

Bach points and virtuosity: A performer's dialogic analysis of Betsy Jolas' *Ô Bach!*

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ABSTRACT: Dialogic music analysis, deriving from critical and cultural study of music, provides a flexible framework for the integration of the 'outside' (practice-related experiences) with the 'inside' (the musical work itself). Dialogic music analysis reveals the performer's role as a multidimensional activity. Nevertheless, it is not always possible or purposeful to clearly distinguish the insights drawn from the diverse dimensions of score reading, listening to, and kinaesthetic engagement with the music as in performing. In this article, I conduct a performer's dialogic analysis of Betsy Jolas' (b. 1926) piano piece entitled *Ô Bach!*, which was commissioned for the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud competition in 2007. Its technical and musical demands place it in the genre of virtuosic music, which is considered not only through its 'traditional' characteristics, but also in terms of the notion of 'virtuosity of sonority'. The inclusion of the introductory figures of J. S. Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564, for the organ in *Ô Bach!*, forming the constructive nucleus of the piece, places it also within the 'homage-genre' specific to Jolas' music – an umbrella concept for the different strategies the composer employs to refer to earlier music in different ways. At first sight, these two genres show contradictory tendencies in the performance of *Ô Bach!*, but performance also becomes a tool for their assimilation. Methodologically, personal experiences emerging from my engagement with the music are regarded as a tool for analysis; they are also integral parts of the analytical discourse surrounding the piece. Descriptions of practice strategies and the experiences of particular performances occasionally emerge as surprisingly similar to traditional approaches in analysis and performance, that is, as analysis prior to a performance and analysis of specific performances.

KEY WORDS: artistic research, Betsy Jolas, dialogic music analysis, performer's analysis, virtuosity

This study concerns the analysis and performance of a rarely performed contemporary piece of music, namely Betsy Jolas' (b. 1926) *Ô Bach!* (2007) for solo piano, from the perspective of an artist researcher.¹ My understanding of this piece emerged and was constructed through a complex network consisting of the interpretation of the signs on the score, accumulation of physical experience at the keyboard, and live performance experiences. This approach displays parallels to auto-ethnography, the leading principle of which is that the individual's perspective on particular cases is a reflection of a shared culture and understanding. Ellis and Bochner (2000) speak about auto-ethnographers, who, "as they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward [between personal experiences and cultural aspects], distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred" (p. 739). In this article, the 'zooming' lies between personal, rather than shared, experiences of a musical work: an auto-ethnographic method related to the performer's analysis and artistic research.

Dialogic music analysis does not comprise a uniform method, but rather represents an attitude that enables flexible, interdisciplinary, multi-methodological and multi-theoretical approaches to music. The concept of dialogism is adapted from Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), whose thoughts on literary and the social function of language (e.g. Bakhtin 1990) have influenced numerous disciplines. As Korsyn (1999) observes, Bakhtin made a distinction between 'sentence' (a unit of language) and 'utterance' (a unit of speech communication), the latter presupposing an active listener and not being repeatable. According to Bakhtin, linguistics has erred in taking the sentence as a model for speech acts. Grammatical analysis cannot tell us about relationships between utterances. The character of language is dialogic, that is, is characterised by dialogue, and thus provides a model for understanding literature, particularly the novel as a literary genre. In the novel, heteroglossia – the 'voices' of several speakers – can be identified. Heteroglossia does not refer to national languages or dialects, but rather to "social stratification of languages" (Korsyn, 1999, p. 61). Korsyn adapts the notion of heteroglossia to develop identification and acceptance of 'heterogeneity' in works of art. Primarily, Korsyn addresses the ontology of music, and advocates a general epistemological rethinking in music study, through examples from the history of music and literature. He draws parallels between the 'autonomous' works of analysis, and the 'continuous' narratives of history. The idea of heterogeneity can help us to create novel analytical models in music.

According to Korsyn (1999), Bakhtin's critique of linguistics "has profound implications for [...] music analysis [which] has often looked to linguistics as a privileged model" (pp. 58-59). Instead of focusing on musical grammar and logic, and privileging continuity and unity over discontinuity, Korsyn claims that "we would need to rethink both the activity and the objects of analysis, by analysing a relational field [consisting of musical utterances as wholes] rather than a discrete work" (p. 65). However, according to Korsyn, understanding pieces as relational events – something 'outside' the text is regarded as part of the text – renders the common metaphors of 'inside' and 'outside' (i.e. musical works and their surroundings) problematic for research, which, traditionally, thrives on a separation of 'text' and 'context', the 'inside' explored by analysts and the 'outside' by historians.

¹ Perhaps based on the typical classical concert repertoire, music since 1945 is often understood as contemporary, even though the definitions of 'contemporary music' vary.

Korsyn provides neither examples of dialogic analysis nor practical guidelines, but rather the basic ideas for future models.² In the end, he does not reject the notion of unity: “new [analytical] models will allow both unity and heterogeneity” (Korsyn, 1999, p. 60), and “the idea of heterogeneity does not mean that the subjective feeling of unity in music is disregarded” (ibid., p. 64).

In outlining her premises for a dialogic music analysis, the ethnomusicologist Pirkko Moisala (2003) leans heavily on Korsyn’s ontological argument.³ Following Korsyn’s discussion of the consequences of the separation of text and context, Moisala advocates an assimilation of the interests of the work-oriented study of Western art music, and those of ethnomusicological and cultural approaches, which traditionally focus on context. “It is argued that ‘music’ or ‘a musical work’ is not located in *one* place, for instance in the score, in the intentions of the composer or in the performance, but in a network consisting of various meanings attached to them by these and other ‘authors’ of the work.”⁴ According to Moisala, the relationship between these ‘authors’, as well as the understanding of the ‘musical work’ should be dialogic.⁵ Such a dialogic understanding of musical works is different from an understanding that arises from more traditional ‘contextualizations’ of them (Moisala, 2003, p. 19): in contextualization, the analyst may justify the results of the analysis by constructing cultural, historical and contextual frameworks, or using interviews with composers. These frameworks are nevertheless treated as complementary to the analysis itself, not integral parts of it. A dialogic analysis, on the other hand, does not make a sharp distinction between ‘text’ and ‘context’ – between ‘musical work’ and its ‘surroundings’. However, the identity of a single work remains: it is not assimilated into other works. As a consequence, the *concept* of the musical work is applied, even though its character differs from the imaginary musical work – the stable, autonomous and unique object (Goehr, 1992; Talbot, 2000). Moisala also argues that dialogic music analysis questions the value of investigating “the abstract properties of music, its structure and logic” (p. 22). As a musician, for whom music constitutes performable entities (or wholes) the structure and logic of which I have to understand, I find it difficult to completely reject the notions of structure and logic. Speaking about ‘musical works’ is rarely a practical problem for musicians, since the concept of musical work is an object of the musician’s artwork, and part of the living practices in Western art music. Moisala’s approach to dialogic music analysis also draws on her background as a fieldwork ethnomusicologist, and consequently, as integral parts of her analyses, Moisala encourages consideration of real discussions that take place during the processes of music making and

² For practical examples, Korsyn refers to an earlier article (1991), in which he bases his discussion of musical works as relational events on the literary critic Harold Bloom’s ideas, without mentioning Bakhtin. See also Korsyn’s review article on Brahms research (Korsyn, 1993).

³ There are two versions of Moisala’s article in different languages (2001; 2003). Here, I refer to the Swedish version (Moisala, 2003). I translated the quotations, with the exception of the quotation from the abstract in English (Moisala, 2003, p. 26).

⁴ According to the broad view, we can understand all agents involved in the interpretation of a piece, such as analysts and critics, as authors.

⁵ Schmalfeldt’s (1985) article forms an early attempt at the dialogic approach; however, genuine communication between Performer and Analyst, as well as the recognition of the roots and the influence of the Performer’s knowledge, are lacking. A contrasting example based on dialogues between four individuals is provided in the study by Clarke, Cook, Harrison and Thomas (2005).

interpretation. As examples, she mentions two related articles by Taru Leppänen (1996; 1998), who considers discussions between composer and performer in the context of Usko Meriläinen's *Suvisoitto* (Summer play) for flute and grasshoppers. Moisala advocates dialogic music analysis as a flexible method: the final shape that a dialogic music analysis assumes is not necessarily defined prior to the analytical undertaking, and may be discovered during the course of the analysis.

In this study, which is based on my own experiences as a musician, I find it important not only to notice that music making becomes an analytical tool, but also to *consider the process of discovery* to some extent. Consequently, I first discuss my earlier experiences of Jolas' music, including interviews with musicians, as these initial findings are as significant as the insights emerging from the completed process. The analytical discussion exceeds the borders of a single musical work.

According to the dialogic attitude, which resembles the principles of intertextual thought, a work can form dialogic relationships with other musical works.⁶ Julia Kristeva (1967), who coined the concept of intertextuality in literary criticism, emphasized that the identification of 'intertexts' not only concerns relationships between texts, but also the whole interpretative process. Hatten (1985) and Klein (2005) have provided valuable viewpoints with regard to the application of intertextual approaches to the study of music. According to Hatten, both author and reader are qualified interpreters of texts and intertexts. The ways in which intertexts are identified by the musician as a 'reader', and thereby music making as an interpretative tool, requires further research.⁷ As I suggest below, descriptions of particular practice contexts can provide insights into the interrelatedness of the performance of a piece of music and the performer's interpretation of potential or actual references to other pieces within it (see Wahlfors, 2013).

In this article, I refer to intertextuality as it relates to Jolas' citations of other composers' music in the piano pieces *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)* and *Ô Bach!*, treating these as dimensions of dialogic music analysis. Jolas' 'discreet homages' (*hommages discrètes*) can be understood through the more casual term 'allusion', which includes both 'accidental' (originating in the reader) and 'intentional' (originating in the author) interpretations. The title *Ô Bach!* is a literal 'text', which, in referring to a particular composer, is inseparably connected to his music. In this article, I refer to the allusions, both textual and musical,⁸ as *Bach points*.⁹

Amidst the growing literature on performer-centred and artistic research in music, performers' analyses are becoming more numerous and influential. 'Performer's analysis'¹⁰

⁶ Lawrence Kramer's (1990) 'hermeneutic window' also draws parallels with intertextual thought, even though he investigates similar constructive and expressive elements between different art forms.

⁷ Klein (2005) touches briefly on his pianistic background in adherence to a study on intertexts in music: "after thirty-five years of playing the piano, I hear its repertoire all too readily when contemplating music: it is a circular memory that comes to me, not what I summon up" (p. 21).

⁸ Hovi (2013) draws parallels between musical notation and verbal text, observing that both are scripted.

⁹ The Swedish expression for Bach points is *Bach-punkter* (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016). 'Points' also refers to the notion that these ideas can be found at particular *points* in the score.

¹⁰ There is some ambiguity in the use of this terminology. Rink (2015) speaks about "performance analysis" (p. 127) as a linguistically awkward umbrella concept. The terminology in different languages provides slightly different interpretative spans. In Swedish, there is no synonym for 'performer', which requires a replacement,

does not constitute a single, unambiguous analytical approach, but rather an umbrella concept that defines the knowledge background of the analyst rather than the result or method, and suggests live performance, rather than the score, as the epistemological authority. In this article, ‘performer’s analysis’ refers to analyses *by* performers.¹¹

The term ‘performer’s analysis’ is based on the artistic identity of the analyst and enables argumentation through the individual perspective of the artist and her relationship to the object of analysis, rather than engaging in a discourse that anonymously refers to ‘a performance’.¹² At the same time, however, it is methodologically ambiguous in the sense that it can take various forms and strategies. In principle, the kind of parameters that are applicable is not restricted, even though there is a tendency to favour ‘performable’ parameters in contrast to ‘traditional’ ones (Cervino, 2012; Leong & Korevaar, 2005). In addition, the roles of practice experiences, as well as the position of the performer with respect to the writing strategies, display great variation (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012a). Are the experiences explicitly narrated from the performer-analyst’s own perspective (Doğantan-Dack, 2015a), or is the (actual or imagined) performance (of an anonymous performer) a background, a point of departure for the analytical insights?¹³ Within this diversity, however, we can identify a few common threads in performers’ analyses: analysis *through* performance rather than fundamentally *for* preparing or improving a performance; analysis as a dynamic and temporal process; the production of alternative analytical parameters and vocabularies (Rink, 2002),¹⁴ and bodily aspects of music (Doğantan-Dack, 2015a; Le Guin, 2006; Riikonen, 2003; Riikonen, 2004). The notion of traditional ‘score-based’ analysis (e.g. Doğantan-Dack, 2015a, p. 6), which is sometimes used to contrast with ‘performance-based’ analysis’, may be better termed ‘non-performance-based’ analysis. As Rink (2015) remarks, the performer’s perspective is score-based in particular ways.¹⁵ Välimäki (2002) observes that the score has significance in the cultural practices of Western art music. Kanno (2012) discusses learning practices, which touch on both physical and cultural dimensions: “much of the learning [of trained musicians within Western art music] takes place within the triangle of musician, instrument and score; however, despite the ambition to learn the notes” (p. 171), the approach to the notation offers room for creativity. Riikonen (2005, p. 80), who interviews

such as *exekutör* (executant). In my earlier study (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016) I applied *musikerns analys* (musician’s analysis). ‘Musiker’ (musician) is intended for music practitioners only, not theorists or musicologists.

¹¹ Studies of performances themselves, however, have also successfully considered performance-oriented approaches and analytical parameters (Cook, 2003; Cook, 2013; Mäkelä, 1989; Samson, 2003; Chaffin et al., 2002).

¹² Rink’s (2002, p. 42) ‘performer’s analysis’ presents an individual’s perspective; the performer, however, remains anonymous. In contrast, in Cervino’s (2012) analysis, the author explicitly names himself as the performer. Lettberg (2008) invokes her own expertise as a pianist in connection with the analysis of recordings of other pianists.

¹³ The consideration of performances themselves as individual performers’ analyses (e.g. Barolsky, 2007), while not further developed in this study, is an interesting topic that in a broader perspective addresses the nature of analysis.

¹⁴ Rink (2002) suggests *shape* instead of *structure*; Leong and Korevaar (2005) present *left-handedness* as a true characteristic of Ravel’s concerto for the left hand; Cervino (2012) discusses harmony via the concept of *chord field*, by which he refers to chords as played entities.

¹⁵ On the role of the notation for performers, see also Heaton (2012) and Kanno (2007).

flautists on the practice experience of Kaija Saariaho's music, emphasizes the bodily dimension:¹⁶ "For musicians, the score is not a neutral text, it always includes [. . .] a connection to the musician's body". Riikonen (2005) observes that personal practice notes are significant for performers, since they reflect the interpretation at particular moments. For example, an interviewee "thought that her corporeality as a flautist is obviously visible and 'audible' in her own notes" (p. 81). Thus, for a musician, a score consists of "imperative symbols" (Ingarden, 1986; 1989), signs that trigger action, depending on her experience as a performer. To me, reading scores of piano and harpsichord music comes with associations of physical action, since the instrument has shaped the connection between eye and movement (see Doğantan-Dack, 2015a, p. 173). Graphs, tables or 'renotations' (Rink, 2002; 2015), which are common and valuable tools in analytical representations, cannot completely replace the visual appearance of the score, particularly if the music is not well-known.¹⁷

The study presented in this article, which is based on the author's own practice, also contributes to artistic research, which represents a paradigm of growing influence.¹⁸ However, due to the multiplicity of methods and objectives it involves, as well as the contrasting notions it entails regarding disciplinary prospects and the relationship between art and science, it remains ambiguous as a frame of reference (Jullander, 2007; Korhonen-Björkman, 2010; Korhonen-Björkman, 2012b).¹⁹ The identity of the artist and her position within an artistic community and the society at large (Korhonen-Björkman, 2010)²⁰ are central to artistic research, which has not only epistemological but also institutional and political significance (Cook, 2015; Jullander, 2007). In artistic research, individual experience and artistic activity are regarded as valid sources of knowledge that can modify our understanding of traditional disciplines, such as music analysis.

Despite the increasing recognition of artistic activity as a source of knowledge, music-making is still approached through preconceptions and it is often not regarded as a valid methodological tool "that could give rise to novel musical insights and signification" (Doğantan-Dack, 2015a, p. 171). In particular, the term 'analysis', especially when not qualified as 'performer's' analysis, is still used with caution in connection with studies that consider artistic activity as the main source of knowledge. The integration of "embodied pianistic expertise into analytical thought" (ibid., p. 196) is not a straightforward business.

¹⁶ Translations from the original by the author.

¹⁷ The study of Clarke et al. (2005) provides several graphs and other visual representations of the form, but lacks excerpts from the score, unlike Cook's (2005) article, which refers to the same project.

¹⁸ The concept of 'artistic research' is problematic, particularly when it is used in contrast to 'scholarly research' or 'scientific research'; there is so far no common understanding of 'the artistic method' (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016, p. 20; Korhonen-Björkman, 2010). Parallel terms are applied, such as 'artistic practice as research in music' (Doğantan-Dack, 2015b), 'practice-based research', 'practice-led research', 'research in and through the arts', or 'performance as research' (see also Jullander, 2007; Kurkela, 2004). Despite the linguistic and epistemological problems and the variety of terms in use at different institutions, 'artistic research' is breaking through also as a term. I owe thanks to Professor Mieko Kanno for interesting viewpoints on the terminology.

¹⁹ Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén (2005), as well as Coessens, Crispin and Douglas (2009), argue for common interests for different art forms. Apart from these, theories and methods focussing on particular art forms have recently been created (for music, see e.g. Doğantan-Dack, 2015b).

²⁰ Emphasis is put on the artist's artwork, her development as an artist, and the visibility of her perspective: see, for example, Hannula et al. (2005); Coessens et al. (2009).

And while the understanding of the nature of music analysis has come to include elements of subjectivity and interpretation (e.g. Agawu, 2004; Burstein, 2011),²¹ performance-based analyses are often expected to distinguish between insights derived from ‘performance itself’ and those that can be reached through score-reading. For instance, Cervino (2012) presents a performance-based analytical solution as a practical alternative to a score-based one; Clarke, Cook, Harrison and Thomas (2005) represent a relatively traditional approach through shifting the perspectives of two analysts, composer and musician with respect to a particular piece. Compared to Schmalfeldt’s (1985) approach, the different ‘voices’ these studies bring into analysis belong to real people and are not constructed personae; in addition, the purpose is to treat the voices equally (despite the fact that the pianist’s contribution is given less space in the text). Doğantan-Dack (2015a) compares ‘normative’ and ‘deviant’ approaches to cantabile playing, not treating the score *per se* as a norm; normative playing, however, is more directly connected to an uncomplicated score reading than the novel approach. One reason for regarding the score-reader’s and performer’s positions differently is that the general understanding of the nature of a performer’s experience and the principles of music analysis do not coincide: *a performer’s experience* is based on the co-evolving activities of score-reading and playing, which enable a holistic, mutable, and locally-shaped perspective of a piece of music, while *analysis* sorts out particular parameters for consideration, presupposes generalizability, and an organized presentation with clear division between method and results, between analyst and the object of analysis. Another problem concerns analytical outputs, which in the case of a performer’s analysis sometimes take atypical forms and expressions that do not fit into the traditions of the discipline: descriptions of practice experiences and observations of a pedagogical nature are commonly not regarded as *independently* analytical, but rather as support for or contrast to the “analysis itself” (Rink, 2002, p. 37), or providing ‘a performer’s perspective’ as an alternative to the ‘analysis itself’, or just a “pianistic shoptalk” (Schmalfeldt, 2005).²² In contrast, according to the perspective that I advocate in this article, practising and performance experiences are fully integrated in the analytical ‘results’, or the analysis of the ‘work itself’: the experiences are regarded both as *tool and method* for analysis, and as *integral parts* of the analysis. A similar holistic approach concerns the performer’s role: through the dialogic attitude, this role can be understood as multidimensional, including the physicality (kinaesthetic aspects) of performance, score reading and listening. In my approach to Jolas’ *Ô Bach!*, score-based and performance-based analytical insights – rather than constituting separate, contrasting perspectives, which can interact – are actually assimilated into each other (*cf.* Schmalfeldt, 1985).²³ This approach is based on an understanding of music analysis as a conscious, verbally mediated act, which is shaped by the particular circumstances of particular practising sessions

²¹ On the epistemological position of music analysis within music studies, see, for example, Samson (1999). The position of music theory has, interestingly, strong positions in both artistic and academic research environments (see also Cook 2015).

²² Descriptions of individual experiences are also applicable in phenomenological approaches to music (e.g. Järviö, 2011). Phenomenology, which is occasionally used without reference to any particular philosophy, is one of a number of pioneer fields that have explicitly questioned objectivity in music analysis (Ferrara, 1984).

²³ A common foundation for both performance-based and score-based insights is musical expertise, the value of which for the ‘true’ understanding of music is occasionally questioned in cultural and critical music study (e.g. Tagg, 2009).

and particular performance occasions, including the intuitive performance decisions these involve. It addresses areas such as structure (here expressed as ‘construction’), genre and notation, but according to the principles of dialogic music analysis, rather than to a model or parameters that are defined beforehand (*cf.* Rink, 2004).²⁴

As described above, dialogic music analysis considers dialogic relationships between the ‘authors’ (composer, performers, listeners, commentators) of a work. In addition, it encourages consideration of verbal dialogues between these agents, and documented self-dialogues (e.g. as in auto-ethnography). While composer-performer collaboration during the process of practising *Ô Bach!* is not directly investigated in this study (*cf.* Clarke et al., 2005; Virtanen, 2007), an indirect ‘composer’s voice’ is present throughout my interviews with the harpsichordist Petteri Pitko (2008) and the cellist Juho Laitinen (2008), who practised Jolas’ solo pieces for the harpsichord and cello respectively, taking part as collaborating musicians in Jolas’ masterclasses for young composers. The aim of the interviews, however, is not primarily to reach the composer’s intentions, but rather to connect my approach to *Ô Bach!* with real discussions surrounding a musical work (Leppänen, 1996; 1998; Moisala, 2003). In this case, apart from having a particular piece of music as a topic, different musicians’ experiences of Jolas’s music converged. At the time of the interviews (in 2008), I had practised two pieces by Jolas: *Signets (Homage à Ravel)* and *Pièce pour* (1997), but the discussions influenced my future interpretation of other pieces by Jolas. With respect to *Ô Bach!*, I also refer to my piano classes with the Finnish pianist Kristiina Junttu (2012), an experienced performer of contemporary music.²⁵

In rarely performed music with few models for performance, the score, together with the instrument, functions as the most crucial tool for approaching the music. The central position of the score does not imply that the musician treats it as an authoritative norm; on the contrary, it leaves space for creativity (Kanno 2012; see also Cook 2003). In my analysis of *Ô Bach!* the following circumstances influence the role of the score: 1) Since my first readings were conducted at the piano, a purely ‘score-based’ understanding cannot be reached, 2) I read the score while keeping in mind my earlier experiences of Jolas’ music, as well as the discussion with other musicians, which I consider in the beginning of next section. The aim of this article, however, is not to investigate the complete practising process from its beginning to the concert-performance; instead, I discuss practising strategies in connection with several excerpts from the score.²⁶ Taking a dialogic position towards a musical work places practising strategies squarely within the music itself.²⁷

The analysis presented in this article is based primarily on a practice experience dating back to 2012, and a brief reference to a re-practice (without public performance) in 2014. The central analytical theme, and the basis for the organization of the text below, is the two

²⁴ According to Rink’s (2004) model, physical performance addresses particular areas: performance history, notational idiosyncrasies, genre, style and structure as shape.

²⁵ The analytical vocabulary was originally created in Swedish, partly as translated from Finnish, the language of the interviews. At relevant points, the original words and expressions are provided in brackets. For the interview quotations, however, only the English translation is provided.

²⁶ Copyright issues limit the number of excerpts that can be shown. A video of the author’s performance (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012c) is available upon request, for private use only.

²⁷ See also Rink’s (1999) observation of a musician’s “dialogue between [. . .] the uppermost hierarchical level and subsidiary motions extending down to the beat or sub-beat level” (p. 218).

genres of *Ô Bach!*, the 'homage' and the 'virtuosic music' genres. My interpretation of the interrelatedness of these two genres changed during the course of the practice, and I came to regard them, in and through their instability, as reflecting the notions of 'heterogeneity and unity' (Korsyn, 1999). Initially, due to the clear use of a quotation from Bach's music (Toccatà, Adagio and Fugue for organ, BWV 564) I understood *Ô Bach!* within the homage genre of Jolas' music. However, the quotation has a structural function and forms a basis for compositional unity; in performance, the quotation material appeared as scattered spots (Bach points), unrelated with the atmosphere of the homage genre. In addition, the sense of homage was intruded by virtuosic features, not belonging to a 'Bachian' keyboard character. Thus, the general impression of *Ô Bach!* was heterogeneous. A solution for making the genres converge, and making a 'performable entity' out of this piece was the identification of 'virtuosity of sonority', virtuosic features beyond the notion of traditional virtuosity.

Bach points and virtuosity in *Ô Bach!*

Despite being a prolific composer, Jolas is surprisingly unknown by musicians and researchers alike.²⁸ The composer has an international background in terms of family and residence (in France and the United States of America), and her style, which draws both on avant-garde and traditional approaches, can be described as post-tonal.²⁹ For further biographical data and consideration of Jolas' aesthetics, I refer to my earlier study (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016), and also to non-scholarly journals, papers and books (Henahan, 1976; Serrou, 2001). Alban Ramaut interviewed Jolas, and edited and annotated her writings (Jolas & Ramaut, 1999); this book also includes a chronological catalogue of her works.³⁰ Serrou (2001) transcribed interviews carried out with Jolas but did not comment on them. Among academic studies, we find a few analyses of particular pieces by Jolas: Darbon (1996), Mathon (1990), and Servière (2006) focus on style and structure. Iversen (2005) also comments on performative matters, but rather as an addition to 'the analysis itself' than as the foundation for the analysis. My article (Korhonen-Björkman, 2008) is based on an interview with a musician whose comments on the piano piece *Mon ami: Ariette variée à chanter-jouer pour pianiste femme ou enfant* (1974) form the basis for the analysis. The present article focuses on *Ô Bach!* from the perspective of my performance of the piece, but also comments on other works by Jolas and considers discussions with other musicians (Petteri Pitko, Juho Laitinen, and Kristiina Junttu) according to the principles of dialogic music analysis: a consideration of real dialogues and related musical works.

My first acquaintance with Jolas' music, through a performance of *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, was purely coincidental, but led to a lengthy project based on both my own performances and interviews with other musicians, of which two are considered briefly in this article.³¹ Other discussion partners during the project were teachers, colleagues and listeners present during practice and performance occasions (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016). *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)* was included in the repertoire of a piano competition in contemporary

²⁸ See for example the catalogue on Jolas' homepage: http://www.betsyjolas.com/niv_2.php3?ch=2&nav=0

²⁹ The word 'traditional' here should not be understood as synonymous with 'conservative'.

³⁰ References to Betsy Jolas in databases such as RILM consists mostly of the composer's own texts.

³¹ Other discussion partners during the project were teachers, colleagues and listeners at practice and performance occasions (Korhonen-Björkman, 2016).

music (Orléans Concours International Piano XXIème siècle, 2004). The visual appearance of the facsimile score (Figure 1) was appealing, and the subtitle *Hommage à Ravel* also fascinated me, due to my extensive repertoire of Ravel's music, and general interest in French music from the first half of the 20th century.

For my interviewees Petteri Pitko and Juho Laitinen, both experts in contemporary music performance, their first contact with Jolas' music was through her scores. One of the central discussion topics during the interviews was Jolas' notation and the musicians' reactions to it. In general, Jolas' music requires traditional playing techniques, although in *Ô Bach!* five notes are to be played on the strings, inside the piano, which is a notable exception. Jolas' notation, however, varies considerably between different pieces. Roughly speaking, the appearance of Jolas' earlier compositions, from the 1960s and 1970s, is more 'modern', with an emphasis on proportional notation and timing indications (the duration of each passage is given in seconds); since the 1980s Jolas has utilized time signatures, bar lines and metronome markings more frequently, even though passages with proportional notation occasionally occur between the metric ones. This article shows score excerpts in the later style. Both notation techniques, however, are characterized by a temporal flexibility and detailed expression marks. Concerning *Auprès*, the harpsichordist Petteri Pitko (2008) noticed that the composer "strives for a visual image of the sonorous result"; and the general approach to the harpsichord is "both innovative and traditional". As for the 'traditional' features, Pitko referred to familiar playing figures³² such as arpeggios, non-metric (*non mesuré*) rhythms, and an atmosphere that reminded him of harpsichord music from the French Baroque. Pitko also had a particular prelude in D minor, by Jean-Henri d'Anglebert, in mind. In his performances, he had played *Auprès* and the d'Anglebert prelude successively, in order to create a connection between them. Pitko also discussed Jolas' other solo piece for harpsichord, *Autour* (1973), which represents the composer's earlier notational style, which Pitko found "difficult to approach".³³ The practical applicability of the tempo and timing indications (duration of each passage) was sometimes questionable, such as the realization of single bars at MM=116 in between passages of proportional notation: "It's moving to see in which ways [the composer tries to reach everything]". The cellist Juho Laitinen remarked that some of the performance instructions of the cello piece *Épisode cinquième* are superfluous for an experienced performer, such as double signs for vibrato. Another topic that came up during the interviews concerned the differences between performers' and listeners' experiences. One of Laitinen's listeners remarked on the discrepancy between the smooth and simple aural impression the piece made, and the huge amount of information in the score, which the listener saw after the performance. Likewise, my practising experience of *Ô Bach!* contrasted with my aural impression of my recorded performance of it (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012c). As a listener, I experience the piece as a continuous flow, while as a performer I sense the

³² Playing figures are kinaesthetically identifiable patterns, adapted to the actual instrument. They often have connections to structure and harmony: in earlier keyboard music, patterns such as Alberti bass can be regarded as playing figures. In German, the term *Spielfiguren* is employed (Bessler, 1956; Mäkelä, 1989). In this article, 'toccata runs' and 'Jolasian figures', as well as the introductory figure of *Signets* are examples of playing figures.

³³ According to Heaton (2012), traditional notation, rather than time-space notation, is a visual presentation of sound. However, Heaton refers primarily to extended techniques in music for woodwinds.

differences between the characteristics and tempi in different sections of the piece (the sections are presented closer together in Table 1 below).

Prior to *Ô Bach!*, I had practised and performed *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)* (1987), *Pièce pour* (1997), *Calling E.C.* (1982) and *Mon ami: Ariette variée à chanter-jouer pour pianiste femme ou enfant* (1974).³⁴ These are all works for solo keyboard, which are representative of two important trademarks of Jolas' style. *Mon ami*, in which the pianist is supposed to sing while playing the piano, demonstrates Jolas' aesthetics of vocality, based on creative ways of using the human voice in instrumental works (Korhonen-Björkman, 2008).³⁵ The aesthetics of vocality are manifest also in the composer's comments on her aesthetic preferences, which are distant from the characteristics of keyboard instruments (Serrou, 2001, p. 237). Another trademark is the stylistic and technical inspiration Jolas draws from earlier composers in general, and early music in particular (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012b; 2016; Mathon, 1990; Thurlow, 2015). *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, *Calling E.C.* (dedicated to Elliott Carter) and *Ô Bach!* refer to other composers, and the harpsichord piece *Auprès* (1980) to French Baroque keyboard style. *Ô Bach!*, in contrast to my earlier experiences of Jolas' music, is a mixture of two genres. On the one hand, it addresses the 'homage' through which Jolas refers to earlier music in different ways: for example, the title suggests a tribute to another composer, J.S. Bach; in addition, we can find a direct reference to J.S. Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564 for organ, the introductory figures of which form the constructive nucleus of the piece. On the other hand, *Ô Bach!* represents the genre of a virtuoso competition piece. It was written for the international Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud competition in 2007 and contains several technical and musical challenges.³⁶ Watching and listening to a video clip from the Long-Thibaud competition reinforced my impression of the piece as belonging to a virtuoso genre:³⁷ I was struck by the young pianist Antoine de Grolée's physical appearance and gestures as well as his choice of tempi and technical performance solutions, which clearly placed *Ô Bach!* in a competition environment.

³⁴ The punctuation of *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)* varies in different sources (Jolas, 1999, p. 59; Muraro, 2008; p. 3; the homepage of the composer www.betsyjolas.com; see also Korhonen-Björkman, 2016, p. 106). In this article the title is as in the Editions Salabert catalogue.

³⁵ For example *Quatuor II* (1964) for three string instruments and a soprano.

³⁶ Many other pieces (*Pièce pour*, *Episode cinquième*, *Auprès*) by Jolas were also written for competitions, most often at national conservatoires, but in the case of *Ô Bach!*, perhaps the virtuosic ambitions were even higher because it was composed for an international competition.

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30P7wS0oDg4>

Bach points: From a discreet homage to the use of quotation

My interpretation of *Ô Bach!* as representing the homage genre within Jolas' music can be explained by reference to her *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)* (Figure 1).³⁸ At first, I regarded both pieces as having similar relationships to the referenced composers. *Signets*, which was commissioned for a memorial concert for Ravel (1875-1937) at the Festival de Montpellier in 1987 takes the shape of a serious homage not only due to its contextual background as a piece for a memorial concert, but also due to the ways in which the references to Ravel's piano music are realized: the musical treatment of these references is subtle; and, though recognizable, they are unnamed in the score. I understand them as 'discreet homages' (*hommages discrets*, Jolas, n.d.), similar to the way the composer described the relationship between the music of Debussy and Chopin and her piano concerto *Stances* (1978).³⁹ In Figure 1, which shows the very beginning of *Signets*, we can observe one of these references.⁴⁰

The piece is introduced by G sharp and A in the same octave, the highest pitches from the introductory chords of Ravel's *Ondine*, from *Gaspard de la nuit*. Besides these pitches, there are several other features borrowed from *Ondine*, which materialize through detailed instructions including the soft dynamics (*ppp-pppp*), and evenness of sound (*sans nuances* and *inarticulé*, barely legible in the printed score). There are both differences and similarities in the physical, playing experiences of *Signets* and *Ondine*. Both share the transparent piano sound, as well as the well-articulated feeling of the fingertips on the keys. The start of *Ondine* – imitating waves on the surface of the water – presupposes a different muscular work than *Signets*, which resembles a frozen, distanced memory of water. However, the hand playing the introductory tones of *Signets* is not passive: on the contrary, *inarticulé* and *sans nuances* require extreme control of the angle of the hand.

Identifying and evaluating the pianistic characteristics of Ravel's piano works referenced in *Signets* as well as features of Ravel's neo-Classical piano style – namely transparent sound and clearly articulated, thin texture – was based on the physical experience of playing the music.⁴¹ The harmonies (with their ambiguous tonalities, such as in bar 8 which is described below) reminded me distantly of Ravel's music. The visual appearance of the facsimile score was also significant for my interpretation of the interrelatedness of *Signets* and Ravel's music, in which visual, aural and kinaesthetic experiences converge. The appearance of Jolas' handwriting looks the way Ravel's music feels to play, with its transparent sound and clear articulation. At the same time, the handwriting is not always easily legible and is related to

³⁸ The first excerpt from *Signets* (Figure 1) is scanned from the original facsimile score, which is not much more legible than the copy provided here. The excerpts from *Ô Bach!* is typeset (by Torbjörn Björkman) on the typesetting programme Lilypond, after the edition of the original score.

³⁹ The subtle use of references to earlier music seems to have been important for the composer. As far as her opera *Schliemann* (1993) was concerned, she mentions that she draws on several musical styles, but nobody usually notices it, since she does not use direct quotations: "*Ma musique puise dans quantité de musiques de toutes les époques, mais en général personne ne le remarque car je ne fais pas de citations*" (Serrou, 2001, pp. 165-166). In addition, Thurlow (2015) observes: "[Jolas] has no desire to reject the past, and feels able to take inspiration from earlier composers without compromising the integrity of her own, fully contemporary language."

⁴⁰ For a more detailed analysis of *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, see Korhonen-Björkman (2016).

⁴¹ On Ravel's neo-Classical style, see Howat (2000). On the 'French' characteristics in *Signets*, see Korhonen-Björkman (2016).

the ambiguous harmonies. *Ô Bach!*, by contrast, lacks a similar keyboard-related relationship to its reference piece and composer: As I observed above, *Ô Bach!* does not communicate with its reference piece at the level of general keyboard playing.

Signets
Hommage à Ravel

Betsy Jolas
(1987) 1

Figure 1. Betsy Jolas: *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, bars 1-12. © Reproduced with the permission of Editions Salabert.

The verbal construction and implied atmosphere of the title *Ô Bach!* resemble a few other pieces by Jolas (e.g. *O night oh...!*, 2001, and *Ah! Haydn*, 2007). On the one hand, ‘Ô’ is associated with a tribute, similar to the homage in *Hommage à Ravel*, and suggests an exaggerated and humorous, rather than a serious relationship, particularly when considered in conjunction with the composer’s use of Bach’s music, which is not delicately allusive, but rather structural: the pitch classes from Bach’s Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major, BWV 564 (see Figure 2), exposed in a visible quotation above the first line of the score, are split up and appear in different octaves; they are recycled for another piece. The visible quotation goes against the idea of a ‘discreet homage’. However, the printed quotation enables the performer to identify the referenced piece, an organ work, which the pianist – who is likely

to be unfamiliar with organ music – cannot identify without the visible reference.⁴² In addition, the structural referencing of materials from Bach’s music is not as easily recognizable as melodic or stylistic allusions.

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Ô Bach!' by Betsy Jolas, spanning bars 1 to 17. The score is written for piano and organ. It features several distinct sections with varying tempos and dynamics. The first section is marked 'Assez lent' with a tempo of approximately 60 beats per minute. The second section is marked 'Modéré' with a tempo of approximately 76 beats per minute. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (ppp, p, mp, mf, f, ff), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like 'riten. ord.', 'poco accel.', 'rit.', 'loco', and 'sub'. The piece is in 4/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns and textures.

Figure 2. Betsy Jolas, *Ô Bach!*, bars 1–17. Copyright © 2007 Alphonse Leduc. Reproduced with the permission of Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen.

A constructed improvisation

Ô Bach! is an unusually extended solo piece by Jolas with a duration of 9-10 minutes; the score in Leduc’s edition consists of 12 pages. It is not what we often understand as a large-scale work⁴³ but rather a kind of extended miniature (while, for example, *Signets (Hommage*

⁴² Jolas herself plays the organ, which may have had an impact on the choice of the referenced piece.

⁴³ cf. Jolas’ *B for Sonata* (1972), which also draws on the sonata genre.

à Ravel) is a miniature of ordinary length at 3.5 minutes).⁴⁴ My impression of the extendedness was not only based on the measurable duration of the piece and length of the score, but also on the physical effort required for the rapid, extensive movements over the keyboard in the majority of the piece.

Table 1 provides one of my interpretations of the irregular, but hierarchical formal plan of the piece, perceived at an early practice stage. My interpretation of the borders between the ‘sections’ was flexible during different stages of practising, while my understanding of the ‘larger wholes’ remained unchanged throughout the practice period. For example, *fermatas*, particularly in connection with a thinning texture, and ‘bridges’ (see Table 1), which connect two sections together, can be understood as border marks. The *fermatas* are signs of flexibility since they can be interpreted as stop signs or breaths, the former creating a stronger boundary than the latter.

Table 1. Larger wholes and sections of *Ô Bach!*

Larger whole	Section	Bar numbers
1	Four sections of introductory character. The texture is ‘restless’ and fragmented.	1-13
		14-32
		33-44
		45-53
2	One section: the first of the ‘calm’ sections. The ‘calmness’ implies no large movements over the keyboard. In this section, the calmness is little by little replaced by increasing restlessness.	54-67
3	Two sections: 1) a ‘bridge’ to the first ‘simple’ theme; 2) a virtuoso section (based on the toccata run figures).	‘Bridge’ 89-96
		The ‘simple’ theme, 97-105
4	Two sections. 1) the second of the calm sections 2) the second virtuoso section.	Calm section: 126-141
		Virtuoso section: 141-158
5	Three short sections.	Bridge: 159-161
		Calm section: 161-169
		A small bridge: 170-171
6	Two sections: 1) fast moving trills and broken chords over the keyboard, together with the second ‘simple’ theme; 2) A martellato section, finished with a toccata run.	172-190
		190-204

⁴⁴ The notion of ‘extended miniature’ derives from the Finnish musicologist Mikko Heiniö’s (1984) study on innovation (modernism) and tradition in Finnish music in the 1960s. Heiniö writes about these traits as philosophical attitudes of composers, which are directly reflected in their compositions through particular characteristics. Besides the use of extended miniatures, the importance of melody, the favouring of tonal and synthetic scales and harmonies constructed by thirds, and the use of traditional polyphony such as imitation are also characteristic of the ‘traditional’ style; in the ‘modern’ style time-space notation is often used, and harmony, rhythm and timbre are more important than melody (Heiniö, 1984, p. 9). It is interesting to compare Heiniö’s thoughts with Jolas’ post-tonal style.

While practising, I handled the notation in smaller units than can be clearly presented in tabular form. I refer to these smaller units or figures as ‘gestures’, that is, performed figures that I felt as one physical movement, which also shaped the music in a meaningful way. Also my teacher Junttu (2012) frequently discussed gestures (Finnish: *ele*) in connection with these figures.⁴⁵ From the perspective of the musician’s practice, gesture refers here to ‘phrasing’, rather than ‘phrase’, which is often associated with harmonies in tonal music. I interpreted the strength and the placement of the borders between the gestures differently during different stages of my practice. For instance, bars 1-7 (see Figure 1) consisted of one (bars 1-7), two (bars 1-5 and 6-7) or three gestures (1-2, 3-5, and 6-7), depending on which details I was concentrating on at a particular moment.

Irregularity, a feature of the toccata form, also provides a Bach point in *Ô Bach!*⁴⁶. As an early musical genre, the toccata developed from keyboard improvisation. Toccatas consist of different texture types, and non-metric as well as metric passages; some require a virtuoso finger technique. Here, we can identify dialogic relationships between the genres of *Ô Bach!*: Jolas utilizes the pitches from Bach’s Toccata for the formal construction of the piece; the toccata, on the other hand, points at keyboard virtuosity, which, in turn, is modified in the idiosyncratic virtuosity of Jolas.

The improvisatory character of *Ô Bach!* is a result of a planned hierarchy; and takes the form of a representation or a construction of improvisation rather than inviting the pianist into real creativity at the keyboard. A closer examination of bars 1-17 (section 1 and the beginning of section 2, see Figure 1 and Table 1) provides insights into this hierarchy. I label bars 1-5 (or, in an another interpretation, bars 1-7) as ‘the starting cell’, inspired by the pianist Roger Muraro’s (to whom *Ô Bach!* is dedicated) description of Jolas’ music: “Like all the music of Betsy Jolas [...] the two pieces for piano that I have chosen here [*Postlude*, 2006; *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, 1987] start from one note, from a cell that grows larger, coils up on itself then comes back to the starting note, thus forming a nucleus that allows the piece to develop, whether it be long or short” (Muraro, 2008, p. 25).⁴⁷ In *Ô Bach!*, the first pitches of Bach’s organ work BWV 564, spreading over the keyboard, form such a cell. In bars 3-4, we can find representations of the second group of five notes: A and B are played simultaneously, in the left hand, D and E successively in the right hand. The G, which is a demisemi-quaver in Bach’s Toccata, sounds continuously and becomes the harmonic dominant (and is also the dominant of C major, the key of Bach’s Toccata). In bars 14-15, the pitches from the first group appear again, and the second group appears in the right hand in bars 15-17 (except for the G which is changed to an F sharp). Here, the pitches are the same in *Ô Bach!* as in Bach’s Toccata, located in the first and second octave (C and E of the first group in the left hand, and the other notes in the right hand) but the rhythm, as well as the dissonant harmony, efface the connection between *Ô Bach!* and Bach’s work.

⁴⁵ In Finnish, *ele* (gesture) is relatively casually and commonly used in music pedagogy. A ‘musical gesture’ refers to a musical or bodily movement in music. Aho (2009), who investigates popular-music singing, understands them as physical, communicative gestures in performance (see also Davidson, 2002; Virtanen, 2007). Hatten (2004), however, discusses musical gestures as inner-musical qualities.

⁴⁶ The toccata in the Romantic era appears in virtuoso and etude-like keyboard works.

⁴⁷ ‘Cell’ is a commonly used term in music analysis, often defined as a unit smaller than a ‘motif’ (see, for example, Nattiez, 1987).

Plucking or otherwise directly touching the strings is a common technique in contemporary piano music, but in Jolas' music, it is rarely used. The notes played inside the piano in bar 5 (further on, 'the string bar') were challenging to realize and therefore sparked significant consideration during the practice process, thus taking up a disproportionate amount of psychological space in my mind. The strings of G4 are located in the middle of the keyboard but on most of the Steinway grand pianos that I practised on, as well as the concert instrument, they were in an uncomfortable location between the inner beams of the instrument. I experimented with different ways of producing a qualitative tune on the strings. This sound production turned into an important characteristic of *Ô Bach!* As the G4 key corresponds to three strings, I played, as suggested by Kristiina Junttu in 2012, alternately on the left and right string of each three-string group, in order to make the rhythm clear. However, this solution was not permanent. During a re-practice of the piece a couple of years later, in 2014, I discovered that, according to the composer's footnote that concerned the string bar, only the first one of the notes should be plucked, the others tapped.⁴⁸ The tapping made the sound production even more challenging, although compatible with the detailed nature of Jolas' style and the purposes of a competition piece.

During my performance (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012c), I kept the music stand in its usual place, and I stood up while playing on the strings; I also discovered that it was impossible to keep down both the sustain and the *una corda* pedals, as called for in the score. Unlike a tall pianist, who can keep the piano's music stand upright all the time,⁴⁹ I needed to add 'music stand choreography' to the performance by starting the piece with the stand lying down and putting it up right after the string bar, while simultaneously moving to sit down on the piano bench.⁵⁰ According to the instructions, the *una corda* pedal has to be released while the pianist is standing, and depressed again when she sits down again. Personally, I felt that all these extra movements (standing up, managing the music stand, and moving my foot for the sustain pedal), disturbed the musical flow. Perhaps this uncomfortable feeling was communicated to the audience of my performance (Korhonen-Björkman, 2012c); a few listeners commented afterwards that my choreography was a dominant visual element for that particular moment in the music.

The instantaneous experience of the choreography during performance strengthened my interpretation of the string bar (bar 5) as a stronger border marker than the *fermata* on the rest at the end of bar 7 which, if one considers the notation only, appears as the end of the starting cell rather than the string bar. A temporal distance to the physical experience of playing on the strings diminished, but not erased, its influence on my interpretation of these bars. Finally, through the combination of performance and score reading, the starting cell appeared not as definite, consisting of either bars 1-5 or bars 1-7, but rather mutable,

⁴⁸ “[.] pincer la corde de Sol à l’intérieur puis [] tapoter légèrement du doigt sans éteindre la résonance” (Jolas, 2007, p. 1).

⁴⁹ Such as Antoine de Grolée on the YouTube clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30P7wS0oDg4>

⁵⁰ Several colleagues have observed that one can place the music stand on the strings farther away from the player, convinced that this would enable the pedals to be played correctly. However, reaching the strings, while sitting down, was still impossible with this solution since I still could not reliably see the strings on a larger concert instrument. This detail demonstrates how bodily dimensions influence the reading of the notation.

consisting of both.

Modifications

The starting cell (regarded here as consisting of seven bars) consists of particular patterns that occur in the same succession, and when modified, the basic pattern remains. Returning to Figure 2, we can investigate these modifications. When occurring for the first time in bars 1-2, the starting figure consists of the first five notes from Bach's Toccata, but spread over the keyboard. In Bach's Toccata, we can, in fact, see two starting figures. Jolas replaces the second starting figure with a repeated figure, which is a G in bars 3-5. The repeated figure is followed by a scale (bars 6-7), which ends with a strictly rhythmical figure in the bass (bar 10), 'the knocking figure', as I named it during practice, after Junttu's (2012) image of "Bach knocking at the door". In Bach's Toccata, the scale run is interrupted by a figure similar to the starting five-note figure, and abruptly cut off by an octave. Which kinds of variations does Jolas make of this detail? In bar 7, the ending is quite soft, but, as I noticed in my practice, it still needs careful shaping, and sudden termination. The turn of direction in bar 7 is also an important indicator of an ending. The *fermata* in bar 7 provides a feeling of breathing in for the start of the next cell, which is situated in bars 8-13. In bars 8-9, we find the starting figure in a very different shape from that in bars 1-2; here it is played in a fast tempo, in a narrow range. Its shape is related to the shapes of the starting figures of Bach's Toccata: if we disregard the first F sharp, all the intervals are one step larger in *Ô Bach!* than in the starting figure in Bach's Toccata. When practising this particular figure, I paid attention to the ambiguous harmony. The initial harmony of *Ô Bach!* suggests a C major environment, the key of Bach's Toccata. The tone G, the dominant of C major, is audible almost continuously, starting with the mutely-pressed first tone of the piece (it starts sounding as soon as the C in the bass is pressed down), throughout the repeated notes in bars 3-5, the chord in bar 6, the slightly accentuated note on bar 8, and the chord in bar 10.

Bar 8 is harmonically ambiguous: the playing of C sharp, D sharp, F sharp, and G sharp with the right hand suggests a harmony based on the key of F sharp major, while C major reminds of itself by a new bass tone halfway through the bar. The F sharp major should not be understood here as a tonal harmony: it is not pure; A and E (in the left hand), D (in the right hand), as well as the trill in the left hand make dissonances. I also associate the sixth (D sharp-B) in the right hand, which sounds through the texture thanks to the *mezzo forte*, with the subdominant of F sharp major. However, hints of the key of D major can also be identified, for instance by focussing on the major third D-F sharp at the very beginning of the right-hand figure. On the other hand, the D is played very lightly, both due to the weak beat and the soft dynamics, and its sound will remain underneath the higher pitches. While the D is part of the *structure* as described above, the *played* shape hides the influence of the D.

The role of the trill that follows (bars 8-9) is similar to the repeated pitch of the cell (in Jolas' music, there are many similarities between the roles of repeated notes and trills), and strengthens the reference to F sharp major. Interestingly, the trill in the right hand (E sharp-F sharp) is to be played softer than the trill in the left hand; the F sharp sound does not disappear, maybe also influenced by the strong C sharp, the dominant of F sharp major. In bar 10, there is another occurrence of the rhythmical figure, followed by a *fermata*, which I understand to be a quick breath before the following virtuoso scale, a toccata run, which will be discussed in the next section. However, through another solution, that is, a longer *fermata*,

the performer can influence the character of the border. We can find the next cell introduced in bar 14; but this time, the scale part starts during the original figure. In bar 13, we can find another ‘knocking’ figure, this time in *pianissimo*.

Virtuosity

The toccata runs and reminiscences of the organ

Virtuosity can be regarded as a quality of a piece of music (Mäkelä, 1989) or a property of the performer (Samson, 2003). In *Ô Bach!*, virtuosity is related to both perspectives. One crucial aspect of virtuosity is the performance challenges it poses (mentioned above in connection with the playing on the strings). Below, I will discuss the fast, brilliant figures of the ‘toccata runs’. Mastering the fingerwork of such figures can be understood as a traditional form of virtuosity, while mastering the dynamics and sound control represents virtuosity of sonority (Swedish: *klangens virtuositet*), a concept I have created through and for Jolas’ music. A wide range of soft dynamics in Jolas’ music requires strategies for sustaining the intensity of sound, for instance, in the string bar. The hints of tonality, which I discussed above, can be regarded not only as references to earlier music, but also affects playing techniques: in order to hear the partly hidden harmonies as C major, or as F sharp major the player needs to find sensitive ways of listening, balancing the voices, and touching the keys. I discuss below virtuosity of sonority in connection with the practice of sound quality in those passages requiring ‘traditional’ virtuosity in the toccata runs; and also in connection with the ‘simple’ theme and the ‘calm’ sections, which require a high level of technical and musical skill even though they do not display traditional signs of virtuosity.

Toccata runs (Swedish: *toccata-löpningar*) are particular figures, which are varied in many ways (such as played in contrary motion, in ninths, as a canon) throughout *Ô Bach!* A similar figure is also the basis for the imitative patterns in the two virtuoso sections (see Table 1). Here, the toccata runs are represented by the first one, the virtuoso scale in bar 11. The toccata runs represent both Bach points and virtuosity. According to the performance instructions, the toccata run should be played brilliantly, in a single physical movement, starting *subito*, and ending equally abruptly. At the end of the toccata run, there is a kind of notated *ritardando* with rests between the notes. No familiar pianistic models for virtuoso scales can be applied since the run is a combination of diatonic and chromatic scales. A usual way of solving challenges in playing fast figures is to find a functional fingering; however, this figure could not easily be adapted to a stable fingering.

They are reminiscences of the scale from the introductory figures of Bach’s Toccata, and one of the few places in *Ô Bach!* drawing on the character of Bach’s keyboard style. Here, the fact that the reference piece is written for another instrument is crucial for my interpretation. The organ sound is a sub-voice, and the toccata runs are reminiscences of another, hidden instrument beneath the surface of the piano sound and the piano keys. Due to the character of the mechanism of sound production on the organ the sound is continuous, until you release the key, and consequently the playing technique is very different from piano playing. Furthermore, Baroque style organ playing is based on a clear hierarchical articulation: for instance, in the introductory figures of Bach’s Toccata, which are quoted in *Ô Bach!*, every note is articulated – not mechanically with similar spaces between each note – but instead by phrasing, that is, articulating groups of notes according to the metric hierarchy. As a result,

the notes are simultaneously both separated and connected. In teaching the fingers to adapt to the irregular scale, I benefitted from organizing the scale to meaningful groups (e.g. in the middle of the scale, there are pitches from the A flat major scale). Also, realizing the *diminuendo*, which is supposed to be evenly distributed (*poco a poco*), was a practical tool towards this end. In the end, I gave priority to the dynamic expressions rather than the tempo, since the suggested tempo (ca. MM=132) seemed too fast for a careful realization of the other expression marks. Paradoxically, I was close to the composer's tempo mark when I had practised the dynamics, without practising the tempo itself. The *diminuendo* appears pianistically idiomatic, and distances itself from the organ-writing in Bach's Toccata.⁵¹

In Figure 4, the first row (bars 174-178) shows the second appearance of the 'simple theme', a short passage that differs from the rest of the piece. The rhythm and melody are clear, and the range is narrow, located in the middle of the keyboard. In terms of traditional virtuosity, this is not a virtuoso passage, but despite its easy appearance, it was challenging to shape in a meaningful way. This passage caught my attention because of its role in the piece and the challenges it posed. Furthermore, it reminded me of a passage from *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, which I refer to as 'the melody fragment' (Figure 3), as it differs from the rest of the piece: similar melodic and rhythmic materials do not occur elsewhere. I interpreted the melody fragment as an allusion to Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (1899), normally translated as *Pavane for a Dead Infant* (or *Princess*). The pavane is a processional, courtly dance likely of Italian origin, but gained wide popularity particularly in Spain during the 16th century. Ravel dedicated his *Pavane* to *une infante*, not addressing any particular child, but rather as tribute to Spain and its history; however, through the dedication, Ravel creates an homage genre around the pavane.⁵²

If seen from the perspective of piano playing, there are considerable differences between the melody fragment and *Pavane*: *Pavane* is to be performed *assez doux, mais d'une sonorité large*, while the fragment of *Signets* is rather dry, to be played *senza pedale*. According to the pianistic qualities, I interpreted the melody fragment as a reference also to other, more sharply articulated works by Ravel: *Fugue* and *Rigaudon* from *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1918). Interestingly, both *Pavane* and *Le tombeau de Couperin* are, through their titles, positioned as homages, which by their genre function as commentators on the homage genre of *Signets*. In addition, they create dialogic relationships between *Signets* and early music, albeit differently from those of *Ô Bach!*

⁵¹ The ways of realizing *diminuendi* and *crescendi* in organ playing in different styles will not be further discussed here.

⁵² Interestingly, with respect to the interpretation of a general or anonymous recipient, the child is female (*une infante*).

The image shows a musical score for Betsy Jolas' 'Signets. Hommage à Ravel', bars 53-57. The score is in 4/8 time and features a cantabile melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Allant' with a quarter note equal to approximately 96 beats per minute. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *p*, and *f*, and performance instructions like 'senza ped' and 'en dehors'. The piece concludes with a triplet of eighth notes marked 'f sub'.

Figure 3. Betsy Jolas: Signets. Hommage à Ravel, bars 53-57. Typeset (by Torbjörn Björkman) with the original facsimile score as a model. © Reproduced with the permission of Editions Salabert.

The simple theme of *Ô Bach!*, in differing from its surroundings, functioned for my practice similarly to the melody fragment of *Signets*. Without any immediate association to a particular reference work, it appeared as an independent point from Baroque or Renaissance music, rather than a Bach point. A listener of one of my seminar presentations identified this passage spontaneously as “some kind of baroque dance”, but did not discuss the reasons for this association. For me, the idea of dance was further developed, not in relation to Baroque music, but rather rhythmical Renaissance dances such as a galliard. The slurs in the right hand suggest – without real accents – particular emphases, which work against the beats of the left hand. However, the position of the hands, located close to each other in the middle of the keyboard, provide quite a narrow expressive frame for a rhythmical, dance-like realization. The co-operation of the hands, realizing polyphony and polyrhythm, becomes a crucial matter, and the left hand, despite its long notes, requires activity. Here, the reference to early music was influenced by my own experience in playing early music, as well as my knowledge of Jolas’ compositional interests and aesthetic values (see above), and created through performance, rather than provided directly by the composer.

Figure 4. Bars 174-184. The erroneous bar numbering is reproduced from the original score. Copyright © 2007 Alphonse Leduc. Reproduced with the permission of Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen.

The ‘simple’ theme consists of a short passage, and already in bar 176, it starts to transform: the G sharp is repeated, first by a *ritardando*, then *accelerando*. The rapid changes of playing figures require equally rapid reactions: as is typical for Jolas, the theme in a narrow range and clear rhythm suddenly becomes a ‘Jolasian figure’ in bar 178 – the name I have given to the blurry, irregular arpeggios, the role of which is to create sound colours and harmonic backgrounds.⁵³ They are carefully shaped by dynamic expression marks and pedal instructions. The metric treatment of the Jolasian figures varies. In bar 182, the latter figure is notated in small notes; in bar 183, the figure is notated within metre. Bar 178 forms a logical continuation of the simple theme, but as *libre* (free) indicates, the previous 3/4 time signature is not realizable here. In practice, there is very little temporal flexibility due to the *accelerando*.

In Jolas’ music, precise pedal instructions are more common than the more flexible marks *ped. ad libitum*, which we find in the beginning of the excerpt shown in Figure 4. In bars 181-184, the precise instructions are important, since without them, one could intuitively hold the sustain pedal down until the end of bar 183. In bar 183, a new harmony starts from the F sharp together with a pedal, but the figure of small notes is not to be played within the same pedal. Instead, the small-note figure will sound in the resonance of the instrument itself.

Figure 5 shows the beginning of the first ‘calm’ section, another example of the virtuosity

⁵³ ‘Jolasian figure’ does not suggest that these figures are unique to Jolas. However, they are characteristic of her piano music. They are technically rewarding and also enable experimentation with small-scale differences in temporal and dynamic organization.

of sonority.



Figure 5. Betsy Jolas: *Ô Bach!*, bars 126-128, the beginning of the first ‘calm’ section. Copyright © 2007 Alphonse Leduc. Reproduced with permission of Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen.

The tempo – MM=60 per minim – as well as the *alla breve* time signature (2/2) indicate a fluent tempo, which also is signalled by *allant* (moving). The contrasting impression between the calm sections and the ‘restless’ ones is based on a kinaesthetic experience rather than tempo. In contrast to the ‘restless’ texture, the calm sections move within a relatively narrow range of the keyboard and in small intervals (seconds). Furthermore, playing *legato* within a simple, two-voiced texture brings a sense of calmness. While playing *legato*, one can keep one’s fingers in touch with the keys. As in the G sharp-A movement in *Signets (Hommage à Ravel)*, the calmness in this passage of *Ô Bach!* is not synonymous with passivity, but instead require an active work to keep secure contact between the fingertips and the keys.

The stepwise *legato* movement in the two-voiced texture presupposes an even more careful phrasing and balance than those parts where larger physical movements support the musical expression. The stepwise movements will be musically meaningful when one listens attentively to each interval, and require experimentation to find the optimal angle of the hand for the production of a horizontal melodic line. The rests in the left hand interrupt the playing, but not the musical flow; and *quasi senza pedale* (as if played without pedal), is common in Jolas’ piano pieces. The strict *senza pedale* is softened with *quasi*, which I understand to be an option to keep a light colouring pedal, without sacrificing the transparency of the two-voiced texture.

DISCUSSION

Dialogic music analysis provides the possibility for individual performers to take a multidimensional position with respect to musical works, without separating ‘the score reader’s’ or ‘analyst’s’ and ‘performer’s’ perspectives. In practice, one can identify points, where the influence of either score-reading or performance is emphasized over the other: in this analysis of *Ô Bach!*, the identification of the constructive nucleus of the piece was dependent on the Bach quotation printed in the score; likewise, practice itself was crucial for the recognition of virtuosity of sonority.⁵⁴ Their separation into different analytical categories would not have been feasible for the practical circumstances of this study, where score reading and performance were continuously interwoven. Interestingly, the influence of direct physical contact with the instrument can in some cases be significant for the interpretation, as listening to my own recorded performance with respect to the borders between sections

⁵⁴ An updated analysis, which takes into account my recent acquaintance with organ playing, may provide further perspectives on *Ô Bach!*

suggested. In addition, the immediate kinaesthetic experience of the string bar was a determining factor for my interpretation of the starting cell.

The principles of dialogic music analysis and performer's analysis coincide, demonstrating temporality and mutability of the analytical process and the analytical interpretations. Furthermore, assembling performance experiences of several works from current and earlier experiences into a discourse is compatible with the principles of dialogic analysis, albeit challenging and space-consuming in cases where the principal object of analysis is only one piece.

Performer's analysis, by definition, presupposes the priority of the musician's views over other agents' perspectives, which may initially appear incompatible with the ambitions of the multi-voicedness of dialogic music analysis. We must remember, however, that the relationship between the 'voices' is dependent on the particular circumstances in each study. As for *Ô Bach!*, the composer was not directly involved in my interpretation, which gave precedence to the performer's perspective over the composer's.⁵⁵ The comments by Juho Laitinen and Petteri Pitko provided insights into Jolas' style on different instruments, as well as discussion topics and strategies in (verbal) communication between musicians; they encouraged me to create personal, spontaneous descriptions of the details in *Ô Bach!* (toccata runs, Jolasian figures, calm sections etc.). Junttu's (2012) idea of 'Bach knocking at the door' inspired me to create the expression 'the knocking figure'. Discussing *Auprès* also introduced Jolas' harpsichord style as a kind of reference frame for her piano style. The relationship between Jolas' piano and harpsichord styles provides an interesting topic for a future artistic research project.

As methods and parameters appear seemingly by chance in the course of a study that employs dialogic analysis, the most solid core of this approach is the theoretical discussion it opens up regarding the ontology of music. A dialogic analysis provides commentary on the concept of musical work to some extent. The performer's relationship to the score, the actual musical instruments (in this case including not only the piano but also the sub-voice of the organ), and practice experiences locate *Ô Bach!* in a "network consisting of various meanings" (Moisala, 2003, p. 26). The role of the musical instrument was in this study discussed in light of practising strategies, and the evaluation of the pianistic qualities of the piece. Particular points, such as the realization of the string bar and the scale structure of the toccata runs, appeared non-idiomatic, while the virtuosity of sonority expressed idiomatic qualities. Performers' comments on the composer's achievements form a kind of 'Other's voice' in the studies of musical performance, in the same way as critical and cultural music study, and ethnomusicology, which traditionally seek alternative perspectives in the study of music (e.g. Edström, 1997; McClary, 1992). Currently, when these perspectives have already entered mainstream music research, the performer's voice contrasts with the researcher's or analyst's comments on the performer's achievements. Kanno, (2012, p. 3), who touches on the same issue, opines that the studies of musical performance "focus on the contribution of the performer in their studied object and rarely assess the musical contribution of the composer beyond the provision of the score or equivalent material."

⁵⁵ The situation, however, would have been different if Laitinen and Pitko, who had directly co-operated with the composer, had been co-researchers in this project.

In the present article, some of the analytical outputs have taken the form of performance instructions and consideration of practising strategies, and resulted in forward-thinking expressions, such as this passage requires... and should be played.... In contrast, the descriptions of particular performances are retrospective. These two kinds of musician-centred outputs are surprisingly closely related to the 'traditional' categories of analysis and performance, i.e. analysis prior to a performance and analysis of particular performances (Rink, 2002).

In this article, experiences of particular public performances have not been analysed as such, but rather as part of the music. To what extent and in what ways do individual experiences represent shared experiences, valuable to other musicians and researchers? As for the interpretations themselves, we cannot always reach a common understanding, but instead we can and should spur discussion on the working process and the strategies by which the musician creates her individual interpretations.

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