The Pontydian Performance: the performative layer

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In this paper we reflect on the performer–instrument relationship by turning towards the thinking practices of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological idea of the body as being at the centre of the world highlights an embodied position in the world and bestows significance onto the body as a whole, onto the body as a lived body. In order to better understand this two-way relationship of instrument and performer, we introduce the notion of the *performative layer*, which emerges through strategies for dealing with discontinuities, breakdowns and the unexpected in network performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to examine the relationship of a performer and her instrument this paper adopts a particular theoretical framework. We draw on the writings of Merleau-Ponty and argue that his way of thinking about the body can contribute to a wider discourse of performance, in particular with regards to the performer–instrument relationship. We therefore investigate the place and the role of the body of a performer from a Pontydian point of view and reflect on the implications for performance practice. The underlying arch of this argument thus leads us from a theoretical framework, in particular a phenomenological understanding of the performative body, via performance in general, to the practices of virtual or network performance. The body for us acts as a starting point from which to think about the performer–instrument relationship.[1] In this way, our approach here sides with Jonathan Sawday's view of the patterns for human ways of thinking about the world as being derived from the human body, in particular by means of its dissection (Sawday 1995). It is vital to set into context the phenomenological investigations by Merleau-Ponty before embarking on a phenomenological reading of the performer–instrument relationship; thus a very brief and basic, not necessarily a strictly chronological, retracing of the history of notions of the body/mind duality is of benefit.

2. BODY/MIND DUALITY

Although the body/mind discussion dates back much further than René Descartes (1596–1650),[2] Descartes' controversial view on the body/mind, in which the body is seen as being made up of separate 'substances', shall be our starting point here since Descartes has in one way or another most distinctly influenced all subsequent views.[3]

The separate substances that Descartes argues for are mind, body and God, whereby a 'substance' is 'a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence' (Descartes 1984: 114, vol. 2). According to Descartes the essence of mind (*res cogitans*) is pure thought and is not extended – a non-physical substance, as it were – whereas the essence of matter (*res extensa*) is extension and does not think (Gregory 2004). It follows that a person consists of two finite substances, each of which can exist without the other.[4] Descartes' body/mind dualism implies that the body is informed by the higher rationality of the mind. In his work 'Meditations' (1641) Descartes expresses this clearly when he states that things are not perceived by the senses or by the imagination, but by the intellect alone. Things are not perceived through sight or touch, but by understanding them (Descartes 1986: 22, paragraph 34). This statement reflects Descartes' often quoted and rather famous argument, called the Cogito: *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), establishing mind and body as separate substances. Descartes' view triggered various vehement reactions, and philosophers, scientists

[1]Schroeder has argued elsewhere that the multifaceted and, at times, highly controversial debate that has been applied to the body has not been equivalently explored in the discussion of performance, and that the body must be understood as occupying the position of a forerunner in the past and present debate of human understanding (Schroeder 2006a).

[2]The body/mind discussion goes as far back as Zarathustra. Plato is often named as the first so-called 'dualist'. He asserted that the soul is distinct from the body, and that it is capable of maintaining a separate existence from the body.

[3]This outline is partly informed by the writings of Gregory (2004) and Wozniak (2005).

[4]Although these substances seem to be separate, one should mention that Descartes, in a seemingly bizarre twist, insists that mind and body inform each other mutually. Descartes gives the explanation as to how these two substances causally interact (this is called Interactionism) by creating a meeting point for the two substances in a part of the brain called the pineal gland.

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and psychologists ever since the dualist statement have tried to reconcile Descartes' views by providing alternative and opposing answers to the problem of the mind and body relationship.

Descartes' theory of the body/mind contradiction was soon followed by a concept that has come to be termed 'occasionalism': Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) most notably nurtured the ideas of that movement. He insisted that there is no influence of mind on body, or of body on mind. For Malebranche, both mind and body are substances that are causally ineffective; he believed God to be the only true cause of all phenomena. Another alternative approach to Descartes' dualistic view, indeed a rather atheist one, was formulated by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and his notion of 'materialism'. According to Hobbes only the physical is real, and the only substance that exists is matter; everything else can be reduced to matter and motion, including the human mind. In his major work 'Leviathan' from 1651, Hobbes (1996) introduces the idea of motion[5] and, referring to man's thoughts, he states that every thought is a representation or appearance of some quality or of some object, and that for every thought there exists an original thought which he calls *sense*. In man's mind there is no conception as everything is derived from that original sense. This sense in turn is caused by an external object, which 'presseth the organ proper to each sense, either immediately, as in the taste and touch; or mediately, as in seeing, hearing, and smelling' (Hobbes 1996: I, 9). Hobbes suggests that all qualities of an object are already present in that object, but that there exist several motions of the matter by which one's organs are 'presseth' (or moved) diversely. Hobbes shows that the object exists on one hand and the image or fancy of that object on the other. In this way, sense 'is nothing else but original fancy, caused (as I have said) by the pressure, that is, by the motion, of external things upon our eyes, ears, and other organs thereunto ordained' (Hobbes 1996: I, 10). Hobbes' notion of 'materialism' is most clearly expressed when he states that there is nothing else 'but divers motions; (for motion produceth nothing but motion)' (Hobbes 1996: I, 10).

The philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza (1632–1677) strongly opposed Descartes' view of the mind informing the body. He thought it ignorant to state that the body had its origin in the mind. In his 'Ethics' (2000) Spinoza states that it would be wrong to claim that the mind guides the body (2000: 167). According to Spinoza, Descartes' understanding revealed a total ignorance of what the body could do by its own powers; thus Spinoza refused to ground mind and body on different substances, opposing others in his time. By proposing that 'the human mind must perceive everything that happens in the human body' (Spinoza 2000: 131), he offered a rather modern view of the human mind as becoming directly linked to, if not informed by, the human body. In Spinoza's eyes, body and mind are a unity, with the becoming-active of mind and body originating in passion, in impingement. It follows that when the body is impinged upon, it is in a 'state of passional suspension in which it exists more outside of itself …, than within itself' (Massumi 2002: 31).

Following Hobbes and Spinoza, Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751) proposed a less extreme view of materialism by not completely denying the existence of mental events. For La Mettrie mental events causally depend on bodily events. In this way, La Mettrie also moves beyond Descartes' idea of the body as a purely physical automaton, a static mechanism, in which external events trigger an automatic reaction. La Mettrie conceived of the human being as a living machine, as a much more dynamic system, which he expressed in his work 'L'homme machine' (1748). Another critical thinker to oppose Cartesian dualism was the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). In his seminal work 'Matter and Memory' he echoes Spinoza's view of body and mind as interrelated. Bergson suggests that human beings are not made up of two distinct substances, but that one experiences oneself as a *unity* of body and spirit. In that sense, the body clearly is not distinct from me, me as a being able to actively perform actions, but the body *is* me. For Bergson the 'body is an instrument of action, and of action only' (Bergson 1896: 225).

Whereas Descartes left the big question of how mind and matter can inform each other, Bergson takes an immense step away from Descartes' dualistic view by looking not at memory and matter themselves, but by looking at their *function*, and by making the acting body a mediator between the two substances.

Echoing Bergson's view of the body as an instrument of action, the Hungarian-born scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) developed the argument of 'tacit knowledge'. In his work *The Tacit Dimension* (1966) he states that we always have some knowledge that we cannot articulate. Polanyi gives the example of a tool that when in use becomes more than just a tool, stating that when we use the tool we soon don't feel it as such, but that we feel the thing through the tool. The tool becomes an extension of our hand and we start to inhabit the tool in the same way that we may inhabit our own body.

[5]Hobbes distinguishes between 'motion vital' as it occurs in the organs – such as breathing, excretion or the flow of blood – and 'animal motion', also called voluntary motion, such as speaking or moving. The motion in the interior parts is caused by the actions of things one sees and hears, and as speaking and moving depend on preceding thoughts, on a will to move and to speak, 'the imagination is the first internal beginning of all voluntary motion' (Hobbes 1996: VI, 33).

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Roughly twenty years earlier, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his most seminal work, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), had elaborated extensively on notions of tacit knowledge. His argument that an instrument transcends its existence as a tool and that it becomes an object with which we perceive will be taken up again in this paper.[6]

3. PERFORMANCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL READING

> the union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object … . It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 88–9)

In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty argues that man is not solely a psyche joined to an organism, and the union of soul and body is not seen as a compound of mutually external terms, as subject and object, but as a union which is 'enacted at every instant in the movement of existence' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 88–9). He states, 'I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 82). For Merleau-Ponty the body, or body-subject as he sometimes calls it, takes on a central position. It is not considered an object ordered by the mind, as Descartes had argued. Merleau-Ponty relies on accounts of perception and emphasises the body's exposure to the world as a central experience. This means that a person's embodied position in the world, rather than his reflective capacities, is considered significant in experiencing the world (Reynolds 2005). Merleau-Ponty's body is a lived body and, according to him, consciousness is not only inside a person's head but is also lived through the body. To clarify this proposition, Merleau-Ponty gives the example of the phantom limb. He argues that people who have had a limb amputated can still feel the limb and experience the sensation of it; they are still called to use it in certain situations, even if it is no longer there. The example of the phantom limb shows that the body is not a machine, which, in the case of having a part severed, would continue its work without the use of that limb. Thus, Merleau-Ponty argues that as a bodily being engaged in the world, one never experiences things independently of one's experience (Robbins 1999).

Merleau-Ponty's suggestion in *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963) of a person not unilaterally affecting her environment, but the environment also coming into being by the organism being there – in other words, by the organism offering itself to the environment (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 13) – is vital to a discussion of performance, in particular to the performer herself, as it forces her to rethink her own position within a performance environment. This implies that a person does not make the world that she experiences, but her body opens onto the world while allowing the world to exist for her. This 'coming into being' is particularly poignant as one addresses musical instruments as entities in performance. Instruments are never stationary but are always given within a constantly changing, indeterminate background or horizon. Consequently, they are context dependent and, furthermore, the context itself is temporary and always subject to change.

In reflecting on performance we see the body as being at the centre. This is a body that turns towards the world for its existence while allowing the world to exist due to the presence of the body itself. This is a body open to change; one that experiences things as multideterminate, within a context. It is therefore a body that may be viewed as constantly in flux, and is bound to give rise to a nonlinear way of conceiving of the performative body. A Pontydian reading of performance addresses the body as flux rather than object, focusing one's awareness towards the resistances and struggles that a body becomes engaged in, in the process of being-in-the-world. We believe that Merleau-Ponty, contrary to his often overly holistic interpretation particularly as offered in the discourse of the arts, allows for notions of in-completeness, of in-extension, and of dis-continuities. These notions are particularly relevant to performance as process. Further, they become exposed in performance conditions which can be at one moment in time characterised as extreme, ambiguous or 'edgy'. Performance practices that are not fully coded from a cultural standpoint question the positioning of the body and, indeed, challenge preconceived ideas surrounding established performance practices. Hardware hacking and live coding are two examples of recent practices (Collins 2006, 2007), which, by deliberately addressing the making of sound through the exposure of its operations, place the question of embodiment at the very centre of the performative environment. By exposing the insides of a toy, a radio, a programming language in a performative context, hardware hacking and live coding practitioners ask the audience to share the risk and the fascination of live making. By emphasising the risk of such making, these practices deliberately expose the body in flux, the body in constant negotiation with the environment and the instrument, itself in flux. We now will examine Merleau-Ponty's body in the context of general performance practice before elaborating upon the performer–instrument relationship in network performance environments.

[6]Other philosophers, most notably the German thinker Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) were making similar arguments about our embodied engagement with the world. Heidegger made the argument that when we use a hammer there also always exists an involvement with the notion of hammering, and with the idea of hammering we become involved in the making of something, a shelter for the sake of Dasein's very Being for example (Heidegger 1962: 305).

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4. HABITUAL, PRESENT AND THE PERFORMATIVE LAYERS

According to Merleau-Ponty the body consists of two layers, the *habitual* and the *present*. The habitual or customary layer of the body is one that includes certain skills a person has acquired in the past, such as walking or opening a door. The present layer is, as the name suggests, the body at this moment, an instance of the habitual and its learned actions and skills. Merleau-Ponty sees the habitual body as constantly being at the disposal of the present body (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 82). He argues that certain actions, such as dancing or playing an instrument, are a constructed entity, suggesting that those actions are a habitual elaboration on primary actions (primary actions are those used for the conservation of life, such as running) (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 146). Therefore, dancing, according to him, would be an elaborated form of walking or running. It is, however, questionable whether in performance there are other elements at play. An instance of walking, which assumes embodied action, is understood through the present layer which situates the body in a specific context – today's walk around *this* garden. An instance that is performative (e.g. the walking on stage by a recitalist at the beginning of a public performance) questions these two layers. The public walk, read in traditional concert situations as the grand entrance of the artist on stage, establishing contact with the audience, is arguably different from the walk we learn as children instantiated by the stage condition. It is a walk that exudes 'look at me walking on stage' as the initial concretisation of the assumption that every performance is unique. Merleau-Ponty's two layers are limited in addressing this uniqueness that characterises the performance condition. Performing a walk is an instance of the walk (present layer) and based on customary action of walking (habitual layer), but it is also something else as the walk gains a significance that is unique: it is rehearsed and live.

We want to put forward the idea that in any performance context, such a bi-layered body (consisting of the habitual and present layers) would be inadequate to perform, and an extension, a refinement, or a connection of previously untrained and unknown circuits, be they of sensorimotor or conceptual nature, a becoming-aware-of and awakening of unused abilities of the habitual body, is also required. All performative activities require such an extra layer since a habitual elaboration on primary actions is insufficient for a performance context. This third layer we refer to as *the performative layer*. Different acts of walking can clarify the need for this layer. For instance, walking into a performance environment is a type of walking that is very different from walking with one's habitual body. I can walk down the road and I can walk down the road performatively, which are two different ways of walking. This means that a performer does not move or dance as an elaborated act of walking or running; rather, when a dancer performs, she dances performatively. Thus, when considering performance activities we suggest one move beyond the habitual and present layers, and we propose the folding in of this third layer, the *performative layer*, into the bi-layered body that Merleau-Ponty establishes. The performative layer revisits the habitual to make the most customary of action performable and unique. By revisiting the habitual, the body re-learns and re-addresses actions as basic as walking which are contextualised by the present layer and given performance potential through the performative layer. However, this performative layer should not be understood as a linear addition to the customary body, as an add-on, or an 'extension'[7] of the body, but more as a folding in of a new substance. Such 'folding in' is closely related to what Michel Serres, in approving of Deleuze's metaphor of the 'fold' (Deleuze 1992), refers to as 'the kneading of dough' (Connor 2004). It is an act in which one folds over the dough; the kneading process being carried out in order

> to blend together the joined and the disjoined, breadth and depth, the virtue of oil's smooth spread and the density of pulverised substance. In kneading, one repeatedly folds the outer skin of the substance inwards, until it is as it were crammed with surface tension, full of its outside. The action of kneading makes the material alive because it invests it with energy … Time has been folded into it along with work and air, and so, having undergone a transition from an in-itself to a for-itself, it has a future. Dough is quickened mass: not amorphous, but incipient of shape, not slack but charged. (Connor 2004)

The folding in of the performative layer has to be understood as a *process*, one that invests material with energy, which only takes place as long as it is continuously folded over, continuously kneaded. This continuous care and attention is what the dough needs in order to stay alive.

It is worth noting that the acquisition of the performative layer does not signify a supplanting of the habitual body; the habitual body has not become superfluous. On the contrary, the habitual body is revisited. In order to perform, and this applies to any type of performative action, the performative layer has to be acquired and then integrated, or folded into the habitual and the present body, suggesting an entirely new use of the body. In other words, just like walking or running, performing also has to become a

[7]The notion of extension in a performer–instrument relationship has been discussed in Schroeder 2005.

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habit; not solely one that relies on the elaboration of primary actions, but a habit that makes use of the performative layer. This layer allows the body to anchor itself in an object, with which the body can express its tasks: tasks such as pressing keys, moving arms, forming embouchures, filling lungs with air, or asserting force upon strings.

As the performative layer comes into play, the relationship between performer and instrument is characterised by issues beyond the habitual (skill and control). Whereas the habitual and the present body play a role in the development of skill, the performative layer assumes these skills and frames the positioning of the body, beyond the habitual, in the context of an environment with elements beyond the control of the performer. This environment or performance context can include elements such as the performer, the instrument, the work, the audience, the dramaturgy. It is through the performative layer that a performer deals with the complexity of the performance environment with its unexpected events, dynamics and breakdowns. However, rather than a linear evolution based on experience, a performer consciously develops strategies for dealing with events she has not prepared for in advance. Resistance in the relationship between performer and instrument exposes these strategies; the breaking of a guitar string, for instance, needs to be addressed through (1) stopping, (2) drawing to a close, or (3) continuing. A concert pianist faced with a creaking piano stool needs to rethink her performance posture on the spot. Here the habitual and the present body are likely to guarantee the continuity of the performance, but it is the performative layer that addresses the discontinuity caused by the unwanted and unexpected sound of creaking. As the performative layer folds into the habitual and the present, the pianist negotiates the uniqueness of that performance environment by adopting a bodily behaviour which addresses the creaking stool while maintaining a state of performance.

Events and conditions such as the breaking of strings and creaking of stools are used here as a simplistic illustration of something that is present in performance and is often considerably more subtle. These events and conditions render performance as a unique activity and are often marked by resistance – a break in the smoothness and comfort of the habitual. The importance of resistance in the context of the performer–instrument relationship, and the argument that discontinuity, rather than seamlessness, is at the core of performance, has been outlined previously (Rebelo 2006; Schroeder 2006b). Although the performative layer cannot be separated from the habitual and the present body, performance practices which operate outside the conventions of situated performance – in other words, performances that imply the bringing together of a spatial and social environment clearly framed by a temporal structure (e.g. the concert, the play, the circus), and that operate in a yet ill-defined environment – provide a context in which this layer can be more easily identified. Here, the complex interplay of performer, instrument, audience and context presents itself as a vehicle for constant re-adjustment and negotiation for the performative bodies. The status of the body as present, tele-present or indeed absent exposes the body in flux, rather than as object. Merleau-Ponty allows us to question the positioning of a body that is in a constant process of negotiating a variety of interpretative possibilities. In networked performances the fluctuating relationship between the body, space and time becomes the very choreography of play. It can be argued that the practice of network performance is currently going through a period of intense activity and experimentation while arguably presenting questions of cultural and technical nature that are still only minimally explored.

5. THE PERFORMATIVE LAYER EXPOSED

In 2007 a study (the 'Apart Study') was conducted at the Sonic Arts Research Centre in Belfast with a view to establishing how performers deal with a variety of conditions that characterise network performance.[8] The Apart Study was informed by other writings in the area of network music performance, especially by previous studies carried out at CCRMA in Stanford (CCRMA 2009) and by Chris Chafe and co-writers (Chafe, Gurevich, Leslie and Tyan 2004), but also by more general writings on network music performance (such as Kapur, Wang, Davidson and Cook 2005; Tanaka 2006; Barbosa 2008).[9]

Amongst the network conditions tested in the Apart Study were latency (both static and variable) and the lack of visual cues between the performers. A free improvisation/jazz trio was distributed between three studios with audio and video links. The study has been described fully in Schroeder, Renaud, Rebelo and Gualdas 2007. Audiovisual documentary evidence provides a platform for analysing the performers' responses to different network conditions. One of these conditions consists of forcing a relatively high latency (120 milliseconds) into the audio stream distributed amongst the musicians. Although in free improvisation this was proven not to be an obstacle for musical interaction, the performance of a work that relies on metric synchronisation (Ornette Coleman's 'Bird

[8]Video documentation of this study can be found at www.sarc.qub.ac.uk/pages/net/study.

[9]More detailed writing on issues in network music performance by the authors can be found in Renaud and Rebelo 2006; Schroeder, Renaud, Rebelo and Gualdas 2007; Rebelo, Schroeder and Renaud 2008; Schroeder forthcoming; Schroeder and Rebelo forthcoming).

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Food') presented some problems. The lack of synchronisation between the three musicians forced a performance that was characterised by constant re-negotiation of a common pulse. In contrast to a traditional performance situation in which common pulse can be achieved through cueing, practising and responding to the overall sound of an ensemble, the musicians in this study were asked to develop strategies on the fly that would take into account the distributed nature of the event (i.e. no overall sound to act as reference for synchronisation nor indeed any other aspects of ensemble play). In this study the relationship between performer and instrument is exposed as one that is characterised by the discontinuity intrinsic in the performance environment itself. By deliberately removing aspects of ensemble play, the instrument establishes itself as a removed entity, as it is no longer a vehicle for contributing to an ensemble, but rather it can become a discontinuity between performance intention (in this case, common pulse) and the task at hand.

Here we can identify the performative layer at work as musicians deal with an unknown, if not completely unexpected, situation and re-address their relationship with the instrument in order to maintain a believable state of performance. The temporal response of the instrument, normally taken for granted, may become open to redefinition. As a musician attempts to adapt to a constantly shifting pulse, she must reconsider instrumental response time. The 120 milliseconds latency re-adjusts the temporal continuum of a performance so that a standard instrumental response is too quick, causing a musical event to sound too early and hence contributing to an ensemble acceleration of tempo. The latency also can cause a musician to impose a deliberate delay, which may be perceived as too slow in the overall temporal continuum, causing a musical event to sound too late, and thus contributing to an ensemble deceleration of tempo. The Apart Study highlights how a musician draws on different strategies in dealing with discontinuities and the unexpected, and constitutes only one example in which the performative layer can be identified.

By constructing a relatively unknown performance situation,[10] the Apart Study is useful in exposing the performative layer in particular in its relationship to the habitual and the present. The study asks the performers to relearn and adapt. The relearning occurs as the performers are exposed to a situation in which temporal granularity (as rendered in delays and feedback, for example), spatial position and ensemble sound become diffuse and, by virtue of the design of the study, not reliable. Here, the revisiting of the habitual comes into play. Performers are asked to adapt to these conditions while maintaining a believable state of performance. The study enforces the notion of breakdown by asking musicians to continue performing even if conditions are problematic.[11] By addressing the unique and sometimes unexpected aspects of the environment the present layer is engaged – the performer regains confidence in the habitual and applies the relearned strategies to the present moment. It was also the premise of this study to emulate an environment that allows for traditional performance conditions to emerge (performance cues, ensemble playing, etc.). By subscribing to the objectives of creating a musical context within which the performers could behave in a manner similar to that in 'normal' performance conditions, the study exposes how the performative layer is rendered. The tri-layered is exposed as the folding in of the habitual, the present and the performative that characterise this unique performance environment. As discussed above, these three layers are not separable and it was not the intention of the study to identify these aspects of the body. The example is used here simply as an illustration of how an unstable performance environment can expose the complexities which are commonly folded together in ways that are impenetrable to those wishing to better understand the performative body.

6. CONCLUSION

When we are reflecting on performance with consideration of the ideas of the philosopher Maurice Merleau Ponty, the body that denotes a person's embodied position in the world becomes our focus. We have suggested that, from this perspective, performance asks one to acquire a new layer – the performative layer. This layer needs to become folded into one's experiential body in order to form a body with which the performer is able to take possession of the world. The performative layer has to become akin to any other habit, and in the same way that learning to see colours is learning a *style* of seeing, the instrument, one's voice, or whatever one uses to perform with becomes a way of being in the world. Instruments transcend their existence as tools and become objects *with* which we perceive. Just as Merleau-Ponty suggests that the pressure on the hand and the blind man's stick are no longer given, and the stick is no longer just an object perceived by the blind man, but an instrument *with* which he perceives, the performative body has come into being as a body (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 148, 152–3). In performance, this body makes use of the performative layer and, as it looks towards the world while allowing the world

[10]Although, arguably, not dramatically different from a recording session in a studio.

[11]The study of ensemble playing thresholds in regards to network latency is well documented in Chafe et al. 2004.

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to exist for it, it also highlights the ever-changing nature of the environment and of the body itself.

We have used the example of a network performance study as an environment that, by virtue of deliberate constraints in temporal and communicative aspects of performance, reveals performance strategies that deal with the discontinuous and the unexpected, and hence exposes the multilayered body in performance. As performance technologies develop into new virtual environments as well as through the re-design of musical instruments, which address aspects of interaction and usability, an understanding of the body in the context of the performative becomes particularly urgent. The performative layer provides a phenomenological approach to investigating the relationship between the body, instrument and performance. This relationship is key to the understanding of existing performance practice and crucial to the design of new performance environments and instruments. Network performance practice in its unstable condition allows for an environment in which questions regarding the body and the condition of performance can be dissected more easily. This paper hopes to initiate a discourse focused on the specificity of the body in unique performance environments as a way of challenging pre-conceived notions of performance.

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