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When I was little, there was a TV show, a cartoon series, Alice in Wonderland. Although I didn't really identify (yet) with Alice – I must have been 6, perhaps 7 when it was aired – there was one thing that really appealed to me. She had a white rabbit. And rabbits have always been my favorite animal – which you might notice during my presentation – and so I was an enthusiastic viewer. But apart from the image - which was actually not even that well drawn – I hardly remember anything from the series.

Much, much later I learned that the novel by Lewis Carroll was an allegory, about learning to find your way in a complex reality, about being open to impossible things and to learn how to think creatively. Whether or not Alice was helped by mind-enhancing substances - which for the sake of educational responsibility I will not include in this presentation - it was a valuable lesson in growing up, and learning how to become your true self in a world that might not even make sense.

But it actually took me years to realise that I might have missed something. You see, in Dutch, *een Wonder* means “Miracle”. So when I watched a series with magical and unrealistic creatures and storylines, this was well within my expectations, especially for a cartoon. Everything was possible, even the impossible - because, after all, it was a land full of miracles. Only later I understood that there's another meaning of Wondering in English, perhaps a more interesting one. Miracles happen to you, magic happens – unless you're the magician of course. But to wonder, that is an activity. To ponder, to think, to admire, to feel surprised – which of course is closely related to a world of magic, but there is a difference. To wonder is more or less a conscious action, a deliberate reflection, an exploration of the unknown – a healthy curiosity. So more than Alice just being subjected to a fantastic reality full of unexpected creatures and adventures, she might have brought herself there too. With questions:

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What else is out there? What is it that I cannot see yet, but what may be possible after all? What if I jump into the unknown, and step away from what I know? How do I create a new reality, new possibilities, just by imagining them?

Now, well that I found interesting questions. Unfortunately, these are the ones that we often forget to ask ourselves – at least, it seems that way, in our contemporary Western Classical Music performance practice and education.

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When I looked up an image on Google, searching under “wondering”, I saw a lot of pictures of faces with question marks. What struck me is that they were mainly unhappy faces. That makes me wonder – pun intended: why do we apparently associate “wondering” with “unpleasantness”? We consider ourselves critical thinkers – why is it then that we seem to be uncomfortable during that process? Are we really so defined by certainty, by control, that anything that makes us wonder, makes us doubt, makes us question anything, or in the world of Alice, that makes us drift off the trodden path into the unknown, makes us uneasy, stressed, nervous, or worried?

This feeling is actually very present still in Western Classical Music Performance, and Education. So that will be my focus today: the practice of traditionally, conservatoire trained performers, in the field of Western Classical Music. In other words: the performance of that artform that is still very much centered around the written works, around the canon, around the score, ergo, around certainty – and how it lies within our responsibility to keep it alive, to let it develop and evolve, and to keep it relevant in today’s day and age without losing it’s specific strengths.

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Just to give you an idea of where we will be going the next 45 minutes:

- **CLICK** first, we’ll look at how we got here — a bit of historical context on why losing control can feel so uncomfortable for classical musicians, and why that’s actually a fallacy.
- **CLICK** Then we’ll examine current conservatoire practices: what’s already changing, and why theory and practice still don’t quite meet.
- **CLICK** From there, we’ll touch on creativity through the 4P model, and see how it could inspire a reimagined model for performance practice — with practical applications for both performers and educators.
- **CLICK** And finally, we’ll look ahead and imagine what might happen if we step into the unknown and take a bolder leap.

Let’s see where we end up.

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Let me start by a question:

Who of you here is trained as a classical instrumental or vocal performer?

You've most probably all had that question: "Oh how nice, you're a musician! Play something for us!" And then you think "Well, why not" – but then – a few exceptions aside, reality sets in "O no, I didn't bring my scores, and I don't know anything by heart, and I haven't quite finished studying so it really isn't really at that point where I would like someone to hear it, or ..." Whatever reason we find, there is always an excuse why we hesitate. I know that especially in this audience there are some exceptions, people who feel as comfortable with freedom as they do with a given framework. But in general, that is still what you are: the exception.

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Despite years of intensive study, practice, and rehearsal — the famous "10,000 hours" — many classically trained performers still feel insecure without the safety net of a score. We are comfortable when we can reproduce a composition we've prepared meticulously, but far less so when asked to perform beyond written notes. In effect, we have become *performers of music* rather than *music performers*. The former relies on a given work; the latter takes on the extra assignment of creating something in the here and now. The latter also gives us an extra quality, an extra responsibility: to create something ourselves, in the here and now. Music, in this respect, is not something that you can retrieve or that can be captured by a score. It is an ephemeral experience, a creation that needs to be performed in order to exist.

I deliberately chose this picture. It is taken during a masterclass at the Royal Conservatoire, but what struck me most, is how much both players are focused. But although they are playing together, they are not focused on each other. Their eyes are glued to the score, as if that is the key to guide them through a successful performance, together.

Unconsciously or consciously, we feel that something is off. Apparently there is something in our Western Classical Music Performance training that is missing or perhaps vice versa: there is something that is not in as much present in other art forms. And that is quite clear – a score. A written work, a piece of paper with instructions for us, the performers. But it is not just that. It is actually how we deal with this score, with these compositions. It is a certain, almost ethically inspired faithfulness by performers towards composers' intentions as they are captured by a score.

But as we know, the score wasn't always as prescriptive.

Up until about 1800, the score was not a strict prescription but a framework. Cadenzas, basso continuo, ornamentations — all were expected to be supplied by the performer. Improvisation wasn't an optional skill; it was part of every musician's training.

From the early 19th century, cultural and aesthetic shifts elevated the composer's role. Works were increasingly seen as perfect, complete, and untouchable. The performer's job narrowed to that of faithful messenger, delivering the composer's intentions exactly as preserved in the score. Stravinsky put it bluntly:

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the secret of perfection lies above all in the performer's consciousness in the law imposed to him by the work he is performing

and Schonberg continued:

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“The performer, in all his intolerable arrogance, is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print.”

From this mindset grew two ideals that still influence our teaching today:

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We have **Texttreue** — literal fidelity to the score.

And related there is **Werktreue** — fidelity to an abstract “ideal work” existing beyond any single performance. Both of these perspectives keep the emphasis on a truth that is captured in, and to be realised from a score – which is exactly what performance is all about: an authentic and truthful realisation.

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The 20th-century Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement sought to reconnect with earlier freedoms through period instruments and historical research. Yet without audio evidence from centuries past, HIP reconstructions inevitably reflect modern interpretation as much as, or even more than, historical fact.

Just a quick example.

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Here you see the first bars of Rachmaninoff's second Piano Concerto, the version published in 1947 – which is exactly the same as the original from 1901, only a more clear picture. What do you see? Moderato, metronome 66 for a half note. Notes. Chords. Some articulations. A little line, suggesting tenuto and slight emphasis. A few times the same, then two accents, suggesting a stronger emphasis. And some words: *poco a poco crescendo*. *Ritenuito*. A grace note- or rather a grace chord. And then: *fortissimo, a tempo* and *con passione*. Still, a lot is not written. How quickly does the crescendo evolve? How loud exactly are the accents? Is the grace note intended to be long or note? What is the intended atmosphere – is it ominous, subdued, plain,...?

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In preparation for this presentation, I listened to multiple versions, among which the one first recorded by Rachmaninoff himself in 1929 with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowskiⁱ;

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by Artur Rubinstein in 1956 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Fritz Reiner, and recently,

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one by Yuja Wang, in 2021, with Valery Gergiev.

Even with the composer's own interpretation audibly at hand, the Rubinstein and Wang versions differ significantly, from Rachmaninoff's and from each other. Still, they use the same score. To what extent, then, can we even speak of historically accurate performance practice – and are they then any less in artistic quality?

If anything, this shows that Texttreue, fidelity to a score, and even Werktreue, fidelity to a work, are fictitious norms. We cannot attain this “perfect compliance”. But still this is more or less how we teach, and how we have been teaching for decades.

Our focus remains on reproducing the score with technical precision — leaving little room for the curiosity, risk, and creative agency that were once part of every performer's toolkit. We could summarize our performance, and our educational process, more or less as follows:

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As we said: we start with a score, so we know we will end up with the performance of that score. The whole road from reading the first notes to completing the entire study process of analysis, reflection and mainly, to practice, practice, practice so on, just reinforces us in the belief that what we will be playing, is that score, that work – to the best of our abilities.

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So, where is the wondering part? The uncertainty, the surprise, the risk?

At most, there is uncertainty whether we will be able to play it to the highest norm. But that's why we study, those 10.000 hours. We hardly do anything else. And that is a shame.

Luckily, there has been a lot of focus on performers these last few decades. After all, audiences don't listen to a score, they listen to a performance. Music, as we said earlier, is what happens in the here and now, what is created in a contemporary historical, socio-cultural context. In other words, performance is a sort of creation. That is why we can refer to performance as not just performatic, so to speak, but as performative. "Performative" attributes an additional quality to a (musical) act: not one that can be judged as right or wrong, but one that *is* and is realized through its performance.ⁱⁱ It is not the reproduction of a fixed product, but a new, situated construction that arises, exists, and can only exist through the performative act, ergo, the performance.

The theoretical focus gradually shifted towards performance. Whereas musicology was previously intended as the study of the musical score — the text — which fed performance and the study of performance in search of *the* correct execution, New Musicology centered the culturally and socially situated performance as the core of a musical work. This is how we should move from being and training performers of music, to music performers.

So that is where we are now, and that is where you can see an inconsistency. For decades, classical performers have become increasingly specialized in playing composed works. And while recent theory no longer places the composition at the heart of performance, but rather the act of performing itself, this shift exposes a real problem. We've become so focused—so highly trained—in that one essential skill of executing written scores, that we've gradually moved away from other crucial aspects of musicianship.

That is not to say that we are not aware of their value: we do. That we also in education try to embed them structurally within our study programmes and curricula becomes clear, for example looking at the 2024 Calohex Learning Outcomes Framework for the Bachelor of Music. Under the umbrella of the Creative and Performing Arts and Design Domain, we find the key dimensions describing the role of creative knowledge, understanding and practice. Just look at these descriptors:

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So yes, also in the domain of Classical Music Performance, we often find creative skills and knowledge in curricula and we do expect students to develop them.: improvisation, interdisciplinary practice, even entrepreneurship and social practices. However, these remain somewhat outside of the core element of our study programmes, which remain score- and composition oriented. After all, when it comes to the pedagogy and the educational focus of our main instrument and vocal classes, our chamber music and ensemble training and our orchestra practice, our focus remains conventional. And when it's time for the final recital, it's still all about playing that second piano concerto as perfectly as possible. The wondering within the core of our craft, within our art, has been sidelined in favour of our ongoing pursuit of technical perfection and artistic certainty.

In other words, our educational practice has not yet caught up with our theoretical insight.

If we are serious about nurturing well-rounded, creatively empowered musicians, then we must address this disconnect. We must begin to reclaim the exploratory, improvisational, and imaginative dimensions of musicianship that have been sidelined in the pursuit of technical certainty. We must cultivate curiosity, risk-taking, and play—not as extracurricular skills, but as essential components of artistic identity. This means: include them within the core of our artform: performance practice, concert practice, technical proficiency and repertoire engagement itself.

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So what should we do to get there? To regain our creativity, our artistic agency?

I would say that that is simple: we start wondering again. Not about **CLICK** 'how should I better play what it says?' but **CLICK** 'what if I don't play what is written?'

What if we know where we start, but not where we will end up? What if we see a rabbit hole, and instead of avoiding it, jump right in, not knowing what we will get ourselves into, who we will meet, what adventures we will have, what mistakes and failures and difficulties we will make and encounter along the way? **CLICK**

It will take longer, absolutely. It will contain risks, and you will make mistakes. But it will be so much more interesting, fun, surprising, and possibly magical.

Let's explore further.

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When we consider what we want: to explore something new, something unexpected, with the idea of creating something novel, we recognise what we are talking about: about creativity. Creativity is a widely used concept, and often assumed to be self-explanatory, commonly associated with words like these:

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However, and perhaps even because it is so widely used, we don't have a real descriptor on how to fully cultivate and train creativity, in all possible different forms, dimensions, intensities and manifestations. It is therefore useful to delve a bit deeper into the concept itself, to explore our own possibilities and rabbit holes.

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Creativity studies are relatively new in social science, roughly since the 1950's. There are different, often complementary ways of approaching the concept, captured by Rhodes into a '4-P-model': through Processes or actions, Products or outcomes, Persons and their personal traits and aptitudes, and the Place or environment. Let me just briefly go a bit into each one of them, to better grab our understanding of it within our domain, Western Classical Music Performance.

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When we look at definitions focusing on the product, they virtually all refer to two conditions:

CLICK novelty and usefulness. In other words, if something is considered creative, it must be new to the field, and it has to meet general expectations, for example in terms of aesthetic qualities. Of course, that all depends on the norms and values of a specific time, place, and domain.

CLICK For instance, Beethoven's decision to add a choir to his Ninth Symphony in 1824 was clearly creative at the time, but a similar move today wouldn't carry the same weight, precisely because the domain has evolved—partly due to Beethoven's own innovation. The same goes for John Cage's 4'33": groundbreaking and creative in 1952, but after its creation, the novelty of the concept diminished; repeating it would no longer be considered creative. In short, the same idea or product might be seen as creative in one context and not in another.

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Creativity and innovation are therefore not absolute, but contextually and socially constructed. They depend on time, culture, and environment. They emerge from the interaction between an individual and their environment. So, while outcomes are evidently important in assessing creativity, their interconnectedness with the other P's makes it clear that they are part of a larger picture. More so: although producing something novel and useful should be the **CLICK** Purpose, the **CLICK** Potential is just as important as the realization. In this view, to achieve a result is actually not essential, and even an inconclusive process can be evaluated as creative. Just think of all ideas and experiments that turn out not to be 'the' right answer, not leading to a definite failure or giving up, but simply inviting to go on and 'fail better'. Just think of Thomas Edison's alleged quote on his invention of the electric lightbulb: **CLICK** "I have not failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Moreover, even when a useful and novel result is achieved, if it did not arise from a creative process or intention, it is not seen as creative – that's why the fifth P: Purpose is also important. For example, a beginner guitarist might accidentally produce an original and aesthetically pleasing sequence of sounds. While the result meets the criteria of novelty and usefulness, it wouldn't be considered a creative achievement. Likewise, if a pianist froze on stage for the duration of 4 minutes and 33 seconds, the effect might resemble Cage's work, but the act itself, or the process leading up to the result, cannot be described as 'creative'.

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Another way to approach the concept of creativity is to look at the person behind the process or product, and their characteristics, experiences, and aptitudes, as well as the way in which they interact dynamically with their environment. Common traits of 'creative people' include these characteristics **CLICK** – not coincidental characteristics that are often attributed to artists. These qualities support creative learning, understood both as the capacity to learn creatively and the ability to apply knowledge in novel ways.

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Creativity, then, involves both the characteristics, experiences and aptitudes of a person, but also their

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capacity and the willingness to move beyond accumulated knowledge. It requires openness to new experiences, a suspension of immediate judgment, and resistance to fixed answers. Think of Glenn Gould's 1981 interpretation of the Goldberg Variations: drastically different from his 1955 version – and actually, from virtually all interpretations up until then -: a divergence only made possible by his willingness to challenge tradition. Or consider how different *Le Sacre du Printemps* would have sounded without Stravinsky's audacity to make a bold move, steering his music away from the expected norms of ballet music.

This is what we might consider as the result of jumping in a rabbit hole. Take the risk, and see where it takes you.

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Still, neither willingness or task-motivation is enough: “You cannot be creative in a field without truly learning the field.” Possessing creative traits alone does not ensure a creative outcome; nor does it guarantee a successful and purposeful process. Quite the contrary: one needs a **CLICK** meaningful understanding of the domain in order to be able to produce creative contributions to it. And this is where our strength does come in: Our famous 10.000 hours. In classical music, domain-specific skills such as craftsmanship, conceptual understanding, disciplined aptitude, and aesthetic sensitivity are absolutely necessary. **CLICK** Mastering these skills, up to the point they become second nature enables performers to use information, use our knowledge, and translate these into an aesthetical and technical valuable result. One can never know too much about a domain - quite the contrary. That’s why we keep continuous learning, lifelong development at the core of our profession. Technical, and other proficiency. On the other hand, that doesn’t necessarily mean that full mastery is needed before engaging in creative processes. **CLICK** You can start training and encouraging it from an earlier stage, even preferably so. That would, or should, safeguard us from becoming too stuck in our ways, into certainty. Because that is a risk: the risk of becoming too conditioned to think outside established patterns, leading to an overemphasis on reproduction, instead of creative exploration.

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Therefor, ideally, creativity involves a balance between exploratory thinking, also known as divergent thinking, where openness and experimentation take precedence, and focused or convergent thinking, which is aimed to guide the process toward a single goal or outcome. After all, while creative processes inherently hold a purpose to produce results, they can also continue evolving after the result is achieved, potentially leading to further developments.

But there is another sort of thinking, articulated by Pierce: **CLICK** abductive thinking. This is a way of thinking and decision taking, somewhere in the middle between divergent and convergent: it is the more or less intuitive feeling what decision is best, with regards to a multitude of options. It is the transition from opening up and exploring all possibilities, to narrowing down and executing the choice until it has become a final product or outcome.

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Of course, this 4P theory is only one of many possible approaches toward the phenomenon Creativity, and one could go much deeper into each aspect as well, luckily. But if we can take away anything from what we just saw, is that creativity is not something that can be seen as a separate subject, or perspective, or goal. It is interwoven into the whole domain it applies to – and in the case of music performance, from the first stage where it becomes clear or known that there will be a performance, through the whole process leading up to it, within a certain context and in full engagement with the domain and the field, all centered around and driven by a central figure: the performer themselves.

However, if we take this back to how we approach and teach creative skills in our educational programmes, we see that they are treated as separate skills. In many of our curricula, we find training of creative skills and coaching of creative attitudes. They will absolutely contribute to the general skillset of our students and thereby of the future representatives of the field. But it seldom has a real impact on our domain, namely the performance of existing repertoire. There we still see a strong adherence to the written text, there we see little room for true, in-depth, authentic creativity. Authenticity in this sense is not contributed to the reproduction of the written work, but to the personal, artistic contribution by the individual creating it in, by, and through the performance.

In other words, if we do not bring these skills into our domain and let them interact with what and who is part of it, the domain itself, Western Classical Music Performance Practice, will not have the opportunity to evolve. We will become more and more specialized in performing what is there, what is written for us – we will become even better performers of music. But at the same time, we deprive the domain from natural development, we starve it from new input which is absolutely necessary if we want to protect its relevance, its situated value, its liveliness in the here and now, and in the future.

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Although this all may sound familiar and logical, it still doesn't resonate practically. It remains theoretical, conceptual. So let's make it more real: Let's take a look at what this could mean for us, as performers, as artists that navigate in a domain that is characterised by, briefly put, two main elements:

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first, a tremendous emphasis on domain-specific technical, practical skills and knowledge, and second,

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repertoire. Let's explore how we could balance these

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with a more creative mindset, with creative actions and traits, with the aim of creating something new, and useful, within Classical Music Performance Practice.

Here I would like to build on a classification that was made with regard to music theatre – but which also provides a good framework for Western Classical Music Performance.

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The first category is Interpretation. This represents the most conventional approach to repertoire, in which the score is followed as closely as possible, with a strong emphasis on maintaining its structure, timing, tempo, form, etc. By developing an interpretation, musical performance becomes an (intra)personal creative activity, in which performers assimilate available information and material — the score, theoretical and contextual knowledge, knowledge of performance practice, analytical and technical skills, self-awareness, etc. —, reorganize it in a logical and feasible manner, and prioritize certain artistic values in different ways; internalizing it but nevertheless remaining quite close to other traditional renditions. The interpretative performance may be subtly creative and even novel and meaningful to the performer but introduces limited to negligible originality for the audience - which also makes it most consistent with the existing frame of reference and stylistic and socio-cultural expectations. cultural framework of performance traditions.

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Let me give you an example: Nigel Kennedy's 1998 rendition of Vivaldi's Four Seasons. In those days, he was already considered an *enfant terrible*, not as much because of how or what he played – which is, admittedly, of high standard – but the way in which he presented himself. Combat boots, a bit punk, eccentric to say the least – but still, what he played was undeniably the Four Seasons. And such, not that different from other interpretations.

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A step further could be described as Arrangements or Adaptations. This is a more creative approach to repertoire. The score is deconstructed, and elements are restructured, blended with others, and rebuilt into a new composition. These elements may include melodic and harmonic components but can also extend to parameters such as instrumentation, tempo, rhythm, orchestration, dynamics, style, and staging, as well as interdisciplinary additions, for example. For the audience, it is evident that the performance extends beyond a mere personal interpretation of the score, with the creative and innovative elements clearly perceptible as such.

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In 2003, Red Priest, a somewhat eccentric baroque ensemble, arranged the Four Seasons for their quartet. As you can hear, it is still recognisably the Four Seasons, however they play with tempo, instrumentation, embellishments, small improvisations, etc. In this way, they actually honour the baroque spirit of performers' artistic agency, but in a totally different way from the HIP(P) movement.

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With Transformationsⁱⁱⁱ, the creative treatment goes a step further, moving toward autonomous creation. Here, elements from a score are highlighted but completely reshaped into a new musical work. This can be done, for example, by incorporating pieces from other, or even entirely new, repertoires, by improvising freely on the used materials, or by mixing them intensively with other disciplines or technologies. The basic elements are still somewhat detectable, but they are revisited and distorted in such a way that they essentially form a new original.

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Let's go back to Nigel Kennedy, but now to his 2015 version: *The New Four Seasons*. In this version he no longer solely holds on to the original score nor its instrumentation but adds among others a vocal quartet, a jazz trumpet and an electric guitar, as well as sound effects. In addition, he renamed the original movements and supplementing them with newly written ones.

Let's listen to Spring once again, this time with new instrumentation, sound effects, a newly composed transition and re-imagined original material.

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Creation is then the final, most advanced level of creative manipulation. Reflections of, or references to, existing repertoire can still play a role here, but the novelty takes precedence over the original composition. For a repertoire-based art form, this is, of course, the farthest from the comfort zone. Improvisation seems to be a first form, co-composition or instant composition, whether or not in collaboration with a composer, choreographer, dancer, or other artist, are other ways in which the performer explicitly manifests themselves as a creator.

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A well-known example is Max Richter's vision of *The Four Seasons*, where new technology, alternate instrumentation and extensive copy-editing resulted in a surprising and daring reconceptualization of one of the most well-known works of the Western classical canon, keeping only about 25% of the original.

Schematically, this would look something like this.

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All of these interventions, manipulations, or interpretations remain rooted in repertoire and continue to require discipline-specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes. At the same time, they each incorporate varying degrees of creativity. The more creative the intervention, the more personal the result becomes—and the less it resembles other versions of the same repertoire.

While these more creative approaches may be included in curricula—perhaps in improvisation classes or elective modules—they rarely find their way to the stage of a final exam. In other words, we still don't provide the kind of environment necessary for students to fully develop as creative performers. Or put differently: we may expect students to become performative creators, yet in reality we keep focussing on reproducing the structures and expectations that keep the system in place—thus continuing the cycle of stagnation.

So perhaps we too must begin to wonder. What can we do, as educators and performers? Perhaps there is a rabbit hole for us as well.

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Let's return briefly to the concept of Place. The Place refers not only to the environment, the context or domain—Western Classical Music Performance—but also to the broader field: the entire ecosystem of professionals, institutions, and audiences that define its norms, expectations, and conditions.

As performers, we must understand the domain deeply, but also recognize how we, how the field influences it. The field plays a vital role in either supporting or stifling creativity. It can nourish, stimulate, and sustain innovation—or, conversely, allow the domain to become static, risking irrelevance. In such a scenario, Western Classical Music Performance risks becoming little more than an “imaginary museum of musical works.”

Think, for example, of the infamous premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, dismissed by its first audience as “Le Massacre du Tympan.” It's difficult now to imagine the outrage it provoked, given how foundational it became to the evolution of 20th-century music. But its reception reminds us that true innovation is often disruptive—and that it can take time, patience, and persistence for a field to absorb new ideas. Crucially, *The Rite* was not discarded. It was reintroduced, contextualized, and ultimately embraced as a landmark.

The way a field is structured—how it deals with risk, experimentation, and even failure—is thus crucial. It determines whether or not new ideas have room to grow.

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And that is where we, in Higher Music Education, still have work to do.

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Not that repertoire study should be discarded—

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it remains vital for students to develop domain expertise and technical mastery. But performance education must go further: it should actively

CLICK teach creativity and embrace risk. Main-instrument teachers, conductors, ensemble and chamber music teachers are crucial in this shift: they can introduce purposeful challenges—impasses, open spaces, time for experimentation—that disrupt the path of certainty and invite exploration. It's the transition from predictability to risk—from *dubito ergo sum* ("I doubt, therefore I am") to *dubito ergo creo* ("I doubt, therefore I create").

CLICK Intuition becomes a key trait for creative performers. It is tacit, instinctive knowledge—an anticipatory sense about which path might be richest—developed through practice and critical self-evaluation. The more we work in this way, the stronger and more precise that intuitive sensibility becomes.

This skill must be trained—students can learn how to combine intuition, experimentation, and reflection effectively. It's not just an optional extra—it is the responsibility of educators to help cultivate it

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Doubt and uncertainty are not threats—they are catalysts for growth. We begin with what we know and move into the uncharted. Uncertainty enables adaptability, fresh perspectives, and new artistic possibilities—an antidote to "one-size-fits-all" paradigms.

Students can indeed rise to this challenge. Initially, it may feel uncomfortable. In my workshops and masterclasses, students often report disorientation: losing control, not getting explicit instructions, or feeling adrift after years of training for precision—their comfort zone.

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Yet structured uncertainty—learning environments where analysis and experimentation coexist with appropriate evaluation—can create safe space for creative risk. Guided by mentors, students can learn that uncertainty can—and should—be valued, both by themselves and by juries and audiences.

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Crucially, this requires new forms of reflection and assessment criteria. Creative activity doesn't diminish performance standards—it reshapes them. We need reflective approaches that include abductive thinking: a blend of intuition, pattern recognition, and tacit knowledge that guides the artist through experimentation toward insight.

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Let me be clear: there is nothing wrong with traditional interpretation. The point is not to abandon the canon or stop playing what is written. Rather, the point is to recognize that we have choices—and that those choices are artistic and creative, not merely technical.

This continuum of performative possibilities, along with the proposed model for performative music creation, invites us to rethink how we educate musicians. If we truly want to prepare the next generation for a broader artistic role, we must teach them more than how to play scores. We must teach them how to think with and beyond them. That means fostering curiosity, encouraging risk-taking, and empowering creative agency.

This is not about tearing down what exists. It is about shifting the emphasis: from perfection to exploration, from reproduction to creation, from reverence to dialogue.

So here is my invitation—alongside Alice's: don't be afraid to take a different route. Let yourself wonder. Ask questions. Explore. Jump into the rabbit hole and see where it takes you.

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Yes, this will be uncomfortable. Taking risks means accepting the possibility of failure—and in a world of high standards, that can feel both liberating and terrifying. But believing in yourself means daring to leave the trodden path. It means learning, growing, becoming—perhaps even in ways we cannot yet know. It means becoming a better performer, a better educator, better leaders by, through and for music. Maybe we can draw more inspiration from other famous girls in literature.

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Like Dorothy and her friends:

To be determined, as Dorothy herself—find your own way, even when it's not clear where it leads, home or elsewhere.

To be intelligent, as the scarecrow—have faith in your own mind, and trust that what you do matters.

To be brave, as the lion—dare to take risks, to fail, and next time, to fail better.

And in doing so, become a better human, as the tin man. Because when we support each other and facilitate one another's growth, our music can help make the world more humane.

So: perhaps it's now the best time to put on some comfortable red shoes and just start doing it.

SLIDE 39

And if there is still a need for a bit of encouragement, take it from Pippi Longstocking: "I've never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that."

ⁱ Sergey Rachmaninov, *Piano Concerto in C minor, opus 18*, Sergey Rachmaninov (piano), and Philadelphia Orchestra, cond. by Leopold Stokowski (Naxos, 1929).

ⁱⁱ E.g. Christopher Small, '*Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*'; John Rink, 'The Work of the Performer'.

ⁱⁱⁱ Coussens uses the term "radical edits", Evelyne Coussens, 'Tweestromenland tussen repertoire en creatie'.