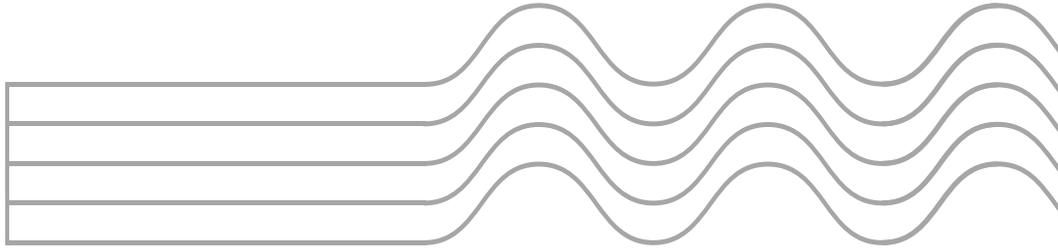


EDITORIAL



The current landscape of music studies and research in both France and further afield reveals ever greater prominence to the consideration of music from the viewpoint of its concrete expression and material realisation – in a word, its “enactment”. In addition to practice-based or practice-led research, as well as other related work involving a research-creation approach, this trend also includes research about musical sound in relation to acoustics and the sciences of perception, instrumental performance and musical gesture, the creative processes of composition, performance and listening, and many other developments. A wide variety of terms is being used to account for the realities involved in these diverse approaches, from the idea of praxis to that of musical know-how, through the notions of activity, action, and even the concept of the musical act itself. This all goes to show heterogeneity in the epistemological and theoretical foundations for the study of these phenomena.

All of these approaches nevertheless seem to have one thing in common: the exploration of music as an artistic phenomenon in all its complexity based on a pragmatic approach that seeks to understand its underlying and ongoing processes and mechanisms – hence with a particular interest in musical phenomena as something temporary or even unfinished. The point is no longer about contemplating a disembodied and idealised musical object, but rather to examine the latter as part of a network of human and social activities of an artistic nature. Such studies seek to account for potentialities and actualisations of musical facts, situations and objects that generate a broad range of perceptible experiences. The observation that a musical praxis is no longer subservient to theory, but definitely an added-value to it, is in some respects a reflection of our current society in which the process of acting – and thus of transforming and creating – seems to constitute a common shared value.

Such a view has made us challenge the way we conduct research on music, and this is precisely what motivated us to found this new journal, *Musique en acte*. Drawing on our research activities over the last ten years or so at the University of Strasbourg’s GRÉAM research centre (*Groupe de Recherches Expérimentales sur l’Acte Musical*), we felt it was crucial to open up a platform for reflection and discussion on the multiple practices of composition, improvisation, performance and listening, and more generally on everything that concerns the “making” of music – while at the same time encouraging critical thinking

on the musicological practices themselves. The consideration of what a score or a musical system holds in terms of their actual sound, the examination of musical objects through the prism of the individuals who manipulate them and the processes involved, the analysis of the practices of musicians via their productions and their discourse, and more generally all studies based on the articulation between academic research and musical practice are welcome in this journal, whose firm intention is to promote shared knowledge.

In openly seeking to make music the meeting point between different academic and musical communities, the journal *Musique en acte* welcomes contributions on all types of repertoires, be that early, baroque, classical-romantic and contemporary art music as well as popular music, including traditional music, without any a priori limitations. It is also open to all types of methodological approaches, whether analytical, theoretical, aesthetic, historical or other. The journal nonetheless wishes to pay particular attention to the experimental dimension of research in all its forms – including, in the broadest sense, collaborations with musicians, fieldwork, the production and processing of experimental data, etc. – as well as to the interdisciplinary – or even “undisciplinary” – juxtapositions and interrelations between musicology, the sciences of music and other fields in the human and social sciences, in particular the other sciences of art, as well as the so-called hard sciences. Such a framework will make it possible to identify the concept of “music as act” in the most fruitful way possible, through its manifold forms, and at the crossroads of the arts and science.

The texts published in this first issue of *Musique en acte* explore a wide musical repertoire and a variety of methodological approaches, from the music of Debussy to more recent contemporary works, from instrumental to electronic music, from composition to listening processes, from theoretical considerations to experimentation. They originate from the GRÉAM study day entitled “*Penser la musique en acte*”, held in Strasbourg on 12 October 2018. Marco Fusi’s article follows on from a session of the GRÉAM seminar that took place on 26 September 2018.

In an introductory and programmatic article, Alessandro Arbo sets out to define the concept of “music as act” and to evaluate its main theoretical foundations. Through a predominantly epistemological and ontological examination, his article seeks to clarify this concept, helping us to think about music beyond the dichotomies usually established between process and product, as well as between performance and its trace. The theoretical propositions apply to a diversity of repertoires, including current musical practices that are often strongly shaped by new technologies, and give particular prominence to the social dimension of music and – in a related way – to the idea of intentionality.

Taking the approach of both composer and researcher, Eric Maestri focuses on the compositional act in his mixed music piece *Trans*, which he composed between 2018 and 2019. From a mainly auto-reflective perspective, the article allows us to enter the composer’s workshop and mind-set and to appreciate the nature of the work done in the studio, the issues involved in the experimentation phases carried out in collaboration with a saxophonist, as well as his own compositional intentions. Analyses of various passages of the piece, based on representations in the form of annotated sonograms, allow us to grasp the organisation of timespans, progressions, directionality and other musical tensions. Against an aesthetic backdrop, the article highlights the interest of a creative research-based

approach involving collaboration between composer and performer as both set out from a perspective of shared creativity.

The article by violinist and viola player Marco Fusi, a contemporary music specialist, addresses the question of improvisation in relation to the music of Scelsi, who is known to have used improvisational practices as a creative tool. The article examines a number of sources held at the Isabella Scelsi Foundation in Rome, in particular recordings of improvised passages, instruments such as the Ondioline, as well as written scores. The role of the score is challenged when one realises that the creative process was in fact based on the transcription of recordings of improvisations originally realised on the Ondioline. The experimental part of the study, carried out in collaboration with graduate students of the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp involves the reconstruction of Scelsi's original creative process in the form of a re-enactment of a work from the past that seeks to overcome the difficulties that the violinists encountered in interpreting this music, in particular with the help of animated scores.

In the article on the specific case of the Princeton Laptop Orchestra (PLOrk), Madeleine Le Bouteiller examines performance practices that involve the use of computers in music ensembles. The idea of instrumentality, defined in terms of control, causality, expressivity and above all gestuality, is first discussed theoretically within the framework of digital technology. Based on a field study of three performances by the PLOrk ensemble that featured different types of visual media, the article focuses on a novel type of virtual music performance that has little or nothing to do with traditional ideas of corporal gesture. The article is a general reflection on the role of the computer as a musical instrument and on how digital environments are changing the ontological status of musical objects and events.

In turn, Benjamin Lassauzet examines the notion of humour in music, focusing on how the listener's nervous tension influences their perception. Based on different theories of humour, the article develops a hypothesis that links the listener's state of nervous tension to their sensibility to musical humour. This is the starting point for an experimental procedure involving auditory testing of a group of students based on an excerpt from Debussy's prelude "Minstrels". The quantitative study and the conclusions that follow lead – paradoxically – to the falsification of the initial hypothesis, which undoubtedly shows the complexity of the musical phenomena involved. Nevertheless, a detailed examination of a specific listening situation brings to light various reactions related to musical humour.

Finally, this first issue of *Musique en acte* concludes with a review of Valérie Philippin's book *La voix soliste contemporaine: repères, technique et répertoire*. Written by Olivier Class, the review highlights the interest of the book for the purposes of research on vocal performance and, more generally, on music as act.

Nathalie Hérold, *Editor-in-chief*
Alessandro Arbo, *Editorial Director*
Founding members of the journal