

*Directing Musical Personalities: Breaking with the Old Sonic Economy
in the Working Method of Marcela Lucatelli*

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Abstract:

Departing from my own experience as a performer of Marcela Lucatelli's compositions, I evince the ways in which her compositional method accommodates the individual propensities of her performers. Similar to certain theater or film directors, Lucatelli encourages her performers to express themselves with guiding artistic principles in mind. Drawing inspiration from her "actors," she then assembles the materials into a larger performative work. As I reflect upon this deeply collaborative working method, I look to the ways it uses a combination of improvisation and composition to challenge the old sonic economy. Additionally, I examine the implications of Lucatelli's compositional approach and its contribution to and alteration of the new music cultural landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

To be in a perpetual state of reaction, one must find that perfect equipoise between perceiving and acting; listening and making; observing and producing. The moment these seemingly oppositional mental states lose tension, the artist ceases to react, *failing* as an improviser. Following this line of reasoning, the performer can fail by way of two options: she gives in to unconscionable impulses that could be perceived as sloppy or even worse, irrelevant; she retroactively thinks and therefore (re)performs the music out of its improvisational existence. The space between these two poles of thought (perceiving, listening, observing) and impulse (acting, making, producing) must remain equals in every phase of the process (which is inexplicable from the performance) in order to successfully stake its claim as halfway decent improvisation. The ability to react appropriately to a musical impulse functions as a sonic economy for improvisational success. Despite the highly protean determination for an appropriate reaction—provided that it is often dependent upon audience, venue, social hierarchies, etc.—the performer must be able to read the situation in order to gain a higher status within the (old) sonic economy. Should the performer cross the line that divides thought from impulse, the improviser risks being deemed a bad improviser, or be relegated to the likes of a composer. Being a composer is not devalued in the sonic economy, however a self-identified improviser must maintain their social position, akin to the Indian caste system, in order to remain sonically, economically, and socially viable. While the composer may be an improviser one night, and the improviser may compose a piece, they are not to overlap within the actual the development of a piece.

The poles of impulse and thought that dictate the improviser's process are likewise essential in sorting improvisers from composers. Should a composer dabble too highly in instinct, the title as composer runs the risk of being rescinded. Where composition transcends human instinct, improvisation transcends the oppression of the human mind. Drawing upon the Cartesian model, body is to improvisation and mind is to composition. While instinct may serve as a compositional impetus for the work, it cannot be essential to its creation, nor can it make an appearance during the rehearsal process, or any other later phases of development. However, unlike the balance between thought and impulse required for an improviser, thought has no limits for a composer. Perhaps more strikingly so for the composer than the improviser, thought and impulse must remain starkly disparate entities incapable of intermingling—for should thought be considered to contain impulse, it fails the composer's claim to temporal foresight.

If thought is rather defined as the reflection upon impulses, determined by its duration of mental engagement, then thought retains its own identity. However if thought encompasses instinct, it loses its contrariety. If the value of a quick timescale of thought (improvisation) is posed against the value of a slow timescale of thought (composition), both timescales substantiate their place within the old sonic economy by means of contradiction. Along these lines, Ed Sarath defines composition as “. . . the discontinuous process of creation and iteration (usually through notation) of musical ideas. In other words, the composer generates materials in one time frame and encodes them in a work in another. This is not to say that these phases of the composing process are necessarily discrete, and that creation ceases while notation or some form of iteration or reflection takes place, but rather that a key characteristic of composition is its multi-layered temporality. The composer

enters the ‘timescape’ of a work, and yet may also step back to isolate, reflect upon, and possibly revise any given moment, all toward fashioning a structure for performance at a time other than that at which it is created.”¹ Essential to Sarath’s definition is the notion of a “multi-layered temporality” in which the composer engages longer timescales of thought. Meanwhile Sarath defines improvisation as “. . . the spontaneous creation and performance of musical materials in a real-time format, where the reworking of ideas is not possible.” The improviser is assessed by their ability to *think quickly* and act appropriately in their current sonic situation, whereby the composer must demonstrate that their thoughts were slow and measured enough to yield a more “idealistic” piece, especially with regards to form.

Should a composer or improviser break with these aforementioned laws, the old sonic economy risks collapse—something that is surprisingly easy to do. The delineation between both processes do not hold up well to further inquiry, especially as contemporary composers and improvisers continue to blur the line between fast and slow timescales of thought. Sarath does manage to accommodate a mixture of a compositional and improvisational approach, which he refers to as the a “Retensive-Protensive temporality,” defining it as “the projection of awareness in past and future directions, thus sharing some similarity to the expanding conception of the composer, and yet occurs in the same continuous framework as does improvisation. RP conception may therefore be invoked as a subordinate temporality by improvisers, manifesting itself when past ideas are recalled and developed, or when future-directed strategies are implemented.” In this temporality, representative of the *new* economy, one can use improvisation as a compositional method, or use elements of

1 Sarath, Ed. "A New Look at Improvisation." *Journal of Music Theory* 40, no. 1 (1996): 1. doi:10.2307/843921.

composition as an improvisational method. In thinking about this alternative temporality, I would like to ask: At what point do these two temporalities become indistinguishable?

One such composer that consciously defies the peremptory methods of the old sonic economy (amongst others as I will demonstrate) is Denmark-based Brazilian musical creator, Marcela Lucatelli. Having had the privilege of working directly with Lucatelli, I can attest to her working model, how it pertains to me as a composer, improviser, and performer, as well as examine the ways in which it incorporates both timescales during all phases of the piece's development and performance. The indivisibility of improvisation from composition in Lucatelli's works is not necessarily a reactionary stance towards an older, perhaps oppressive working method, but rather an advantageous plan of attack for her over-arching artistic goals. These goals seek to utilize the strength of each musical individual in the hopes of yielding the more overtly expressive and unique performance.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES THE OLD SONIC ECONOMY?

The old sonic economy can be defined as an extension of quasi-Kantian aesthetic universalisms that function to hierarchically sort beauty from ugliness, sublimity from the everyday. "Disinterested pleasure," as defined by Kant, transcends the realms of reason. Taking pleasure in objects that offer no direct personal gain or are essentially useless implies that we expect others to feel to take the same pleasure in those same objects. Fundamental to disinterested pleasure, then, would be the universality of aesthetic judgment.² However as aptly critiqued by Michael Davidson, "this conflation of non-contingent personal pleasure with collective ascent is the cornerstone of bourgeois

² Bethany Younge, *Seeing and hearing disability in Mauricio Kagel's "Repertoire" from "Staatstheater"*, "unpublished paper, 12/21/2018, pp. 7-8.

aesthetics, from Karl Marx to Herbert Marcuse.”³ Perhaps what is most striking about this aesthetic paradigm is not the universal aspect of dividing beauty from ugliness, but rather what is required in order to determine the separation between the two. Beyond just erasing subjectivity from aesthetic judgment, Kant’s theory implies that pleasure can be easily detached from displeasure, and that a more ambiguous interpretation is irrelevant or unfit for further inquiry.

As elucidated by Terry Eagleton, Kantian aesthetics were essential in uniting the German eighteenth-century populous as well as upholding political absolutism:

What germinates in the eighteenth century as the strange new discourse of aesthetics is not a challenge to the political authority; but it can be read as symptomatic of an ideological dilemma inherent in absolutist power. Such power needs for its own purposes to take account of ‘sensible’ life, for without an understanding of this no dominion can be secure. The world of feelings and sensations can surely not just be surrendered to the ‘subjective’, to what Kant scornfully termed the ‘egoism of taste’; instead, it must be brought within the majestic scope of reason itself. If the *Lebenswelt* is not rationally formalizable, have not all the most vital ideological issues been consigned to some limbo beyond one’s control? Yet how can reason, that most immaterial of faculties, grasp the grossly sensuous? Perhaps what makes things available to empirical knowledge in the first place, their palpable materiality, is also in a devastating irony what banishes them beyond recognition. Reason must find some way of penetrating the world of perception, but in doing so must not put at risk its own absolute power.⁴

The reasoning involved in separating aesthetic pleasure from displeasure (though somehow the same time transcended by the two) would seem to incur profit by way of its own self-regulation. Falling in line with the mandates of the state, aesthetic judgment exposes the social stratum from which the interpreter belongs. In whatever way the interpreter interprets

3 Davidson, Michael. “Aesthetics” In *Keywords of Disability Studies*. NYU Press, 2015.

4 Eagleton, Terry. "Free Particulars." In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 14-15. Blackwell Publishing, 1990.

an artwork, their social and economic position within society is justified. Put simply, should the interpreter use judgment—whether with regards to aesthetics or otherwise—in accordance with the state’s agenda, the interpreter may be more likely to maintain their (higher) social status. Provided that the rich are more likely to be in accordance with the governing state (and vice versa), the tastes of the higher classes determine what is or is not considered disinterested pleasure. The lower classes are expected express aesthetic judgment along the decrees commanded by the upper class. Essential to these decrees, however, is precisely their unattainability.

Along these lines, aesthetic judgment is but one convenient way of determining social order and difference. Historically from Plato to Shaftesbury to Hume and beyond, beauty has been attributed with the duty of upholding a moral code. Monique Roelofs explains, “the human sense of beauty is able to register the presence of this design, recognizing in advance of personal benefit or utility and independently of rational comprehension, that is, in a distinterested fashion, those actions, traits of character, and forms that stand in a just proportion with the whole, and that, as such, qualify as good.”⁵ And despite this claim to “goodness,” it is beauty that is often responsible for “unjust constellations of difference.”⁶ These constellations enforce roles not only on lines of class, but also race and gender. Roelof goes on to show how Shaftesbury used as aesthetic moral codes to impose racial difference:

5 Roelofs, Monique. "Beauty's Moral, Political, and Economic Labor." In *The Cultural Promise of the Aesthetic*, 92-93. Bloomsbury, 2014.

6 Ibid.

Politeness in figures helped still to polish grace. . . . [A]s beauteous forms polish (taking politeness with its consequences), so ugly barbarize. . . . But this assert: that neither Jew, Egyptian, nor Chinese polite. This is judgment of politeness. If polite: show me a picture, a statue, coin, proportion, nature. But arabesque! Japan! Indian! Savage. Monstrous. Even in their portraiture, pleasure-pieces, wanton pieces. Also gods monstrous, frightful according to Egyptian and Syrian models; or Turkish mosques, no architecture, or statuary, or figures: or as a bad as none.⁷

The moral-aesthetic codes outlined by these philosophers also translate along the lines of gender. “Truth” and “goodness,” as Plato would define them, elide with masculinity in its “order of reason,” while falsehood and corruption is associated with the feminine, i.e. the body.⁸ Where goodness can be attributed to the rationality of the (beautiful) man, falsehood and the misleading sensorium of the body is reserved for likes of the (ugly) woman.

It would therefore seem that a clearly defined and striated social order based upon human difference is essential to the continuation of this aesthetic economy. In addition to imposing strict social positions with regards to class, gender, race, and (dis)ability, the aesthetic economy must impose highly specified artistic differences and roles. However more than ever before, artists have braved other mediums of artistic expression beyond their central domain of expertise.⁹

As Morton Subotnick explains in his essay about mixed-media music, “It is fairly well established that the long-expected ‘common language’ of the twentieth century has not

7 Ibid, 94.

8 Ibid, 97.

9 While opera has been considered a full mixed-media production, notions of expertise are nonetheless preserved. Composers compose the music; performers perform the music; directors direct the action on stage. With the exception of the singers who are granted the ability to behave both as musicians and actors, none deviate from their (self) assigned artistic roles.

been achieved.” Provided that these twentieth century composers pursue many different styles, in addition to different mediums, “The fractured nature of twentieth-century music has invalidated the concert hall as an effective institution for its presentation.”¹⁰ It goes without saying that the immersive multi-media performance cannot be accommodated by a concert hall in the same way it a strictly musical one can.

The New Discipline, a movement developed in the twenty-first century, derives its identity from its very multi-mediality within the cultural landscape of new music. One of the central figures of the movement, Jennifer Walshe, describes The New Discipline “as a way . . . to connect composition which have a wide range of disparate interests but all share the common concern of being rooted in the physical, theatrical and visual, as well as musical; pieces which often invoke the extra-musical, which activate the non-cochlear.”¹¹ Confronting the many pieces that extend beyond just sound required for a musical performance, more musicians within the new music community directly engage the body and the visual than perhaps ever before. Musicologist, composer, and singer, Nina Eidsheim, goes as far as to claim that from her works *Boomerang* and *Speechjammer* “. . . we may conclude that the process is never exempt from sound; sound-making bodies are never irrelevant or paralyzed where sound is concerned. That is, aesthetic value is neither tethered to nor hinges on sonic results.”¹² If the central point of evaluation from the musicians in *Boomerang* isn’t the sound, is it really just music? Multimedia artwork,

10 Subotnick, Morton. “Extending the Stuff Music Is Made Of.” *Music Educators Journal*, vol. 55, no. 3, Nov. 1968, www.jstor.org/stable/3392392.

11 Walshe, Jennifer. “The New Discipline and Notes on Conceptualisms.” 2016.

12 Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Music As Action." In *Sensing Sound Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Duke University Press, 2015.

especially when presented within the context of a specified artistic medium, such as music, breaches the aesthetic economy through its very abandonment of capitalist notions of expertise. The global assembly line collapses when the individual parts (and in this case, humans) no longer fulfill their duties. How can musicians focusing on their bodies (as if dancers) fit within the old aesthetic economy?

Extending to that of this sonic economy, a similar fulfillment of roles must be preserved. If the composer fails to uphold their half of the bargain—that is, to act strictly as a composer—the sonic economy risks collapse. Likewise if the improviser or performer relinquishes their attributed positions, they too disrupt the assembly line of sonic production. This not only threatens the disinterested economy of pleasure, but also the proliferation and substantiation of wealth for those in power. It would therefore seem that a noncompliance with laws regarding the practitioner is a defining feature of the the *new* sonic economy. “In the creative economy of contemporary western musical production, the defined roles of composer and performer remain powerfully embedded, despite indications from academic writing and the statements of practitioners that this division of creative labour is increasingly regarded as highly porous.”¹³

In the new sonic economy, my value as a performer is inseparable from my value as a composer; my value as a composer is inseparable from my value as an improviser. I am expected to engage with the work on multiple timescales of thought, while also maintaining a delicate balance between my role as an interpreter and author. Beyond acting as a well-rounded musician, my value depends on my ability to recognize when I am or am not

13 Clarke, Eric F., Gorton, David, Doffman, Mark and Östersjö, Stefan. “Fluid practices, solid roles?” in *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*. By Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

needed as an aesthetic contributor. In other words, asserting Bethany Younge has to be in harmony with supporting the vision of Marcela Lucatelli. This balance between the you's and me's of all collaborators involved is essential to rehearsals¹⁴ and performances. And as the lines between composer, performer, improviser, author, interpreter become increasingly indistinguishable, so do all stages involved in the work's development. Paraphrasing Jack Stillinger, Nicholas Donin explains that "the 'myth of solitary genius' established in the nineteenth century long prevented scholars and audiences from recognizing creative collaboration in the context of the dominant western canonical model of 'single authorship.'" Relating this idea to new music, Donin goes on to express that "New music presents some conspicuous cases of this tension, valuing a spirit of 'research' that is embodied both in solitary composers and in collective organizations (ensembles, studios, centres)."¹⁵ The "myth of the solitary genius" helps preserve the old economy's division of labor, meanwhile collaborative work and its disruption of single authorship and singular expertise threatens to dismantle the old economy's assembly line of artistic production.

Directing her relatively free musical actors (such as myself) during the rehearsal process, Lucatelli compels each rehearsal to feel as if it were a performance. During the actual performances, Lucatelli often performs alongside her collaborators, even performing *the act of directing*, as an overt reference to her rehearsal process. While the timescale of thought would increase with each additional rehearsal of her piece—provided that we would reflect upon what did or did not work and adjust the piece accordingly—the instability

14 Note that I do not separate the creation of a work from its rehearsal. Inherent to this rehearsal process is the act of creating and/or developing the work.

15 Donin, Nicholas. "Domesticating Gesture" in *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*. By Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017. December 2017. Accessed May 15, 2019.

offered by her own contribution as a performing director forced the work to partially remain on the shorter timescale of thought. Lucatelli kept her musical actors on edge, eliciting unique musical events to occur with each performance. At tension with one another, these two timescales do not subvert one another, nor do they assist in one another's contradiction, but rather cooperate as mutual entities for a new sonic economy.

THE WORKING METHOD OF MARCELA LUCATELLI

I first met Lucatelli in 2016 in Darmstadt where I worked with her alongside Mocrep, a Chicago-based ensemble of which I was a member at that time, to develop her piece, *this is a piece not a WHOL*.¹⁶ Lucatelli showed up to the first rehearsal with a large collection of kitschy plastic objects. Counter to what I would have anticipated even in a collaborative workshop setting, she came with no clear trajectory or idea for the piece we were supposed to create within less than two weeks. We had just met Lucatelli for the first time earlier that very day, and had only engaged with her artwork virtually. In these first rehearsals, I felt it was my duty to push our working process forward, as I anxiously attempted to direct the group towards a clear trajectory in hopes that it could guide us through the development of the piece. We could always improvise the whole piece, of course, but we weren't there as *improvisers*; we were there as collaborative performers. It eventually became clear to me,

¹⁶ Mocrep is a “collective creating radically experimental, interdisciplinary, and collaborative work. Equal parts music, performance art, video art, and movement, its varied and fluid practice reflects the complexity of contemporary culture and relationships. Its work subverts the rigid structures that circumscribe relations among artists and commodify the products of their labor, creating new possibilities for exchange among artists, artworks, and audiences.” In “JUST BEYOND OUR INSTRUMENTS IS THE WORLD,” Mocrep’s workshop in Darmstadt, the ensemble “explored the possibilities of new music without traditional classical instruments, the instrument-performer relationship, and collaboration between performers and composers. Mocrep selected eight participants, who each brought ideas or partly finished pieces which were realized collaboratively over the course of the two week workshop.”

however, that Lucatelli had not *not* sufficiently prepared for our workshop as I had initially assumed; she fully intended for and even relished the nakedness that characterized our first meeting. It was then that it became obvious that her ugly little plastic objects were to function as the central starting point for the work's development by way of communicating a strong guiding aesthetic. Contagious was Lucatelli's surprisingly relaxed stance as I gradually allowed for the objects, and then people, guide the work's development.

While Lucatelli's starting point for artistic creation was fairly loose, her decision-making process was even looser. Lucatelli embraced the majority of our artistic suggestions. When a certain idea didn't seem to work, despite Lucatelli herself suggesting its initial trial, Lucatelli was quick to listen to the concerns presented by her collaborators. When a collaborator made a suggestion, she nearly always gave the idea a chance. Our probationary method for each idea always came back to improvisation. Depending on how *we* as individuals improvised, the idea therefore would or would not make the cut. If everyone was on board with this improvisational trial and Lucatelli herself approved, it made its way into the piece. Put simply, each idea collectively introduced had to pass through an inspection imposed by improvisation. Only until we knew how a musical idea *felt* in real time through our bodies could we then determine its place within the amorphous work in progress. As improvisers, we each became performing composers in every aspect of the creation.

This approach recalls Nina Eidsheim's description of her collective rehearsal process for *Noisy Clothes* where the performers think of the body as a central point for which sounds can then emerge even as subsidiary stimuli.¹⁷ I would argue that Lucatelli takes this step further by allowing performers to determine the sounds and shape of the piece by way of

¹⁷ Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Music As Action." In *Sensing Sound Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Duke University Press, 2015.

how they are practiced and felt through the body as improvisers. The performers must act as listeners both in the moment of improvisation but also in the process of developing the formal scope of the work. The composer, in this case Lucatelli, listens to the needs of her performers, the success of the momentary improvisation, as well as the shape of the work. Her role as composer here has substantial overlap with our roles as performers, and one could argue that the demarcations between the two is nominal at best. As composers, performers, and improvisers of this work, we measure our success by our ability to listen *ubiquitously*.¹⁸

As defined by Anahid Kassabian, ubiquitous listening is the involuntary act of encountering music on a daily basis within our industrialized world.¹⁹ Unlike hearing, which implies passivity with regards to the perception of sounds, listening is an active form of perception. Largely due to the advent of recording technologies and their mass distributions, ubiquitous listeners may choose to listen to their favorite album in nearly any location at nearly any moment in time. Even if we do not actively choose to listen to music, we may encounter it in the elevator, through the earphones of another subway passenger, in a grocery store, etc. Implicit to Kassabian's notion of ubiquitous listening is the idea that the listener is always receiving (whether voluntarily or otherwise) sonic stimuli, implying a

18 As opposed to listening *deeply*, a concept developed by Pauline Oliveros, where the listening is most often an active form of meditation. Oliveros explains, "The practice is intended to expand consciousness to the whole space/time continuum of sound/silences. Deep Listening is a process that extends the listener to this continuum as well as to focus instantaneously on a single sound (engagement to target detail) or sequences of sound/silence. In order to acquire the discipline and control that meditation develops, relaxation as well as concentration is essential. The practice of Deep Listening is intended to facilitate creativity in art and life through this form of meditation."

19 Kassabian, Anahid. *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. University of California Press, 2013.

certain degree of acquiescence. Should the listener try to escape this paradigm, they would have to likewise retreat from human development in most, if not all, of its forms. The meaning behind ubiquitous listening, as I argue, radically transforms when applied to the act of music-making. Philosopher Margaret Gilbert speaks to this process: “Noticing requires attention, and a failure to notice is the result of a failure to maintain a kind of assiduous perceptual acuity across the span of the joint or collective intention. . .” (as cited in Hagberg 2017).²⁰

A successful ubiquitous listening cultivates a dynamic tension between both passivity and activity, as was previously discussed with regards to improvisation. An especially *good* ubiquitous listener can listen on multiple timescales and from various perspectives. Listening for what is needed in the moment, the ubiquitous listener uses these sounds as guideposts for making decisions regarding larger structural dimensions, as required for composition. In order for this to happen, the ubiquitous listener must simultaneously imagine themselves as audience member, performer, improviser, and composer. In this music-making scenario, the ubiquitous listener is no longer a powerless subject as Kassabian described, but rather a tempering agent of musical transformation. While pure improvisation may take on some form of ubiquitous listening, its inability to address sounds/actions retroactively limits its ability to listen structurally. Strict composition also relies on some form of ubiquitous listening, however its fixed sounds/actions make no demand that the performers listen as if they were composers. Some combination of the two would merge each approach’s listening strengths to reveal a richer ubiquitous listening experience.

²⁰ Hagberg, Garry L. "The Ensemble as Plural Subject" in *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*. By Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017. December 2017. Accessed May 15, 2019.

While each rehearsal of *this is a piece not a WHOL* concretized the piece a bit further, many elements of the work never took on further definition. This was not due to a lack of time or discipline on our part; in order to maintain our status as ubiquitous listeners, many aspects of the work required a certain degree of freedom. The general shape of the piece and the type of actions desired were clear, however the details of their formations resisted any prescriptive order. Furthermore, in the actual performance of the work, Lucatelli would appear on stage as an autonomous performer performing as a director. Provided that her directions were only roughly decided, her performative (non-verbal and verbal) instructions would serve as a disruption of the pre-determined shape. In this way, another form of ubiquitous listening was required: we not only had to respond to her directions in sensible ways, but also manage to accommodate them within the larger scope of the work.

This method of collaboration, improvisation, and composition for generating a new musical work would seem to resemble a composite of what Johnson-Laird calls the “neo-Darwinian” and “neo-Lamarckian model” as is elucidated by Eric F. Clarke, Gorton, David, Mark Doffman, and Stefan Östersjö:

In the context of improvisation with its requirement for ideas to be implemented in real time, Johnson-Laird suggests that only certain types of algorithm can realistically be envisaged. Three are considered: Darwinian, Lamarckian and a composite of these two. The distinction between these algorithms lies in the degree to which constraint is exercised at either the ‘generate’ or the ‘select’ stage of the process. In the neo-Darwinian model, ideas are generated in an unstructured manner and are then subject to rigorous evaluation that involves the rejection and selection of candidate forms. This is ‘random generation’ followed by highly constrained selection. In the neo-Lamarckian model, the original generation of ideas is highly constrained (through the accumulation of prior experience), so that the secondary process of evaluation is reduced to an arbitrary, minimal selection between the members of a very small set of viable alternatives. Johnson-Laird describes a third algorithm, a composite, that includes an intermediate level of selectivity at both stages of the process. The neo-Lamarckian process is distinct from the other two in that it has no need of recursion (the

necessary cycles or iterations between the stages of the process) for it to be effective. As a model of a mental process, the key point about the Lamarckian model is its ability to function without the need for a significant memory store (which is required to link the generative and evaluative stages of the neo-Darwinian or composite model). (as cited in Clarke, Gorton, Doffman, and Östersjö, 2017) ²¹

The constraints imposed by Lucatelli were not necessarily verbal ones; her aesthetically provocative objects were the tacit limiters. Nevertheless whatever sounds/actions we generated still needed significant evaluation and revision, a process more akin to collective composition. While I would argue that the neo Darwinian model seems more representative of Lucatelli's process than the Lamarckian model, I think its important to address just how inextricable these two process can be. For example, despite having only little-to-no constraints beyond the aesthetic objects presented to us, we developed a concise sonic language with relative ease. As we continued to work and make decisions, limitations were thusly imposed, requiring less and less evaluation and revision. Perhaps this demonstrates the very weakness of Johnson-Laird's supposed delineations between the two models, but it also speaks to the complexity of Lucatelli's working method.

In the performance of *this is a piece not a WHOL*, myself and two other performers erratically moved about as our limbs linked to one another by rubber bands. Attached to our feet, legs, wrists, fingers, and even eyeslids were the kitschy objects. Amplified through both instrumental and contact microphones, the objects would react with small sounds in response to any minute movement. As we attempted to escape our plight, Lucatelli would approach us with chains and straps further limiting our ability to move autonomously. The

21 Clarke, Eric F., Gorton, David, Doffman, Mark and Östersjö, Stefan. "Fluid practices, solid roles?" in *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*. By Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

more she would attach, the more we would resist our fate. While we knew she would take this provocative role, it was never obvious to us when and how she would bond us together. As we continued to rustle around, Lucatelli would later drop other noisy objects on us and would even try to play us as if we were her sounding instruments, further elucidating her role as director. Wrapping us further in bubble wrap and caution tape, we eventually managed to escape. Once free, we improvised and actively sounded those areas of our bodies that were augmented by contact microphones (in my case, my throat). As the piece progressed, her role became less directorial, though equally independent. Each action that followed was pre-determined, however how long and in what affect it occurred was left open.



Lucatelli, bottom right, chains us together in *this is a piece not a WHOL*.

Similarly in *Off-Human* (2017), a lengthy piece I helped develop and perform in Chicago as a member of Mocreps, Lucatelli performed alongside us as a commanding force. Towards the beginning of the work, she would conduct our entrances and cutoffs as we sang the words projected on the wall and her mannerisms and affect would inform what kind of inflection was imposed onto each sung word. Despite knowing in advance that she would be taking this role, we never knew the details of her performance and how it would impact us, provided that it would change from rehearsal to rehearsal.



The chorus sings the words projected on the screen following Lucatelli's expressive commands (though she is not pictured here).

Lucatelli's approach in *Off-Human* has much in common with Butch Morris' Art of Conduction. Perhaps more representative of the neo-Lamarckian model, "Conduction" is a collection of physical gestures expressed by the conductor that are to be read by a group of musicians as symbols representing various actions and/or sounds. As Morris describes in his

notes for *Testament*, a CD collection of the first fifty Conductions, “Each sign and gesture transmits generative information for interpretation by the individual and the collective, to provide instantaneous possibilities for altering or initiating harmony, melody, rhythm, articulation, phrasing, or form.” (as cited in Stanley, 2010)²² During the rehearsal process of each “Conduction,” the performers must learn the corresponding sounds associated with each gesture. Morris shapes and molds the sounds through an improvisational process. Describing and demonstrating the sounds that should occur, the performer then attempts to attain the right sonic texture with their instrument. If the resulting sonic texture is not in congruence with Morris’ sonic desires, verbal feedback is provided so that the texture can be adjusted accordingly.

Despite the pre-determination involved in defining each gesture and resulting sound, the performance remains very much within the improvisational tradition as Morris himself explains: “This is ensemble music for improvisers. A lot of improvisers say that they are their compositions, because they give the music its structure. But I give equal authorship to all the people involved. I use the word improvisation so people will know what I’m talking about, but I prefer to refer to these musicians as ‘intuiters.’”²³ Indeed *intuiters* would denote a different kind of musician—one that is highly flexible and sensitive to the demands of any given sonic environment. The intuiiter must sustain awareness for when a more submissive or dominant musical role is required; the intuiiter must ubiquitously listen. Morris himself aptly articulates this mode of listening: “Through experience. And playing, looking,

22 Stanley, Thomas T. “Butch Morris and the Art of Conduction®.” UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2010.

23 Henderson, David, and Morris, Butch. “Butch Morris.” *BOMB*, vol. 55, 1996, pp. 32–36.

listening. Seeing people's responses. And understanding my own response to music. Music isn't something on paper, it's something you make.”

Morris’ sets of signs challenge semiotics’ preference for notated scores. The relative ephemerality of his signs—provided that they are not locked down through time in the form of a score (however they are formatted into something comparable to an instruction manual)—counteracts the systematization of what the signs actually signify. As noted by Keith Sawyer, “. . . group interaction has been almost completely neglected in the study of sign systems. For example, when a recent issue of *Semiotica* (1987, Vol. 66, nos. 1/3) was devoted to the semiotics of music, none of the articles addressed the phenomenon of improvisational performance, nor of group creativity.”²⁴ However, unlike pure improvisation, all of players involved in “Conduction” are in agreement on what the appropriate musical response should be to a given sign or gesture. The fixed gestural signifiers and their concomitant brevity render “Conduction” a particularly compelling and atypical artwork in the field of semiotics. It is in this way that “Conduction” like *this is a piece not a WHOLE* and *Off-Human* contribute to the development of the new sonic economy.

CONCLUSION

My examination of Marcela Lucatelli’s working method departs first and foremost from my perspective as one of her collaborators. While others who have collaborated with her may have had entirely different experiences, whether positive or negative, it is important to note that the personal experience of the performer/actor substantially effects the development and ultimate success of the piece. Should one, for whatever reason, feel

²⁴ Sawyer, R. Keith. *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2003.

disillusioned by her process, the effectiveness of the piece is likely to suffer as a result. In order for any of Lucatelli's works to be convincing, all collaborators must be fully invested and feel their contribution as artists is essential. Without total commitment from each collaborator, the individual risks retreating back to their more traditional artistic division of labor. It is for this reason that Lucatelli's working model and resulting performance(s) are predicated upon challenging the old sonic economy.

By providing her collaborators the opportunity to help compose the piece, Lucatelli further ensures, from the very beginning, that all members remain invested throughout the process in its entirety. Her approach not only breaks with an antediluvian model of music-making, but also shrewdly compels a more ardent performance. If all collaborators feel that the piece is in some capacity their own, it would seem to logically follow that they would be more invested in its performative success. Put simply, with contribution comes responsibility.

In this new sonic economy authenticated by Lucatelli's working method, the individual is always aware of how their piece actually fits into the larger puzzle. No longer a mindless body of habit (as are the potential pitfalls of expertise), the individual's new division of labor yields a never-ending stream of feedback; by having to regularly assess sonic outcomes, self-recognition and self-evaluation become more visceral to the music-making experience. While I never felt like a true equal to Lucatelli during the performance of the piece, I was keenly aware of how my contribution mattered, beyond just being an acting body of sonic production.

Indispensable from my mattering was the feeling that my artistic persona was valuable on a number of levels. I was needed as an improviser; as a composer; as a performer; as a

unique and inspiring individual. The differentiations between my improvising self, composing self, and so forth could not be treated isolated skillsets. My ability to improvise was essential to my ability to compose; my ability to compose was essential to my ability to improvise; my ability to react was essential to my ability to think. My body could not be disconnected from my mind.

Once validated as a collaborator from multiple musical standpoints, it was easier to then validate the differing perspectives of the other collaborators. Understanding my own sonic gravity directly translated to an ever-growing appreciation of another collaborator's sonic weight. Through this social and aesthetic dance of collaboration, each member gains access to the music-making tribe, to the act of truly belonging.

It strikes me as oddly funny that this essay was written in its entirety predicated upon the notion that it was Lucatelli who granted us this new sonic economy. We also granted ourselves this sonic economy, or perhaps that'll be the sonic economy to someday follow...

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