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**Accordion in Action**

How to develop my artistic skills applying theatrical choreography with accordion to a performance

A written reflection within the degree project that is also documented with a video that can be found here: XXX
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1. Introduction

1.1 My artistic background

When I was trying to learn one especially tricky part in a musical piece my former teacher told me "Music is not a circus" and took that part away from the composition. I believe that if he would see me rehearsing for my master’s examination performance he would like to remind me the same thing again, and I would agree - music is not circus, it is a serious form of art and musical perfection should always be appreciated and maintained. On the other hand, there is nothing bad in trying out interesting and surprising ways of playing music instruments and no one can surely predict what effect the outcome would give to the performance and musicians growth.

For a long while I have been interested in creating a performance where apart from music making I am taking physically and emotionally active part in everything what happens on stage and studies in KMH, NAIP program have given me such opportunity.

My first experience performing music and moving (acting) at the same time was during the NAIP introduction course in The Hague in a performance with Israel Castillo, Artjoms Martjanovs, Ty Constant and Philip Curtis. In this performance, we demonstrated a legend about Maculele from Brazilian folklore. We moved across the stage, playing instruments at the same time, and performed an improvised fight scene. During rehearsals, I practiced how to keep certain dynamics in my playing whilst moving, putting accents when I am supposed to attack and reacting to movements made by opponents. During the performance, we did not operate with real physical contact. The intention of the movement should guide the response. This experience was so intense and breath-taking that I decided to deepen in it and maintain the focus on the intersection between theatre and music, movement and instrument during my further artistic activities.
During my studies, I have made several attempts to incorporate movement into musical performances. In a workshop with Nina Hartes (a professor with background as a dancer from Norway who is working with musicians in Norwegian Academy of Music and in Det Multinorske theatre school) for example, I gained quite a lot of experience working with my instrument in unusual ways and trying to be musician and dancer at the same time. It was amazing to explore alternative ways how to approach music instrument that I have used to play only in one way. Performance for T. Lundquist “Ballad” with Milan Rehak, Artjoms Martjanovs and Madara Peiseniece was my first attempt to create a visual performance from a written musical piece. During the rehearsals I and Artjoms explored the music and connected it with his dance and my movements with the accordion. Another performance, “Inter x logues”\(^1\) with Ruben Fenemore, Miriam Goldkuhl, Henrika Kurkimaki (2 dancers and 2 musicians) was based on musical improvisation and movement intentions. During the performance, I understood that it is easy to create and maintain dialogue between me, other musician and dancers if the music I play is improvised, if all the participants have a clear idea of what is happening in a certain moment and if we are engaged in finding a solution for whatever issues that might emerge.

During my studies, I also had several opportunities to join musical-theatrical performances and explore the field, seeing how experienced producers lead the process. These shows were “Varjoje ja Tomua” with 3\(^{rd}\) year students from Theatre Academy in Helsinki and “Everything goes to hell anyway” with 2\(^{nd}\) year students from Det Multinorsk theatre school in Oslo. In Oslo, I explored how to play accordion if it is not fixed on me, how the choreography can be added to my playing and how to continue playing while shifting from standing to lying position.

All this experience has helped me in creation of my own performance, together with actress Miriam Goldkuhl, as well as deepening my interest about performers and shows with mobile musicians.

1.2 Idea

“The musician’s body is not just the tool for producing exquisite musical sound. The performer’s musical thoughts and feelings are embodied in a holistic sense; transformed into a multimodal display in order to express and communicate with others.”

For a long while I have thought what is wrong with the concept of traditional music concert situation, where the main attention, as I see it, is to the music per se and the performer is considered, as a tool for fulfilling audience’s expectations to hear technically perfect, emotional and gazing musical performance, forgetting the performer’s physical existence. This kind of contemplation has lead me to start exploring the performance from the physical point of view, yet being a musician.

When I entered the field of theatre and stage movement I was interested in questions like “how musicians can contribute to performance in other ways than making music” or “how could musicians interact with actors, dancers or the audience?” I decided that I would like to gain a palette of different ways of how to contribute to the performance and use this knowledge in making my own.

Taking a look around what is happening in the world, I discovered that apart from the traditional music concert settings, people nowadays can experience various experimental and unusual music performances where the instruments and music itself are approached and performed in new ways. In a performance with musicians and dancers (or other stage performers) on stage

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simultaneously, musicians can be perceived in many other ways than being a background setting, props, or just creators of the sound.

In this work, I will write about some artists (musicians, clowns, actors) that are operating in this field and their performances that have drawn my attention. Afterwards I will describe my discoveries while working with Miriam Goldkuhl to add theatrical choreography to our performance “The Dress Up”.

**My question:** How to develop my artistic skills applying theatrical choreography with accordion to a performance?

**Keywords:** Accordion, music, performance, gestures, choreography, theatre
2. Background

2.1 Movement in instrumental music

In a live music performance one can witness different types of movements – gestures that, as defined by Godøy and Leman, can be divided in 4 groups\(^3\): sound-producing, communicative, sound facilitating and sound accompanying. These gestures can be more or less expressive according to the musical piece, musician’s personality and other factors. Many composers have explored movement in music, particularly in the music-theatre works, that developed in the twentieth century, creating Music-Theatre and Instrumental Theatre performances\(^4\). Gestures and other onstage movements have been used as a visual complement to the performance.

Considering my study field, I decided to take a look on how accordionists and other instrumental musicians have used movement in their performances. I came across several accordionists, other instrumental musicians, clowns and actors who have explored the field. Often the movement is extended in collaboration with other artists or playing the instrument in unusual ways. Analysing performances of these artist, I gained both ideas and inspiration on how to create my performance, and understanding about what kind of self-expression on stage I would like to avoid.

From the world of accordionists, one man who has experimented a lot with accordion (and the possibilities that it receives when united with electronics) is Finnish musician Kimmo Pohjonen. One of his most popular shows is called Accordion Wrestling\(^5\). In this performance music is combined with choreographed movements by fighters and Pohjonen himself. He is not only providing music for their show but also takes part in all of it. His role as an

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\(^4\) Whittle James William, Music is Theatre: Devising Musical Performance (University of York, 2017)

actor holds the same function as for wrestlers. He leads fights as a judge, gets hoisted into the air as he plays, fights with wrestlers himself and runs across the stage if it is needed, whilst simultaneously continuing to play. A great advantage in his music, and something that allows him to move more freely, is that his accordion is provided with a very good sound system. The accordion is amplified through speakers and special effects allow it to be as strong and continuous as he wants. His shows inspire me by the vitality that an accordionist can add to the performance moving around freely and interacting with other performers. In one of his interviews, Pohjonen has also mentioned that he has made a lot of crazy performances while he was younger, for example there was one instance, whilst he was playing and spinning with his accordion, where he moved so fast that he fell and broke his leg.

During XIV international accordion music festival in Limbazi, May 9-12 2017, I had the opportunity to see a performance of accordion ensemble “Tutti” from Ukraine, a group of 5 female accordionists. I took a closer look at one of their videos that are possible to see on YouTube, a compilation of their performances, published in year 2013. Usually they perform standing, dressed in showy, lookalike costumes and almost every composition is complemented with slightly choreographed and simple dance steps. Movements in their performances are added as a decoration and do not create any narrative. This way the inappropriate movement seems to lower the quality of performance.

Another example that is connected to accordion music is a clown duo Koblikov & Gashuk (Ukraine, Odessa). Accordion and clown is quite a usual combination but these artists use accordion while they are performing tricks

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6 Interview with Pohjonen Kimmo, The Telegraph, by Ivan Hewett Jun 4 2012, accessed Jan 26, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=968916g-DG0
like balancing a juggling pin on head or standing on accordion and juggling while the other is playing. This performance demands both strength and balance from the person who is playing the accordion and a good balance from the one who is on top of it. This performance encouraged me to try out and add physically demanding and challenging choreographies with accordion to my performances.

Other musicians as well have explored the field of movement within music. The ones who seemed very interesting for me were L'Orchestre de Contrebasses and composer Georges Aperghis.

In the performance in Paris (2011), L'Orchestre de Contrebasses, double bass sextet, show a whole new approach to double bass performance. It is a show with very wisely set choreography, effective light design and theatrical scenes with different characters. Musicians play their instruments upside down and, as their heads are not visible, the setting makes a mystical effect. One can imagine big bugs or other cartoon-like characters. To make the interaction between characters more specific, they make them fight with endpin spikes that, when the instrument is upside down, now look like an antenna of the big bugs. Choreography is added for everything – change of focus from one person to another by turning the whole body of the instrument, leaving and entering the stage. They create the scenery using just their instruments and light. In some moments, double basses seem to be light as feathers when musicians are swinging them between their arms to create rhythm. This show is a great source for inspiration and admiration, particularly, showing how the instrument specifics and physicality can be used in innovative ways to enrich the performance.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjiwg9-Igfk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nf1_QXpS7I
Georges Aperghis is a Greek composer working primarily in the field of experimental musical theatre. Information about him is taken from his webpage\textsuperscript{10}. Already his first attempts at music theatre were demonstrating a fascination with the relationship between music, words and the stage. After founding the Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM), he began creating performances that used both actors and musicians. He based works, created gradually in the rehearsal process, on everyday events transported to a poetic, often absurd and satirical world. He treated voice, instrument, movement, text and staging equally, eschewing standard theatrical and orchestral hierarchies. In his composition Retrouvailles\textsuperscript{11} (a duet using speech, movement, objects (glass, bottle, chair, table), creating simple and complex rhythmical structures) – he experiments with simple movements and the impact they have when put in a sequence with other movements and repeated. Exaggerated movements give a fresh dimension to the performance. The performance is very intense. Each scene flows in to next one rapidly. For me it is inspirational how Aperghis makes actors interact with each other in ways that are familiar for everyone – clapping hands, clapping on another person’s body, talking. The usual movements suddenly have a broader significance and give a new layer to the performance, a space where one can try to find an alternative message beyond what is played and showed.

### 2.2 Actors-musicians

Since my intention was to make a performance in collaboration with an actress I was interested to take a look on how the development of musician’s role takes place on the theatre stage. This led me across the term actors-musician.

\textsuperscript{10} Webpage of composer Georges Aperghis, accessed Jan 8, 2017
http://www.aperghis.com/english.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-uIWgHbIKE
During the theatre project in Theatre school in Helsinki I discovered Jeremy Harrisons book “Actor-Musicianship”\textsuperscript{12}. He describes the history of actors-musicians appearing on the theatre stage in Great Britain, the most successful directors, playwrights and theatre companies in the field, some of the performances, the specifics using actors-musicians (and musicians-actors) in shows and gives examples on exercises that could be applied for actors-musicians to feel natural with their instruments in play. Actor-musicianship does not always stand for movement with the instrument, but mostly deals with expression and connection with necessary character. The information of their experience and practice turned out to be useful for me and the actress as soon as we started to blend choreographies in our performance.

The use of music instruments in shows has forced producers and actors to use their ingenuity and create, discover new ways to use, play, and treat instruments in ways that are appropriate for a shows narrative, stage setting, and characters. I was amazed by the great and inspiring examples how actors solve different situations, for example using accordion as a snail shell or building barricades from music instruments.

From the author, I also learned some things related to use of instruments in theatre play that should be considered, creating a performance. For example, a phrase “I also found several theatres use music in their plays as they consider that the music in some ways diminishes the intellectual power of play” seemed warning for me as we (me and actress) wanted our performance to be not only humoristic as it sometimes tended to be, but as well mindful and attentive.

Acknowledging the fact that the process of writing music for a play with actors-musicians is different\textsuperscript{13} was useful for my rehearsals as well. In comparison with a usual play with musical accompaniment, the music has to

\textsuperscript{12} Harrison Jeremy (2016) *Actor Musicianship*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

be added at early stages of rehearsal process as actors have to study their parts by heart and blend with the character.

To get the image of how musicians or actors-musicians act and deal with their instruments in plays, I decided to analyse one of the most popular actor-musician show “Sweeney Todd” and one musician-actor offering by Matthew Sharp.

“Sweeney Todd” revival by John Doyl, Broadway 2005\(^{14}\)

In this play all characters are played by actors-musicians. All actors-musicians who are on stage are present, take active part in what is happening on stage. They never lose the character. Instruments are associated with the characters as well – tuba is played by the humoristic lady in the shop, cello by the love couple. Actors move with their instruments on stage, sit, play, take them away and continue acting if it is needed. Additionally, small movements that incorporate the instrument, but don’t involve the actual playing of said instrument, are used to provide an extension of character. Furthermore, there are some actors who do not need to deliver proficiency of playing musical instrument as the main driving force is the emotion and story.

“Tommy Foggo-Superhero”, The Egg 2015\(^{15}\), a solo performance for children by Matthew Sharp\(^{16}\).

In this performance, the actor treats the cello partly as another person. He is talking to it, acting as if the cello is talking to him and makes it fly in his hands. He is using the box of his instrument as a prop – sitting on it, climbing, drawing faces on it and speaking to it, making an imaginary underwater planet from it. He uses a loop station so that music continues while he is speaking,


\(^{16}\) Matthew Sharp is an internationally recognized classical performance artist and director.
walking around, playing melodies or singing. The cello is fixed vertically so that in any moment he can approach it and start playing. There is total freedom in music making and speaking at the same time.
3. Method

During rehearsals on my own and with actress Miriam Goldkuhl I wanted to explore and luckily include in our performance several choreographed movements with the instrument whilst maintaining playing. At the start of the rehearsal process I was focused on what choreographed movements are possible for me and Miriam to perform. We occasionally chose several movements that seemed interesting and attainable for us considering our strength and specifics of the instrument. When we identified the movements we wanted to use, we had to find appropriate moments for them in the narrative and add the proper music material to them, according to the story. Movements should fit both the situations and characters

3.1 Procedure

The choreographed movements we chose were the pyramid, balancing, contra force and bridge. To acquire movements, we created a procedure that consisted of several steps:

1) Trying the movement without the instrument.
   Acknowledging the force, balance and position required to perform the movement.
2) Adding the instrument.
   Acknowledging the differences and difficulties that emerge doing movements with the instrument, for example the change of balance, weight and support that I can possibly give with hands and minimization of space for actress for placing feet.
3) Playing improvised music with left hand and maintaining the movement.
4) Playing improvised music with both hands.
5) Finding the most appropriate music and adding it to the movement.
   This defines how long the movement should last.
3.2 Specifics adding choreographed movement to accordion performance

Fusing accordion music with choreographed movement and departing from the traditional way of playing it whilst seated demands extra strength due to the weight and size of a professional instrument. Consideration of changes in body balance and the specifics of accordion mechanism in creating the sound should be taken in account.

Physical strength

Already playing accordion while seated demands physical strength from the musician and correct position of body and instrument as the weight of a professional instrument is ca. 12-15 kg. Playing accordion requires vitality of the backbone, shoulders, arms and good stamina. The same as other instruments, accordion should be played with relaxed body to ensure a long performance\(^\text{17}\). If one chooses to play standing, the weight of the left part of the accordion is not based on left leg, but on the shoulders and left hand instead. The bellows are moved in different way as they cannot be supported by the opposite leg. If the decision is to walk while playing, each step after a while will be felt in the shoulders. The bellows must be led smoothly, steps should not disturb the music (unless they are supposed to be so). Playing in a lying position limits the possibilities to manipulate the bellows further. Both in Pohjonen and in the clown performance it is obvious that the artists need physical effort to do the movements they use.

Size of accordion

Depending on the model, the size of accordion differs. It could be larger, wider or higher and that makes considerable impact on the musician’s freedom of movement. Some accordionists, because of the height of treble

\(^{17}\) Anzaghi Luigi (1978) *Complete Method for Accordion*, London: Sam Fox Publishing
side of accordion, cannot see what they are playing with the right hand. Others cannot reach the front side of bellows with right hand to make the drum effect. I did not have any of those difficulties with my instrument until I tried to play it while lying on the ground. In this position, it tends to move in whatever direction – to the left or right side or towards the head.

Balance

Putting on the accordion, one can feel how the balance of one’s own body is changing. It is both because of the weight of instrument and its placement in front of the body. When I joined the performance in Oslo I experienced how hard it is to spin around as fast as the actors did as soon as I put my instrument on. Additionally, I had to take up much more space than they do to perform the movement. These things should definitely be taken into account when making a choreography for accordionist-performers.

The left-hand rule

As the bellows control dynamics and tension of sound the left hand should almost all the time be fixed to the instrument to provide and control air pressure in them. This means that only the right hand can be used to provide support for the body, for example, while going up from the lying position.
3.3 Our choreographed movements

The pyramid

Practicing this movement, we used the procedure that is described above. As this was the first time I was doing this kind of contra force movement, it was quite hard to keep balance when the actress got up to the position on my upper thighs. It was also significant to train the position of my hands to assist with upwards movement. Adding the accordion to this movement turned out to be more complicated than expected. First the weight of the accordion shifted our balance. Then it turned out that, because of the size of the accordion, the actress did not have enough space to put her feet as the edges of instrument were exactly at the place where her feet used to be. Once the position was reached, playing with both hands turned out to be quite easy, however the position itself could not be held for a long time because of the weight and pressure on the legs.

Figure 1 Pyramid
Balancing

The starting point for this movement is lying on the ground. At the start, we practiced this movement without accordion. My legs and hands are stretched up to give support for the actress. She places my feet as a support under her hips, pushes herself away from the ground and starts balancing on my feet and hands. When balance is found, the left hand and later both hands are released. On this level, the main thing we had to learn was how to find balance, where my feet should be placed, how stretched my legs are.

When the instrument was added the first thing that I understood was that I have to practice playing in lying position. I had to find different techniques for smoothly changing the direction of bellow movement as the weight of the left-hand side together with gravity make them move in unusual ways and there is no point of support. The next complication comes when the actress tries to find her base from my legs. Because of the size of the accordion I have to find new way to raise my legs in comfortable and safe manner because doing it in the required position makes the accordion move away from legs and into my face. Balancing over the accordion feels reckless but safe after a while. The next step is playing with the left hand and thereafter with both.
Contra force

At the start, when thinking to use movement connected to contra force, we were thinking about balancing by leaning backwards whilst maintaining grip of each other’s arms. In this case, we should use the same procedure as previously outlined to learn how to do it, but as the positions did not appear visually attractive for us we decided to skip it. After a while, the movement did occasionally appear while we were practicing transition out from pyramid. As this movement does not demand an active movement from me it is technically easy to accomplish. The only things to keep in mind is being straight in the body and trusting in the strength of the actress. As I am not leaning too much in my body, the bellows are in quite the same position as whilst standing.

![Figure 3 Contra force a](image)

![Figure 5 Contra force b](image)
Bridge

At the start, to do a bridge with the accordion I considered using an extra belt to fasten the accordion to my body so that when I enter this position the instrument does not fall in my face. It was needed when I did the movement with both hands, but as I added music to it and started playing left hand, it turned out that I can do the movement without the extra safety belt because my left hand keeps it in a controllable position. Another problem that appeared was the loss of support for the bellows. Playing while the bellows are opening was relatively easy and similar to usual practice, but playing “in”, the right side of accordion resulted in no support for the right arm or leg so it drifts to the right side of the body, too much so for maintaining the movement. In order to keep the movement in performance, it was necessary to play in this position only while I am opening the bellows to maximal amplitude and then go out from the position to continue with the next movement.
3.4 Difficulties

Practicing these movements, I came across several things that I did not realize before. The difficulties of using movements with the accordion in the performance arose from the physicality of instrument (size, weight), complexity of entering and exiting movements (transitions), unifying movements with music and finding the right place for them in the narrative.

Before starting rehearsals, I theorized that the weight of the instrument will cause the most problems, but in turned out that this was not too much of a problem as long as I did not remain in challenging postures (for example the pyramid or balancing) for too long. The hardest movement from the point of weight was the pyramid, because I had to cope with both the weight of instrument and actress. Furthermore, the left-hand side of the instrument loses support from the legs in such movements as bridge and the left hand is forced to carry all the weight.

The size of instrument was not a great problem for me. I can imagine that there would be less problems in the bridge and balancing movement if I was using a smaller and lighter instrument because, for example in bridge, gravity is not holding the instrument in its usual position anymore so the instrument starts moving “up” towards my face. To perform the balancing movement, I raise my legs causing the instrument to press up into my face. If I was using a smaller accordion the distance between accordions upper side and my head in both of these movements would be much bigger and would not cause any discomfort, though the movements are realizable this way as well.

The unpredictable and unsupported movement of the instrument made some movements much more complicated than I thought before. In the bridge, I could play only when I was opening the bellows, because playing “in” instrument had no support point, it slid off my body and frustrated the balance. Playing whilst lying and balancing were the hardest movements technically to perform. The most optimal way of handling the instrument
whilst lying was putting it maximally on chest, keeping left elbow tight to body, playing with minimal amplitude in bellows and pressing right hand keyboards with fingers so that they provide the base for changing the movement in bellows.

**Transitions** of entering and exiting movements turned out to be the clumsiest part to perform as the music usually is suited to something that benefits the narrative not just to hide or illustrate rising up or gradually laying down. To avoid problems of uneven sound I decided to perform some transitions in silence or perform the change of position in a small natural gap between two musical materials. It refers to transitions such as walking-lying down and lying down-sitting on knees. The sound can disappear for a moment or there can be an accent – it depends on how smooth the actress manages to enter these movements.

![Figure 8 Transition (start)](image1)

![Figure 9 Transition (finish)](image2)
In the balancing movement, the transition for rising up was hard to accomplish without causing a disruption to the music.

![Figure 10 Balancing transition (start)](image10)

In the pyramid movement, both while the actress was rising up and climbing down, it was difficult to keep the same air pressure in the bellows and make it smooth. After several practices the actress decided, as it is not possible to do it in smooth way, we should apply expressions of character to it so that the clumsiness feels staged in the movement.

![Figure 11 Pyramid (start)](image11)
Limitations regarding **music** and demands of the **narrative** in performance. A lot of movements are easy to do if the music is loud and chaotic and the mood of the occasion in the performance allows musicians to go beyond the borders with self-expression and attitude. Whereas at moments when atmosphere is calm and peaceful and the music is soft, the movement or change of it should happen smoothly, something that is often much more challenging to perform. At this point of our rehearsal process I understood that the principle that I should always continue playing while making a movement has exceptions according the narrative.
4. Result

The choreographed movements we explored turned out to be suitable for our performance – it was possible for me and Miriam to perform them whilst continuing playing accordion and we could reasonably place them in the plot. People who saw the final performance and run-throughs gave positive feedbacks about our inventions. The movements gave little spiciness and made our show slightly unusual. We managed to maintain the necessary character whilst doing the movements and give each of them a specific mood: the bridge – craziness, balancing – freedom, pyramid – power. It was essential to keep these emotions in mind and show them – practicing it I understood how important for a musician who wants to perform in frames of theatre is to gain acting skills.

I consider that the procedure we created and used to acquire the choreographed movements was useful. The movements we used were based on balance, flexibility and contra force. We used our current physical qualities therefore extra training to gain these skills were not needed. We had to learn how to perform movements and then find the smoothest and effortless method of doing them compelling and with required character. Although we did not do specific exercises doing this kind of movements it was always essential to warm up whole body before rehearsal. Even if it was not hard to perform them the body was under tension and the activities demanded physical effort that is not natural for it – twisting, bending, squeezing.

As something that did not work out as conceived I should mention the silent transitions. Whilst imagining our performance, my idea was to smoothly blend all the movements into the plot, maintaining playing. As it turned out impossible for us, the transitions in and out from the movements now seem to be pointed out, a little too noticeable for the audience. Some transitions would be possible to perform playing tone cluster or making other sound effects, but the plays narrative in places where we decided to use them ask for different kind of musical illustration.
After “The Dress up” performance on 11th May in Svarta Lådan I received a lot of positive feedback from the audience about the performance and the choreographed movements that we used. Some people were particularly surprised that I managed to continue playing whilst doing them. I consider that audiences positive review is a great prove that it was worth using the choreographed movements in the performance.
5. Reflection and summary

5.1 The Outcome

I learned how to add and added choreographed movements with accordion to my performance. It felt interesting widening the repertory of movements I can perform with my instrument and I would like to explore and learn doing other things as well. If I would make a performance with other accordionists I could apply the procedure we used now to teach them. For this show with actress we explored movements that were easy to learn and perform as we used the physical skills that we already had, but I am sure, that there exist a lot of other movements (leaning backwards whilst maintaining grip of each other’s arms (a movement that we did not use in this performance) could be complimented by rotation and provide a nice visual effect; making pyramid changing the positions – the actress as a base and me with accordion climbing up; cartwheel on one hand using smaller accordion) that we could try both using the abilities that we have now and practicing new skills – gaining more power, better balance and awareness of each other and ourselves.

Furthermore, I understood that I will not do the movements I learned if there will not be a good reason for it. A movement that is done apart from the moves that provide music making has to have a purpose and be grounded in a narrative, associated with characters or have another reason for applying it. This realization occurred when I analysed performances of other musicians and actors. In ensemble TUTTI performance movements are added as a decoration and does not create any narrative. In that case, I consider that the movements are not necessary. They make the performance as a show. It looks like doing movements just to differ from other artists, show costumes and gain attention from audience that can be hooked by visual image. Whereas Matthew Sharp does not add any extraordinary movements with cello to his play (although I believe, he could) as it is not needed for the story.

I believe this research gave a new dimension to our performance. As I and my accordion had characters of our own it did not turn out to be actresses’ solo
performance with music accompaniment, but 2 people performance. We experienced a new way of collaboration with the actress as she knew that she could refer to me during performance, feel and use my presence, create eye and physical contact.

After taking a closer look to movements that musicians do onstage with their instruments and trying my hand in doing some and adding them to a performance I understood how big the importance of the theatrical aspect that performance gains this way is. I think it is a great advantage, but adding it to performance the musician should be aware that now the audience is considering one not only as a musician but as an actor as well. This demands musician to step into a certain character, use mimics, be fully present. As I noticed in the Sweeney Todd performance, for actors it is natural to maintain a certain character while they are on stage whether they talk or play music instruments. Ordinary musicians are used to sit with a stone face, stare in sheet music, let their eyesight roam around the room. That is understandable because musicians from their childhood have been thought that the main thing they are doing is making music. And there is no big difference in his/her physical presence on stage. Musician comes on the stage, goes till his chair, bows, sits, plays the piece, stands up, bows again and leaves the stage. And that is it. Basically, in a usual concert situation it even does not seem strange. It is a tradition. And if a musician is just playing it does not seem wrong. The audience has used to exclude the musician from their view and concentrate on the rest of the visible action but if the musician uses a movement that could be considered theatrical, the behaviour that is more associated with actor should be applied.
6. Critical afterthought

6.1 What to do to get better outcome?

I am considering use of a smaller instrument as it would be lighter, smaller in size and give more freedom in movement.

During rehearsals (and afterwards seeing Matthew Sharp’s performance), I understood that there would be more possibilities to add movement to performance if I would use loop station. The continuity of music could be maintained this way and I could move freer, adding just some rhythmical elements or playing melody on top of it. It allows to take off the instrument if needed as well.

Another thing that could help with technical problems would be wireless amplifying. In that way, it would not demand so much force to make the music sound powerful and there would not be any difference if I play facing the audience or if I am turning my back to them. A disadvantage for amplifying would be that every smallest change of the bellows would be noticeable and that is not always needed.

6.2 Possibilities, what’s next?

In future, a performance of group of accordionists or other instrumentalists with choreography that follows a certain narrative could be made. I think this would be a source for unique show with choreography. Besides the music could be written by a composer especially for accordionists-actors.

During the rehearsal process and our performance, I understood that it is frightening for me to act, to communicate with other people and audience apart from music making, but I am inspired to gain acting skills and continue working in this direction. I acknowledged that there are a lot of things that I can do on stage apart from music making and I will be glad to explore them during my upcoming musical interdisciplinary projects.
The most interesting idea that popped up from one of my friends after she saw the performance was that this kind of movements could be used when advertising accordion to children so that they get interested by all the thrilling things one can do whilst playing this instrument.
References

Books


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