

MUSICIANSHIP AND NARRATIVITY: MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AS FOCALIZATION

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Background

Although musical narrativity is a relatively new research area in musicology, much has been written about the narrative aspects of music. But, just as in literary theory, there is no general consensus on how to define musical narrativity and on what its constitutive narrative elements exactly are. Furthermore, the main object of investigation into musical narrativity is nearly always the written musical score.

Aims

In this paper, I want to investigate the role the performer plays in the process of musical narration. In investigating this role, I want to devote special attention to the differences between performances by live musicians and performances by machines, and the implications of these differences for a musical narrativity.

Main Contribution

By using the narrative theory of Mieke Bal, I will argue that the performer fulfills the function of focalizer in a musical narrative, since we perceive the music through the 'eyes' of the performer. I will focus especially on the similarities and differences of the focalizer in music and in literature. After all, music and literature are two different media, so one cannot simply apply theories about literature on music, without taking into account the differences between literature and music.

Implications

The investigation into the role of the performer in a musical narrative will give us greater insight in the way musical narrativity is established. Since performance is an important, and even necessary, element in music, one cannot ignore this element when talking about narrativity in music.