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"We-ing" in Joint Music Performance: Phenomonological Lessons with "The Danish String Quartet," Abstract

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“We-ing” in Joint Music Performance: Phenomenological Lessons with “The Danish String Quartet”

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This paper concerns the phenomenology of expert musicianship and targets the various modes of communication found here. The data for the research is derived from a developing methodology with the working title of “A Phenomenological Interview” (Høffding & Martiny 2015) which integrates qualitative interviews and phenomenological analyses.

Through phenomenological interviews with one of the world’s leading classical quartets, “The Danish String Quartet” (DSQ), three forms of communication are identified: 1) Motor resonance, 2) Explicit coordination, and 3) Interkinesthetic Affectivity. The first refers to the subconscious system of canonical neurons (Pacherie 2014) and the second to explicit and reflective processes of planning and prediction as described by music psychologist Peter Keller (Keller 2008). The third, however, has not been thoroughly described in prior literature and concerns when musicians experience a strong, unified “we-intentionality” characterized by a high degree of trust and labelled as a “hive-mind” or as subject to unusual “zone-forces” (DSQ). This third form of communication has strong pre-reflective, affective and bodily components, and in the mind of the DSQ musicians instantiates the most beautiful and pleasant kind of performance.

The paper concludes by suggesting that interkinesthetic affectivity is an emergent form of consciousness that is best understood in enactive and interactionist terms.