

Ligetilines: Introduction

First as a musician and second as a cellist playing the *Ligeti Solo Cello Sonata*, I desired the expressive power of bodies in motion through dance. Upon considering the inherently different natures of music and dance, I realised that I needed to create a score that everyone could read in order to establish even collaborative ground. This graphic score inspired the new music composition *Lines for Gage*, based on selected pages of the score. The team included cellist Gage Ehmann, choreographer Harriet Macauley, dancers PJ Hurst and Joel O'Donoghue, and composer Daniel Ehrlich.

The process of choreographing the *Ligeti Solo Cello Sonata* for two male dancers with live cello has revealed to me that much of what has driven this project both creatively and intellectually is my inclination toward analogy and its related constructs. Here, music : time : : dance : space. It is no coincidence that the first movement—lyrical and abstract—and the second movement—virtuosic and literal—reflect this relationship between space and time. *Dialogo* : space : : *Capriccio* : time. The basic format of the project reflects duality at some level; the graphic score produced for the choreographic interpretation of the music also inspired a musical interpretation.

By immediately implying binary oppositions, I risk the very reduction and limiting against which Simon Shaw-Miller cautions. In describing the construction 'image—music—text,' he explains:

What a study of hybridity can show us is that gray areas, those that lie between such oppositions—the hyphens—are sites of rich and provocative activity. Indeed, such compound and hybrid sites are more characteristic of the processes of making art in history than are attempts to reduce practice to essentialist oppositions.¹

If it does anything, this project harnesses hybridity as creative potential. I hope to show that hybridity and constructs of analogy within the context of this project are mutually beneficial. Analogy will appear frequently to demonstrate the effectiveness of what seem purely conceptual connections in directing the creative process. If metaphors are mixed, this only emphasises the degree to which the elements of collaboration are inextricably linked.

The particular story that Ligeti chose to appropriate from Bartók—the *Dialogo's* inspiration of youthful infatuation, then love rejected—provides a good example of the potentially dubious context surrounding the piece. Because Ligeti modelled the Sonata on the two-movement form of the Bartók Violin Concerto, his choice of story both recalls the duality that interests him, and also subverts a biographical reading of the Solo Cello Sonata. While this context provides one lens through which to view this work, I would like to focus instead on the interactions between the distinct creative disciplines encompassed by this collaboration.

Consequently, I will now turn to the collaborative process, the linchpin of which is the graphic score I created as the interpretive 'common denominator' for communication with

¹ Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: from Wagner to Cage*, (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 35.

the choreographer. Because distinct images are only understood in proximity to one another, the creation of the graphic score introduced the spatial in the time-space relationship mentioned above. Musicologist Richard Leppert reminds us:

The way of seeing hence incorporates the way of hearing: the artist must produce images in such a way that their meanings will be congruent with those produced by sight and sound together in the lived experience of the original and intended viewer.²

The viewers within this context were the creator and choreographer, and later in the progress of the project, the composer. The two perspectives represented—consistent with the duality of the Sonata—both met the original musical line with the physical line of movement, and also interpreted the geometric lines that constitute the graphic representation of the music through the musical lines of fresh composition. What had originally inspired the graphic score also emerged from it to influence the whole of the creative process: gesture, in all of its various manifestations. In addition to the visual gestures put forth by the graphic score, I provided the choreographer with video clips of technical gestures at the cello corresponding to specific excerpts of the Sonata. By employing the model of Simon Shaw-Miller, quoted above, gestural inputs and outputs together could be described as visual—technical—musical—physical. Again, the *spaces between* these different types of gestures are the '...sites of rich and provocative activity.'³ In seeking to understand these gestures and the relationships between them, I will present two mechanisms that facilitated this collaborative process: an investigation of the gestures themselves, perceived as resulting from the 'musical forces' proposed by Steve Larson, and the space between these gestures in which sound and movement, music and choreography interact, represented by a discussion of synaesthesia.

Steve Larson's melodic and rhythmic inertia, gravity, and magnetism influenced the scientific nature of the ideas that emerged from conversations between cellist and choreographer (reinforcing those of the graphic score), and promoted movement motifs that explored the relationships between two musical forces acting simultaneously. The notion of synaesthesia—from its most common manifestation as audio-visual phenomenon to consideration as inter-sense, and by extension, inter-art analogy—proved a recurrent stimulus that challenged the objectives and implications of the project process and final outcome.

Exposition of abstract ideas in the graphic score finds grounding in the approaches of musical forces and synaesthesia, which stimulate collaborative creation. The general trajectory of discussion, then, traverses from conceptual to actual: description of images traces gesture through the graphic score, thereby revealing its interpretive rationale; musical forces and the principle of synaesthesia help to explain how gesture transforms from an abstract concept to a participant in the physical experience of creativity; gesture unifies the choreography and facilitates its fluidity; gesture emerges from the new composition through translation of selected pages of the graphic score.

² Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xxi.

³ Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music*, 35.

Before delving into the graphic score, a general sense of perspective on music-dance collaboration begs a pertinent comparison to the convenient 20-year-old precedent: the *Prelude* and *Sarabande* from the Third Bach Solo Cello Suite, performed by Yo-Yo Ma, and choreographed by Mark Morris.⁴ The spatial arrangement of dancers, their paths of movement, and the lines created by individual bodies all reflect a Neoclassical aesthetic, which complements the Baroque dance suite. Geometric symmetry and movements in counterpoint are both archetypical examples of this aesthetic. Key to this interpretation is the placement of the cellist atop a pedestal. The immediate implication is that the cellist assumes the status of the deity to be worshipped, especially considering the bowing motions of the dancers in supplication before an altar. Another possibility is that this spectacle is Sound personified and consecrated.

Apart from the Neoclassical aesthetic, the distinguishing feature of this 1995 choreography is the way in which movement is precisely coordinated with various aspects of metre and rhythm.⁵ This 'mirroring' of movement and sound is the principle against which the current choreography reacts. The present collaboration seeks subtler manifestations of sound, and points of creative resistance where music and dance maintain independence. Collaborative malleability was afforded by the multiple potentialities of the graphic representation of the music.

⁴ 'Yo-Yo Ma plays the Prelude from Bach's Cello Suite No. 3', YouTube video, posted by 'lesludmm73', 9 August 2008, <http://youtu.be/IGY4LtJ2_CI> accessed 17 August 2015.

'J.S. Bach: Cello Suite No. 3: Sarabande', YouTube video, posted by 'gskndbrg', 15 October 2008, <<http://youtu.be/kAX7WF6iMcU>> accessed 17 August 2015.

⁵ This definition of mirroring is my own; for further discussion of the implications of meter and rhythm for musical motion, see the section 'Mapping Musical Forces'.