

PIANIST'S PERFORMING CREATIVITY AS A DISTINCT FORM OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITY

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Summary

The article is devoted to the theoretical understanding of the pianist's performing creativity as a distinct form of artistic activity. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to clarify the creative status of musical performance in contemporary musicology, where the relationship between the musical text, interpretation, and artistic meaning-making remains a subject of scholarly debate. The study argues that performing creativity cannot be regarded merely as a process of reproducing a fixed authorial text. Its specificity lies in the creation of a new artistic reality of sound that emerges through the musician's interpretative activity. The article reveals the interaction between the structural determinacy of a musical work and the freedom of artistic interpretation. It demonstrates that the performer's creative space is formed through intonation, articulation, dynamics, agogics, pedaling, timbral thinking, and sonic dramaturgy. The artistic image is identified as the central outcome of performing creativity, enabling the transition of a musical work from the sphere of textual fixation to that of cultural experience. Musical performance is proposed as a process of meaning-making that unfolds through the interaction of the musical text, the performer's personality, and listeners' perception. It is demonstrated that the creative nature of piano performance is manifested not in the creation of a new musical text but in the formation of new modes of its artistic existence within cultural space.

Key words: musical interpretation, artistic image, musical performance, piano art, meaning-making, musical communication, artistic thinking, musical text.

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1. Introduction

The issues of performing creativity, musical interpretation, and artistic meaning-making remain among the most dynamic areas of contemporary musicological research. Recent studies demonstrate a gradual shift in scholarly attention from viewing a musical work as a static text toward understanding performance as an active process of constructing musical meaning.

Among recent contributions, the study (*J. A. Bergamin, 2024*) occupies an important place. The author examines musical performance and improvisation through the lens of performer agency, awareness, and artistic decision-making processes. Bergamin emphasizes that musicians' creativity is realized not only through spontaneity but also through the continuous re-evaluation of performance strategies.

Issues of interpretative practice and its relationship to the musician's psychological states are explored (*K. Chen, 2023*), who investigates the interaction between musical interpretation and the phenomenon of flow. The findings confirm the importance of interpretative activity as a factor in the performer's artistic self-realization.

A separate line of research is represented by the work of (*S. D'Amario and colleagues, 2023*), devoted to performer coordination in ensemble music-making. The authors

demonstrate that artistic outcomes are shaped not only at the individual level but also through the interaction among participants in the performance act.

The philosophical and pedagogical dimensions of musical activity are examined in the works of (*D. Elliott and M. Silverman, 2015*), where music is understood as a distinctive form of human praxis inseparably connected with creativity, knowledge, and cultural communication.

An important contribution to the understanding of musical perception was made by (*E. Clarke, 2005*), who proposed an ecological approach to musical meaning. His concept makes it possible to consider performance and listening as interconnected processes of constructing artistic experience.

One of the most influential contributions in the field of performance studies remains the monograph by (*N. Cook, 2013*), in which music is conceptualized primarily as a performance event. The author substantiates the need to study performance practice as an independent object of musicological inquiry.

Issues related to the interpretation of artistic content are also addressed in the works of (*L. Kramer, 2011*), who views musical performance as a process of generating cultural meanings and communicative significance.

A significant contribution to the study of the creative nature of performance has been made by (*D. Leech-Wilkinson, 2020*). The scholar emphasizes the historical variability of performance norms and argues for the consideration of performance as an autonomous creative practice rather than a mechanical reproduction of the composer's text.

The formation of individual performance style is examined in the work of (*M. Malakhova, 2024*), where interpretation is regarded as an important factor in the professional development of musicians. The formation of individual performance style is examined in the work of (*M. Malakhova, 2024*), where interpretation is regarded as an important factor in the professional development of musicians. New perspectives on understanding musical performance as a form of knowledge acquisition are proposed by (*M. Reybrouck and A. Schiavio, 2024*). The authors conceptualize performing activity as a process of knowing in which embodied experience, artistic thinking, and cultural practice are integrated.

The specific features of concert performance and the perception of artistic events are investigated by (*O. Urbaniak and H. Mitchell, 2023*), who demonstrate the significance of visual and acoustic components in shaping performance experience.

An analysis of contemporary scholarship indicates the gradual establishment of an approach according to which musical performance is understood not as a secondary reproduction of a text but as an autonomous process of artistic meaning formation. At the same time, despite the substantial body of research devoted to musical interpretation, the problem of the pianist's performing creativity as a distinct form of artistic activity remains insufficiently developed. Most studies focus on the psychological, pedagogical, historical-stylistic, or technological aspects of performance, whereas the issue of artistic meaning-making within performing activity requires further theoretical generalization.

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the pianist's performing creativity as a distinct form of artistic activity whose specificity lies in creating a new artistic realization of a musical work through the process of interpretation.

To achieve this purpose, the following objectives have been identified: to examine the place of performing creativity within the system of musical art; to reveal the relationship between the structural determinacy of the musical text and the freedom of artistic interpretation; to characterize the mechanisms underlying the formation of the artistic image in piano

performance; and to elucidate the performer's role in the processes of meaning-making and musical communication.

The methodological framework of the study is based on cultural, hermeneutic, and systems approaches. The research employs methods of theoretical analysis, interpretative generalization, and conceptual modeling to explore the specific features of performing creativity. The logic of the study proceeds from a general consideration of performing creativity within the system of musical art toward an analysis of the specific mechanisms of artistic meaning-making realized in the process of piano performance.

2. Performing Creativity within the System of Musical Art

Musical creativity belongs to the complex forms of artistic activity in which the creation and functioning of an artwork are ensured through the interaction of various participants in the cultural process. Traditionally, the central position in the understanding of musical creativity has been occupied by compositional activity, since it is directly associated with the creation of the musical text as the structural foundation of a future artistic work. However, the actual existence of music within cultural space is not exhausted by the moment of composition. A musical work attains the fullness of its artistic being only through the processes of performance and reception, which brings into focus the question of the creative status of performing activity.

For a long time, musical performance was viewed primarily as the reproduction of the composer's intention. Such an approach was grounded in the conception of the musical score as the completed form of a work's existence, while the performer's activity was interpreted as a process of realizing, as accurately as possible, the parameters fixed by the composer. Contemporary studies of musical interpretation, however, increasingly demonstrate that there is no relationship of mechanical equivalence between the notated score and sounding performance. The musical text contains the structural foundation of a work, yet it does not exhaustively determine all aspects of its artistic realization (*Cook, 2013*).

Unlike the composer, who creates the musical text, the performer works with an already existing artistic structure. This, however, does not imply the absence of creativity in performance. If creativity is understood not merely as the production of a new material or symbolic object but as the generation of new artistic meanings and new modes of their cultural existence, musical performance acquires the characteristics of an autonomous creative activity. Its outcome is not a new text but a new artistic realization of the musical work that emerges through the process of interpretation.

The distinctive feature of performing creativity lies in its realization under conditions of simultaneous freedom and constraint. On the one hand, the performer is bound by the structure of the musical text, including its pitch organization, rhythmic design, harmonic language, and formal architecture. On the other hand, none of these parameters eliminates the necessity of artistic choice. It is precisely through such choices that the intonational, dynamic, agogic, articulatory, and timbral characteristics of performance are formed, ultimately determining the specific mode of a musical work's existence within cultural space.

Piano performance represents one of the most illustrative examples of this type of creative activity. A high degree of structural determinacy in the score is combined with exceptionally broad possibilities for artistic interpretation. The stability of the musical text does not eliminate the diversity of performance solutions; rather, it creates the conditions for the manifestation of the performer's individuality. For this reason, the same musical work can assume different artistic forms of existence while remaining identical to itself at the level of compositional structure.

Within this context, performing creativity emerges as a distinctive mechanism of the cultural actualization of a musical work. It enables the transition of music from the sphere of textual fixation to that of artistic event, where it becomes an object of direct experience, reflection, and communication. Consequently, the performer functions not merely as an intermediary between composer and listener but also as an active participant in the creation of musical meaning. This circumstance allows performing creativity to be understood as an autonomous form of artistic activity occupying a distinctive place within the system of musical art.

3. The Musical Text and the Space of Interpretation

One of the central issues in the theory of performing creativity concerns the relationship between the structural determinacy of the musical text and the freedom of artistic interpretation. It is within this problem that the specificity of performing activity becomes most evident, since performance takes place not under conditions of complete creative indeterminacy but within the framework of an already established artistic structure. Unlike many other forms of artistic practice, musical performance relies upon a system of symbolic notation that ensures the preservation of a work's fundamental parameters regardless of the time, place, or circumstances of its realization.

The structural determinacy of the musical text is multilayered in nature. Musical notation fixes pitch relationships, metric and rhythmic organization, harmonic logic, textural design, principles of thematic development, and the overall architectonics of form. Together, these components constitute the constructive foundation of a musical work and ensure its integrity as an artistic object. It is precisely through notational fixation that a musical work is able to preserve its identity across extended historical periods.

At first glance, such determinacy may create the impression that the performer's creative space is minimal. If the principal characteristics of a work have already been fixed by the composer, performance may appear to be nothing more than a process of technically reproducing the information encoded in the score. Musical practice, however, provides compelling evidence to the contrary. The history of performance demonstrates the existence of numerous artistically convincing interpretations of the same work which, while preserving its structural identity, differ substantially in the character of their artistic realization.

This situation can be explained by the fact that the musical text does not encompass all dimensions of music's artistic existence. It defines the structure of the work but cannot fully determine the ways in which that work exists in sound. Between the text and its sonic realization there always remains a space of interpretation within which the performer's creative activity unfolds. It is precisely in this space that structural determinacy is combined with the freedom of artistic choice, allowing a musical work to assume diverse forms of cultural existence.

The space of interpretation emerges primarily in those dimensions of the musical process that cannot be fully regulated through musical notation. Even when detailed performance indications are provided by the composer, performers are required to make decisions concerning intonation, articulation, dynamic organization, agogic development, pedaling, and timbral shaping. Each of these decisions directly influences the formation of artistic meaning and determines the manner in which the work is perceived.

This issue acquires particular significance in piano performance. The piano combines a high degree of structural determinacy in the musical material with exceptionally broad possibilities for artistic realization. The stability of the text does not eliminate performance variability; rather, it creates the conditions for the manifestation of the musician's individual artistic

thinking. For this reason, interpretation should not be understood as a deviation from the composer's intention but as a necessary mode of its actualization within a specific cultural context.

From this perspective, interpretation is not an external addition to a musical work but an indispensable condition of its existence. Only through performance does the structure of the text enter the sphere of sounding reality and acquire the status of an artistic event. Consequently, a musical work appears not as a static object but as an open system of semantic possibilities, each of which may be actualized through a particular interpretative reading. This capacity to combine structural stability with semantic variability constitutes one of the fundamental foundations of performing creativity.

4. The Artistic Image in Performance

The creative nature of musical performance is most fully revealed in the process of forming the artistic image. Whereas the musical text provides the structural organization of a work, the artistic image endows that structure with semantic and emotional completeness. It is through the artistic image that music transcends the mere aggregate of acoustic parameters and acquires the capacity to function as a bearer of culturally significant meaning. In this sense, the artistic image constitutes the central outcome of performing creativity, as it unites the composer's intention, the performer's interpretative reading, and the listener's perception into a coherent system of artistic communication.

The formation of the artistic image cannot be reduced to the mechanical realization of the musical score. The text contains a set of structural preconditions for its emergence; however, the artistic image itself comes into being only through performance. For this reason, the same musical work can acquire different artistic realizations depending on the interpretative decisions made by the performer. What changes is not the structure of the work but the manner in which that structure is semantically understood and artistically presented.

One of the most important mechanisms involved in the formation of the artistic image is intonation. In musical art, sound does not function as an isolated acoustic unit but as an element of a semantically organized process. The character of attraction between tones, the degree of internal tension within musical motion, the directionality of development, and the sense of closure or openness in musical thought acquire concrete artistic expression only in the act of performance. It is the organization of intonation that transforms musical notation into a living form of musical discourse.

An equally important role is played by articulation. The ways in which sounds are connected and differentiated determine the character of musical plasticity and directly influence the perception of artistic meaning. Through articulatory decisions, performers shape a distinctive grammar of musical expression, enabling individual elements of the musical texture to acquire the necessary expressiveness and structural clarity.

Dynamic organization constitutes another significant factor in artistic meaning-making. The composer's dynamic markings indicate only the general direction of the musical process. The actual relationship among dynamic levels, the scale of contrasts, the character of climactic development, and the internal hierarchy of sonic layers are formed through the process of musical interpretation. It is through dynamics that musical form acquires emotional persuasiveness and dramaturgical expressivity.

Agogics also performs an important function in shaping artistic meaning. The temporal organization of music cannot be reduced to the mathematically precise reproduction of rhythmic durations. Subtle fluctuations in tempo, slight accelerations or decelerations, make it possible to

reveal the internal logic of musical form, emphasize the semantic focal points of a composition, and create a convincing dramaturgy of musical development. Through agogics, musical time is transformed into an artistically experienced process of the emergence and unfolding of the artistic image.

Pedaling occupies a particularly significant place in piano performance. Its influence extends beyond the acoustic characteristics of sound to the formation of its artistic quality. Different approaches to pedaling affect the nature of resonance, the transparency of texture, the interaction of registers, and the overall spatial organization of the sonic environment. As a result, pedaling becomes an important means of creating an individual sonic conception of a musical work.

All of these components converge in the processes of timbral thinking and sonic dramaturgy. Despite the relative stability of the instrument's construction, the piano offers performers extensive possibilities for shaping diverse sound qualities. Timbral modeling, the organization of sonic layers, and the construction of systems of tension and resolution create the conditions necessary for the emergence of a coherent artistic image that ultimately determines the character of the listener's perception of the musical work.

Thus, the artistic image emerges as the integrative outcome of performing creativity. It is within the artistic image that all interpretative decisions are unified, enabling the transition of a musical work from the sphere of textual fixation to that of lived cultural experience. Through the formation of the artistic image, performers do not merely reproduce a musical text; they reveal new possibilities for its semantic existence, transforming performance into an autonomous creative act.

5. Interpretation as a Process of Meaning-Making

The understanding of performing creativity is impossible without addressing the phenomenon of musical interpretation. Interpretation provides the transition from the structural organization of the musical text to its artistic existence in sound. It is not an external addition to a musical work but a necessary form of its actualization. Through interpretation, the musical text acquires a concrete cultural embodiment, while the semantic possibilities embedded within it receive the conditions necessary for their realization.

Within the musicological tradition, interpretation has often been understood as a process of revealing the composer's intention. This understanding retains its significance, since performing activity indeed presupposes an effort to comprehend the internal logic of a musical work. At the same time, the artistic meaning of music cannot be fully reduced to the reconstruction of original authorial intentions. Once created, a musical work acquires an independent cultural existence, enters into interaction with different historical contexts, and opens itself to multiple modes of interpretation (*Cook, 2013*).

For this reason, interpretative plurality should be regarded not as an accidental phenomenon but as an inherent property of musical art. The stability of the musical text does not prevent the existence of numerous artistically convincing performance versions. Each of them actualizes particular dimensions of a work's content, illuminates specific semantic relationships, and proposes its own mode of organizing artistic experience. Herein lies one of the most important features of performing creativity: it does not create a new work, but it continually creates new forms of that work's cultural existence.

A particularly important role in this process is played by the performer's personality. This does not imply arbitrary self-expression or the imposition of personal preferences upon a

work. Rather, it refers to the participation of individual artistic experience in the understanding of musical material. Worldview orientations, aesthetic convictions, characteristics of musical thinking, professional experience, and systems of artistic values shape the perspective through which musicians engage with a work. It is for this reason that different performers are capable of revealing different dimensions of meaning within the same composition.

The process of meaning-making does not end with the performer's activity. Listener perception constitutes an equally important component of the artistic existence of music. A musical work realizes its communicative potential only when it becomes an object of experience and reflection. The listener is not a passive recipient of a completed message. Rather, listeners relate what they hear to their own life experiences, cultural backgrounds, associative frameworks, and individual modes of understanding art. As a result, the artistic image continues to unfold beyond the immediate act of performance.

A musical work may therefore be understood as a system of interaction among three principal components: the text, the performer, and the listener. The musical text provides the structural foundation of the artistic process. The performer undertakes its interpretation and artistic actualization. The listener incorporates the results of this activity into the sphere of personal experience and cultural understanding. A fully realized artistic reality emerges only at the intersection of these dimensions.

Such an approach makes it possible to regard performing creativity as a specific form of meaning-making. Its object is neither a set of technical actions nor a process of mechanically reproducing a notated score, but rather the creation of conditions for the artistic existence of musical meaning. It is through interpretation that a musical work gains the capacity to enter cultural space anew on each occasion, preserving its structural identity while simultaneously opening new semantic perspectives. In this way, musical performance emerges as an autonomous form of artistic activity whose central function is the creative actualization of the semantic potential of a musical work.

6. Conclusions

The conducted study makes it possible to consider the pianist's performing creativity as an autonomous form of artistic activity occupying a distinctive position within the system of musical art. Its specificity lies in the fact that the creation of something new occurs not through the production of a new musical text but through the formation of a new artistic realization of an already existing work. In this respect, musical performance should be understood not as a secondary form of musical activity but as a distinctive mode of creatively engaging with and actualizing musical meaning.

The study has demonstrated that the creative nature of performing activity is directly related to the relationship between the structural determinacy of the musical text and the freedom of artistic interpretation. Musical notation preserves the constructive integrity of a work, yet it cannot fully regulate all forms of its sonic existence. It is within the space of interpretation that the possibility of creative choice emerges, determining the specific mode of artistic realization of musical material.

The findings confirm that the artistic image constitutes the central outcome of performing creativity. Its formation occurs through a system of interpretative decisions involving intonation, articulation, dynamics, agogics, pedaling, timbral modeling, and sonic dramaturgy. It is the artistic image that enables the transition of a musical work from the sphere of textual fixation to that of lived cultural experience.

The study further substantiates that interpretation is not an auxiliary element of performance practice but the principal mechanism of artistic meaning-making. Through interpretation, the semantic potential of a musical work is actualized, making possible the existence of numerous artistically convincing readings of the same text. Interpretative plurality thus emerges as a natural manifestation of the inexhaustibility of musical meaning and of the performer's active role in its cultural functioning.

It has also been established that the artistic reality of a musical work is formed through the interaction of three interrelated components: the text, the performer, and the listener. This interaction ensures the incorporation of music into the process of cultural communication and defines the distinctive status of performing creativity as a form of artistic mediation between the composer's intention and the cultural experience of society.

Prospects for further research are associated with the development of theoretical foundations for performing creativity as an independent field of contemporary musicology, the deeper investigation of mechanisms of artistic meaning-making in performance practice, and the analysis of the specific features of creative interpretation across different forms of musical performance art.

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