

## 4.9 Conclusion

I was interested in the working methodology of the curator (which was: the artist is the work. Invite them and they will make/or not make) and, within this, the working process of the artists... Perhaps you have some idea about what is possible from each artist – but this is not a stable ground. I was not interested in making what is known or expected or predictable. (Tiravanija 1995, 91)

The continuation of a history of New Music informed the approaches to leadership of both Henze and Ruzicka after him, in their respective ways. Daniel Ott and Manos Tsangaris, while still doing the same, have decided that adherence to this one specific tradition of music making would be a missed opportunity to explore the wealth of ways that music theatre can take place. Their approach has been one that emphasizes a diversity, a heterogeneity, of practices and formats of music theatre, seemingly understanding New Music as a tradition that is, as is apparent in its very name, something open and attempting to foster unforeseeable change.

Both of their artistic practices are concerned with the *composition* of the event of performance. They both coordinate many different performers in order to realize the specific situations that they have in mind. At the biennale, this concern with the composition of the event takes is directed at the *conception* and planning of the biennale. This is seen in how they manage the platforms, as well as their work commissioning other artists outside of this system to appear at the biennale, and taking care that these all work together in a coherent whole across a variety of venues during the festival week, etc.

What is happening here is a transfer of their *creative and artistic skills*, that used to be focused on composing immersive music theatre events to the *management* of the festival. This intermingling of creativity and festival management is an extension of their already-established artistic practices composing immersive events. What is new is that these skills are now no longer only focused on the event, but extend to also attempt to manage the financial, managerial, and administrative aspects of realizing the event.

Rather than separate out artistic and organizational practices, as was the case with the two former directors, the creation and running of the biennale platforms means that the artistic practices of DOMTS are directly tied to the success of the biennale. They have to manage relationships, give advice, and nurture productions until they are ready to be shown, a deeply affective, creative task, now coupled with an entirely new added dimension of being in charge of all these works' contextualization, the management structures that will help realize them, the funding structures that will pay them, and the co-productions that will help these artists fund their next project.

This is the juncture where this form of artistic production can be labeled as a curatorial practice, in that, as has been shown, a curatorial practice is one that works across a diverse set of stakeholders in order to establish both an artistic message and its specific contextualization, aspiring to create a coherent public event that aspires to take a position on contemporary reality.<sup>40</sup>

The integration of administrative responsibilities, and the expansion of the composer's task to include not just "non-musical material" but the management of the entirety of stakeholders contributing to the performance, is additionally significant because it is recursively also something that each individual project needs to navigate as well. While heterogeneous, biennale commissions share in common their need to reckon with the specificity of their own mediation.

This focus of artistic production on mediation can itself in turn be understood by looking at the changed societal status of immaterial labour (for which the performative arts are the poster child) under the regime of cognitive capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The project of artistic critique having become integrated as a cornerstone of the new economy, what disappears is the self-evidency of its message. As Chiapello argues, the concept of critique is still valid (understood in the sense of not wanting to be governed "like that," after Foucault), but with the additional caveat added that artistic practice must now also navigate the pitfalls of being instrumentalized by the entertainment industry (see Chiapello 2012, 51; also see section 2.4.3). This "navigating pitfalls" is nothing more than the need for artistic practice to also be acutely aware of the specific realities of its mediation, and its deployment within a given constellation of interests and stakeholders.

Thinking in these terms about both the biennale's organization by DOMTS, as well as the productions that it is developing, makes it possible to better understand the consequences of the biennale moving in its current direction. While what DOMTS have done is open up music theatre practice to the ambivalences between contribution to the experience economy and revitalizing a critical project in musical practice, this has been necessary because it allows for the *potential* for music theatre works to insist on their criticality at all. This means that in the best cases, there remains proximity to the cultural industry, but also a marked differentiation through the insistence on the production of genuinely critical, counter-hegemonic knowledge. Whether this occurs does not follow a general rule, except for that it needs to happen on a case by case basis, in coordination with the stakeholders that one is working with.

DOMTS are reacting to the difficulty with which New Music is currently able to respond to important political, social, technological changes in society. This is clear at the latest when they claim in the opening statement to their 2018 biennale that finding music theatre works that deal with the issue of privacy would have

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40 See here also Raqs Media Collective's definition of curatorial responsibility in section 2.5.2.

to be done with a magnifying glass (Münchener Biennale et al. 2018, 9). They are acting against that situation, and in that way are producing a critical practice that seems to be, at least partially, successfully navigating the situation in order to do this. Despite their occasional shortcomings, the productions at the biennale have achieved a level of ingenuity that is infusing the space with a newfound energy.

This energy is the result of DOMTS' curatorial practice fostering musical performances that have regained the possibility for artistic critique by being able to determine their own mediation. The fact that they are working like this is in turn a development of their respective compositional practices that have shifted to focus on composing infrastructures and interpersonal relations in the name of increased societal relevance of musical practice.