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**The Media Frame: The Theory and Practice of Integrating a Variety  
of Production Protocol in Modern Experimental Temporal Art**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Music

by

Ross Patrick Karre

Committee in charge:

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2009

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Chair

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2009

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**The Media Frame: The Theory and Practice of Integrating a Variety  
of Production Protocol in Modern Experimental Temporal Art**

by

Ross Patrick Karre

Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

University of California San Diego, 2009

Professor Steven Schick, Chair

Temporal art production protocol since Wagner has seen a narrowing of performance practices and audience expectations. This narrowing has created numerous obstacles for integrating media with distinct protocol into a single frame of presentation. This paper sites numerous examples of pieces since 1950 that attempt to integrate a variety of production protocol with varying degrees of success. It also proposes a vocabulary for analyzing the frame of presentation and its manipulation.

# Chapter 1

## Wagnerian Production Protocol

Richard Wagner's description of the design and construction of his *Bayreuth Festspielhaus* borders on egomaniacal. In his desire to create the "utmost possible achievement of a sublime illusion," Wagner trusts only himself to "lead this artistic exploit to its complete success (Wagner 358)." Furthermore, his motivating emotion is a self-described "desperation" to right the wrongs of centuries of failed music-drama presentation (Wagner 358). Wagner desired to be the sole author of a new protocol regarding media integration that would become the norm for nearly all future operatic productions. The degree to which he realized his desire is astounding.

At the core of Wagner's desire was "that of rendering invisible the mechanical source of the music (Wagner 365)." Wagner wrote numerous essays that addressed the issue of the visibility of the orchestra in his music dramas. The new hall at Bayreuth was to put to rest all controversy over this issue by specifying that, "with a dramatic presentation, it is a matter of focusing the eye itself upon a picture... leading it away from any sight of bodies lying in-between, such as the technical apparatus for projecting the picture (Wagner 365)." As in many of Wagner's arguments relating to a host of media integration questions, purity of the "dramatic personae" was to be maintained by means of eliminating all "superfluous elements that compromise the poet's (author's) aim (Wagner 228)." This included, among other things, subverting the "musician's caprice (Wagner 228)," relegating them to the pit in their roles as "executants" (Wagner 228).



The strong language of Wagner's argument, the passion he put towards this new venue's project, and the unparalleled proportions of his epic masterworks were enough to convince numerous cities (including Chicago) to offer Wagner vast riches to build his venue in their town. This proves that the egomaniacal dream of building a concert-space suited for only one type of media integration (his own) was shared by numerous others, including those outside the circles of "the German." Twenty years before the dawn of the cinema (more than fifty before the Talkie), Wagner's influence was already contributing to how the spectator expected to receive each component medium in nearly any combination of media.

Wagner's new theatre was the polar opposite of the modern blackbox theatre. Embedded in its lack of modularity were prescriptions as to how live temporal art was to be constructed and how it was to be best received. Fortunately for temporal art, twentieth century experimentation in all media has lead to skepticism surrounding a singular method of integration. However, the codification of production methods of temporal performing arts since Wagner's first postulations about the future of the music-drama and sketches for its venue have lead to an advanced methodology for presentation of works to the public in a variety of settings. Theatre, Dance, Cinema, and Music (and media that combine those: Ballet, Opera, Silent Film), have fostered a clear set of expectations from the spectator due to centuries of adherence to even clearer production protocol. These modes of presentation have also developed procedures that are distinct from one another both in their methods and in the audience's expectations of them. Each medium has its own method of framing the material for presentation and re-presentation that is both familiar to the audience and leaves the audience wanting if left out.

In this paper, I will address performance theory and practice issues in a variety of pieces that attempt to integrate any number of these protocol, components, and expectations. Central to each of these pieces is precise contradiction of Wagner's most vehement concern: making the instrumentalist and his/her instrument invisible. The pieces discussed share the property that the instruments and their "executant" are a crucial component of the totality of the audio-visual presentation. As such, their role transcends execution. In these works, the per-

former is an interpreter, bringing to light the “musician’s caprice” and gaining a solid footing in the realm of the author.

## Chapter 2

# Developing a Vocabulary for Media Integration

The piece-examples in this paper have cultivated a vocabulary of ideals for component integration. This vocabulary (capitalized in this paper) is, in part, derived from the performance instructions from a variety of scores from the 20th and 21st centuries. The one constant in all of these examples will be the score as a method of conveying temporal information and instruction. What these terms combine to reveal is a FRAME of presentation. Shaping the frame is the nature of the language that the author uses in the score instructions and information. IMPLICIT language defines the nature of the frame. EXPLICIT language shapes the frame's boundaries; physically and methodologically. DECLARATIVE statements convey the way in which the components reinforce the frame of presentation and IMPERATIVE language presents a list of tasks to be accomplished in order for the frame's integrity to be optimized. Inside the frame, but also crucial to defining the nature of the frame's construction, are the COMPONENTS. The components often consist of a CONCEPT, a SCENARIO, and MATERIALS. Both the scenario and the materials are media in that they either present a mode of interaction or a means of communication. The concept transcends and supersedes the scenario and the materials on the level of the medium (abstractly outside the reality of the realization) but is defined by the scenario and materials in its frame of realization (concretely within the reality of the realization). The frame is then shaped by hind-

sight and foresight in the form of component information defined but the author(s) - A PRIORI - and that derived from the framing process - A POSTERIORI. Finally, the frame and its content's presentation exists along a spectrum delineated by three CONFIGURATIONS of physio-spacial reality. (1) The FRAME can be INSTALLED into a physio-spacial reality. In this configuration, the space is known a priori and the frame and space react mutually to one another. (2) The frame and space can be CONFORMED to one-another. In this configuration, the nature of the space is variable and unknown a priori such that the space AND the frame are malleable. (3) The frame and physio-spacial reality can also be IMPOSED onto one another. In this case, the space OR the frame are variable. The spectrum allows for installation, conformation, and imposition to be combined but, ultimately, the space is the dictator of the unique configuration model. Practically, the frame of presentation, when made clear by the terminology outlined above, will indicate which existing production protocol(s) should be used or new production protocol invented in order for the piece's components to be clear and consistent.

## Chapter 3

# Kagel: Anti-Wagnerian Experiments in Instrumental-Theatre via the Motivation Path

Less than a century after Wagner, the illusionism of his request to conceal the sound-producers of his music dramas is called into question by American Experimentalism and the European Avante-Garde. John Cage (with pieces such as *Water Walk* containing theatrical components) and Fluxus (with several musical and non-musical action pieces) began to have an influence on perhaps the most thorough experimenter of media mixture: Mauricio Kagel. As early as the 1950s, Kagel would have seen a performance of Cage's *Water Walk* in Cologne and would have been aware of Nam Jun Paik's experiments with multimedia in that same city (Heile 34). Kagel's work would not have been at home in the Bayreuth Theatre of Wagner's creation. His philosophy opposes music as a purely auditory experience. He posits that "Music has also been a scenic event for a long time. In the 19th century people still enjoyed music also with their eyes, with all their senses. Only with the increasing dominance of the mechanical reproduction of music, through broadcasting and records, was this reduced to the purely acoustical dimension. What I

want is to bring the audience back to an enjoyment of music with all senses. That's why my music is a direct, exaggerated protest against the mechanical reproduction of music. My goal: a re-humanization of music-making (Heile 38)." Kagel attributes the aural-only music experience to the recording and the radio but early experiments in these media (including Kagel's own work with radio plays) made significant attempts at humanization as well. The late nineteenth century focus on auditory purity stems not only from mechanical reproduction of sound but from Wagner's obsession with the illusion of the drama and cinema's acceptance of some of Wagner's protocol. In fact, "Kagel's instrumental theatre strives to re-discover what has been lost [to Wagner] in western classical music: the visual and kinetic nature of performance, the physicality of music-making, the bodily presence of performers, the three dimensional space of the stage, and the spectacle of stage-events... No culture views music as disembodied pure sound except Western music (Heile 37)."

In this way, Kagel becomes a 20th century anti-Wagner. The goals of his experiments were to explore not only the aesthetic sonic practices of the concert music medium but the resulting kinetic actions. Furthermore, he wanted to explore the reverse by studying the resulting sounds of aesthetic kinetic actions of instrumentalists. These explorations result in pieces that make no visual illusions as to the origin of sound, Kagel places all the components of the sound/action production within the frame of the viewer. Kagel incorporated a variety of other media into this frame. Lighting, projection, cinema, pantomime, dramaturgy, foley, installation, sculpture, and music were common features of Kagel's works. In fact, the only media thread that runs through all of these is the musical score. Many of Kagel's performance works use the western contemporary music score as the source of information for the performers. As a result of this fact, it is often musicians who perform the works but many of the pieces transcend vocation via the clarity with which Kagel presents the MOTIVATION PATH in the score.

The motivation path is a means of analyzing the reason for the performer to execute a task within the frame. In other words, the motivation path is the answer to the performer's question, "why am I doing this?" As the examples that

follow show, Kagel and other composers often imply or make explicit the motivation behind an action within a scene (to use Kagel's terminology from his scores). Two paths are used most often and variations on these paths create ambiguity and diversity of intention, a feature of Kagel's aesthetic. The sound-action-drama path is the most common. This means that the performer is aware that the primary motivation for executing an action is the resulting sound and that the kinetic action and perceived dramaturgy are ancillary. The drama-action-sound path is also featured in his works. This means that the advancement of a theatrical relationship (between performers and objects, performers and performers, or performers and the narrative or scenario) is the motivation for the kinetic action and the resulting sound is a consequence of that action. Then, in an innovative cultivation of compositional materials, Kagel also features action-sound-drama or action-drama-sound paths that have clear instructions and motivations but ambiguous, often-absurd, and diverse perceived results.

Kagel's trio for wooden instruments titled *Dressur* is an example of the sound-action-drama path. *Pas de Cinq* for five actors is a piece involving the drama-action-sound path but from the instructive standpoint of action-drama-sound. *Match* for three players (percussion and two celli), navigates the line between these motivation paths by splitting the ensemble into differing roles of aesthetics and consequence. At times in *Match*, the kinetic action is prescribed and the sonic result is ancillary. Other times, the sonic result is prescribed and the necessary action to achieve that sound is, though well within the realm of Kagel's awareness and purposefully in view of the audience, ancillary. All three pieces present practical problems in their presentation because of the strong procedural illusionist traditions (and corresponding audience expectations) that Wagner has established that hide the mechanism of sound production instead of celebrating it.

In the performance notes to Kagel's works, two things are often made clear. Kagel expends great effort in satisfying the conceptual core of his work and he is also keenly aware of the pragmatic concerns associated with that concept's presentation. His craftsmanship is embodied in the balance of these two attributes. Examples of this craft abound in *Dressur* and will yield answers to the questions

of media integration. First, conceptually, *Dressur* is composed to evoke the style, spectacle, and energy of the musical accompaniment to a circus act. Opening with quotations from circus music, one could easily imagine the scenario of *Dressur* as a concert overture to a circus dressage act and thus rightly presented on the concert hall stage (not unlike the tradition of presenting opera overtures before the rest of an orchestra concert whose program includes, for example, a concerto and a symphony). Over the course of the piece, the sounds and actions reveal that the musicians themselves are the circus and that their musical performance is the spectacle. By the end of the piece, the actions make overt comments about obedience and training (applicable to dressage and music performance), the musicians following the instructions of the composer (trainer) no matter how ridiculous or humiliating. The piece concludes with three possible reactions to this authoritative training: frustrated revolt, jaded apathy, and maniacal detachment. The marimba player, who thinks he is in control, tosses his mallets and aggressively exits the stage. The sistrum player continues to passionlessly follow the rules of ad infinitum repetition. And the third player is reduced to the innocence of senility after a schizophrenic flamenco dance in dutch clogs. These states of mind are not explicitly represented in the score but are rather possible interpretations stemming from the concept of the piece and the actions that result from Kagel's detailed prescriptions of sound production. Therefore, this interpretation lies at the end of, and is the result of, the motivation path.

Kagel is clear about this sound-action-drama relationship in *Dressur*. The causal relationship is evidenced in the notation of the score and in the instructions to the piece. Sound is the principle medium as this is the primary concern of the notation. Notation yields actions and these, in combination with a small number of non-sonic prescribed actions, yield a dramaturgy that is not explicit from Kagel but can be gleaned by the audience or by the interpreters on a diverse individual level. To further clarify the causal hierarchy, Kagel instructs the performers not to engage in any facial expressions or other procedures of dramatic expression (Kagel *Dressur*). The kinetic action results of sound-making (though sometimes absurd and self-deprecating) are stronger and more meaningful in their conveyance of the



cruelty of musical authoritarianism when they are achieved via explicit musical instruction; when the motivation path is not only emanating from sound but also from the field of expertise of the performers.

The method of clarifying and prescribing sound yielding action which yields dramaturgy is unique to Kagel (but would be adopted later by Globokar, Aperghis, etc) and proposes theoretical and practical solutions to media mixture. First, by clarifying the reason for an action to be executed (the production of sound), the performer is relieved of defining theatrical motivation; something outside his/her expertise. Kagel then relieves the performer of any further theatrical obligation (except for that which results from sonic actions) by enforcing a strict “dead-pan” rule in the performance notes. What this means in the execution of the sound-actions is that the performer can maintain the facial expressions that would normally result from a chamber music experience: eye contact with fellow performers, intense focus on the sound-producing object and the sheet music, and a neutral relationship between the shape of the mouth/eyes (smile, frown, etc) with the potential emotional content of the music (a technique that is common in western concert performance).

And, along this line of causal thinking, Kagel explicitly states, and reveals as a consequence of a combination of explicit statements, the method of installing the piece into the space of presentation. Kagel’s pragmatism shines through as he draws a clear diagram of the disposition of the instruments and then presents detailed descriptions and diagrams of all of the instruments to be used. These instructions are not at all distinct from the traditions of concert production. What is less orthodox is his brief instruction for the framing of the piece. Again, pragmatically acknowledging a variety of spaces and their technical facility, he instructs that either a curtain is to open to reveal this disposition of instruments and performers or that the stage is to suddenly be illuminated from complete blackout. Both techniques allow the audience to view the opening of the piece as a pure tableau, appearing suddenly and making the frame of art-making obvious. What is less obvious is the way that this framing legitimizes any dramaturgical consequences that may arise from prescribed kineti-sonic action. In concert performance

traditions, the usual method of framing the beginning and end of the artistic experience is to follow a familiar protocol (familiar and comfortable to the performers and well-within the knowledge and expectations of concert etiquette): house lights dim, stage lights dim, stage lights raise, performers enter stage, audience claps at first sight of performers, performers bow, audience silences, brief pause from performers to confirm silence, and then the frame of music-making is open. To close the frame, the performer stops, allows all resonance to fade, releases the grasp on his instrument, averts his gaze from the score or his instrument, relaxes his body, and then the audience claps; performance complete. Kagel prescribes (and therefore perhaps desires) none of this ritual in *Dressur*. Instead, his instructions come directly from the procedures of theatre and dance-theatre. While solving the problem of framing the opening/closing of art-making in a more clear and elegant way than the ritual of concert performance and also legitimizing any dramatic consequence of the ensuing performance, Kagel presents new problems with this method. Specifically, by framing the piece in this way, audience members can expect something different from this piece, perhaps even expecting that there will be a theatrical component to the piece. This poses the problem experienced by Red Fish Blue Fish in a review of their performance by Christan Herzog on [signon-sandiego.com](http://signon-sandiego.com). In it he laments, “For me, the biggest problem with all this is in its half-assed theatricality, and it’s an issue with all of Kagel’s theatrical works. Most musicians are not good actors... None of these three gentlemen had a convincing stage presence. ... Does Kagel demand more theatricality from his musicians? If so, this performance couldn’t be considered good. Or does Kagel anticipate that musicians aren’t actors, and the resulting hokiness is an important aspect of the performance (Herzog)?”

Herzog’s review is obviously subjective and others in the audience marveled at the convincing resulting theatricality. But the questions are valid. If the 11/19/05 performance of the piece had not incorporated any lighting cues to establish a theatrical tableau of concert music and instead the group had entered the stage in full lighting and had executed the concert production framing ritual, perhaps the expectations for convincing theatrical stage presence would have been

reduced or eliminated. Furthermore, a more aggressive, conscious effort to suppress any physical actions not inherent to the performer's natural musical interpretation of the prescribed sonic actions might suppress theatrical expectations. Because of distinct codified protocols in the theatre and concert music traditions (endorsed by the Wagnerian aesthetic of illusionism and auditory purity), the problem presented by *Dressur* is not one of musicality or theatricality but the combination of both. Wagner solves this problem by "hiding the mechanism for musical production (Wagner 365)" whereas Kagel's music brings this problem to the fore by "allowing music to be enjoyed with the eyes, with all the senses (Heile 37)."

Proof that the audience's expectations are the result (not the motivation) of these codified protocol is evidenced in the simple fact that Kagel's music is labeled experimental, absurd, ridiculous, post-modern, self-reflexive, etc. All of these adjectives are justifications for the violation of protocol for mixing media established by the operatic tradition and Wagner. To take a step outside the realm of familiar traditions, how much less absurd is the Wagnerian music-drama? Imagine the scenario: an orchestra that the audience knows exists is buried in a hole under the stage. On top of them, actors, whose dialog is crucial to the understanding of the plot (the dramatic personae, in Wagner's terms) unintelligibly (molto vibrato, highly melismatic, and at a rate of delivery far too slow for meaningful context to be derived) sing to each other in a language that the audience likely does not speak. Meanwhile, great pains are taken to encapsulate this completely absurd method of communication in a scenic world of illusion. If the problem in Kagel's music is not its relative absurdity, then the problem is in codification. The problem lies in blindly adhering to an ever-increasing standard of production protocol, developed for other concepts, instead of establishing a unique framing method (production protocol) for each new piece, its driving concept or scenario, and the space in which it is presented. In this way, the expectations of the audience change from something that needs fulfillment to an artistic variable or tool at the disposal of the composer and interpreters. Mr. Herzog and his fellow concert-goers could go into each new, potentially absurd, live temporal art experience with an open mind instead of a tainted set of equally (if not more) absurd expectations.

If *Dressur* represents a sound-action-drama hierarchy of prescriptions from Kagel, *Pas de Cinq* has the opposite hierarchy. It focuses on the scene of people walking and their dramaturgical interactions with one another. Kagel's instructions are clear in this regard. Each actor plays several roles. Dramaturgical relationships are to be created between performers. They are not to behave merely like sleepwalkers or dolls but rather should give the impression that this is a walking scene in which a number of actions are being represented simultaneously. Finally, actors play mute (Kagel *Pas de Cinq*). Therefore the problem of integrating theatre into the procedure of music production is replaced by the problem of integrating music interpretation protocol into the realm of a dramatic scene. Specifically, how does one negotiate the intricate engagement of a score with as much musicality as *Pas de Cinq* while maintaining a convincing stage presence that might satisfy Mr. Herzog.

After the extensive notes, the score's notation indicates practical elements to the performers. It tells them their location in the performance space and when they should be there relative to one another; neither of these is outside the methodology of dance-theatre. What becomes difficult is finding a theatrical space for things like tempo, staff-stem-notehead-beam rhythmic notation, and dynamics. Kagel explicitly indicates which foot to put down, on which subdivision of the mixed meter, and at which volume. The sonic result to these prescribed kinetic actions is something Kagel was concerned with to the point of ambiguity of priority. Kagel indicates that this production is to create a set of walking pathways at a variety of heights covered with a variety of materials (carpet, wood, metal, gravel, etc). This instruction is designed to accentuate the sonic consequence of the kinetic action of the footfalls in the score. Kagel integrates the media aesthetically by considering each with great care. Mark Applebaum's theory about his own mixtures of media (titled *Sensory Collision* at his 2009 presentation at the Banff Center) makes reference to considering each element with great care. He described approaching each component of his piece as if its performance practice had a one hundred year, almost classical, tradition to justify its existence. As such, it requires an extreme level of detail and foresight. But with such great care given

to each discipline, what type of performer is skilled enough to execute the actions? An actor who can read complex rhythms and graphic scores carefully? A musician who has experience in stage acting? Kagel's instructions indicate that a group of five actors, with director, should perform the piece. He (as in many of his pieces) offers an ossia version for five percussionists on percussion instruments, executing the rhythms with their hands and mallets instead of with shoes and walking sticks. And yet, because of the score's intricacy, the piece's theatrical version is often performed by percussionists. The difficulty for the percussionists is to execute the rhythmic intricacy while avoiding doll-like sleepwalk behavior without the training of physical comedy.

Again, though, this difficulty is only made a reality because of codification-induced expectations from the spectator. If the actors are to create the illusion of a walking scene, then theatrical methodology must be employed. However, if the motivation for the action is due to engagement with a musical score, and the resulting walking scene is accepted without preconceptions of what defines quality stage presence, the piece can be accepted by an open-minded audience as redefining the methods of the music-drama.

*Match* for three players is the most complicated because the sound-action-drama/drama-action-sound relationships are varied throughout the piece. Uncharacteristically, the notes preceding the notation are not explicit as to which medium, theatre or music, has primacy but he does make other comments that suggest music production. For example, he suggests that *Match* should ideally be performed twice in the same concert. Experience has shown that the listening audience will react the first time more to as spectators (Kagel *Match*). Words like concert and listening audience give clear indications as to Kagel's expectations for a production model without explicit prescription. At the opening of the piece, when the celli are alternating antiphonal Bartok pizzicati (one of the few times when they are engaging in a sound-action-drama relationship), the concert setting works perfectly. Therefore, entering the stage in full lighting and enacting the concert framing ritual is adequate. And perhaps this explains why the piece is devoid of extensive performance notes for how the piece should be framed to the spectator. Perhaps

Kagel means for the performers to conceive of the piece purely musically and allow the space in which it is being presented to determine alterations to concert-framing protocol.

This example in *Match* brings up a larger issue which will be addressed in different lights via the remaining examples in this paper. By withholding certain information from the performance notes, but making clear the concept, scenario, and relationships to be fulfilled in the piece, Kagel enables effective performances in each new context. Kagel understands that the best of circumstances are never available and that a good performance is the sum of available optimized components. Generating that list of components is a set of variables that are out of the grasp of a composer's foresight, especially regarding time (technology advancements, etc). Performer's experience and ability, venue size, lighting capabilities, etc. all add to the complexity of negotiating a balance between and among combined media and their codified methods and resultant expectations. By revealing the essence of the work's concept implicitly, and stating the crucial modes of presentation explicitly, Kagel leaves ample room for negotiation between what is ideal and what is available; all with little sacrifice. Beyond pragmatism, works that utilize a balance of implicit and explicit instruction yield a life of their own, beyond Kagel's own life, in places where Kagel would otherwise be unknown, and in circumstances beyond anyone's imagination. In this way, the works have the potential to transcend space and time.

## Chapter 4

# Moving Image Integration

A balance of implicit/explicit instruction can also withstand the evolution (and, hopefully, broadening) of the procedures of production and the resulting audience's expectations. Thus far in this paper, theatre and music production protocols have been addressed. But what about the numerous experiments in the last century integrating sound and moving image practices? Though these media have a shorter history than theatre (and perhaps proportionately less resistance to new methods of presentation and experimentalism), the variety of frames in which questions arise is overwhelming. Cinema, which takes most of its procedural protocol regarding the sound producing mechanism and the proscenium directly from Wagner, has had much written about it.

Cinema since Wagner has gone through a variety of well-documented frame and corresponding sound practice changes. Early magic lantern lectures and presentations coincided with Wagner's life time and continued past his death. In these contexts, a host would guide the audience through a series of projected images (Crangle 39). Both the projection and the host were visible to the audience, leaving voice-of-God narration for a later medium. The millenia-old zoetrope enabled the phenomenon of moving hand-drawn images to combine with the magic lantern to cast crude projections of moving animations in the mid-19th century (Ronan). Edison's success with the phonograph lead him to desire a combination of the zoetrope's phenomenon, the magic lantern's projection ability, and the still photograph camera's reproduction realism. Edison wanted his cameras and projec-

tors to “do for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear (Gunning 13).” Edison would prove successful in this task and would foreshadow the now-inseparable relationship of the technology of the phonograph (sound reproduction and playback) with the camera and projector (moving image reproduction and playback).

The visibility of the host/narrator in the magic lantern presentations of the 19th century presents an interesting mode of media interaction. In the midst of Wagner’s purist notions of a single visual proscenium vantage with “no intermediate figures to contaminate the spectator’s line of sight” is a precursor to the modern powerpoint presentation. And, similar to the case of projected slideshows of the 21st century, the magic lantern show mediates plurality of focus by making primary and ancillary roles ambiguous. Perhaps since the images are not moving, except in rare cases of zeotropic magic lantern shows (and even then the result was merely that of a single animated slide, not a continuous progression of moving image sequences as in narrative film), the viewer has the ability to grasp the content of the projection and then move his or her focus to the host of the slideshow (Crangle). This begs the question of whether Wagner’s concern about distracting the viewer from the dramatic personae was exaggerated. One can easily imagine focusing primarily on the scenic illusion while still having the ability to occasionally focus on the mechanism of sound production, the human beings in the pit whose job is to evoke the emotional content of the stage narrative. The consequent kinetic actions of these sound producing “executants” would undoubtedly add to the intensity of the experience if the viewer could witness the passion and skill being transferred into the instruments of the orchestra. Just as Kagel wanted to “rehumanize” instrumental performance by reattaching sight and sound, magic lantern shows refrain from hiding the mechanism of sound production.

Between the magic lantern slideshow and the first “talkies” of the 20th century, various incarnations of sound-image practice were explored. Without detailing every step along the way to the current codification of a 16:9 screen dimension and immersive hidden sound sources, highlighting some points of interest will illuminate possibilities of moving image/visible performer integrations on the concert stage.



If the Wagnerian method of suppressing the visibility of the sound producing mechanism was intended to separate the sounds of the diagesis from the sounds of the accompaniment, then cinema adopted this Wagnerian practice quite quickly. However, a peculiar attempt was made to reconnect reproduced sound with its human (or human-like) sound source. Edison's phonograph technology was, for a time, sold in an optional housing shaped like a human female (Gunning 21). This design was intended to bring the sound of the human voice back to its corporeal point of origin. Other than this example, the task for the evolution of sound-image practices was how to realistically coordinate three elements: moving image, recreations of diagetic sounds (often comprised of dialogic material and foley sounds), and non-diagetic sounds (music). The visibility of the sound sources of these latter two media was to be suppressed, if possible. The size and type of these sound sources was yet to be standardized. The pit orchestra was often still the source of non-diagetic sounds and some foley sounds. Depending on the size and budget of the theatre anything from a piano or organ player to a full orchestra was employed. Diagetic sounds, if used, came from live actors who spoke from behind the screen (King 32). From these initial configurations of media, other experiments and theories including early attempts at recorded sound lead to specific theories of sound source locations (Altman 46). All of these experiments lead to theories which culminated in a narrowing of accepted protocol with regards to sound source visibility and location.

The evolution of the theory and practice of sound design in 1930s cinema is a perfect example of procedural narrowing and codification yielding specific expectations from the audience. Rick Altman, a well-regarded silent film sound historian and theorist describes this evolution eloquently in his article "Sound Space." To start, he posits that "the early years of sound cinema were marked by a heavy debt to contemporary arbiters of sound representation: radio, theatre, phonography, and public address (Altman 46)." The main issue to be addressed by sound cinema in the thirties was "what relationship should obtain between between image scale and sound scale (Altman 46)?" In other words, in terms of amplitude, diffusion, and reverberation, should we hear be what we see? According to three

independent film sound organizations (RCA, RKO, and ERPI) the answer was yes, there needed to be a realistic correlation between sound and image (Altman 49).

This was to happen in three ways in the early thirties (Altman 47). (1) the loud speakers were to be placed according to Wagnerian principles of sound design. The music sound track speakers were to be placed below the screen as an orchestra pit would be. The dialogic and diegetic sounds were to come from speakers behind or above the screen. In the early part of the decade, great pains were taken to add more and more speakers to the rear of the screen so that specific speakers could coordinate vertically and laterally with the location of the sound source on the screen. (2) In editing, early post-production techniques were employed to simulate sound space in coordination with image space. (3) Production techniques such as microphone placement were of the utmost importance in conveying sound space realism. The primary goal was to “maintain the illusion of reality” by maintaining a constancy of the distance between the ear and the origin of the sound and the eye. Sound cinema made an attempt to misappropriate Wagnerian illusionism in the early 30s.

But the attempt failed. Only eight years of experimentation lead to a codified practice in direct opposition to the early theories of ERPI, RCA, and RKO. “Why this striking change? Sound was not yet in its teens and already sound technicians had reversed their position about sound space, not only in theory but also in practice. It is no exaggeration to claim that this reversal represented a fundamental turnabout in human perception. We often give lip service to the notion that cinema teaches us to see and to hear, that the media determine our very notion of reality. Yet we are rarely privileged to isolate the moment in the process whereby our perception changes (Altman 55).” In less than a decade what was thought to be a rigid coordination based on the needs of the human psyche, the connection of sight space and sound space, was firmly rejected. Following this rejection, the opposite phenomenon, a disconnect between sight and sound, was the accepted (if not preferred) norm. Altman expands to answer his question of why by stating, “The construction of a uniform level sound track, eschewing any attempt at matching sound scale with image scale, thus takes its place alongside

the thirties' numerous invisible image-editing devices within the overall strategy of hiding the apparatus itself, thus separating the spectator from the reality of the representational situation, thereby making that spectator more available for reaction to the subject-placement cues (materials) provided by the fiction (concept) and its vehicle (scenario) (Altman 61).” In other words, close-miking rejected the Wagnerian notion of the proscenium but maintained the notion of illusionism by placing the spectator not in front of the screen but in the screen. Speakers moved accordingly such that the audience was immersed in sound and their point of view moved from that of the tableau proscenium to that of inclusion within the scene itself. Just as cameras have a POV (point of view) shot that puts the spectator in with the diagesis, sound has the “point of audition” technique which puts the audiences ears near the point of origin of the sound. This fortifies the immersive illusion and increases clarity of content. It also shows that, while a codified practice determines the nature of human perception (and expectations), human perception has the ability to change quite radically in a short period of time. This gives hope to the rise of new and distinct experimental production protocol.

Instrumental theatre and interdisciplinary temporal art can take a cue from cinema in the thirties by allowing the needs of the medium to guide the production protocol and not adhere blindly to the established conventions of those media with a longer history. Cinema designed its protocol via experimentation with conventions of the music-drama but quickly rejected those procedures as others were proven more effective. For new media configurations, this proves that no existing protocol will perfectly suit the materials, concept, and scenario of a given piece, especially if that piece is created without a particular media's procedure in mind (as most of the examples in this paper do not).

From this, it is now expected that the cinematic experience will include a display of wide dimensions and immersive surround sound. But, unlike opera and theatre, the moving image has adopted a variety of acceptable methods of presentation. At this time, the size of the screen is completely varied and the sound source ranges from in-ear binaural experiences to proscenium to immersive. Each variant includes but a few constants or narrow constraints of acceptability.

For example, the screen proportions usually range from 4:3 to 16:9; a much smaller variability than early moving image practices (the cylindrical zoetrope and the circular magic lantern throw). Therefore, since the protocol for presentation is more varied, so are the expectations from the spectator. As the protocol and expectations become more codified, more drastic attempts to break these norms are necessary for true experimentalism in media integration to exist.

## Chapter 5

# Kagel II: Experiments in Moving Image Integration

A prime example of experimental moving-image integration experiments is Kagel's *Camera Oscura*. The piece allows each medium to act as a component to another medium. Spot lights become moving images, projected moving images become spot lights, actors become projection screens, projection screens become dancers, and all of this is coordinated in a notation that is no different from his other graphic scores. Though the material's temporal realization is conveyed via a musical score, the only sonic element is pre-recorded speech and murmurs from the actors.

The reasons for using a musical score to convey materials and their method of delivery then becomes more than purely practical. Other means of conveying the information (such as those that do not use time as a fixed spatial component on the stage) may have been more effective, especially if those operating the machinery, acting, etc, are not musicians. The musicality that Kagel seems to want to preserve via the score method is the implicit/explicit method of conveying information. Explicitly, the score tells you what to do, when to do it, and how to do it quite clearly. Implicitly, that clarity and exactitude yield a uniform rigor and precision from the operators and actors. This is another way of proving Applebaum's point. By conveying the information in score form (a multi-century tradition of detail and rigor), Kagel successfully elicits rigor from *Camera Oscura*'s performance. In a way, the

motivation path then has a prefix to the normal flow options: exactitude. Like *Pas de Cinq*, the score explicitly indicates way points on the space of the stage in graphic form and then uses symbols and text instructions (often typical musical indications) to describe the method of traversing the way points (Kagel Camera Oscura). These explicit instructions act as micro-motivations for each action that yields confidence in their aesthetic action and rigorous intentionality in the aggregate global result. In short, explicit exacting detail allows a brand new scenario for media integration to occupy the same space as codified media (music, theatre, cinema). In addition to moment-to-moment instructions, Kagel gives “framing” instructions which implicitly give a global motivation for the entirety of the piece. If the piece can be simplified to the three components (which, as described above, is inaccurate because each participant occupies multiple media roles), then the actors, projectionists/lighting board operators, and sound diffusers have unique global instructions. “The actors are silent mimes (Kagel Camera Oscura).” Kagel thus gives the actors their dramaturgical motivation. The audience should “perceive a difference in spatial location and volume (Kagel Camera Oscura).” Thus Kagel implicitly defines the roles of the sound designers: to highlight sound-source location and establish an immersive sonic experience. And, by telling the lighting board operators and film projectionists that they “must have an assistant with a stop watch so that prescribed timings can be adhered to,” Kagel uses specific instruction to implicitly reinforce that only through exactitude can this piece be effective.

*Camera Oscura* succeeds at integrating media because it does not make an attempt to codify a transferable protocol of media integration. Instead, it attempts to draw from rigor, codification, and audience expectations of other established media in order to implicitly and explicitly establish a frame unique to its concept. This frame has numerous two-way (audience-performer) attributes that accommodate unprecedented media combinations. The implicitness of the instructions’ language both before and in the graphic notation establishes confidence in the intentionality of the actions of the performer. In other words, by following precise and rehearsed instructions, the performer can feel as if they are participating

in a codified ritual. This confidence is perceptible to the audience and allows them to get past the unprecedented combination of media and instead gain access to the core of the concept. The degree to which other pieces successfully utilize implicit global instructions and explicitly detailed task/actions is crucial to establishing a frame in which previously uncombined media can be combined.

## Chapter 6

# 2008-09: A Survey of Media Integration Problems

To illustrate this point, I would like to describe the framing methods of pieces with which I have had experience performing, recording, and intimately studying (*Dressur*, *Match*, and *Pas de Cinq* also fall into this category). To arbitrarily limit this list of pieces, I will simply make a survey of this, my final, year as a Doctoral Candidate in Music Performance at UCSD. I will further limit the selection of pieces to those that have unique media framing problems.

Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri's *Kein Thema* is a piece written for Steven Schick, Justin DeHart, and me and has yet to be performed by anyone but that group. That configuration of performers has now given three performances and produced a video/audio recording. My perspective on the piece has been unique in that I have both performed it and produced/edited the video for later presentation in galleries and on the composer's personal site. Unlike a performer's engagement with Kagel's music, *Kein Thema* has no score and is the result of personal interactions with the composer over the course of a few months of collaboration. The piece is framed as a series of overlapping scenarios with ambiguous goals. In performance, these scenarios take on a game-like feel where only the rules of each scenario are known by the players, not the rules necessary to comprehend the game's overall goal. The audience is then in a similar position. At each moment in each scenario, they may understand the goals of each gesture and exchange but the



aggregate of all of these actions, is mysterious, like a ritual. The enigmatic ritual of the piece acts as an overarching frame and justifies the confidence and rehearsed quality evident in the player's actions. What is unique about *Kein Thema* is the innocence of the toy-like objects that the performer's use and also the ambiguity of the relationship that Kagel establishes in *Dressur* or *Pas de Cinq*. In a way more similar to *Match*, the sound-action-drama has moments of reversed motivation in *Kein Thema*. This reversal is indicated by extraneous actions. When the stage-left and right performers begin to make near-inaudible sounds with their temple blocks (right by rotating the block in his hand, left by rotating a marble in the notch on the block's surface), they also move the blocks closer to one another until they meet in the center. At this meeting point, they simply reverse direction and go back to their place of origin. This happens twice. Each time, the movement towards one another does not add a new sound to the rotation friction effect of each performer but merely adds the dramatic effect of anticipation. Therefore, dramatic effect motivates action which motivates resulting sound (in this case, resulting in silence). In other cases, the sounds are clearly the motivation behind the action and the resulting drama. When the stage right player rolls the marble along a track created by two parallel xylophone bars culminating in a collision with the ceramic bowl at the track's end, the action is motivated by the desired sound of marble-rolling-on-xylo-bar-followed-by-bowl-strike. In fact, the action to initiate the sound and the marble and track assembly itself are hidden from the audience's view. In this moment, it is clear that the sound-action-drama motivation path is the dominant one. Finally, some actions seem to work from the center of the motivation path outwards. Some seem to be actions purely for the sake of the action which yield sonic and/or dramatic results. The opening of the piece and the penultimate scene have this quality. Papalexandri-Alexandri's verbal instructions to the performer are that of action. The dramatic/sonic relationships/results that ensue are consequential, falling only into general causal categories. As the performer's make their initial reach for the onion-skin paper-filled bowl, they are not motivated by a prescribed order of interaction with the bowl but rather by specific instructions that have no temporal order or specific causality. Each performance is a

scenario with unique extemporaneous causal relationships. One performer asserts his action by grabbing for the paper bowl and the other performer then engages in a spontaneous dramatic/sonic relationship with the other performers. At times, the aesthetic motivation behind the action is for the resulting sound, at other times, the motivation is the game-like relationship of gestures between the players. The same ambiguity of motivation path is also pronounced in the final game of the piece, the moment where Papalexandri-Alexandri instructs the performers to move marbles to and from different empty holes atop Orff Xylophone bars. The motivation for the action is to fill the empty hole with a marble. The resulting sound is a desirable consequence, and, at times, becomes the motivation for when the marble is placed in the hole. In this way, the performer's temporal decisions (the "when") are motivated by the sonic result and the performer's dramaturgical decisions (the "how") are motivated by game-like non-sonic interaction.

*Kein Thema*'s careful navigation along the fence between sound-motivated and drama-motivated actions is a large component of the piece's success. Coupled with the unique and other-worldly sounds that result, the piece is strikingly similar to *Match* but results in a completely different experience for the audience. This highlights how subtle differences in the frame that accommodate a mixture of media protocols can drastically change the resulting experience. In *Match*, the resulting frame is humorous, self-deprecating, post-modern absurdity while *Kein Thema* is an innocent, ritual enigma.

In October, Red Fish Blue Fish and Roger Reynolds presented the monumental percussion work, *Sanctuary*, at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, CA. Following performances in New Mexico, Buffalo, Washington DC, and UCSD, the Salk performance represented a definitive version of a work that has changed, lengthened, and transformed itself significantly over its five year performance history. The piece highlights a unique framing method in that the frame was clearly established a posteriori. Whereas many of the other pieces discussed in this paper were performed with an a priori framing method, *Sanctuary*'s frame of presentation and media integration has been constructed and strengthened with each new performance. Subjectively, the piece has reached a conclusive framing methodology which can

be used by future performances (at their interpretive discretion) but this frame will “be in a continual state of evolution, responding to new performance spaces, new performers, new percussion sound resources, and new technologies, as time and circumstance offer (Reynolds 1),” as the composer states. This is not to say that Roger Reynolds didn’t have a clear goal for framing the piece from before the premier of the second movement, *Oracle*. What is true is that the evolution of implicit instruction (used for general framing) has changed drastically while explicit instruction (used for navigation of materials within the frame) has evolved more subtly. The two cannot be successfully detached from each other in this discussion and their dependence is also interesting to consider.

The evolution of *Sanctuary* is made more complex by the fact that each new performance was not a “workshop” of the piece in its current state but a professional performance in a prominent venue or festival. In this way, the piece had finality in its interpretation at each step in its performance history. The frame in which the materials were presented was solid and highly-considered in each performance. What this revealed is that the components of *Sanctuary* were strong enough, autonomously, to shape a piece in each new context. What it also revealed was that, using context as a motivator for creative interpretation (problem solving) was an asset to the piece’s artistic trajectory and performance success. Thus, malleability was to be consciously preserved by Reynolds in the creation of his a posteriori performance notes. Just as Kagel’s performance notes accommodate multiple versions of a piece using explicit and implicit language, Reynolds’ piece embraces context (of space, place, conditions, etc) as an important component to any performance of *Sanctuary*. In broad terms, by crafting performance notes that balance implicit and explicit instruction, the piece successfully asks “what can *Sanctuary* do for (in) this space and what can this space do for (around) *Sanctuary*?” Reynolds states it in this way: “So, I have been making a work that evolves with the experience of its creators (composer, performers, and technicians) and is able to adapt to and capitalize upon changing resources, as well as to the differing contexts in which it is realized. I have formulated musical materials which allow us to experience their identity even though they are manifested through unfamil-

iar and strikingly heterogeneous sound media. Metaphorically, one might say that never before has our world seemed so fractured: multifarious in its profusion of content, dissociated if one seeks connections. One searches for ways in which to insure substantive communication in spite of the inevitable inconsistencies of experience and outlook. *Sanctuary* means to address this circumstance (Reynolds 1).” After that description of the conceptual and anecdotal locus of the piece, Reynolds then goes on to provide some details for mounting the piece. The language Reynolds uses to convey the conceptual, logistical, and situational (scenario) information can be categorized distinctly. Each category conveys a different type and level of prescription for mounting the piece. Reynold’s navigation of each of these types of language is a crucial component of maintaining a level of flexibility (to accommodate each new performance circumstance) and also upholding conceptual principles and interpretive quality.

The two first categories that run as a theme for the notes and for the piece in general is that of the previously mentioned scenario vs. concept. In many sentences of the general description of the piece, he uses declarative and imperative language to propose acceptable situations in which the piece can be presented. These are the various scenarios of *Sanctuary*. To describe the way in which sounds coming from loudspeakers and sounds coming from performer’s action integrate, Reynolds declares “in addition to the virtuoso instrumental demands on the performers, there is real time computer transformation and dissemination of their live performance sounds.” The word “is” further categorizes the language of this statement in two ways. It provides information declaratively and implicitly. The opposite would be to phrase the information in this way: “The technician should transform and disseminate the live performance sounds of the performer’s virtuosic instrumental material in real time.” Neither method gives explicit instructions for “how” to accomplish the result, but Reynolds’ descriptive declaration (as opposed to imperative) states what the piece “is” as an aggregate of all of the components involved instead of what it “should” be. The distinction is subtle but it shows that prescriptive authoritarianism is largely absent from these performance notes and instead, a scenario that is attainable via a variety of avenues is proposed. “Is”

effectively describes the piece as a thing with which the performers must engage as opposed to a set of tasks to execute.

Imperative and declarative language are also evident in Reynolds' information regarding the conceptual components of *Sanctuary*; the components that transcend each scenario. These components are at times more basic and general than the scenarios and, at other times, quite specific in their dependence on the scenario itself. He declares that Chatter/Clatter "is an exploration of a level of 'utterance' that is dependent upon the primitive gestural repertoire (Reynolds 2)." Again noting the declarative nature of the word "is," it is clear that Reynolds' view of the score is not instructive or prescriptive but rather a presentation of a concept and a scenario with highly specified materials. The semantics of Reynolds' performance notes allow these three components (concept, scenario, and materials) to combine organically with the interpreters, technologists, and the space/place of the performance. In this way, Reynolds establishes a malleable (but distinct) frame for media integration.

Two other classifications of language used by Reynolds facilitate media integration. He uses implicit language to evoke a type of characteristic in the piece and explicit language to guide a specific execution. The subjects of each implicit and explicit instruction are a function of Reynolds' conceptual foresight in the composition stage of the piece's history and of the hindsight resulting from his close collaboration with Steven Schick, a rotating cast of eight members of Red Fish Blue Fish, and large resources of technologists and technology. The navigation of the implicit/explicit a priori/a posteriori classifications of language are a way for Reynolds to allow ingenuity in problem solving to enter each new context of media integration. Implicit information shows a trust in the performers/technologists ability to realize *Sanctuary*. A posteriori information shows the respect he has for the decisions of the collaborators and his willingness to include that in the information made available to future performers. Presenting all of this information in a declarative historical syntax establishes a precedent of process and an endorsement for future progression.

When presenting the details of the setup for Chatter/Clatter, Reynolds

crafts a sentence that elegantly navigates the implicit/explicit and imperative/declarative language. “Firstly, the performer must (imperative) select a set of eight oddity (implicit) sources as instruments, and arrange them in a V shape (implicit), the performer positioned at its tip (explicit declarative). These selections, however, must (imperative) be made in accord with the following ideals (Reynolds 2).” Reynolds then presents two columns of information regarding instrument selection. In the first column, he implicitly details a spectrum or range which the instruments must occupy. Three ranges are presented: high to low, dry to resonant, and consistent to malleable. In the corresponding column, he explicitly states the nature of each of these ranges. High to low refers to “relative pitch”, dry to resonant refers to “decay time”, and consistent to malleable refers to “sound quality” (Reynolds 2). In this chart and the language that precedes it, Reynolds effectively combines a level of flexibility, affording a proper integration of available components (performers, technology, instruments, space, etc) with a rigorous and detailed conception of the nature of the sound source and the performer’s engagement with it.

After an intimate study of the performance notes and the notation itself, what questions of media integration remain unanswered? A posteriori, the main problem to address with *Sanctuary* is not the integration of media in the final performance but cultivating a working model that aligns three (perhaps four) distinct modes of operation and optimizes their congruence in performance. In other words, how does the pending performance force the performers, the technologists, and the production manager (lighting, staging, sound design) (perhaps also the composer, when he is involved in the productions as well) to coordinate their working models to accommodate one-another? As the primary problem to address to mount a performance, which group’s model will act as the guiding method to which the others will conform?

The experience of mounting *Sanctuary* in Washington D.C., La Jolla, and for audio/visual recording proved that the performers’ working model was the initial guiding method and that the technology was the primary method in the days leading up to the performances. The production design then inserted obstacles for both models to work around. This configuration is a reverse of the ideal and

sidelines the production design in a problematic way. Ideally, after the piece's concept is made clear to all participants, the production design would be established based on the proposed venue for presentation. As stated, the nature of the piece warrants careful attention to how *Sanctuary* changes a space and vice versa. This means that the specifications of the score and the specifications of the venue must be compared and coordinated. It further means that adopting a strict model for concert production (as was utilized at the Salk Institute) or a model from theatre (as was attempted at June in Buffalo), presents more obstacles than solutions. A simple solution such as erecting a raised platform with a pleated skirt, misappropriated from concert production, casts the piece as a sequestered installation of *Sanctuary* as opposed to an integrated embedding. A crucial component of the piece is that of the expanding frame. In Chatter/Clatter, the frame is a simple proscenium arrangement of a solo musician, his micro-gestures, occasional hints of sounds from distant surround sources, and the spectators. As the piece progresses through Oracle and Song, the audio visual frame continues to expand outward from the soloists position until, in Song, the performers are around and among the spectators. This means that a black platform on white marble prohibits the progression of this frame expansion because it makes the moment of leaving that platform (when the performer steps off it) an event as opposed to a step along a gradual immersion process. In this way, the installation at the National Gallery was more successful. The performers installed the instruments directly onto the highly resonant marble floor of the gallery's main space. As the performers began to move around the undefined space for Oracle, a precedent for movement was established within the frame. Then, when the movement gradually included the spaces outside the quartet (at the high and low remote cowbell stations some fifty to seventy-five yards away), the actions to the new locations were not drastically event-like but rather necessities along an established motivation path: sound source - macro-movement to that sound source - micro-movement engagement with the sound source - drama. In line with the physio-spacial configuration "installation," the piece's spacial components were calibrated to the architectural properties of the space by utilizing the stair-cases, balconies, etc. as locations of electro-acoustic

sound sources. In this way, the motivation path is thus space - sound source - macro-movement - micro-movement - drama.

The decision to use the stage platform at the Salk performance then simply represents a disconnect in production protocol and working models. This disconnect is born of a diffuse set of framing visions. A collaboration such as *Sanctuary* inevitably engages a multitude of framing subjectivity. This plurality is essential to the process but a hindrance to a performance's specific singular finality and coherence. The production company responsible for the lighting, stage, and other logistics simply (with innocent intentions) imposed its normative production protocol onto the Salk space and *Sanctuary* itself. This is not to say that the simple stage platform was diametrically opposed to the concept of *Sanctuary*. It is simply a minor GLITCH caused by incongruent production procedures which may have been solved by, at the time of attempting to prepare a performance with a definitive time and space, adhering to a singular directorial vision of the piece's mounting. *Sanctuary* must momentarily detach itself from its process-oriented evolution at each performance and become a defined entity. That defined entity will determine the goals of the performance a priori. The accumulation of performances in unique time and spaces can then be viewed as a process a posteriori.

Many of Kagel's pieces can rely solely on the singularity of the concept and scenario to define the performance that will exist in a specific time and place. *Sanctuary*, with its emphasis on process and a posteriori framing, requires a directorial vision akin to theatre production methods. The production of the *Sanctuary* "Integrated Perspectives" (IPeR) DVD is an example of that directorial production vision. In consultation with Reynolds, I created a precise framing methodology for the piece's video presentation a priori. Using the music score as the scenic and conceptual motivator, I created a project-specific score which detailed the use of the resources available, the space provided, and the participants.



## Chapter 7

# Re-Framing an Integrated Work for the Cinematic Medium

Looking back to Kagel, one can find a clear precedent for framing a piece of music in the medium of moving images. Again looking at *Match*, this time the film of the same title made by Kagel, we can see the value of a singular vision born of a directorial approach to production. In the end credits of the film, we see that Kagel claims the “regie” (director’s) role in the production. While in other framings of Kagel’s work the concept and scenario can act as directors of certain procedural decisions, this particular cinematic framing of *Match* contains more intricacies than the score alone reveals. This presentation of *Match* allows the nature of 16mm film and the directorial vision to create a new frame of production. The film is in no way a documentation of a concert performance of the score. It is a cinematic view into the concept, scenario, and materials of *Match* which purposefully avoids the realities of live concert production: realism, continuity, fixed visual distance/angle (zoom/pan), and even sight/sound source synchronization. The *Match* film purposefully exploits the ability to manipulate realism to accentuate the absurdity of Kagel’s concept and scenario: two cellists playing tennis with their instruments as rackets and their sounds as tennis balls, refereed by an absent-minded percussionist whose rule-enforcement stems from the peculiarities of percussion. Layered on top of this exploitation of discontinuous non-realism is an experiment into compositing images related to the piece. These images fill

the white spaces of the black and white celluloid (often occupied by the head of a performer) and evoke the psychological activity of that performer's role in this surreality.

Exploitation of film's (video's) medium was the motivation behind my directorial vision for the *Sanctuary* IPeR document. In my vision, the document of *Sanctuary* is also not meant to be a capturing of a live performance. It is meant to be a reframing of *Sanctuary* for the cinematic medium. Instead of exploiting the ability to disrupt continuity, an element used in *Match* to accentuate absurdity, great pains were taken to preserve continuity in the initial direction, the cinematography, and the editing. The goal of this document is to create a reality within the realm of the *Sanctuary* that plays by the rules of our own reality but offers views and insights to that world only available in non-linear video editing practices. Whereas absurdity was a feature of *Match* to be highlighted, it is not a feature of *Sanctuary* and was avoided via strict adherence to continuity editing protocol.

This adherence does not exclude intentional violation of some cinematographic protocol. The cinematographic plan was designed around the concept and scenario of *Sanctuary* with such a level of detail that a hybrid score, with a staff for each camera, was created for reference during the days in the studio. Violations of the 180-degree rule, basic editing principles, etc. combine to elevate the intensity of specific moments in the piece's trajectory. Thus, the working method for *Sanctuary* IPeR recording was to allow the combination of my directorial vision and Reynolds' concept, scenario, and materials to integrate in a hybrid score which called upon protocols of music production, theatre production (lighting design), and cinematography. Like *Match*, the final product is neither a concert document, a narrative film, nor a montage sequence. It abides by rules of continuity when they highlight the piece's components, rules of concert production/audio engineering when necessary, elements of theatrical production when effective, and perhaps most congruently, the loose production protocol of the MTV music video (those outside the realm of the montage).

This brings to light a very important point regarding the *Match* film and

the *Sanctuary* IPeR document. *Match* bares striking resemblance to the most experimental pop music videos made over the last fifty years. Like pop videos, it shows the “band” and their instruments in a scenario akin to a concert but with clear departure from the reality of a concert. In much the same way that, in one verse of a music video, the lead singer might be on a stage and another they may be on a yacht in the Caribbean, *Match* exploits discontinuity by placing the performers in new positions at each new section of the piece; impossible in real time in the concert hall but essential to Kagel’s vision. The film, made in 1966, is thus a precursor to nearly all popular music videos of a similar style. In the opposite direction, *Sanctuary*’s IPeR came after the heyday of the music video (Saul Austerlitz posits, considering that MTV has effectively discontinued music video airplay, music videos are a thing of the past (Austerlitz 1)) and, while it may be influenced by the production methods of the music video, it does not originate from that protocol. For both *Match* and *Sanctuary*, a codified protocol is not the primary source of procedural decision making. Instead, the director’s vision, the piece’s concept, and the medium combine to create a piece with a unique frame. This frame aligns with pop music video production only as a consequence of the combination of similar ingredients.

In the end, *Sanctuary*’s IPeR document is the result of an a priori hybrid score that integrates the concept, the scenario, the space, and the resources in a specific way. The hybrid score is further the result of a posteriori information gathered from numerous framings of the piece in a variety of other procedural contexts. In this way, the IPeR document responds to both the process of engaging with *Sanctuary* as a conceptual object and the finality and authority of the concept itself.

## Chapter 8

# Media Fulcra: the Synchronism Project's Experiments in Collaborative Media Integration

Moving along in this last year's concert program (and skipping countless performances framed naturally in concert production protocol), I would like to describe the process that resulted in two collaborative pieces by the Synchronism Project. The Project is an attempt to find fulcra for integrating and balancing various media combinations with a variety of authors. The two most recent pieces from this collaboration are *Popol Vuh* (2008) for solo bass drum, flower pot, electronic sounds, and projected moving images and *Risk* (2009) for multi-percussion, live electronics, and projected moving images. William Brent and I are the primary authors for both pieces and Jeffrey Trevino contributed the temporal structure and event map for *Popol Vuh*. Both pieces have interesting ramifications relating to a priori, a posteriori procedural and conceptual components. They utilize a variety of framing methods to contain the myriad media, most notably, the MEDIA FADER technique cultivated by Brent and myself. They answer to a core concept and scenario as opposed to a single author. They exploit BLIND component creation and a process of TECHNOLOGY REDUCTION.

*Popol Vuh* began with a concept inspired by Werner Herzog's *Fata Morgana*. In that film, Herzog exploits the mayan creation myth as a sonic component

that accompanies other-worldly images of a north-central African montage. All of these combine to create a science fiction film made up entirely of earthly components. *Popol Vuh* uses the same text (english translation spoken by Steve Willard) and sets it in the context of a sound world derived from a flower pot and bass drum. The flower pot is symbolic because the original hieroglyphs that were translated to Quiche, then Spanish, then English were also drawn on pots and containers (Christenson). The primary concept stems from the scenario of the pot as storyteller; aurally and visually.

The work process is the main facilitator and determiner of media integration and framing for the piece. The framing is explicitly determined in the piece's score and leaves little room for augmentation from space to space. Both pieces utilize imposition configuration that requires neutralization of physio-spacial realities via a blackout and sound reenforcement. The individual processes of creating the separate components adhered to the concept and scenario but was otherwise blind. Jeff Trevino was responsible for the event map and time-structure. William Brent was responsible for software and sound design. I was responsible for the original concept, the sonic materials, and the video imagery. Once those elements were crafted independently of one-another, their combination was the result of numerous rehearsals. In each rehearsal, we implemented a metaphorical media fader which required the content of each medium to be temporarily reduced or ignored. In other words, for the sake of experimentation with media EQ, the imagery and its content's meaning was reduced to merely a "projection." The sonic materials were reduced merely to "signal." The percussionist and playing was reduced to "live performance." Once reduced, the balancing of each component was easier to analyze and adjust because we could refocus our composition on the interaction of three layers and then gradually fade in the meaning and content as it became appropriate. Using the media fader technique meant that certain bits of content within a certain medium were not allowed back into the final piece. At any time, the level of each media could be adjusted such that their constant shift made primacy ambiguous and balance paramount.

Much like the motivation path from other examples in this paper, *Popol*

*Vuh* used a motivation circuitry which was dependent on the modularity of each component. The projector has to also be theatrical lighting. The percussionist has to initiate, coincide with, or respond to projection and electronic sounds. The electronic sounds must facilitate acoustic sounds or give momentum to moving images. In this way, the motivation for each component nearly always come from another component and defines the nature of the resulting component. The exception to this is the voice-of-god narration that begins and ends the piece. The narration seems to act as an independent layer but, hidden out of sight of perception, motivates much of the other components' activity. It breaks the media silence of the opening of the piece (beginning in complete blackout). Then as each new component medium enters, the narration justifies their entry and binds them to one-another such that a balanced immersion in a modular hybrid medium is initiated.

Once the proper balance of component media was achieved, the process led to a technology reduction that prioritized the portability, reliability, and core-conceptual adherence. Though many technological advances were discovered by the trio in the process of creating the piece, the primary aim is the final performance and its balanced media integration. Once the primary aim was achieved, all interactive technology was locked in time and simulated using a fixed playback performance track. In the media fader rehearsal process, live interactivity was a crucial asset. In the performance, the flexibility offered by this asset is out-weighed by its unreliability and imperceptibility. In performance, the piece is simply a projection from a digital video file and sound from that same video file. The performer is responsible for following these two fixed elements. The overall goal is to encourage the audience to forget or disregard the way in which the components are coordinated and instead become engrossed in the sum of the parts.

*Risk* uses a very similar approach to the media fader but also, like *Sanctuary*, uses a scenario of an expanding, constantly varying frame of media containment. The piece can be broken into three parts, each with clear trajectories. The first section begins with a soup of stochastic snare drum sounds in complete blackness. Out of this blackness and chaos, the acoustic snare drum emerges vi-

sually and audibly as it acts both as an instrument and a projection surface. The opening material on the acoustic snare drum is regular, fast pulsations to contrast the chaos underneath. In this way, the frame is established with electronic sounds alone. Then the acoustic snare drum is added both as a sound source and a projection surface. Because the only illumination of the setup is from the projector, the spectator is given a limited understanding of what sound sources are available. In the transition into the second section, the snare drum seems to cast light onto the bass drum and so the visual frame is effectively quadrupled in area. To disjoint the audio-visual connection, the illumination of the bass drum does not reveal bass drum sounds but rather the pure noise of the china cymbal in chaotic swells out of time with the imagery. The second section begins when three media have clearly established themselves: the imagery is projected onto its largest frame (bass drum and snare drum), the electronic sounds have moved from highly reverberant distant sounds to near sounds that are indistinguishable from the acoustic instruments, and the performer and his gestures are illuminated by the projector as well. The entirety of the second section allows the media fader of these three elements to operate independently of one-another with the exception of about a dozen key points of structural coordination where all three maximize their intensity in single snare strokes. In the concluding section, a dramatic process of reduction ensues which fades out the performer's visibility, gradually removes the snare drum's presence, and moves the bass drum and its projection surface to the foreground. In essence, all media (even the low bass tones of the electronics) gravitate towards the bass drum. Bass drum becomes the master fader as the other elements fade to nothing.

The decisions regarding the trajectory of this media fader technique come clearly from the concept of the piece, both in its a priori and a posteriori work phases. The general concept of the piece stems from a catalog of iconic figures of war, conflict, and battle as represented through exaggerated editing techniques of sensationalist media outlets and sonification of mortality statistics. That concept's trajectory drives many of the technical decisions in the piece. It begins with realism and flickering images evocative of war time footage. The military (snare) drum is used both for its evocation of combat and its resemblance to chaotic artillery. As

the frame expands from stark realism, the images and sounds begin to resemble a more modernized approach to sensational media outlets. In section two, the imagery makes an interesting cross-fade with the sound world. The images move so quickly and chaotically that they are blurred into a texture of colors. The sounds are so sparse and distinct that each can be perceived with maximum clarity. Blur and clarity couple at the outset. As the second section progresses the images get more clear as they reduce in layers and slow in speed. The sounds get more dense and seemingly more chaotic. At the end of the section, image clarity is coupled with sonic density and indistinction. The result is, while progressing in opposite trajectories of clarity, the effect of an increase in intensity from both media. The goal is to convey the phenomenon that clarity of image yields a more intense and meaningful engagement with the material. This seems antithetical to sensationalist media tactics. In these outlets, when presented with maximum rates of cutting, maximum diversity of images, and maximum layering of information, the content from main stream media outlets becomes a blur of eye candy with very little meaning. The media fader then further exaggerates this point by only allowing certain media to be visible/heard at any given time just as distraction in our every day lives prevents society from digesting content in a meaningful way. In the third section, the frenzy moves quickly to stasis, allowing the most abstract icon of conflict in this piece to come to the fore, the pawn.

In *Risk*, the concept, scenario, and media integration protocol move in parallel as a result of mutually beneficial decisions. After the premier of the piece in May of 2009, a posteriori information informs both future performances and the above conceptual summary. It also gives insight into practical considerations that can further optimize media integration. For example, for the expanding frame to be most effective, it would be ideal if the audience was prevented from seeing the setup and projector before the opening of the piece. Whether via blackout or a curtain, if the audience sees the snare drum illuminate for the first time in the piece itself (as opposed to when they sit down before the concert begins) the effect of the expanding visual frame would be maximized. Furthermore, at the end, the performer should leave the stage completely so that the solitude of the bass



drum can be more pronounced. Finally, because of the media fader “distraction” technique in section two, the trajectory of the images and sounds is too slow and diffuse to perceive. By reducing that section’s duration by one quarter, the balance of trajectory and distraction can be explored further. Like *Sanctuary*, certain implicit and explicit information in the score will change a posteriori so that each performance will have finality but will also exist in the long term along a trajectory of clarification.

# Chapter 9

## Conclusion

The examples above have revealed a breadth of practical and theoretical knowledge about integrating media post-Wagner. Perhaps most important is that no hybrid protocol which satisfies the procedural concerns of any and all media (and their traditions) and the expectations of the audience (defined by those traditions) can be cultivated. And, since these codified protocols are the culprits for a narrowing of production possibilities and audience expectations, it is best if a transferable production protocol is never determined. In an extreme sense, the best possible production protocol is one that is defined by and serves only the concept, scenario, material, and space of the presentation; a non-transferable methodology that both opens the minds of the audience and encourages greater experimentation from the author.

What a non-transferable piece-specific methodology reveals is that the linguistic style of instructions for mounting a piece (in most examples, the score performance notes) is paramount to a successful rendering of the piece both in terms of production (the frame) and interpretation (inside the frame). The language has to be of the type that inspires creativity in each new context and demands the rigor and detail proportionate to the piece's concept and its context in history. To do this, a careful balance of implicitness and explicitness can reveal what components maintain constant from context to context and which ones adapt to each new context. Implicit language shapes the frame. Explicit language defines it. Similarly, declarative statements say what the piece is (positing an ideal but potentially un-

achievable frame) and how the interpreters can react to that in their new context while imperative statements order a set of tasks (positing instructions for crafting the frame, no matter the consequences). The language of these instructions can come from the foresight instincts of the author or the hindsight and experiences of the components. In either case, information and its syntax yields configurations of framing that are just as important, if not more important, than what happens within the frame.

Interestingly, in experimental media productions, much more time and exacting detail is spent on what goes on within the frame than the frame itself. Authors often blindly accept a traditional frame of presentation, no matter how drastically that effects the materials within the frame and their interpretation by the spectator. The disjunction between attention paid to what's inside and outside the frame can cause glitches that destroy a piece's totality of experience. To return to Kagel and Wagner, the problems of absurd performance practice exist in both *Dressur* and the Ring Cycle but the difference is that, with Wagner, the frame of presentation is so clearly established that buildings were made just for his work. There is nothing objectively less absurd about the components in Wagner's *Bayreuth Festspielhaus* than the performance of *Dressur* in Mandeville Auditorium. The difference is that Wagner's frame of presentation is custom tailored to his work (or, at the very least, his work is custom tailored to the traditions of operatic performance). *Dressur* is simply trying to exist in the frame of another set of pieces and this causes perceived glitches such as those that Mr. Herzog noticed. To avoid these, a careful examination of what *Dressur* is (its motivation paths, scenario, concept, and materials) will yield a unique production model frame that will avoid these glitches and inconsistencies.

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