

PIANISTS' INTERPRETATIVE INTENTIONS IN EXPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE

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Background

A large body of previous research has established the general principles of expression in piano performance. However, the variations of the expressive features in music performance need to be investigated in relation to performers' interpretative intentions.

Aims

This study investigated the relationship between a performer's interpretative intention and his/her own performance of a piece of music. The main purposes were to investigate whether music performers' interpretations are different from one another in a piece of music, and whether the interpretative intentions of a performer in the music correspond to his/her own performance.

Method

Five experienced pianists were given a short musical piece in which all expressive markings had been deliberately removed. The pianists were asked to interpret the music by indicating expressive markings on the music score, and perform it on a Disklavier piano. The MIDI data from the recorded performances were analysed in terms of two features of expressive performance: inter-onset timing and dynamics. The expressive markings indicated in the score by the pianists were converted into a numeric form based on a quantification model that relates graphical symbols in the score to timing and dynamic values.

Results

Significant interactions between the individuals and their performances were observed, indicating that the pianists' performances were significantly different from one another. For the timing data, each pianist's performance showed positive correlations with his/her interpretation as well as with the other pianists' interpretations, and for the dynamic data, each pianist showed more positive correlations with his/her own interpretation than with the others' interpretations.

Conclusions

These results demonstrate that the expressive characteristics of a performance relate strongly to the conscious interpretative intentions of performers, but that performers do not have complete awareness of their own expressive strategies.