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Article

Audiovisual composition: Describing and defining an intermedia process

Louise Harris
Music, University of Glasgow, UK

Abstract

This article is approached from an experimental perspective, attempting to more closely align the author's compositional and critical practice by writing through ideas 'live' on the page as opposed to fully structuring thought in advance. It considers audiovisual composition as an intermedia art form, asking what the term really *means* for audiovisual composition as both a compositional practice and a perceptual experience, and considering the usefulness of framing the broader field of audiovisual composition as an intermedial one. It reflects on the author's compositional process, offering some description and discussion of the intuitive elements of this and how they are manifest, and offers a conceptual framework for understanding the act of composing audiovisually, through offering the term *transconception* as a partner term to *transperception*, a concept put forward in the author's previous writing. Ultimately, it reflects on audiovisual composition both as a field and as a category of artwork, asking whether it is now sufficiently well understood to be considered a standalone art form with its own conceptual frameworks and terminologies.

Keywords: audiovisual composition; transconception; transperception

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Introduction

I have been mulling over what, if anything, I should write in this article for some time. Specifically, whether it is of use to me, or might be of use to others, to write more in this space and what putting further thoughts out into the world around the nature and/or experience of audiovisual composition could achieve. My book, *Composing Audiovisually* (Harris 2021) has, to some extent, been successful. I've had a number of really positive pieces of feedback on both the style and content of the work, have contributed a number of invited talks, have been asked to examine a number of PhDs largely as a direct result of the volume and have also seen an increase in the number of doctoral students I have working with me. Nonetheless, the critical discourse I invited through the work just hasn't really materialised. I wanted readers to push back, to disagree, to take issue, to offer alternative perspectives, but I have found that this has not been the case. Instead, while the response has been largely positive, I find myself a little frustrated at feeling that the volume hasn't really provoked the kind of critical engagement and discussion I hoped it would.

My thinking on what/where audiovisual composition actually *is* has both stayed the same in some ways and moved on in others in the five years since I wrote *Composing Audiovisually*. So, it is perhaps a useful time to reflect and offer suggestions on where we might go from here and what, I feel, the interesting questions around audiovisual composition actually *are* at this point. Alongside this, for my own development, I feel that it's time to try something new and, hopefully, to more directly both provoke and facilitate the lively critical dialogue I hoped to through my book. To that end, in writing this article, I *will* be trying out something new; specifically, I will be trying to write more as I compose – to gather, arrange, put together and curate my ideas more intuitively, to write without a detailed, extensive plan or a concrete sense of what will result from the writing process. To compose this article as I do my creative work – in the moment and responding to ideas as they progress. I have a general sense or feeling of what I want to say, but as I write this introduction, it's not hugely concrete, which very much reflects how I compose my creative work. It may be successful; it may not be but, crucially, it will allow me to align my writing more closely with my creative process, to attempt to write somewhat as I make, to more closely reflect my creative process in my written one and to more directly manifest in writing what, instinctively, I feel is a very close connection. In so doing, I will be letting go of the conscious planning and shaping I typically do well before any of my words hit the page, which will be a challenge. I am hopeful that it will, ultimately, be a fruitful one.

Intermedia - What do I understand this to mean?

Bearing in mind that this issue of organised sound is entitled *Electroacoustic Audiovisual Composition and Intermediality: Reconceptualising media relationships* I'd like to begin this discussion with a consideration of what intermedia actually *is* – or rather, what I understand the term to mean and how I apply it. I first encountered the term intermedia, as I suspect many of the readership here did, through Dick Higgin's (Higgins 1967, 1984, 2001) writing on Fluxus and through his Intermedia chart (2001).

Email: louise.harris@glasgow.ac.uk

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Higgins never really encapsulates intermedia directly or offers a fully fleshed-out definition – ultimately, 'the term is not prescriptive; it does not praise itself or present a model for doing either new or great works. It says only that intermedial works exist'. (Higgins 2001: 4)

Spielmann (2001: 2, emphasis mine) positions intermedia as follows:

> Conceptually, the term intermedia implies an interrelationship between different media that merge with each other where the couplings of different media elements result in a third, ***a new form of media***. This can be characterized as the transformative quality of intermedia.

This echoes my own thinking on audiovisual composition, and, indeed, those reflected in the survey results that underpin much of the discussion in my book, with artists and theorists alike both considering that the relationship between sound and image in an audiovisual composition is a synergic one – that by combining the two sensory modes together you create something additional, something new; that 1 + 1, in this case, equals 3.

However, if we look again at Higgin's work, it is notable that in his later, reflective return to the term in 1981, he writes:

> with this, I would leave intermedia. It is today, as it was in 1965, a useful way to approach some new work; one asks oneself, 'what that I know does this new work lie between?' But it is more useful at the outset of a critical process than at the later stages of it . . . it would seem that to proceed further in the understanding of any given work, one must look elsewhere – to all the aspects of a work and not just to its formal origins, and at the horizons which the work implies, to find an appropriate hermeneutic process for seeing the whole of the work in my own relation to it. (Higgins 2001: 53)

Higgins is often credited with originating the term intermedia (Hertz et al., 2001) but here he himself points to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1812 use of the term in exactly the same way – to define works which fall conceptually between media that are already known (Higgins 2001: 52). What is important to acknowledge about Higgin's reflections is that they deal primarily – as did his original essay – with the *reception* of a work, not with its creative conception. Intermedial works simply *are* – they exist – but to encounter them as an act of intermedia occurs in the critical, not the creative, phase. As we see above, Higgins suggests that to understand a work, one must look beyond that simple statement of being – that *thing* that these works are – and to find the 'horizons which the work implies' and to see the 'whole of the work in my own relation to it' (ibid: 53). This resonates very strongly with my own understanding of both creating and experiencing intermedial work, implicating not only the act of reception but also understanding and interrogating one's position and relationship to it.

Later authors have paid closer attention to intermedial relations both as they are combined and as they are received, noting the importance in acknowledging the differences, and indeed similarities, between the two. To broaden the notion of intermediality in audiovisual composition out further and consider both conception and perception, it is useful here to draw on Lars Elleström's (2010, 2017, 2021, 2023) work in intermedial studies. Elleström argues that intermedial relations fundamentally involve two distinct elements – mediation and representation – with mediation being the 'pre-semiotic, physical realization of entities (with material, sensorial, and spatiotemporal qualities, as well as semiotic potential)' and representation being the 'the creation of meaning in the perceptual and cognitive acts of reception' (Elleström 2017: 668). Though not completely aligned – particularly as there are semiotic relations at play in the compositional act – there is nonetheless resonance here with my understanding of both the composition and the experience of audiovisual work – the former being the pre-receptive, material, sensorial and spatiotemporal realisation of the work from a compositional perspective and the latter being the creation of individual meaning through perceptual and cognitive reception. To fully flesh out this resonance, we need to dig further into the processes of audiovisual composition and think through how these relate to the distinctions Elleström is drawing.

What is an audiovisual composition?

In *Composing Audiovisually*, I make the argument that any artwork that engages sonic and visual sensory modes can be considered an audiovisual composition if it is perceived and understood as such. Taking examples from a range of practices including fixed media, performance and installation, I conduct close readings of each and apply formal and analytical features to the experience and understanding of those works. I argue that it is possible to read and understand a work that engages both auditory and visual perception simultaneously as an audiovisual composition if one approaches it in that way. I further argue that this process requires engaging transperceptual attention, 'an apperceptive act in which I specifically attend to sight and sound and their interaction, and encounter other perceptual and contextual modes in light of that interaction', further contending that 'Encountering audiovisual works is not the same perceptual experience as listening to a sound work, or viewing a visual work, but is instead a transperceptual experience, rooted in both of its individual sensory modes yet also moving across, beyond and/or through the spaces between those modes and the effects those modes have on one another" (Harris 2021: 63).

One could argue, therefore, that transperceptual attention is essential for experiencing intermedial works, audiovisual or otherwise – to consider and experience each of the modes being engaged by the media present in the work whilst also being open to and experiencing the transformative effect each has on the other(s). These relationships, as Spielmann (2001) suggests, create a new form of media – the intermedial work or, in the case of my own practice, an audiovisual composition.

However, as hinted at above, this intermediality and potential forming of new media does not just happen in the moment of reception – it does not *only* require transperceptual attention to bring it to fruition. I would argue that composing audiovisually is an entangled, hybrid act – engendering not only a new type of media as an outcome but also a type of compositional act that is distinct from composing in either sound or image in isolation. It is an act that, rather than considering sonic and visual media as distinct, attempts to create them in both media – simultaneously or otherwise – as part of a unified compositional process. Whilst transperceptual attention allows us to understand the process of perceiving an intermedial work across, between and through perceptual modes, the act of making an audiovisual composition has as its essence the desire to sidestep the differences between these sensory or perceptual modes altogether and to work with an audiovisual *whole* from a compositional perspective. It is a creative process that, rather than taking two media and combining them to create something new, begins from a sense that sound and image are already unified as they are composed in the creative act, even if their actual creation does not happen simultaneously.

We talk a lot about relationships within audiovisual composition – indeed, my own volume is subtitled *Perspectives on*

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audiovisual practices and relationships. Because we are engaged with a form of making that at a fundamental level involves more than one sensory domain, we spend a lot of time thinking about how those sensory domains relate to one another – how are they connected and how do we, as both author and audience, connect them, consciously or otherwise. Reflecting on this, I realise that I am in fact not hugely comfortable with the term 'relationship' as a means of describing that connection. Through describing and positioning connection, relationship by implication also describes separation – that the two related things are distinct from one another but connected in a specific way. This does not resonate with how I understand and conceptualise my own work or how I understand the process of making an audiovisual composition. There is sound and there is image, but they are part of the same compositional process and the same creative thought. Whilst, perceptually, they might engage distinct sensory modes – or indeed, modes that we discuss and position as distinct – creatively, I do not feel that separation; I understand the process of composing for both as coming from the same place.

I have used the following quote from Merleau-Ponty in previous writing to encapsulate my understanding of what an audiovisual composition might offer, in terms of avoiding a sense of media hierarchy or the dominance of one sensory domain over another:

> "The sight of sounds or the hearing of colours come about in the same way as the unity of the gaze through the two eyes: in so far as my body is, not a collection of adjacent organs, but a synergic system, all the functions of which are exercised and linked together in the general action of being in the world, in so far as it is the congealed face of existence. (Merleau-Ponty et al., 2013: 234)

On reflection, however, I realise that this not only resonates with my understanding of how I experience audiovisual work – and indeed, what both makes and mediates effective transperceptual attention – but also resonates with my understanding of what is happening when I *compose* audiovisually. I am not thinking about sound or image in isolation – even if I happen to be making one without the other at a particular point – but instead understand and sense them as part of a coherent and unified whole. As my sensory system is a synergic one, my compositional practice follows suit – in making works that feel audiovisual throughout their creation, even if from a purely practical perspective that is not always the case.

I have been trying to find an appropriate way of describing or defining this *thing*, which is not so much a process as an ethos and a principal underpinning my approach to working with sound and image. It is also a sense of what is happening when I compose and a reflection of how I feel about how sound and image connect and manifest in the compositional process. In defining it, I feel that keeping the prefix 'trans' is key, not only because it relates to the transperceptual attention I advocate in encountering audiovisual work but also because I want to preserve the notion of the compositional process travelling across and between sensory and perceptual modes. The question of what to marry that prefix with is trickier. I initially thought *transcreation* would be apt, but that term already has a home in translation studies, where it refers to creative reinterpretation of texts to suit an intended audience, often involving translation, adaptation and recreation (see, for example, Benetello 2017, Gaballo 2012, Pedersen 2014). There is resonance here, as this speaks in part to the notion of creating shared audiovisual language through a single compositional process, but it does not quite capture the synergic process I'm wanting to foreground. Instead, I have decided to use *transconception* – which is not only a syntactically pleasing counterpart to transperception but also speaks to the process of initiating and developing ideas across and between conceptual and creative domains. Further, it is not a word that has been defined or used extensively in other disciplines – I have been able to find some references to it in psychology (see Brodsky and Cattaneo 2013, Verbena et al., 2023), but these have been relatively limited and involve the creation of theoretical frameworks that draw from two conceptual fields (which is also resonant). Consequently, in this context I would offer the following definition:

> Transconception – a creative process in which more than one media or expressive mode are considered inextricably linked in both the conception and realisation of an artwork. For the artist(s), the consideration of each media as a combined creative force underpins every aspect of the realisation of the work.

As Elleström (2017) ref argues that understanding intermedial relations requires grappling with both the material/conceptual and receptive elements of a work, I contend that audiovisual composition involves the two related but distinct processes of transconception and transperception, each being an integral element in creating, encountering or understanding the work. As the composer of an audiovisual work, I will engage both transconception in its creation and transperception in its reception. The way in which transperception is enacted here will be different for me, as the composer, than it would be for an audience member, just as the nature of transconception will be different for more than one artist composing a work together than it is for me in developing a piece on my own. What is essential to both is the understanding that the two media are inextricably linked – are, in this case, audiovisual – in both the conception and the reception of the work. This is what underpins both transconception and transperception at their core.

Writing in the recent *Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality*, Marina Grishkova offers us some further definitions and explanations of intermediality and provides a useful overview of the development of intermedial relationships as a field of study since the 1960s. In positioning intermediality in relation to similar and related terms, she states that

> In a broad sense, "intermediality" covers any possible relations between media. Transformation, transgression, and negotiation of media borders, as highlighted by various authors, distinguish intermediality from similar phenomena, such as "transmediality" (a spread of content or its features – narrative, stylistic, generic – across media and platforms); "multimediality"; and "multimodality" (a co-existence of multiple media or semiotic modes in a single work, genre, or message). (Grishkova 2023: 14)

We could consider audiovisual composition as being a multimodal practice, owing to the existence of more than one media/mode in a single work. However, the word *co-existence* might argue against this. Yes, the two media co-exist, but this implies a certain passivity; instead, what is happening is transformative, with the united compositional act of working with both media creating a third, or another. It is useful to consider Christina Ljungberg's discussion of Laurie Anderson's *White Lily* here, which she positions as transgressing and, as a consequence, renegotiating borders between the distinct media in the work. In doing so, she argues that this creates a new, unique, hybrid and reflexive form, focused 'both on their own mode of production and on their own semiotic specificity' (Ljungberg 2010: 83). Certainly, this reflexivity and awareness of the distinct modes of creation and reception and their interplay speak to the usefulness of understanding the related

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roles of transconception and transperception in the audiovisual compositional act.

Audiovisual Composition – an art form in its own right?

Stephanie Glaser suggests that 'the term "intermediality" is today used in a variety of ways, one of which is to describe creative works that resist classification into the 'pure' or conventional categories of literature, music, or the visual arts' (Glaser 2009: 12). This is an interesting point and bears reflection here. Historically – even relatively recently (at the beginning of my career, for example) – audiovisual composition did not really feel like a category of artwork, conventional or otherwise. I no longer feel this is the case. I will return to this later in this discussion, but I used to feel a certain amount of anxiety in describing myself as an audiovisual composer (which very often elicited the question of 'what's that?') or in attempting to describe what audiovisual composition is in an accessible way. A quick Google search suggests that audiovisual composition is now well understood, even if the way in which the term is positioned and applied (often 'audio-visual' as opposed to 'audiovisual', or art/practice as opposed to composition) varies. Indeed, even ChatGPT can tell me what it is – stating that 'Audiovisual Composition is the practice of designing and organising sound and visual elements together so they work as a unified whole to communicate ideas, tell a story or create an experience' (OpenAI 2026). The call for this journal – which not only accepts 'audiovisual composition' as a term that does not require further definition but seeks to drill down into it further through considering the implications of electroacoustic exploration within that context – speaks to the proliferation of the understanding of audiovisual composition as an art form in its own right. Indeed, I would argue that the term *audiovisual* itself effectively evokes intermediality, rendering the hybridity of working in more than one medium implicit in the term itself.

There is perhaps, therefore, little need to continue to consider audiovisual composition as an intermedial art form; if we accept Glaser's premise that intermediality is used to describe 'creative works that resist classification' (Glaser 2009:12), then I would argue that we have moved to a point where this is no longer the case; as a field, we have a classification and are establishing conceptual and theoretical frameworks with which to position and understand this classification. Similarly, to return to the very beginnings of the term intermedia, audiovisual composition is no longer something that falls 'conceptually between media that are already known' (Higgins 2001: 52) but is instead establishing distinct conceptual frameworks that account for its intermedial nature. Exploring what happens in audiovisual composition at both conception and perception might well be best approached through an intermedial lens; indeed, the above discussion suggests that considering these ideas through a framework of intermedia can provide a way of positioning and understanding the relationships at play. However, I would argue that the term audiovisual itself not only implies intermedial connection but also extends to encompass the 'other' ness of working with and perceiving two media as part of a cohesive, creative whole. I would encourage our field to be bolder – to use intermedia where it serves argument, discussion and conceptual framing but also to embrace the strides forward made in our field in recent decades and feel empowered to continue to develop terms, frameworks and understandings that fully account for audiovisual composition as an art form in its own right.

Transconception in practice – composing audiovisually:

To move away from the conceptual underpinning of transconception and into its practical implications, I will attempt to illustrate how it is enacted through describing a little of my compositional process. This is difficult to do, as so much of the process is non-verbal and non-visual – more about the felt experience of making, which can be very tricky to put into words. I will preface this by saying that this is necessarily a somewhat reductive summary of the process I go through when making a (usually fixed media) piece, and that this relates most closely to what I experience when I make a work that is 'just for me' – because I have an idea or a sense of a 'thing' I want to make. This process is different or distinct if I am responding to a brief, creating an installation, working to a commission or doing some of the data-driven audiovisualisation research I have been developing recently. When I compose just because I want to compose, this is – as best as I can describe it – what happens. In the example below, I have given a general description of the stages of the work and then, in indented text, given an indication of how this played out in my work *Alocas* (2017) to allow for a more complete picture of the making process.

I begin with a sense of what I want to make. This is (sometimes) at least in some way concrete – a single, static shape or form; a sense of how that might sound; a central, specific sound that triggers an association with a particular colour. Usually, there is something underpinning my creative way forward, even if it's not always possible to say what that thing is (for example, if it is a sense of a mood or overall tone of a work).

> In *Alocas*, I had a sense of a work showing a zoomed in, and zoomed out, version of the same system working in related but distinct ways. I had been teaching a class on synthesis and sound design had been blending simple sine tones with recordings of myself playing the same pitch on a flute. This elongated, timbrally-complex sound was really pleasing, and I wanted the work to expand on and develop this material in more detail, focussing on a sense of zooming in and out, both sonically and visually.

Next, I try out ideas – often, these involve singing/verbalising sounds alongside simultaneous drawing, usually with my colour index open for reference. These often bear relatively little resemblance to the final work but are helpful in working through and assessing initial ideas.

> In *Alocas*, I assembled a series of sound materials I wanted to develop and spent some time singing and playing around these. They felt fundamentally circular in shape, so I decided on this as the principal form that would be explored, then spent some time thinking through how these circles would relate to one another – I have used circles extensively in previous work, but wanted here to provide a sense of their being both separate and related to one another in each audiovisual rendering.

I typically have a feeling of an overall shape for the work – peaks and troughs; a gradual increase in momentum/intensity; a more static, gradually changing exploration of a small number of things – and will sketch this out as a single line drawing, which I put up near my workspace to refer to.

> *Alocas* felt palindromic – a very gradually move towards a central pivot point and away again. The single line drawing for this was akin to an elongated mountain, rising very gradually to a centre point and away again. The materials themselves do something similar, though not moving exactly in reverse in the second half but being fundamentally based on that premise.

If the desire to make has come from a particular material or 'thing', either sonic or visual, I will begin to explore this – breaking it down, pulling it apart, manipulating it, making new versions,

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experimenting with its limits. This is done audiovisually – even if the initial 'thing' is something that is only sonic or visual, these explorations usually involve enacting both – developing a sense of what a thing might look or sound like before giving it concrete form. This will give me an initial audiovisual palette to work from.

> I developed the sonic and visual systems in parallel for this one, with some semi-random elements in the visual system (using a process I've described elsewhere as algorithmic aleatoricism) (Harris 2020). I used the occurrence of unexpected events in the visual system to decide where to intervene/play around with the sound materials in time, then used these to trigger further events in the visual system. This is where the work began to not just feel fully audiovisual in my mind, but begin to become it materially.

I think through how this audiovisual material might contribute to the overall shape – and, indeed, whether that shape needs some reconsideration. Usually, it does not, as the shape forms part of my thinking when developing materials.

> In Alocas, the original shape very much defined the overall shape of the work, with some additional peaks and troughs evolving through the experimentation described above.

At this point, I begin to put things together – to shape the materials into a piece. The best way to describe this is that I have a sense – not necessarily anything concrete or specific – but an overall feeling about what I want the work to be. As I select, develop and combine materials, I am trying to move through space to find or reach that sense – to make the feeling I have about the piece into something concrete and actual. The best way I can describe it is travelling down a tunnel and trying to get to something you know is at the end but cannot see, occasionally branching off into unexpected corners and dead ends. The closer you get to that thing, the more the momentum builds – often I find that the further I go into a work, the easier and simultaneously more time-consuming to make it becomes (often to the frustration of my family and friends).

> With Alocas, this was very clearly the case and involved a lot of back and forth into my studio over a relatively short period of time – indeed, I remember at one point being unable to sleep at 3am and going to my workspace to see whether a particular render had finished and find out how it looked. At this point, the work seems to take off on its own.

As the final piece settles into something close to its finished shape, I try to experience it in a range of different ways – in my home studio, on my living room TV, through slightly tinny headphones on a mobile – to see what works and what does not. I get very concerned about pacing at this point and usually invite my husband (who is very creative but not a composer) to watch the piece and tell me what he thinks – specifically, I want to know if there are sections where he feels the piece meanders; I have always had a terror of getting so bound up in the things I'm enjoying making that I end up boring everyone else rigid with pieces that are far too long.

> I showed *Alocas* to my husband on our living room TV when I felt it was close to done. I remember being genuinely very nervous about his response and feeling very relieved when he said that he had boht enjoyed it and, if anything, thought it could be longer.

Based on this experience and feedback, I do some final shaping and sculpting and, once it feels 'finished', I release it into the world – usually via my Vimeo channel and quite often at a concert or festival if it's something I've made with a particular event in mind. The final test of my personal satisfaction with the work is the 'experiencing it with others' test – if I find myself feeling nervous whilst a new audience experiences the piece, then I know that it has come out as something pretty close to what I wanted it to be.

> *Alocas* is a good example here as it is a work in which the 'experiencing it with others' test was particularly keenly felt – indeed, at the soundcheck before its first screening I remember being so nervous I almost had to leave the room. I still find it quite difficult to watch with new audiences, though do try to push myself to do so.

As discussed above, this is a pretty reductive encapsulation of what is happening during this process, and it's very difficult to effectively put much of this in words – particularly the 'navigating down a tunnel' phase, which is much more felt than consciously understood – but as far as it's possible, the above captures in words what happens when I compose an audiovisual work.

Transconception and transperception – where to go from here

I have considered in the past that when writing about both how I make and how I experience audiovisual work, I have been trying to contribute to understanding in the field; to offer my perspective on these interconnected elements of my work as a means to both broaden our (historically) relatively narrow discourse and help others who make and/or experience audiovisual works in similar ways to try and make sense of those experiences. On reflection, however, I think what I'm really trying to do here is to understand *my own experiences* in both making and perceiving audiovisual works – to think through what's actually happening in both of those spaces and how making and perceiving are connected.

We might ask: why does it matter if the act of composing audiovisually – for me at least – is a transconceptual one? Why does it matter if the act of experiencing an audiovisual composition is a transperceptual one? How does this help us move forward? How does it advance the field? How does it help us to continue to create, to make, to push boundaries, to develop?

In truth, perhaps it doesn't! Perhaps this article and the book that proceeds it are nothing but conceptual navel-gazing that, whilst useful to me, are of limited use elsewhere. However, I would offer the following reflection: the works that I have made that, to me, feel the most successful and most compositionally satisfying – the ones that, even if they are fixed media, I still get nervous when watching in public – are the ones where compositionally I felt the sonic and visual elements were most in tune. They are the ones where I had an immediate, intuitive sense of what the audiovisual output should be – if not in terms of actual colour, shape or form, then in the intangible sense of direction and outcome in the compositional act that I described earlier. They are the ones where the creation of sound and image was most straightforward to negotiate – where I had a clear sense of what the creative process should be and what should come out of it well before I had gathered, generated or selected materials. These works are also the ones that are the most requested for performance, most often selected from open calls, most commented on, most viewed on Vimeo, most positively fed back on after concerts, festivals, installations, most often emailed about, etc. There is something there, I think. A suggestion – albeit one that is difficult to quantify – is that the sense of clarity in knowing, intuitively, what a composition should *be* when making it, and being able to realise that intuition, ultimately yields a work that is more successful and more satisfying to both myself as the creator and the audience as perceiver. That the success and the clarity of the transconceptual process in composing a work precipitates greater success and clarity of the transperceptual process in receiving it. In exploring and codifying these two related processes in this way, I am hopeful of both better understanding what it is that I am actually *doing*

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when making and experiencing audiovisual work – and indeed, what the implications of those processes are – and offering other composers, makers and theorists potential ways of understanding their own approaches in these domains.

As composers, we often shy away from talking about what actually *happens* when we make work – we can talk about the ideas that underpin a work, the conceptual frameworks they sit within, and the works that result from those ideas in significant detail, but very rarely do we engage with or explore the messy entanglements of stuff and things that constitute the actual process of making. In trying to both unpick some of that here and to think through how that impacts on how I compose audiovisually, I am hopeful that this will resonate with other composers and inform future discourse on what it means to both make and experience audiovisual composition. As discussed above, I no longer have anxieties about describing myself as an audiovisual composer – indeed, during my career this has become something that I both feel more ownership over and more confident in explaining to those outside of my field – and as I've already suggested, calls such as the one for this issue of Organised Sound evidence that audiovisual composition is now a more complete, coherent and well-understood field of practices and approaches. By continuing to offer reflective, challenging and sometimes messy discourse in the field we can, I hope, continue to move forward and to bring greater understanding to the work we do, both for ourselves and for those interested in the field.

Conclusions and final reflections

In this article, I've tried to address how I understand the term intermedia as it relates to audiovisual composition and to both consider audiovisual composition as an intermedial practice and question whether it is necessary to do so. In so doing, I have offered a new term for describing the audiovisual compositional process – *transconception* – as a counterpart to the transperceptual attention I have previously advocated in encountering audiovisual works. I have also attempted to describe and reflect on my own compositional approach and how this relates to my understanding of composing audiovisually as a fundamentally intermedial practice. In my approach to this article as a whole, I have attempted to write in a way that is more closely aligned with the way I compose – I began this discussion with a sense of what I wanted to write and what might come out, but without a clearly defined trajectory or preconceived notion of how the discussion would evolve. As an example, the term transconception came about through working through the above ideas on the page 'live', rather than through thinking, planning and constructing arguments in a more offline way. I am unsure whether this has yielded an effective article as a consequence, but I am hopeful that it has at least yielded one that will provoke further discussion and discourse in our broader field.

To conclude, I'd like to return to Lars Elleström as a way of thinking through and reflecting back on what's been presented here:

> Producing new knowledge . . . is very much about making it possible to see things clearer, making the mental image more fine-grained . . . A good concept should be both very concrete and very abstract: concrete in the respect that it is properly and, in some detail, defined in relation to neighbouring concepts, and abstract in the sense that is applicable to more than one very specific area of investigation. (Elleström cited in Petho 2021: 201)

In attempting the above, I have been trying to find ways to see things more clearly, particularly around my own compositional process and how this relates to audiovisual composition as a practice more broadly. The notion of making a mental image more fine-grained has absolute resonance with the way I compose, as I describe above; indeed, when I talk about having an intuitive sense of what I am wanting to make this could very much be described as a mental image, even if not a concrete one, that comes into clearer focus as I go through the process of composing.

In offering transconception and transperception as ways of understanding both making and experiencing audiovisual works, I am offering concepts that, I hope, are concrete and defined both in relation to one another and to the phenomena they originally draw from and abstract enough to be applicable to different areas of investigation. These could prove to be other forms of intermediate practice or forms of making, or experiencing making, in completely unrelated fields. For me, as an audiovisual composer and someone who thinks extensively about audiovisual composition, they are concepts that encapsulate what I am doing when I make, and what I am doing when I experience things that have been made, either by myself or others. They are doubtless not universally applicable, but I offer them here as a potential inroad to both making and encountering audiovisual composition and intermedia practice in ways that might offer insight into our sensuous, sensory, perceptual and semiotic responses.

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