



EDITORIAL: BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Christopher Fox

In his much cited essay ‘Musica Practica’, first published in the journal *L’Arc* in 1970, Roland Barthes draws a distinction between the act of listening to music and the act of playing music, suggesting that knowing music through our bodies can be quite different from knowing music through our ears. Anyone who has ever sung or practised an instrument will recognise that this is one of many truths about our perception of music; alongside it one might set the difference between seeing a performance and hearing it, between hearing a performance and being in the same physical space as the performers or between listening to music and listening while reading its notation.

These various forms of knowing and understanding are explored in a fascinating series of articles that Björn Heile and Martin Iddon have drawn together for this issue under the generic heading ‘somatic music’. Their introduction to the five articles discusses the extent to which somatic music may also imply somatic musicology, whether or not consideration of embodied musical performance is just a twenty-first-century way of talking about music as theatre, and much more besides. Heile and Iddon also draw attention to the paradox of their somatic project: conceived as a series of critical reflections on new works in performance, the unwelcome arrival of the COVID-19 lockdown meant that they and their collaborators had to reimagine the project in a disembodied version, relayed through video conferencing interfaces. Their success in achieving this is a reminder both of those remote pandemic days and of the resourcefulness of all those involved.

From the immediate past to prehistory: Alastair White’s article on ‘composition as speculative archaeoacoustics’ breaches almost every tenet of *TEMPO*’s editorial policy. I often reject articles whose subject is music from the latter years of the last century, yet here is an attempt to access ‘the lost music of the Upper Palaeolithic’ era. White is a composer first and an archeoacoustician second, however, and his carefully argued speculations explore how and why we might think it is possible to know anything about music from a time before our own. His conclusion is that he, and everyone else making music today, needs to overcome ‘the ideological partisanship of our own’ modernity. It’s a bold challenge but the postscript to White’s article indicates that it is one that he has already taken up: the ideas of his article will become performed compositional reality on 24 June in the new-music festival *.abeceda III*, in Bled, Slovenia.

As was the case with Julie Zhu in *TEMPO* 309, the subject of this issue’s profile interview, Edward Cowie, is also the creator of the issue’s artwork. *TEMPO* failed to celebrate Cowie’s 80th birthday last year and an extended interview only hints at the richness of his musical imagination; we will undoubtedly return to his work in future issues.