Work in Improvised Music
Playbour, Improvisation and Neo-liberalism

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This paper is based on a combination of theoretical and practical research. The purpose of this paper is to discuss digitalisation and its effect on music in relation to the concept of "playbour". It combines theories of games and labour with the practices of improvisation in live electronic music and economy. We observe similarities between these two research fields, one of which is rooted in the social sciences and philosophy and the other in artistic composition and creative methodologies. Although we make no assessment on a possible causality in the chain of events between theory and practice, we do want to investigate a cross-disciplinary field that combines improvisation, game studies and the organisation of labour. These three fields all use the notion of play to convey different outcomes, which are valorised differently according to the concepts of labour applied. The world of fine art and music composition has in the past been associated with that of game and play,[1] and both have been seen as socially formative and educational for the participants. But, as we will argue, it is in our current digital economy that computer games, music production and organisation of work have converged as part of the neo-liberal economy. We will argue that the neo-liberal digital economy flattens the spectrum of musical performance so that it resembles modern play in computer games or in work life. As a consequence of this, improvised music in particular is devalued and the players degraded to immaterial labourers without wage compensation. Our aim is to question how improvisation is valued according to the digital economy, which does not duly compensate musicians for their labour. How can we see musical improvisation as a form of labour that is reduced to modern forms of play? What is it that produces wealth and value in improvised music?

To answer these questions, we will analyse two different live performances and music compositions by Lars Bröndum. Methodologically it is important to include the performer in the analysis as they offer an insider perspective, without which the analysis would simply equal a critical reception.[2] Although vital in the economy of artistic production, critique of the art object is not our aim. Rather we seek to analyse play and the value of play through the concept of the player-as-analyst, or more precisely, the musician-as-analyst.[3] As such, this paper is the continuation of the experimental work undertaken by Bröndum as a musician, composer and scholar.[4] The analysis of several musical compositions proposes a way to concretise improvisation through the use of spectral analysis. This descriptive analysis is based on nine parameters: seven musical parameters and two non-musical ones. Parameters 1-4 are analysed with a spectral graph, and 5-9 through interviews with the composer/musician. It is hoped that by using these simple parameters that the analysis of improvisation will transcend the "playbour" dimension, and its value can be seen as similar to that of music based on composed scores. That way the abstract becomes tangible through descriptive analysis, and it is hoped that it will open up to further analysis and discussion. By building a body of analysed improvisations, through comparison it will be possible to discover similarities and differences.

Playbour and Organizational Neo-liberalism

Improvisation and play used to mean the liberation from the production line, where workers' performance is tightly linked to that of creating surplus value (*Mehrwert*).[5] The alienated worker lacked freedom to improvise and play, and was instead constrained to produce the products of the factory. In this sense, classical literature has been at pains to emphasise the separation of play and work. Roger Caillois was adamant, pointing to the professional player as outside the realm of play. He writes: "as for the professionals [...] it is clear that they are not players but workers. When they play, it is at some other game."[6] According to Caillois, a game is to be unproductive and all value created by the game should be intrinsic to it. Once the player is paid to play, as a professional, the intrinsic value of the game is in fact subtracted from the game and as a result the game stops being a game and resembles work. This is a very Marxist way of seeing games and play that purports that play is different from work and that work is different from play.[7] To contemporary readers, these assertions can be seen as outlandish, or even bizarre, since in our current economic setting these two entities, play and work, are intertwined or entangled to such an extent that it is difficult to separate them. Furthermore, creative performances such as those at music concerts or theatre shows can easily be seen as paid practices, whereby the element of play remains within the realm of a performative game. The author is paid to write and theirs is still considered an artistic and creative practice. At the same time, we have to remember that performance and text have for the last couple of centuries been connected to property and ownership. Michel Foucault asserted that the notion of the author is imbued in a discourse around property.

> *In our culture—undoubtedly in others as well—discourse was not originally a thing, a product, or a possession but an action situated in a bipolar field of sacred and profane, lawful and unlawful, religious and blasphemous. It was a gesture charged with risks long before it became a possession caught in a circuit of property values. But it was at the moment when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established [...] that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature.*[8]

What Foucault reminds us of is the fact that creative practice before the industrial revolution was located outside the value system of waged labour. Creativity—including writing, theatre and music—was viewed (and valued) as either within the accepted or unaccepted, the sacred or the profane. Eve Chiapello has written about similar issues in her conceptualisation of "artist critique", pointing out that in the nineteenth century

> *Artists were reaching the peak of their economic status, the philosophic conception of their activity was at its zenith, yet the world in which they found themselves by no means shared their values. The power elite placed great value on material goods, utilitarian activities and money. Though it did create some space for artists, they were never a prime concern. [...] Only certain authors got rich, while many others more or less failed to satisfy the new public's needs.*[9]

The point is that art or artistic creativity was outside the economic value system, but increasingly becoming entangled with it through the art market, which is all about property and ownership. Similar to the change in the author-as-owner-of-the-text and the artistic-critique, we want to argue that play enters an exchange system where value is placed on the outcome rather than being intrinsic to play. We attribute the change to the post-industrial condition based on a neo-liberal idea of play.[10]

In the neo-liberal version of play, quantifiable outcomes are the hallmark of a game,[11] leading to the term "playbour", in which gamers can be considered more like workers than emancipated players. Julian Kücklich, who coined the term "playbour", examines the position of so-called "game modders", that is, players who modify existing games in order to prolong the life-time of a game. These modifications are co-opted by the game company without, or very little, compensation. Kücklich writes that

> *the precarious status of modding as a form of unpaid labour is veiled by the perception of modding as a leisure activity, or simply as an extension of play. This draws attention to the fact that in the entertainment industries, the relationship between work and play is changing, leading, as it were, to a hybrid form of "playbour"*.[12]

In Kücklich's words, the game world is changing because the relationship between work and play in our society in general is changing, which is supported by Alan Liu's work in his book *The Laws of Cool* (2004). Liu examines post-industrial knowledge work, arguing that cool is what blurs the line between job and home in such a way that there is no recreational outside from knowledge work.[13] Another way of seeing Kücklich's "playbour" is through the precarity of being a game modder, whose leisure time is co-opted by the game owner without them extending any security in return. The labour market is rife with examples of workers in precarious positions due to digital technology, but it is important to point out that the position of "playbour" contains none of the "artist critique" that Chiapello identified, as referred to earlier. Rather, it resembles the financialisation of neo-liberalism, where everything "can become an instrument of economic speculation".[14] Neo-liberalism is a political project, according to David Harvey, which historically sought to squash labour powers gained in the late 1960s and early 1970s through deregulating finance capital, making domestic and foreign labourers compete for jobs and implementing technological change that has automated the workplace.[15]

Returning to the notion of playbour, Pawel Frelik also examines game modding as a form of non-normative play, but situates this within the culture of cognitive capitalism, where digital brain-labour is utilised to produce surplus value for the "owners" of digital technology.[16] Cognitive capitalism and digital technologies are closely intertwined in, for example, the tradition of autonomist Marxism:

> *Digitalised labour manipulates [...] abstract signs, but its recombinant functioning is all the more specific, all the more personalised and therefore less and less interchangeable. As a consequence, high-tech workers tend to consider their work as the most important, most singularised and most personalised part of their life—the exact opposite of the industrial worker's situation, for whom the eight hours of salaried service were a sort of temporary death from which one awoke only when the stop-work siren went off*.[17]

Immaterial labour is not impersonal labour: on the contrary, digitalised labour is increasingly becoming the master of selves according to neo-liberal lines, which celebrates self-management and fulfilment of self. It is clear that the neo-liberal economy is at the heart of this digital operation. There is no immaterial labour without a neo-liberal dispossession.[18] As such, neo-liberalism is more a political philosophy than a set of economic policies. As Peter Rutland asserts, "for its defenders, [neo-liberalism] is a philosophy that maximizes human freedom and prosperity; for its opponents on the Left, it is a façade behind which capitalist elites advance their class interests."[19] What is clear, though, is that neo-liberalism is closely connected to the rise of computers and the subsequent changes in the perceptions of work. In this regard, live electronic music is no exception.

Economics and Live Electronic Music

As with game modding, many make music for fun, because it is a passion and not primarily a way of generating income. To make an interesting product is the major concern for both gamers and musicians. Since music is easy to distribute online, the competition is also enormous. It has become common for small-label artists not to expect an income at all and to rather use these platforms as a way of supplying audio samples for prospective concert attendees. The line between amateur and professional is blurred since the tools to create are inexpensive, distribution is free, and many applications and music programs enable anyone to make music. This is of course not necessarily a negative state of affairs, but the effect is that enormous amounts of music are produced, resulting in musical "inflation" through which its value is reduced. It also means that the income generated becomes spread out over more people. In the concurring post-liberal economy, the value of music thus depreciates as there is inflation.

Another factor to this development is the illegal file-sharing movement. Pirate bay, file sharing torrents and Napster were major actors in the decline of physical distribution of vinyl records and CDs. Streaming platforms, such as Spotify, initially offered a glimpse of hope and an alternative to the illegal sharing of music. Streaming was seen as a better alternative and was hoped to eventually turn into a reasonable market mechanism for music. Streaming services started with extremely low pay-outs, since it was new and experimental, hoping to replace illegal file-sharing. However, as the success of streamed music has increased, revenue has not. It is interesting to note that Spotify and Pirate Bay are not so different from each other.[20] According to *Dagens Nyheter,* Daniel Ek, the CEO of Spotify, was one of the ten highest earning CEOs in Sweden in 2017.[21] What is more, Ek worked as CEO of uTorrent during the Pirate Bay period, where uTorrent was a BitTorrent for sharing pirated music. It is also interesting to note that the Napster co-founder Sean Parker joined Ek at Spotify.[22] This is all part of the neo-liberal strategy of job competition and technological automation of the workplace.

Chiapello's assertion referred to earlier, that a few get rich while many others do not, somewhat eschews the labour theory that purports that the value of a commodity is the cost of labour in its production. However, as Dennis Rothermel writes in regards gold, its value is not only based on the labour of the single prospector locating the commodity, but on the labour of all those prospecting for gold.[23] Similarly it can be argued that the labour of all musicians makes a few non-musicians rich, as is the case with Daniel Ek. In our view, the emphasis on play and fun in our contemporary economy contribute to making this process of valuation the standard, without consideration of the actual labour processes involved. In this sense, neo-liberalism makes no distinction between wealth and value, which means that anything that performs—music, stocks or academics—can be turned into value, regardless of what kind of wealth it creates.

Neo-liberalism emerged out of the late 1970s with the arrival of the computerisation of society, which meant a change in the way work is organised. This change has increasingly been seen as a gamification of the workplace.[24] It is Peter Fleming's argument that this change in management approach is symbolic of the blurring of the boundary that "has traditionally demarcated work and nonwork experiences."[25] Play in the workplace functions here as the mechanism that (supposedly) liberates us from alienated factory work and ties us into neo-liberal economics, where we are paid less for more work. Fleming posits that we need to unearth "the political struggles that lie behind the injection of play and fun into workplaces today [and to] identify a kind of constitutive political 'dark matter' that lies behind [...] managerial interventions today."[26] Our argument is that this is also the condition on which musical creation rests.

Sustaining an income from improvised music for musicians and composers is harder than ever as we are about

to enter the third decade of the twenty-first century. Revenue through concerts is minimal and sales through CDs are fading out. According to Ed Sarath, the commercial orientation of the music industry results in "improvising musicians find[ing] limited outlets for performances, CD sales and airplay, and society thus has limited exposure to important creative expressions of our times."[27] The new possibilities offered by digital distribution should offer a way to improve the exposure and market for niche genres such as improvised live electronic music. It is relatively inexpensive to record music and it is usually free to upload it. There is big money in music, but it is not the small artist who benefits in this new digital marketplace. According to Daniel Sanchez, "streaming music services, record labels reported record-breaking revenue last year. In 2017, the 'big three' made an estimated $14.2 million a day from streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music."[28] The profits of the creator on the other hand are extremely low, Sanchez continues: "… Spotify and YouTube, arguably the largest streaming music services, had the worst payouts. The Swedish music platform had a per-stream rate of $0.0038. With over 1.1 billion users, artists would receive just $0.0006 per play on YouTube."[29] As an example, a rather successful artist of a less popular music genre, such as improvised live electronic music, who has 100 streams a day (which is pretty high for this genre) earns $0.38 a day on Spotify, which is roughly $10.64 as a monthly income. On YouTube it is worse: there income would be $1.8 a month. This is akin to slave labour. The economics here are similar to that of "playbour", as outlined above, through which surplus value is extracted from art labourers through processes that generate profit to the organisers—read digital factory owners—of art/work platforms.

We want to propose that play and improvisation, as part of an artist critique, creates wealth by refusing the capitalistic value system. Following Caillois, play and game cannot be turned into profit, since this would serve purposes other than the imaginary. Once value is placed on improvisation, we argue that it loses its emancipatory force and its abilities to create new wealth. The question is whether this newly created wealth, formed through improvisational labour, can be made visible for examination without adding value to it. Or is it a phantom of its own existence, a phantasmagoria that disappears once the performance stops? In order to explore this question, we will use Chiapello's definition of the processes of valuation,[30] which are broken down into two stages: 1) the viewpoint from which music is assessed, outlining the set of assumptions that counts in certain contexts and which are ultimately bound up with the people performing the valuation or for whom it is performed; and 2) the metrics and methods of calculation used, which point to the scale on which the music is assessed. In short, who is assessing and how the assessment is registered is of importance to us. Through these processes of valuation we examine two electronic music compositions by Lars Bröndum.

In the Swedish context, within which the proposed analysis plays out, ticket sales and royalties are the major sources of income for composers and musicians.[31] In Sweden there are two major member organisations that monitor and distribute money to the composer and musician: STIM pays out royalties they collect to the composer and lyricist,[32] whereas SAMI collects fees for musicians' participation in recordings and live performances.[33] Through STIM royalties are paid to the composer based on a multiplication key. It is a progressive model in which more popular music helps to subsidise less commercial music. STIM subsidies are collected through royalties. STIM states that "the purpose of the graduation is to compensate composers of works that require a particularly large work effort, where the work has limited opportunities to be performed [but] it is not an assessment of the artistic quality of music."[34] On STIM's homepage, it stated that "All of the works in STIM's repertoire are assigned a grade from A to E. The grading influences the size of the payment per work and performance."[35] How the grading is determined relates to the form, structure, complexity and control of the sound composed. The grading is calibrated by STIM's music consultants, and any complaints from composers on the rating are dealt with by the Grading Committee, which has representatives from the labour unions of composers among its members.[36] The grading of the composition is then multiplied as follows:

A: 1 x amount

B: 1.5 x amount

C: 2 x amount

D: 2.5 x amount

E: 3 x amount

In this system, improvised music is generally graded an A. Electronic music is usually qualified as A or B, or sometimes C. Improvised live electronic music usually gets allocated the A category. In order to refine this template, we suggest a nine-step analysis of the compositions that allows the value of the improvisation to reflect the labour processes involved.

Value of Improvisation and Spectral Analysis

Improvisation in music is an invitation to the unknown and to the intentional and unintentional, quantifiable and unquantifiable. Live electronic music is a fringe genre originating from the electro-acoustic tradition. The music is often improvised, or sometimes improvised over pre-recorded parts, or improvised over a graphical score or concept. There are also pieces that are self-generating, using algorithms and randomly generated systems. Often live electronics are used in solo settings, but sometimes improvisations take place in ensemble settings, featuring traditional instruments and/or other live electronic musicians. Live electronics encompasses traditional electro-acoustic music, but also extends to subgenres such as drone, noise, ambient, DIY, and glitch. The equipment ranges from analogue modular systems to laptop computers, contact microphones and/or tape manipulation. Fylkingen in Stockholm has since the 1960s been the main venue in Sweden for this experimental type of improvisation. The co-author of this paper has been involved in live electronics since the 1990s, and has played extensively in Sweden and abroad. Two of his compositions, *Coils #2* and *Spleen*, are considered here in order to propose a model on how improvisation can be analysed.

Improvisation is often viewed as being something akin to play. In *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (1990), Stephen Nachmanovitch writes, "improvisation, composition, writing, painting, theatre, invention, all creative acts are forms of play."[37] Improvised music does not use a score, which puts it at a disadvantage compared to other genres of music, since it is exactly because of its generation *in the moment* that it is difficult to analyse and concretise it as a basis for comparison with other genres. We propose that by analysing improvisation, a concretisation may lead to a different valuation of the music in music theory and critique.

In "Philosophical Perspective" (2006), Sarath states that "the predisposition toward composed music in the academic musical world has relegated improvisation to the remote fringes of musical practice and investigation."[38] Since improvisation is not situated within the written tradition, scores are not used.[39] Bearing this in mind, improvisation has historically therefore eluded traditional forms of absolutism. It is difficult to ascribe value to music in general, and even more so when there is no theoretical blueprint or absolute form in terms of artefact, such as a score. Music is attributed a value in different ways: through musical critique, the musical canon, in theory and in economics of music. However, musical critique tends to follow questionable methods of evaluation, where assessment often falls short of being simply a matter of personal taste in which critique is related to non-musical parameters, such as the audience's clothing or their age.[40] The historical canon is not

necessarily based on musical context, but, perhaps, more on nationalistic, gender and historical revisionist grounds. Anne C. Shreffler writes that "throughout the nineteenth century, in a musical culture increasingly aware of its historical position, a canonic repertory of masterworks emerged."[41] She also states:

> *given how hard it is to notate, reproduce, preserve, and possess music [the canon] only gained widespread cultural validity in the West after the mid-eighteenth century, with the strengthening of the work concept, the increasing acceptance of music's autonomy, and the new economic significance of published sheet music*. [42]

Music theory is primarily based on the analysis of notated music, where non-European aural traditions and improvised music fall short in this respect. So why bother to analyse non-written/improvised music?

> *Why should the fields of analysis and performance be brought closer together, and how would this benefit musicologists, theorists, and performers? The simple answer is that both analysis and performance are mutually supportive endeavors that broaden our musical understanding in different but related ways. A more profound reason for bringing analysis and performance closer is that doing so can expand our understanding of the musical "work"*. [43]

In the early discipline of ethnomusicology, the main way to analyse music transmitted aurally was for scholars to transcribe the music into music notation. A difficult task sometimes, especially when the music did not comply with the common "rules" of notation. Ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger experimented with a Spectrograph/Melograph Model C to undertake objective analysis of folk songs.[44] The idea was to use the spectrograph as a system to transcribe music without fully relying on traditional notation. The technique of the spectrograph has since then developed with the use of computers. Robert Cogan analyses performances using spectrographs of musical recordings from a variety of eras and cultures. "He also analyzes different performances of the same piece and uses spectrographic images as corroborating evidence for a theory of tone color."[45] In addition, many spectral analytical methods have been laid down by researchers/composers in electroacoustic music.[46] In particular, Simon Emmerson's analysis as outlined in "The analysis of live and interactive electroacoustic music: Hans Tutschku—Zellen-Linien" has many components that are similar to the nine points proposed in this paper.[47] However, the method used here offers a much simpler way to document and analyse—with a focus on auto-ethnography—where the composer can easily document musical and non-musical parameters and, in particular, how they relate to the economic framework. But before we get to the analytical part of this paper, we need to address the issues of the contemporary music economy.

Method of Analysis

Music theory can be divided in either prescriptive or descriptive analysis. It is argued by John Latartara and Michael Gardiner that prescriptive analysis "involves the analysis of a score prior to, and perhaps as the basis for, a performance."[48] On the other hand, "descriptive performance analyses attempt to reverse this one-way flow by beginning with the performance instead of the score."[49] In this paper, we propose a simple tangible way to analyse live improvisations based on spectral graphs, similar to those of Seeger, and adding verbal commentary by the composer or musician. The abstract improvisation becomes tangible through descriptive analysis, and it is hoped that will allow further analysis and discussion. Within a body of analysed improvisations it will then be possible to find similarities and differences between the individual works.

To analyse the music by transcribing it into a score would be cumbersome and difficult, since live electronic music does not adhere to traditional musical parameters. For example, there are many layers of sound (for example, sound mass) within which it would be difficult to decipher a harmony and rhythm and to find detailed content with a spectrogram, while rhythm may be randomly generated and not fit traditional rhythmical patterns. To make it more complex, several layers of rhythms may be layered. The spectrograph can, however, serve as a visual foundation representing form, duration, dynamics and perhaps density. The spectrograph will be complemented with verbal descriptive analysis to provide more detailed content.

Due to the scope of this paper we have concentrated on only nine parameters: seven musical parameters and two non-musical parameters. Parameters 1-4 are analysed with a spectral graph and 5-9 through interview with the composer/musician.

1. Duration
2. Form
3. Dynamics
4. Density and Complexity
5. Instrumentation—which instruments were used and who performed?
6. Idea, concept and other comments
7. Musical detail, themes, riffs, motives
8. Preparation—how much preparation was needed to execute the pieces?
9. Economy/exposure—how was the music valued on a monetary basis?; Was it exposed somewhere else?

Two live electronic pieces were chosen for this paper: *Spleen* and *Coils #2*. The two pieces were chosen because of their difference in economy and artistic approach. *Coils #2* was published online on the *Lars Bröndum LIVE 2017* album and can be listened to on Bandcamp.com.[50] *Spleen* can be listened to at antennaemedia.se.[51] An abbreviated and embellished version of *Spleen,* now titled *When the Sky is Low and Heavy*, can be listened to on Spotify.[52]

Coils #2

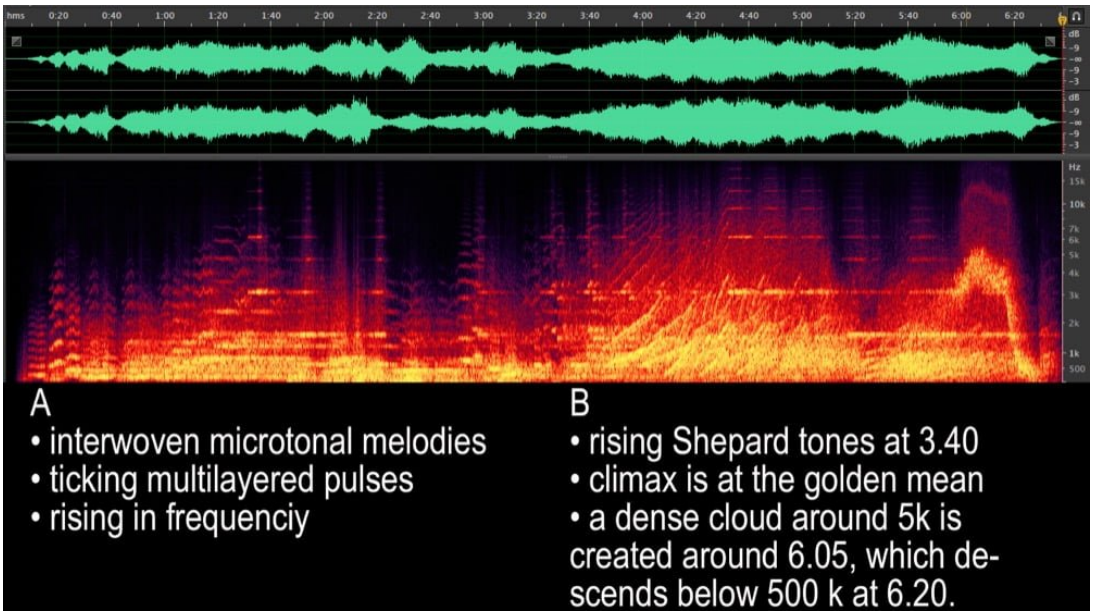

Figure 1. Spectral overview of Coils #2

1. Duration: 6 minutes, 36 seconds.

2. Form: The commission was for two relatively short pieces: *Coils #1* and *Coils #2*. *Coils #2* was structured around an ascending idea (Shepard tone) and a rapid pulsating rhythm. An A-B form.

3. Dynamics: The spectral graph reveals dynamic growth as well as two main sections. The climax is in the golden mean at two-thirds into the piece.

4. Density and Complexity: The complexity of the piece lies in the interwoven microtonal melodies and its relation to the ticking pulse. A dense cloud is created in the last section of rising Shepard tones on the Theremin.

5. Instrumentation: Theremin and effect pedals

6. Idea, concept and other comments: *Coils part #2* was performed by Lars Bröndum in Västerås.[53] It was a commissioned performance for the unveiling of the sculpture *Spirare Spira* by Arijana Kajfes at Kopparlunden i Västerås. The unveiling was curated by Linda Wallenberg and took place on 22 September 2016. The piece was commissioned by the construction company Castellum, Västerås konstmuseum and Arty (Stiftelsen för Kultur och Näringsliv i Samarbete). The brief for the piece from the curator was that it should be a live performance and that it should be performed on a Theremin. The artist's work was inspired by Tesla's coils and she wanted the Theremin as instrument since it was invented roughly in the same period as Tesla experimented with transferring electricity through coils. The commission brief asked for two relatively short pieces. The curator had listened to Bröndum's music online and was well aware of the experimental nature of his music. After some brief discussions with the curator, Bröndum began to visualise the piece. Two parts inspired by Tesla's coils.

7. Musical detail, themes, riffs, motives: There are several webs of interwoven Theremin melodies into clustered harmonies. The harmonies were recorded into loops and treated with an envelope follower and low pass filter (24dB) Mooger fooger pedal. The loops were at times transposed up or down an octave

and reversed. This was recorded into a second loop pedal. Pulses were generated by running the Theremin sound through a ring modulator that was modulated by a low-frequency square wave. The arranger wanted a faster "more upbeat" tempo to close the event.

8. Preparation: quite extensive research and rehearsal and working out of ideas went into this piece, and also much experimenting with the equipment. The commission was for Theremin, so I experimented to accomplish the use of a minimal amount of equipment, but still retain my musical aesthetic.

9. Economy: The commission generated SEK 4,000, no ticket sales. Travel expenses were paid and a free lunch was included. The piece has to date not generated any other royalties from the concert. An estimation of the preparatory work (rehearsal and conceptualisation), travel to and from Västerås, set-up, performance and breakdown in time equals roughly three days' work, and cost of equipment. A sound technician was hired. I estimate that after three days' work and deduction of expenses, social security fees (pension etc.), total net earnings were around SEK 2,000, which boils down to approximately SEK 166 gross an hour, or SEK 83 after tax and social security contribution. The piece was also performed on 15 October, at the release concert of the new music publishing company SwedArtMusic. The concert took place at Fylkingen in Stockholm. The entrance was free. No royalties from STIM have yet been collected for this performance. *Coils #2* was featured on *Ocean of Sound—the 3rd annual report* volume II by Various Artists which was released 15 December 2017.[54] It was also streamed on web radio in Italy and a short excerpt of *Coils* was also played on Swedish Radio SR2.

Spleen in Five Fragments

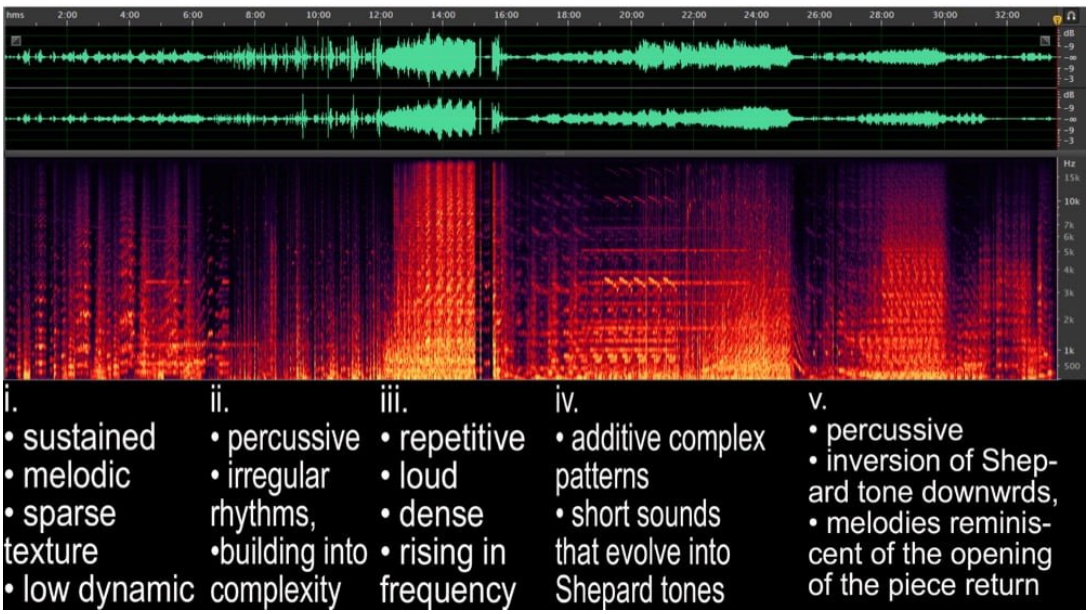

Figure 2. Spleen in Five Fragments, spectral overview

1. Duration: 33 minutes, 36 seconds.

2. Form: The piece is structured around five sections, or five fragments from the poem.

3. Dynamics: The spectral analysis reveals much difference in the dynamics between the parts. The piece's

loudest point is in the second movement. There seems to be a growing amplitude in each part.

4. Density and Complexity: The sound is much sparser and much more time is given to the development of each section. The highest density is in the second section, trying to emulate “voiceless hordes of spiders”.

5. Instrumentation: Theremin, modular synthesiser and a Boss RC 505 looper.

6. Idea, concept and other comments: It is based on improvising on strands of Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil* (1857). The poem has five sections:

    1. from the whole horizon’s murky grid
    2. the dome of stone
    3. voiceless hordes of spiders
    4. bells leap with rage
    5. long processions without fifes or drums

7. *Spleen* is an improvisation that premiered on the 80th anniversary of Fylkingen and the performance took place 23 November 2013 at Musikmuseet in Stockholm.[55]

8. Musical detail, themes, riffs and motives: The piece is built around the five parts. Section i. Slow improvised Theremin solo with effects. Long and contemplative melodies with glissando and microtones, relatively sparse and expressive. Becomes more complex polyphony towards the end as the loops begin to repeat and accumulate. Section ii. Percussive and short sounds in irregular rhythms are introduced, sparse and building in complexity. Section iii. Introduction of repetitive and continuous 16th-note patterns imitating movement of spiders. The repeated note patterns move in upwards motions. The layers become complex and increase in intensity—and then suddenly disappear. In Section iv. the opening melody returns and gradually rhythmical complex patterns of short sounds evolve and eventually take over. At 22 minutes, ascending Shepard tones are introduced, a result from adding layer upon layer of rising melodies. In the last section, Section v., the short percussive sounds return and fragments of the melody from part of the opening of the piece also briefly return. An inversion of the Shepard tone appears, but now in downwards motions. The section finishes with long melodies reminiscent of the opening of the piece.

9. Preparation: The research consisted of finding the poem, and selecting five fragments and then trying to interpret those. The piece was performed three times and there was a lot of variation between the performances due to the improvisation and open structure. There were no time constraints on this performance.

10. Economy/exposure: This performance was free. It was for the celebration at Fylkingen and at a concert with pianist Arne Forsén. The piece has been remixed, shortened, with new parts added and included on the recent CD, titled *Chimera Cadence* (AM2004, Antennae Media).

Discussion

Instead of making firm conclusions, we prefer to leave our approaches to labour in improvised music open for discussion. To reiterate the main points from our introduction: our aim is not to have fixed models or holistic definitions, but to debate the elements of play and creativity in improvised music. Therefore, the goal here is to discuss both theory and practice by asking the question: How does this model for analysing improvisation relate to the ideas of "playbour" and neo-liberalism? In order to discuss this question, we will use the concept of "deterritorialisation" as formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[56] It can be briefly summarised "as a movement producing change"[57] or "[t]he breaking up of order, boundaries and form to produce movement and growth."[58] Central to the concept is the notion of transformation and change, but also that processes of reterritorialisation can be part of the production of capital. For example, labour that is deterritorialised from the body of the worker into "abstract" labour can be reterritorialised into wages.[59] Crucially for the neo-liberal condition that we have described above, is that the reterritorialisation happens elsewhere, other than in the form of wages or monetary compensation. In this way, neo-liberal digital economy sponges on the human condition of creative impulses, whether in game modding or music production.

Improvisation consists of different components, one of which is the fleetingness of its construction, its "liveness",[60] and another is the difficulty of reproduction of this performativity. In order to look at this process, we have in this paper transferred the improvisation to a visual medium by way of spectral analysis. An advantage of this approach is that musical parameters can be recognised visually and formalised. Spectral analysis can be a simple way of transcribing very complex music to detect structures, such as density, dynamics and pitch fields. While this does not reinstate the "aura" of the artwork, it does make the improvisation more tangible for analysis, precisely because it has been transferred to the physical realm. It can be analysed and thus enter the canonical and critical musical discourse. In conjunction with recoding (audio), it can be valued for its labour as well as for its creativity. Central to this process is the "deterritorialisation" of the artwork, its transformation from liveness and performance to concrete product and possible reproduction. However, it is here that the neo-liberal evaluation system can "reterritorialise" the product in the art market and extract capital from it. In other words, it can be financialised and co-opted by forces other than within the bodies playing.

In this paper, we have proposed a simple, tangible way of analysing live improvisations following the idea of the proposed nine steps analysis. Furthermore, we have included the verbal commentary by the composer or musician in order to reach the insider perspective as argued by John Baily,[61] and to retain the focus on the role of the assessor as highlighted by Chiapello in her view on the process of valuation.[62] In developing a new simplified way to analyse improvised music, it is hoped that the value consideration will shift from notions of play and playbour to a concrete document for further analysis. With the proposed analytical method, it will be possible to find similarities, differences in performance as well as conceptual differences in improvised music. Thus the music will transcend the aural dimension to the physical realm, from music and phantasmagoria to music concretisation and value. Musical labour needs to be concretised for the twenty-first century in order not to slide into playbour and "ludefaction", processes whereby radical imaginaries are hijacked by a playfulness that only adheres to the accumulation of neo-liberal value.[63] It is hoped that this paper will add to the discussion of art and work in terms of the notion of "playbour" and ascribe value to the often neglected labour that goes into

improvisation.

Footnotes

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