

INTERPRETATION AND CREATIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY PIANO MUSIC

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Background

Much of the published research on expression in performance has focused on the standard (tonal, metric) repertoire, has been conducted under 'laboratory-style' conditions, and has examined only final-state performances rather than the process by which those performances are developed.

Aims

This paper reports one part of a larger project studying the development of a performance interpretation within the repertoire of contemporary piano music, tracing this process from commissioning, through rehearsal, to first public performance. The aims of the project are to explore the processes by which an interpretation develops through rehearsal, is shaped by interaction with the composer, and is presented at the work's first public performance, taking account of the practical and musical considerations which affect real concert performance.

Method

One of three new works, commissioned, rehearsed and performed by a specialist contemporary pianist, will be presented. Interview data with the performer and composer, audio recording of rehearsals and performances, and MIDI data from rehearsals and the first performance have been collected.

Results

The data will be analysed to explore: i) the progressive shaping and refinement of the performer's realisation of the piece from first rehearsal to performance; ii) the performer's approach to some of the particular rhythmic notation used in the piece; iii) the role of instrumental sonority in shaping interpretation - a characteristic that has seldom been considered before in studies of expression and interpretation.

Conclusions

Our intention is that this study will contribute to: i) the still very small body of research that has studied the performance interpretation of music of our own time; ii) an understanding of the particular kinds of decision-making required by contemporary notation; iii) an understanding of the development of an expressive interpretation through rehearsal.