

Artistic Research Report

From paper to performance

Nonverbal communication as a vehicle for expression

Research Question

What nonverbal communication skills do I need to develop in order to help display characters, emotions, and communicate narratives in contemporary pieces such as Cie. Kahlua's *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan's *Home Work*?

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Abstract

This artistic research project focuses on the use and role of nonverbal communication as a means to effectively communicate narratives and display characters in modern percussion works, with particular emphasis on visual cues, i.e. physical appearance and kinesics – facial expressions, posture, and body and ocular movement. Research into this topic was motivated by the author's desire to become a more expressive performer and had the added benefit of expanding the author's solo percussion repertoire. The research strategy applied was the realisation of two case studies, on Cie. Kahlua's *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan's *Home Work*. The mixed methods approach to the topic included literature research, analysis of the scores and videos of performances, interviews, coaching by experts in music, theatre and dance, quasi-experiments, and autoethnography. The interventions resulted in the author's own versions of the compositions, each with its own narrative and corresponding characters, which are made clear by the use of nonverbal cues. In addition, the author designed a general method for preparing engaging performances that can be followed by other musicians and thus provides a contribution to the field. By the end of the research process, the author had improved his body awareness, stage presence, and nonverbal communication skills to the point where he could effectively communicate his artistic ideas to the audience.

Keywords

- Nonverbal communication
- Body percussion
- Physical theatre
- Body awareness
- Narrative
- Character
- Emotion

Research process and findings

Introduction

Motivation and Goal

The story of my Artistic Research dates back to 2015, when I graduated from the Bachelor of Music programme at Codarts. Back then, I was quite satisfied with my technical and performance level, mainly as an orchestral player, but also as a chamber musician. I decided to take a year off to enjoy my newly acquired degree, look for work, and think about the future. While reflecting on whether I should continue studying or not, I reached the important realisation that there was still something about my performance that I was not completely happy with: it was the fact that I did not like performing as a soloist. I have always been introverted, so it was very uncomfortable to suddenly be under the spotlight, the center of everyone's attention. Indeed, I realised that this was why I felt so much better as part of an orchestra or a chamber ensemble.

This shyness on stage naturally led to shortcomings in my performance: the anxiety and discomfort connected to being alone on stage made me rush through my performances, sometimes entering a kind of "automatic pilot" mode where I just played the notes without much thought, as if I wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. The feedback I received from my peers made me realise that the audience felt the same. There was a barrier between me and them, and I felt was not getting my message across as an artist: the playing was very good, but there was something missing in my expression.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, I derived no pleasure from solo playing. A paradigmatic example of this was my Bachelor final exam, a concert programme that I created with the intention of repeating after graduating. However, the repertoire was very heavy and I reached the end of the performance exhausted and unhappy – why do it, then? After all that work I was still unsatisfied with my performance. This had to change.

After a long reflection, I decided to enroll in the Master of Music programme at Codarts and focus on ways to become a more expressive performer in order to improve my communication with the audience and feel more confident and secure on stage. Initially, my intention was to act directly on my "performance skills", which I defined as the external expression of my ideas. However, the first feedback I received during the design phase of my research from a member of my network, actor and director Arlon Luijten, led me to conclude that this external expression needed to be rooted deeply in my artistic ideas – I would first need strong and clear ideas in order to achieve strong external expression. Because of this, I shifted the focus of my research and added a new goal: to improve my interpretation of the repertoire I performed. This was the first step towards establishing my Artistic Research Question.

Defining the Artistic Research Question

As mentioned above, my ultimate goal was to become a more expressive performer in order to feel more comfortable on stage and communicate better with the audience. During the research design phase, I learned that I needed to address both my internal expression by clarifying my interpretation, and my external expression by performing that internal interpretation.

When the moment came to decide how to apply my findings to my artistic practice and I realised I would need to choose repertoire, I was divided. Having my future professional aspirations in mind,

namely chamber music, I felt I should choose “conventional” repertoire, i.e. music that would be played on an instrument. However, I had played a couple of theatrical percussion pieces during my Bachelor studies and I felt that they had already led to a small improvement of my expressive capabilities by giving me a different focus and purpose on stage. With my goals in mind, I believed that theatrical repertoire would be more beneficial for my development. Thus, I arrived at my first AR Question:

How can I improve my musical interpretation and develop my performance skills in order to enhance my expressive capabilities on modern conventional and theatrical percussion repertoire?

This question proved to be too broad, so I started working on focusing it on the real causes of my perceived reduced expression. Terms such as “body language”, “stage presence” and “character” immediately came to mind, but I lacked a clear understanding of what they were or how to relate them to my artistic practice. Initial research showed that “body language” did not fulfill the requirements to be considered a full language (Barfield, 1997, as cited in Wikipedia, 2018) and should instead be treated as a colloquial term for kinesics, a subset of nonverbal communication (Birdwhistell, 1952, as cited in Wikipedia, 2016). I also learned that “stage presence” was related to how the audience perceives a performer on stage based on nonverbal cues, e.g. how they stand and walk (A. Scharfenberg, personal communication, April 14, 2017). “Character” could have different meanings, e.g. musical character or theatrical character. In theatre, characterisation is normally based on nonverbal cues, e.g. posture, gait, speaking style. Because a musician, particularly a percussionist, depends solely on his movement in order to perform, it quickly became apparent that nonverbal communication would have a key role in my research. Indeed, my interpretation of the music would have to manifest itself primarily via nonverbal cues, with the goal of effectively communicating the emotions I felt and, in the case of theatrical pieces, the story I had created.

I proceeded to choose suitable repertoire. I sought theatrical pieces performed without an instrument in the hope that this would allow me to focus entirely on my body. Further, I wished to explore my developing skills in the more interactive setting of chamber music. I adjusted my AR Question accordingly and arrived at:

What nonverbal communication skills do I need to develop in order to help communicate emotions and storylines in contemporary pieces such as Cie. Kahlua’s *Ceci n’est pas une balle*, F. Sarhan’s *Vice versa*, and chamber music arrangements of popular Portuguese songs for percussion and voice?

During the intervention cycles, I learned that I would also need to tackle the challenge of creating characters in the theatrical sense. I also realised that trying to apply my findings to both theatrical and conventional repertoire, and also in a chamber music setting, might take more time than what was available to me. I therefore adjusted my repertoire choice again to focus on solo theatrical compositions for body percussion and arrived at the final version of my AR Question:

Artistic Research Question

What nonverbal communication skills do I need to develop in order to help display characters, emotions, and communicate narratives in contemporary pieces such as Cie. Kahlua’s *Ceci n’est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan’s *Home Work*?

Research strategy

My research process consisted of two intervention cycles, each dedicated to a case study of one of the selected compositions. It is important to note that, although my personal interpretations of these compositions constitute a large part of the artistic result, the creation of these versions was not the main goal of my research; it was the development of skills that would allow me to communicate effectively with the audience via a clear display of emotions, characters, and narratives that was my primary goal. This way, I also produced a performance preparation process that I can apply to any piece. That process, presented in detail in the next section, follows the steps I used in my case studies of Cie. Kahlua's *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan's *Home Work*.

In order to attain a multifaceted approach to the repertoire, as well as a better understanding of the research topic, I divided my data collection into two parts: knowledge-based and repertoire-specific, according to research strategy diagram in Appendix 4. Below is an explanation of the research methods used:

- Literature research on:
 - the compositional background of each piece: the composer, his inspiration and motivation;
 - nonverbal communication: its different categories, how it is transmitted and how people perceive it;
 - theatre: characterisation, narrative creation and performance aides, such as subtext;
- Interviews with:
 - experts in theatre and music theatre: Andreas Scharfenberg, Arlon Luijten, David Prins and René Spierings;
 - composers and experts in crossover between music and other art forms: Dr. Falk Hübner and François Sarhan;
- Autoethnography: by joining an amateur theatre production at the Rietveld Theater in Delft;
- Expert coaching in:
 - music: main subject teachers Chris Leenders and Hans Leenders;
 - theatre and music theatre: Arlon Luijten, Andreas Scharfenberg, Cézanne Tegelberg, David Prins and René Spierings;
 - body awareness and movement: Katharina Conradi
- Analysis of:
 - the scores of *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and *Home Work*;
 - videos of performances of both pieces;
 - video of a mime performing.
- Quasi-experiments, with the goal of:
 - acquiring new skills, e.g. playing *Ceci n'est pas une balle* with a real ball;
 - discovering new possibilities, e.g. alternative characters and narratives for *Home Work*;
 - providing a baseline for comparison with the artistic result: strictly musical versions, containing only the information provided in the score.

The knowledge-based material was then adapted to the pieces studied and, supplemented by the repertoire-specific data, led naturally to the interventions, which took the form of a performance script in the first intervention cycle and an annotated score and video in the second.

Artistic result

I see my artistic result as two-fold: on one side, we have the final recordings of my performances of Cie. Kahlua's *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan's *Home Work*, and on the other, my performance preparation process, which I developed throughout the research (described below).

Performances

Ceci n'est pas une balle

Final recording: <https://youtu.be/EnMWrXtzrvc> (37 Reference Recording 2)

My version of *Ceci n'est pas une balle* is supported by the intervention of the first cycle in the form of a performance script, available in Appendix 5.

Home Work

Final recording (up to bar 86): <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc> (53 Reference Recording 4)

Given that the performance script of the first intervention cycle turned out to be a very large and impractical way of representing the intervention, I decided to split the intervention of the second cycle into two parts:

- an annotated score, where I wrote my own sub-score, e.g. character changes and emotions, as well as small changes to the music: see Appendix 6;
- an annotated video, where my artistic choices can be followed in real time by the viewer: go to <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc> (53 Reference Recording 4) and enable subtitles to see the annotations.

Performance preparation process

This is a graphical representation of the process I followed to prepare the two compositions studied and essentially shows a streamlined version of my research strategy, taking the user “from paper to performance”. It is also my contribution to the artistic community – I believe it is general enough that it can be followed by any musician interested in enhancing his performance through nonverbal communication.

Close to the end of my research, I was happy to learn that the process I had designed and perfected along the way resembled Rink's (2017) own “refraction in interpretation”. Rink proposes that an interpretation is the result of different factors, e.g. performing history, analysis, compositional style and physicality, which are then combined into and modified by a “prism” which represents the performer's personal contribution. In my process, I combine musical preparation – a combination of analysis, research and practise – with performative preparation – creation of narratives, characters and addition of nonverbal cues – in order to obtain a unique artistic product. My personal contribution appears in the form of the artistic core, which forms the root of my interpretation.

Furthermore, this process combines my pre-existing capabilities with my research findings. These findings are very much related to my personal development on stage: I learned practical skills of nonverbal communication, body awareness and theatre, and combined them with my existing analytical and technical knowledge in order to produce engaging interpretations, develop better posture and movement control, create engaging characters, and increase my comfort on stage.

My performance preparation process is available in Appendix 7 and below is an explanation of how my research findings have contributed to its development.

Musical preparation

The first step of the preparation process is the study of the music, which I divided in three parts: technical, analytical and investigatory. As mentioned before, I have been happy with my technical level since my graduation from my Bachelor studies but, reflecting on my approach to the preparation of a new piece, I realised that I often did not spend enough time analysing it or researching its compositional background. However, this can undermine the whole preparation process, as I believe it is important to understand the piece in its entirety in order to make informed decisions about its interpretation. I have discovered that experimentation with, and reflection on, the written material are great sources of inspiration and lead to much more refined artistic choices. I engaged in this practice in both of my case studies, particularly in the theatrical sections of *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (see Appendix 5 for the piece's structure) and while developing actions for the characters in *Home Work*.

Artistic core

The first breakthrough of my research arose from discussions with Arlon Luijten (personal communication, January 16, 2017) during the first intervention cycle. This was my realisation of the need to establish the "artistic core" of a performance, i.e., the message I wish to communicate to the audience. After reflecting on this issue, I realised that, as a student, I had never had the need to do this myself: teachers had always been there to guide me in creating an interpretation. Without that guidance, it was difficult for me to find an interpretation and a purpose for my playing.

In order to achieve that, Arlon suggested that I should ask myself a series of questions: Why did I want to play a certain piece?, What do I want to communicate?, What does the music ask for in terms of character?, Is there an implicit narrative? This connects directly to the previous step of the preparation process in the sense that the answers to these questions emanate from the musical text. In essence, I need to engage in deep reflection on what a performance means for me and find a purpose for it based on the repertoire I play. Only then can I decide on my interpretation.

I have found that, after analysing and familiarising myself with the piece, establishing the artistic core is the first and most fundamental step in creating an engaging version for performance. By finding a purpose for the performance, I can then give myself objectives as a performer and my actions become meaningful and therefore convincing.

My choices for the artistic core of *Ceci n'est pas une balle* and *Home Work* reflect this thinking process. The first performance was simply meant to be funny and show myself in the role of a showman who performs tricks with an invisible ball that eventually rebels against me (Appendix 5, Version 4). The second came to have a deeper meaning, related to the integration of *Home Work* in a whole concert performance: I took what I found to be the piece's implicit narrative – assembling and testing a machine that malfunctions and is ultimately destroyed – and used that as a metaphor for the life of a character, who ages throughout the piece and follows the aforementioned narrative applied to his own relationships (Second intervention cycle, 4. Intervention).

Narrative and conflict

The narrative arises from the application of the artistic core to the music. Every action of the performer needs to contribute to the expression of the artistic core; it is therefore necessary to attribute roles to the material written in the score and find reasons for the performer's actions. During my research process, I accomplished this via experimentation. Examples of this are the evolving performance scripts for *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (Appendix 5) and the experiments with an alternative narrative and multiple characters in *Home Work* (Second intervention cycle, 3.2.4. Lessons and Expert coaching).

An important concept to keep in mind during the creation of a narrative is conflict. In the words of Andreas Scharfenberg (personal communication, April 14, 2017), "where there is theatre, there is

conflict". This was an extremely valuable lesson, because I realised that conflict, besides being ubiquitous in theatre, is an excellent tool for creating engaging and rich narratives which I used in both interventions: the rebellion of the invisible ball in *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (37 Reference Recording 2, 3:00, <https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc?t=3m>) and the realisation of the mistake after reading the warning in *Home Work* (53 Reference Recording 4, 6:35, <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc?t=6m35s>)

Characterisation

As the narrative is put in place, characterisation comes into play. This had a very important role in my research, especially in the second intervention cycle. I learned about the differences between external and internal characterisation (First intervention cycle, 3.4. Interviews) and developed these concepts further in the second intervention cycle. I will talk about the two types of characterisation in turn.

External characterisation is related to a character's physical appearance – essentially costume, makeup and its use of props. I learned that props are a simple and effective approach to costumes – the right accessory or piece of clothing, e.g. a hat, a tie or a walking stick, can help make the character clear. In my own research I employed props on two occasions: a magic wand in the form of a mallet in one of the intermediate versions of *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (Appendix 5, Version 2; 03 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4>) and a walking stick for the old man character in *Home Work* (53 Reference Recording 4, <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc>).

However, during my research I concluded that, in general, costumes and props were not something that I would choose to invest much into: good, complete costumes take time to prepare and put on, which can make them impractical to use in solo and chamber music performances where time between pieces is limited, this especially if I need to play several pieces in sequence or if the programme mixes theatrical and non-theatrical repertoire. However, if the opportunity is there and the costume and props fit the artistic core then they can be an important resource for expressing character effectively.

On the other hand, internal characterisation is related to a character's personality, psychological features and feelings, and is something that I can use without limitations. For this, I discovered different sources of inspiration: I can try to put myself in a certain situation, like I did in *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (First intervention cycle, 4. Intervention; 37 Reference Recording 2, <https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc>), or I can mimic the behaviour and appearance of other people, e.g. a child (50 Experiment, <https://youtu.be/w5bMnIUxWeY>) or a politician (49 Experiment, https://youtu.be/Co85JR_0Uq0). My acting skills are still rather basic so these are stereotypes and I will need more work on this in the future in order to create unique characters. Nonetheless, I believe that my progress has already been a big victory for a musician with no prior experience in theatre.

Nonverbal communication

An important finding came from my study of the visual aspects of nonverbal communication, colloquially known as body language. My first discovery was how complex it actually is. I had always thought of it as simply the "language of the body", but it is in fact very complicated. I discovered there are many nonverbal communication categories, e.g. kinesics, oculusics and paralinguistics, and several different channels through which it is transmitted, e.g. posture, facial expressions and eye movements (Reis and Sprecher, 2009; Tubbs and Moss, 2002; Wikipedia, 2016, 2017). This made me come to a number of realisations:

- nonverbal cues are transmitted simultaneously through different channels, as a whole package, reinforcing the expressed message;
- this means that it is impractical to try and act independently on each of the nonverbal channels as they are all working together to achieve the desired expressive goal; therefore, the secret to creating convincing nonverbal cues is not in refining them individually, but in

letting them emanate naturally from the artistic core, evaluating the outcome, and making corrections to the cues as needed.

This way, nonverbal cues appear as the result of a strong intention to communicate a certain message, play a given character or perform a certain action, and can be refined or enhanced as part of the development process.

Good examples from my own work of nonverbal cues emanating from narrative choices are the moment of conflict in *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (37 Reference Recording 2, 3:00, <https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc?t=3m>), the back pain of the old man character in *Home Work* (53 Reference Recording 4, 1:35, <https://youtu.be/pwlRcluSWwc?t=1m35s>) and the disappointed child in the same piece (ibid, 3:23, <https://youtu.be/pwlRcluSWwc?t=3m23s>).

The refinement of these cues can be seen in several of the coaching videos, such as the one with René Spierings on *Ceci n'est pas une balle* (04 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/2-jYRSZJzN8>) and the one with Cézanne Tegelberg on *Home Work* (47 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw>).

Sub-score

I see the sub-score exceptionally well defined by Pavis and Shantz (1998) as a “kinesthetic and emotional master plan”. The sub-score is a more complete version of the subtext, which represents the thoughts of a character. In my opinion, the sub-score is a fundamental part of the performance in the sense that it tells the character how to move and what to think, thus providing him with an objective and reinforcing the intention mentioned above. My sub-score for *Ceci n'est pas une balle* has been extensively noted down in the performance script (Appendix 5, Version 4); the one for *Home Work* was annotated into the score in a simpler, more intuitive way (Appendix 6).

Body awareness and external expression

My incursion into the field of body awareness and movement was very interesting, albeit short. Working on this with Katharina Conradi (Second intervention cycle, 3.1.3 Coaching) and following her exercises allowed me to experience several general improvements.

First of all, it allowed me to become more aware of my posture and my balance (41 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOA0>); this made it easier for me to adopt a neutral posture, which then facilitates playing different characters because I could easily return to a neutral baseline. This was further developed during my participation in an amateur theatre production at the Rietveld Theater (Second intervention cycle, 3.1.4 Autoethnography).

Secondly, via experimenting with the concept of the kinesphere (41 Coaching, 9:45, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOA0?t=9m45s>), I was able to improve my stage presence by becoming more aware of the space around me and how to enlarge my personal space.

And lastly, the action drive motifs that I learned from Katharina (41 Coaching, 13:48, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOA0?t=13m48s>) provided me with a structured way to think about different types of movement, which I can apply to different characters and emotions. For example, I think about Press – a slow and effortful movement – when playing the old man character in *Home Work*.

Towards the interventions

The findings outlined above were applied when it came to craft the interventions. I started by defining the artistic core: in *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, a showman performs all kinds of tricks with an imaginary ball, until it gains a life of its own (conflict) and rebels against the performer, who then tries to regain control of the situation. In *Home Work*, the artistic core is a journey through different stages

of the character's life, reflecting the narrative of creation – excitement – error (conflict) – failure – destruction implicit in the score.

Once this was decided, the narrative and characters were developed side by side, drawing inspiration from the musical material and the artistic core. In the first intervention cycle, I experimented with different character possibilities, e.g. a clown and an illusionist, but did not feel capable of playing an invented character. This way, I decided to play myself in the role of the showman. I dressed in my own casual style – in this case, polo shirt, jeans and sneakers – and imagined myself in the situations described in the score. In addition, I decided to add a stage entrance to the performance early on in the intervention cycle in order to clarify the narrative. The initial version, in which I played an illusionist who “created” the ball with a flick of a wand (Appendix 5, Version 2; 03 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4>), evolved into a calm moment without any use of props, in line with my choice of character (Appendix 5, Version 4; 37 Reference Recording 2, <https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc>). Furthermore, I also decided to resolve the conflict in the end, regaining control of the ball (37 Reference Recording 2, 5:35, <https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc?t=5m35s>), as opposed to letting the ball win (02 Intermediate recording for feedback, 5:45, https://youtu.be/q6a1_zSbFzo?t=5m45s). Another important part of this intervention was the improvement of my movements while performing tricks with the ball; this was the subject of extensive experimentation which can be seen in detail in First intervention cycle, Sections 3.6 and 4.

In *Home Work*, the artistic core required the creation of different characters, corresponding to the different stages of life. Having engaged in more theatre training and participated in an amateur theatre production, I felt I was ready for this challenge. By analysing the score, I realised that the best option for the narrative would be to start as an old man, have a memory flashback that brought me to a younger age and progress from there. For this, I created an additional character, similar to my initial idea of a person with an attention deficit, but found out that this version (46 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/5BBnoU9YVUE>), gave too much prevalence to the second character, which was less interesting than the old man. This way, and in order to better illustrate the life journey, I used the coaching sessions with Cézanne Tegelberg to develop three additional characters: a child, a teenager and an adult (47 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw>). For these different characters, I looked for inspiration in my own life: my grandparents for the old man, my niece for the child, my high school memories for the teenager and myself for the adult. In order to be able to switch instantly between characters, I decided to wear a neutral black outfit, like a mime would do – although they traditionally dress in white (RockOfVictory, 2015).

Once the characters and the narrative were set, I added my own sub-score, based on the musical material and what I felt it could represent if played by its associated character. After setting the sub-score, giving thoughts for the characters to follow and objectives to their actions, I focused on letting those thoughts come to life in the form of nonverbal cues. I cannot say I have a magic formula for this; what I do feel is that the acting training I have followed has taught me not to restrict my impulses and not to feel ashamed or shy when doing embarrassing things on stage, the body awareness exercises have helped me become more confident inside of my larger personal space and my deeper knowledge of nonverbal communication has helped me understand how I can fine-tune my nonverbal cues in order to make them more convincing. Still, much of this fine-tuning needs to be done either by analysing and reflecting on self-recordings (First intervention cycle, Sections 3.6 and 4) or by working with external help, like I did with Cézanne Tegelberg during the second intervention cycle.

I believe the combination of all these elements has led to comprehensive interventions and rich artistic results, especially in the second intervention cycle in which I successfully played different characters and displayed a wide variety of emotions, according to the feedback I received (Second intervention cycle, 6. Self-reflection and feedback).

Reflection

Although the artistic results of the intervention cycles themselves are personal interpretations of two contemporary theatrical compositions for body percussion, I believe that I obtained much more than that during this artistic research process.

First of all, there is my performance preparation process, a repeatable and generally applicable guide that I already successfully used in creating the interventions and subsequent artistic products of this research.

Furthermore, I believe I managed to harness the knowledge from several experts with different artistic backgrounds and coupled it with my own broader understanding of the research topic via effective case studies, in order to create highly personal, unique versions of the repertoire I selected. The interventions reflect this learning process: I used the skills I already had as a professional musician, such as a developed technique and analytical capabilities, and combined them with new skills and knowledge in areas completely unknown to me, especially theatre, in order to create interesting artistic results.

This process involved a great deal of reflection as well. There are many possible choices when it comes e.g. to creating a character or a narrative and choosing the right moments for inserting conflict or looking around so as to capture the audience's attention – I needed to make sure that all of them reflected my own personal taste and understanding of the music, so that I could still shine through as a performer.

What I see in my final recording is actually very much true to myself. This may sound surprising to the people who know me as a calm and organised person, but the truth is that I behave very differently with close friends and family – with them I am much more playful and at times extremely silly. The real achievement for me was being able to bring that part of me onto the stage and managing to do so in what I felt was a natural and convincing manner, without feeling embarrassed.

When comparing my first reference recording with my final recording, I see myself taking much more initiative, going for my performance goals, and acting in accordance with clear artistic choices. This results in my feeling more confident and indeed, finally happier in my performance, something that had been previously missing. Of course there is still work to be done: I should continue fine-tuning all the choices I make, refining and adding to the sub-score, and experimenting with different characters and narratives. For that I will need to continue working with experts in theatre, but that is something that I am definitely willing to do because this research process has been such an incredibly enriching experience.

Conclusion

Now is the moment to answer my Artistic Research Question: “What nonverbal communication skills do I need to develop in order to help display characters, emotions, and communicate narratives in contemporary pieces such as Cie. Kahlua’s *Ceci n’est pas une balle* and F. Sarhan’s *Home Work*?”

I have learned during the research process that it does not make sense to dissect the nonverbal message and act independently on each of its categories or cues, because they all influence and naturally reinforce each other. However, for the sake of practicality and clarity, I chose to focus my research on visual nonverbal cues. Those are:

- kinesics: facial expressions, posture, body movement, gestures
- oculusics: eye contact, eye movement, gaze direction
- physical appearance: clothing, accessories

Over the course of the research, I also needed to deal with paralinguistics – nonverbal cues related to the voice – because it proved to be an integral part of characterisation. However, I discovered that kinesics was the category where I had the most difficulties and it became the focus of my development. I learned that facial expressions, particularly the ones involving the eyes, are the most effective way to communicate emotions.

In the addition to the development of nonverbal skills, I learned that I needed to improve my interpretations of the selected repertoire by establishing its artistic core, based on which I created characters and suitable narratives, in accordance with the possibilities offered by the music.

Now that this research process has come to an end, I believe it is worth reflecting on who I was two years ago compared to who I am now. When I decided to embark in this journey, I was an introverted musician who disliked being alone on stage, had difficulties creating his own interpretations and expressing them to the audience and was afraid of doing potentially embarrassing things in front of other people. Today, I can say I have learned to enjoy my own performances and have fun while showcasing my work; I have learned to reflect on, and find purpose for, the pieces I choose to perform; and I have learned basic acting skills that allow me to truly step into a character and remain true to it, even if I have to do very stupid or silly things. In a way, I can imagine that it is not me doing those silly things, it is the character – I can return to my “normal” self when the performance is over.

For these reasons, I believe I have managed to evolve from a “musician” to a “performer” and this broadening of my personal identity on stage has given me much more freedom to explore, experiment, and enjoy performing. This has also helped me to feel more confident in connecting with my audience because I finally feel that I can get my message across to them.

Artistic result

I am extremely satisfied with the artistic result. Two years ago, I would never have imagined that I would achieve what I have achieved. I have developed my body percussion skills, my critical analysis skills, my creativity, my posture, my confidence on stage, my understanding of how people communicate and the needs of a good performance. I could not be happier with what I have learned.

I believe I can confidently say that I now possess an uncommon set of skills for a classical musician and that I have learned to deal with, and overcome, my introversion on stage. I feel capable of giving much more engaging performances and I think I can be used as an example in order to help other musicians who feel the way I did when I started this journey.

On a self-critical note, I would have liked to apply the findings of the second intervention cycle to the whole of *Home Work*. That was unfortunately not possible, but I will keep working on my version of the piece until it is finished.

As topics for further research, I would like to delve deeper into the other channels of nonverbal communication. I think I have much to learn, particularly in the field of paralinguistics. I am still not entirely satisfied with my diction and my capacity to adopt a neutral accent and it is also still easy for me to forget about the correct pronunciation of certain syllables when I am too focused on playing the character or the music.

Research process

I think my research process was generally successful. I managed to create and apply a comprehensive research strategy which led to valuable interventions and produced good artistic results. Nonetheless, wanting to collect data from many different sources was overwhelming at times and made it difficult to analyse and relate all the findings. As a key point for improvement, I would very much like to have done more literature research, especially in the second intervention cycle. However, I notice now that I always subconsciously chose to do more practice-based research, engaging in coaching sessions with different experts and participating in group activities. All things considered, I do not think that was a bad choice, because it provided me with a more vivid experience and many opportunities for experimentation.

One interesting part of the process was having to deal with very different, and sometimes contradictory, opinions from the experts I consulted. This required much reflection, initiative and also some courage, all things that will help me in the future.

Overall, I am satisfied with the scope of my research and the question I proposed myself to answer. Although both of these changed slightly during the process, I believe I achieved a good balance in studying a completely new field for me while following a clear direction and not getting lost in all the new information.

Future ideas: playing an instrument

One thing that I really would have liked to do would be to apply my findings to playing an instrument. I am very curious as to how the movement and postural restrictions imposed by the instrument would affect my capacity to express myself via nonverbal cues. Perhaps I would need to use more facial expressions or shape my movements in a way that made them convey the emotions I felt or the musical characters I imagined.

However, and even though I had no time to take this extra step, I strongly believe that I can use the methodology learned during this research process, as well as some of its findings, to obtain these answers by myself.

Documentation of the intervention cycles

First intervention cycle

1. Reference Recording 1

Benigno, M., Esperet, A., Noyer, A. (Cie. Kahlua) – *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, for mime and tape (5:15)

URL: <https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4> (01 Reference Recording 1)

Recorded on November 9, 2016

2. Self-reflection and Feedback

The experts consulted for feedback were Hans Leenders (main subject teacher), René Spierings (guest teacher – music theatre) and Arlon Luijten (actor and stage director).

At the beginning of the research process, I sought feedback on the specific elements of nonverbal communication, as well as other parameters I found important for this piece, such as character, story and technical as well as musical aspects. After my initial reflection, the first people I contacted were Hans and René. On the specific parameters, I learned the following:

Posture: my posture was generally good and relaxed, in accordance with my own assessment.

Facial expressions: there was no clear consensus about my facial expressions. I found them moderately interesting, Hans found them insufficient, especially during the acting sequences, and René found them too focused on one point (the camera) and sometimes exaggerated.

Eye contact: this raised two different issues – looking at the audience and following the ball. Hans and I agreed that eye contact opened an additional channel for communication, with him defending that I should not be shy when looking at the audience. We all agreed (René included) that following the ball could be done better; doing this realistically helps make the actions more believable.

Gestures: these were found to be mostly good. However, René and I found some of them to be unrealistic. Hans found some of them to be lagging behind the tape. This ruins the element of surprise – it should be apparent that I am creating the sounds and not following a script.

Story and character: these constituted another topic of discussion. René found the character to be fine and he thinks that the story told in the notes is enough. However, he recommended doing sharper mood changes. Hans found the story to be unclear and that my personality was not properly revealed. He felt that I was performing the actions only because they are written, so they were not believable. They should be a consequence of a character and story that I choose for the piece.

Technical aspects: they were mostly good. There was room for improvement in some rhythms, but the balance of sounds and the timing was very good.

This initial feedback led me to think about my creative process. After reflecting on it, and incorporating elements from *The Inner Game of Music* (Green and Gallwey, 1986), I drew a mind map (Appendix 1) reflecting upon and detailing what I saw as the process that took place between taking a new music score and bringing the artistic product to an audience.

I took this to my next feedback session, with Arlon Luijten. This session provided very interesting information, because Arlon has a very different approach to performance. About the mind map, Arlon felt it was too rational. It also missed, in his opinion, a key point of the creative process, which is to define the artistic core of the performance. After doing research on the piece, such as analysing the score and learning about the composer and compositional background, conclusions need to be drawn: what is it that I want to express and why I want to do it. Arlon defends that robotic, fixed choices for the nonverbal parameters do not work because they are not believable. There was no specific feedback about them because Arlon believes they should stem from the story. About that and the characterisation, he said I needed to find my own motivation and make clear choices. That is, determine what my goal is as a performer and as a character, with the latter being a consequence of the first. I needed to find out what the material asked for via experimentation. A “white mask”, i.e. purely musical version of the piece keeping strictly to what is written could help. After that, I should make a drawing of the piece, where I associate words and emotions with each action, taking care that there is a reason for everything.

Conclusion

After analysing the feedback received, I realised that I was placing the focus of the research in the wrong place. In line with my own opinion, Hans and Arlon both felt that the character I was playing and the story I was telling were not clear. A quick reflection on this topic led me to the realisation that I was not telling much of a story beyond the notes on the score.

As Arlon cleverly pointed out, there was a step missing on my creative process mind map. The study/analysis of the score and research on the composer and the composition led immediately to interpretative choices on tempo, articulation, character and so on. But one can only make clear choices after defining the artistic core of the work: I needed to ask myself why I wanted to perform this particular piece and what it was that I wanted to express to the audience. The elements of nonverbal communication would then stem from the artistic choices that I made and the story I chose to tell. I felt this was very much in line with my goal of bringing my own emotions out and not fabricating new ones. The updated mind map can be found in Appendix 1.

This way, I decided not to use the nonverbal communication parameters as decision points, but as evaluation points. This meant I would not make specific choices about my facial expressions, gestures and posture, but instead use them as a benchmark for how effectively the storyline is being transmitted. They are, after all, the means through which the audience perceives it. Of course specific tweaks to each of the parameters can still be done in order to enhance clarity.

So what was the goal of the performance? What did I want to achieve as a performer and as a character? I chose this piece because I found it funny. I felt there was a lot of potential for doing silly things and I connected to that. My performance goal was to make people laugh. Now I needed to find a story that fit the material and a suitable character to tell it.

Apart from that, there was work to be done regarding eye movement when following the ball and gestures, such as making them more realistic and improving their timing.

3. Data collection

3.1. Score analysis

Benigno, M., Esperet, A., Noyer, A. (2014) – *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, for mime and tape

The composers

Matthieu Benigno, Alexandre Esperet and Antoine Noyer are three young percussionists who met in Lyon, France during their studies. Together, they founded Compagnie Kahlua, a music theatre company whose first children show, *Black Box*, includes a version for trio of *Ceci n'est pas une balle*.

They share varied backgrounds. Benigno, who gave his first steps in music learning violin, switched to percussion at the age of 16. Interested in crossover art, he learned clown arts, burlesque drama and dance. Noyer has a special interest in traditional percussion and shares the interest in scenic arts. Esperet, eager to collaborate with other artistic forms, has worked with several choreographers and stage directors. He was also the winner of the TROMP Percussion Competition in Eindhoven in 2012, where he premiered the solo version of *Ceci n'est pas une balle*.

This performance, which I watched live, was the inspiration for my work on this piece.

The Treachery of Images

Although not explicitly stated, the similarity between the piece's title and the text on Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (Magritte, 1929), "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*", makes a connection between both unavoidable. Inspired by Magritte's own words,

"The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture 'This is a pipe', I'd have been lying!" (Torczyner, 1979)

I decided to play with the idea that things are not always what they seem and develop a character with powers of illusion, provoking the appearance of the ball and performing magic tricks with it. This later evolved into adding conflict as an element of surprise: the ball, at first seemingly under control, would rebel against me and pursue an agenda of its own.

The score

In order to have an overview of the piece and the elements it incorporates, I made a formal analysis of it (see top half of the performance script in Appendix 5, Version 4). My chosen format for this was a proportional timeline – this provided me with a clear image of the durations of each section and how they relate to each other.

I found the piece to be divided in four major sections. The first and third are of theatrical nature: they are written non-rhythmically and use words as a primary tool to describe the actions to be performed; the second and fourth are of musical nature, using conventional notation, i.e. notes placed rhythmically on staves. The first two sections – one theatrical, one musical – are each roughly 1'35" long; the last two – in the same order – are around 1'00" long. This shortening of the duration of each section is caused by an increase in the density of the material they use: the first two sections are more spread out in time, with more silences and longer sequences, while the last two are much more packed with action.

It is also interesting to note that the theatrical sections are made up of relatively shorter, different scenes, while the musical sections stay longer with the same material, usually associated with a technical or rhythmical build-up over several repetitions.

3.2. Literature review

In my bid to become a more expressive performer and make sure my message reached the audience, my first goal was to understand how the audience perceives the information transmitted to them during a performance. Tichelaar (2009) divided a musical performance into nine parts, ranging from the moment the performer sets foot on stage to the final relaxation, just before the applause. This led me to think not only about the musical execution, but the performance as a whole and concepts such as stage presence and performance skills. I decided to investigate further.

Benchmark Institute (2016) divides performance skills into three categories: physical communication, vocal expressiveness and mental attitude. This division is refined on SkillsYouNeed (2016), with the addition of proper terminology, such as **kinesics**, **proxemics** and **paralinguistics** (defined below), and more channels for nonverbal communication. Here it was also stated that nonverbal messages reinforce or modify what is said, conveying information about emotional states, regulating the flow of communication and providing feedback to the receiver.

The search for clarification eventually led me to a series of articles on Wikipedia (2016, 2017) and to the *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships* (Reis and Sprecher, 2009), which proved to be the most comprehensive source of information. Nonverbal communication is defined as “communication through sending and receiving wordless clues”. These clues can take many different forms; the physical appearance of a communicator and the environment he is inserted in already transmit information, but some other nonverbal cues have their own fields of study:

Kinesics studies nonverbal behaviour related to movement of any part of the body or the body as a whole (facial expressions, gestures and posture).

Oculesics is a subcategory of kinesics. It studies eye behaviour and deals with eye contact, eye movement, pupil dilation, gaze direction and blink rate.

Proxemics interprets the effects of space in communication.

Paralinguistics deals with vocal aspects.

Chronemics deals with time.

Haptics deals with the aspects of touch.

A reflection on the knowledge acquired so far led me to better focus my research. The scope of “performance skills” as a research topic revealed itself to be too broad and vague; I would choose nonverbal communication instead. Within that, and taking the repertoire chosen into account, I decided to focus on kinesics, including oculesics, and physical appearance for this first intervention cycle.

According to Cuddy (2012), kinesic elements, or “body language”, as she calls it, have a profound impact on people’s perception of each other. Her research deals mostly with power dynamics and the effects that high- and low-power poses have on interactions. Different postures give different impressions of the emotional state and confidence levels of a communicator, making body language a prime tool for conveying emotions while on stage.

After understanding the elements of nonverbal communication at play in *Ceci n’est pas une balle*, the next step was learning how to control and apply them to my interpretation of the piece. This led me to research on physical theatre, defined on Wikipedia (2017) as a “genre of theatrical performance that encompasses storytelling primarily through physical movement”. Some of its distinctive features are the opening of the stage-spectator relationship (“breaking the fourth wall”) and accentuation of the audience’s engagement and involvement, as well crossing over between theatre and other art forms, such as music (Callery, 2001).

Telling a story using only physical movement is a specific skill that I, as a musician, had never tried to develop. There are, however, several tools that can be used to help accomplish this, incorporating theatrical actions in a performance in a natural and convincing way, without forcing or

overacting. One of them is **subtext**, defined by Pavis and Shantz (1998) as something not explicit, but emerging from the performer's interpretation and providing the audience with clarification needed for proper reception of the performance. Next to the notion of subtext is the **sub-score**, which Pavis defines as a "kinesthetic and emotional master plan" created by the actor around their reference points, but realised only in the body and mind of the spectator. This concept gains heightened importance in music theatre, where the spaces between words in a song or, in this case, the silences between the notes, become dangerous pitfalls, where the performance can easily become dull and lifeless, according to Silver in *Auditioning for the Musical Theatre* (1985) (as cited in Crum, 2010). By filling these spaces with thoughts, feelings, emotions and even dialogue, the performer can provoke immediate physical and emotional reactions. Another trick described by Silver to enhance performance is spotting, i.e. eye contact. This creates the illusion of interacting with a partner, which, in the case of physical theatre, can be someone in the audience.

The introduction of **conflict** constitutes another possibility of enhancing a theatrical performance. According to Pavis and Shantz (1998), conflict has become the hallmark of action-oriented theatre. They cite Hegel (1832), who defends that dramatic action rests entirely on "collisions of circumstances, passions and characters", which lead to actions and reactions that make the resolution of the conflict necessary.

These tools are only a few of those available to performers when creating a story and a suitable character. It is still necessary to find the right behaviour and gestures, make sure these are readable and beautiful to watch, and decide on an outer rhythm for physical actions and an inner rhythm for subtext (Pavis and Shantz, 1998). This can be achieved by making a few simple, but important choices: every time there is a new action or musical gesture in the score, I should ask myself what I am doing, why I am doing it, when and where it is taking place and to whom I want to perform it (Crum, 2010).

3.3. Coaching

The meetings I had with my experts of choice (Arlon Luijten, David Prins, René Spierings and Andreas Scharfenberg), as well as the lessons with my main subject teachers (Hans Leenders and Chris Leenders), served as moments of ongoing feedback on the current versions of *Ceci n'est pas une balle*. I performed the piece for all of them and we worked together on some aspects, according to each expert's background and artistic taste. In essence, these lessons worked as guided experimentation. This produced very interesting results, which I will explain in more detail below.

The main topic of the coaching sessions was the creation of the story, i.e. what to perform apart from, but based on, the written score. In preparation for the first session, with Arlon Luijten, I made a timeline of the piece. He had asked me to associate emotions with each section, but I found this to be difficult. We quickly concluded that this was because the story I wanted to tell was still not clear in my mind. This way, we worked through the piece in order to create a story and associate emotions with every action. This resulted in a version with a very high action density, filled with tension, conflict, interplay with the audience and extreme, aggressive emotions, far from my natural emotional state. I should elicit, or rather, try to elicit reactions on them and react on their feedback – the performance would be always different this way. The performance script for this version (I will call it Version 1) can be found at <http://bit.ly/pscript1> (Appendix 5).

I presented this version to Hans Leenders during a lesson and he concluded that the story was clear, as if the piece had been written like that. The music was not played perfectly, but that became less important because the actions were so engaging that they drew the attention to them. This point was raised by Chris Leenders in a subsequent lesson. For him, the acting was indeed too distracting. Upon reflecting on the balance between theatre and music, I concluded that I would prefer a version with less action density that allowed for the music to be expressed more clearly. This resulted in

Version 2 (Appendix 5, <http://bit.ly/pscript2>), which was then performed for David Prins (02 Intermediate recording for feedback, http://youtu.be/q6a1_zSbFzo).

David's feedback was very positive and he considered the performance to be very entertaining. However, he still felt that the action density was too high at some points and that I could use less material. To achieve that, I could use isolation techniques – focusing on different aspects of the action separately, in order to learn how much time I needed to display each of them clearly – and think about my role at each point of the performance. If that was clear for me, the audience would see it.

The feedback from the following lesson, where I performed a similar version for René Spierings (03 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4>), went even further in this aspect. René is a classical percussionist with a career in music theatre, which means he is unforgiving when it comes to musical mistakes. He found my acting to be exaggerated and that it obscured the music, which was also below his standards. In his opinion, the story behind this particular piece is shallow and there is not much to be added. I have to say that, for the purpose of this research, I disagree with this. Although the piece can be performed via a strict reading of the score, as I have successfully done in the past, I made a conscious choice at the beginning to add something that was not on the paper – that is the whole purpose of this intervention cycle. Despite this disagreement, René's advice to think of each scene as a picture and make sharp, clear-cut transitions between them, as well as to think critically about how much acting – if any at all – to add at each point of the performance was very welcome and valued. All in all, it was good to be reminded to always start from the music; the first thing a musician owes to his audience is, after all, a high level musical performance.

The last session, with Andreas Scharfenberg, was spent mostly experimenting with the beginning of the piece. I performed a different version for him: one with much less action but where I tried to switch between different characters (05 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/AseuexUWSBQ>; Appendix 5, Version 3). He found this very difficult to do and thought that I would need training in order to do this successfully. The experimentation we did was very much related to stage presence and enjoying being on stage. This is something which I have not approached directly yet but which he believes I should work on. In relation to the acting, Andreas also said that less material meant more focus on each action.

3.4. Interviews

The meetings with experts were also used as an opportunity to interview them and acquire specific knowledge about the research topic and new questions that appeared along the way. These started as mostly unstructured interviews, with me letting the expert talk freely about the topic. However, as I learned more about it, I started asking specific questions in order to compare their different perspectives on theatre and the expression of emotions through nonverbal elements. The interview notes can be found in Appendix 9, Diary.

External characterisation

The first contact I had with the notion of external characterisation was via Arlon. Musicians traditionally dress in a neutral and sober manner, with all black being a popular dress code. Arlon opposes this in a theatrical situation because he feels that it does not communicate anything, or that we “hide” behind the black clothes. In his strive to make me embody a character with a behaviour far from mine, he said that I should wear a costume, preferably one that would make me unrecognisable. I find this to be an interesting point of view and I would like to try it in the future, but this suggestion raised the question of how to incorporate this in a musical performance, where I would, in principle, not have much time to change clothes or apply make-up. Would it be worth it? What did other experts have to say about this?

René did not find it important to wear a special costume. In line with his belief that I should act naturally, especially in *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, and the fact that he is a musician, his choice of clothing stems mostly from the music. This way, in a body percussion piece such as this one, it is important to wear comfortable, but tight-fitting clothes so that the sounds are clear, as well as good, non-slippery shoes that produce a good sound when hitting the floor.

Andreas believes that a costume only matters if the audience believes it. There is no need to use a special, surprising costume; instead, details are very important – everything matters. An important aspect is how the clothes are worn, e.g. how far the shirt is buttoned up, whether the sleeves are rolled up or not, the tightness of the clothes, the quality of the fabric. This allows a person to stand out from a group wearing the same type of outfit (all black for musicians, for example).

Because of Andreas's background in physical theatre, I went further and asked him about neutrality and costumes, since mimes traditionally wear all white, including make-up. I felt that this could make it easier to incorporate different characters (Section 3.5, Video analysis 5). Andreas said that wearing white is a good way to learn about the body, because the focus is completely on the aspects of kinesics.

Internal characterisation

The underlying goal of my research is learning how to better express my own creative ideas. After establishing the need to clarify these ideas and attach emotions and/or images to them, I questioned myself about the origin of these elements. With Arlon, I tried associating extremes, but ultimately felt that I fabricated emotions to match my actions, something that seemed ingenuine and distant from my original goal of bringing my inner world to the foreground. The other experts agreed with me.

David defended that I should stay true to my current mental and physical state. Purposefully acting a foreign emotion will always feel fraudulent.

René felt that this is dangerous. For example, if my goal is to entertain the audience with a funny piece but I feel sad or depressed, I will have problems. He said that, instead of adapting to my current state, I should think about what I would feel and how I would react if faced in real life with the situation I want to depict, i.e. learn my true reaction and then perform it. If I do that, the audience will believe it.

Andreas said that it is better to work with the personality of the performer, so that there is a link between the performer and the performance. There are, of course, other possibilities, but this is the best strategy if the goal is to work from the inner world outwards. Andreas also believes in elements of chance and mistakes as driving forces for characterisation and the creation of storylines. For example, I behave differently in my public and private life. I could bring some elements of my "private" personality to my character in order to surprise the audience with a part of me that they do not know.

Conflict

After my initial coaching session with Arlon, I realised that conflict is used in theatre as a generator of dramatic tension. Although René said that his use of conflict depends on the piece, Andreas was more pragmatic, saying that "where there is theatre, there is conflict", although he is open to the possibility of stories without conflict, especially in solo performances. Conflict can also be contact – or interaction, as I see it –, e.g. collective improvisation in a band, or a challenge, e.g. physical challenge for a circus artist.

Nonverbal elements

Interestingly, the specific feedback on nonverbal elements that I received from the experts was restricted to oculesics. Arlon wanted me to constantly "break the fourth wall" and interact with the audience, requesting feedback from them and reacting strongly on it. René felt that the moments of contact with the audience should be exaggerated, but used with much less frequency, at key points of the performance.

Andreas said that nonverbal communication stems from what I want to achieve as a performer and what I want to show the audience. It is important that I have fun while performing – that makes it believable. He defends that focus (gaze) is important: when a performer focuses on something, he draws the attention of the audience to it. This is something we experimented with, first by performing the opening sequence of the piece with only eye movement, i.e. without gestures, and by looking around the room before starting, thus making the effective beginning of the piece – the appearance of an airplane on the right side – much more intense. The experimentation recordings can be seen at <https://youtu.be/lhhDW-phWjo> (06 Experimentation 1) and <https://youtu.be/bSDqtOICj7M> (07 Experimentation 2).

3.5. Video analysis

To complement my research on physical theatre and *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, I analysed a few performance videos of the piece and a scene from *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1945) featuring the mime Jean-Louis Barrault.

Performance videos

Video analysis 1: Alexandre Esperet (TROMPpercussion, 2013)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apvHLrOzJal>

The first video I analysed was a performance by one of the composers, Alexandre Esperet. This is the video I used as reference when learning the piece. I watched this performance live and went back to it regularly later to watch the gestures that the score did not explain completely clearly and to get an overall impression of the piece. Taking a critical look at it, I could draw a few conclusions.

First of all, I thought he really fits the character, which appears to be a silly version of himself. The musical gestures are sharp and well timed, and all the others are exaggerated and wobbly in order to maximise the comical effect. In the acting sequences, e.g. at 0:50, I could see the character clearly; however, that is mostly lost during the purely musical sections, e.g. 2:15.

The story follows the same line as the character. The events are quite clear during the acting sequences such as at 3:30, but the musical parts appear to be only a kind of magic trick where he shows off his skills, such as at 4:23. However, I missed causal relationships between the different sections, which means that a long story, followable throughout the piece, is inexistent.

The nonverbal elements are clear and effective when there is dramatic intention behind the actions. I could only see this during the acting sequences, especially at the beginning of the piece. This seems to support my finding that nonverbal elements appear naturally when the story is clear – if the performer has a role at a certain moment, his body will react accordingly.

In conclusion, I found this to be a good performance which was capable of inspiring me, but I missed a long dramatic line. Even if he chose to do this on purpose, as a kind of collage, I lost some interest during the longer musical sections, mostly because they are quite repetitive. The challenge would be to fill those sections with something that connects them to the rest of the performance, in order to keep the audience interested and engaged.

Video analysis 2: Se-Mi Hwang (MFP Zagan, 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvOOOp_Z9OUE

The next video was a performance by Se-Mi Hwang. In general, her gestures are small and stiff, but well-timed (2:08 and 2:20). I felt that this made the performance less engaging. The body percussion is poorly balanced, with some gestures being indeed completely inaudible (1:42). The story of the piece also includes elements of show-off and, as in Esperet's version, loses intensity during the purely musical sections. One thing I particularly liked about Se-Mi's performance was that

she appears to be having fun (2:35). She also directs the audience's attention to the invisible ball several times (0:14, 0:30), which can make it appear more "real". On the other hand, I would find it more interesting if this would not be necessary; the gestures should ideally be self-explanatory.

Video analysis 3: David Moliner Andrés (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMAPsfjzAzk>

David Moliner Andrés performed *Ceci n'est pas une balle* as part of a musical theatre show. I really dislike his approach to the piece. In my opinion, the gestures are all large and boomy, which makes all the actions seem almost but not precisely timed (1:33). The rhythm is also heavily modified (1:40), which makes some sections barely recognisable, although I would expect this to have a minimal effect on a non-expert audience who does not know the piece. Finally, most of the body percussion is inaudible (2:15 and from 4:10), although this could be caused by the bad quality of the recording.

Video analysis 4: Shota Miyazaki (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLK5oCnFLCI>

The last performance video I watched is by Shota Miyazaki. He had an interesting idea: to edit the video so that the ball is represented by a bright dot (0:25). This makes the actions very easy to follow. Unfortunately, it is not very well synchronised (2:10). He also seems to be having fun, which I like, but his gestures feel a bit awkward and unrealistic to me (1:45).

Physical theatre

Video analysis 5: Jean-Louis Barrault (RockOfVictory, 2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ABzfKzWA7g>

The scene from *Les Enfants du Paradis* where the mime Baptiste Debureau, played by Jean-Louis Barrault, tells the story of a pickpocketing is very interesting, primarily by its purity in traditional physical theatre. The mime is completely dressed in white, which lets the audience focus only on his actions and not his appearance, thus allowing him to efficiently switch between characters. He plays 3 characters in this scene. They all have distinct physical features (posture, facial expressions and gesture types) and are depicted in a satirical way, because the scene is meant to be comical. Their gestures are sharp and clear, but not kept to a minimum, since their intention is to provide a richer characterisation. Each of them has a clear purpose, though. The evolution of the dramatic line is also interesting. The action density remains constant and not too high while the main body of the story is being told. However, as soon as the audience understands the story, Barrault introduces many extra gestures that maximise the comical effect.

Conclusion

Analysing these videos contributed to my understanding of some general issues related to physical theatre and some specific issues of the piece I was working on.

I learned that a neutral external characterisation focuses the audience's attention on the physical actions and enables the performer to switch between different characters. These characters should have very distinctive features in order not to be confused with each other. All gestures should be clear and have a purpose.

In relation to *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, I learned that it is easy for the performance to lose strength in the longer musical sections, where there are more silences and repetitive elements, and the narrative can essentially stop – which confirms Crum's (2010) assertion that performances can easily become lifeless during the spaces between the notes. I should add actions to these sections, so that

they become part of the larger story that I want to tell. I also found that timing and balance were very important issues for me. The story should therefore be built around a strong musical base in a way that allowed me to perform comfortably and have fun.

3.6. Quasi-experiments

Working with a real ball

One of the suggestions I received from the experts I consulted with was to work with a real ball, in order to learn the mechanics of the movement and how to properly follow the ball in the air. I chose a tennis ball for this because it suited most of the gestures I needed to perform, the exception being the football section at the end of the first theatrical part (see analysis in Appendix 5, Version 4, top half), which would require a different ball. I quickly realised that it would be impossible to play the whole piece with a real ball, because of several reasons: some sections, such as the football section just mentioned, would require the development of a completely new skill; sometimes the ball stays in the air more than what is physically possible indoors, e.g. bars 1 and 11; and it was very difficult to control the rebound, especially in the sections with body percussion, e.g. bars 46 to 49. Developing all these skills would be very time-consuming, if at all possible, and I did not think the benefits would be worth the work. Instead, I chose four excerpts that would provide me with enough information to extrapolate to the rest of the piece – the fact that much of the material is repeated makes this possible. These excerpts were:

- a silent version, using material from all the passages below (08 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/zpL2H4IajCY>);
- introduction: third line of page 1 (09 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/WW8X4I2s8LY>);
- bars 5 and 6, with repeat (10 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/qXYPxI0Klr4>);
- bars 24 to 28 (11 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/h8g1249EJoI>).

Performing these fragments with the tennis ball made me realise a few things. In general, I felt that I could perform the gestures without body percussion very naturally. There were two, however, that raised questions. The first one was the sideways throw at 0:22 in the silent version. I had been performing it with short and fast gestures before, as if the ball traveled a distance similar to the width of my torso in the air, but here I realised that the gestures should actually be quite broad and relatively slow, and that the ball only travels a short distance between the hands near the centre of the torso. This holds true for the faster movements at 0:34. The corrected movement can be seen in the version without the ball (12 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/UWtDtgFaMic>, 0:30). However, when performing the introduction with the ball, I realised that this sideways gesture had to be performed much smaller (0:07). So what would work the best without the ball, a smaller gesture or a sped-up broader one? I tried both possibilities (13 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/Or5mWCiRnLM>; 14 Experimentation, <https://youtu.be/nt6fyexPumY>, 0:09) and decided to keep the latter.

The second gesture that intrigued me was the bouncing of the ball at 0:40 in the silent version. I noticed that I slapped the ball slightly in order to stop it rhythmically, but upon trying it without the ball (14 Experimentation, 0:10), I thought it looked awkward and decided to stick with a light flick of the hand, as can be seen on <https://youtu.be/lkunKZXw5NI> (15 Experimentation), together with the correct sideways throw.

Bars 5 and 6 proved to be very difficult to perform with the ball. Even the best version I managed to record is quite poorly in sync with the tape. However, it allowed me to learn where to look while performing the body percussion segments. The version without the ball can be seen at <https://youtu.be/zC-pkkyStpA> (16 Experimentation).

In bars 24 to 28, the material is similar to that of the introduction. Also similarly, the sideways throw had to be performed with very fast, small movements, but I have already concluded that I prefer

to use a broader gesture. Here, however, I wanted to try two possibilities: throwing the ball sideways purposefully and suffering the sideways movement involuntarily, as if the ball moved on its own – this is what I have chosen to depict at this moment in the piece (17 Experimentation, https://youtu.be/4_i-x8a-4UQ; 18 Experimentation, https://youtu.be/B_omCNLR7ug). Note the absence of preparation in the right arm in the second version.

Strictly musical (“white mask”) version

Video: <https://youtu.be/HDOLTmYaN8c> (19 Experimentation)

Following Arlon Luijten’s advice, I recorded a version where I only performed the actions on the score, without adding any emotions. The result was similar to performing the piece with a white mask on, a tool used by actors and, more specifically, mimes in order to let the viewer focus on physical expression. In my case, I used it as a tool to discover which moments in the piece needed enhancement via addition of nonverbal elements and which did not.

In general terms, I found that the moments where the engagement level dropped and the performance became “dull and lifeless” (Crum, 2010) were the ones where:

- the narrative became unclear or stayed still for longer periods of time;
- rhythmical patterns were repeated several times or had silences in between them;
- particular elements in the tape suggested changes of character, such as different sounds.

Repetitive rhythmic patterns are exclusive to the sections with body percussion, but appear in conjunction with pauses in the narrative, because they usually cause it to happen, i.e. repetitive actions mean that the story does not move forward, unless the narrative is made to include them. These moments of repetitive patterns can be seen in the video from 1:33. In this section, there are several short silences, e.g. at 1:39 and 1:56, where essentially nothing happens. At 2:03, a long repetitive section starts. The last section of the piece constitutes an even longer repetition. Here, the musical interest is maintained by adding rhythmical elements with each repetition, but the question remained of what to do from a theatrical perspective.

Moments where the narrative could become unclear were visible at different points in the piece, since the score does not provide causal relations between the events, e.g. why would the airplane turn into a ball at 0:11, stop mid-air at 2:36 or behave in such a way from 3:09? I found that these moments would need clarification in order to fit into my narrative of choice.

Finally, most of the piece is made up of bouncing sounds. I found that the moments where different sounds were added, such as words or music, should receive special treatment. The contrast between these moments, such as the presentation of the ball at 0:23 or the central theatrical section starting at 3:09, and the neutrality of the bouncing sounds suggested changes of character. These moments, especially the transformations of the ball, clearly needed facial expressions as well, in order to correctly show what the character was experiencing.

4. Intervention

The intervention of this first cycle resulted in the creation of a performance script for *Ceci n'est pas une balle*. This script reflects the learning process I went through and the data I collected. I used the formal analysis of the piece (Appendix 5, Version 4, top half) as a starting point for the script, adding lines for the story, the sub-score and moments of interaction with the audience.

In the story, I described the actions as I intended the audience to perceive them. These were then translated into the sub-score: my internal cues while performing. In comparison with the previous versions of the script, the sub-score is the result of the merger between the thoughts, that I had called subtext, and the underlying emotions. I found this concept, introduced by Pavis and Shantz (1998), easier to manage mentally while on stage.

The interaction with the audience was determined as moments of eye contact. I realised I could act much more naturally during the body percussion sections without interacting with the audience. This also gives them an opportunity to just see me work without feeling the need to provide feedback, as suggested by Andreas Scharfenberg.

As for the character, and in line with the information gathered from David Prins, René Spierings and Andreas Scharfenberg, I decided to play myself and imagine how I would react on the circumstances of the piece.

The final version of the performance script can be seen in Appendix 5, Version 4 and is explained scene by scene below:

Intro: the introduction uses elements from the sessions with Arlon Luijten, René Spierings and Andreas Scharfenberg. With Arlon, I created a very busy walk-on moment, which was made more relaxed later with René. Finally, I introduced the waiting with Andreas, giving me the opportunity to settle on stage and enjoy the moment.

Airplane arrival: the airplane is created with the right hand as René suggested, instead of with a wand as I had previously done with Arlon. It is then transformed into the ball with the left hand, so as to not cover my face, as Andreas suggested. These simple movements provide a clear demarcation of the scene and a reason for the events to occur.

Fall and Fetch: I decided to use the back of the stage for this, contrarily to what I had tried in the coaching sessions. I felt that performing this far from the audience would hide the ball from them a little longer and strengthen the surprise in the next scene.

Present: this marks the first character change, to silliness, matching the sounds on the tape. It is accompanied by suitable posture and gestures.

Throw and Bounce: relaxed gestures, according to the experiment with a real ball.

Catch: I chose to fill in this silence with an action of polishing my nails, with the goal of transmitting boredom due to waiting. The “wow” comment appears in the background, as René as Andreas suggested.

Football tricks 1: I am not a great footballer, so I chose to be very focused in this section.

Football tricks 2: after managing to pull off the tricks, I chose to gradually relax until almost losing control, prompting the transition into the next section.

Football tricks 3: I chose to regain control in this section, feeling happy and confident when it is over.

Bounce intro: René and Andreas highlighted the importance of eye movement in making actions believable, so I made a difference between long and short flight time. I also decided to make the first repeat more inquisitive and focused, and the second more relaxed, in order to introduce a mood change in this repetitive section.

Tricks (rotation): corrected ball tracking after experiment with a real ball.

Bounce intro (reprise): first one – relaxed, second one – energetic. This introduces a mood change as above and prepares the next section.

Tricks (increasing density): I chose this section to be my last moment of “freedom” in the piece. This way, I perform it with gradually more enjoyment, completely in control of the tricks and their increasing complexity. This also provides an emotional build-up.

Slow motion: this moment is halfway through the piece and was originally meant to be performed in slow motion. I decided to make it the onset of conflict, where the ball suddenly becomes alive and decides to stop mid-air, frustrating my attempts to carry on. This provokes a sharp change of character and the appearance of negative emotions, in this case confusion and frustration.

Tricks (rotation): the composition orders me to repeat a previous section, so I chose to integrate it into the story by starting clumsily and regaining control. The need for stability justifies returning to previously used material.

Throw – Bounce (energetic): this is also a repetitive section. In order to create a build-up, I decided to start by testing the ball, being immediately surprised by its continued rebellion. Here, I decided not to prepare the sideways throw after experimenting with both possibilities, i.e. with and without preparation.

West Side Story: in this scene, the ball stays out of play for a relatively long time. With Arlon, I experimented with pretending that the ball took control of my body, making my arm move involuntarily. However, I felt I could not perform this in a convincing manner. This way, and in line with my desire to reduce the density of actions throughout the piece, I decided to pretend that the ball stays up in the air while I call it back down, eventually catching it.

Egg timer: I chose to keep Arlon’s suggestion for this scene, in which the ball turns into a bomb – instead of an egg timer –, because it fits the storyline and provides the opportunity to introduce fear as a feeling. The corresponding gesture is looking away and maximising the distance between the ball and me.

Stayin’ Alive: here I decided to make the gestures jerky and involuntary, following the idea of conflict with the ball. I noticed that this easily translated into a facial expression of effort and suffering, which completely fits the action.

Juggler: the chosen emotion for this scene was panic, at the sight of the ball split in two. The juggling takes place in an effort to hide the problem, until I manage to reunite both halves into what happens to become an egg.

Fried egg: I thought that the appearance of the egg gave me a chance to definitely solve the conflict by destroying the ball – this is something I tried with Arlon. This gives me a feeling of sadistic happiness as a character. At the end, the fried egg is thrown at the floor.

Hamlet: in this scene, the egg is picked up from the floor as if having a slimy texture – again indicated by Arlon for coherence with the remainder of the sequence. I decided to point the finger at the audience in the end, for increased effect.

Intro: this is a generic scene. I decided that its place in the story would be only to reassert control.

Tricks (enhanced rotation): the sequence from this point until the end of the piece is essentially a long build-up using material from before and new gestures, with each repetition adding a new rhythmical element. I thought this needed an underlying emotional development, in this case growing frustration and anger, but I noticed while practising that it is very difficult to show this evolution in such a busy musical section. I ended up deciding to increase the sharpness and energy of the gestures, starting very relaxed and progressing gradually.

Chaos: the development of the same rhythmical material continues into this section, where it reaches maximum density. The emotional development follows the same evolution. I chose this because of the natural continuation of the story and because the material in this section fits this very well due to added foot stomps, which can be easily used to show anger.

Surprise and Outro: at the last moment, I manage to catch the ball. I decided to include a small outro section to give the narrative closure. Arlon originally suggested this, but I lost the battle in the version we created. I prefer a version where I emerge victorious, so I changed the final section to accommodate that choice.

Working with a mirror and self-recording

While I was collecting data about *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, I practised several times in front of a mirror, testing what I learned during the lessons or trying out new ideas. Most of these were very short, informal practise sessions, but led to quite a few good ideas that I integrated in the piece along the way.

After the intervention was finished, I needed to make sure that all the elements worked and that the actions looked realistic and reflected my own personality. This way, I recorded myself performing short segments of the piece and adjusted them if needed and according to my own taste until I found my favourite versions. Below are a few examples of what was done:

Intro

<https://youtu.be/Es-BjCFxn5w> (20 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/R7iT15VORzw> (21 Practising examples)

Here I tried different levels of eye contact with the audience and different ways to look around the room. I prefer to establish eye contact briefly in the beginning and look around in a seemingly random way.

Airplane arrival

<https://youtu.be/6RrKZSuxfoY> (22 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/OnsDLJfIXlw> (23 Practising examples)

I tried different trajectories for the airplane. I eventually chose the one travelling from the far right towards the front left of the stage, giving room for the ball to bounce backwards.

Present – Catch

<https://youtu.be/annWfx25ak8> (24 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/BQPbcV0SX9A> (25 Practising examples)

In these videos, I tried adding eye contact while filling the silence and different reactions to catching the ball. I decided not to establish eye contact while waiting for the ball and react only with a smile.

Football tricks

<https://youtu.be/eLb4Qlp83Xc> (26 Practising examples)

Here I tried focusing before the difficult trick, having a half-surprised reaction and subsequently relaxing, leading to almost losing control.

First section

<https://youtu.be/xPpa7XwHPzk> (27 Practising examples)

In this video, the previous segments were finally combined as a whole section.

Second section (partial) / Bounce intro (reprise)

<https://youtu.be/XsBdcWJhDOc> (28 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/-pnMnwAntdY> (29 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/vwEJAXwOKc0> (30 Practising examples)

The first video shows part of the second section. I thought the scene which I called “Bounce intro (reprise)” was not very clear, so I tried it separately and ended up deciding to make a small adjustment to the gesture: instead of showing that I had remembered what to do next, I chose to adopt a more energetic posture, preparing the next scene.

Bounce (energetic) + West Side Story

https://youtu.be/1G8C_6LNM9U (31 Practising examples)

This is another of the sections I practised separately, in order to clarify the gestures at “Bounce (energetic)” and determine the density of actions at “West Side Story”.

Second section

<https://youtu.be/NyXIFoojaBc> (32 Practising examples)

This video shows all the scenes of the second section, including the adjustments made.

Third section

<https://youtu.be/ehdUzWUVjSE> (33 Practising examples)

<https://youtu.be/RidXuGfpLZs> (34 Practising examples)

I worked on the egg timer scene separately, because I wanted to try a new idea for the movement of the ball: it turns back facing me before going crazy. I decided to keep it. The second video shows the whole third section.

Fourth section

<https://youtu.be/RbKKBKfjNxjk> (35 Practising examples)

https://youtu.be/EFIN_nw10dU (36 Practising examples)

The first video shows the whole fourth section of the piece. Here I realised that it is actually almost impossible to see my face for a period long enough for the viewer to perceive any change in my emotional state. I tried another possibility – using the silence in bar 39 – in the second video, but that also felt unnatural, so I decided to stick with a change in gestures only, starting relaxed and gradually increasing energy and sharpness.

5. Reference Recording 2

Benigno, M., Esperet, A., Noyer, A. (Cie. Kahlua) – *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, for mime and tape (5:45)

URL: <https://youtu.be/FnMWrxTzrvc> (37 Reference Recording 2)

Recorded on April 28, 2017

Intermediate recordings

I tried different versions of the piece on the way to Reference Recording 2, as explained in the previous chapters. These intermediate versions were performed to the various experts consulted and are listed below with the strictly musical version, for comparison:

Strictly musical version

<https://youtu.be/HDOLTmYaN8c> (19 Experimentation)

Version 2

For David Prins: https://youtu.be/q6a1_zSbFzo (02 Intermediate recording for feedback)

For René Spierings: <https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4> (03 Intermediate recording for feedback)

Version 3

For Andreas Scharfenberg: <https://youtu.be/AseuexUWSBQ> (05 Intermediate recording for feedback)

6. Self-reflection and Feedback

I asked three people for feedback: Hans Leenders, one of my main subject teachers, Andreas Scharfenberg, one of the experts I worked with, and José Miñarro Sánchez, a colleague from the classical percussion department who is also working on *Ceci n'est pas une balle*.

In reflection of the work done so far, I decided to ask for feedback first on the clarity and followability of the storyline and how it related to the display of emotions. After that, the aspects related with the eyes: contact with the audience and eye movement when following the ball, moving on to the quality of the gestures and the engagement level throughout the piece. To conclude, I asked for feedback at a musical and technical level, e.g. precision of rhythms, balance of body percussion, and how they felt about the balance between theatre and music in this version of the piece.

Storyline

José thought that the story was very clear, with all the sections well developed and well connected.

Andreas, who had seen a previous performance, felt that the story was clearer than before, but still not a whole unity; sometimes I knew what to do as a character, but not always. Although he could see that I knew the story and the structure, he felt that this was as far as I could go without specific training in body movement.

Hans was not sure that he could see the story as I intended. What he did see, though, was that I took much more initiative and leadership, appearing to create all the sounds. That was a major difference and certainly made the message clearer.

I found the story quite clear in general. I managed to perform everything I included in the script as far as the storyline is concerned. The scenes were demarcated and the conflict was explained and resolved.

Display of emotions

José found the emotions to be very visible, with each section bringing different elements in what I did with my face and my body. He could feel all the different emotions and their build-up.

Andreas found the facial expressions to be very effective, but there was still room for improvement, for which I would need further training.

Hans could see the facial expressions, but thought that I should exaggerate them more in order to be more effective. Perhaps a different character, such as a clown, would give me more extreme possibilities.

I felt this was generally very clear in the acting sequences, where my face was visible. When I looked at the ball during the body percussion sequences, my facial expressions got somewhat lost, but I found that difficult to solve without compromising the mechanics of the movements. However, I felt that some gestures really made up for these issues.

Eye contact

José liked the amount and placing of the moments of eye contact and thought it would be difficult to make more. He believed that the quieter moments were indeed opportune for this, while the busier sections should be more of a display rather than an interaction.

For Andreas, it was unclear when the "fourth wall" in my performance was open or closed. At times, it even seemed to be half-transparent. So there was still room for development, but I would probably need to work with a director in order to clarify this.

Hans missed more moments of eye contact because he thought they made the performance stronger and more engaging.

I liked the amount of eye contact, but I would perhaps add one more moment in the first body percussion build-up in order to maintain the engagement level.

Eye movement (following the ball)

José found that this was perfect in the beginning and worked very well. However, when the body percussion becomes denser, he felt that I lost the ball, but his attention was anyway drawn to the body percussion.

Andreas could see that I had practised with a real ball. It worked very well, with some moments being really very sharp. At those moments, the gestures themselves became so enjoyable that he did not care about the story anymore, he just enjoyed watching the virtuosity of the movement.

Hans said that this was absolutely better. Not only the eyes, but the movement of the hands and legs made the gestures much clearer and sharper.

I felt this was quite successful, especially in the sections that I could practise with a real ball. There were some imperfections in a couple of places, but I was quite happy with the result.

Engagement level

José felt that some sections had a lower energy level, but he believed that it was a choice of mine. Anyway, there was good development, especially towards the end of the piece.

Andreas thought that there were a few less interesting sections, but gave suggestions on how to deal with them. Mimes work very much with time, space and tension. In this case, and since timing is fixed, I could work with space, e.g. different orientation and/or placement, size of the gestures.

Hans felt engaged throughout the piece. He felt especially interested at the moment when the ball stops in the air (onset of conflict).

For me, the body percussion sections felt slightly too long, even though the tricks still managed to capture my attention. I really liked the added movement in the silences, because it kept the scene active.

Technical / musical aspects

For José, the performance was very nice and detailed in general. However, he noticed some imperfections when the body percussion became more difficult and found that I pushed the tempo in some parts. In the end, he missed some sound quality in the body percussion sounds and rhythmical precision.

Andreas suggested using the different music styles present in the piece as a guideline for the acting. In that case, I could choose to go with the music, against it or meet it at some points.

Hans could see improvements in the musical performance, as well as in the gestures: they were bigger, sharper, more energetic and on top of the tape. He could feel the music much more.

This was the aspect I was the least happy with, because I know I can perform the music even better and more precisely. I could not really understand why I rushed at some points – it does not usually happen. At the end of the piece, I directed so much energy to the acting that the music suffered a bit, but I felt compelled to do it in order to continually increase the level of tension.

Balance between theatre and music

Even with the small musical imperfections, José preferred that I put more energy into the acting, because that made the performance really amazing. He would not trade the current version for another with a higher musical level but a less engaging theatrical side. However, he thought I could get the best of both worlds with a bit more practise.

Andreas found this an interesting point of discussion, in the sense that it is something which varies greatly between performances. In this case, with fixed timing, there is a lot of potential for

illustration, for example with the face. But how far to take it is a matter of taste. However, he could see that my body is not trained to do this to a great extent, so he suggested that I work with a choreographer, because they are used to dealing simultaneously with theatre and music.

Hans felt that the music predominated in this version. He would find more theatre acceptable if I managed to keep the musical performance at the same level.

I chose the current balance between theatre and music, so I felt happy with the result. However, I felt more could be added, but not without further training. That stays as a topic for further research.

7. Conclusion

I have to say that I felt quite satisfied with the results at the end of the first intervention cycle. In the beginning, I had some trouble finding the right path to follow, but the discovery of the missing link in my creative process – the definition of the artistic core – made everything clearer. At the end of the cycle, I believed I knew the steps to follow in order to create a high quality artistic product, both musically and visually. Of course each step should still be continuously improved, especially the visual part, to which I only started truly paying attention at the beginning of this research.

I learned a lot about what nonverbal communication is and the many channels through which it manifests. Although I did not go very deep into the specific elements of nonverbal communication, my research into its physical aspects led me to physical theatre, an area very much related to the repertoire I worked on and where physical communication takes the main role. This was a very important connection for me, because it was in the world of physical theatre that I could learn how to manipulate the different elements of kinesics, such as facial expressions, gestures and eye movements. I understood much better the possibilities available to me for transmitting information using my body and I achieved a relatively good level at it, considering that this was an unknown field for me just a few months before.

I also managed to create a well fundamented and consistent story for *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, drawing inspiration from the score, its background and many influences from the various experts I interviewed and worked with. I developed clear roles for myself as a character, which translated into stronger motivation and decisiveness to perform the different actions in the piece and gave more depth to the performance, which in turn provided for a more engaging result and a version which is much richer in energy, action quality and sharpness than the first one. These improvements were patent in more precise and realistic gestures, more fluent body and eye movements and a larger variety of facial expressions.

I felt that my work had a good reception, both at the end, in the form of the second reference recording, but also along the way. I was told that my performance was entertaining and that I had achieved a high theatrical level, considering that I was not trained in this area at all. However, there was still work to be done: I should pursue specific training if I wanted to improve my physical communication skills and be able to impersonate different characters in order to reveal more extreme emotions.

As for the research process, I believe I managed to collect fair amounts of data from various sources, as well as make connections between them in order to create a successful intervention. This was especially difficult when dealing with different – and even contradictory – information from some of the experts. Dealing with this was challenging, but I believe that I managed to critically assess the data and make decisions that felt right for me as an artist.

Second intervention cycle

1. Reference Recording 3

Sarhan, F. – *Home Work*, for six musicians, part 1: for solo body percussion (incomplete, ca. 1:30)

URL: <https://youtu.be/ixY0Feamyqo> (38 Reference Recording 3)

Recorded on November 20, 2017

2. Self-reflection and Feedback

Taking the result of the first intervention cycle and the feedback received on it as starting points, particularly the need to make the story clearer, improve the use of facial expressions and explore different characters, my goal for this case study on François Sarhan's *Home Work* is to tell a story which is consistent with the music by bringing one or more new characters to life, while giving them personality features very different from my own.

When analysing the Reference Recording, it was obvious that I still had not mastered the music. I needed to look almost constantly at the score while I was recording and, based on the feedback, I understood that that made it very hard for the spectator to understand what was happening with the character. Even the few decisions I had already made regarding the storyline were not visible for two reasons; first, because I was too concerned with playing the right notes, and second, I did not yet have enough emotional involvement in the performance.

However, I was happy to note that my spoken text was audible and understandable, and that my body percussion sounds were clear and balanced.

The opinions of my main subject teachers Hans Leenders and Chris Leenders, whom I asked for feedback, were largely the same. They both agreed that I needed to be free from the score in order to bring the character to life and suggested clarifying the beginning of the story with my first entrance on stage, that is, with the opening of a manual with instructions for testing a certain machine.

I tested their ideas immediately and the second version (39 Reference Recording 3 after feedback, <https://youtu.be/8e14ofhEugY>) already showed some welcome improvements. Specifically, the addition of the introduction sequence made it clear that some information was to be obtained from the papers: what the audience does not know is that the papers were actually the score. In addition, I changed the focus of the performance from technical precision to the actions of the character; this released myself from the “need” to play correctly and I unconsciously assumed a much more inquisitive posture, as if I was curious but puzzled by what I was reading. My moment of surprise when saying “take the right” was much clearer.

What was still missing from my performance was my clear distraction from the “manual” during the moments when the body percussion takes over.

Conclusion

My first and perhaps most important conclusion from this part of the intervention cycle was that the piece needed a very large amount of work, much more than I had initially thought. This was due to its technical difficulty, particularly the need to develop the simultaneous coordination of different body

parts while speaking, something I had never done before. However, after practising *Home Work* for some time, I became even more enthusiastic about its potential for helping the development of my nonverbal skills.

The feedback on the first Reference Recording made me realise that many decisions needed to be made regarding my actions – thus creating an effective sub-score. For example, I should decide when to look and not to look at the score, the role of each action – why is the character repeating the text? Why does he perform those rhythms? – and the feelings of the character throughout the piece.

Furthermore, although my idea of the character seemed to be more developed than in the first intervention cycle – his personality was more detailed and he was less similar to me in terms of posture and behaviour –, I still needed to reflect on his features and try different possibilities to see what best fit the musical material. One thing that needed particular attention was the character's unstoppable distraction; I realised that if I could clearly show the conflict between his trying to follow instructions while being constantly distracted, the impact would be much stronger for the audience.

A question that remained for possible future experimentation was whether to open the "fourth wall", i.e. interact with the audience while performing, or not.

3. Data collection

I decided to split the data collection of this intervention cycle into two sections: knowledge-based and repertoire-specific data. The first includes general information about the topic of nonverbal communication, as well as the results of my coaching session in movement & body awareness and my autoethnography as part of a theatre production. The latter includes the data collection relevant for the specific preparation of *Home Work*, in line with the performance preparation process that I designed during the first intervention cycle (Appendix 7).

This approach, from general to specific, allows the reader to understand how the general knowledge of the topic is applied to the preparation of *Home Work* and the subsequent intervention.

3.1. Knowledge-based

3.1.1. Literature review

In this intervention cycle, I focused on deepening my understanding of nonverbal cues, being especially interested on how people perceive and interpret them.

According to Tubbs and Moss (2002), communication can be divided in four categories, resulting from the different combinations of the following: verbal / nonverbal and vocal / nonvocal. Following the research done during the first intervention cycle, I will focus on nonverbal / nonvocal communication, which encompasses the information we receive via visual cues, i.e. physical appearance and kinesics, e.g. gestures and eye movement.

A receiver will acquire information from several channels at once, both verbal and nonverbal. Birdwhistell (1970) estimated that 65% of social meaning is conveyed nonverbally, with nonverbal cues having a preponderant role in forming first impressions (as cited in Tubbs and Moss, 2002). This means that the physical appearance of a character can be very powerful because it is the first thing an audience member sees. Furthermore, it is commonly believed that body movements, facial expressions, vocal qualities and other nonverbal cues cannot be simulated with authenticity by the average person (ibid.). This makes it all the more important not to fake the artistic core of a performance, i.e. the nonverbal message cannot be effectively superimposed on the musical performance; these two elements have to be addressed as one single entity, so that the musical message is consistent with the nonverbal one. Therefore, the actions of a performer should be felt by them as their own – they have to become the character.

In addition, a nonverbal message can replace, reinforce or even contradict a verbal one (ibid.). This broadens the spectrum of expressive possibilities in performance: by using the right nonverbal cues, a performer can “play” with the audience’s emotions, provoking e.g. reassurance or confusion.

On the subject of space and time, Tubbs and Moss (2002) refer that:

- when communicating over larger distances, e.g. a large concert hall, it is important to exaggerate body movements and gestures;
- the use of time varies greatly according to one’s culture and personality, thus becoming an important part in the creation of a character.

Visual cues, the main focus of this research, include facial expressions, body and head movements, eye contact and movement, and physical appearance, such as the clothing we wear and the objects we display (ibid.).

Tubbs and Moss (2002) state that facial expressions are the single most important means of nonverbal communication. They cite several studies (Ekman and Friesen, 1971; Konner, 1987; Forgas, 1987) that have shown that expressive facial behaviour is largely constant across cultures, but the interpretation of said behaviour depends on many variables, e.g. physical attractiveness communicates self-confidence, whereas unattractiveness communicates the opposite. Facial

expression is also important for emotional contagion: nonverbal feedback from a person may cause another to mimic their behaviour and experience their emotional state, e.g. through smiling. Our accuracy in identifying emotions seems to increase with the number of received cues, therefore emotional contagion during performance will be more effective if the information is transmitted via several channels at once.

Within facial cues, eye contact is the most important: we have greater control of the muscles in the lower part of our face than of those around our eyes, so they reveal spontaneous responses, emotions and intentions (Tubbs and Moss, 2002). This way, oculusics becomes very important for characterisation in the sense that it effectively reveals the character's emotional state.

In addition to nonverbal cues given by our bodies, our physical appearance and use of objects also has an effect on communication. Dress code – style, colour –, accessories – watches, jewelry –, cosmetics and even body modifications can influence other people's opinion about someone (Tubbs and Moss, 2002). It is therefore worth thinking about external characterisation, i.e. how to dress a certain character. It might be useful to wear a costume or use a specific accessory in order to clarify who the character is or what they are doing.

Although it is not the focus of this intervention cycle, it is worth mentioning the importance of paralinguistics in communication and characterisation. Different voice qualities, such as pitch, range, speech rate, timbre and articulation, as well as the use of nonverbal vocalisations, such as crying and grunting, can help reveal someone's personality traits. Of particular interest for the case study of *Home Work* is the rate of speech, which is usually very stable. Therefore, fluctuations such as long pauses, especially those in the middle of an idea, undermine the flow and effectiveness of communication (Tubbs and Moss, 2002) – this is exactly what happens in the first 20 bars of the piece.

3.1.2. Interviews

The interviews made during this intervention cycle had the goal of deepening my understanding of theatricality in music performance. To achieve that, I interviewed:

- Dr. Falk Hübner – composer, director and researcher on the impact of reduction in performance, i.e. playing without an instrument;
- François Sarhan – composer of *Home Work* and multidisciplinary artist. Sarhan's interview included some questions about performance in general and others about specific aspects of *Home Work*. For the sake of this report's structure, this section includes only the information acquired about performance in general; the information about *Home Work* is cited in context in Section 3.2 – Repertoire-specific data collection.

Please refer to Appendices 11 and 12 for transcripts of the interviews.

Dr. Hübner (personal communication, December 15, 2017) started by mentioning the importance of defining the artistic core of a performance, i.e. the message that is to be transmitted to the audience. In this sense, he finds ownership important: performers should find a reason to perform a certain piece and make it their own, something that is relevant for them. This is something that other performing artists, i.e. non-musicians, discuss from the start of the preparation process, although it seems not to be as important for musicians. This is in line with the advice given by Arlon Luijten (actor and director consulted during the first intervention cycle). My experience with establishing the artistic core is that it instantly provided direction to the performance – as soon as a clear goal is set, the character's actions had to be shaped in accordance with that goal.

As composer and director, Dr. Hübner also believes that working with performers on the same level, breaking the traditional hierarchy, can lead to richer end results: different backgrounds cater for a greater variety of ideas. In fact, he believes that composers should be flexible enough to allow modifications to their work if it benefits the performance as a whole – this makes each performance

unique. Besides, some music compositions work differently in a music theatre setting and should be adjusted accordingly. However, he is aware that some composers do not welcome changes to their work. I had first-hand experience with this issue: Sarhan (2018) states that, although the visual part is very important when performing *Home Work*, there should not be modifications to the score, particularly in what concerns the rhythm. In his own words, “the material must keep its ambiguity, and the rhythm is the corset which keeps the narration ambiguous. To try to make it clear is not a good idea” (F. Sarhan, personal communication, February 21, 2018). This goes against my approach to the piece, which will be explained in detail in the next section of the report (3.2. Repertoire-specific data collection); the reasons why I decided to keep to my approach are:

- the goal of this case study is to help me develop my nonverbal communication skills, with emphasis on visual cues. Although I believe that performers should try to respect composers’ wishes whenever possible, I find that, in this case, this would greatly restrict the application of my research findings regarding characterisation and narrative creation;
- the addition of my chosen narrative, i.e. a journey through life, adds another layer to the composition (H. Leenders, personal communication, April 26, 2018). Although it does alter the performance by slightly distorting the music, it does not clarify the narrative implicit in the piece, i.e. the construction of the machine. In order to create a neutral version that respects the composer’s wishes, it is enough to assume a neutral character and remove the added narrative (52 Strictly musical version, <https://youtu.be/PO6HvEDWMSl>).

Regarding playing without an instrument, Dr. Hübner mentioned two possible effects. On the one hand, there is expectation, related to the stage setting: the audience expects things on stage to be used; not using them creates surprise, tension. This way, anything can become a prop, even an instrument. On the other hand, there is increased awareness. When an instrument is played, the focus of the audience tends to be on the music; by taking away the instrument, the audience’s focus shifts completely to the performer, making every action meaningful. Regarding this, it is of the utmost importance to realise that everything a performer does on stage – even if nothing – is part of the performance. This emphasises the need for me to assign a role to all of the character’s actions while performing *Home Work*, as well as to have comprehensive and functional subtext. In order to achieve this, theatre training is valuable because it helps develop one’s awareness of space, audience and gaze direction – a very important nonverbal cue.

Sarhan believes that performers should not create artificial characters and should instead find ways to show themselves doing something different from what they do in their daily life. Dr. Hübner believes it depends on the situation. Sometimes, the audience might see different characters when a performer follows a very precise set of instructions without playing a character. It might also be possible that a character arises from a strong musical idea or the energy with which a certain piece of music is played. In other situations, it might even be useful to artificially and purposefully go against the character of the music in order to create tension. Given all these possibilities and taking into account the feedback received at the end of the first intervention cycle, I decided to follow a different path during the second cycle: whereas I tried to play myself being subjected to the events in *Ceci n’est pas une balle* during the first intervention cycle, I created and played different characters for *Home Work*. This allowed me to try different approaches to theatre and characterisation.

The next topic I was interested in discussing was the issue of nonverbal cues and how to integrate them in performance. Sarhan sometimes writes all the nonverbal cues on the score, but generally finds excessive notation counterproductive and chooses to leave the nonverbal cues up to the performers, so that they have to create their own versions of his compositions. Dr. Hübner believes the most important is to have different options, highlighting the importance of having external feedback, e.g. working with a director, as well as experimenting with and comparing different possibilities – what he calls “quick prototyping”. This is exactly what I did by following coaching sessions with actor and director Cézanne Tegelberg (see Section 3.2.4 for details).

Given that nonverbal cues are very difficult to notate and describe precisely, Dr. Hübner defends that a video recording constitutes the best script or sub-score. This corroborates what my research

coach Dr. Nicole Jordan suggested, so I decided to use this method in my intervention and produced an annotated video (see Section 5 – Reference Recording 4).

On the quality of a performance, both experts agreed that the most important factor for success is practice. Sarhan stressed that performers need to be at ease with their body and voice in order to achieve successful performances, corroborating the need for training in body awareness and theatre. This way, their understanding of the pieces they play will be passed on to the audience through the performance. For Dr. Hübner, a good performance is one that tries to communicate something, engages and challenges the audience; ideally, it should do all three, to various degrees, allowing each audience member to perceive it differently and have a unique experience – something to take into account when defining the artistic core of my performance of *Home Work*.

3.1.3. Coaching

As I realised the need to improve my stage presence and gain more awareness of my body, particularly on the issues of movement possibilities and control over my physical actions, I visited dance therapist and movement coach Katharina Conradi, with whom I did some exercises. We worked on eight different action drive motifs, which are combinations of three binary variables regarding direction, intensity and speed:

Action drive motif	Direction	Intensity	Speed
Punch / Thrust	direct	strong	quick
Press	direct	strong	sustained
Dab	direct	light	quick
Glide	direct	light	sustained
Slash	indirect	strong	quick
Wring	indirect	strong	sustained
Flick	indirect	light	quick
Float	indirect	light	sustained

I was very satisfied with this coaching session for several reasons. First and foremost, once we started warming up (41 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOAh0>) and moving all my different body parts, I realised how easily I forget to move – I spend so much of my life inside my small personal space that it felt very awkward at first to stretch my body and enlarge that space. In order to achieve this, I learned about expanding my kinesphere, i.e. the space within which I can move, by doing a series of three-dimensional exercises (41 Coaching, 9:45, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOAh0?t=9m45s>). In addition, moving – and stretching in all directions – helped me to find better posture, balance and muscle placement, preventing the appearance of contractures and overall muscle stress.

Secondly, the action drive motifs (41 Coaching, 13:48, <https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOAh0?t=13m48s>) provided me with a very organised but simple way to think about movement. By associating these motifs with particular emotions and feelings, e.g. aggressiveness – thrust, press – effort, flick – fragility, glide / float – calm, I was able to effectively adjust my nonverbal communication to the message I wanted to transmit. For instance, when playing the character of the old man in *Home Work*, I think about Press: a slow, effortful movement with a purpose.

We ended the session with a round of exercises to strengthen the core muscles (42 Coaching, <https://youtu.be/FKL-gswj9yU>), which are very important for maintaining a correct posture, as well as reducing fatigue and chances of injury.

3.1.4. Autoethnography

In parallel with the individual coaching sessions and other research methods, I joined an amateur theatre production directed by Cézanne Tegelberg at the Rietveld Theater in Delft, as a cost-efficient way of obtaining regular and continuous training in theatre.

All these sessions started with a warm-up similar to the one I did with Katharina Conradi. This was not surprising, considering that body movement is essential for both dancers and actors. During the first sessions, the warm-up was followed by a series of exercises that stimulated group dynamics and emphasised attention, reaction speed, spatial and body awareness, posture improvement, flexibility of movement, trust and reduction of impulse restraint (see Appendix 10, Autoethnography for a description of the exercises and a diary of the sessions).

At first, it was difficult for me not to restrain my impulses, as well as to enlarge my stage presence by making broad movements. However, all this became easier and more natural as the rehearsals progressed. At the moment of writing this report, I feel much more confidence on stage and much more flexibility and fluidity in my movements.

An important moment in this part of my research was an assignment where we needed to present three different storytellers to Cézanne and the other participants. I used this opportunity to experiment with applying multiple characters to the first bars of *Home Work*: an old man, a politician and a child. Although I did not exactly perform the piece while playing these characters, I did use the text and some of the gestural elements in *Home Work*. It was unfortunately impossible to record my original presentation at the Rietveld Theater; however, the recordings below, made at a later date, show the same material:

- Old man: <https://youtu.be/RHbQpBSS0gA> (48 Experiment)
- Politician: https://youtu.be/Co85JR_0Ug0 (49 Experiment)
- Child: <https://youtu.be/w5bMnIUxWeY> (50 Experiment)

This short performance was especially relevant for me, because it was the first time I felt I could actually play different characters. Moreover, performing the same material as different characters made me realise the importance of defining very distinctive features for each of them; the fact that the material is the same and, in this case, very abstract, i.e. nonsensical text and apparently meaningless gestures, places the burden of storytelling on the nonverbal cues displayed. The same would happen if I were to tell a story in a language that nobody understood – a clear example of this was a presentation by one of the other participants: she told a story in Turkish, her native language, and the general narrative was understandable because of her use of props and visual and paralinguistic cues.

This way, the experiment made me think of more detailed characterisations: I had to create distinctive postures, movement styles, facial expressions and voices for each character. In addition, and following Cézanne's advice, I tried different props with each character – the hope was that they would help strengthen the audience's perception of them via recognisable elements in their physical appearance. For example, the old man wears a robe and slippers, walks slowly with a hunched back and has a hoarse voice; the politician has a serious face and makes broad gestures; and the child has a high-pitched voice, acts in a curious manner and plays on the floor. Please refer to Appendix 10, Autoethnography for a more detailed list of each characterisation.

Although I still find it difficult to build a strong character from zero, I realised that there are plenty of sources for inspiration. For example, I tried to mimic the behaviour of my 5-year-old niece while playing the child, I thought about what political speeches look and sound like for creating the character of the politician and I imagined how my grandparents move around in order to play the old man.

3.2. Repertoire-specific

3.2.1. Background research

The composer

François Sarhan, born in 1972, is a French composer, director and visual artist. He studied composition and analysis at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris and is a teacher at the Universität der Künste Berlin since 2015. Known for creating music theatre and multimedia works in which he often performs, he started directing his own performances in 2008 and recently opened his first exhibition in Paris, including videos, collages and artist books (Sarhan, 2017a).

It is clear that, although Sarhan received a classical music education, his more recent work reflects an aesthetic approach that goes against the traditional values of classical music. As he claims in his interview with Grégoire Tosser (Cdmc, 2016), he is interested in destruction: questioning one's own ideas, challenging the notion of composition as constructive creation, subverting traditions. He states that he wishes to promote art's relation to the real world by composing on apparently irrelevant topics of daily life and allowing himself to perform on stage, thus distancing himself from conventional composition methods which he believes promote "art for art's sake".

In some of his most recent compositions, e.g. *L'Nfer* (2006) and *Home Work* (2011), he uses "automatic writing": the process of recording and thoroughly transcribing all the elements of a free improvisation: rhythm, intonation, melodies and even nonverbal elements, such as hand gestures, facial expressions, coughs and silences between words (Cdmc, 2016).

The composition

Home Work, for six musicians, part 1: for solo body percussion, subtitled *In the garage*, is part of a larger composition made to be performed on a round central stage divided in three parts separated by large painted fabric screens. On it, the three parts of *Home Work* are to be performed simultaneously, while video is projected on each of the screens, creating a rich audiovisual experience (Sarhan, 2017b).

According to Sarhan (2017b), the piece deals with ubiquitous subjects in a ritualistic, neurotic style, materialised into short mechanical routines. It aims to express intimate and unconscious behaviours in a highly subjective and purposefully incomplete manner.

As for the composition process, *Home Work: In the garage* was improvised in Sarhan's kitchen using amateur body percussion over improvised text. There was no care for musical technique or literary structure, only about dramaturgy. This improvisation over a completely non-musical idea was the starting point for the elaboration of the score. The movements of the performer are tightly controlled, but Sarhan is more interested in the elements of nonverbal communication, with all their hidden meaning. This approach again made this piece perfect for me to use for my research. The artistic potential of the piece lies in these different levels: what is clearly stated and what is hidden, but meaningful (Cdmc, 2016).

The general plot is the following (Sarhan, 2017b; 2018): one man, in his garage, reads an instruction manual in order to assemble and test a machine. The man alternates between following the instructions and his own introspection, gradually merging these two realities into a trance. As the trance becomes apparent, what seemed to be a simple task takes an unexpected turn: the man's desire materialises but transcends his expectations, leading to a scenario which is first satisfying, but quickly evolves into masochism and culminates in the catastrophic destruction of the machine and the individual.

The music provides the ritualistic elements and dramatic direction. The different elements of the composition, i.e. body percussion, gestures, text and rhythm, allude to the construction of a

mechanical object in a DIY – do it yourself – fashion, where all the sounds are produced by the individual (Sarhan, 2018).

3.2.2. Score analysis

Composer: François Sarhan

Full title: Home Work, for six musicians, part 1: for solo body percussion

Alternative title: Home Work II, in the garage

Composition date: 2008-2011

Instrumentation

There are three main “instrumental” textures in *Home Work*, each with its own role:

Voice

The voice is used via verbal and nonverbal sounds, including breath. Its role is to recite the text – described in detail below –, describing the character’s actions, as well as to communicate some of his emotions.

Body percussion

Includes finger snaps, hand claps, foot stomps and strokes on different body parts – calves, thighs, abdomen, chest and head – chin, cheeks, top of head and face in general.

In my opinion, the body percussion has several roles and represents sounds made:

- while assembling the machine;
- by the machine while working;
- by the character while hitting his own body. This happens in two circumstances:
 - groovy rhythms performed on the body and hands during solo body percussion sequences, e.g. bars 21-23;
 - slaps on the face and head during moments of trance, e.g. bars 54-55.

Gestures

There are five gestures in the composition: hands on the knees and four positions performed in the air.

In my opinion, the gestures represent:

- operations on the machine, e.g. pressing buttons and moving levers at bars 72-76;
- calls for attention, especially position 1, e.g. bar 79.

Text

I find that there are two main types of text in *Home Work*:

- the instruction manual;
- the character’s own voice, which can be further subdivided into:
 - commentary, i.e. self-assessment, narration;
 - trance, i.e. disconnection from reality.

These two voices can be seen in the transcription below. In order to improve clarity, repetition is removed, instructions are in **bold**, commentary is in *italic* and trance is underlined (see Appendix 8 for the verbatim transcription). The choice for moments of trance was made in relation to the following musical elements:

- high-pitched, dreamy “oooo” sounds, e.g. bar 55;
- self-inflicted slaps on the face and head, e.g. bars 69-70;
- insistent repetition of words and phrases, e.g. bar 128 – repeated 10 times – and bar 131 – repeated 5 times.

Take the right side of the lip in your left hand.

And, with the help of the metal pin, locate the position of the pipes' lips.

WELL? NO, NOT LIKE THAT.

Connect the device to a grounded plug for guaranteed use of the lip in the pipes.

WELL...

Open the front latch and put all the external leather, plastic pipes and all rubber in the lips of the plastic grounded pipe.

OKAY. M-MMMMM. NO, NOT LIKE THAT. NO. HERE IT'S TOO HARD, THERE IT'S TOO SOFT.

Never use the engine without heating the membrane of the hinge of the pipe! in the grounded plug, otherwise you risk... yes! A BIG risk my GOODness ...of lowering the lip in the pipe of the membrane, in the tank of the left metal pin in your hand.

WELL... 000000

Now! You must heat the membrane in order to receive a reward. Use the lip of the pipe in the tank. It's the only way to make the engine... 000000 ...hot! and efficient! Otherwise the whole device will not reach the point of full potential.

M-MMMMM.

Caution: please never sit on the pipe! 000000

How do you get into this machine, now?

OKAY! I SIT HERE, THE PINS OVER THERE, HERE WE GO, HERE... WELL... 000000

YES! THE ENGINE IS ON NOW, THE PINS TICKLE. ALL RIGHT THEN!

Now, you'll do all I want you to do.

000000000000

LET ME GO, LET ME GET OUT OF THIS DRILLING, PUMPING, TURN AND PARTING, THUMPING AND THRUSTING...

NO! AH NO! NOT HERE. NO!

An analysis of the text allowed me to draw some conclusions:

- structurally, the piece can be divided into two major sections:
 - bars 1 - 89: construction and preparation of the machine by following the instructions in the manual;
 - bars 90 - 161: test and subsequent malfunction and destruction of the machine.
- there are major distortions in the text, suggesting distraction or difficulty in reading the instruction manual:
 - words and phrases are repeated several times, e.g. bars 1-9 and 66-67;
 - syllables are spread out in time, alternating with body percussion sounds and gestures, e.g. bar 16, 24 and 28.
- the character's commentary, which initially indicates self-assessment and realisation of mistakes made – b. 35-41 –, starts giving way to moments of trance towards the end of the instructions – b. 55. The trance takes over during the machine test, underscoring the character's drift away from reality – b. 116-123 –, which ultimately leads him to suffering and destruction – b. 132-143.

Structure

Both sections mentioned above can be divided into smaller groups and phrases, as outlined below. Please refer to Appendix 8 for the detailed structure with corresponding text.

Section 1: construction & preparation

1 - 17: instructions

17 - 19: commentary – self-assessment

20 - 23: body percussion sequence

24 - 33: instructions + commentary

34 - 41: commentary – self-assessment

42 - 45: body percussion sequence

46 - 53: instructions + commentary

54 - 55: commentary + trance

56 - 70: instructions + trance

71 - 78: trance + body percussion & gesture sequence

79 - 82: instructions

83 - 86: trance + body percussion sequence

Section 2: test & destruction

87 - 89: body percussion sequence

90 - 91: commentary – narration

92 - 94: body percussion sequence

95 - 97: commentary – narration

98 - 101: trance

102 - 106: commentary – narration

107 - 113: trance + commentary – narration

114 - 116: body percussion sequence

116 - 123: trance

124 - 131: commentary – narration + trance

132 - 143: commentary – narration

144 - 161: coda: gesture sequence

The structural analysis shows that:

- solo body percussion sequences appear as a third alternation element in addition to the instruction text and commentary;
- the clean “instructions – commentary – body percussion” formula used in the beginning of the piece (bars 1-45) gradually transforms into aggregates of text, sounds and gestures punctuated by moments of trance as the different layers merge together, e.g. bars 56-78 and 95-123, corroborating the evolution suggested by the text.

Tempo

A closer look at the score led to the realisation that there are five different tempo markings. I found that the performance speed is proportional to the amount of enthusiasm and energy at each point of the narrative and therefore each tempo marking has a specific role:

- $J = 70$: corresponds to moments of commentary – self-assessment, e.g. bar 18, and the first moment of trance at bar 55. It is also the tempo of the beginning of the piece, although there is an immediate accelerando then;

- J= 90: tempo of the instructions after the initial *accelerando* and of the body percussion sequences. Further into the piece, moments of trance keep this tempo, e.g. bars 63, 68-69;
- J= 112: starts at bar 87 and marks the beginning of the machine test. The higher speed corresponds to more enthusiasm and involvement by the performer;
- J= 120: starts at bar 116 and marks the beginning of a long moment of trance after the machine is turned on, followed by its malfunction at bar 123 and subsequent destruction. It constitutes the energy peak of the piece;
- J= 50: tempo of the coda – gesture sequence, starting at bar 144. This is a very low-energy, depressive section after the machine's destruction.

3.2.3. Video analysis

Samuel Favre

URL: <https://youtu.be/FNyWq5bjKDM> (François Sarhan, 2011b)

This is a video of a performance of *Home Work* by Samuel Favre, member of the Ensemble Intercontemporain and virtuoso body percussionist (Ensemble Intercontemporain, 2016; Cdm, 2016).

The first thing that struck me about this performance, endorsed by the composer himself, was that the text is different from the one in the version I have. Some words in the video appeared to be more complex than the ones in my version, e.g. “hinge” instead of “lip”, “faucet” instead of “pipe”. Upon interviewing Sarhan (transcript in Appendix 12), I found that “[Favre’s] version is an early one, where the text, and part of the score were less precise and sometimes incorrect. The changes are not meaningful, but practical and linguistic.”

On a technical level, I was impressed by the fact that the piece is performed completely by heart and in a very relaxed and effortless manner. The technical quality of this performance led me to return to it several times throughout this intervention cycle, both for inspiration regarding the execution of certain rhythmical elements, e.g. bars 56-57, 62-63 and 92-93, as well as the clarification of ambiguous sections of the score, e.g. bar 75 and the standing up / sitting down moments at bars 78 to 85.

Watching the piece being performed by heart made me realise the need to make an important choice: whether or not to purposefully read from the score – and thus follow the instructions in the “manual”. These two circumstances could convey two different narratives, i.e. reciting the actions from memory versus reading from the instruction manual.

In my opinion, the absence of a physical “instruction manual” and the overall lightheartedness of Favre’s performance made it look quite abstract; my first impression on this level was that of accompanied recitation. I did not feel that this diminished the quality of the performance, especially because Favre is naturally expressive and managed to keep me engaged throughout, e.g., by looking at his hands sometimes and introducing facial expressions at key moments (e.g. 0:18-0:23, 0:43). Nevertheless, all these elements seemed inconsequential with regard to the transmission of a narrative and the display of a distinct character; many more nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, would be necessary for that.

There was, however, a very interesting section from an expressive point of view: from 5:55 to 6:20, I could really see the mounting suffering, in contrast with the light, easy-going mood that had been constant until then. In terms of nonverbal cues, this is characterised by a bigger involvement of the body in the performance: the posture changes from largely static to more dynamic, there are more body parts involved in the movements at a time and the voice becomes more aggressive and energetic.

3.2.4. Lessons and Expert coaching

While learning *Home Work*, I performed it for several people in my network in order to obtain feedback on the progress of my work, as well as to seek advice on how to improve my characterisation and the quality and effectiveness of the nonverbal elements. The experts consulted were:

- my main subject teachers Chris Leenders and Hans Leenders, who focused on the musical aspects, such as rhythm and balance, and gave non-expert feedback on nonverbal cues;
- René Spierings, Codarts guest teacher for theatre in classical percussion and experienced body percussionist, who gave feedback on the quality of my body percussion and advice on the blend of music and theatre;
- Cézane Tegelberg, actor and director, with whom I worked on character development, narrative creation and improvement of nonverbal cues;
- Sara Moreira Marques, classical singer, who helped me improve the pronunciation of the text, as well as my diction and voice projection.

As during the first intervention cycle, I used lessons and coaching sessions as guided experimentation, testing my ideas and building on the feedback received during each interaction to gradually improve my interpretation, as well as to try different characters and nonverbal cues. A summary of this mini-intervention cycle process can be found below and the detailed diary of these sessions and discussions can be consulted in Appendix 10, Lessons and expert coaching.

Initial lessons

I first performed part of the piece for René (40 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/c4LoleDqrv4>). His opinion was that the performance was very good from a technical perspective, with clear and balanced body percussion sounds. This constituted a natural follow-up of the first intervention cycle and was corroborated by all the other experts. However, he suggested that I should clarify the roles of the different layers in *Home Work* – voice and percussion – as well as those of the introspective, mechanical and trance moments. He also recommended working on the pronunciation of the text, as well as trying to create more melodic nuances.

Here, our opinions diverged: for René, the body percussion represents the sounds the machine makes and the trance moments represent frustration with not being able to complete the task of assembling the machine. At this point, it was still not clear for me what the body percussion represented, although I preferred the idea that it was played by the character as a result of his unavoidable and constant distraction; this would eventually grow out of control and lead to the moments of trance, which would represent detachment from reality.

I also discussed the possibility of taking more time during the thoughtful sections and modifying the hand choices – L and R for left and right – suggested by the composer if they were uncomfortable. René supported my decision of taking time if that contributed positively to my performance, even if it went against the wishes of the composer – something I eventually decided to do for reasons already mentioned. About the hand choices, he agreed that I should change them to whatever was comfortable for me.

Later, I asked the composer what he thought about these issues (F. Sarhan, personal communication, February 21, 2018). According to him, he thought of different roles for the “mechanical” layers in the composition, i.e. body percussion and gestures, but they are not disclosed, being purposefully left to the interpretation of the performer – this way, I was completely free to make my own choices. Regarding the written hand choices, Sarhan said that both hands should be equally important in the performance. Therefore, his suggestions could be slightly modified, as long as it did not change this balance. I did change several of the written suggestions, but always kept Sarhan’s request in mind when doing so.

Text

Following René's advice, I asked Sara for feedback on how I recited the text. We worked mainly on improving my diction and correcting vowel sounds, e.g. the "o" in "connect", "otherwise" and "goodness", and the "i" in "position" and "lip". A recording of the improved text is available at <https://youtu.be/5h4K6Zb3WEY> (51 Improved text).

Breakthrough: artistic core

After the lessons with René, I realised that I need to create a stronger character and a clear narrative for him to play. I had also asked Sarhan (personal communication, February 21, 2018) if he had thought of any character for *Home Work*. Since he used his "automatic writing" technique to compose the piece (i.e. improvised then transcribed the material), he claimed that the only possibility of a character would be himself. Given that I do not know him personally and was not interested in playing a particular person, I decided to go my own way.

This is what I tried to do in my first session with Cézanne. I already had something in mind as a result of my analysis of the piece: a very energetic man with an attention deficit that would make it increasingly difficult for him to effectively follow the instructions in the manual; as his excitement built up, he would stop assessing the quality of his own work, leading to his constructing a defective machine which would ultimately malfunction and be destroyed. Cézanne liked this character, but proposed some changes based on the fact that the piece was meant to be performed as part of my final recital. By analysing the rest of the repertoire, we realised that there was a strong suggestion of a journey; and since my girlfriend would also be part of the performance as a singer, it would be a journey through our life as a couple – this would become the artistic core of my version of *Home Work*. Each stage of the implicit narrative, i.e. creation, excitement, error and destruction, would then have a parallel in the character's life, illustrated by other pieces. This way, the piece would be divided in sections and spread out throughout the whole performance.

I thought this was an excellent idea, because it gave me opportunity to develop several different versions of the character, representing each stage of his life, and helped clarify the role of each section of the piece. Furthermore, it made me realise how the ultimate goal of a performance – in this case, my final recital as a whole – influences the choice, role and interpretation of each piece.

Having decided this, and taking the initial musical material in *Home Work* into account, Cézanne suggested starting the performance as an old man. Under her guidance, I began developing this character, working on his physical features, such as posture, movement style and voice, and we discussed the possible use of props, as well as the role of each action in the score.

Character development: old man

The following lessons, with Hans, Chris and René, focused on further developing the character of the old man, improving the aspects mentioned above and attributing roles to some of his actions, e.g. falling asleep during the long rest in bar 20. We also worked on the treatment of the music, concluding that the initial section of *Home Work* would need to have its rhythm slightly distorted and be performed at a slower tempo in order to be consistent with the character. The videos show the improvement during the lesson with Hans on March 16, 2018:

- original version: https://youtu.be/IPiZh9t3c_I (43 Intermediate recording for feedback)
- improved version, without stage entrance: <https://youtu.be/YPVULB9BgZU> (44 Intermediate recording after feedback)

We both agreed that the inclusion of the aged voice, as well as the slower pace and irregular movements made the character much clearer and more believable. This was the moment when I truly realised how to use the action drive motifs that I had learned from with Katharina Conradi.

Alternative narrative

During the same lesson with Hans, I experimented with the application of an alternative narrative to the first 20 bars of *Home Work*, while playing the character of the old man: reciting the instructions from memory instead of reading from the instruction manual (45 Experiment, <https://youtu.be/qJO7N6FyXXc>). This constituted a different approach to the musical material with the goal of testing different dramatic possibilities: while the first version – reading from the manual – uses the sparse, repetitive nature of the text as a consequence of the character's reading difficulties due to poor eyesight, the second – reciting from memory – uses it as a consequence of the memory effort caused by the inability to read the instruction manual, which is set aside in the beginning of the scene.

The results were inconclusive. While we both agreed that reciting from memory lent some tension to the performance and allowed me to be more in contact with the audience, the question of how to relate that to the rest of the narrative remained. In the end, I decided to keep the instruction manual, since it was more consistent with the rest of the narrative and still pictured the old man as trying to achieve a goal without success. Nevertheless, the experiment showed how it is possible to create different narratives based on the musical material at hand and the features of the character.

Character development: child, teenager, adult

In the last coaching session with Cézanne, I performed the version of the piece that had resulted from the work done so far (46 Intermediate recording for feedback, <https://youtu.be/5BBnoU9YVUE>). It included a more developed version of the old man and one other character, similar to my original idea, i.e. young and energetic, but hopelessly distracted and detached from reality.

I was quite happy with the result of this, apart from a couple of musical mistakes. However, I was still missing the additional versions of the character representing his aging process and Cézanne was concerned with the fact that the character on which I had spent the most effort – the old man – appeared for such a short time when compared to his younger self. In her opinion, with which I came to agree, this imbalance compromised the narrative and made the idea of a life journey less clear. This way, we decided to work on different younger versions of the character during the session.

By then, I had already decided that the old man needed to turn back to a younger version of himself on bar 21 – he would fall asleep on bar 20 and wake up in a vivid dream, a flashback from when he was young. This was due to the increasing complexity of the music, which it made it impossible to be played as the old man. My idea was to go back to the character's late teens; however, after some discussion, we eventually decided to try a version of him as a child, in order to cover a longer timespan. For this, I could use the character I had created for the storytelling assignment at the Rietveld Theater (see Section 3.1.4 – Autoethnography). The character would then grow into a teenager and later into an adult.

We proceeded to work on each of the characters: I thought of possible features for them on the spot and Cézanne gave me feedback on what she saw and advice on how to improve it. That process is documented below:

Old man

Video: <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw> (47 Coaching)

The video shows the use of props: a walking stick for the old man and a ladder, which one would find in a garage – remember this is the intended setting for *Home Work*. It also shows the improvement of posture and moments of eye contact with the audience. I also thought of his actions as slow motion with focused energy, something I had done very well in one of the Rietveld Theater rehearsals, according to Cézanne.

Some features of the character: knees slightly bent, back bent at the hip, moves very slowly with effort – focused energy, poor eyesight, hoarse voice.

Child

Video: <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw?t=3m26s> (47 Coaching, 3:26)

For this, I added excitement and a childish voice. However, Cézanne correctly pointed out the need to show how a child cannot perform smooth and precise movements yet, so we worked on that.

Some features of the character: very energetic, clumsy, with underdeveloped fine motor skills – body percussion should be stiff and slightly unnatural, high-pitched melodic voice.

Teenager

Video: <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw?t=6m42s> (47 Coaching, 6:42)

I tried a more energetic and smooth character for the teenager. We proceeded to add a feeling that the character was surprised by his own physical and hormonal growth, coupled with the mood changes and self-discovery characteristic of teenagers.

Some features of the character: careless, dismissive, makes fun of everything, suffering hormonal changes.

Adult

Video: <https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw?t=18m0s> (47 Coaching, 18:00)

The adult should be very serious and focused, similar to my real self, in a way. However, I should go even further and make him very tedious, as a stereotype of all men who have unhappy office jobs.

Some features of the character: formal, very correct posture, focused, pensive.

Final lesson & feedback

The version with the four characters was presented to Hans, who thought that both the characters and the narrative were very clear. An important remark, however, in line with the findings of the first intervention cycle, was not to let the theatre take over the music, i.e. I needed to make sure that the technical and musical quality did not drop due to the investment in theatrical enhancement. To achieve this, I practised further with my focus on technique, so that I could eventually perform the music almost automatically and concentrate on characterisation.

4. Intervention

The intervention of this cycle had several steps. Following Dr. Hübner's and Arlon Luijten's advice, I started by defining the artistic core of the performance, which I followed with the creation of a suitable narrative and its respective characters. After that, all the decisions were annotated on the score. Since it is impossible to capture all the nuances in nonverbal cues into text, I followed Dr. Hübner's and my research coach, Dr. Nicole Jordan's advice and created an annotated video, where the viewer is guided through the sub-score as he watches the performance. This decision is also the result of feedback received on the intervention of the first cycle, for which I produced an overly complicated – and long – performance script.

Due to time limitations, I have decided to apply the intervention only until bar 86, corresponding to the first large section of the composition. This section includes the majority of the narrative and the four characters discussed before in this report – old man, child, teenager and adult –, providing numerous possibilities for the display of many different emotions. Furthermore, I succeeded in defining the artistic core and creating a narrative for the whole composition. The application of the intervention to the rest of the piece will be a continuation of the process undertaken so far.

Artistic core

The definition of the artistic core emerged primarily from the background information gathered about *Home Work*, my analysis of the score and my discussions with Cézanne Tegelberg about my goals for the performance.

According to the composer, *Home Work* takes a mundane event and presents it in a ritualistic manner through neurotic mechanical routines, with the purpose of ambiguously expressing usually intimate and subconscious issues such as drifted sexual behaviours.

This psychologically complex concept, coupled with the surrealistic nature of the text and the intertwined blend of instructions, percussion, and commentary, which grow in excitement throughout the piece until near insanity, led me to think of a mentally disturbed character who embarks on a journey through trial and error, arousal, failure, suffering and ultimate destruction, here symbolised by the assembly, operation and subsequent malfunction of a machine. After discussing my original idea with Cézanne and reflecting on the role of *Home Work* as part of a larger performance, this interpretation evolved into a metaphor for a journey through life. As the character grows throughout the piece, he tries to understand the changes he is going through until adulthood. Then, he commits a mistake, setting off a series of events that ultimately make his life fall apart.

Narrative

The narrative of my version of *Home Work* is the following: I enter the stage as a very old man, carrying some papers as I walk towards a chair. After much effort, I manage to sit down and try to read the papers, only to realise that it is very difficult. I keep trying to perform the actions in the instruction manual, but fail after two sentences. Disappointed, I fall asleep on the chair.

A flashback starts to the time when I was a child. I wake up, energised and excited about a new toy that I need to assemble. However, I do not succeed.

At this point, I grow into a teenager, surprised about the changes in my body and contemptuous of the activities I am forced to take part in. Immediately after, though, I notice something intriguing in the text that makes my hormones fire. Excitement, uncertainty and self-doubt ensue, almost to the point of losing control. I try to remain calm, but my excitement eventually takes over.

After this, time shifts forward again and I become an adult at work: formal, focused and pensive. While performing a task, I notice a warning. A sudden impulse leads me to ignore the warning and make a mistake, realising it immediately.

As I scramble to fix the problem, a solution appears to be within range, but is pushed aside by a catastrophic choice that sets off a chain reaction leading to the collapse of the situation. Incapable of resolving the problem, all I can do is witness the destruction of what I had built.

I return to the old man for the final section, melancholically reflecting on my life choices.

Characterisation

There are four different characters in my version of *Home Work*, which actually correspond to different stages of the same character's life. Below is a description of their characteristics and which parts of the piece they correspond to.

Old man – bars 1 - 20

Posture: knees slightly bent, back bent at the hip

Movements: very slow with much effort, trembling, small steps, drags feet

Facial expressions: bland

Oculesics: poor eyesight, squinting

Voice: soft, hoarse

Possible props: walking stick

Child – bars 21 - 35

Posture: natural – children do not care about it

Movements: very energetic, clumsy, stiff, slightly unnatural – motor skills not completely developed

Facial expressions: excited, very honest

Oculesics: unfocused gaze, trying to absorb information

Voice: high-pitched, melodic

Possible props: baseball cap, toy

Teenager – bars 36 - 71

Posture: varies from slouched to stiff

Movements: vary from careless and dismissive to excited and energetic

Facial expressions: vary from dismissive and contemptuous to scared and confused to excited

Oculesics: varies from unfocused, avoiding eye contact to very focused

Voice: neutral, excited at times

Possible props: headphones

Adult – bars 72 - 86

Posture: very straight, almost unnatural

Movements: calculated, precise

Facial expressions: vary from neutral and serious to worried and frightened

Oculesics: gaze varies from very focused to disperse

Voice: neutral

Possible props: tie

It is important to mention that I have purposefully chosen not to wear full costumes for each of the characters, wearing neutral black clothes instead – similar to traditional mimes, who would wear an all-white costume. This allowed me to continuously shift from one character to another without making cuts in the performance. In addition, I believe that wearing a simple accessory is enough to clarify the role of each character.

Annotated score & video

The annotated score can be consulted in Appendix 6 and includes the character changes and the parts of the sub-score that are possible to be written, mainly emotions and actions. For a better understanding of all the nonverbal cues displayed, please refer to the annotated final recording at <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc> (53 Reference Recording 4, enable subtitles for annotations).

5. Reference Recording 4

Sarhan, F. – *Home Work*, for six musicians, part 1: for solo body percussion (7:00)

URL: <https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc> (53 Reference Recording 4, enable subtitles for annotations)

Recorded on May 4, 2018

Strictly musical version

As in the first intervention cycle and given that my first reference recording was incomplete, I decided to record a version of my performance that strictly followed the instructions in the score. This provides a better base with which to compare the final version.

Video available at <https://youtu.be/PO6HvEDWMSI> (52 Strictly musical version)

Intermediate recordings

Below is a list of intermediate performances, made while working towards the final version.

Lesson with René Spierings

<https://youtu.be/c4LoleDgrv4> (40 Intermediate recording for feedback)

Lesson with Hans Leenders

Original version: https://youtu.be/PlZh9t3c_I (43 Intermediate recording for feedback)

Improved version: <https://youtu.be/YPVULB9BgZU> (44 Intermediate recording after feedback)

Coaching session with Cézanne Tegelberg

<https://youtu.be/5BBnoU9YVUE> (46 Intermediate recording for feedback)

6. Self-reflection and Feedback

For the final round of feedback, I gathered opinions from several people with varied backgrounds:

- Cézanne Tegelberg, actor and director with whom I had worked on my version of the piece;
- Hans Leenders, main subject teacher and supervisor of classical percussion master students;
- Jaume Santonja, principal percussionist with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra;
- Manuel Martínez, co-principal percussionist with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra.

I asked all of them to give feedback about:

- Characterisation – could they see the different characters and what they represented?
- Narrative – could they figure out what it was?
- Emotional display – which, if any, emotions were visible?
- Performance in general – did they like it? Why?

It is important to mention that the final Reference Recording was made as a final performance for Cézanne, so she gave feedback only on the live performance – this was a personal request from her. In addition, Hans accompanied much of the preparation process, so only I asked him to compare the final recording with the strictly musical version.

Jaume and Manuel did not know the piece and were asked to give feedback on:

- the Reference Recording 4 without sound, in order to measure the effectiveness of the visual nonverbal cues;
- the Reference Recording 4 with sound, to assess whether the addition of text and paralinguistics had any effect;
- the Strictly musical version, to determine which one was more expressive and which one they preferred.

Characterisation

I could see three clear characters: the old man, the child and an older one. Of course I knew there was a fourth one and I can clearly see the transition from the third to the fourth. However, I find that their features are not distinctive enough. Hans agreed with me: although he knew that there should be four characters, he saw the third and fourth not as different stages of life, but as different sides of a bipolar person. He concluded that, without additional information, he would only have noticed three different characters.

This was corroborated by Jaume's and Manuel's opinion. When watching the silent version of the final recording, they both saw three characters. The old man was clearly and immediately identified; Jaume then mentioned a livelier character and another more extroverted; while Manuel correctly identified the child – he even made the connection between my movements and the ones his baby son does, which made me very happy – and an older version. They did not see the adult.

Regarding the version with sound, it was surprising to learn that Jaume and Manuel saw less characters: one old and one young. Nonetheless, combining the newly acquired information with their inferences from the silent version, Jaume correctly suggested that it might be the same character growing older.

Cézanne gave very comprehensive feedback on the characterisation. She said it was very good in general. She could a great deal of work done on the old man and loved the funny moment of stretching and subsequent back pain. The amount of details really captured her attention – something she would only expect from a trained actor. She did give some advice for improvement: find a better walking stick and lean better on it; work on the old man's hands – think about arthritis, he should not be able to stretch his fingers. This would create instant conflict – what would a percussionist do with arthritic hands? It would certainly lead to frustration and add an additional layer to the character.

She mentioned that she could not immediately see the child. I realised that this happened because I made a small mistake with the music and needed to change the focus of my attention in order to correct it. To avoid and correct this, Cézanne suggested practising giving the mistake to the character and think about how he would react in that situation. Furthermore, she taught me a trick for accomplishing quick character changes: think about their center, i.e. where to focus their energy. Whereas a tired, old man could have his center in his knees, a child could have his center in his cheeks, a teenager in his chest, and so on.

Cézanne loved the teenager – I really assumed my choices and that led to a fantastic build-up. The adult, however, needed some work to contrast with the teenager – this agrees with the feedback from other people and my own assessment. He should be boring and stuck in a routine, which would give him something to escape from, a reason for a mid-life crisis and reinforce his role in the whole narrative of a life journey. Cézanne thought he still looked too much like me, i.e. focused and inquisitive, but he should be more tedious and stereotypical, like the hundreds of businesspeople who commute to work every morning in large cities, wearing the same clothes and stuck in their own little world.

Narrative

I find it hard to do an unbiased reflection on the narrative because I obviously always know what is going to happen next. I do think that it is possible to understand that the old man has a memory flashback to a younger age and grows older from there. I also believe that the details of the narrative will be much clearer when I perform the whole piece – by returning to the old man at the end, the life journey will be easier to see, as well as the attempt to escape from something that ultimately leads to the character's destruction.

Hans stated that it was clear that I was continuously reading the instruction manual. He also said he could follow the life journey, but not understand it. However, he could see it was clear for the character, that his actions made sense to him – in a way, he felt like he was in my mind, seeing how I experience things, and that was interesting for him.

Jaume and Manuel could not see a narrative when they watched the silent version. The version with sound, however, provided interesting results. Jaume understood that I was following instructions to use a kind of home appliance and suggested they might also apply to a woman, with all the talk about pipes and membranes – this is a very subliminal message that I tried to discreetly emphasise with the character of the teenager, so I was very happy that he noticed it. He also correctly realised that the old man became young, as in a memory. Manuel added that he thought that the old man became lively because of the percussion. He also mentioned that the clearer narrative kills the viewer's imagination – he finds it interesting to reflect about the goals of a performance and creating his own story.

Cézanne already knew the narrative, so she did not make any specific comments. In her opinion, the narrative would become clearer due to improvements in characterisation.

Emotional display

I was quite pleased to notice that I could identify almost all of the emotions I had written in my sub-score. I could clearly see the child's excitement and disappointment, the teenager's cheekiness, doubt and arousal, the adult's concentration and concern, and the old man's effort and frustration.

Hans could see many, very extreme emotions and stated that they told a lot about the personality of the character. He felt constantly surprised by all the strange and unexpected emotions. For him, the display of emotions was the best part of the performance, in terms of clarity.

Jaume could see a large emotional diversity in the silent video. He named a few of the emotions he saw: doubt, surprise, discomfort and joy, to which Manuel added fatigue. For them, the video with sound showed the same emotions, but with more information available.

Again, Cézanne gave very comprehensive feedback. She could see that I had written in the subtext. In her opinion, it really worked and successfully layered the characters, because I still managed to keep my own world to myself and did not overplay it – so she believed me, which is a very nice characteristic to have as a performer, according to her. She went on to say that my acting does not become unbelievable even when I make it bigger, which is good.

She could also see there were reason for my actions. In regard to this, the old man seemed to have the largest thinking process, followed by the teenager. She could see that the old man had an objective – to bring something back that he had before and was now gone. To achieve the same level of detail with the other characters, she suggested writing their thoughts on a piece of paper and giving them goals, e.g. making the child perform for an audience, such as a friend or his mother. The adult would need to go through different emotions, though. He should feel uptight and shout due to anger and frustration, not excitement – that would make him more different from the teenager.

She finished by saying that one needs to play the thought and not the emotion in order to be successful, but that I was already doing that right.

General remarks

I am very satisfied with this final result. Although the performance is not perfect from a technical point of view, I feel that I have achieved all my dramatic goals. When I started studying *Home Work*, I did not expect it would turn out like this, so I feel very successful.

Hans said that the performance felt very interesting for him, although he thought it could be even stronger if I had chosen to play a bipolar character, due to the duality between rhythmical and trance sections that exists in the piece. I could then think of how that character would behave at different stages of his life.

Jaume liked the performance and said it was very convincing. He was also pleased to see a part of me that he did not know from “real life”.

Cézane felt that the performance was very good and impressive. As a general feedback point, she said I should make more eye contact, especially at key points of the performance, e.g. just before the old man sits down and when the child is disappointed. Here it is important to note that eye contact does not mean interaction with the audience – there is still a “fourth wall”. The idea is not to acknowledge the audience, but merely to capture their attention – the eyes are a great tool for that. In addition, I should remember to maintain a good speech articulation when playing the child, especially in words that require a big movement of the mouth, such as “grounded”.

Comparison with strictly musical version

I made the strictly musical version for two reasons: it serves as a full reference recording 3 – the one I made at the beginning of this intervention cycle was very incomplete – and it respects the wishes of the composer in the sense that I do not make modifications to the score and do not try to clarify the narrative. While I like this abstract version for the pure craftsmanship and rhythmical virtuosity it reveals, I have to say that my enhanced version is much more fun to play.

The feedback I received on this version was unanimous. Jaume and Manuel said they did not understand the narrative and they could not see emotions or characters apart from myself. Jaume stated that it felt like a reading of the score, something you would expect from a conservatory student. He clearly preferred the enhanced version. Manuel’s opinion of this version, after having watched the two versions of the Reference Recording 4, was very simply put: “this one was superfluous”.

Hans’s feedback was more comprehensive. By focusing more on the music – because there was nothing else to see –, he felt the strictly musical version was technically worse than the enhanced version, when it was actually played more correctly. He said he did not like it, because he did not understand it. He could not see the story, not even that I was reading from a manual, because it looked like I was reading from the score – which was true. He also did not see characters, only a person who sometimes shows emotions. The problem with this is that, because I could not avoid

showing a bit of emotion, he kept wondering where was the rest – so I just seemed to be a very boring person. The general feeling was that he was watching art but did not understand it. He was not triggered by the music and did not understand what was happening and why I was doing it. To sum up, it was a “total no-go”.

7. Conclusion

I think the result of this intervention cycle was very clear. I was very pleased with the artistic product I created and so were the people I asked for feedback. Their opinion that my version was much more interesting than the non-enhanced version also proved to be unanimous. This way, I truly believe that I accomplished the goal I set for myself at the beginning of the research process. The only issue with this cycle was the fact that I could not apply my intervention to the whole piece – I would have needed more time for that. However, the result obtained, even if incomplete, clearly showed the potential of my preparation process and the successful application of my research findings. Achieving a complete artistic product was only a matter of continuing on the same path.

Concerning the final recording, I was very happy to learn that my different characters were visible and displayed a wide range of emotions. This was one of the focal points for further research set at the end of the first intervention cycle and I managed to successfully deal with it. I was also pleased to realise that the general narrative of the performance was understandable. Although the audience could not see the artistic core *per se*, especially because the piece was not performed completely, I discovered that this still allows them to enjoy the performance as they make up their own story. In this sense, the artistic core exists to provide direction to me as a performer – when I transmit my ideas clearly, the audience is capable of creating their own interpretation. It was very interesting to realise that some people actually prefer an ambiguous, but expressive version – in this case, my silent performance –, because it gives more freedom to their imagination.

Regarding the visual nonverbal cues to which I devoted so much of my attention, I was happy to learn that they were clear and self-sufficient, since my audience managed to obtain most of the information regarding characters and emotions from the silent version. The addition of sound only helped with the clarification of the narrative. This proved just how strong the nonverbal message can be.

An interesting note is that what I see in my final recording is actually very much true to myself. This may sound surprising to the people who know me as a calm and organised person, but the truth is that I behave very differently with close friends and family. One of the biggest achievements for me was being able to bring that part of me onto the stage and managing to do so in a natural and convincing manner, without feeling embarrassed.

As a topic for further research, I would like to delve deeper into the other channels of nonverbal communication, particularly paralinguistics because I realised it is an essential part of characterisation. Moreover, it has a large influence on daily communication, making it a generally applicable skill and therefore worth developing.

Appendices

1. Tracklist of A/V recordings

01 Reference Recording 1 – ‘Ceci n’est pas une balle’

November 9, 2016

<https://youtu.be/qlcUHstIPoo>

02 Intermediate recording for feedback – David Prins

March 14, 2017

https://youtu.be/q6a1_zSbFzo

03 Intermediate recording for feedback – René Spierings

March 28, 2017

<https://youtu.be/b6MqxU2Yxc4>

04 Coaching – René Spierings

March 28, 2017

<https://youtu.be/2-jYRSZJzN8>

05 Intermediate recording for feedback – Andreas Scharfenberg

April 14, 2017

<https://youtu.be/AseuexUWSBQ>

06 Experimentation 1 – Andreas Scharfenberg

April 14, 2017

<https://youtu.be/lhhDW-phWjo>

07 Experimentation 2 – Andreas Scharfenberg

April 14, 2017

<https://youtu.be/bSDqtOICj7M>

08 Experimentation – Silent version, with a real ball

April 25, 2017

<https://youtu.be/zpL2H4IajCY>

09 Experimentation – Introduction, with a real ball

April 25, 2017

<https://youtu.be/WW8X4I2s8LY>

10 Experimentation – Bars 5 and 6, with a real ball

April 25, 2017

<https://youtu.be/qXYPxl0Klr4>

11 Experimentation – Bars 24 to 28, with a real ball

April 25, 2017

<https://youtu.be/h8g1249EJoI>

12 Experimentation – Silent version, without ball
April 25, 2017
<https://youtu.be/UWtDtgFaMic>

13 Experimentation – Introduction, without ball 1
April 25, 2017
<https://youtu.be/Or5mWCiRnLM>

14 Experimentation – Introduction, without ball 2
April 25, 2017
<https://youtu.be/nt6fyexPumY>

15 Experimentation – Introduction, without ball 3
April 25, 2017
<https://youtu.be/lkunKZXw5NI>

16 Experimentation – Bars 5 and 6, without ball
April 25, 2017
<https://youtu.be/zC-pkkyStpA>

17 Experimentation – Bars 24 to 28, without ball 1
April 25, 2017
https://youtu.be/4_i-x8a-4UQ

18 Experimentation – Bars 24 to 28, without ball 2
April 25, 2017
https://youtu.be/B_omCNLR7ug

19 Experimentation – Strictly musical (“white mask”) version
April 26, 2017
<https://youtu.be/HDOLTmYaN8c>

20 Practising examples – Intro 1
April 27, 2017
<https://youtu.be/Es-BjCFxn5w>

21 Practising examples – Intro 2
April 27, 2017
<https://youtu.be/R7iT15VORzw>

22 Practising examples – Airplane arrival 1
April 27, 2017
<https://youtu.be/6RrKZSuxfoY>

23 Practising examples – Airplane arrival 2
April 27, 2017
<https://youtu.be/OnsDLJfIXlw>

24 Practising examples – Present + Catch 1
April 27, 2017
<https://youtu.be/annWfx25ak8>

25 Practising examples – Present + Catch 2

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/BQPbcV0SX9A>

26 Practising examples – Football tricks

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/eLb4Qlp83Xc>

27 Practising examples – First section

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/xPpa7XwHPzk>

28 Practising examples – Second section (partial)

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/XsBdcWJhDOc>

29 Practising examples – Bounce intro (reprise) 1

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/-pnMnwAntdY>

30 Practising examples – Bounce intro (reprise) 2

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/vwEJAXwOKc0>

31 Practising examples – Bounce (energetic) + West Side Story

April 27, 2017

https://youtu.be/1G8C_6LNM9U

32 Practising examples – Second section

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/NyXIFoojaBc>

33 Practising examples – Egg timer

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/ehdUzWUVjSE>

34 Practising examples – Third section

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/RidXuGfpLZs>

35 Practising examples – Fourth section

April 27, 2017

<https://youtu.be/RbKKBkfjNxjk>

36 Practising examples – Tricks (enhanced rotation) (partial)

April 27, 2017

https://youtu.be/EFIN_nw10dU

37 Reference Recording 2 – 'Ceci n'est pas une balle'

April 28, 2017

<https://youtu.be/FnMWrXtzrvc>

38 Reference Recording 3 – 'Home Work'

November 20, 2017

<https://youtu.be/ixY0Feamyqo>

39 Reference Recording 3 after feedback – Hans Leenders

November 20, 2017

<https://youtu.be/8e14ofhEugY>

40 Intermediate recording for feedback – René Spierings

January 30, 2018

<https://youtu.be/c4LoleDqrv4>

41 Coaching – Katharina Conradi (warm-up, kinesphere and action drive motifs)

February 5, 2018

<https://youtu.be/rnA2vLfOA0>

42 Coaching – Katharina Conradi (core strength exercises)

February 5, 2018

<https://youtu.be/FKL-gswj9yU>

43 Intermediate recording for feedback – Hans Leenders

March 16, 2018

https://youtu.be/IPIZh9t3c_I

44 Intermediate recording after feedback – Hans Leenders

February 5, 2018

<https://youtu.be/YPVULB9BgZU>

45 Experiment – alternative narrative

March 16, 2018

<https://youtu.be/qJO7N6FyXXc>

46 Intermediate recording for feedback – Cézanne Tegelberg

April 25, 2018

<https://youtu.be/5BBnoU9YVUE>

47 Coaching – Cézanne Tegelberg (multiple characters)

April 25, 2018

<https://youtu.be/UWKzB0dkYKw>

48 Experiment – multiple characters: old man

May 4, 2018

<https://youtu.be/RHbQpBSS0gA>

49 Experiment – multiple characters: politician

May 4, 2018

https://youtu.be/Co85JR_0Ug0

50 Experiment – multiple characters: child
May 4, 2018
<https://youtu.be/w5bMnIUxWeY>

51 Improved text – 'Home Work'
May 4, 2018
<https://youtu.be/5h4K6Zb3WEY>

52 Strictly musical version – 'Home Work'
May 4, 2018
<https://youtu.be/PO6HvEDWMSl>

53 Reference Recording 4 – 'Home Work'
May 4, 2018
<https://youtu.be/pwIRcluSWwc>

2. Network

Andreas Scharfenberg

Theatre teacher with the circus department at Codarts, educated in physical theatre (mime). Andreas coached me in the basics of physical theatre and helped me create a more engaging version of *Ceci n'est pas une balle*.

Arlon Luijten

Stage director with the music theatre department at Codarts, Arlon had worked with former percussion students on theatrical endeavours with excellent results. He introduced the concept of *artistic core* to me and inspired me to work on playing extreme characters and emotions.

Cézanne Tegelberg

Actor, director and deviser who coached me in basic theatre and helped me develop my narrative and characters for *Home Work*. She also gave me the chance to engage in autoethnography by participating in an amateur theatre production she was directing.

Chris Leenders

Main subject teacher. Chris had worked with other students on the repertoire I studied and was an important source of feedback during the research process.

David Prins

Stage director and drama teacher with the classical singing department at Codarts. David was relevant for information on drama and creative process.

Dr. Falk Hübner

Composer, music theatre maker and researcher on the musician as theatrical performer, he gave me a great deal of information on what it means to approach music from a theatrical perspective.

François Sarhan

Composer of *Home Work*. I interviewed him in order to have a better insight into the piece's compositional background and to clear some doubts that had arisen during the analysis of the score.

Hans Leenders

Main subject teacher, most closely related to the artistic research. Hans had experience with former students who worked on similar research topics and was an excellent source of ideas and feedback throughout the whole research process.

Katharina Conradi

Dancer, therapist, movement analyst and coach. Katharina provided me with exercises to improve my awareness of my own body and the space around me and taught me to think about different types of movement in a structured way.

Dr. Nicole Jordan

Artistic Research coach and friend. Connected me to Cézanne Tegelberg and Katharina Conradi and guided me throughout the whole research process.

René Spierings

Guest teacher for theatrical percussion at Codarts and member of Percossa, a theatrical percussion ensemble. Having extensive experience in the field of combining music theatre with percussion, René was very valuable for my development of the repertoire.

Sara Moreira Marques

Classically trained singer and Codarts alumna, Sara gave me feedback on my pronunciation and diction of the text in *Home Work*, as well as on my voice projection.

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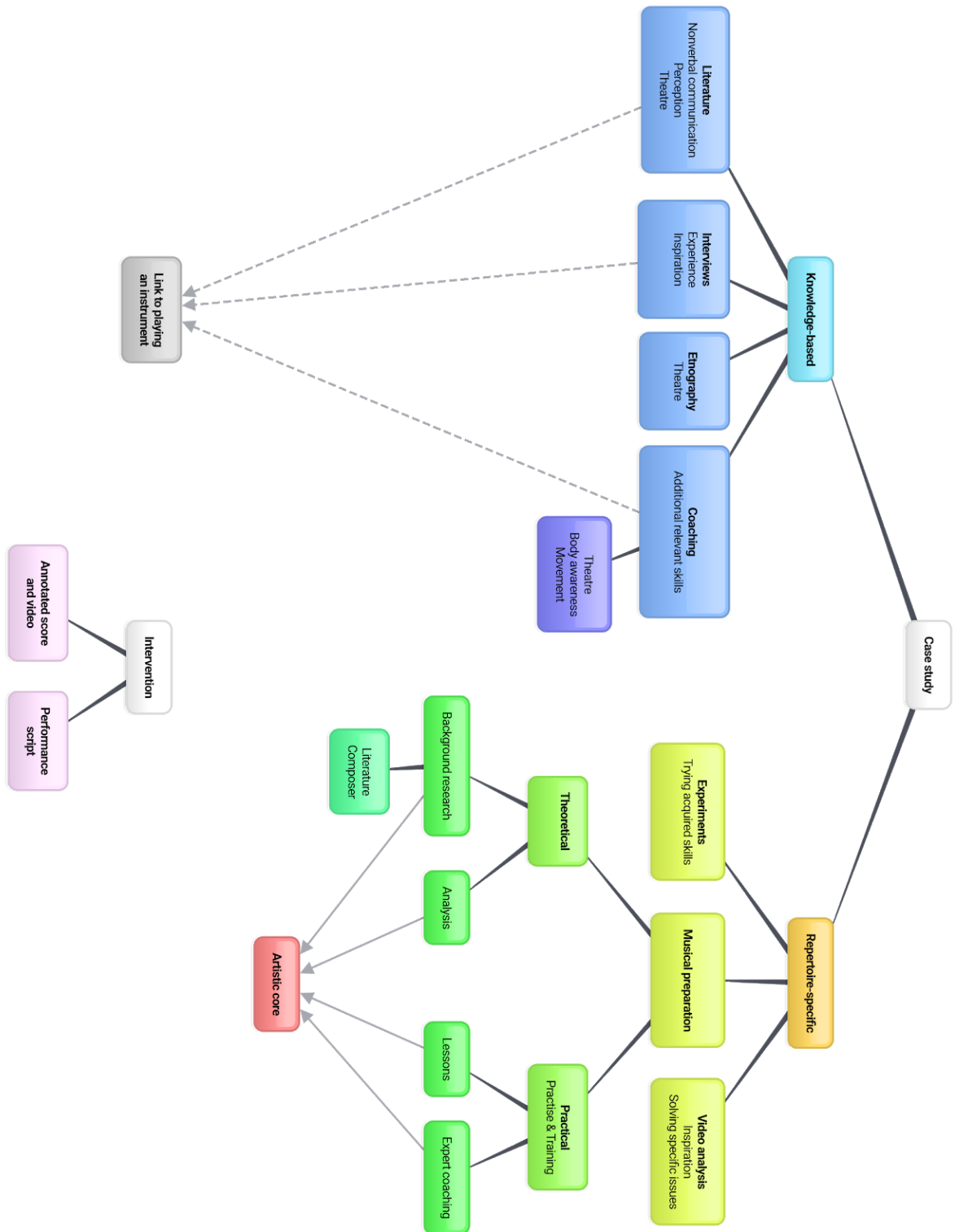
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4. Research strategy diagram

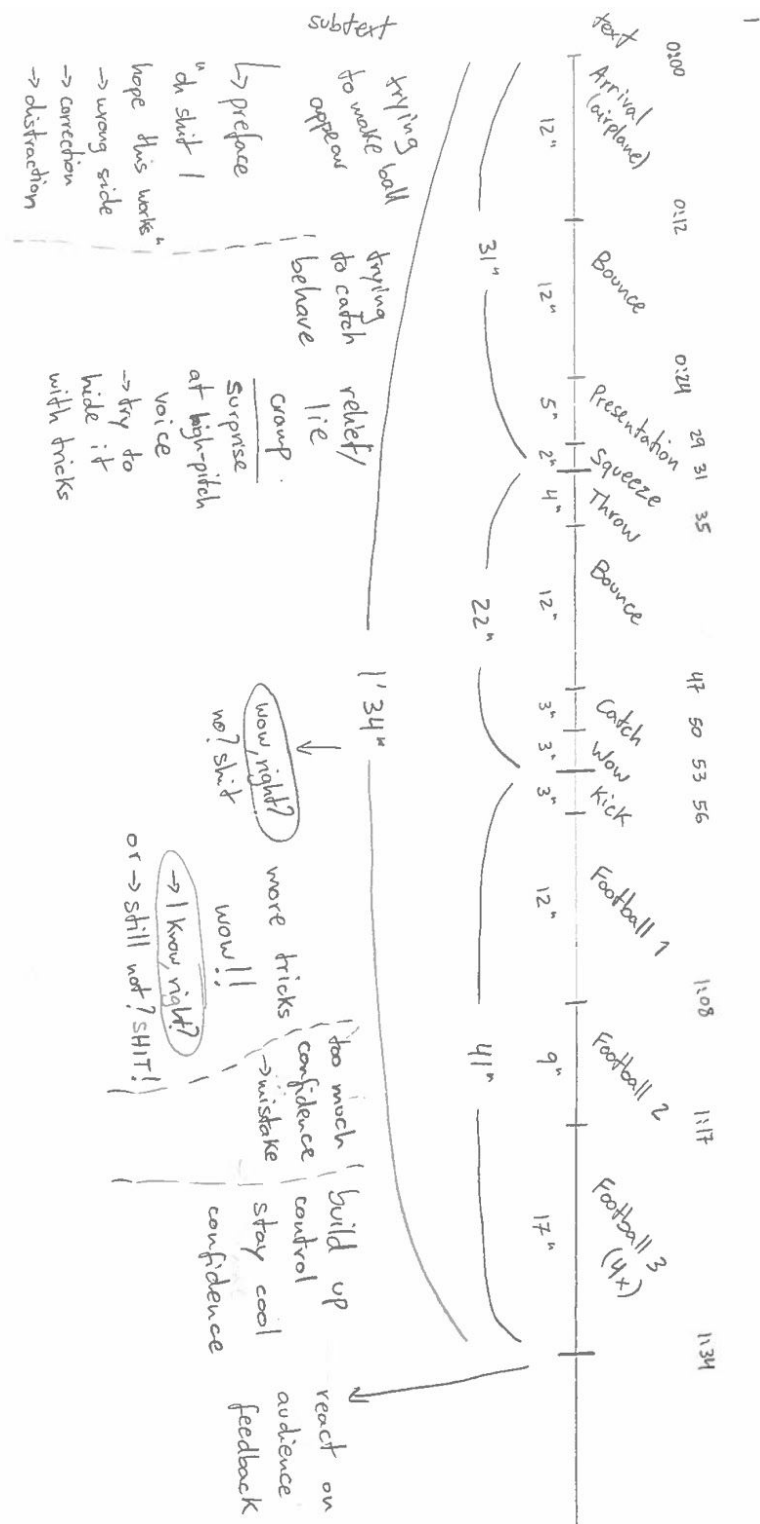
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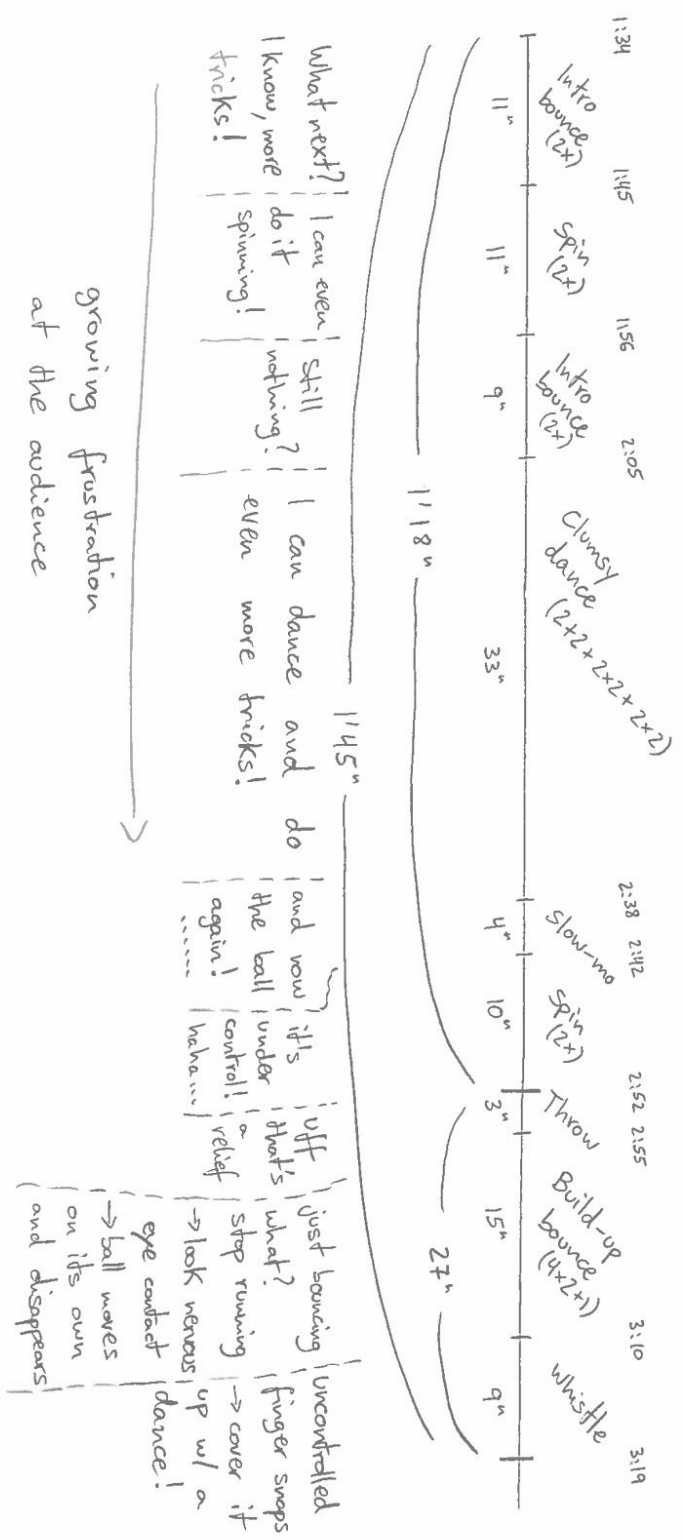


5. Ceci n'est pas une balle – performance scripts

Version 1

Full-scale, downloadable version: <http://bit.ly/pscript1>

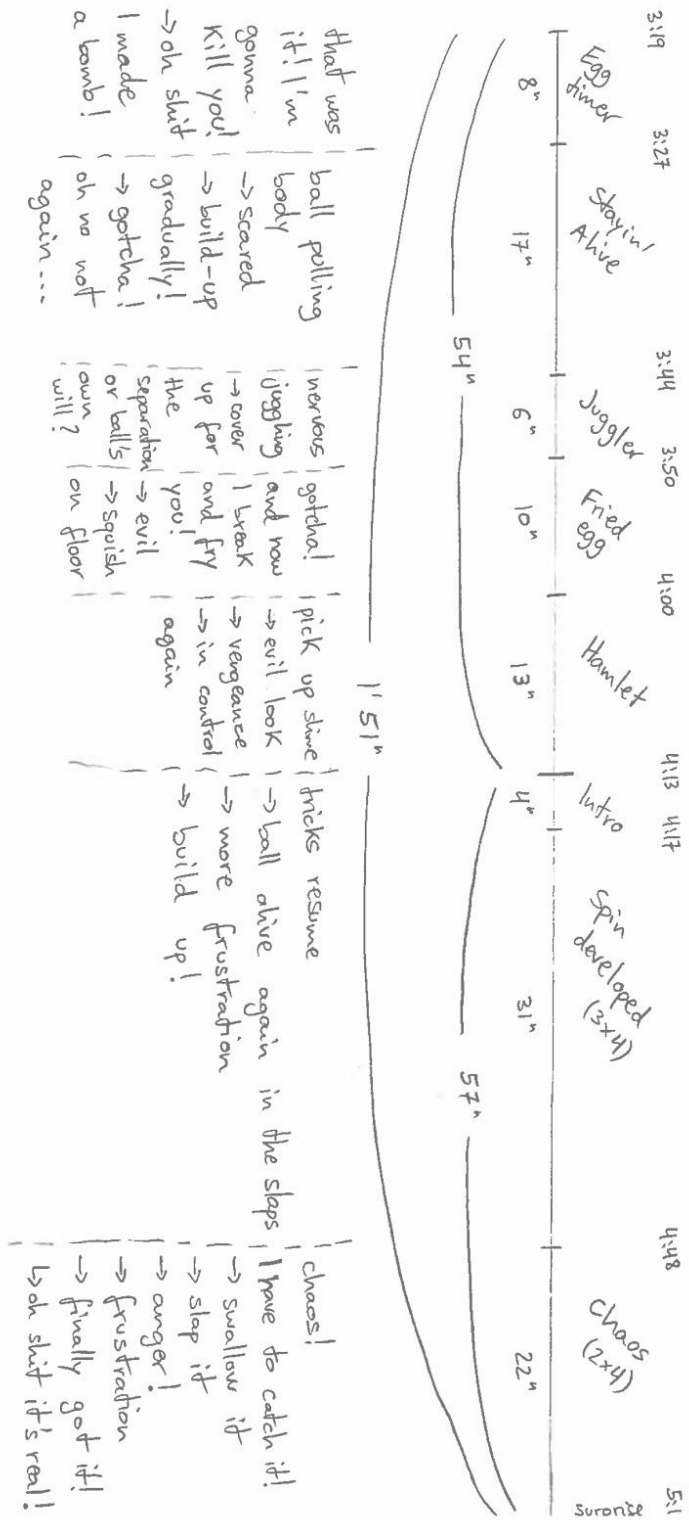




What next? | I can even | still | can dance and | do
 I know, more | do it | nothing? | even more tricks!
 tricks! | spinning!

and now | it's | uff | just bouncing | uncontrolled
 the ball | under | that's | what? | finger snaps
 again! | control! | a relief | stop ruing | → cover it
 | hehe... | → look nervous | up w/ a
 eye contact | dance!

→ ball waves
 on its own
 and disappears



Version 2

Full-scale, downloadable version: <http://bit.ly/pscript2>

<div> <div>0"</div> <div>30"</div> <div>1'00"</div> <div>1'30"</div> </div>												
Scenic structure		Airplane arrival	ounce (la	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch	Fetch
Bar numbers		1	2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Duration		12s	5s	7s	4s 0ms	4s 1ms	5s	12s	3s	3s	3s	10s 0ms
Written action (text)		Ball arrives in the form of an airplane traveling from right to left	Ball bounces ball, hiding it on stage behind back	Fetch the ball, hiding it behind back	Show it to the audience	Show it to the audience	Throw the ball in the air and juggle it	Bounce the ball on the floor with increasing strength	With the ball out, look at the audience	Kick it up and catch it	Football tricks, increasing difficulty	Football 1
Imagined action (story)		Illusionist comes on stage, presents wand to audience. Flick starts the tape	Flick to make ball land – doesn't work. Read instruction manual. Miss ball landing	Pretend everything's fine	Confide in the audience	Confide in the audience	Show the ball to the audience	More tricks. Last bounce: pretend to be bored (look at audience / wristwatch, polish nails)	Continue the previous act once	Try to engage the audience in moments of rest	Football 2	Football 3
Thoughts (sub-text)		Why doesn't it work? / Oh... Ok...	Shit! Ok, here we go again	What? ... Oh, here we go again	Oh, I know what will impress you!...	Oh, yeah! OR No? Ok...	Here it comes!	Yeah! OR No? Ok...	Here it comes!	Yeah! OR No? Ok...	Here it comes!	Yeah! OR No? Ok...
Underlying emotion + evolution		Confidence	Doubt	Frustration / Sadness	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction	Renewed confidence / Affliction
Posture												
Gestures												
Facial expressions												
Eye contact / gaze												

2'00"											
2'30"											
3'00"											
3'30"											
Bounce intro	Spin	Bounce intro	Enhanced tricks	Slow-mo	Spin	Throw	Bounce (energetic)	Whistle	Egg timer	Stay'n' alive	
1 - 4	5 - 6	7 - 10	10 - 20	20	21 - 22	23	24 - 29	29 - 33			
11s 0ms	11s 0ms	9s 0ms	33s 0ms	4s 0ms	10s 0ms	3s	15s 0ms	9s 0ms	8s	17s 0ms	
Bounce the ball and catch it, rhythmically	Add body percussion and 90° rotation per bar	Repeat intro	More body percussion tricks, increasing density (6 levels), special body posture / movement (walk back as if the ball was thrown too far behind)	Slow motion ball recovery	Repeat spin	Throw ball up	Bounce and juggle the ball, shortening rhythmic cell (3 levels) until collapse and transition to acting	Finger snaps and whistle to West Side Story. Bounce and catch the ball	Turn ball top as if it was an egg timer. Wait for ting	Ball moves in unexpected directions, movement gradually becomes dances moves to Stay'n' Alive. Ball splits in 2 at the end.	
And next, more tricks are coming!	I can even do it spinning!	React on audience. Have new idea, even more tricks!	Engage audience during tricks. 'I'm super cool!	Suddenly the ball stops moving. What?	Regain control while trying to understand what's happening.	Look at audience? vanishes repeatedly	Everything seems under control, but the ball starts moving on its own. Problem only gets worse until ball vanishes repeatedly	Involuntary finger snaps. Cover it up with a dance, pretending it's OK and looking for ball	Try to destroy ball by twisting it forcefully. Create what seems to be a bomb instead	Momentary relief for not dying. Ball starts pulling and the fear comes back. Now it's just making fun of me. Try to catch it but it breaks	
What can I do next? / I know!		That was cool, right? / React	I'm super cool!	What's happening?		I don't understand what's first and last...	What? / Stop that! Stop that!	What the hell is happening? / Hum... It's nothing! (where are you?...) /	Aha, gotcha! Now you die! / Uh oh... Oh no!	I'm alive!... Huh? Aaaaah! / What the hell is this? / Come here! What?	
			Growing confidence / happiness at success	Surprise, concern		Confusion	Frustration / Anger	Extreme confusion / Growing anger	Anger, aggressiveness / Fear	Momentary relief / Confusion / Anger again	

<div> <div>4:00"</div> <div>4:30"</div> <div>5:00"</div> <div>5:30"</div> </div>									
Juggler	Fried egg	Hamlet	Intro	Spin developed	Chaos	Surprise			
34			35	36 – 47	48 – 53	54			
6s	10s 0ms	13s 0ms	4s 0ms	31s	22s 0ms	5s			
Juggle to circus music.	Ball becomes an egg. Break it and fry it.	Bring ball to eye level. Fiddle variation of Hamlet to Baroque music	Body percussion intro	Development of "Spin" material (3 levels, 4 bars each), increasing density and complexity of body percussion	Continuing development (4 bars, 2x2), most dense and complex body percussion	Catch and reveal ball			
Ball moves around while I try to catch it, eventually succeeding	Break ball and fry it. Engage audience. Splat it on the floor at the end.	Catch the ball, now a shapeless slime. Give an evil rendition of Hamlet's variation.	Confidence, as if again in control	The ball is obedient for only 3 bars. It slaps me on the face immediately after and it's downhill from there.	Try to catch the ball continuously, but it just manages to fly away every time until the last moment.	Finally catch it, taking the real ball from pocket.	Wait for silence. Relax with "victory", revealing the ball to the audience. React on them. See the ball and run away screaming!		
Stop moving! I will destroy you!	It's over. I win.			What? No. / Oh, not again! / Just stop it!	Just cut it out! Stop!!!	Could it be? Yes, I've done it!	Aaaaaaah!!!		
Confusion / Anger, frustration	Anger, sadism	Contempt, evil satisfaction	Renewed confidence, control	Confusion, growing anger and frustration	Lots of anger	Doubt / Relief / Relaxation	Frightened surprise		
				Gradually sharper and more aggressive and energetic.					

Version 3

Character

Tri-polar: highly confident, smug / super silly / hysterical

Story

Walk on stage confidently. Chin up, open chest, free shoulders, arms slightly open, walk decisively with slow(ish), large steps.

Slowly lift finger, showing it to the audience. Breathe... airplane! (Freeze! – Relax on sound)

Follow airplane (keep posture), quick head turn with Doppler effect. Breathe... transform! Follow ball (2nd bounce) towards front stage left.

Walk confidently towards the ball but then pick it up sneakily, as if hiding it. Walk back to center stage and slow down, as if having an idea.

Turn impersonating silly character. Very curved, wobbly, stupid smile.

Play with the ball with childish delight.

After throwing it too high, look down sad and almost crying. Catch ball without looking, switching back characters.

Smug, auto-congratulatory smile. Wow turns into hysterical character. Hands open, hyperactive, to the sides of the torso; awkward legs; surprised at everything, exaggerated reactions.

Football sequence. Before Position 1, take 3 shallow, quick breaths. Hysterical wow reaction.

Continue playing with the ball. After knee touches, run with little steps after the ball. Gradually return to serious confident character during body percussion.

Catch the ball on the neck. Come back up slowly and smugly.

Follow the ball.

Body percussion. Relaxed and easy.

Body percussion build-up. Look at audience (different people), showing off.

Ball stops mid-air. Confusion and struggle.

Recover control during body percussion sequence.

Follow ball intensely in the air. Look at it as if trying to instruct it to behave. Bounce it, hold it, it moves on its own. Increase aggressiveness.

After last bounce, while looking up, finger snaps start involuntarily. Show confusion. Arm moves left, pushing body, which almost trips. Ball hits hand and bounces.

Try to twist it. It turns into a timer (bomb). Look at audience in fear. Squint and brace for the explosion. Doesn't happen.

Turn head slowly, trying to understand. Ball pulls arm (first accent, after sci-fi sound starts).

Hysterical character starts showing. Enjoy dancing Stayin' Alive!

Electrical noise brings silly character. Head down, look quickly at two hands. Look up in character and juggle around frantically.

Catch ball, now an egg. Break it and return to cool character. Fry egg.

Ball retakes its shape and character changes to serious.

Mime the text, look at audience during second phrase.

Play body percussion confidently and relaxedly. When ball slaps face, anger grows.

Relax slightly, become angrier (2 bars each). Bars in control become stricter with sharper, more forceful movements.

Ball eventually hits character also on the mouth. Big chaos!

Catch the ball at the last moment. Feel surprised by the sudden silence. Look around and suddenly realise that the ball is in the hand. Look at audience in awe. Reveal the ball.

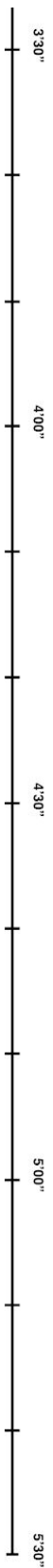
Version 4 – Intervention

Full-scale, downloadable version: <http://bit.ly/pscript4>

0"											
30"											
1'00"											
1'30"											
Bar numbers	1	2	2	3 – 4	5	6	7 – 8	10	11	12 – 14	
Duration	12s	5s	7s	6s	5s	12s	6s	15s	9s	17s	
Scene	Intro	Airplane arrival	Fall	Fetch	Present	Throw	Bounce	Catch	Football tricks 1	Football tricks 2	Football tricks 3
Action description (score)	Ball arrives in the form of an airplane travelling from right to left Ball bounces on stage Fetch the ball, hiding it behind back Show and squeeze the ball Throw in the ball several times Bounce the ball on the floor with increasing strength Catch ball without looking – wow! Kick the ball up and perform football tricks – wow More complex tricks, with different body parts More tricks, with head and shoulders (4 repeats), body percussion, catch ball on the back of the neck										
Nature	Theatre (1'34")										
Story	Performer walks on stage and looks around mysteriously. An airplane appears to the right. Airplane travels towards stage left until it transforms into something else Object bounces away from viewers Performer fetches the object The object is shown: an invisible ball! Different actions are performed while playing with the ball, as if showcasing, until it is thrown too high and caught without looking – wow! Ball becomes a football and more tricks are performed – wow! More football tricks until ball almost escapes Performer recovers the ball with the chest and performs even more tricks with other body parts										
Sub-score	Walk neutrally on stage. Look around as if deciding something. Eventually look right and magically create airplane (right hand) Follow the airplane with the eyes, eventually transforming it into something else (left hand) Follow the bounce, towards the back Stealthy Character change – sily (posture) Relaxed moves, broad sideways gestures. Have fun from this point onwards! Waiting.. (trails) Text is a background comment Focus! Deep breath. Look half-surprised, half-smug Relax gradually until it's too much Regain control and some confidence. "Yeah!"										
Interaction	Occasional eye contact Eye contact Eye contact Eye contact Eye contact Eye contact										

2'00"		2'30"		3'00"		3'30"	
1 – 4	5 – 6	7 – 10	10 – 20	20	21 – 22	23 – 29	29 – 33
11s	11s	9s	33s	4s	10s	18s	9s
Bounce intro	Tricks (rotation)	Bounce intro	Tricks (increasing density)	Slow mo	Tricks (rotation)	Throw – Bounce (energetic)	West Side Story
Bounce the ball and catch it, rhythmically	Add body percussion and 90° rotation per bar	Reprise	More body percussion tricks, increasing density (6 levels), special body posture / movement (walk back as if the ball was thrown too far behind)	Slow motion	Reprise	Throw ball up, then bounce and juggle it, shortening rhythmic cell (3 levels) until collapse	Snap fingers and whistle to <i>West Side Story</i> . Bounce and catch the ball
Percussion (1'36")							
Performers explore how the ball bounces...	...and adds body percussion to the mix	Back to basics, deciding what happens next	Performer gradually adds several new body percussion elements, until...	...the ball stops mid-air	Performer regains control	But the ball starts escaping again and again until it vanishes up in the air	Performer snaps fingers and calls the ball back down, catching it
Mark difference between long and short flights, Inquisitive – relaxed	Keep looking at the ball	On second long flight, more energy	Seriously enjoy the tricks, don't look away at the ball. Look down, at the audience, close eyes...	Push it back into play	Cumbersome beginning, regain control	Test the ball but be surprised (2nd bar). Don't prepare sideways throw!	Snap fingers, intently and call the ball back down
Theatre (1'03")							
							Performer twists the ball violently, but it starts ticking. A bomb?
							Apparently not! The ball starts pulling the performer erratically until the moves become 'Stayin' Alive' and the ball eventually breaks in two
							Show surprise and fear. Maximum distance!
							Look doubtfully at the ball, only to be surprised again. Jerky movements
							Eye contact

Onset of conflict



	34						
17s	6s	10s	13s	35	36 – 47	48 – 53	54
Stayin' Alive	Juggler	Fried egg	Hamlet	Intro	Tricks (enhanced rotation)	Chaos	Surprise
Ball moves in unexpected directions, movement gradually becomes dances moves to Stayin' Alive. Ball splits in 2 at the end.	Juggle to circus music.	Ball becomes an egg. Break it and try it.	Bring ball to eye level. Recite variation of Hamlet to Baroque music	Body percussion intro	Development of "Tricks (rotation)" material (3 levels, 4 bars each), increasing density and complexity of body percussion	Continuing development (4 bars, 2x2), most dense and complex body percussion	Catch and reveal ball
							Outro

Theatre (1'03")

Percussion (1'02")

Apparently not! The ball starts pulling the performer erratically until the moves become Stayin' Alive and the ball eventually breaks in two	Performer juggles with the halves of the ball	Performer catches the ball, which becomes an egg and is fried and spat on the floor	Performer picks up the slime and recites a variation of Hamlet	Body percussive control	Everything seems fine until the ball slaps the performer, one time after another	Chaotic section where the performer tries to control the ball but keeps failing...	...until succeeding at the final moment	Performer looks around surprised at the silence and realises that the ball must be in his hand, revealing it
Look doubtfully at the ball, only to be surprised again. Jerky movements	Juggle to hide panic, no success. Hyper ventilate	Surprise at sight of egg. Take chance to solve the conflict. Sadism	Serious and victorious. Point finger at audience	Follow the ball	Relaxed at first, then annoyed. Increase sharpness of gestures	Focus on the body percussion and follow the ball. Angry foot stomps!	Take ball out of pocket and grab it	Look around, searching for the ball. It must be in my hand! Reveal it
	Eye contact	Eye contact	Eye contact					Eye contact

Apparent resolution

Resistant of conflict

Definitive resolution

6. Home Work – annotated score

Home work

François Sarhan
2008-2011

Enter stage
as old man

$\text{♩} = 70$ **ACCEL** ($\rightarrow \text{♩} = 90$)

f -energetic-
and-groovy-*f*

voice: Take the right side of the frustration Take the right side of the

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

rewind what was it? realisation

voice: Take the right side of the of the lip stretch in your left hand.

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

$\text{♩} = 90$

voice: And, reading effort And, with the help uncoordinated of the me tal

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

pin, lo-cate the po si tion of the pipes lips. NO NO NO NO NOT LIKE THAT. sigh

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

fall asleep wake up as young child energetic!

-Home work II-3 -

difficult text

voice: uh
Co - nnect the de - vice to a ground ed plug for gua rant eed

23

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

voice: use of the lip in the pipes. WELL... does it work? oh! there's more! energetic and groovy!

26

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

turn head right
interrogative

WELL... does it work?

oh! there's more!

energetic and groovy!

voice: the o pen the front latch and put all all the ex - ter - nal lea - ther, lea - ther, plas - tic pipes and

29

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

inquisitive

excited

novelty

voice: all ru bber in the lips of the plas - tic ground ed pipe. O -

32

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

calm and thoughtful (bars 32-33)

voice: NO NO NO NO NOT LIKE THAT. surprise NO. HERE IT'S TOO HARD,

35

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

sad

look up

surprise

annoyed

making fun

voice: THERE IT'S TOO SOFT. THERE IT'S TOO HARD,

41

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

annoyed

energetic and groovy!

sudden
realisation

cheeky, look up

voice: Ne-ver use the en-gine with-o-ut hea-ting the mem-brane of the hinge of the pipe!

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

f *ff* *f* *mf* *f* *p*

uh uh

voice: in the ground ed plug, o-ther o-ther-wise you risk yes! a BIG risk my GOOD-ness abdomen

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

ff *f* *mf* *R* *ff* *f* *mf*

of lo-wer ing the lip in the pipe of the mem-brane, in the tank of the

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

ff *f* *mf* *ff* *f* *mf*

building excitement

voice: left me-tal pin in your hand. WELL... WELL... WELL...

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

ff *f* *mf* *mf*

pp excited

voice: oo dreamy, sung, high, falsetto, look up

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

pp

f try to be serious

voice: Now! you must must heat the

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

f *p* *f* *p*

(T: talon, P: pointe)

cheeky excited

voice: mem-brane in or der to re-ceive a re-ward. Use the lip of the pipe

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

T *P* *P* *L* *T* *P* *Use* *CHEEKS* *TOP OF HEAD*

-Home work II-5 -

build up excitement *very cheeky*

voice: in the tank. It's the on-ly way to make the engine

61 surprise

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

dreamy, sung, high, falsetto, look up

oo

CHEEKS *PPP*

AAHH!!

voice: oo hot! and ef-fi-cient! Uh O-ther wise the whole de vice won't

64

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

build up! *energy* *diaphragm!*

voice: won't won't won't will not reach the point of

67

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

breath in only, no breath out!

TOP OF HEAD

climax *breathe out* *adult, sit straight* *focused*

70

voice: po ten tial. look around

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

Arm to the left, look up, an down on the left

thinking

76

voice: thinking

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

surprise

Caution:

inquisitive *playful* *crazy* *realisation of mistake (conflict)*

80

voice: please ne ver sit on on the pipel uh-oh, I just did!...

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

frightened, worried

growing anxiety

84

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

ff

TURN ON LEFT SIDE
CHECKS

p

86

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

pp quickly alternate extreme fingers, like piano octave

f

FRONT

f

89

voice

How do you get in-to this ma-chine, now?

TOP OF HEAD

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

CHECKS

abdomen

alternate T/P

93

voice

O KAY! JUMP ON YOUR FEET I SIT HE

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

96

voice

RE, THE PINS O VER THERE, HERE WE GO, HERE TURN ON LEFT SIDE WELL, WELL...

SIT DOWN

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

99

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

TOP OF HEAD

101

voice

WELL... oo

pp dreamy, sung, high, falsetto, look up

YES! FRONT

ff

pp THE EN-GINE IS

ff

101

clap fingers
clap hands
chest
thighs
calf
feet

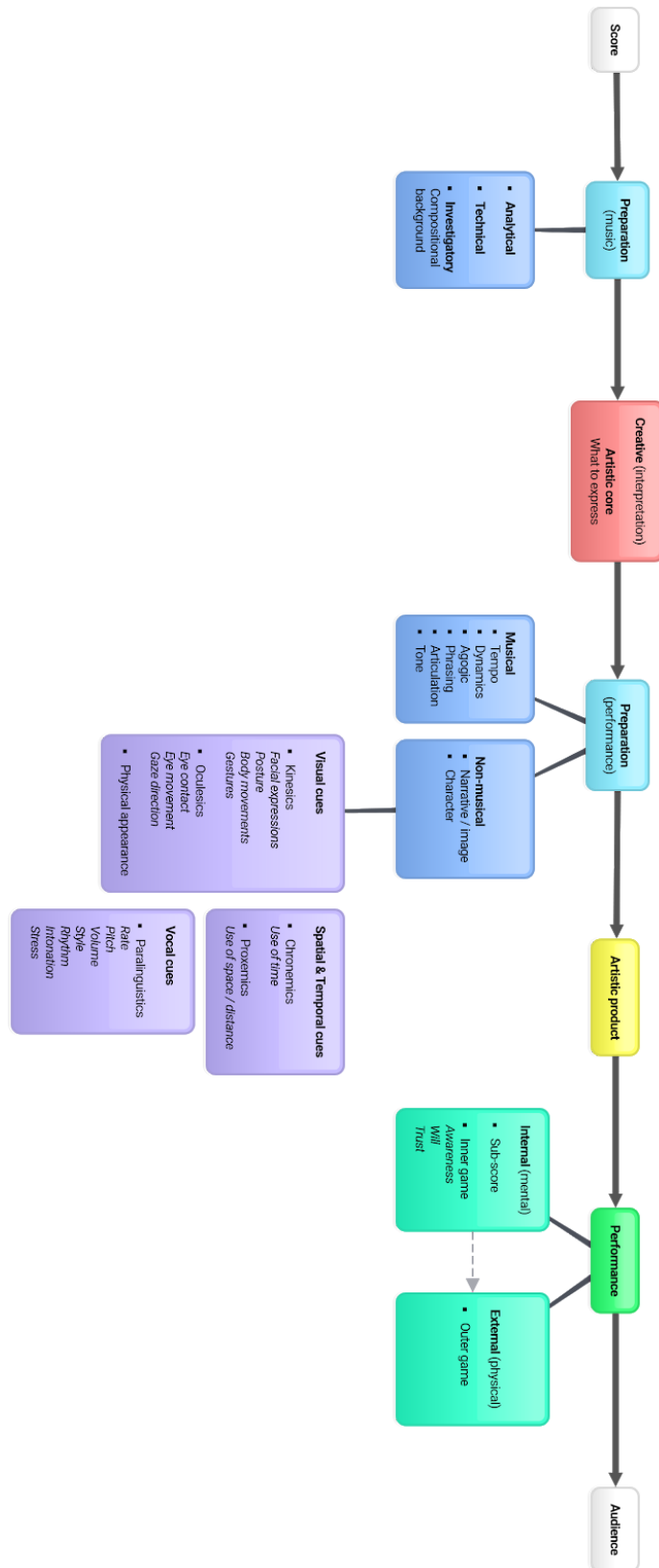
pp

CHIN

TOP OF HEAD

7. Performance preparation process

Full-scale, downloadable version: <http://bit.ly/PerfPrepProcess>



created with www.bubbl.us

8. *Home Work* – notes on analysis

Instrumentation

- Voice and breath;
- Body percussion: finger snaps, hand claps, foot stomps and hits on different body parts – calves, thighs, abdomen, chest and head (chin, cheeks, top of head and face in general);
- 5 gestures: hands on knees and 4 positions performed in the air.

The notes with a cross are on the face, the notes with a circle around are positions of the hand in space, silently. However, they must be "performed" in the air, as hitting an invisible instrument, and the position must be held for the exact duration.

The position number 0 is with the hands on the knees. The four positions in the air: see score.

Text

Verbatim

Take... Take the right side of the... Take the right side of the... Take the right side of the lip in your left hand.

And,... And, with the help of the metal pin, locate the position of the pipes' lips.

WELL? NO NO NO NO, NOT LIKE THAT.

Connect the device to a grounded plug for guaranteed use of the lip in the pipes.

WELL...

O... Open... O... Open the... Open the front latch and put all... all the external leather,... leather, plastic pipes and all rubber in the lips of the plastic grounded pipe.

OKAY. MMMMMM. NO NO NO NO, NOT LIKE THAT. NO. HERE IT'S TOO HARD, THERE IT'S TOO SOFT.

Never use the engine without heating the membrane of the hinge of the pipe! in the grounded plug, other... otherwise you risk... yes! A BIG risk my GOODness... of lowering the lip in the pipe of the membrane, in the tank of the left metal pin in your hand.

WELL... WELL... WELL... oooooo

Now! You must... must heat the membrane in order to receive a reward. Use the lip of the pipe in the tank. It's the only way to make the engine... oooooo ...hot! and efficient! Otherwise the whole device won't... won't... won't... won't... will not reach the point of... full potential.

MMMMMM. MMMMMM.

Caution:... Caution: please never sit on... on the pipe! oooooo

How do you get into this machine, now?

OKAY! I SIT HERE, THE PINS OVER THERE, HERE WE GO, HERE... WELL, WELL... WELL... oooooo

YES! THE ENGINE IS ON NOW, THE PINS TICKLE. ALL RIGHT THEN!

Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now, you'll do all I want you to do.

oooooooooooo

LET ME,... LET... LET ME GO, LET ME GET O... OUT OF... O... OUT OF THIS DRILLING, PUMPING... DRILLING, PUMPING... (10 times) THIS DRILLING, PUMPING, TURN AND PARTING, THUMPING AND THRUSTING (5 times)...

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! AH NO NO! NOT HERE. NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

Condensed (repetition removed)

Take the right side of the lip in your left hand.

And, with the help of the metal pin, locate the position of the pipes' lips.

WELL? NO, NOT LIKE THAT.

Connect the device to a grounded plug for guaranteed use of the lip in the pipes.

WELL...

Open the front latch and put all the external leather, plastic pipes and all rubber in the lips of the plastic grounded pipe.

OKAY. MMMMMM. NO, NOT LIKE THAT. NO. HERE IT'S TOO HARD, THERE IT'S TOO SOFT.

Never use the engine without heating the membrane of the hinge of the pipe! in the grounded plug, otherwise you risk... yes! A BIG risk my GOODness ...of lowering the lip in the pipe of the membrane, in the tank of the left metal pin in your hand.

WELL... oooooo

Now! You must heat the membrane in order to receive a reward. Use the lip of the pipe in the tank. It's the only way to make the engine... oooooo ...hot! and efficient! Otherwise the whole device won't, will not reach the point of full potential.

MMMMMM.

Caution: please never sit on the pipe! oooooo

How do you get into this machine, now?

OKAY! I SIT HERE, THE PINS OVER THERE, HERE WE GO, HERE... WELL... oooooo

YES! THE ENGINE IS ON NOW, THE PINS TICKLE. ALL RIGHT THEN!

Now, you'll do all I want you to do.

ooooooooooooo

LET ME GO, LET ME GET OUT OF THIS DRILLING, PUMPING, TURN AND PARTING, THUMPING AND THRUSTING...

NO! AH NO! NOT HERE. NO!

Instruction manual (extra text removed)

Take the right side of the lip in your left hand.

And, with the help of the metal pin, locate the position of the pipes' lips.

Connect the device to a grounded plug for guaranteed use of the lip in the pipes.

Open the front latch and put all the external leather, plastic pipes and all rubber in the lips of the plastic grounded pipe.

Never use the engine without heating the membrane of the hinge of the pipe in the grounded plug, otherwise you risk lowering the lip in the pipe of the membrane, in the tank of the left metal pin in your hand.

You must heat the membrane in order to receive a reward. Use the lip of the pipe in the tank. It's the only way to make the engine hot and efficient. Otherwise the whole device won't, will not reach the point of full potential.

Caution: please never sit on the pipe!

Structure

The piece can be divided into two major sections corresponding to the different parts of the narrative:

Bars 1 to 89: construction and preparation of the machine by following the instructions in the manual;

Bars 90 to 161: test and subsequent malfunction and destruction of the machine.

Both sections can be divided into smaller groups and phrases, as outlined below.

Section 1: preparation

1 - 11: Take... Take the right side of the... Take the right side of the... Take the right side of the lip in your left hand.

12 - 17: And,... And, with the help of the metal pin, locate the position of the pipes' lips.

17 - 19: WELL? NO NO NO NO, NOT LIKE THAT.

20 - 23: intermezzo – body percussion

24 - 26: Connect the device to a grounded plug for guaranteed use of the lip in the pipes.

27: WELL...

28 - 33: O... Open... O... Open the... Open the front latch and put all... all the external leather,... leather, plastic pipes and all rubber in the lips of the plastic grounded pipe.

34 - 41: OKAY. MMMMMM. NO NO NO NO, NOT LIKE THAT. NO. HERE IT'S TOO HARD, THERE IT'S TOO SOFT.

42 - 45: intermezzo – body percussion

46 - 53: Never use the engine without heating the membrane of the hinge of the pipe! in the grounded plug, other... otherwise you risk... yes! A BIG risk my GOODness... of lowering the lip in the pipe of the membrane, in the tank of the left metal pin in your hand.

54 - 55: WELL... WELL... WELL... oooooo

56 - 70: Now! You must... must heat the membrane in order to receive a reward. Use the lip of the pipe in the tank. It's the only way to make the engine... oooooo ...hot! and efficient! Otherwise the whole device won't... won't... won't... won't... will not reach the point of... full potential.

71 - 78: MMMMMM. MMMMMM. + intermezzo – body percussion & gestures

79 - 82: Caution:... Caution: please never sit on... on the pipe!

83 - 86: oooooo + intermezzo – body percussion

Section 2: test & destruction

87 - 89: intermezzo – body percussion

90 - 91: How do you get into this machine, now?

92 - 94: intermezzo – body percussion

95 - 97: OKAY! I SIT HERE, THE PINS OVER THERE, HERE WE GO, HERE...

98 - 101: WELL, WELL... WELL... oooooo

102 - 106: YES! THE ENGINE IS ON NOW, THE PINS TICKLE. ALL RIGHT THEN!

107 - 113: Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now,... Now, you'll do all I want you to do.

114 - 116: intermezzo – body percussion

116 - 123: oooooooooooooo

124 - 131: LET ME,... LET... LET ME GO, LET ME GET O... OUT OF... O... OUT OF THIS DRILLING, PUMPING... DRILLING, PUMPING... (10 times) THIS DRILLING, PUMPING, TURN AND PARTING, THUMPING AND THRUSTING (5 times)...

132 - 143: NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! AH NO NO! NOT HERE. NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

144 - 161: coda – gestures

9. Diary – Intervention Cycle 1

Reflections, Feedback, Coaching, Interviews and Experiments

Self-reflection on Reference Recording 1

In order to structure my self-reflection, I have chosen to divide my analysis into several parameters, with emphasis on the elements of nonverbal communication and other aspects that I think are at play in this particular piece. This is a framework that I can use later to better assess and compare subsequent recordings.

Posture

Mostly relaxed and flexible, constant throughout the performance. Slightly awkward in the beginning (chest too much forward). Doesn't communicate anything in general.

Facial expressions

Moderate use. I find some of them very interesting and opportune, but there should be more throughout the performance to illustrate the different characters and feelings. Even the ones that exist could be more elaborate and exaggerated.

Eye contact / movement

Could be much more explored. When I establish eye contact, I feel as if it opens another channel of communication and the performance becomes momentarily much stronger. So I should think carefully about when to look at the audience in order to keep the engagement level high. I also need to think about when and how to look at the "ball" in order to make the story believable.

Gestures

Mostly well timed and sharp. However, not all of them seem real; for example, the volleyball reception gesture is weak because my arms are slightly bent and my legs are not in an active position. There's another gesture I definitely need to improve: throwing the ball sideways – it always looks like I'm throwing it in a V-shape instead of a horizontal line.

Usage of space

I could use a larger stage area (impossible in the case of this reference recording because the room was too small) in order to create a bigger presence and take some moments of the performance close to different members of the audience. This would add spatial depth and breadth to the performance and make it more engaging.

Character / story

This is not really clear. At this moment, what I see is the written notes and instructions with a small amount of added visual elements. I need to choose a storyline that fits with the written music and the soundtrack and a character to play that story (a clown, a magician, a guy showing off his skills, etc. – there are many possibilities that I can try, but the choice should be clear).

Technical / musical aspects

I find this quite good in general. There are a couple of spots that could be clearer, especially when there body percussion "rudiments" involving different body areas in a fast sequence (e.g.

clap-thigh-feet quintuplet, thigh-chest sextuplet). The balance between the different sounds was surprisingly good!

Feedback – Hans Leenders

November 30, 2016

General remarks

Very good in general, great timing, impressive. At the same time, the performance never catches me. It's as if the whole story is written in pencil, like a draft. Now some lines need to be drawn over with a pen or a marker. So, what's missing?

Posture

Generally very smooth, but the chest was too much forward in the beginning.

Facial expressions

There's plenty of room for improvement. The face should be much more expressive, especially during the acting segments.

Eye contact / movement

Eye contact works very well and opens you up as a personality, but don't be shy when facing the camera. The tracking of the ball should be more realistic - try with a real ball. Focal points: horizontal movements, throwing the ball up in the air and catching it.

Gestures

They are well timed, but sometimes a bit behind the tape. This ruins the surprise, because then it's obvious you're following the sounds and not creating them. Therefore, gestures have to be performed just in time or slightly ahead of the tape - sounds should be a result of your actions.

Usage of space

It's possible to use a larger area for movements, but not necessary. It could amplify the story, but it's not the means to achieve that goal.

Character / story

I don't understand you as a personality, right from the start. The story is not clear. I feel you're doing the movements because they are written, but I should believe you're creating them. You should create and develop a character in order to make the story clear. Your actions should be a consequence of the character and story you choose. For every moment, think of tasks for you as a character.

Technical / musical aspects

The musical performance is fine, but again it should stem from the story.

Feedback – René Spierings

December 2, 2016

General remarks

The music is now in your heart, but it should be in your system in order to become natural and get to next level. The acting sequence is “perfect”, very natural, but this should also be the case when playing with the ball. When playing for an audience, don’t react on them. You’re telling the story and they follow you. Take the lead, that’s the most important communication aspect.

Posture

(Not directly asked, but the rest of the feedback received implies that it’s good.)

Facial expressions

Sometimes they are too much and too focused (on the camera). Don’t forget the general audience around the center. Don’t overact. Put yourself in the shoes of the audience and think about what you would like to see.

Eye contact / movement

Learn the movement with a real ball. Eye tracking has to be realistic. Some things are very good, but not all of them.

Gestures

Don’t try to convince us that what you’re doing is special. Act naturally. Timing is good, movements are good. To go to the next level you must believe that you’re playing with a real ball. How does it feel? Play with a tennis ball (for example) at home, at the beach, etc. Play the piece a couple of times with it to learn the mechanics. Pay attention to the end of the piece, don’t forget the ball when playing the difficult body percussion sequence. Watch some videos of football players to learn how to do the foot movements right. You have to believe that you’re playing with a ball. That’s the difficult of being a mime.

Usage of space

Make the performance broader (look in different directions to involve more people).

Character / story

Character is OK in general, no problems. Make hard mood changes. Although I said not to react on the audience, that means don’t step outside the character. You can react on their feedback, for example exaggerate some actions if you don’t get the response you expected. But these are things for a next step, if you want to improve continuously.

The story is in the piece, maybe that’s enough. If you want to make it really clear, the beginning is important (introduction of the topic) and end too (I have a ball after all!). The energy should be the same in the beginning and the end, like one long line.

Technical / musical aspects

The performance of the score is technically OK. Now you have to come to the level where you enjoy playing with the ball. The balance is beautiful. Very good last body percussion sequence. Very good timing, very tight. The quintuplets seem to be the most difficult part, that’s the only place with room for improvement.

Feedback – Arlon Luijten

January 16, 2017

I have chosen to reorder the parameters for the feedback by Arlon Luijten in order to reflect the perceived importance given by him to each one.

General remarks

About the creative process: you need to draw conclusions from your research. Ask yourself why you want to play this piece. Find the artistic core. Before asking how to express something, ask what to express and then you'll know how to do it. The process as you drew it looks very rational – I miss imagination, fantasy, reaction.

When you make choices, there are several possibilities, e.g. the existence of a 4th wall, the type of character (human – more natural, archetype, stylised, abstract). Robotic fixed choices for facial expressions and gestures won't help you. You're not a robot, you need to find your inner craziness. Predetermined choices are not believable.

There's also information in the title. Relate the performance to the aesthetics of Ceci n'est pas une pipe (surreal art). Maybe it means you're free to change character. It gives you a lot of freedom.

Check Pepe Garcia from Slagwerk Den Haag. He's really in touch with his inner fantasy.

If you want to have more freedom on stage, you have to work in order to break free and have fun. Don't play too correctly.

Character / story

Discover your own motivation – why does the character want to do it? Is it to impress? To make people laugh? What happens then if people don't laugh? There's the goal of the performer and, underneath that, the goal of the character (get the job, make people laugh, get the girl, sell the object). You clearly need to act, the piece asks for that. You have to make clear choices. The character doesn't need to be convinced of them, but you do. That's the only way people will believe it.

You can try a mechanical (white mask) version, it's interesting for the research. Maybe the piece already expresses itself. And before writing a script, find out what the material asks for.

To start, make a drawing of the piece and write words for emotions and actions. This provides images of what you do. Make sure there's a reason for everything you do and make it believable. Divide the piece in sections and give names to make sure there's a buildup. What is the character experiencing? Idea: make a surreal, post-modern version inspired by Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Gestures

When the ball stays in the air longer, why does that happen? React on it, make a choice.

Some gestures aren't clear (in the acting section). They have to be consequential. If you make an egg and break it, the shape afterwards has to be that of a broken egg, so pick it up in that form or reshape it to a ball. The rest is very precise.

Posture

Nothing about posture.

Facial expressions

Nothing about facial expressions.

Eye contact / movement

Nothing about gaze.

Usage of space

Nothing about usage of space.

Technical / musical aspects

In the long sections, you need a buildup to maintain tension. It's a shame because it's really well done.

Example shown: Han Hoogerbrugge - Neurotic (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtMRYnFcsXc>)

Self-reflection on feedback

In general, the feedback I received on the reference recording led me to think that I was placing the focus of the research in the wrong place. In accordance with my own opinion, Hans Leenders and Arlon Luijten both felt that the character I was playing and the story I was telling were not clear. A quick reflection on this topic led me to the realisation that there was actually very little story being told beyond the notes on the score.

As Arlon cleverly pointed out, there was a step missing on my creative process mindmap. The study/analysis of the score and research on the composer and the composition led immediately to interpretative choices on tempo, articulation, character and so on. But one can only make clear choices after defining the artistic core of the work. I should ask myself why I want to perform this particular piece and what is it that I want to express to the audience. The elements of nonverbal communication will then stem from the artistic choices that I make and the story I choose to tell. I feel this is very much in line with my goal of bringing my own emotions out and not fabricating new ones.

This way, I have decided not to use the nonverbal communication parameters as decision points, but as evaluation points. This means I don't make specific choices about my facial expressions, gestures and postures, but instead use them as a benchmark for how effectively the storyline is being transmitted. They are, after all, the means through which the audience perceives it. Of course specific tweaks to each of the parameters can still be done in order to enhance clarity.

So what is the goal of the performance? What do I want to achieve as a performer and as a character? I chose this piece because it's funny. I feel there's a lot of potential for doing silly things and I connect to that. My performance goal is to make people laugh. For the character, I've chosen an illusionist who wants show off his skills.

Experimentation topics:

- Gaze: improving the tracking of the ball
- Gestures: improving volleyball reception, sideways throw, football tricks
- Record mechanical version (white mask).

Further work:

- Draw a timeline of the piece with words for emotions and actions.
- Look for information on *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.

Coaching – Arlon Luijten

January 23, 2017

In preparation for the lesson, I made a proportional timeline of the piece, divided in sections according to the different scenes. I also chose to play the character of an illusionist (alternatives considered:

clown; explorer, discovering new tricks; show-off, self-confident or non-self-confident). However, I ran into difficulties while adding emotions to the performance; I found out during the lesson that this happened because the story I wanted to tell was still not clear for me.

The focus of the lesson was, therefore, primarily to find a story that worked well together with the written material. Along with this, we tried adding depth to the character and emotions to the actions performed.

Arlon has a very energetic and experimental, hands-on approach, so we tried several different possibilities for each section of the piece, from a small intro before the music started to an ending sequence after the end of the audio track. The result of this work reflects a few distinctive characteristics and the circumstance at hand: Arlon is fond of performances with high levels of tension (ref. percussion performance during first project week, Han Hoogerbrugge animations); he believes in conflict as a means to create said tension and maintain interest and engagement; and he knew that part of my goal is to unlock channels for the expression of more extreme emotions. Thus, we created many problems at every turn of the piece, which the character had to endure and/or solve in order to progress. The origins of these conflicts were many: clumsiness, overconfidence, negative audience feedback and finally the imaginary ball itself. The emotions associated with each of these situations were meant to be uncomfortable for me: confusion, frustration, aggressiveness, panic and even sadism; they should also grow in intensity as the piece progressed. It was a wonderful exercise (with much more still to be done).

At the end of the lesson, I wrote the story, emotions and some subtext on the timeline. Arlon suggested that, for a future lesson, I should wear a costume (something far from my usual look) in order to better immerse myself in the character.

Main subject lessons – Chris Leenders and Hans Leenders

January 24 and 25, 2017

Both Chris and Hans were pleased with the new version. Hans spoke of major progress and a very convincing story, as if the piece had been written like that. The engagement of the performance was so high that it even camouflaged little techno-musical mistakes. He also laughed quite a lot, which gave me a really good sense of accomplishment.

However, Hans said I should be careful with the amount of eye contact. Being the only spectator, he felt very much watched and it was slightly uncomfortable. With a larger audience, it shouldn't be a problem.

Chris warned me not to overdo the acting. Sometimes it became too distracting. He would also like the character (illusionist) to be more consequential: it should be clear throughout the performance and not only in the beginning (maybe more magic tricks?).

Reflection on lessons

The lessons with Chris and Hans helped me find a balance after the lesson with Arlon. Although the work I did with him was fantastic and a real eye-opener, the two subsequent performances made me realise that I needed to invest an enormous amount of energy into a performance that could easily become visually overwhelming, so much so that it sometimes detracted from the musical result.

This made me think about and refocus the goal of my research. Do I want to create and impersonate new characters or do I want to enhance and express my own qualities, essentially bringing forward a version of myself that suits the repertoire? I choose the latter. With this in mind, I remade the timeline,

removing what I thought were excessive elements and dialling down some of the actions so that they would more closely resemble my own.

Coaching / interview – David Prins

March 14, 2017

General remarks

When performing the piece to an expert, it's more interesting and effective if they have the same starting point as a real audience. Therefore, don't tell them what the story is about.

You've already mastered a lot. That's really nice! It looks like an improvisation. If your goal is to entertain a live, paying audience, you've already achieved that. The scene is prepared, you have great skills and I'm sure the audience will love it. However, you can use less material and spend more time with each thing.

We constantly need to change roles in our lives. If you're shy, you can try to develop your acting from this perspective. You develop a version of yourself that fits the circumstance. As you perform, you receive feedback and tweak the character. You don't need to change character, though: features like vulnerability and insecurity are human features and we as an audience are sensitive to that and connect with it at a very basic level. You don't need to reinvent yourself. You can try to find out what your role on stage is, and adapt your personality to it. If this role is clear to you, you'll do a great job.

We need opinionated people. We need to have an idea that the artist has an opinion about what he does and that this is communicated to us. This will colour the scene very differently from what your colleagues would do.

Expressing emotions

Drama theory says that we, as humans, are always in a given mental and physical state. If you try to act out a certain state, it will feel fraudulent. If you feel happy or sad, that's fine with us; you don't need to invent a certain state in order to perform. In that case, you will probably start doing weird things, and that's called dramatising, not acting. You should always translate your current physical or mental state into something you can do acting-wise.

In principle, never try to play a certain emotion. However, if you have to because it's on the score or the director asks you to, think of it as an extra ingredient. For example, the score asks you to play with an invisible ball, so you do it, but you don't believe that there's actually a real ball there, otherwise you're not professional.

Subtext

In order to use less material, you can use isolation techniques: focus only on the hand and the ball, or only on looking at us. When you start combining the elements, you learn what you need to do first and you realise you need more time, so you end up using less material but more clearly.

Physical acting

Commedia dell'arte (the first professional theatre) used lazzi: predetermined acting scenes where smaller characters interfere with the main story when it becomes boring. What you do, the whole scene, can be considered a lazzo from a theatrical perspective. You can check these scenes for inspiration.

Mimicry / clowning

You should work with a specialist on this. And look for examples on YouTube, for example. A famous mime is Marcel Marceau. His teacher is on a movie called *Les enfants du paradis*.

Character / story

The character, this version of you, can use less material so that it becomes more clear. There's so much information and we want to absorb everything, so it helps to select what you really want to show.

Eye contact / movement

You can continue to refine the relation between you and the public. The moments when you look at the audience are a bit vague. Choose clearly when to look and when not to. Now the look was very specific, but you can broaden the scope to a larger, imaginary audience. You can of course choose to look at someone specific.

On the topic of reaction to the audience's feedback: that's not entirely necessary. Each person can only see your reaction to themselves. If you suggest that you're reacting to someone in the audience, people can see that and they will believe you. You can therefore incorporate concrete decisions in the acting sequence.

Technical / musical aspects

In the busier sections, I don't clearly see the artist behind the performer. It's as if the tape is directing you and not the other way around. You can make more specific decisions in order to bring yourself forward. And this is the next step you need to take. You should allow yourself to work with a real specialist, someone that is not immediately amazed by your performance but sees it as a starting point.

Network

Aus Greidanus - expert on clowning

Wilfred van de Peppel - expert on physical acting / mimicry, works with isolation techniques

Coaching / interview – René Spierings

March 28, 2017

General remarks

In this piece, stay natural. We're not actors, but we should think about what the audience expects. Don't act, otherwise people won't believe you because they still see you as a musician. There are two layers: the musical line, which we have to perform correctly, and the explanation of what's happening. The difficulty of music theatre is focusing on both these things at the same time. Therefore you have to be way above the material.

What I see in other performers is that they are constantly trying to convince the audience. For me, this piece is much clearer if it stays sharp. Direct interaction with the audience should be exaggerated but only used sometimes.

Adapting to current state (cf. David Prins)

It's dangerous to adapt to current mental states. You have to entertain your audience. Use all the aspects of your emotional luggage.

Adapting to one's own character

You should stay true to yourself. Don't try to pretend that you feel a certain emotion, think about what you would feel in that case. How would you react in normal life?

Wearing a costume

Good shoes, for the sound on the floor. Not slippery, in order to be well grounded. Tight trousers (jeans, for example). It should feel good for you.

Using conflict

It depends on the piece. Children theatre is a good place to learn about it because they are very honest.

Feedback on the performance

I've seen you perform the piece more accurately. Several body percussion parts are sloppy.

For you, it's a bit too much acting. It's too exaggerated. Stay true to your own world. If I know you, it should be more cool rather than trying to impress. You should find a balance; I would believe you more that way.

This is a totally different league than only playing music. If the music is in your system, it becomes 20% of the work, the rest is performance. So it's good that you always film yourself and reflect on the exact places where you feel confident or not. Then you can find tools in order not to exaggerate, or to exaggerate more (so that it becomes really abstract).

I feel that you're trying to convince me of everything. The story should stay in your hands (Mauricio Kagel: lead the audience).

The acting sequence is not clear enough. If you want to show the story you thought about, it has to be expressed in a bigger way, not physically (that's already enough), but emotionally. Think about and be clear about which emotions you feel at each point.

Specific feedback

Beginning: should be clearer. Strong, sharp.

Change of character when showing the ball.

Everything should be sharp and precise, so that no-one doubts what you are doing, especially yourself.

Maybe we don't need the illusionist.

Think of images, drawings.

For the busy story to work, you need acting lessons, so your face translates the story as well.

Don't wobble, be sharp in the actions.

Reflection on coaching with David and René

David's feedback on my performance was mostly in line with what Chris and Hans had said before. I have achieved the goal of entertaining the audience and the performance looks good. However, and even though I had already reduced some of the density in the extra-musical actions, David felt that there could still be less material, so that everything becomes clearer. For this, I can try using isolation techniques, focusing on different aspects of the performance in order to clarify the role (and evaluate the necessity) of each action. I should therefore think about what my role is in each moment of the performance and adapt my actions accordingly.

He also advocates bringing forward one's own personality traits over creating a different character, which corroborates my earlier decision to do so.

The interview was interesting because I received new material to research on (lazzi, mimicry - Marcel Marceau) and new names for my network (Aus Greidanus, Wilfred van de Peppel).

The lesson with René was hard because it contradicted much of my work so far. Although this is not necessarily bad (because it gives me a completely different perspective to reflect on), it was at times somewhat frustrating to learn that my decisions don't actually work.

René's different approach to this piece is the result of several factors. He is first and foremost a musician (and a classical percussionist), something in which he differs from the other experts I consulted with. Therefore, he always pays much more attention to the music itself. Since I had been focusing on the theatrical part of the performance so far, the music suffered. René also knew the piece beforehand (he has worked with me and other students on it), so he already had a strong idea about how to perform it which didn't exactly match mine, so there was some friction in this aspect. For him, the story in the piece is quite shallow and he believes it should be performed with little additions. I have to say that, at this point, I disagree with this. The reason why I chose this piece is because there is space to add a story (which is not necessarily written in the notes) and a lot of extra-musical elements in the moments where nothing happens musically.

However, the lesson was a good reminder to always start from the music. Bring it to a high level and only add the necessary elements to make it engaging without detracting from the work already done. Other important conclusions are that enhancing a performance doesn't necessarily mean acting and that music performance doesn't need constant action (a good example of this is the beginning of Mahler's 1st Symphony).

Overall, what I find most important is that I now have almost opposing views on this piece and I can, through my own experimentation, draw from all of them I find what feels most comfortable and works best for me as a performer.

Topics for further work:

Practise the music exhaustively

Clarify role at each point of the performance

Isolation techniques: think about what to show in order for every action to be clear - use less material

Find ways to connect the character to my own personality - how would I react to the events in real life?

Check lazzi, Marcel Marceau

Coaching / interview – Andreas Scharfenberg

April 14, 2017

Bringing out inner fantasy or creating a new character?

What I prefer is to go from what's already there, the personality of the performer, so that there's a link between the performer and the performance. There are many possibilities (you can also do an homage and perform it as closely as possible to someone), but if you want to go from the inner world, I would start not so much psychologically, but from what's already there (the person on stage, what is the instrument?, does it need to be explained?). I also have a taste as a creator, so it depends on what you want from me (to enhance it, to create something different). I believe in playfulness and mistakes, not in a psychological way. So I would go from what's already there, who you are, walk around, stand there. What would happen if you come on stage from another place? There are a thousand ways to go to Rome. There has to be a personal click.

What about the mistakes you mentioned? (more like chance elements)

In the past, I used to have clear ideas about how I wanted things to look. I used to always be disappointed by the result, because it's never like you dreamed of (in theatre). You can only come close. Confronted by this, I started to lose the fun in it. In the mime school, you have to do a 20-minute solo at the end of the first year. You create it yourself. The coach told us to think about what we like. I thought I like to drink vodka, so I bought a bottle and it became a very interesting element in the performance. This was a kind of unplanned mistake and it worked very well. I started to

keep an eye open for these things. I think about my idea, my performers and try to see what else is happening. In my first circus production, there were two girls fighting just for fun, really violently. I thought this was fantastic and I added it to the show. The whole ending scene ended up coming out of this. Just dare to make mistakes, maybe it captures better the moment. Don't be too smart.

Role of conflict

Where there is theatre, there is conflict. You could also say problem and the need to solve. I'm also intrigued by what would happen if there's no conflict. Richard Maxwell (American theatre maker) made a show with 3 girls just talking for half an hour. Suddenly one man came in and the whole situation changed, it created a certain conflict but still different from the European notion. I believe in conflict, I think it has to be there. But there is also the beauty of pure work. It can be very theatrical just to see how things get built in front of our eyes. I think there definitely has to be conflict if there's more than one person on stage. If you look at a band, for example, they perform as a unity but also challenge each other. It can also be a fun conflict (I would call it contact), in the sense of problem solving. That's also a challenge in circus – how far can you go as a performer?

Costumes

I have to believe it. Everything matters. It should always be a choice based on the circumstances.

Mimes dress neutrally. Can they better incorporate characters like that?

That's a huge field. For mimes, neutrality translates as tension. You can have high or low tension. Neutral is something in between that makes you active. You're not "parked", but paying attention and ready to start at any moment. Mimes have a tradition of dressing white, with no face. Masked training is a good way to learn about your body.

I think about this from a musician's perspective. During a concert, there's no time to step in and out of costumes.

That has to be fine. I imagine it has to be black.

Colours are fine, there's flexibility.

I find it's not so much about the colours but how the clothes sit on you. Some people button their shirt all the way to the top. Maybe a V-shape would be better than a round shape. Can you roll up your sleeves? Are the trousers tight or loose? This already characterises a lot. We can also see if clothes are more expensive, if the fabric is good. You can actually stand out from many people wearing black just by how you wear it. Taking your shoes off, for example, can become a costume. You can stylise it. Small details matter.

Non-verbal elements. Adding them methodically or consequentially from inner fantasy?

I think it starts with what you want to achieve and show the audience. For me it starts with whether you have fun or not. If I see someone is enjoying what they're doing and has some swing, then I buy it and I'm willing to step into his world. Focus is indeed an important thing. Let's say this cup makes music when you touch it. You can approach it in many different ways. If you're really into it and treat it like an instrument, I see someone working and I like that.

Experimentation

Done for the beginning sequence. Different characters: neutral, suspense (Hitchcock-like), swingy (like John Travolta). There was not so much different between neutral and suspense.

Tip: it's not elegant to cover the face – use both hands.

Don't use hands, only focus: interesting because the "wow" becomes a comment in the background. If you do everything the tape does, it takes away the element of surprise. Less material means more focus on the actions.

Waiting before starting: much better, lets you get into the piece before you start and makes you more powerful. Just enjoy being on stage.

Experimentation

April 26, 2017

Recording of a strictly musical ("white mask") version to determine the moments which could be theatrically enhanced.

<https://youtu.be/HDOLTMYaN8c>

For me, these moments are generally the ones where the action stays still for longer periods of time, where patterns are repeated several times and where there are particular elements in the tape that suggest changes of character.

Analysis

In the introduction, each small scene can be clearly demarcated in order to make it easier for the audience to follow the story and so that each action has a reason and a purpose, e.g. airplane transformation at 0:11.

The presentation of the ball (0:23) is accompanied by different sounds on the tape, suggesting a character change translatable by facial expressions and different gestures or posture.

The silence at 0:41 provides an opportunity to fill the empty space with an action, as well as the reaction that ensues (0:50). The same happens in the preparation for the difficult football trick (1:00), the reaction to it (1:05) and the last moment of this theatrical section (1:31).

In the following body percussion section, there are several short silences, e.g. 1:40 and 1:56, which can be used to announce the next movements. The long repetitive section starting at 2:05 needs some kind of build-up.

The slow motion move at 2:39 also creates a good opportunity for adding extra actions, as well as the section starting at 3:10 (West Side Story, egg timer). Naturally, the following theatrical section needs many facial expressions in order to correctly show what the character is experiencing.

The last body percussion section (4:15) is essentially a long build-up, with each repetition adding a new rhythmical element. Here, I feel that there has to be an underlying emotional development in the character that will translate into his actions.

10. Diary – Intervention Cycle 2

Lessons and expert coaching

René Spierings

January 30, 2018

In this lesson, I performed the piece until bar 45. René's feedback was the following:

- Body percussion sounds were good and well balanced
- There should be two clear layers – voice and percussion
- I should work on the pronunciation of the text and follow the pitch line better
- The body percussion should represent the machine sounds and so be performed mechanically while strictly keeping the pulse
- The cuts between the mechanical and introspective sections should be clearer, with an instant retake of energy when restarting the machine
- It is fine to take some freedom of time during the thoughtful sections
- Left and right hand choices, although notated on the score, can be changed to something more comfortable: that is not what the piece is about

René Spierings

February 28, 2018

In this lesson, I performed the piece until bar 65. René's feedback was the following:

- Recite the text in a more legato way, in order to improve intelligibility, e.g. bar 24
- Play more with the vocal line, e.g. longer, resonant "O" in bar 28 and more emphasis on capitalised words in bar 50
- Establish a clearer character change in the trance moments. For René, these moments represent frustration.

Conclusion

I had doubts about René's proposed role for the body percussion: machine sounds (his idea) vs. unavoidable actions by the character (my idea). The trance moments posed the same issue: for me, they represent a detachment from reality. Something to experiment further with.

René agrees with taking freedom of time during thoughtful sections and changing hand choices. Follow up in interview with composer.

Cézanne Tegelberg

February 28, 2018

Topics covered:

- discussion of repertoire, concept and narrative possibilities for my final recital
- application and development of a possible narrative to Home Work

By analysing the repertoire I had chosen so far for my recital, we realised that there was a strong suggestion of a journey. Considering the fact that my girlfriend would have a strong presence in my recital, Cézanne suggested that it should be a personal journey. This, combined with the musical material in Home Work, led us to think of the life journey of a couple, told from the perspective of an old man.

The narrative in Home Work – creation, excitement, error, destruction – would have a parallel in the character's life, with each stage illustrated by other pieces. This way, Home Work would be divided in sections and spread out throughout the whole performance.

After this decision, we worked on the initial section of Home Work and on the development of the character. Several questions appeared about the physical features of the character, his voice, the use of props and the role of every action in the score. I had to reflect on all this and find reasons for every action the character performs.

Some features of the character:

- Old age
- Bad eyesight leading to reading problems, possibly illustrated by nearby reading glasses that are never used
- Posture: crooked, with a hunched back
- Harsh, hoarse voice

Conclusion

How the goal of a performance as a whole influences the interpretation of a certain piece and its placement / role in the performance.

Hans Leenders

March 16, 2018

I presented the new character of the old man to Hans. I forgot to include the harsh voice, which he immediately pointed out. We also worked on making all the movements and gestures more realistic: the stage entrance was OK, but all the movements during the piece itself were not consistent with those of a very old man, especially because I was trying to strictly respect the score in terms of rhythm and tempo.

The second video shows these changes, although without the stage entrance. In order to make the movements more characteristic, I took a slower tempo and slightly distorted the rhythm in order to convey clumsiness / lack of motor control and difficulty in moving.

The third video shows an experiment. Since the character has difficulties reading, he enters the stage, tries to read the manual but sets it aside when he realises that he cannot do it, proceeding to try and recite the first lines of instructions from memory. This did not go very well because I did not know the music by heart, although it does add some interesting uncertainty to the performance.

The last part of the lesson was dedicated to the rest of the first large section of Home Work, performed outside of character. Hans was very pleased with the direction the piece was heading into and he said I had made a big development in my voice projection.

Chris Leenders

March 23, 2018

I performed the piece until bar 82. Chris was very happy with the result and how I managed to convey different emotions and states of mind. He gave a few suggestions, though:

- keep closer eye contact with the score (manual) while reading instructions and make clearer distinctions between which moments are introspective and not
- do not make a joke out of the stage entrance, otherwise it might set the wrong mood from the audience's perspective
- clarify the difficulty in reading while performing the first page of the score
- do not ask too many people for feedback in order to avoid receiving contradictory information and stick to my own version

René Spierings

March 26, 2018

I performed the piece until bar 86. This would be the end of the piece for research purposes. René was also very happy with the development of the piece. He said that the narrative worked very well and that I had managed to create a believable character for the first section. Suggestions:

- move very slowly, with small steps, like a really old person
- perhaps make a small joke about the reading issues – turn the page upside down
- pretend to fall asleep on bar 20, suddenly waking up to a younger character and proceeding with the performance

Cézanne Tegelberg

April 25, 2018

Topics covered:

- development of different characters in Home Work: old man, child, teenager and adult
- final planning of narrative for my final recital

In this final coaching session, I performed my current version of Home Work – until bar 86. Cézanne was quite happy with the character of the old man, but could not really understand what came afterwards, which was actually the most part of the piece. This way, and considering the concept of journey that I would use for my final recital, we decided to create characters corresponding to different stages of life: the old man would fall asleep in bar 20, as suggested earlier by René; he would then wake up energised as a young child, before becoming a teenager in bar 36 and an adult in bar 72. Further ahead in the piece, the character would age into a midlife crisis and finish back as an old man. Each character has distinct features which need to be displayed clearly with the help nonverbal cues:

- old man: knees slightly bent, back bent at the hip, moves very slowly with effort – focused energy, poor eyesight, hoarse voice
- child: very energetic, clumsy, with underdeveloped fine motor skills – body percussion should be stiff and slightly unnatural, high-pitched melodic voice
- teenager: careless, dismissive, makes fun of everything, suffering hormonal changes
- adult: formal, very correct posture, focused, pensive

Cézanne also suggested using one wearable prop to help identify the characters, e.g. walking stick for the old man, baseball cap for the child, tie for the adult. All this was immediately integrated in the performance and developed under Cézanne's guidance.

Hans Leenders

April 26, 2018

Hans was very positive about the different characters and how they added a new layer to the performance. He also thought they made the narrative – the journey through life – very clear. However, my focus on the characterisation made the musical performance lose some quality – something to work on during the last few days of the intervention cycle.

Autoethnography

Amateur theatre production at Rietveld Theater in Delft

February 6, 2018

In this first session, the focus was on participants getting to know each other through group exercises that emphasised focus / attention, reaction speed, spatial and bodily awareness, flexibility of movement, trust and reduction of impulse restraint. We were also given some basic notions of posture, specifically how to adapt a neutral one.

Exercises:

- Warm-up game to stimulate focus and reaction speed, with increased difficulty;
- Group consciousness and awareness: walking around the stage - starting and stopping as one unit without perceptible leadership, with gradual introduction of more complex elements, such as solos and duos, with emphasis on allowing individual impulses to appear without restraint; walking with eyes closed in order to focus on different senses; walking as a school of fish - closely copying a leader which changes according to the orientation of the group;
- Seeing the stage as an image: placing our own bodies on, and removing them from, an empty stage in order to create meaningful images, but avoiding the suggestion of a story;
- Adopting a neutral posture and realising the potential of non-neutral postures for nonverbal communication;
- Amplification of small tactile impulses with eyes closed, departing from a neutral posture: development of flexibility of movement and trust in colleagues.

February 27, 2018

The session started by warming up with a walking game similar to the one in the session of February 6.

After that, each participant presented a myth of their choice with a small staging created by them. The presentations were very diverse:

- some of them were solos, others included several participants, either as actors or figurants;
- some used props, others didn't;
- there were different languages: we discussed how (not) understanding the language influences our perception of the narrative and realised the heightened importance of nonverbal communication when the verbal message is unintelligible.

March 13, 2018

The session started with a warm-up, after which everyone presented 3 different storytellers. I used the opportunity to experiment with applying different characters to Home Work. Besides working on the old man character suggested earlier by Cézanne, I added a politician and a child. Their main characteristics are below:

Old man

- Wears robe and slippers
- Needs eye glasses, but does not have them
- Crooked, hunched back, dragging feet, squinting
- Slow movements

Child

- No shoes, wears hoodie
- Fast, imprecise, impulsive movements
- High-pitched, mellow voice
- Toy (otamatone)
- Sits on the floor, playing
- Occasional giggles, loss of attention
- Curious, looks everywhere

Politician

- Wears a suit
- Stands at a podium, reading speech
- Looks audience in the eye, invites reaction
- Serious face, intense voice
- Walks confidently, makes broad gestures, uses gaze to direct attention
- Shows occasional contempt

Cézanne was quite positive about my work. However, she mention that I should be careful not to double act or overstate something, e.g. it was clear that I was playing a child when I ran on stage with quick, light steps and sat playing on the floor. There was no need to reinforce that image by calling “mommy”.

March 27 – May 1, 2018

These sessions followed the same structure as the previous ones: a warm-up followed by work on the performance – acting training and scene development. Since they were increasingly dedicated to the theatre production and did not objectively influence my research apart from general training in theatre, I decided not to describe them here.

11. Interview – Dr. Falk Hübner

Recording: <http://bit.ly/DrHubner>

Background info

Composer, researcher, music theatre maker

Experimental stage work between concert, installation, performance

Focus on daily life experiences, (non-)communication, reduction

PhD on musician as theatrical performer: impact of reduction on performer's identity

Work field is similar to François Sarhan

Questions

- You have quite a varied background – university studies, double-bass, composition and theory, up to a PhD on music theatre. What motivated you to pursue this path?
- Why the interest in music theatre and the impact of reduction on identity?
- What does your compositional process look like re: inspiration, role of nonverbal elements?
- When you write a piece, do you have a certain storyline / character in mind?
- Do you always participate in the making process? What is it like? What steps do you take?
- Do you also direct pieces not composed by you? Are there differences in the process?
- How much do you leave up to the performer and how much do you interfere? Do you write instructions on the score?
- One of my big questions is how to create believable nonverbal elements. What's your opinion on this? Do you think the performer should be genuine, showing his own personality or create different personas? How would he do that?
- So far, I've discovered that theatrically enhancing a performance needs many decisions. How do you deal with that? Is there a way to notate it?
- Your work and your research allow you to look at performances from a different, more informed perspective. What makes a good performance for you? Follow up.
- Briefly describe some findings of your research on reduction and identity.

Transcript

R: Introduction - research topic, work done so far, things still to improve, presentation of the piece and composer, research methodology, feedback on Reference Recording 25

R: You have a quite varied background. What motivated you to pursue this path?

FH: Well, in general I think... I do believe very strongly in emergence, so that things come up and things in your biography make turns and get to a point where they, well, somehow need to go, which means that... I guess on a large scale, my biography is not planned in that sense. I learned in the conservatoire that I should do that, but I never did, because it didn't work for me that way. So I started... I don't know if you've read this or not, so I'll just tell it and we can either jump or just go on. So, when I started at the conservatoire I immediately worked interdisciplinarily. That was also one of my main fascinations there, because what I felt was maybe not so far away from what you're sketching. I realized that as soon as we were working with dancers, discussions very quickly go to the core of what you're actually working on, not so much about which notes do we play or what is, let's say, the real musical hardcore content, but about, well, what do we want to communicate. Which I felt was very strong. And at the same time the fascination for actually not understanding each other,

because you're coming from different languages and... I still believe, even after having collected quite a lot of experiences working with other disciplines, that almost every time when you're working with someone new from another discipline, you actually don't understand each other and you have to work on building up that communication or frame of reference, that you can actually talk to each other and kind of can assume that you're talking about the same thing. Which is not easy. And when I finished my studies... Actually I was doing a lot of different stuff. So, I was really composing a lot, but also still working interdisciplinarily for quite some years, mostly in theater, and at some point I wanted to... Well, maybe... I would say I wanted to design the kind of collaboration myself because, especially in large theater productions, there's a strong sense of hierarchy involved. There's the director and then comes, well, other makers, such as the composer, stage designer, costume maker, but the whole design of the collaboration is that the director is on top of the whole group. And I think, by definition, that doesn't make so much sense, or actually I believe that, by creating strong positions for everybody, you just make it more interesting and more layered, what you get as a result. Which means not only that, as a composer and a director, I think it is useful to be on one level of hierarchy, but also with the performers. So, at one point I just started to make my own work, in the sense of also directing it, but also making video for it and working very, very closely with performers. And that, I mean, afterwards I realized that this started much earlier, so when I also wrote compositions that were drawing very much on the performers' input, such as... I made a solo for violin which started in the tempo of the heartbeat of the performer, and which, in the middle, had the tempo of just as fast as possible. And both of these are tempo indications that are beyond my control. So, these... And I was always fascinated by the idea that it's not just my piece as a composer but a piece of a collaboration. One of the points of departure for that was that I really have doubts on the idea that it's super important, what I'm doing, basically, because I think, ya, it's just me, well, so why should this be interesting enough? And I believe that it becomes interesting when there's happening something between people, or between humans. And I guess the pieces I've made in the last years take this to an extreme and maybe... Most of them, especially Thespian Play, the piece with the saxophone player, and I will carry you over hard times, with the percussion player, because they have been performed a lot, both of them, and they showed really interesting development, that in the end it's actually the piece of the performer. It's not my piece anymore. I mean, of course I have designed the original idea and I've thought about the notes, but, well, first the performers had a really strong influence on what the piece is going to be and we had a lot of small studies of just seeing "OK, does this work?", "how does that feel for you?", "how does that work for you, for me?", "how does it look like and how does it sound?", and there was always one point, especially in Hard times, where the performer also got very active during the making process. So, at one point, I guess when the piece was, I guess, $\frac{3}{4}$ finished, more or less, we thought about using more small instruments. Which resulted just on that he made a video for me to just demonstrate small instruments. Of course I know all these instruments, but nevertheless he just demonstrated them because then I could also see how it looks when he does it and he also made suggestions. So he said, "Well, I think this is what you like and, well, I don't think you'll like this but I'll just show it to you anyway", so he already thought along the lines of the piece, so "this might be working as well with this passage", and "I think you'll like this because of this movement, which relates to that other section". So he becomes a kind of co-composer, in a way, which was really fascinating. And, I mean, of course, I guess with many pieces that are performed lots of times, he knows it far better than I do, especially because it's played by heart. So, I mean, of course I can see a lot on how well it's performed and I can make suggestions and give feedback, but he knows it far better. So this is an interesting process in itself and it's, in the essence, it's the collaboration, I think, which led me to that part. And also, in the case of Hard times, I mean, we did a production a few years ago at the Opera Dagen in Rotterdam and he was actually replacing another performer, because this performer couldn't come, and he saw this saxophone piece. And he asked me "well, could we do a piece like that with marimba?". And I agreed, with just a question: "yes, I think that we can do that, but the only thing I request is that we experiment with something that takes it further". Which, in the case of Hard times, was the movement in space, very

much, and the aspect of exhaustion, so that he has to run between the instruments up to a degree where it's almost not possible anymore to perform it. And that was very much the root, how this came up.

R: That's interesting. By the way, have you seen your pieces performed without your input? That they go and prepare it alone and you see that?

FH: No. Actually, there was, with *Thespian Play*, the saxophone piece, I was asked twice by saxophone players who wanted to perform it, but I actually think they didn't perform it in the end. Because, I mean, the notation is in fact quite rudimentary, it's very simple, because both of the pieces were developed so closely with the performers, that I actually didn't write the notation as I would when I know somebody else performs it. I also need the performer to give feedback: "OK, is this actually clear?", and "does this contain all the information we need?". So, in *Thespian Play*, I made a little update of the score to make a little bit easier for someone who performs it without my input, but I'm still doubting if that really works. Of course there are enough contemporary composers who have very detailed visions on notation, but in fact I'm very pragmatic about this, so in fact I'm also discussing this with the performers, how it makes sense to notate it in order for them to remember, because both pieces are performed almost by heart and, in fact, notation doesn't matter so much because it's very performative. And the only function of the notation is to remember the performer, who has worked on this with me, to "oh yeah, it was like this". And there was one case in *Thespian Play* that was actually interesting for notation, because in the beginning of the piece there is what I call a finger choreography, so the saxophone player is standing like this and just moving his fingers. And I wrote the choreography at some point and then we just experimented with different ways of notating it so that it would be most easy for him to actually memorize and play it. Which in the end was... We used a notation with two staves, just as a piano score, and basically transposed it to the piano, because that was his reference. For example, both thumbs would not be the same notation, because on the piano, of course, the lowest on the left hand is this one and the highest is here, and on the right hand the lowest is here and the... So this was the easiest way for him, but maybe it's not obvious for someone else. So it's super individual in that sense. And I think with *Hard times* it's even more extreme, because the score in itself doesn't contain any stage direction at all, not even a stage layout, because he knows everything. And, actually, I was thinking about making a real score, which would be super intensive work, basically, actually because I didn't do it. So it would require a lot of work and I would only do it if someone asked really seriously that he wants to perform it, with almost a guarantee that it would be performed, because it requires so much work.

R: Yeah, exactly. That's a bit what I'm doing for the intervention part, that I write a performance script or a kind of sub-score. Basically, what I'm doing is I take the piece, I prepare it and I make up the stage direction myself, for me, and then I have to write it for the research purpose, that they have to see what the final product is. And I also found out last year that it's a lot of work.

FH: And I mean, there are different ways to do that. In my case, I think, the visual score, or the stage score, is in fact a video recording, which is not so uncommon. For example, Pina Bausch worked like that, the German choreographer. When the company would, let's say, retake a piece to play in a specific season, they would just sit with the whole company in front of the video of the performance. "Oh, it was like that, you did this, did you see that?" and then they would just start to rehearse.

R: I guess that's the most effective. It saves you a lot of writing, I guess.

FH: Especially because text is limited. And maybe what could also appear is that, when you restage the piece, that you actually think "well, this is a different performance, so we also do different things". Maybe slightly different or maybe completely different. Because the staging is also based, for a large

part, on the ideas of the performer and other performers come with different ideas. It's actually as simple as that. In this sense, I'm not such a big fan of the super authoritative vision of the composer, because I think in the end it's work for the stage and, if you work together, you can come to different conclusions, different outcomes.

R: What interested you in the impact of reduction on the identity of the performer?

FH: Let me think how to start. If I look back, when I was writing my dissertation, I realized that the fascination for reduction began much earlier than I thought. So, when I was making my first music theater piece (that was in Germany, actually, still), then we already started to work with aspects of reduction. So, for example... I mean, it was a piece for 5 musicians who do all kinds of things, just playing different instruments, walking, talking, shouting, building up stuff, different activities. And there was a grand piano on stage, which is the only thing at the beginning of the piece which is on stage. Everything else is just brought onto the stage during the piece. And, at the same time, it's the only object that's not used. It's just set up, made ready for playing, and the piece, the whole performance ends with the saxophone player just getting his hands on the piano keys without playing and then it's finished. Which I think is an interesting... At least, what fascinates me is an aspect of expectation. Or, sometimes just what you're used to, so there's a piano and, very simple, we expect it to be played. And, by not playing it, something happens where...

R: A kind of tension.

FH: Tension, which is disrupted. Sometimes we're also just surprised. And this moment at the end of the piece where he's getting his hands on the piano is just illustrating this, in a subtle way, to an extreme. Because that's just finally where the final chord comes and then it doesn't come. And this simple play is something which I like to play with on a basis. So it's about surprise and expectation and disruption. But it's also about self-reflexivity, which means, by not doing something, you make it visible. In essence it's a play between absence and presence. So, in the saxophone piece, where there's no saxophone, but by miming it, you actually realise what a saxophone player does, which you normally do not. I mean, we all know and have seen saxophone players, and they just play saxophone. And we're listening to the music and sometimes it's interesting to look at them because of their presence or performativity, but we don't question the identity of being a saxophone player, it doesn't have one. But that happens when you leave away the saxophone. And it's getting stronger the better it is performed. So, when it's performed at its best, and that's the same for the percussion piece, many audience members actually have reported to me that they actually see the instrument and feel them and almost hear them. That's the interesting play there, which is basically the same play with expectation and disruption. But it's about making things present and making the identity of the people who are performing it more explicit. And, at the same time, also realising: "oh, that's what percussionists do". And of course it doesn't happen in words but much more in experience. That's one of the fascinations. And, I mean, what emerged during working with these pieces is actually the discovery of a specific way of virtuosity, which I didn't know before. Because, in essence, I was just fascinated by mime and, when I was rehearsing with the saxophone player, he reported to me also how difficult it actually was and that he got pain in his muscles by not playing the saxophone, which is amazing! Especially as an artist, I think "wow, I'd never come up with that". So that's also a bit of a fun aspect in it. And one last thing, which is also about self-reflexivity on musicians, is that many people have asked me "well, do you work with sensors?" or "how does actually the sound come at the right time?". And it communicates how hard you have to study, because the only way to perform it - there are no tricks - is just hard practise, which usually we don't see. So, if you're performing well, then everything looks easy and that's actually the art of it. But, strangely, when the percussion piece or the saxophone piece are performed well, the audience also thinks "oh my gosh, how does he do that?". That's the interesting view on the musician that I'm fascinated by. And, I mean, if you want to know

more about absence, then there is quite a discourse within the performance and dance world about absence. In essence, what is new about working with absence in music is actually that it didn't happen in music so much, but it happened in dance a lot and in theatre a lot. William Forsythe, the choreographer, has works all the time with absence of ballet. So he has trained ballet dancers, but they don't dance ballet. They just, let's say, if you have poses in ballet, which are usually fixed forms, they just touch the forms and then leave the forms again. So if you're really a trained, experienced with ballet, you realise that they do it, they use it, but you only see it in a glimpse, which is also super interesting. And that's how dancers can work with that. Or also contemporary dance work, where they're not actually dancing but just doing random stuff.

R: That's quite interesting. When you write a piece, do you have a certain character in mind or a storyline?

FH: Usually not. Most of the time, I'm starting from either a conceptual idea or a form, or a research question. Like with "Hard times", so the question was "we're making a mime piece, or a playback piece, but I'm looking for something which extends the idea of that, but I don't yet know what". And then the experiment starts and, in most cases, a narrative or a storyline comes out from the work itself. But I don't very often think about characters. That also, I mean, in one way that comes from the tradition and mostly influenced by what is performance art, which, in tradition denies character or denies playing as if you're somebody else at all, and it's very much about being who or what you are. And I think that in the case of musicians, it's very strong that, if you're performing as a musician, an audience can see hundreds of characters in that. Not necessarily what you think should be the character, because you think about how you play the music and how you perform the music as strong as possible, which makes them experience characters. Which is very strong in pieces by Kagel, for example. Ya, Kagel I think is one of the strongest, because his pieces are extremely humorous, but only if you perform them very seriously, which is very interesting in itself. As soon as a performer of a Kagel piece tries to perform something as if it is funny, or let's say, tries to play humour, it's nothing. Well, it's nonsense, basically. And at the moment when you really do it very, very well and seriously, people start to react. That's actually the same, for example, with the saxophone piece, which is, at some places it is funny, but as soon as the performer thought about anything else than just following and remembering the score, he was off immediately. That's the tension between doing what you're actually supposed to do and, well, letting a character emerge. And we also see this in work from Heiner Goebbels, for example, where also even the actors don't perform characters, but they just perform almost to a musical score. So it's very, very precise what assignments they have to do, and because they perform them so exact and also very musical, as an audience you can see characters. And it's the multiplicity of characters that's interesting then, but it only emerges because they're not performing one character.

R: Yeah. Maybe something interesting for me to experiment with as well.

FH: I mean, if you take, let's say, a very hard hit on a bass drum with a specific energy, which might be perceived from the audience as being serious. But of course you're not performing something which is super serious, but you're just making an intense hit on the bass drum. And that's the interesting part, I guess. So I think also that the power of character which comes when musicians play originates in a very strong idea about how it should sound. In the beginning you told me about visualising performance and I guess that's a very strong technique to do that, but you can do it with sound as well, of course.

R: You spoke a bit about how much of your composition work is collaborative. How much do you leave up to the performer and how much do you input yourself in this work?

FH: Yeah, usually I would say there's a scale involved. In the beginning, although I try to start very open and to have a real exchange about what maybe should this piece be about, but of course I do have a strong conceptual idea about the piece. So I would say there is still a lot of ownership on my side, because I am also designing the relationship and I'm asking questions a lot, especially with classical musicians. And, during a work, usually the ownership of the performer grows until the point where performers make suggestions or even think about themes themselves, or also change things when the piece is already finished. Usually there are not large parts of improvisation, for example, where it's just completely open. Usually even if things are improvised, we share the same idea about how long it should be, or what the character is, or what maybe the function of an improvisation is. For example, there's one moment in "Hard times" where there is a moment of improvisation where Maarten improvises on a kalimba. And the musical part of the improvisation is completely free and I don't interfere with it at all, but we did have a lot of talks about what is the function of that part and how are you actually performing the transition to the playback part again, because that's extremely important. In this case, it's basically to open up something, so there's a moment of freedom, but even that moment is framed in a very, very particular window, because the soundtrack just goes on, just with silence, so there's no free amount of time where this improvisation happens. And when the soundtrack starts, as soon as it's audible, Maarten just leaves wherever he is in this improvisation and just continues. So it's a strong idea of having a break. And we even talked about that in a way of visualisation, so it's a moment... Do you know the Matrix movies?

R: Yeah.

FH: So there's this one moment in the last Matrix movie where they're going up in the sky, Neo and his girlfriend... So they go up in the sky and they come up on top of the clouds, and they have this one small moment of a beautiful sunshine, which they have never seen before in their entire lives. And that's the kalimba improvisation. Of course, then comes the moment when they're descending back into the dark abyss where they have to go, the city of the machines, etc., so that's the moment when the soundtrack takes over again. And that's, even if it's not a character, in the sense of "play it like this", that's a strong image of how the function of that kalimba piece is working, even if it's free to improvise. So at least there is always a common agreement on what happens in a specific part... And I mean, by the way, what's maybe interesting is that I actually needed quite some time and a few projects to get this clear, how this work process actually works. In some projects, I realised there were misunderstandings actually with performers about who is the director. So where performers were actually also not satisfied... I mean, for example, one of the performers in one piece, she even felt a bit offended that in the credits she would not be assigned director, because she thought she also designed a lot of the things herself, together with me, which should give her ownership to being a director as well. Which is, I mean, it's not so much about "should you credit this or not?", but it's about finding clarity about how we actually work. And I really needed some time to have clarity about this myself. In the beginning, I was always convinced that the performer should be as active as a collaborator as possible, but I wasn't aware that this kind of misunderstandings can happen. That was really a learning process.

R: One of my biggest issues is how to create believable nonverbal elements. What's your opinion on this? You spoke already a little bit about this. Do you think the performer should be always genuine or that creating different personas is also a possibility?

FH: I think there's not one easy answer to that. I think it always depends on the piece itself and how you interpret the piece. So one approach works for one piece, but it doesn't work for the other. I think basically I'm open to any approach that works. And I have the strong opinion that it's important not to be too strict on any kind of dogma of how things should be done. Actually I just don't see the point of that. So, if you feel, for example, I mean, many of the pieces from Heiner Goebbels are just disruptive

in their own identity, so there's an A part and the B part seems to have no relation to the A part. There's also no transition but just a brutal cut. So the most obvious way to perform this would be just to think about two different characters. And why not try this? And maybe somewhere during the interpretation process you think "well, ok, they're different musics, but what happens if I perform them with the idea of the same character?". To actually have a counterpoint to his way of writing the music could be a valid argument for that. What always helps, I do believe is to have somebody standing outside to give feedback, which in theatre, of course, is very often the director or dramaturg. But also if you're working on pieces yourself, I think it's good to have someone standing outside to comment, to ask questions. That's actually the reason why I don't perform in pieces, usually, that I direct, because I've seen it so many times that it's incredibly difficult to actually have any idea of what's happening when you do it yourself. And I've also seen many choreographers fail in that because they also wanted to dance. That's very difficult, I guess. But to incorporate other people or to work with other people who give something back, just ask the question "how does this work for you?". And then their answer, it depends on how their answer relates to your idea of the piece, or maybe the idea of the composer.

R: That actually relates to the next question. So far what I've found out is that, for these theatrical pieces, to make it work, you need to make a huge number of decisions. It's also related to what you said in the beginning, that the best performance script is a video, actually, of the performance. So how do you deal with this? For you, is it only standing outside and looking at it, and seeing how it works, giving feedback on that? How do you think about this decision-making process?

FH: Well, I mean, I do really like also to stand up on stage to just try things out with the performers. For example, with Maarten we did this quite a couple of times, where I would try to be in his place and just try to feel how the movement works. To just feel it with my own body, because it's about bodies, essentially. Sometimes I try and many times I do, I think, have trust in the performer, so there are quite some instances where maybe I would say the performer has to go left, but the performer says "well, for me it really works when I go right". And I think that this kind of decisions, it's not so much about what I think I want, but also about what feels good for the performer. Because at the moment when the performer moves in a way that is natural, I believe it's also stronger. And of course that doesn't go for all cases, because sometimes it's good also to provide a challenge, of course. But with many cases I think it's good to have trust, in fact. Of course, on the other hand, that goes also for the performer to have trust in me as somebody from outside when I think "this is really not working" and to just try different things. And I think that the process of decision-making should actually be always as practical as possible. I've also had a lot of years of discussion, especially in theatre, endless discussions of why things should be in this and not that way, and actually believe very much in, I guess... Sometimes it's called "quick prototyping", so just "ok, should you move right? Well, let's try it. We see it, maybe we can also videotape it so that you can see it yourself. I think it's left, let's try this as well. And afterwards we see it and we try it a few times more and then just decide". Quick and effective. And maybe, well, you think right, I think left, should we also try going to the back? Just to get more options and try them out in practice. And mostly it's good to, I think... I try to make it one decision at a time and build up on that.

R: Do you also direct pieces that are not composed by you?

FH: I'm going to, actually.

R: First time?

FH: Yes. So we're now working with, they're called Trio Nebula, it's a trio from percussion, flute and saxophone, and they asked me to direct one of their pieces. There are 5 or 6 composers who are

composing for them and then we make one piece about a specific theme. And we're now in the process of writing the applications for that. So that's actually quite interesting.

R: I was wondering if there are any differences in the process, if it makes you feel different.

FH: I think there are. I'm a little bit... I'm not worried, but I do feel some tension on that. Because, of course, I'm not a professional director, which is different. And I've also asked them, when we had the first talks about that project, that what I really would appreciate is if the composers are at least open in a way that some try-out with their material is possible. Because otherwise it's difficult for me to see it as a director, with fixed pieces, because that's also not how I work with my own pieces. And when I compose myself I'm also just happy to throw any material away if it's not working, but of course doing that with other composers' material is a bit difficult sometimes.

R: You don't know how they will react.

FH: Yeah, you know how they are!

R: Actually I'm a bit curious about that. I haven't interviewed François Sarhan yet, I will do it, but I'm curious about how much freedom he gives to the performer to maybe change some things, even if it's just making a few bars longer or shorter. That's something I'm curious about.

FH: I think it helps if composers are open to their material. I guess that most composers who have been involved in real theatre making, or stage making, are aware that not everything in a piece works as soon as it's staged. I mean, in a way it's loosely comparable to theatre texts, so to dialogues. And which, as soon as you bring them on stage, you realise it's too long. And that's just possible. And maybe in a concert it would work perfectly for 20 minutes, but on stage it just works for 15. That just can happen. And if you then, as a composer, insist on your musical structure, there are cases, I think, where this just means that you misunderstand what the work in its entirety is about. I guess that's why I actually started to direct and compose at the same time, because I just want to be open also to just throw my own material away.

R: That makes sense.

FH: And there are actually funny examples also from Heiner Goebbels, when he worked with Ensemble Moderne, that in a very late stage, very late phases of the process, they would also ask him "well, Heiner, we actually think all the material is fine, but we want something which is a little bit more challenging musically". And then he would just compose something which is very virtuosic, which is not at all, let's say, about composer's autonomy, but just working together with the performers. If they want something, well, let's try it. Again, actually, the same idea of quick prototyping, you could also use that for composing. I think that's first working on stage, that's very strong.

R: A more philosophical question. I think that your work and your research allow you to look at performances from a slightly different perspective. Maybe more informed, because you're more involved in the whole process. So what makes a good performance for you?

FH: Well... I guess a good performance... How general can you be? I guess a good performance tries to communicate, and to engage, and to challenge an audience. And I think it's best if it does all three, to various degrees. And that a performance is possible to do more things than just one thing at a time, which could mean that one part of an audience is challenged by something, but maybe another part of an audience is just invited to engage in just following, and doesn't need to participate, for example.

And that's another thing, I guess, that a performance should allow the audience to engage to various degrees. And in this way be an open system, to some degree. But it's a very difficult question.

R: Yeah, I know. I was just curious, because I find that you can't really control completely how the people understand and interpret what you're trying to communicate. So of course I can have an idea for the performance and I try to communicate it as clearly as possible, but I don't know if they will understand it in the way I think about it.

FH: I mean, the question makes me think of one performance that I saw from Alain Platel, it was also a few years ago... Alain Platel is a Belgian choreographer. He started to work, that was also with amateur dancers, partly, but his latest pieces are really with highly professional trained dancers. And he made one piece with his dancers and Elsie de Brauw, one of the really most experienced actresses from Holland. And when I saw the performance, I think this was just one of the most amazing performances that I saw that year, but I couldn't tell why. And that was the most challenging part, because usually I am quite OK in articulating why I like a performance and why I think it is good. And with this performance, I just realise it's amazing, but I couldn't tell why and that was super fascinating.

R: Indeed. Interesting.

FH: I even couldn't remember what Elsie de Brauw said in her dialogue, because it was just "wow!".

R: The impact... The performers that were in your reduction pieces, have you seen them perform pieces without the reduction aspect?

FH: Yes. Most of them, yes.

R: How does it change their identity?

FH: Usually it's just something completely different. I guess that's because, especially the playback pieces, that's something which is... I mean, even if the idea in itself is very simple, if you take it to a professional level of doing that, it's something which is completely detached from playing music. Because it's not daily practice. For example, Heiner, the performer from the saxophone piece, he performs a lot, he plays a lot of cover music. Whatever, he plays in party bands a lot, which is something which you wouldn't expect if you see this piece. And he does that very well, actually, and he loves to do that. But it's something completely else. Yet, at the same time, he found that the piece that we did together was very, very special for him, because it's a piece which was really about him and acknowledged him and his identity, who he is, even much more than in any of the other bands. Because he's completely not replaceable and it's on him, which of course also provides a big burden, because if he fails, it's gone. And I guess with Maarten it's a little bit different, because he's performing a lot in theatre as well. So there the piece, because it's performed, even if it's in the realm of music theatre, it has a closer relation to what he does in other places as well. But also there, he has... I mean, one of the main differences is that he really has to practise a lot before he performs it once again, because it's played by heart and he really has to remember everything, and because it's about not failing. And that's, I guess, the challenging aspect about playback. Usually, when you perform a piece, no matter what piece, every mistake you can correct. By just playing another note after that or just not making it visible to the audience that you played a mistake. But in the playback pieces, because they are so precise, you just see it. In essence, every failure is communicated as such, which is, I guess, one other difference.

R: Yeah, that's true. I felt it last year in the piece I had. It was much stricter than this one. Sometimes there were a little bit longer silences... and then you have to do a gesture synchronised with the tape and sometimes it's a little bit late or a little bit early, and then... What can you do?

FH: Exactly. Yeah, it's over. Because also you don't have another moment for it, it's just that moment. And I guess, especially with percussion, I guess the difficulty is because you're preparing every movement, so it's not possible to just have this little moment of hearing a sound and just playing it then, just like a saxophonist can do, just this then, but you need to prepare it, which is always too late if you hear it already. But that also makes it extra fascinating to see it. Even a less experienced audience realises that, if you prepare a movement and then the timing is exactly together with the soundtrack... They don't understand "what the hell?". That's also what makes it interesting and challenging at the same time. And that's, I guess, what one aspect of a good performance can be. That you communicate this idea that there is a challenge, but it's also fascinating to see it's not only about the challenge.

R: Last question. Do you feel that having specific training in theatre helps in performing this kind of pieces? Did you feel that with Maarten or Heiner, that they needed to do some extra work, for example?

FH: I think it helps, because you have a certain idea of space and you have a certain idea of focus, where your audience is. And, of course, as a performing musician you also have this idea, but still it's different, for example, with what your eyes do. I mean, you see a lot of musicians on stage that are looking anywhere, basically, but if you have more training in playing in a theatrical context, you're much more trained in that every aspect of what you do, even if you're doing nothing, is performance. And that's something which is, for many musicians, at least quite challenging or quite difficult, to realise that if they're looking anywhere, that's perceived as being absent or not focused or whatever. Because even your brain or your pause is there. And I think it's very helpful for a work process. I mean, I've worked with a number of musicians that are classically trained and, funnily enough, especially the ones who are really, really good classical musicians, such as... I mean, I worked on one piece with Bas Wiegers, who's now... He's not performing anymore, he's performing as a conductor. And he had huge problems with that approach to work. So in the second rehearsal he was already thinking "OK, when are we doing something?". And, I mean, that's not to blame him, because that's just a...

R: Different mindset.

FH: It reflects on the different processes of working. Where I still think "well, I would like to just see and collect ideas", he's already hesitant, because he would like to see a score which he can practise. It has more to do with just work process, because it's also in the context of an ensemble production, which is usually working in a different way, because usually we just get the scores from the composers, you're paid for two rehearsals and I was already in the fourth rehearsal just doing something... Which is just a different way of working. That's very different. And there, it helps to have more experience with that.

R: I'm doing that, I'll do some theatre coaching, so I hope that helps with my development.

FH: Fantastic. I mean, the interesting thing is also that the interdisciplinarity, again, that they usually say something which you couldn't come up with yourself... Never thought about that.

R: I think the first breakthrough in my research was actually when I received feedback from my first recording and I talked to Arlon Luijten, who's an actor...

FH: Oh yeah, I know him.

R: And I had made a kind of mind map of my creative process, how I prepare the things. And then he looked at that and said “yeah, that’s very rational, but I don’t see what you want to communicate there”. And I was like... Yeah, because it’s not there... He told me about the artistic core, that I had to look at the material and then see what do I want to communicate with this, and then we can talk about what you do with your eyes and your posture and your movements.

FH: Yeah, because that depends on the idea. I also think it’s strong if you play percussion pieces, if you play classical pieces anyway, to really be aware of why do you perform that piece, and that piece, and what’s the idea for yourself. And also the order of pieces. And if that’s really strong, then you also can make up what you actually do.

R: That’s the way I need to think differently about what I do, because I was a very classical musician and it’s what you’ve been saying, that... before, you get a score, you prepare the score and then you play the piece, and that’s it.

FH: That also has to do with ownership. Because at that moment, you claim ownership for yourself, because you know why you play that piece. And, I mean, of course it’s a piece by another composer that’s not you, but that does not mean that you don’t carry any ownership. You’re not just the guy who follows the instructions in the score, which is quite boring, in a way. But if you have your own idea about that, then you’re also able to become someone else concerning your own identity, because you decide. And that’s also fun.

R: OK, that’s all for me. Thank you very much.

FH: Yeah, you’re welcome!

12. Interview – François Sarhan

General questions – performance

R: One of my big questions is how to create believable nonverbal elements. What's your opinion on this? Do you think the performer should be genuine, showing his own personality or create different personas?

FS: I think there are a lot of questions in your question. Or one could say the first one is a non-question: we believe in a lot of non verbal elements, music being one, but also body language, dance, visuals in general. Then when it goes to performers, there is no one way which would solve the question, and the relation between genuinity and personas is complex. On the one hand, I don't think convincing performers create artificial personas, but are convincing when they find the way to show themselves WHILE doing something other than their everyday's life. Here we touch theatre, because it's the centre of acting: how to find the good relation between authenticity and a role.

R: So far, I've discovered that theatrically enhancing a performance requires many decisions (posture, where to look, how to move, etc.). How do you deal with that when you perform or direct a performance? How do you notate it?

FS: Part of it is writable, part is left to the performer. First because an over-precise notation is counterproductive in general, and second because even if over notated, a performer who doesn't find solutions on his own will not be helped by the precision of the notation.

R: Your multi-sided work allows you to look at performances from a different, more informed perspective, because you're familiar with the whole process. What makes a good performance for you?

FS: First, it's A LOT OF PRACTICE. Most of the time, good performers are the ones who practice A LOT. Especially because my material requires to takes seriously various dimensions, gestures, attitudes, sound, etc. So it's much more demanding than a traditional piece of instrumental music. Second is a certain ease with the body and the voice. If the performer has a fluid relation to the body, then the understanding of the piece passes through the performance. Otherwise a lot of layers are lost.

General questions – *Home Work*

R: In the interview with Grégoire Tosser, you mention that you try to notate all the nonverbal cues / "body language", but there are only a few in the score: some movement cues (standing, looking to the side, etc.) and occasional mood indications (energetic, thoughtful, etc.). Do you sometimes include more cues? Or is it up to the performer to add more?

FS: Homework doesn't coincide with this statement. I was thinking of the cycle Situations, where, indeed, the body language is present, and notated.

R: I know the body percussion solo is meant to be part of a larger performance, including the other parts of the composition and a specially designed stage. What changes for you when this part is performed by itself?

FS: The narration is less clear, and the language of the solo percussion is not confronted with the 2 other ones. It's not a problem, it actually solves technical problems, such as power, amplification, etc.

R: Did you have a character in mind when you composed the piece? If so, what would his personality be like?

FS: No. It was me, at first who improvised the material. I always proceed this way, so i guess if there is one character, it's me.

R: Did you think of different roles for the "mechanical" elements in the composition, i.e. body percussion and gestures?

FS: Yes, they all have a different function, but they are not described, because they are open to personal interpretation.

Specific questions – *Home Work*

R: In "Home Work", I find that the slower, "thoughtful" sections could sometimes benefit from some rhythmical freedom. By this I don't mean a "senza misura" feeling, but perhaps making some silences longer to facilitate the inclusion of a dramatic action that could illustrate the narrative more clearly. How do you feel about this? Do you prefer that performers strictly respect the instructions or do you allow some freedom?

FS: I don't think any external action, any time freedom is of any good. The few theatricalisations of the piece I've seen were disastrous. The material must keep its ambiguity, and the rhythm is the corset which keeps the narration ambiguous. To try to make it clear is not a good idea.

R: What's the function of the L/R indications in the score? Are they transcribed from your original improvisation? Should they be followed strictly?

FS: Left and right are both practical, and meaningful. I mean that the roles of the 2 hands are notated, and one shouldn't be more important than the other. They can be slightly modified, of course, but not a lot.

R: I watched a performance by Samuel Favre on YouTube and noticed there are differences in the text compared to the version I have. Why is that? Did you change the text? If so, why?

FS: His version is an early one, where the text, and part of the score where less precise and sometimes incorrect. The changes are not meaningful, but practical and linguistic.