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**Questioning the 'Experimental':
Electroacoustic Improvisation as 'Experimental' case study**

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Abstract

As pointed out in the conference call, the concept of 'experimentation' and the experimental in music was central in the development of the electroacoustic art form, as indeed it was for many areas of twentieth-century music, especially post-WWII. However, it is indeed timely to return to this notion of the 'experimental' in our art form, now that it is seventy years old and has survived into a new century. The conference call also focuses somewhat on the question of musique concrète as an experimental art form; this, I think, leads directly to several questions. The broadest would be:

- Can the electroacoustic endeavour still claim to be 'experimental'?
- Would acousmatic music (as the inheritor of the musique concrète tradition) be the likeliest site within the broader electroacoustic landscape for this 'experimentalism' to currently be located?
- Or, has the experimentalism once found in the glory days of musique concrète now migrated elsewhere within our broader field?

Perhaps unsurprisingly with such a leading question, I will argue that this is in fact exactly what has happened – i.e. that:

- the conference call is correct in asserting the experimental nature of the early days of musique concrète;
- the conference call is equally correct in being somewhat sceptical of any claimed 'experimentalism' in today's acousmatic music;
- however, rather than implying the extinction of this experimental spirit, it is rather that it has indeed migrated elsewhere – specifically, towards the area of Electroacoustic Improvisation.

This presentation will therefore consider:

- the nature of the 'experimental' in electroacoustic music, and its location;
- the possibly 'experimental' qualities of Electroacoustic Improvisation;
- comparison and contrasts with the concrète/acousmatic tradition.

Introduction

I will respond directly to this year's conference call, essentially asking "Where does the 'experimental' lie in electroacoustic music today?" On reading the call, after a moment's reflection, I very quickly knew my reflex response: I agree with the call, that we can say that in the early years *musique concrète* was 'experimental'; I agree that it is not clear that we can call acousmatic music today 'experimental'. So, has the 'experimental' left electroacoustic music? Or has it moved, and if so, where?

Before we go any further, it is first extremely important to point out that this is in no way a judgement of quality. Saying "I don't think we can call current acousmatic music experimental" is *not* a critical or negative assessment of current acousmatic music; nor is it, conversely, any automatic claim for the *de facto* quality or significance of any other forms or genres to say that they ARE experimental. Very obviously, to be 'experimental' is far from the only creative goal that is worthy of our pursuit! And with regard to acousmatic music in particular, personally I agree with Francis Dhomont's call for a 'classicism' in acousmatic music, that is essentially defending its move away from the experimental: "Il y a un temps pour mettre en doute et remplacer les anciens modèles et un temps pour prouver, par des œuvres fortes, la pertinence des nouveaux. Il ne faut pas craindre le classicisme, toute vraie nouveauté y aboutit un jour ou l'autre."¹

So, do I therefore think that the 'experimental' has left electroacoustic music? My reflex reaction is 'No, absolutely not'. So, where do I think the 'experimental' lies in today's electroacoustic music? To this, my reflex response was: in Electroacoustic Improvisation, thinking specifically of the work of people like Lionel Marchetti and Jérôme Noetinger, as well as Graham Lambkin, Jason Lescalleet, Keith Rowe, or John Richards. (There is, of course, a thorny conversation to be had around if and when specific performances by each of these constitute 'Electroacoustic Improvisation' and when they do not, tied to definitional difficulties with the term; but that is a broader conversation, which we will sidestep here.)

Video examples

I'll begin by providing a few examples of the kinds of performances that I have in mind:

- 1) A 'live Revox' performance by Lionel Marchetti, at LUX Scène nationale, Valence, France, as part of the (é)mergences festival, in January 2012 – available online at: <https://vimeo.com/36195077> (accessed 20.06.2018)
- 2) An excerpt from 'Ineffable Constructs - An Afternoon With Graham Lambkin': <https://youtu.be/8JpaGft-4vc?t=18m53s>
- 3) An excerpt from a tabletop guitar performance by Keith Rowe in the 'Guilty Guitars' series at the 2010 steirischer herbst festival, at the Helmut-List-Halle in Graz: <https://youtu.be/tZkFaIpxbHY>

These demonstrate my instinctive response: that these three quite different examples, for me, constitute the 'experimental' in electroacoustic music today. My intention now is to unpick and examine these reflex responses that I had to the initial questions.

¹ "There is a time to question and replace old models, and a time to prove, through strong works, the pertinence of the new ones. We must not fear classicism; all true novelty ends up there eventually."

Definitions, and their shortcomings

Inevitably we have to start with defining our terms. We will begin with 'Experimental'.

The Oxford dictionary² gives us:

- 1: "based on untested ideas or techniques and not yet established or finalised"
- 2: "(of art or an artistic technique) involving a radically new and innovative style."

For 'Experimentation', Oxford³ gives us:

"1.1 The action or process of trying out new ideas, methods, or activities."

So:

- 1) 'New';
- 2) 'Not yet finalised';
- 3) 'Trying out'.

But I have realised that, not only do I have a reflex response to what works are or are not 'experimental', I also have a reflex response to what I think 'experimental' means, when we are talking about music, and this is not necessarily it. For example: "involving a radically new and innovative style" – I disagree; I think that this is maybe more a definition of 'the avant-garde'. Let us therefore take a look at the definition for 'avant-garde'⁴, where we get: "new and *experimental* ideas and methods in art, music, or literature" (emphasis mine). So, we are immediately caught in something of a tautology here.

Some of these definitions are immediately problematic for our opening premise around the 'experimental' in electroacoustic music. If we take these definitions literally, then in fact they could be argued as precluding tape music entirely: in some ways tape music is the ultimate 'finalised' work – things have been 'tried out', but have then been 'nailed in place'.

However, this isn't really what these definitions are getting at; rather, they support the general hypothesis of the conference call, in saying that the early years of developing the art form would naturally result in 'experimental' works, while in later years, once the language has been established, the works would no longer be considered 'experimental'.

However, this doesn't sit quite right with me. For one thing, an art form is never stationary, but is in constant evolution; and while I wouldn't try to deny the creative explosion of the electroacoustic music's formative years, can we really say that the very rapid creative evolution from, say, 1945 to 1960, is fundamentally and ontologically different from the less rapid creative evolution since then, to the extent that we can say that this earlier creative transformation is 'experimental', while this more recent transformation is not? So for me, these definitions of 'experimental' haven't really hit the nail on the head yet.

Perhaps we might find greater clarity under 'experimental music'. This time we will start with Wikipedia, which gives us:

² Experimental, in *Oxford Dictionary*, n.d., <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experimental> [accessed 20.06.2018]

³ Experimentation, in *Oxford Dictionary*, n.d., <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/experimentation> [accessed 20.06.2018]

⁴ Avant-garde, in *Oxford Dictionary*, n.d., <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/avant-garde> [accessed 20.06.2018]

"Experimental music is a general label for any music that pushes existing boundaries and genre definitions."⁵ Well, again, I'm not sure I agree... However, it then goes on to say that: "Experimental compositional practice is defined broadly by exploratory sensibilities radically opposed to, and questioning of, institutionalized compositional, performing, and aesthetic conventions in music." Perhaps this begins to get a bit closer for me, particularly 'exploratory sensibilities'...

Of course, if we are talking about 'Experimental Music', then we can't ignore Michael Nyman. Now, there is much in Nyman's construction of a narrative around 'Experimental Music' that is perhaps open to debate, but there is a central element to Nyman's definition that rings very true for me, and that is his emphasis on *process*: "Experimental composers are by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined 'time-object' whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining (...) a *process* of generating action." (Nyman 1999: 4)

I particularly want to stress several words here:

- not prepared 'in advance';
- 'process'; and,
- 'action'.

So, this starts to ring true for me; this comes closer to my fuzzy feeling of what 'experimental' means in electroacoustic music. However, we're not there yet; this requires a closer look – WHY does this get closer for me, than some of the previous definitions?

The composer vs. the listener

First of all, I think there is a fundamental 'missed trick' in all of these definitions, which seems to be a near constant theme in pretty much any theoretical discussion in our field. This is, as always, the 'who' question. The silent assumption across all these definitions is that we are interested in 'Who is BEING experimental?' But I would argue that this is simply not how art works. The far more important question is: 'Who PERCEIVES or INTERPRETS something as being experimental?'

For example, if you put someone in front of us who looks like they are experimenting, we will likely interpret the results as experimental. Give us what looks like a glossy finished product, and it is likely that we will not. It is an *interpretative act*.

The definitions we have here, when applied to art, essentially become reifications of the creative process: 'I am the brave explorer, charting new territory.' But the 'experimental' in art is not locked to the creator. Art is a transactional process, and a *community* process. And the 'experimental' is, very importantly, a 'cultural marker', or a piece of 'cultural collateral', that the *viewer or listener* assigns to a work. While 'This is clearly a formative work developing a new artistic language' might certainly be expected to trigger that 'experimental' marker, there are an enormous number of other potential triggers. And, very importantly, there is no reason to expect that, just because a work *is* 'a formative work developing a new artistic language', there is absolutely no reason to assume that it is going to be *received* that way. 'Experimental' is not a private commodity; as a 'cultural marker', it is the *culture* and the *community* that

⁵ Experimental Music, *Wikipedia*, n.d., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experimental_music [accessed 20.06.2018]

determine whether something is experimental or not. The author of the work is only one single figure out of a great many within that community.

Listeners don't necessarily know, and don't necessarily care, when a piece was made, or whether the piece was earlier or later in the development of a musical language. So this can't be the main qualifier – or at least not the *only* qualifier – for whether they interpret it as 'experimental' or not.

What's more, once we shift our interest towards the *perception* of the 'experimental', we run into some broader questions around the idea of 'the work' and its place in time. We keep coming up against this idea of 'The New' as the marker of the 'experimental', but once we start talking about audience perception this falls apart very quickly. For example, it would impose a strange kind of 'sliding scale', where something is perceived as 'experimental' upon first encounter, and then never again. So today's developments in any artistic language would *always* be interpreted as 'experimental', but wouldn't be by tomorrow; and yesterday's developments, once having been encountered, would never again be interpreted as 'experimental'.

This is simply not how it works. There are works that listeners mark as 'experimental' that remain permanently marked as experimental, or at least marked that way over a considerable period of time; and there are new developments that do *not* get marked as 'experimental'. (Again, we may here have come up against the potential distinction between the terms 'experimental' and 'avant-garde'.)

For example, I agree that the music of the early concrète is 'experimental'. It is now 60 to 70 years since the works were made, and it is now 25 years since I personally heard the works for the first time, and they *still* sound 'experimental' to me. But that is not first and foremost because I have read the books and I know what Schaeffer was up to, and therefore recognise that his actions were experimental. It is because, as a listener, listening to those works now, they push the 'experimental' button in my brain, and the 'experimental' bulb lights up. That won't change when I hear the piece again tomorrow.

Process vs. results

This brings us back to Nyman's emphasis on process, which, in fact, is tied up with the 'experimental' being an interpretative act. In part, the problem is that a piece of music in itself *cannot* be 'experimental', if we take it as an object, as a 'thing that exists' (which, generally speaking, I don't think we should). If I put a rock down in front of you on a table, it would be ridiculous to claim that the rock itself can somehow be 'experimental'. But, I can try to think of something experimental to *do* with it, or I can somehow be 'experimental' in how I put it on the table, etc. But there is nothing inherently experimental about the rock itself.

Objects cannot be experimental; only *process* can. For example, the heart of scientific experimentation is 'the experimental method'; and, while there are indeed 'experimental results', they are entirely meaningless taken on their own – they are only meaningful as an outcome of experimental process.

As a result, musical practices that foreground process are far more likely to trigger the 'experimental' marker than practices that do not. Therefore, to begin with, one could argue that 'live' practices, where the creation takes place before the listener, are more naturally 'experimental' than studio-based practice.

This is not to say that all performance is experimental, because ‘creation’ and ‘performance’ are not synonymous. It could be argued – unfairly perhaps, but not without some degree of truth – that performing from a score is not an act of creation, but of reproduction: taking an existing work, and making it sound. This is clearly different from the act of *creating* the work live: devising a work in real-time; spontaneous composition; improvisation – a number of somewhat different names and approaches, but all of which in essence involve the creation and composition of the work before the eyes and ears of the spectator.

Thus, Live Creation, by foregrounding process, engages more directly with our idea of the ‘experimental’, which to some extent explains my reflex response that the experimental today lies primarily in Electroacoustic Improvisation. If we accept this, then acousmatic music and music for fixed media are de facto less experimental than the kinds of live practices just mentioned.

Now, while I do believe there is some truth to this claim regarding the non-experimental nature of fixed media, I don’t believe it is the whole story. Something is missing; it’s not this simple.

In some ways it is hard to generalise about acousmatic music, because it is an umbrella term for an enormously varied range of activity and approaches. However, one of these approaches – or, maybe more accurately, one of the possible ‘listening positions’ available to us with acousmatic music – is the acousmatic composition as a ‘trace of the live’⁶. The ‘sound object’ (Chion 1983), ‘source bonding’ (Smalley 1997), Smalley’s indicative fields (Smalley 1992), etc. – to some extent these all underline our experience of acousmatic music as traces of gestures or other creative actions, that have somehow been unmoored or set free from those initiatory acts to live their own unfettered sonic lives. This disconnection from the ‘live act’ is not a shortcoming, as one might mistakenly assume from our earlier comments on locating the ‘experimental’; in fact, this severing of the umbilical between action and result – between cause and effect – is entirely glorious, and a significant part of the charm and the thrill of acousmatic music.

But, almost paradoxically, the thrill of severing the bond between action and sonic result nevertheless relies on an innate understanding and recognition of that bond. Severing the bond can only be thrilling if we accept that the bond exists in the first place. So, acousmatic music *celebrates* the connection – whether literal or figurative – between sonic gesture and creative action, at the same time as it revels in pulling the two apart.

Now, as we know from seminal writing by people like Simon Emmerson and Denis Smalley⁷, we can claim a distinction, or perhaps more of a continuum, between works, passages, sound materials, etc. that *obscure* the relationship (real or imagined) between a sound and its parent action (actual or imagined), and works, passages or sound materials that *highlight* that relationship (again, real or otherwise). I would claim that the listener’s relationship with the work is significantly different if the listener feels a link to the sources and actions that have made these sounds possible, than if the listener does not – if the sounds are entirely or largely abstract, if the listener feels no bond between the sounds they hear and wherever those sounds might have originated.

This brings us back to acousmatic music as a ‘*trace of the live*’. Acousmatic music can paint a ‘sonic picture’, or leave a ‘sonic trace’, of originating sources and actions, which can be a

⁶ An area discussed from several perspectives in Emmerson 2007.

⁷ F.ex. Emmerson 1986 & Smalley 1992, 1994, 1997.

very physical experience. In this sense, acousmatic music is perhaps also about process and about action; we are perhaps responding just as much to the performance process and performance gestures and actions inside an acousmatic work, as we would if they were taking place in front of us, despite the displacement in both time and space between the act of creation and the act of listening. To the extent that we can hear – or, very importantly, that we *think* we can hear – a composer or creator making these sounds for us, our ‘experimental’ interpretation can be triggered.

Now, as per the conference call, we started from a position where early musique concrète ‘feels’ more ‘experimental’, in a way that more recent acousmatic music does not, and I accepted this position. We at first assumed that this is because of the ‘experimental’ qualities of discovering and developing a new musical language; but, as I said earlier, I don’t really accept this definition of ‘experimental’. Well, here perhaps we find an alternate explanation:

If we accept my claims about the ‘Trace of the Live’, then tape music that engages with this trace is more likely to hit our ‘experimental’ trigger than works that do not. And, if we look at how musique concrète and acousmatic music have transformed over time, there is to some extent a shift in how often the ‘Trace of the Live’ is prioritised or accessed.

To some extent this lies in shifts in the technologies involved, and, more importantly, shifts in the *audibility* of the technologies involved. Early musique concrète relies, first and foremost, on sound recorded with a microphone; here we have maximum audibility – we know what ‘sounds in the world’ are, and we recognise them when they are recorded. Next, we have transformations afforded by the turntable and the tape recorder, leading to a greater degree of potential abstraction; however, these are very mechanical transformations; the sonic results tend to remain quite recognisable, both in terms of the original sound, and of the mechanical process used in the transformation – slowing a sound down, turning it backwards, and so on. Further, these tend to be performed by hand, thereby retaining a degree of human gesture. As a result, the music of this period retains quite a strong sense of ‘liveness’, and of ‘process’.

Over a number of decades however, the practice moved away from the mechanical, and towards the digital; away from the tape player, away from the studio even, and onto the computer. Acousmatic work is now created in software environments, using software tools. This has several consequences: first, it tends to downplay, or often to eliminate entirely, the use of actual human gesture in the composition of the work; and, it offers a whole universe of processing and transformational possibilities that are not mechanical at all, that result in sounds where both the sources and the human creative process of transformation are, at least potentially, entirely unrecognisable.

There is nothing in this shift that a priori denies the ‘experimental’, from the perspective of the composer; but, if we are correct in arguing that the listener’s *interpretation* of a work as ‘experimental’ lies in *process* more than in *results*, then making the process obscure or inaccessible to the listener will negate the work’s interpretation as ‘experimental’. Thus, I claim that earlier works of musique concrète, where we can hear the sounds in front of the microphone and we can hear the hand of the composer in the studio, have a greater capacity for being perceived as ‘experimental’, than more recent works that, sometimes through greater sophistication and sometimes simply through a shift in tools, obscure that image. (We can of course find a great many works, both early and late, that don’t fit this model, but it is nevertheless a reasonable generalisation.)

This, then, is my alternative argument for why earlier works continue to feel ‘experimental’ in a way that more recent works do not. Again, this is not ‘black or white’: the formative quest

for new methods and language – and, maybe more importantly, our *awareness* of that historical quest – does play a role in our interpretation of the experimental. But I have argued here that our experience of *process* is also very important to that interpretation.

Back to the improvisers

Interestingly, a number of the live electroacoustic artists that I am holding up as examples base their stage performances around older technologies – around tape decks etc. – in other words, around the technologies of the early ‘concrète’. Obvious examples here include Lionel Marchetti, Jérôme Noetinger, Jason Lescalleet, and plenty more.

This is another case that counters the emphasis on the ‘new’ in definitions and preconceptions around ‘experimentalism’, which we often find intertwined with notions of advancing technologies, especially in a field like ours. There is a tendency to (at least unconsciously) believe or assume that using fresh, cutting-edge technologies makes our work ‘experimental’. This position might prove to have accidentally defeated itself, either because a) this emphasis on the ‘cutting edge’ has itself become an established *modus operandi* – i.e. technological change has become a new ‘status quo’, and therefore no longer qualifies as ‘experimental’, and/or b) because ‘advancing technology’ has become culturally ubiquitous, inescapable even, with the consequence that the *refusal* or *rejection* of the latest technology has come to be viewed as the more ‘experimental’ stance.

It also means that we have a situation where the early ‘experimental’ stage of *musique concrète* was tied up with a certain set of technologies in the studio, while the recent ‘experimental’ has moved onstage – but has brought with it those same technologies. This connection might therefore lead us to assuming that the electroacoustic ‘experimental’ is innately tied to this specific formative technology. Or, it might seem to reinforce our previous assumption, that the perceived ‘experimentalism’ onstage today stems from a clear referencing of the methods of an earlier, formative ‘experimental’ generation of artists and technologies. Once again, however, I believe this is a red herring. The attraction for these more antiquated technologies does not lie in nostalgia; it lies in their visibility of process. The back of someone’s laptop is the ultimate barrier between the audience and the performer’s process, and many non-laptop-based digital tools are little better. The connection between performer activity and sound result when using older technologies of an earlier generation is often quite clear, so once again I would argue that the ‘feeling’ of ‘experimentalism’ is brought on by our connection with process.

Back to fixed media

Interestingly, however, I also feel that much of the fixed-medium works by some of the live artists under consideration – Lionel Marchetti being a clear example – also have a particularly ‘experimental’ feel to them. Does this perhaps stem from experimental aspects of their live work bleeding into their studio work? But, if it is the ‘liveness’ of their live work that affords a sense of experimentalism, would this transition to the studio remain meaningful, or would it result in the immediate loss of the ‘experimental’ quality? Perhaps both. If the ‘experimental’ lies in the revealing of process, then it is reasonable to assume that ‘live’ practices in-studio will be more likely to leave the process unveiled for the eventual listener, and thereby to retain experimental qualities of the live work. However, we might also assume that this might not be a complete retention; for example, the visibility of the performer’s actions in a live

performance obviously plays an enormous role, which is lost by bringing that performance back into the studio for the preparation of fixed-media work.

However, there are some tendencies in live work that are significantly different from studio work, as well as different expectations. Studio work can reasonably be expected to be technically of a very high standard, and to be extremely polished; in live performance our expectations on these fronts are often significantly less, with an increased emphasis on other aspects instead. The conference call was again, in my opinion, quite correct in suggesting a dichotomy between 'experimentalism' and 'craft', at least as reflected in the evolution of the concrète/acousmatic tradition – i.e. that the flourishing and honing of an immaculate 'acousmatic craft' has tended to reduce the sense of 'experimentalism'. On the other hand, Electroacoustic Improvisation often tends, deliberately or otherwise, to downplay or explicitly deny any emphasis on 'craft', at least in the traditional sense of the word. This ties rather neatly into what we have just said: that expectations for polished craft in studio work tend to move it away from our sense of 'experimentalism', while our reduced expectations for the same in live work increase the probability of an 'experimental' interpretation.

Of course, this is a somewhat problematic generalisation: consider for example the genuine virtuosity in Marchetti's or Noetinger's live revox performances, or the absolutely extraordinary degree of craft in early works like Ferrari's two *Études* or *Visages V* (Ferrari 2003), which wouldn't be considered any less 'experimental' as a result.

But, it is also worth noting that artists like Marchetti do not necessarily see their improvisation practice and their fixed-medium practice as separate or differentiated. Can electroacoustic improvisation (sometimes) be viewed as simply live concrète/acousmatic? If electroacoustic improvisation is recorded does it simply *become* acousmatic music? Certainly there is much grey area here: live improvisation in-studio as a basis for acousmatic compositions (anywhere from simply providing raw material for further development, to essentially producing the finished piece); or, recorded improvisation performance that is then 'reborn' as acousmatic compositions, ripe for concert diffusion, etc.; or well-known repertoire works (for instance Jean-François Laporte's *Mantra*) that are explicitly 'live' one-take compositions; and so on.

So, if the artists in question don't necessarily see a clear distinction between improvisation and fixed-medium practices, where might any proposed difference in 'experimental' qualities be found? Well, in fact, we have answered that question already: the live works tend to foreground process; if this live work is then *re-presented* as a fixed medium work, then it is a question of the extent to which this sense of process survives that translation. And vice versa: a not-very-satisfying tape piece, may be quite thrilling when transferred to the stage, where we are immediately sucked into the drama of watching a human being engaged with their tools, attempting to wrestle out a work of art.

Form

To examine this more closely, I propose taking a moment to consider form. On the surface, Electroacoustic Improvisation has the capacity to be uniquely experimental with regard to form; as a live practice, new or 'experimental' ideas around form can be attempted, explored, considered, potentially discarded... all in real-time, often several times within a single concert performance. This would appear to recommend improvisation as possibly the ideal context for experimental attitudes towards form. In practice, however, not only is this rarely the case, it is often quite radically the opposite, with improvisation practice very often gravitating

extremely heavily towards a mere two or three primary formal archetypes. While there are reasons for this perhaps perplexing formal reductionism – especially in group improvisation scenarios – it appears to be clear evidence against claims for the genre's experimental nature.

However, for very different reasons, acousmatic music has also tended towards its own brand of formal predictability, which again links back to the question of craft: perfectly crafted phrases and gestures tend to pre-determine what follows, leading to smooth surfaces of peaks and troughs that, as a direct result of their perfect craft, make formal deviation a near impossibility.

However, I would argue that, as Marchetti takes techniques that he has honed onstage and carries them back into the studio with him, this offers alternative, and more experimental, approaches to acousmatic form. It was discussed above that we have different expectations from studio work than from live work – that we expect greater craft and polish from studio work, and that as a result this affords the live performer an opportunity to be much more experimental; Marchetti then brings these sometimes bolder attitudes and techniques back into the studio. As a result, in his fixed media compositions we find for example sudden edits, the composer deliberately cutting across his own constructions, interrupting himself, brutally interjecting or otherwise deflating or refuting formal logic – all techniques that we hear from him, and from others, onstage, but which are generally much less common in fixed medium work, and that as a result now sound refreshing and, yes, 'experimental' in tape works. This perhaps revives the ghost of an 'experimental' concrète, from a period before the language, and thereby our expectations, were properly established.

Conclusion

This, then, is the entirety of my argument:

- that the 'experimental' in electroacoustic is fundamentally much less about the perspective or attitude of the artist, but much more importantly centred in the experience and interpretation of the listener;
- that being perceived as 'experimental' is much more a question of *process* than of the sounding result;
- that the 'experimental' in electroacoustic music began in the studio, but has since moved onto the stage;
- that this move is largely to do with the foregrounding of process;
- and, that this has now resulted in a complex, and potentially very rich, interaction between stage and studio practices.

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