



## Two Response Models: The Similarity and Difference Responses

The tactile and movement-based part of the Response-able Com-position practice (stage three) is guided by two response models. This is the juncture in the practice where instrument and instrumentalist connect together with the acousmatic agents in recordings. Let's briefly look into how these two responses are understood and applied in the RC practice.

The similarity response is about finding and tracing similarities with the acousmatic agent. It is about empathetic thinking; it thinks and acts through commons and resonances, mimicking and imitating. It looks for a behavioral continuum and a level of homogeneity. However, this is not about direct mimesis that aims to exactly reproduce, mirror, copy, or substitute the acousmatic agent, replicating it elsewhere. Rather, it entails a generative approach that is interested in self-reflection, drawing on the idea of what might becoming the other be like. There is an underlying trans-desire, looking for contagions, extensions, expansions, completions and imitations, which builds on various musical characteristics of the acousmatic agent.

The difference response on the other hand, is about differentiating from the acousmatic agent, and looking for heterogeneous forms of relation. It opposes, diverges, cuts, divides and digresses from various musical characteristics of the acousmatic agent. The difference response aims to figure independent, autonomous, and differential forms of co-existing. However, the word independence is a tricky word in music practices; whenever sounds are brought together in the same space-time continuum and heard simultaneously, they are always entangled with one another; there can never truly be an absolute separation. As Denis Smalley points out:

[t]rue independence is not a musical reality. It is rare if not impossible for simultaneously existing events to be unrelated, simply because placing them together in a musical context confers connection upon them. (Smalley, in Emmerson, 1987, p.88)

However-contrasting the two agents' sound types and their behaviors etc. may be, they still need to make musical meaning and sense together, because they share a sonic space which they cohabit. The act of differentiating occurs in a shared musical space, where there is no

absolute separability. Therefore, the understanding of differentiation is explored through this understanding of independence: an entangled and relational one.

I work with these two response models for the RC practice because they enable constraints, yet allow space and freedom for expression, and provide a level of coherence by offering repeated structures in the practice. They act as reference points, guiding and informing my listening, thinking and acting. Along with these, generating expressions with both the similarity and difference responses produce plural perspectives; and by doing so, functions to overcome one's own reflexes, habits and inclinations.

In my practice, the application of the response process does not aim to exactly pin down and represent what an ideal similarity or difference response would be. It is not interested in looking for pure and absolute translations and interpretations of similarities or differences. The aim is to generate and trace the effects that these relations have on me, others and our relations, through a self-reflexive practice, exploring a multivalent set of possibilities. Therefore, I intentionally don't determine and assign certain characteristics that should be explored and interpreted in certain ways within the practice, as to leave space for chance and discovery.

Both the similarity and difference responses rely on interpreting sound through technical and conceptual guidelines. Both the responses listen to the acousmatic agent to create similarities or differences with them following parameters of spectra, timbre, morphology of sound type, gesture, energy/motion (TSU), as well as structure, form, and narrative. By relying on interpretation of similarity and difference responses, with a focus on these parameters, provides a structured-enough guide for coherence, yet open-enough to pave way for discovery.

It is important to point out that, the similarity response is not solely an act of conjoining with the other, nor the difference response a dis-joining. The boundaries of similarity and difference are difficult to define precisely, as each includes forms of the other within it. In my practice, there are always various elements of similarity found in difference response and vice versa. For example, sometimes the response differentiates from the gesture level yet it shares similarities with the other on the spectral level, or the response is similar with the other in terms of sound types, yet differ on gestural level etc. The two categories guide the practice, and they do that by being imperfect categorical separations. Their function is not to be interpreted as scriptures to be perfectly executed.

The filmmaker, writer, literary theorist, Trinh T. Minh-ha's, "inside-outside opposition" frames the understanding of working with both positions of "I am like you" and "I am different" rather eloquently. She states:

The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She is, in other words, this inappropriate other or same who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference and that of reminding 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (Trinh, 1997, p. 419)

Therefore, by enacting both differentiating and entangling, the process of deals with a paradox. There is an affirmation of holding two things that do not resolve, maintaining the tension and dissonance and not to be torn by such, i.e. learning to "stay with the trouble<sup>1</sup>". Working this way, the practice carries the potential to disrupt the engagement processes which could pave the way to new and creative ways of thinking, feeling and engaging with the process of com-posing.

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<sup>1</sup> Here I am referring to Donna Haraway's "Staying with the Trouble" (2016).