

## Performing Otherness: Musical Persona in a Performance of *D'om Le Vrai Sens*

While musical performance is still often conceived of as the mere transmission of an ideal, unchanging work, at least within the realm of Western art music, the advent of the field of performance studies has helped to deepen the dialogue about musical performance. Perhaps one of the most significant ideas to emerge from this approach has been Philip Auslander's (2006) concept of the "musical persona." Auslander argues that, in fact, musicians do not so much perform a work as they perform the role of the concertizing musician and that their persona is invented through their actions and the audience's reaction to them. However, as Nicholas Cook (2013) suggests, it seems clear that the nature of a musician's persona at any given performance develops in relation to the work being performed. This relationship can become particularly complex in the case of contemporary music, an area underexplored in the present literature.

This paper will explore the creation of performance personae in contemporary music through an examination of clarinetist Kari Kriikku's 2011 performance of Kaija Saariaho's concerto *D'om Le Vrai Sens* with conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Radio France Philharmonic. The concerto, loosely inspired by the medieval *La Dame à la licorne* tapestries, frequently calls for a wide range of extended techniques for the clarinet. Additionally, Saariaho's notes suggest that the soloist perform in different areas throughout the space. In this performance, Kriikku's departure from traditional orchestral staging conventions, his very exaggerated and idiosyncratic physical gestures, and his realization of the musical material itself - in particular his manipulation of timbre, all serve to create a persona beyond simply that of the virtuoso clarinet soloist. In addition, this non-traditional performance is situated in a largely traditional context, that of a standard orchestral concert in a concert hall, setting Kriikku's performance apart from the behavior of the audience and orchestra. Kriikku's performance

frequently summons the unfamiliar, to the extent that this paper argues that his persona *becomes* the unfamiliar, a being set apart from the classical tradition, the orchestra he performs with, the audience, and perhaps by extension, even the realm of reality.

Auslander, Phillip. "Musical Personae." *The Drama Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 100-119.

Cook, Nicholas. "Bridging the Unbridgeable? Empirical Musicology and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies." In *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 70-85. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.