical thought. Musical thought was no longer bound solely to a transcendental musical object – the musical object per se arose as a consequence of the particularity of the investigations and experiments under which acoustical material, and the techniques for its production, were produced.<sup>43</sup>

Why do I include this? Let me see if I can frame a satisfactory answer. I have been talking about musical creativity throughout this whole paper. It is my experience that nothing triggers creativity more than to talk about, think about, philosophize about the process of making music. This is something that happens within composition departments, sonology departments, pedagogical departments? There is something, for me, deeply exciting in thinking about a composition rising from a set of computer parameters, like an growing organism, a swelling dough. I do not get the same feeling from thinking about how Mozart composed. These are modern thoughts, certainly not the only way of thinking about composition, but they are relatively fresh thoughts, full of implications and applications. In his paper ‘Composing strategies and pedagogy’<sup>44</sup> Simon Emmerson, Professor at London’s City University and champion of contemporary music, speaks of the need to develop an experimental musical ‘analysis’ to match the experimental nature of compositions such as those by Stockhausen, Xenakis and Ligeti. Certain parameters of the works could be changed and then tested to match the results with the originals. He emphasizes that the experiments would be to develop tools for future work, not an objective set of rules such as in tonal harmony and counterpoint.<sup>45</sup> He then gives a simple and elaborated model of composition. What is interesting for me in the context of this paper is the end of his section ‘Pedagogy and beyond’ where he claims drastic consequences for the future of (Western) music, given the fact that a composer will not be fully equipped with a language after some arbitrary period of study:

The model [. . .] is essentially incompatible with the system which has been with us since the late classical era for the commissioning, promotion and publication of musical works. The ‘masterwork syndrome’ militates against true experimentation in several ways:

1. The composer may create only one version of the work. The flexibility, sometimes found in the music of other cultures, to accommodate different times of day, different locations, etc. is usually proscribed.
2. The composer’s work is usually tested ‘once and for all’ in its final form. Revisions and new versions are discouraged and often impossible. Hence further testing fails to take place.
3. Each work is promoted as a potential masterwork with associated vested interests militating against honest (that is not to say ‘objective’) assessments of its merits. A few chosen ones (the critics) hold absurdly disproportionate power over the fate not only of the work but of the composer and represent the smallest part of the community of interest [. . .] from whom a contribution is needed.<sup>46</sup>

Flexible, adaptable form, multiple revisions, non-closure, resistance to claiming masterwork status. This all comes surprisingly close to the descriptions of a feminist aesthetics of music mentioned in the first section of this paper. Feminism and continual experimentation, continual growth, continual searching of sounds and processes and musical experiences.

So, have I risen transcendently above my status as a female music teacher to float away on the wings of electroacoustical euphoria? Will I come back down again, inhabit my own pedagogical body, accept my responsibility as a piano teacher dedicated to bringing the works of the masters to the ears and minds of the next generation? As I have often said, the answer is both ‘yes’ and ‘no’. I agree that endless exploration of the beauties of the works of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven is possible. I do love classical music, although its history of exclusion troubles me. I do believe that women can be added to the history of Western art music, and their works can be endlessly explored as well. I also believe that pedagogy must move ahead, must look to the future of music-making. As ‘pedagogues’, we should remain poised

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<sup>43</sup> Hamman, section: ‘compositional technique’: paragraph 3.

<sup>44</sup> Clarke, Eric and Simon Emmerson (issue eds.), ‘Music, Mind and Structure’, Nigel Osborne (ed.) *Contemporary Music Review*, (Vol. 3, 1989) 133-144.

<sup>45</sup> Emmerson, 139.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

on the edge of the unknown, that which fascinates us. I am also pragmatic and believe that adventures into improvisation and technologies could increase our chances of survival into the coming century. But what kind of survival? One focused on building new pedagogically-correct-as-we-know-them methods and systems within the field (I am still not even completely sure if it is 'my' field), or one based on inspired interdisciplinary networks, social interactions, experimentation and artistic growth?

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# APPENDICES