DEBATES

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Musical Performance Ethics

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1. The *ethos* of musical performance

"And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. And God saw that the light was good"[3]. These verses reveal the first speech act of God, the *fiat lux.* The verses, however, not only describe this discursive act but, firstly, they define the inseparability implied in such act, between the decree and its realization, between the enunciation and its performance; God said and there was. The verses also teach a second point, which continues to be a poetic pattern in the text, which is the consideration that God makes after the product of his creation: the light was *good.* The light is made and in existing it receives an *ethos,* a status of existence. A single term, *tob* (טֹוב) in Hebrew, as simple as it is, ultimately encompasses a myriad of concepts to the fragmented modern ears. The term does not consider that God only did a good job, but that He "imbued" the creation with his own goodness, his attribute (WALTKE; FREDRICKS, 2001, 70). The light was not evaluated as good, beautiful or just, as would prefer scholastic Neoplatonism. It *was* good; contained the sum of what is fitting to the God who created it.

When it comes to artistic production, especially the musical one, to assign a discourse as good or bad, right or wrong, sounds moot. What is the standard that qualifies a set of actions? Or what is the reference to evaluate the level of beauty or goodness of a musical discourse? Bringing any type of ethical qualification to music soon brings with it an element that seems tied to a moralism, which, in turn, does not provide good memories to any musician, even more in the contemporary context.

However, ethics should be of utmost interest to performers; this because it is defined by Aristotle himself, in his seminal treatise, *Nicomachean Ethics*, as

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3 Genesis 1: 3-4. The English Standard Version (ESV)

examining the nature of acts after their practice (ARISTOTLE, *Nichomachean Ethics*, II: 2). Musical practice, therefore, constitutes in its set of actions a reality able to be examined by ethics. Not only that, but ethics aims to examine the practice as habit and character or, to use the original Greek term in its *ethos.* If, in his Rhetoric, Aristotle seems to care more about the extent to which the discourse grants an ethical value to the one who pronounced, persuading the listener with the authority or credibility of the speaker, the treatise written to his son Nicomachus studies more the ontological value of actions performed by a subject. However, the two senses are not as disconnected as they seem. That is because of the question: what, finally, is a character? Or, in the present case, what constitutes the nature of what one does when interprets music: only black notes on a piece of paper? Just air vibrating through space and time?

Although *ethos* comes from two terms with different spellings, *éthos* and *êthos* (ἔθος and ἦθος), Aristotle works with the concept more as a way of being, a habit, but not so much in the sense of repetition, but as a set of actions that produces or manifests a value. However, the *ethos* with *eta* was most translated by Latin Philosophers as Lucretius and Cicero to a term that granted it a sense not only practical but as an intrinsically antecedent value, the infamous term *mores*: moral. Morality is no longer a set of actions that builds a value but it is a value in itself, a virtue where the manifestation of good is the only purpose. What happens then is an inversion in the role of cause and effect, process and product; virtue is not a result anymore but begins to be the own root of an action (SPINELLI, 2009).

Michel Meyer (2013) adds that *ethos* is the basic point of conflict and resolution within the human condition of having to be individual and collective at the same time. Man is destined to be one and, at the same time, to be corporatized in a community, thus dealing with the question of distance. In connecting with others and with other things, finally man constitutes his own state of existence, his own *ethos*. Morality would be nothing more than a reduced fixation of assemblages within this relation of distances. It is the simplification and standardization of a larger and more complex network of connections between bodies.

By definition, morality tries to be an ethic; but ethics is not morality. Deleuze (1988) makes clear in his reading of Spinoza's Ethics, understanding that "Ethics, which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values" (DELEUZE, 1988, 23). Not that the absence of metaphysical standards is here affirmed, on the contrary, the very force of attraction and repulsion of affection overflows the material. But rather than a totalitarian inquiring that assigns meaning to all acts, a local vision of actions is affirmed, instead, creating thus the possibility of a deeper analysis, perhaps even more beautiful and good, but which does that in searching on a specific affective setting.

In order to understand in a practical way how the ethical dimension can be developed in music, it is necessary to retrieve some propositions on the ethical implications of musical performance. Firstly, the ontology of music is defined ethically when it is assumed to be music *what people do in doing musical actions* (TEIXEIRA; FERRAZ, 2017). While ethics, music thus exceeds the category of object or product and finds its own existence in the fact that it is *made* (NOSKE, 1976)*.* People make music and, therefore, people act appropriately or not. While action, music thus becomes subject to examination through its ethical aspect or its *ethos.* As a set of actions, music finds its meaning less in linguistic referentials and more in that category called by the philosopher of science Michael Polanyi as "existential meaning" (POLANYI, 1962, 60); resuming Spinoza's Ethics, this meaning might not be exhausted in analysis or papers, as is customary to try on academic efforts, but it is possible to have an "adequate knowledge" of musical meaning and its affections when they are performed; not because "performance is music", as John Cage would like (CAGE; DUFFIE,1987), but because when music is made, meaning is finally actualized, entering reality; when music is made, it *is.*

One final aspect on the ontology of music that needs to be approached here, because of its ethical implication, is its very nature, as what philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Nicholas Wolterstorff understand as a "two-times art" which makes it unique, similarly perhaps only to Drama among all other arts (RICOEUR, 1996; WOLTESTORFF,1980). The very nature of music implies a partition, a division between its conception and its realization or between its composition and its performance. Whether through a ritual, an oral transmission, an improvisation

language or even a score, music demands as such a medium that transmits the normative record necessary for it to be actualized and for a piece of music to be *a* and not *b* in an occasion *x* and also in an occasion *y*.

Igor Stravinsky (1947) brings this question in a similar way in the sixth and last of his lectures at Harvard when he speaks of these two times as "potential music" and "actual music". Thus, Stravinsky shows the basic conclusion of the very nature of music: a performer is needed. Or replacing the assertion ethically: the performer is necessary for the existence of the music. However, he continues, the performer finds in this need a responsibility: it is not enough to be a reproducer, but more than that, he needs to be truly an interpreter. The rhetorical implication of the ontology of musical discourse, its double interpretation, is thus posed. The performer is responsible not only for reproducing some musical information but must interpret this information, understand-making this interpretation so that the audience will later make their own interpretation of a musical discourse. And it is at this point that Stravinsky claims to be a difference of an ethical order (STRAVINSKY, 1947, 121-124).

The performer begins thus to have more defined his *ethos.* Is there a meaning in music? Is it possible to have access to meaning in musical discourse? If so, how? These are questions that must be answered in order to allow the performer knowing more clearly his determinant set of values. Or not. In fact, these questions are inevitably answered every time we play music, with every performance. The ethical nature of music turns out to be perceived when one interprets some meaning coming from the text or if he or she falls at one pole of the interpretive spectrum: just fingering notes assuming there is nothing else beyond them, or, on the other hand, creating a new meaning, as ignoring that written and prescribed by the composer.

2. From taste to gesture: ethics of responsibility

Ethics is a necessity for human life, as pointed out above, but few are interested in discourses about it; talking about ethics seems necessarily to have to do with a normative preaching, where the goal is to affirm a set of actions as correct, thus, assign to another set the status of mistake. In relation to music, this relation is aggravated, since it would be the same as to make it possible to speak of

correctness and error, two categories absolutely present in the head of musicians in their daily hours of practice and in the pedagogical environment within the instrumental practice. Between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it seems to come from the later the fruit that abounds in the musical practice today.

There has never been so much talk about relativity and tolerance as in the Twentieth Century, but perhaps never has so much been said about good or bad performance either. If there is no taste from Church, nobility, or from a univocal technical school, what does the debate about the ethical dilemma refer to? The imposition of an ethical spectrum departs from the order of the reasonable and claims its throne to a relativism that transverses itself of tolerant, but that not sustains itself before the reality; music teachers continue to point interpretive paths despite others and instrumentalists continue to spend hours in search of a certain interpretation. And so new institutional altars are erected, from the Contest Jury to the taste of market, slyly taking on a normative character of musical decisions.

This problem is especially noticeable in the musical context, but it is not its exclusivity. In the years leading up to World War II, a German theologian called Dietrich Bonhoeffer returns from the United States to his country, precisely because he felt himself responsible for bringing up this discussion: if the authorship of the actions can finally be attributed to a party or an ideology, what would be left to individuals? The theologian then delivered a series of lectures and conferences, published posthumously in 1949, as the *Ethics,* his great work of the period, discussing the role of individual choice as the basic movement and meaning of human action. Bonhoeffer himself would be executed a few years before publication due to his involvement with Operation Valkyrie, a famous plan designed to murder Hitler; his life and work were thus witnesses and prophecies of what years later would be Hannah Arendt's analysis of the ethical condition of man from the judgment of Eichmann in Israel.

Bonhoeffer (2008) thinks the Ethics as an existential configuration *(Gestaltung),* a state of being in the world under construction, not by absolute standards - ideal - but after the practice of actions in the world. Ethics is the process of building the individual *ethos* that ultimately leads to the construction of

a communitarian *ethos.* As a study of practice, ethics can only be done in practice, therefore. It does not make sense a theoretical ethics, an ethology, in view of the unique being that is the man, beyond any Platonic: in being man acts. *Ecce homo*: this is the man, the incarnation of the will in the action of the whole and undivided being (BONHOEFFER, 2008, 82). It is in this sense that ethics is nothing less than a value in being figured.

The problem with morality is that it is not what it purposes to be: self-evident. Goodness or justice do not emanate from the situations presented to us in the form of action. People have to act. And for this reason, morality becomes more a restriction of thought than a guide that conducts actions for fittingness to a given position in time and space. Any attempt to act by a *telos* of goodness ends up becoming arbitrary because the transcendent goodness can only blind who stare at it blankly. It is in listening to the other that there is finally room for choice because nobody gives what he or she does not have.

The ends justify the means only in the "success idolatry" (BONHOEFFER, 2008, 101), an ethic more easily marketable or, in the case of musical pedagogy, more teachable. Finally, it is a more comfortable ethic, where individual responsibility is diluted as bureaucracy. What directs choices are the expectations of a jury, what a conductor wants or the teacher prefers. All choices are taken from a punctual success and so the music remains, a succession of points, a line of utilitarianism where there is never time for self-choice based on musical discourse itself and its creative agency. Or, subtly, when a certain interpretation 'works', it fits into a technical pattern of skills already possessed, a 'school', not opening to an extension of the technique itself. Therefore, an ethic that selects values which are prior or inner to a piece of music while performing it can only be the opposite, an ethic of failure. Perhaps this is the figure of this configuration, the failed *logos*, without the exuberance would be expected of an interpretation based on more immediate taste, but that fights and conquers the difficulties of reality without shortcuts, far from the figure of the soloist, the embodiment of romantic genius in performance.

A colleague of Bonhoeffer, the also theologian Karl Barth, synthesizes the ethical question as follows:

> The ethical question is the question as to the basis and possibility of the fact that in the multitude and multiplicity of human actions there are certain modes of action, i.e., certain constants, certain laws, rules, usages or continuities. It is the question as to the rightness of these constants, the fitness of these laws. It is the question as to the value which gives any action the claim to be the true expression of a mode of action, the fulfilment of a law-the right to be repeated and in virtue of its normative character to serve as an example for the actions of others. What is the true and genuine continuity in all the so-called continuities of human action? What is it that really gives force to all these recognized laws? What is the good in and over every so-called good of human action? This is roughly the ethical question, and roughly again the answering of it is what is generally called "ethics". (BARTH, 1957, 514)

One of the most relevant systematizations of this ethical conflict for the present and most easily applicable to our case in music is perhaps that of the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard when he separates the human condition between an aesthetic stage and an ethical stage. According to Kierkegaard (1988), the aesthetic stage is that we are more used to seeing ourselves when we make music in an unthinking way; a state where what moves action and existence is mere taste or preference. These things are not bad in themselves, but a life or performance based solely on these parameters may seem free, but it is finally caught in a sink of volatility. Tastes and feelings change and so do the preferences. So, freedom is deceptive; what control such performance are the contingencies, the circumstances, because there is always something or someone in the control of actions. A performance guided solely by aesthetics thus produces an individualistic ethic, where the implicit value is only one: the self.

The only way to find true interpretive freedom is bounding or, more precisely, covenanting to a responsibility. It is the interpretative pact that one has with the musical work that gives the freedom to be new in each performance, seeking a new aspect hitherto unknown, of both work and performer. An ethical performance is thus an exercise of otherness; it is not a selfish performance, but rather an opportunity to see the other in the musical discourse and to see you in the other. To assume that there is a meaning in the musical work that must be interpreted in the musical performance is a commitment that, contrary to arrest, frees to the multiplicity of interpretations enhanced in the score. In denying oneself momentarily, one gains the opportunity to know a previously unknown self and which now actualizes itself from a potential that only the other could offer.

This ethical stage is finally an alliance with the other who hears and lives the musical discourse; the interpreter is placed to serve the discourse, understanding musical discourse as a *communicative act mediated by musical actions in delimited time.* The performer assumes the responsibility of mediating the existence of music between the composer and the audience. However, this stage is not part of the nature of human action. Rather, it places Kierkegaard, it must be object of the Will; must be chosen. Thus, ethics is defined not as moralism, which seeks the right or the wrong in musical performance, but as the responsibility or the responsibilities involved in musical making. Before it seems like a burden, these responsibilities should enhance this activity. Musical performance is part of what makes music what it is; part of the very existence of music and, thus, of existence itself.

Of course, this posture implies a much greater commitment to music in its individual manifestations than would seem to be possible, for example, to an orchestral musician, who must perform an hour and a half of new repertoire each week. No doubt it is not possible to demand this sense of responsibility to every single moment of music in this type of situation. But the reality of things should not exempt the need to analyze this reality and question whether this is the best or the only way to make and live the music. This utilitarian ethic comes into play when what matters is the result, or worse, the product, much more than the process. Unfortunately, this ethic becomes standard when the musician is formed to serve that jury and not the identity of the work itself. When he is conditioned to obey masters possessing a Gnostic knowledge, but who, as demiurges of an invented tradition, keeps the performer away from the hidden face of the composer who underlies the work and who longs to be presented in music.

Musical performance does not have a categorical imperative, a duty that can condition it to necessarily meet the precepts of the composer and to fulfill this responsibility before the public. When ethics are viewed not as a sense of duty but as responsibility, the performer receives exactly what the term speaks of, the ability to respond (to the other). It is in this sense that interpretive freedom can coexist and, indeed, is necessary for the maintenance of authorial identity. It is in this sense also that can be brought together the meanings of *ethos* in Aristotle and integrate this set of agreed values all logical and emotional instances of being, all included in the

artist's response to the presences prior to him and following him, the composer and the public. There is no room for a purely rational or "cold" interpretation, attached to the text, oriented only by paper or history, as there is no room for an emotionally inflamed or theoretically directed interpretation, but without fidelity to the discourse in its record of an authorial intention. *The musical gesture embodied in the performer is, finally, the meaning getting body in performance*.

Faced with a dystopian reality, music seems to inhabit a utopian reality of contemplation and entertainment, apart from the seriousness of events. Many see in a militant action the solution for musicians to be heard in their social role. But the music itself seems to remain aesthetic, outside the realm of ethically perceived reality. More than protest music, it is perhaps the act of making music itself an act of resistance, when viewed as the incorporation of a set of values, through which performers are guided and choose to fight bow-stroke after bow-stroke, sound after sound. Thus, they constitute their *ethos,* not from an eminently social or material *mythos*, but as self-constructed from their place in existence. Kevin Vanhoozer thus presents the dilemma of interpretive choices:

> To think aesthetics and ethics together along the lines suggested above leads one to consider art as an instance of responsible action, but also action as a work of beautiful art. Indeed, one might say that ethics is all about "designs for living," though such a notion can be understood in two very different ways which we can abbreviate by asking: Nietzsche or Kierkegaard? (VANHOOZER, 2004, 119)

The arrow of responsibilities separates a view of music and life between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Both consider the existence and the formation of an *ethos,* but to where this existence is directed? In making himself, man becomes art or in making art becomes man? In the end, both lay their beliefs that, in some way, man acts; and more, man creates. In acting, man imagines, projects a world, but as creator he is, he becomes responsible for this world, constituting a particular ethic in his own affective configuration. This is the dilemma that collapses existence, because between being and non-being, there is always a direction, a gesture that goes away, waiting for the decision of the one who performs in giving it the *ethos* of continuity or the final cut.

3. Improvising tradition, building an *ethos*

Interpretative decisions are taken and *ethoi* are built. Conscious or not of their responsibility, performers accumulate choices, punctual and contingent, but still fruits of their response to the musical situations that are put to them, including those situations when the presence of a composer is mediated by a normative record of musical actions. At this point, a solution presented by many to the dilemma instituted is simply to recognize that if the ethical conflict is established from the recognition of the presence of the intention of another in the musical discourse, it is enough not to have the other. It is then suggested as a possibility of existence *in time,* where discourse does not depend on anything but itself, free of any informal set of information such as tradition. Improvisation and tradition seem to be thus opposite poles in the historical situation of the interpreter where one keeps his eyes back while the other sees only what comes ahead. However, if Augustine is right, the overcoming of time comes neither from the past nor from the future, but from a constant state of present, of intensive presence; it is eternity touching time.

In fact, this notion of improvisation owes much to its etymology, which, coming from the Latin *improvisus* really means something not foreseen. Bruce Ellis Benson (2003, 26-29) coins at least eleven meanings for improvisation within musical contexts and Jeremy Begbie recalls Pierre Boulez, when, disregarding the validity of this practice by limiting their emotional states that "improvisation is a personal psychodrama" (BOULEZ apud. BEGBIE, 2000, 180). The difficulty in defining it is precisely the reflection of the difficulty of affirming that something is created *out of nothing* without any link to a prior or even simultaneous structure. Improvisation, when viewed conceptually, already presents its first limitations as to the reality of being new and not demanding any presence from the other.

Kevin Vanhoozer (2005), taking both musical and theatrical improvisation as a reference, imagines its nature as a walk after the script, not simply about it, toward it or against it. Such performance thus takes the normative record not as a cage, but as a propulsive spring, which propels the discourse to where its own constitution directs it. Spontaneity is part of what improvisation is, but no individual can easily

give up everything that he is or knows about his environment and about the other. Thus, there is always a cultural path that underlies the footsteps of the one who improvises.

Improvisation is not, either, the lack of preparation or a temporary solution to structural problems. Its situation, in the midst of composition and performance, or within both, places it at the service of a libertarian political discourse, sometimes as a paradigmatic mechanism serving a naïve attempt of innovation. Rather, improvisation and the good improviser seem to be the ones who play the game at the maximum of their rules, giving rise to new interpretations and new combinations, expanding their possibilities, not so much the ones who give up the game or ignore its rules. As Gary Peters (2009) demonstrates, by playing collectively, improvisation runs the risk of appearing to be a deaf game, where on the one hand one can deny everything indiscriminately or, on the other, one can accept everything that is presented. Thus, the interaction itself seems to be limited in a game pretentiously without rules, but that in the end has the invisible hand of the culture in charge, or more, the invisible hand of individualities and an affective setting that overlaps others in their strength.

Probably Derek Bailey (1993) is correct in saying that most of those who improvise not call their actions as such; the one who plays flamenco believes he is playing flamenco, not he is improvising. The conceptual question seems to concern more the theoretical thinking much than those who actually practice improvisation. For them, it is unthinkable to enter the circle of those who play without first knowing the rules, conventions and essential attributes of the genre, at the risk of 'making mistakes' in their improvisation; or more basically, of not playing the music they were supposed to play. From the baroque instrumentalist in his ornaments to the jazz player in his languages, everyone needs to know a certain canon to enter the interpretive community.

Berliner (1994), by the way, does a complete scan in the formation of great jazz musicians from the United States and draws several educational paths in the formation of a 'vocabulary' for improvisation, from churches to the hearing records, culminating in 'higher education' that means playing in groups with experienced musicians, since they consider to be a 'correct' way to play a particular kind of music. Perlman and Greenblatt (1994) examine other relationship, between the

language of improvisation and verbal language, concluding that both share very strict rules in their user community. The very idea of a personal style arises more from the repetition of certain patterns of pitches and rhythms in different contexts than from an infinite extension of the possible combinations of those two aspects.

Even traditional music, communicated orally, has its own set of musical actions and, consequently, musical structures, which are suitable for a particular use. John Blacking makes this clear when analyzing children's songs from the African tribe of Venda, demonstrating that because they are part of this genre, the tribe member knows that to perform this song and not another he must follow a specific pattern of percussive performance:

> On each half-note beat, a finger is grasped and counted, from the left little finger to the thumb, and then through from the right thumb to the fourth finger, with a clap of the hands on the tenth half beat. (BLACKING, 1973, 91)

This is the normative record of this specific type of music: a gestural pattern. There is a proper ethic for such a discourse to be what it is and not a song of hunting or funeral service. It is not the absence of a written normative record, therefore, that makes the music more or less improvised. There is no evolutionism where the complexity of the written record equals the complexity of discourse, but only an adequacy to the musical aspects that give identity to a musical discourse.

Even the improvisation called free, Bailey adds, is circumscribed within the idioms of genres and of musical instruments and their players. Even when it is sought to expand such possibilities, musicians still remain restricted to the set of possibilities of the material medium, in addition to being conditioned to a basic data: improvisation is done by people. And people are affected by attraction and repulsion, and so all transcultural and transpersonal intertextuality continues to produce a discourse governed by social norms.

It is clear that improvisation still preserves difficulties similar to those of the interpretation of written records; sharing their nature and also sharing their ethical conflicts. Bruce Benson includes improvisation within this reflection, proposing that improvisation is a mode of action, rather than an action in itself. As such, the composer performs his art improvising on paper or on an instrument and empirically choosing sounds, listening, changing; or even improvising algorithms, sets,

permutations, in short, experiencing and using structures that existed before, but never figured that particular context and therefore that body. Performers improvise fingerings, bowings, inflections, breaths, and phrases, even when following a score. This is the human condition acting after rules, but not being suppressed by them. An improvisatory attitude that protects in its ethics the intent of composer, claiming, "the music making is *fundamentally* improvisative" (BENSON, 2003, xii).

Benson makes an interesting analogy, comparing the interpretative schools 'historically informed' to rationalist epistemology and the romantic interpretation by the performer to empiricism, which seeks the immediate experience its result. The former believes to have an ascetic knowledge of the 'original idea', ignoring the interpretative tradition created after the composition. The second completely ignores such idea and faces the performative data on its surface, aiming only what 'sounds good'. The question is clear, and has already been discussed: both extremes are impossible and, ultimately undesirable. Benson calls "ingratitude" (BENSON, 2003, 122) this interpretative attitude that uses interpretive tools granted by tradition, but insists in victimizing and suppressing its role in practical understanding of the meaning of a discourse. The solution, he suggests, is an interpretative ethics to answer something to all instances present in the speech, a "responsible ethics".

Thus, the limitation always returns in different forms, but not more than the finitude of human existence in their actions. Respecting the action of others and responding appropriately to them seems to be the best and most feasible solution in the face of reality. Respect is not fear or blind submission, but a critical attitude to take into account the proposals of others to act; the responsibility is not the unthinking obedience or deaf mime, but the answer with own words (notes, actions or gestures) to the questions raised by the other. This is a possible ethics, but more than that it is necessary. It is an ethic where individuals suspend their pre-judgment *a priori* and open themselves to another. In doing so, they put their own individual status at stake; not to cancel out, but because they pose themselves as attributes of a whole musical discourse. An ethical configuration so is possible, with all its elements acting on respect and responsibility to the other, each in their own set of actions operating on their own levels of responsibility. The individual exists, as society and the collective exist. But the fight is momentarily ("kairótically") suspended in order to make individuals members of a larger body, serving a single purpose.

Warren (2014) also takes musical ethics as responsibility, especially after the notion of Emmanuel Levinas where "refers to the responsibilities to other people that arise when we encounter them in the world" (WARREN, 2014, 30). So Warren is concerned predominantly with the relationship between individuals, coinciding with an interest in this approach, but leaves aside the concern with musical actions of individuals, more emphasized here. Vanhoozer identifies the limit of Levinas ethics, when applied to music making, as if the individual has an infinite responsibility with others in their social role, the only way to 'be ethical' is using music as a political means to be ideologized (VANHOOZER, 2004, 113). The point here is not meeting the interpretation or political taste of the composer, but to respond to the affections and gestures of his or her musical discourse. In this sense, this sense of ethics is critically placed as the choice within the interpretive spectrum and not as blind servitude.

Vanhoozer continues defining improvisation not just by spontaneity, but also for its intrinsic demand for memory. The improviser looks forward but also looks back to his memory and to the answers previously given, in order to reincorporate them to new issues of the present. In this sense, a successful improvisation makes use of previous actions critically, as new questions demand new answers. Improvisation and tradition go hand in hand as key parts of the interpretive covenant. Tradition, in this sense, has a very different connotation of traditionalism: traditionalism is to answer present questions with answers from the past. A healthy view of tradition seeks to understand the logic behind the answers given in the past in the light of those questions, rescuing that logic and reincorporating them into new answers to new questions. It is for this reason that tradition is nothing more than the history of improvisations, a number of local responses to local issues seen in later perspective. And this is the reason why in answering new questions the interpreter builds the tradition and gives its own contribution to the establishment of the *ethos* of his interpretive community (VANHOOZER, 2005, 355).

"Tradition 'hands on' (*tradere*) what is to be done" (VANHOOZER, 2005, 168) and so it is a really important thing in musical interpretation. To analyze and to play a musical score must necessarily include the reading not only of the normative record but also of the history of interpretation of that record. In looking at these indications of what was done, the artist goes beyond the score and sees answers

that others have given to interpretative issues that are also presented. A critical reading of the tradition, however, does not make use of these solutions indiscriminately but places them under the scrutiny of the normative record. This relationship is then an interpretative method that improvises its own answers and thus constitutes its own *ethos*.

It is making this point that the composer Luciano Berio said: "musical instrument is itself a part of the musical language" (BERIO, 1983, 78). This is due to the particular physical properties of the sound emission of an instrument, but also for the whole history of playing of this instrument, all its accumulated technical tradition, answers and more answers to many musical questions submitted to it. It is for this reason that a performer - and, according to Berio, also the composer - cannot ignore tradition or interpretative traditions of a given instrument or musical genre. Cello, for instance, remains surviving not because it has beautiful shapes, but because people are still playing it and people continue to write music for it. The instrument and its tradition are still been written and doing so making they live with each new performance and every new piece of music.

Bernd Alois Zimmermann (2010 [1968]) will dialogue with this tradition of the cello to think his own contribution to what he calls "a new signification of cello in new music" (ZIMMERMANN, 2010, 241). He takes into account not only the interpretative tradition but also the very constitution of the instrument, its energy to produce sound, in short, the entire *ethos* contained in that entity that becomes the instrument. Zimmermann recalls that his first composition for cello soloist, *Canto di speranza*, was sent to the Schott-Music publishing house, which, in turn, sent the piece to five cellists. Only one respond the call, which was Siegfried Palm, because he was the only one who accepted rethink his own technique to solve performance issues in the piece, as others considered impossible to play. The composer defines well what it is this true ethics of musical performance: "It is especially the openness of spirit that determines to what extent the performer can find appropriate strategies for the interpretation of new music" (ZIMMERMANN, 2010, 241). The interest of Zimmermann on the instrument increased thanks to the openness of Palm, what gave him an deeper knowledge of the possibilities of the instrument, especially the

different sounds that a same pitch could have if produced in different strings, as he applies in the following example from his *Sonata* :
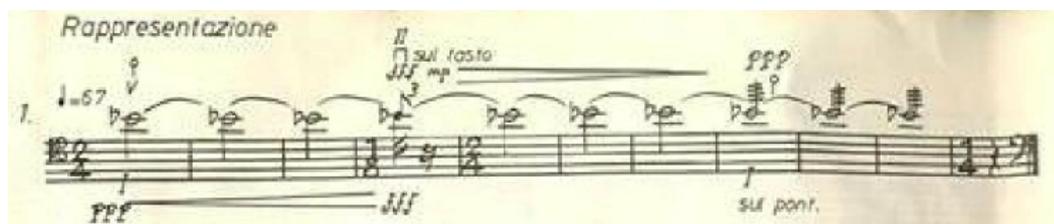

Fig . 1: Zimmermann, Sonata, 1, Line 1. (Source: Editions Modern)

The Cello Sonata is itself an expression Zimmermann's relationship with the instrument. Its name, the composer says, it is because of his willingness to emphasize the performative action, the 'playing', which the word *suonare* means. His intention is creating performance techniques, more than sounds and notes. The collaboration with Palm was restricted to a few reviews and subsequent insertions to the completion of the writing, as long as they should not change the crux of the matter; this because, according to Zimmermann, "it is up to the composer to set the musical and technical function of an instrument" (ZIMMERMANN, 2010, p. 247).

The construction of an interpretative *ethos* presents itself, then, as fundamental and inevitable. Performers manifest their *ethos* in their first step upon the stage, carrying with the instrument all its history and even the history of listening the audience already has of that instrument and that music. This is the deep rhetorical dimension that the *ethos* adds to musical discourse and which can never be forgotten in performance practice. Tradition is a fundamental tool to support the improvisational attitude of a performer in giving new answers to new questions that bring new repertoires, but it can never eclipse the compositional intent fixed in the normative record, whatever it is. Kevin Vanhoozer think a very appropriate metaphor for this interpretive tension: the normative record is for the interpretive tradition just as the sun is to the moon; in a night well lit by the moon, one can walk quietly his way because can see and have security of every step; However, ultimately this light did not come from somewhere else, but from the sun itself (VANHOOZER, 2016, p. 139). Tradition can be a reliable guide to musical interpretation, in that which it faithfully reflects the affective directions prescribed by composers in their writing

act. To examine this relationship, however, it is the responsibility of performers: in front of the public, the composer and all the interpretive tradition that precedes them.

The tension between obedience and freedom seems to anticipate a solution to the ethical vision of musical performance, understood as the construction of an *ethos*. Performance, as life as well, thus acquires a configuration defined by Bonhoeffer as the *structure of a responsible life*, a structure in constant formation:

> In responsibility both obedience and freedom become real [realisieren sich]. Responsibility has this inner tension. Any attempt to make one independent of the other would be the end of responsibility. Responsible action is bound and yet creative. Making obedience independent would lead to Kant's ethic of duty, making freedom independent to a romantic ethic of genius. The person bound by duty as well as the genius have their justification within themselves. Responsible human beings, who stand between obligation [Bindung] and freedom and who, while bound, must nevertheless dare to act freely, find justification neither by their bond nor by their freedom, but only in the One who has placed them in this-humanly impossible-situation and who requires them to act. (BONHOEFFER, 2008, p. 288).

This statement means that the first responsibility to act is before the one who calls the individual to action. As Palm attended the first call from Zimmermann to be open to his discourse, performers are called to an ethical action every new piece and musical situation that are presented. Responsibility is thus the ability to respond. Although Bakhtin draws a distinction between responsibility and answerability, it seems more correct, after the history of the concept and the reasons already given, to keep the etymological and philosophical use of the term. The ethical performance it is so not because it should assume a moral virtue more than other modes of action, but because its result is a responsible *ethos*. This is not an opposition between virtue and responsibility, but an emphasis; to respond to others results in virtue.

4. Towards a phronesis of Musical Performance

A thick description of the musical reality assumes there is a meaning to be known, what, in principle, could lead this proposition to a tautology in proposing another theory, a new vision that arrogates to itself as the ultimate vision. But practice and theory are not the only simulacra of human knowledge. Between the absolute truth and the mere opinion there is the world of Wisdom. This is what Martin Heidegger understands as the possibility of a practical philosophy able to interpret and produce actions. The project can be summarized as "the *kinesis* of factual

life, *phronesis* and its relationship with the *kairos* and the concrete situation, the urgency of *praxis* against the theoretical world" (WU, 2011, p. 96).

Heidegger retrieves the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* (φρόνησις), defined by the Greek as the practical reason or the knowledge in practice. The ethics of musical performance reaches its consummation as phronesis and musical knowledge should aim exactly this purpose. The phronesis does not seek a general knowledge, a totalitarian theory that explains everything and everyone. Instead, it understands every piece of reality as unique and therefore seeks the most fitting action in the face of this reality, although immersed in a whole. Phronesis is thus a free knowledge, an improvised theory, constantly, step-by-step, in the repertoire. This may not be the most persuasive way to end a proposal on musical performance ethics, but this is the best that ethics can do for music: to demonstrate the complexity of reality, rather than simplify it or reduce it, making clear the wealth of music and its process of sharing, or rather, to make it real.

This does not imply the denial of tradition or any set of knowledge previously built, but an open attitude to an expansion movement of this technical knowledge. "It is not, therefore, a mere peculiarity at the moment of action, but rather an apprehension of the concrete situation that always surpasses this same particularity" (WU, 2011, p. 100). Each new piece composed and every new interpretation do integrate the whole of existence and the whole interpretative *ethos*, i.e., a repertoire and tradition through their musical actions; as stated, in being the being moves and in making music being exists. The phronetic performance cannot by definition be just technique, not as motor direction nor in the sense of a pre-existing embodiment; in open our beings to the presence of a meaning in the musical piece, we do not do so only to the piece, but we open ourselves in our becoming of being-in-the-world.

The phronetic performance is not mainly concerned with hitting or missing notes, but with the fitting to each musical discourse. That is what for Heidegger differentiates phronesis from technique; while the second operates by attempt and error, the first understands that an event is never repeated and therefore its response is always unique. Far from denoting an interpretive irresponsibility, this notion leads to the contrary, to the impossibility of repetition in the "seriousness of the definite decision" (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 38). This is also the reason why, in Aristotelian

thought, phronesis is not a virtue, but a mode of existence. The phronesis is not, therefore, a truth, because it does not produce permanent knowledge, but it is more than that; it is the situational choice that penetrates past and future overflowing the present.

The phronesis of musical discourse takes the data of the performance as the embodiment of musical knowledge and therefore part of it as a reality to be interpreted. The musical gesture and its *kinesis*, its movement and life, are the reality of which is music. By the way, this is what music is: sound is movement. As interpreters, we are challenged piece after piece to seek the most appropriate way to know a new reality and to have access to that, making it known in our performance. There is not only a single vibrato, a single fingering, just as there is no single harmonic system, phraseology or formal approach. We must actualize, making music real in opening ourselves to its own vibrato, its fingering; its harmony and its form. Open ourselves to the other who are there and *respond* to him; that is, being responsible. And so we can offer to the public maybe not the best, the most refined and most beautiful; but surely the most responsible performance.

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