



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund

Page 1 of 6

NNIMIPA, the Nordic Network for the Integration of Music Informatics, Performance and Aesthetics, under the sponsorship of NordPlus, held a week-long interdisciplinary Master's Course, "Music, Meaning and Gesture," at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) at Odense from March 22 through March 26, 2010. Each day featured morning presentations from 10:00 to 12:00 and workshop activities and additional presentations from 13:00 to 17:00.

The event was international in scope, with faculty/student participation from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and the United States. Due to a sudden illness (she is now doing fine!), Network Coordinator Cynthia M. Grund was unable to be present at the course this year, but had enjoyed organizing it and is very grateful to her SDU colleagues William Westney (Hans Christian Andersen Guest Professor) and Søren Frimodt-Møller (Ph. D. candidate in Philosophy) for the wonderful job they did representing SDU as host institution during the course.

PRESENTERS:

Anders Friberg, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, Sweden

Søren Frimodt-Møller, University of Southern Denmark

David Hebert, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland

Kristoffer Jensen, Aalborg University (Esbjerg), Denmark

Kristian Nymo, Four M's Laboratory, University of Oslo, Norway

Fredrik Søegaard, Academy of Music and Music Communication, Esbjerg, Denmark

William Westney, University of Southern Denmark, Texas Tech University

STUDENTS:

Denmark: Daniel Frandsen, Linda Havgård, Jarl Primdal Mogensen

Finland: Josué Moreno, Davis Ozolins

Sweden: Maryam Ammouri

In addition, 12 students from the Performance Degree program at Odense's Carl Nielsen Academy of Music attended and performed in the afternoon session on Tuesday afternoon.

MONDAY, March 22

Presentations:

William Westney: Welcome and Introductory Remarks on Music, Meaning and Gesture

Søren Frimodt-Møller: Administrative Announcements and Overview

Anders Friberg: Real and Virtual Gestures in Music

Virtual Gesture: survival issues RE picturing what one hears; relationship of good music making to the biological constraints of motion



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund

Page 2 of 6

Real Gesture: non-musical arm gestures have been measured for their acceleration/deceleration rates; these patterns mimic expressive musical *rubato*, and when the values are charted they produce a classic arc shape. The pattern of deceleration used by runners who come to a stop can be charted; the charted shape creates a visual gesture that resembles the charted shape of an organic musical *ritardando*.

Psychology of Music Perception: the balance organ and its function, the inner ear's "sacculus," experimental findings on emotional perceptions. Visual perception of gestures – the motions of a point-light computer display of a human form can be perceived more accurately than a regular film of a real person.

Media examples: computer-generated "expressive" and "non-expressive" renditions of the same piano piece; Stevie Wonder video clip; Swedish experiments in which movements of a group of listeners could create the nuance and energy of electronic music.

Kristian Nymoen: Introduction to Video Motion Capture and its use in the study of gesture in music

History and overview: Listed and characterized all the different ways to capture motion (pros and cons); demonstrated the software used in the University of Oslo "Four M's" laboratory

Capabilities of software, distributed by KN to participants:

Motion image
Motion history
Keyframes
Motiongrams

Resources:

*Motion Capture: Musical Gestures Toolbox: Max/MSP/Jitter; www.cycling74.com;
www.fourMs.uio.no;
(all downloadable)*

Kristoffer Jensen: presented ways in which he has started working with the data collected during the NNIMIPA February coordination meeting in Oslo, using motion capture software. Included: the "angry, sad, happy" performances of the same piece, looking for differences and similarities, exploring the possible meanings of other patterns that emerged from the data.

General class discussion of what is really the point of gathering all this data, does it simply demonstrate the obvious, etc. . . . KN admitted that labs generate far more data than anyone can process or even know how to process. There is also the problem of who



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund

Page 3 of 6

has time to view hours and hours of video data – so the work has to be targeted. Comparison of one situation to another seems to be the prime usefulness of data collection right now.

TUESDAY, March 23

Presentations:

David Hebert: Musical Embodiment and Gesture in Cross-Cultural Perspective

- we can learn by reflecting on both FAMILIAR music and UNFAMILIAR music
- discussion of Hebert's proposed global typology of music gesture, in two categories: (1) physical/observable (gestures that are actually performed by the body), and (2) phenomenological (gestures that are formed only in the mind)
- discussion of music as something that communicates the ineffable, and as a proto-language. This led to an activity of trying to match world-music sound clips with their title or commonly agreed-upon subject or meaning. Much philosophical discussion of the possible assumptions in activities like this about what music might actually be "about" (regardless of what its titles or song lyrics seem to say)

Media: excerpt shown from the world-music film "Baraka" and from the Roma music film "Latcho Drom"

Workshops:

William Westney: "The Un-Master Class": for this two-hour performance workshop, twelve students from the Performance degree program at Odense's Carl Nielsen Academy of Music attended for the afternoon. The highly interactive session, based largely on the whole-body gestural approach of Emil Jaques-Dalcroze, united faculty and all students in expressive games and activities designed to experience gesture from the inside out, mirror the gestures of others, and so on. Performances by two singers and a pianist were featured and worked with through a group process.

Several of the music students stayed on to participate in the final workshop of the day, "Exploring the Musical Impulse." This involved music expressed through art materials (gestures imagined visually and captured on paper), using the group as a vocal chorus to create sound that corresponded to improvised gesture, and games of creative physical expression such as "Statues," "The Name Game," "Freeze" and "The Machine."

WEDNESDAY, March 24

Presentation:

Fredrik Søegaard: Instrumental Geography and Finger Movement



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund

Page 4 of 6

Sitting around the piano, the class discussed FS's demonstrations of such topics as: how the hand expresses music theory; how instruments are an extension of your body; how this dictates the way string instruments are tuned (comfortable positions for the fingers); why some pieces just feel good to play (Bach Prelude in C); the physical pleasure of playing as a sometimes overlooked value; description of the striking symbolizations in Bach's scores (visual gestures on the page that could never be understood aurally).

Workshop: Participants, even those who had never touched a keyboard instrument before, were taught to play the finger movement pattern of the first four measures of Bach's Prelude in C. With this in place, students then recorded their own playing using the Musical Gesture Toolbox. For the rest of the afternoon they explored the various possibilities and experimented with different analytical approaches to the computer representations of their movements.

THURSDAY, March 25

Presentations:

Kristoffer Jensen: Modeling Musical Interaction (part 1)

Analysis of theories of schismogenesis (Bateson, Fiske) in music interaction – actions and interactions and the signals that are used.

Knowledge = action possibilities

ACTIVITIES: towards objects, collective; "this is what people are doing"

ACTIONS: goals (planning)

OPERATIONS: carrying out the plan

Søren Frimodt-Møller: Modeling Musical Interaction (part 2)

- What type of communication is taking place in the ensemble? When are gestures meant as signals? Analysis was offered, with many examples, of instances of gesturing and signaling among musicians in the moment of performing, when talking is simply not possible.
- A brief introduction to the problems of describing the musician's deliberations regarding how to interpret actions of fellow musicians as exemplary of their intentions and strategies.



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund

Page 5 of 6

Workshop:

The class split into two groups in order to have a hands-on experience of non-verbal signaling during a performance where the performers' goals and intentions may experience conflicts that need to be negotiated. We used as departure point, the "Intuitive Music" compositions by Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen, and proceeded to invent (rather uproariously) our own experimental designs, all using as the musical element the two syllables of the Danish exclamation "Hurra!" We reflected on what worked and what didn't and what the communication issues seemed to be.

Frimodt-Møller and Westney: We then applied what we had been processing about gesture to an activity of watching various YouTube performances together and analyzing and commenting on the different layers and "meanings" of their gesturing. These examples included:

Kronos Quartet <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja35dyPxE74>

Liberace <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irgsVmCfrYs>

Judy Garland <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3AOIj2WiHM>

Mitsuko Uchida <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czTJjZuybkw>

"Rhapsody Rabbit" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL_rdNOyxkE

Chico Marx <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Fx252AgYeM&feature=related>

Bobby McFerrin <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOQ40DqGZ5A>

Al Jarreau <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQVANPDxFTI>

Flamenco <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BYcF7OYIXw>

FRIDAY, March 26:

Presentations:

William Westney: Philosophical Remarks on Meanings of Gesture for the Performer and the Listener

Empirical findings from Westney's years as a concert pianist were integrated in this presentation with the theories of Dalcroze, Susanne Langer, John Dewey and Martin Buber, with additional passages for discussion taken from Schopenhauer and Aldous Huxley.

Media: We watched Part I in its entirety ("On the Record") of the documentary "Glenn Gould: On and Off the Record" and discussed the role of gesture in the artistry of this uniquely compelling artist. (there are YouTube excerpts from the film such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtmifxrdsw>)



NNIMIPA

Master's Course on
MUSIC, MEANING and GESTURE
March 22-26, 2010 at SDU-Odense

SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK'S ACTIVITIES

Compiled and edited by: William Westney, Søren R. Frimodt-Møller and Cynthia M. Grund
Page 6 of 6

Watched the highly idiosyncratic gesturing of a much older Glenn Gould:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwkzf-KUNPM>

Kristoffer Jensen: Analytic approaches to action

Exploration of the "Beliefs, Desires, Intentions" model applied to music performance. Considerable discussions of whether or not it made sense to differentiate desires and intentions in the instance of music performance

Workshops:

Student projects, developed through the week, were presented and discussed:

(1) Josué Moreno and Davis Ozolins from the Sibelius Academy (Finland), presented their computer project using embedded sound files (both of music and environmental sounds) entitled "Gesture Time Travel"

(2) Jarl Primdal Mogensen from University of Southern Denmark, presented his analysis of this video of Westney's "Un-Master Class" <http://www.aabenraa-lokal-tv.dk/wp/?s=unmaster> using the discourse principles of Michel Foucault

Concluding remarks by William Westney.

Themes that crystallized during the week: Which gestures that are technically necessary for performance? If some are not, what purpose do they serve? Can gestures be perceived as phony vs. true? How would we know the difference? Are they a signal to the audience, or part of the performer's inner world? Do the most artistic gestures follow universal principles of physiology, such as acceleration/deceleration rates and arc shapes? Our opinions differed on these questions, but we found them to be intriguing ones that will sharpen our awareness of, and curiosity about, musical gesture in the future.