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

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

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Ethnography and Autoethnography

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

Anonymous (ethnographically sourced) senior UK musicologist on ethnomusicological work

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

Autoethnography - definitions

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

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

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

Autoethnography - definitions

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

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

[...]

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

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

Autoethnography - definitions

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

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

Analytic Autoethnography

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

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

Key features:

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

My definitions

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

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

For performers, simply *critical performance*.

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

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

Documentation of Practice – other problems

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

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

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

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Some examples of collaborative process documentation

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

Some examples of collaborative process documentation

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

Notation

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

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

Notation

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

Ian Pace, *Das hat Rrrrasss* (2018)

59 momentarily synchronised with piano 11

you are quite ri-dic - u - lous

f poco a poco cresc.

f poco a poco cresc.

7:6

7:6

60

16:11

Detailed description: This image shows a page of a musical score for the piece 'Das hat Rrrrasss' by Ian Pace. The page is numbered 59 at the top left and 11 at the top right. The score is for a voice and piano. The voice part is on a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano part is on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. The lyrics 'you are quite ri-dic - u - lous' are written under the voice staff. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics. The instruction 'momentarily synchronised with piano' is written above the voice staff. The dynamic marking 'f poco a poco cresc.' appears twice, once above the piano right hand and once below the piano left hand. There are two bracketed sections in the piano part, each labeled '7:6'. The first section spans from measure 59 to the end of the page. The second section spans from measure 60 to the end of the page. Measure 60 is indicated by a '60' above the piano right hand staff. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Ian Pace, *Das hat Rrrrasss* (2018)

19

95

6:5

dep - u - ty played a - long.

f (upper part)

9:7

10:7

mf (upper part)

p (lower part)

(L.H.)

7:4

L.H.

9:8

17

16

17

16

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a piece titled 'Das hat Rrrrasss' by Ian Pace, page 19. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is on a single staff with a treble clef, starting at measure 95. The lyrics are 'dep - u - ty played a - long.' The piano accompaniment consists of three staves: a right-hand (RH) staff with a treble clef, a left-hand (LH) staff with a bass clef, and a grand staff bracketed together. The RH piano part has dynamic markings of *f* (upper part) and *mf* (upper part). The LH piano part has a dynamic marking of *p* (lower part). There are several performance markings and slurs: a 6:5 slur over the vocal line; a 9:7 slur over the first part of the RH piano line; a 10:7 slur over the second part of the RH piano line; a 7:4 slur over the first part of the LH piano line; and a 9:8 slur over the second part of the LH piano line. The page number '19' is in the top right corner. Measure numbers '17' and '16' are written at the end of the vocal and piano staves respectively.

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

7 vedi NOTE

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

1 { S
M
P

2 Battuto
Muto
Coperchio
Tastiera

3 { sequenza
frequenza
timbro
durata
intensità

4 { u
o
dentro il piano

5 ()

6 }

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

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

Più Lento **Moderato**

p *pp*

a b a' b' c d

Second Waltz

Walzer

p

a' b''' c d''

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

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

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

Further derivations

3:2 3:2 5:3

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

Strauss, First Waltz



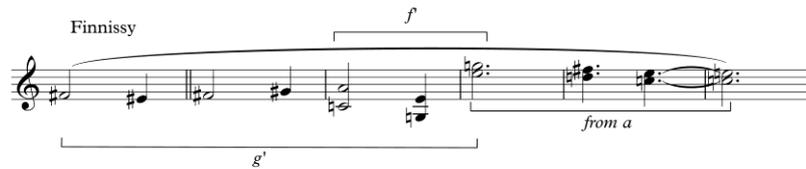
Finnissy



Strauss, Fifth Waltz



Finnissy



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

Sostenuto

p

7:5

7:5

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a common time signature. It features a series of chords and a melodic line that rises and then falls. A slur covers the first two measures, and another slur covers the last two measures. The lower staff starts with a bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. A slur is placed over the final two measures of the lower staff. The dynamic marking *p* is located in the lower left. The time signature 7:5 is written above the first and last measures of the system.

7:6

7:6

This system also consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line from the first system, with a slur over the first two measures and another slur over the last two measures. The lower staff continues the bass line with eighth notes and rests, also featuring a slur over the final two measures. The time signature 7:6 is written above the first and last measures of the system.

7:6

p

6:5

7:5

3

pp

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and another slur over the last two measures. The lower staff features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by more eighth notes and rests. A slur is placed over the final two measures of the lower staff. The dynamic marking *p* is in the upper right, and *pp* is in the lower right. The time signature 7:6 is above the first measure, 6:5 is above the second measure, and 7:5 is above the fifth measure. The number 3 is written above the first measure of the lower staff.

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

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is written in a complex, rhythmic style with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are several measures with triplets and other rhythmic groupings. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The system includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

ral. ----- accel. ----- ral. -----

The second system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music continues with a similar complex, rhythmic style. There are several measures with triplets and other rhythmic groupings. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The system includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The word *p* is written in the lower staff.

accel. ----- ral. -----

The third system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music continues with a similar complex, rhythmic style. There are several measures with triplets and other rhythmic groupings. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The system includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The word *p* is written in the lower staff.

Michael Finnissy, *Snowdrift* (1974)

precipitato, velociss. e piano

(P.1.) molto ped.

sub.ppp

pppppp quasi insensibile

(P.1.)

just before the low B \flat

just after the cluster

on the attack

(A)

7:5 (2,2)

precipitato, velociss. e p

poco accentuato

pp

loco

retake G silently then pedal-change

(P.1.)

pochiss. pp

quasi insensibile pp

pppppp

cresc. molto

(C)

7:4 (fp)

5:3

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

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

First system of the musical score. It features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a supporting line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. There are two first endings marked with a double bar line and a first ending bracket, both labeled '8ª bª!'. The first ending leads to a second ending marked with a double bar line and a second ending bracket, also labeled '8ª bª!'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Second system of the musical score. It continues the piece with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature remains three sharps. The piece starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The bass line includes a first ending marked with a double bar line and a first ending bracket, labeled '8ª bassa!'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The system concludes with a *p* *marque* marking.

Third system of the musical score. It begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is three sharps. The piece starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The tempo/mood marking '(8) Un peu anime léger' is present. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The system concludes with a *pp* marking and a first ending marked with a double bar line and a first ending bracket, labeled '8ª bª!'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Charles Ives, from 'Emerson', Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860" (1916-19, rev. 1920s-40s)

Main 'Emerson' lyrical theme.

Musical notation for the main 'Emerson' lyrical theme. The notation is on a single treble clef staff. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, some beamed together. A crescendo hairpin is shown, leading to a *p* dynamic marking. The piece concludes with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking.

Musical notation for the first system of the piano sonata. It features two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a *pp* dynamic marking. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Performance instructions include *l.h.* (left hand), *slowly*, and *faster*. A *f* (forte) dynamic marking is also present.

Musical notation for the second system of the piano sonata. It features two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a *f* (forte) dynamic marking. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Performance instructions include *cresc. and faster*. A *1* (first ending) marking is also present.

and finally faster with more and more motion