

Please discuss two or more aspects of the role which gesture plays in contemporary thought about meaning formation in musical contexts. .

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*Gesture is not only physical motion, but attitude (Bertolt Brechet in Henrotte, 1992: 105).*

In a dictionary Gesture is described as a movement or position of the hand, arm, head or body that expresses an emotion, an idea or opinion. To use gestures is to use movement to express thought and emotion. In this meaning it becomes clear that this is clearly a human field, a river or tree cannot gesture, they only move because they are pushed on by other forces; they have no emotions, or ideas or opinions to convey.

The notion of meaning is to convey, through gestures and skill, a specific sense of information to a person or people. In music the goal is communication. To communicate with the audience through not only hearing the music but also seeing the *movements* of the music player and feeling the emotions he conveys through them. As we saw on the videos yesterday emotion is easily read by an audience and this can help them interpret the music in different ways. When Bill played sadly, the music was sadder, slower and poignant just as his movements were slower and repressed. When he played angrily his head and arms showed his aggression and the music was in turn aggressive and insistent. When he played happily his whole body was relaxed and in turn the music flowed in an ethereal way. Or is this the way I interpret the music to be because of his gestures?

I believe so, I believe that it is not enough for a pianist to have only skill; he needs to be able to use his gestures to communicate with the audience as well. The musician has to learn to be an exceptional communicator and expressionist as well. Skill and clear, open gestures go hand in hand in create a top performer and therefore a magical and unforgettable experience for the audience. Otherwise why bother having recitals? Why not just skilfully record his best performance, and play that for an audience? We have the best technology for that these days to play music through the best capable sound systems and yet live music has not lost any of its appeal. The recorded music can appeal to you and introduce you to the music but there is always something missing, some part of us knows that the technology cannot record the entire performance, only the sounds, the human gesturing aspect is missing. The experience is not complete until you have experienced a recital or concert and you actually *see* the music being played.

In modern setting I have experienced this myself and would like to talk about an example. I grew up listening to Eric Clapton being played in my home and knew many of his songs but it was not until I saw him playing the guitar live that I realised what an absolute genius guitar

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player he is. When I listened to the music at home, I heard a song, good music but a put together sound and listened to a whole band playing. When I saw Eric Clapton on stage and *how* he played, it enhanced my entire experience of his music. I now listen to his music in a completely different way and often wonder what would have happened if I had seen him first and then listened to his music at home, would I have found the recorded music lacking? In a way I did because I was not a fan before I saw him playing. I became a fan after seeing him play live. It made all the difference. Now when I listen to his recorded music I hear him playing, I appreciated the guitar more and the other instruments become merely accompaniments.

A listener can make a connection between the music they hear and the gestures made by a performer on their instrument. And the connection can enrich the experience. Gesture is never neutral and can bring difference significance to the music.