

Book Review: *Enacting Musical Time: The Bodily Experience of New Music*, by Mariusz Kozak

Calla Paleczny

Independent Scholar, Composer

callapaleczny@gmail.com



In his book *Enacting Musical Time*, Mariusz Kozak spirals through dense layers of phenomenology, embodied cognition, and ecological psychology to propose a new theory of embodiment in music cognition and analysis. Each chapter, while apparently signalling a move to a new topic, rather returns to re-evaluate the same moment in time: the *embodied present* (and its *protentions* and *retentions*) at a deeper stratum. Each progressive idea is akin to a core drill reaching new depth in the same horizontal space, and the reveal of the core sample in its entirety comes only in the empty space after the abrupt close of the last chapter.

There is clarity, focus and care in Kozak's coring process. As a reader entrained in linear narratives and familiar with the embodied sensation of reading "forward moving" texts, I found myself refreshed by Kozak's willingness to return and ensure that the reader is still with him. Kozak's writing is replete with sentences and paragraphs that convey conceptual coordinates: a birds eye view of the terrain and what is just ahead on the spiralling descent. He makes liberal use of the phrase "in other words" as another form of return within ideas, resulting in a controlled descending spiral at the level of the chapter, and at the level of ideas. In any other book, a reader might rebel against the attentiveness that Kozak applies to keeping his reader oriented. But the complexity of the task—to transform one's *embodiment* and *enactment* of time, music and analysis—requires, or at the very least benefits immensely, from Kozak holding a lamp for guidance. Dense texts require return (backtracking and rereading), and instead of forcing the reader to step out of a linear text to practice their own spirals of return, Kozak's approach keeps the reader journeying smoothly and securely into increasingly complex ideas.

It might seem strange to begin a review of a book (published six years ago, and already well reviewed: Marcus 2020; Tremblay 2021; Schiavio 2021; Besada 2021; Stover 2023) with little more than a nod to the ideas within the book, and to instead hone in on the form of the book unfolding, but this form is itself an enactment of Kozak's ideas within. The reader of the text enacts its form which serves to co-create the significance of the arguments it presents. It is this essential feature of Kozak's text, not explored in the existing reviews, that motivates my contribution. Furthermore, while some time has passed since its publication (though nothing considering the 1600 year span of the thinkers in it), its material has only expanded in my lived experience of time. It is not that I am drawn back to the text, but somehow my changed experiences of time draw it back towards me, in cycles of return calculated this time, in years.

In the first chapter, Kozak establishes that he is concerned not with objective time, but "lived time." Time is not purely subjective, but rather co-constituted by interactions with the outside world (34). Lived time is the moment of the present, and the moment immediately before and after that are not yet in the future and not yet in the past, but the edges where the *primal impression*, "the awareness of an unfolding 'now-phase'" (35), sinks into the past (called *retention*) and extends into vague immediate future awareness (called *protention*) (36). These are not 'the past' and 'the future', but the edges of the present moment of experiencing music. As each present moment comes into focus, another present recedes, like a new sedimentary layer in the strata of time past. Kozak extends the present to include these moments, while also noting that all memory and prospecting in the future are also experiences that occur within the present, for recalling a memory brings it into the now, changing it fundamentally.

Lived time, as the moment of interaction between a body and the outer world, in the contained present (with protensions and retentions) is where Kozak situates the focus of the entire book. Though titled *Enacting Musical Time*, and concerned with time throughout, this book could have been easily titled *Enacting Musical Meaning*. In this first chapter, he also establishes that certain musical objects can only exist ephemerally and are outside of symbolic representation, and that the meaning of music, which he calls *significance*, "arises in the moment of one's perception of, and action upon, one's immediate environment" (13). In the first two chapters, Kozak draws from James J. Gibson's body of work on ecological perception (1966, 1977, 1982, 1986), exploring how accessing significance occurs through an animal's ability to perceive various opportunities for action, or *affordances*, in their environment. In the context of embodied cognition, affordances (or what can I do with what is around me?) are relations between the features of an environment and a perceiver's abilities, and in return, information, or the knowledge from embodied cognition, is relational between the environment and the patterns of energy that may imply affordances to the perceiver (76). This means, affordances in an environment (like the kinaesthetic, cognitive or emotional affect of a piece of music) may not convey to a different person in the same way, or even the same person (in the same way) at a different time, and on the other hand, the same affect can be induced by different patterns of energy (75). Kozak adds *temporal affordances* to Gibson's theory of affordances (1977), which accounts for *when* an affordance can be acted upon, not just what can be acted upon (90).

Kozak's descent in these first two chapters, extends considerably beyond the subject of enacting musical time, and wades into the ways in which one interacts with reality (and how reality interacts with them) and how it leads to meaning in life itself.

In chapter three, entitled "Body," Kozak asserts that a body moving in response to acoustical signals is *doing* music analysis (109): "to *act* is to *think*" (111). He differentiates between a body *synchronizing*, often done as an anticipatory act such as tapping to a tactus, and *coordination*, which involves aligning to various spatiotemporal dynamics of the music that may not be metered at all (a central method in his review of experimental works) (120). In his calmly orbiting spiral, Kozak returns to music's relation to time to assert that music is not *in* time, but rather *of* time; that music is the organization of time. This places the listener into the role of co-creating the form of music in the act of experiencing music as structurally coherent while "simultaneously undergoing disintegration into non-being" (112). Kozak's work in this chapter knocks conventional processes of music analysis, of form and time, off the page and into the body, and all of a sudden, looking at musical form as being representable by a visual or symbolic image that ignores the perceptual reality of experiencing music feels not merely inadequate, but actually inaccurate.

It would be easy to mistake this book as co-authored work between Kozak and late French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Arguments throughout the book spring from terms and ideas from Merleau-Ponty's body of work on time and the body as the site and interface of perception with Kozak continuing ideas found in the posthumously published, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). This close intertextual relationship, and the many other instances of Kozak's extensive interdisciplinary engagement in the book, furnishes this work with a rich dimensionality around which a reader can move and themselves interrogate the arguments at hand. *Flesh [la chair]*, a Merleau-Ponty term that Kozak uses to explore the present (and its protentions and retentions) at a yet deeper and now structural level, is the frame in which he argues that time is "secreted" by an individual as "vortices, eddies, waves and ripples, cascades of energy, all kinds of bifurcations and convergences familiar from fluid dynamics...[an] aura [that] swirls, jostled out of its equilibrium by the body's disturbances" (154). Merleau-Ponty's contributions are robust in chapter four, providing a framework for exploring how our perception of time requires a gap or differentiation between our inner reality (and its temporal feel) and our perception of a different and distinct temporal reality existing around us. It is only this differentiation that allows us to experience anything other than a unified reality of time. In his return to the relational aspect of a body in the world, it is here that Kozak asserts that movement (as a perceptual act) reveals the world to the subject, and at the same time, movement reveals the subject to the world (through how the body comes up against it). For example, the world shapes my body by resisting her movements, thereby giving them structure (158). I am "enveloped" by things (a chair, a musical instrument) without losing my sense of self. Thus if I am enveloped by music, rather than merging into music, I co-create the music by my movement (embodied perception) in the space between. This is the space where musical time comes into existence, in the space between, and in the present (with its protentions and rapidly

receding retentions which are “not explicitly available to consciousness, but instead constitute its very structure” (221)). In a Kozakian orbit into existential depth, he asserts *maximum grip* (a Merleau-Ponty term fundamental to perception, that drives our efforts to achieve the “most advantageous hold on the world” (120)), must “also be balanced with a maximum *letting-go*” (163).

Though analysis exists throughout the book, it is in the last two chapters on “Affectivity” and “Verticality”, respectively, that Kozak delves more fully into the application of his theory to musical examples. Kozak applies a rather conservative, but resultantly unobjectionable understanding of affect here. He establishes a clear distance between affect and “emotional experience”, instead focussing on “the musical circumstances—as they are taken up by the body’s potential for opening up into its environment—under which the body’s relation to the acoustical signal can be modified and turned into an aesthetic experience of musical time” (193). Though not rousing, his articulation of the affect of music as *auto-affection*, or the organisms own ability to affect itself from within through the connections between sensory and motor cells (192) is clear, constructive and explanatory of the vast variability in experiences that individuals have when listening to music, and the difference that exist from one listening to the next.

His analysis of the feeling of timelessness in Louis Andriessen’s piece *De Tijd* (1980-81) begins with an observation of the compositional tools that provide a narrative sense of timelessness: harmonic progressions that do not lead to cadences, slow moving harmonies, closed harmonic cycles that do not seem to progress, unchanging relationships between musical objects, and a focus on a slow pulse that weakens the causal links between musical objects in the piece (210). He then draws the listener to instead, attend to how the listening experience shapes an interpretation of the music, arguing that mapping time onto a piece prior to listening obscures the ability for time to emerge *in* the listening. The most salient part of this analysis is that the piece creates the sense of an extended present because the “music fails to dissolve into the past even as it continues to unfold” (213). But Kozak is not content with this conclusion and bridges into a fascinating exploration of St. Augustine’s differentiation between eternity and timelessness which he uses to frame a new analysis of *De Tijd*. Despite traversing his extended analysis (that shapes the chapter into two mountains connected by a valley of St. Augustine), I am left feeling as though I cannot adequately recount the changing terrain (despite— or perhaps because of, the many details offered along the path). I am unable (as of yet) to embody all that is necessary to apply his theory to *De Tijd*’s piece at a conceptual and embodied level.

It is in the last chapter that a kind of clarity on Kozak’s argument comes into view. This is not the type of clarity that has left me able to hear how he is hearing, or to be sure that I am experiencing the fullness of his thorough and mind expanding vision of musical time, but the clarity that one gets from a certain kind of life-earned wisdom: a wisdom that returns this reader to *knowing* as an embodied process. He introduces ‘verticality’ as a new temporal dimension; “the depth of lived time” (233). “Derived from Eastern Buddhist philosophy, vertical time marks the utmost limit of what Kramer (1988) calls “non-linear time”, which is the time that

emphasizes the state of being rather than becoming...” (235). Verticality is “a practice” where one

allows the embodied consciousness to become deeply engaged *with* the flow of time...it is a practice that cannot be generalized to specific auditory phenomena (like a dissonance), but rather one that is predicated on a particular kind of feeling, an affective engagement on the part of a situated, embodied listening agent (247).

I am reluctant to provide more on this chapter’s central themes, for in truth, I would feel regretful to steal your experience of unfolding this portion of the book for yourself. Here, Kozak, with the help of Nietzsche, introduces the most illuminating and beautifully applied concept of the book: the *eternal return*. The present moment that we have meditated upon throughout the spiral of Kozak’s book is now placed into the hands of the reader with agency. Although this moment of time is repeating endlessly, that we *will* its return means that we become affective agents who take ownership over our lives, instead of being swept up by the passage of time (256). Willing its return means revaluing how we see this repeating moment, similar to how a repeating musical phrase is heard in new and revelatory ways given the changing musical context. Life itself becomes a revelation through our willingness to *will its return* and *revalue our own context*. And so, in these final pages, Kozak clarifies the spiral, the *return*, the embodied enactment of form, and left this reader feeling as though without so much as a proper conclusion, the core sample was all of a sudden above ground and fully visible.

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