

Developing and synthesising three areas and ten aspects of performance

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When preparing a performance, my ideal is to synthesise many aspects of music-making: to have a holistic approach to performance. I suggest three large areas of performance preparation and awareness each with three or four aspects, making ten total aspects of holistic performance.

1. Analytical technique: investigation into structure and form

- a. Voice leading and harmonic analysis: understanding the undulating waves of consonance and dissonance operating both in the vertical and spatial dimensions. Discovering and understanding the underlying linear structure the binds together these transformations of different qualities of harmony.
- b. motivic analysis – finding the interrelationships of motives and themes, understanding the growth of small units into larger ones, the transformation of one motive into another with a contrasting character.
- c. phrase structure and rhythm – Understanding the clauses, sentences, paragraphs and chapters of the work. Perceiving how one phrase relates to another, to what extent are they similar or contrasting. Perceiving the function of parts within the phrase (e.g. presentation, continuation, cadence) and of the phrases themselves within the phrase group or section. The importance of cadences in marking phrases links this analysis directly to harmonic structure, while the way that phrases are built from motifs links it to the motivic perspectives.

2. Interpretative technique: performance practice and physical technique

- a. Dynamics – the shaping of volume on many levels, also balance between voices.
- b. Matters of time: tempo flexibility at different levels (within the beat, within the bar, within the sub-phrase, within the large phrase), tempo choice.
- c. Colour and intonation – this directly relates to the harmony: dissonance and consonance, \sharp and \flat leading tones or harmonies, major, minor and diminished.
- d. Articulation – closely related to time, but this area focusses on the relationship of sound to silence: how long is the silence before and after the note, how should the tone be released into silence or bound to the next?

3. Psycho-technique: investigating the meaning of the work and projecting it in performance

- a. The embodiment and projection of the emotions of the work – discovering the main moods or characters, how they transform and where the emotional climaxes are.
- b. Investigating the cultural, artistic, psychological world of the composer
- c. Investigating the psychology and spirituality of the performance act

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