



Editorial Introduction

Popular Music Performance

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For those who don't know his story, Charles Bradley was an amateur musician who sporadically performed as a James Brown impersonator under the stage name of Black Velvet, until he signed for Daptone Records in 2002 and recorded his first album of original songs for the Brooklyn-based label in 2011 at the age of 62. The documentary *Charles Bradley: Soul of America* (2012) tells of his increasing worries when, while approaching his first promotional tour, he was requested to give up his James Brown persona and, finally, to perform just as Charles Bradley.

Did impersonating another singer – one who epitomized the popular music performer in many ways – make him less of a performer? Is performance, after all, not a form of pretence, a temporary suspension of reality when one is accorded a new personality? Did the death of the Godfather of funk on Christmas day in 2006, in some way, make it easier for Bradley to give up Brown's guise and to take up his own? Does the body performing on stage, as Charles Bradley, belong to Charles Bradley in the same way as it belongs to its audience or to its producers? What are the implications for authenticity in a singer-songwriter who interprets their own repertoire? Performance, then, is a crucial aspect for both popular music and popular music studies.

This exercise in *captatio benevolentiae* hints at the complexity with which music performance implicates interconnected issues of power, aesthetics, economics and social roles. As Kun (2005) argues, "political and cultural citizenship is configured through the performance of popular music and its reception, via acts of listening, by the people" (30). In the context of composed music, performance is often understood as interpretation, the performance of the work, while in the context of improvised music, performance is the work itself (Shumway 1999: 189-190).

The example of Charles Bradley suggests a renewed central role for live music, which has arisen in conjunction with the decline of record sales during the last ten years and the consequent reorganization of the music industry (Nardi 2012). This is in contrast to Auslander's assertion of the prevalence of mediated over live performance,

which "has become the exception of musical perception and experience, to the extent that our retelling of popular music history often tends to be reduced to familiar and verifiable dates of 'important' recordings" (cited in Inglis, 2006: xvi). In the current state of the music industry, though, it is urgent to place performance back on centre stage.

The critical exploration of performance can greatly enrich the theorization of music signification. The contributions in this special issue investigate performance both from the perspective of musicians and from that of their audience, by stressing the role of values, norms, meanings and aesthetics in performer-audience interactions. For example, broadening the concept of music performance to national identity, Allyson Fiddler shows how Austrian musicians performed a counter-image to the right-wing politics of the Freedom Party of Austria at the turn of the century.

This special issue further explores the relationship between performance and place. In a strict sense, performance is linked to specific places such as venues, the stage, clubs and festivals, while in a broader sense, it is influential in defining artistic districts and antagonistic spaces, establishing associations with scenes, urban or rural areas, regions and nations. In other words, not only does performance happen at a place, but is also of and about a place, and thereby actively shapes it. In this issue, Fabian Holt contributes a perspective on local urban cultural production through a focus on the concert culture of mid-size venues in New York City, highlighting transformations in music creativity and performance in relation to the process of urban gentrification.

Both Shumway (1999) and Frith (1996) show how performance – in terms of both our understanding of it and its productive role – is entangled in technological development and socioeconomic change. In particular, the advent of sound recording, by means of freezing and reproducing apparently unique events, generated a paradigm shift that affected the meaning of performance itself: it became possible to repeat a performance, removed from its original context, and for a musician to become an audience to their own performance. New performing practices have developed since, actualizing recorded music and the instruments for their reproduction through the DJ's intervention (Attias, Gavanas and Rietveld 2013; Fikentscher 2003; Katz 2012). Similarly, record producers and sound engineers are now often recognized as performers in their own right. Since the 1970s, we have seen increasing importance attached to the art of record production and to remix work.

We have also witnessed the production of unique dubplates for the purpose of performance. This is illustrated in Kim Ramstedt's paper regarding Finland's mobile dancehall scene, additionally showing how a localization of globalized Jamaican culture is achieved by the adoption of specific reggae-influenced music and performance styles, and of the technological apparatus of the reggae sound system. As Middleton (1990: 90) argues, "once established, particular musico-technological crystallizations can take on definite connotational or ideological references; and these can be hard to shift". Nonetheless, translation of performing practices into new national contexts can accelerate such shifts, as Ramstedt's paper demonstrates.

Through an ethnographic case study of touring musicians, Daniel McKinna's paper takes the issue of mobile performance in a different direction. Applying Deleuze's syntheses of time he explains the senses of musical authenticity that rock and pop musicians experience during their repeated performances. This article is followed by an ethnography of the Madrid blues scene, in which Josep Pedro develops a theoretical framework for understanding jam sessions through the analysis of interactions between participatory action and presentational setting.

Ramnarine (2009: 221) makes the important point that, by perceiving music as a performing art, we can understand "the experiential dimensions of music, and its immediacy. Experiencing music in performance highlights music as an interactive process" and also stresses the extraordinary character of performing practice, as "it is

often understood as standing apart from everyday life and it involves presentation to an 'audience'. Although Shumway (1999) insists that performance is always a performance for someone, Frith (1996: 203-204), contends that the audience does more than mere listening, and that "'listening' itself is a performance: to understand how musical pleasure, meaning, and evaluation work, we have to understand how, as listeners, we perform the music for ourselves".

While sound recordings might suggest that music – even music performed live – is a material object, performance reminds us to also perceive it as a process. More precisely, as a concept related to a creative and communicative activity, performance encourages a focus on what is immanent, transient and interactive in music practice. This resonates well with Small's (1987, 1998) concept of 'musicking', which transforms music from a noun to a verb and from an object to a process that includes "the totality of a music performance" (Small 1998: 13), stressing a broader framework in which a performing event is embedded. Drawing on these observations, Kun (2005: 25) suggests an approach that takes into account "the entire process and context of a performance that involves everyone and everything that a performance touches, from the roadies to the record execs to the musicians to the audience".

As active listeners, participating audiences are crucial in understanding performance. This issue offers two papers on metal fans who engage in the spectacle of performance, both in terms of their localized embodiment as well as in terms of globalized online music performance. Gabrielle Riches, Brett Lashua and Karl Spracklen dive into the mosh-pit in Leeds, North England, taking an ethnographic approach that places emphasis on embodiment and performativity. They argue that this is a physically demanding, transgressive yet homosocial space where moshing allows participants to overcome the alienating effects of the spectacle. Importantly, as a site of resistance it is itself transgressed by female participants.

Considering a different space in which metal performance is explored and transformed, Web 2.0 has further facilitated interactive practices of production and consumption, accelerating the development of the 'prosumer' as a social actor. Performance is continually actualized through online discussions, confrontations, praise and abuse, while setting the conditions for the evolution of new forms of music-making that are strictly tied to an online mediated environment. In this context, Julian Schaap and Pauwke Berkers investigate online discussions of extreme metal fans, analyzing vocal covers on YouTube in which it seems there is, perhaps surprisingly, no substantial difference in how male and female cover singers are judged by fans, making space for female performers to enter music production in the metal scene via the Internet as space of performance.

In addition to the research articles, this special issue includes our very first PhD abstract, of Julijana Zhabeva Papazova's work on alternative rock in Yugoslavia. The issue also includes nine book reviews that touch on the topics of music venues, urbanism, improvisation, parody, identity politics, technologies, and a sense of place.

We thank the authors, peer reviewers, book reviewers, copy editors, proof readers, and our ever hard-working Editorial Assistant Dr Elina Hytonen-Ng, for their well-considered contributions to this diverse international collection, which we hope will offer fresh perspectives to debates in the field of popular music performance.

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Videography

Charles Bradley: *Soul of America* (2012) Directed by Poull Brien, US.