

Zembylas, Tasos and Niederauer Martin (2018). *Composing Processes and Artistic Agency: Tacit Knowledge in Composing*. London: Routledge.

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Abstract of Chapter 1

Chapter 1, “The Topography of Composing Work”, deals with the wide range of relations between people, artefacts and resources that characterise composing practices in western contemporary art music. Analysis focuses on general contractual conditions, labour resources, places of work, collaboration with other musicians, as well as the role of material devices and immaterial objects such as notation systems and algorithms. Thus, the chapter not only emphasises the role of cooperative relations, but goes beyond usual analyses of “art worlds” in that it also considers material resources, apparatuses and intangible objects to be constitutive elements of creative processes.

Abstract of Chapter 2

Chapter 2, “The Processuality of Composing”, inquires into the emergence and connection between various types of compositional activities. Rejecting common phase models, the authors find that composition processes are characterised by explorative approaches accompanied by in-situ, auditory-sensual understanding and valuating of the outcomes. This in turn initiates new experiments and further work steps. They therefore emphasise the interdependence of four activities that are inherent in composing: exploring, understanding, valuing and making. This chapter reveals the internal dynamic of creative processes and brings to the surface their fundamental openness and fragility.

Abstract of Chapter 3

Chapter 3, “Orchestrating Different Forms of Knowing”, extends previous research on composition processes by adding an epistemological conceptualisation. Overcoming binary distinctions – such as explicit vs. implicit, or propositional vs. tacit knowledge – this chapter identifies and analyses a wide range of different forms of knowledge: knowledge related to past experience, situative perception of the musical material, the body’s involvement and connected to local-contextual, formal-technical and general musicological knowledge. The analysis highlights the interlinking and synergy of these various forms of knowledge as they occur throughout complex and long-term creative processes.

Abstract of Chapter 4

In chapter 4, “Composing-as-Process: Musicological Perspectives”, Andreas Holzer investigates the relationship between ideas, exploration and notation. Starting with a historical outline of musicological research into composition processes, he identifies the fundamental concerns over attempts to record composers’ actions and thought patterns on the basis of sketch materials, interviews and self-assessments. He then concentrates on three case studies and analyses the individual composers’ working methods in relation to their particular composing circumstances, musical material and aesthetics. As a result, this chapter scrutinises the relevance of theoretical generalisations and appeals for a sensitive approach to complex particularities.