# Notation and/as Performance: A Post-virtual Account

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## Abstract

This presentation is a live adaptation of a book chapter entitled “Three Performances: A Virtual (Musical) Improvisation” (Maschat and Williams 2016). That text interweaves a verbal/graphic score (the “transcription” of a recorded musical improvisation by the authors) and an analysis of same. Drawing on theories of reader-response criticism (Iser 1972) and performativity (Fischer-Lichte 2012), we reflexively argue that “liveness” (Auslander 2008) is present in the act of reading the score even after the initial event has passed, and even before it is performed out loud. Reading here is a virtual improvisation with the score/text, in the reader’s imagination.

At the conference, we will read aloud an adapted version of “Three Performances”, incorporating fragments of the “original” audio recording, images of the score, and projected written text. This post-virtual performance (i.e. now in physical and social space) is meant both to extend and recontextualize the chapter’s central claim that notation, beyond prescribing and preserving musical works for instrumental realization, can constitute a performance in its own right.

In this way we link two topics proposed by the conference – notation and performance, and notation and knowledge. Specifically, we address the following questions:

* How might notation, performance, and improvisation be entangled rather than opposed?
* What does it mean to “read” music and how is musical literacy socially and culturally conditioned?

In response to the first question, we provide a concrete example and offer principles that can be generalized to other cases of experimental music. We also look forward to opening up the second question with conference attendees in ways that go beyond what can be accomplished in written media alone.

Stereo audio playback equipment and a beamer with VGA input are required.

## References

Auslander, Philip. 2008. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. 2012. “Literatur als Akt—Lesen als Akt: Zur Performativität von Texten”. In *Performativität: Eine Einführung*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Iser, Wolfgang. 1972. “The Phenomenology of Reading: A Phenomenological Approach.” *New Literary History* 3 (2): 279-299.

Maschat, Mathias and Christopher Williams. 2016. “Three Performances: A Virtual (Musical) Improvisation”. In *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance: Interdisciplinary Perspectives,* edited by Matthew Reason and Anja Mølle Lindelof, 243-253. New York: Routledge.