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APPENDIX II
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The Notion of Seyir as a Conceptual and Typological Scheme for Comprovisation – pp. 11-23


Dimitris Papageorgiou
PhD in Musical Composition, 2017
The University of Edinburgh
Searching for a Voice

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“it takes only a moment’s reflection to recognize that lines are everywhere”
Tim Ingold, 2007

Introduction

Lines, paths, places, people, events, durations; points and instants connected by continuous
and discontinuous threads; listening, practicing, reading, questioning, thinking, making
comparisons and judgments; figure and ground, symmetries and asymmetries, local and
general morphologies; an outside-of-time sonorous multitude in constant flux and an in-
time irreversible temporal flow (see Xenakis; Serres; Ingold).

Could this be a topology of a musical practice?

The discussion that follows will focus on the line of thought that connects and enframes
certain concepts with my practice as a violinist, improviser, and composer working in the
realm of free improvisation. I am about to sketch the scenography of this practice by
unfolding a story which in a way might appear to be predictable and clichéd.

From history told, you can tell everything. All narratives have value, all theories
as well…What concerns scenographies is always, and banally so, well observed.
(Serres 51-52)

I would like to start with the assumption that free improvisation can be understood as the
*techne* (τέχνη, tékhnē) of creating a spontaneous composition. Although we experience its
realization as it happens, in real time, with our ears and eyes, holding our instruments in
readiness, it still remains a musical synthesis. The intention when using the words
*composition* and *synthesis* is not to examine and recall techniques for controlling and
organizing sounds in the context of relevant practices, but rather to re-enchant this *putting-
together* with the dynamic of the processes that configure the non-hierarchical relationships
between the agents that shape our experiential patterns—an exploration that perhaps
reveals to oneself her/his own unique *voice*.

Experiential

Harry Lehmann, in his article “Avant-garde today, A theoretical model of Aesthetic
Modernity,” reconstructs the history of Western modern art as a history of progressive
differentiation. Lehmann’s thesis is that the three commonly accepted art-historical
daeraus of Western music—the modern age to classical modernism, the historical avant-
garde, and postmodernism—were the result of a transformation that took place not only
through stylistic changes, but also through a continuous process of negation, re-inclusion,
and increasing autonomy between *the concept, the medium, and the work of art*. Lehmann
suggests in his concluding remarks that we are now in a phase of reflexive modernism, where the autonomy of all three—medium, concept, work—creates the possibility for “an aesthetic communication...that neither presents nor a-presents the world, but rather...reveals the world in the state it has reached” (33), and he writes:

Art can be produced as an open work, a closed work or an anti-work; it can take advantage of both old and new media or avoid any predefined medium...With reference to these seemingly unlimited possibilities, we are faced anew with the question of the aesthetic purpose... (Lehmann 38)

And in regards to this aesthetic purpose, Lehmann suggests that:

[I]t is not a matter of representing a self-description of society that has already been socially accepted, but rather the presentation of an experiential pattern inscribed upon the work of art that is taken up by the individual on a trial basis... (Lehmann 37)

There is a tendency to understand the actual performance and sounding of a non-idiomatic free-improvisation as an open work, or as a figure that reflects the hybrid state our world has reached. These are factors that, for some, might bring the practice closer to the avant-garde of our times. However, the risk we face if we focus our attention only on such implications is to render the praxis of improvisation into a commodification and draw conclusions that could only be of use to art critics trying to find significance in what we do.

In contrast, the point of interest here is the suggestion to understand as the main aesthetic purpose of our times the exercise of inscribing upon our artefacts our unique experiential content. This inevitabling raises some interesting questions in regards to issues of authority and control over observations that emerge from this process of searching-for-a-voice (see Parker) inside oneself, especially when one considers the “roles and identities, both material and immaterial taken by [the agents]” that shape our experiential patterns as well as their effects on these observations (Nelson, “What Is Sound?” 5). Such a kind of awareness can perhaps open up the individual to a negotiation with the unmediated aspects, qualities, and conditions of the undertaken exercise, a negotiation that I would say is certain to end in favour of the irreducible and, as a result, to possibly re-enchant our art with some grace and modesty. In other words, against “a rhetoric of control and domination,” we are asked anew to consider the activity of expression as “entering into relationship with one’s surroundings” and to rethink of art as techne (Nelson, “What Is Sound?” 2; Lachenmann 22).

**Techne**

In his book *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Martin Heidegger suggests that the Greek word *techne* “signifies neither craft nor art, and not at all the technical”; it rather “denotes...a mode of knowing” (184). *Techne* as experienced knowledge “belongs to bringing forth, to poiesis,” where “something concealed comes into un-concealment” (Heidegger, “The
Question Concerning Technology” 13, 11). A human being is the fourth factor in this chain of materials, forms, and functions that “let what is not yet present arrive into presencing [sic]” (Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” 10). She/he is the agent that is “challenged forth into [this] revealing,” with the artwork being the gestalt, the morphe (μορφή) that emerges from this gathering together of forces that challenge her/him “to reveal”; a condition that Heidegger called gestell or “enframing” (“The Question Concerning Technology” 21; The Origin of the Work of Art 189).

If we assume, then, that we are challenged “to reveal” and that our musical outputs are instances of this bringing-forth, how then does “enframing” manifest itself? What functions as the ground to the emergent figure?

Michel Serres, in the beginning of his book *Genesis*, illustrates this manifestation with a short tall tale:

As I was sailing along that summer, under a dazzling sky, and drifting lazily in the wind and sun, I found myself, one fine morning, in the green and stagnant waters of the Sargasso Sea, at a mysterious spot where thousands of tiny sparks, all shapes and all colours, were glimmering crazily in the early morning light. Bearing off, I was dumbfounded to see an area almost two hundred and fifty acres square entirely populated by dancing bottles. There were countless little vessels, and each one no doubt bore its message; each had its freight and each had its buoyant little roll, ballasted with seawrack and rockery; each carried its hope and despair. The coiling winds had compelled them all there, from far and near, from a thousand different quadrants. Their constant and perilous collision made for an acute and cacophonic carillon, and this noise mounted heavenward, wafted to the horizon, it filled all space with giddy ecstasy. (Serres 1)

Later in his book, Serres suggests that it is the noise of the multiple—the cacophonic carillon—that acts as both the background and the medium of phenomena:

The silence of the sea is mere appearance. Background noise may well be the ground of our being. It may be that our being is not at rest, it may be that it is not in motion, it may be that our being is disturbed. The background noise never ceases; it is limitless, continuous, unending, unchanging. It has itself no background, no contradictory [sic]. How much noise must be made to silence noise? And what terrible fury puts fury in order? Noise cannot be a phenomenon; every phenomenon is separated from it, a silhouette on a backdrop, like a beacon against the fog, as every message, every cry, every call, every signal, must be separated from the hubbub that occupies silence, in order to be, to be perceived, to be known, to be exchanged. As soon as a phenomenon appears, it leaves the noise; as soon as a form looms up or pokes through, it reveals itself by veiling noise. (Serres 13)
Tim Ingold, in his lecture “Thinking Through Making,” provides a similar description of the multiple when he invites us to think of the world “not as a network, where everything is a particular node and we draw all the lines connecting them all up, but as a meshwork where everything is a line and all lines get tangled up together…and those lines are the lives of ourselves, of other creatures, of the things around us.” He goes on to say that in order to understand what ‘making’ is, we need to think of creativity as a process that loops forward rather than moving backwards, from the finished object to the idea that gave rise to it. For Ingold, this means:

Joining with the movements of materials and awareness as they feel their way ahead in real time…and such feeling forward is essentially a process of improvisation; finding one’s way…where nothing is ever finished; every artefact is a way station…an on-going binding together of material flows and sensory awareness. (“Thinking Through Making”)

This understanding of knowledge as a feeling forward, finding one’s voice from within the sonorous multiple, seems to me like the key to understanding Heidegger’s concept of “enframing” as a dynamic and temporal condition that challenges a human being “to reveal”—especially when thinking of free improvisation, although it could possibly be said for what we conventionally think of as composition.

For one thing, an instrumental practice joins with the movement of the hand as a process of understanding what the hand can do. It is an on-going feedback loop between crystallization and flow that constantly refines this knowledge from the inside; a library of techniques and sounds shaped from the different musical landscapes one has experienced and practiced, ready to be recalled, used, and transformed. At the same time, it involves experiencing the “battle and racket” between the different perspectives carried by the multiple inside oneself (Serres 52); opening up to the meshwork of tangled-up lines and listening to its noise; reposing old and raising new questions; trying to solve the compositional problems of bringing together ideas and materials; attempting the synthesis. It is a journey “on the high seas” (Serres 13), and therefore a nauseous process of confronting, sharing, and forming relationships with agents, both material and immaterial, that constitute this non-hierarchical web of threads, wires, and channels of communication. The journey is an exploration that reveals the seafarer’s role not only as a craftsman assigned the task of “making” within this sonorous landscape of the experiential, but also as a medium of the emergent figure. The sailor in Serres’s story, as a carrier of noise—a unity of “sheltered multiplicities”—becomes “a pure capacity” for bringing forth a sound, a piece of music, a voice (Serres 3, 31).

Proteus

Similar accounts can be found in the words of improvisers themselves. Evan Parker, in his interview with Frances-Marie Uitti, emphasizes the importance of practice, repetition, and memorization as a process of forming a relationship with the instrument; a “kind of biofeedback” as he says in the Amplified Gesture documentary, where now and then you
lose control and suddenly the instrument imposes its own will upon you (Parker 415; Hopkins). In Parker’s own words:

You couple yourself with your instrument and it teaches you as much as you tell it what to do...by hearing the way it’s feeding back to you, you learn to control it better; a very dynamic and sensitive process...you have to have a goal, something you are trying to do...and when practicing that might be a very specific thing...[and] every so often something will go wrong and you will lose control. But in that moment you are given the opportunity to learn something else that the instrument can do...[as if] the nature of the instrument and its own will in relation to its destiny, its set of intentions in its relationship to you, make difficult to distinguish yourself and your own intentions. (Hopkins)

This aspect of losing oneself in the process of improvisation is also described by Eddie Prevost in the same film:

We are not trying to command the instrument; we are actually trying to explore the materials, to see where they will lead...we are looking for the responses which we can find through this material we work with...letting it unfold, letting it happen is the key to it...what we do is offer a different view of the world which is somehow translated through an awareness of people making music in the way described. (Hopkins)

Likewise, in the beginning of his book *Sounding the Full Circle*, Malcolm Goldstein writes:

There is no pre-set structure; rather it is the process of discovering new qualities and relationships, that is the flow of music. Melodies of sound...are created that evolve out of the interplay between the resonance of the violin and the gesture of the violinist. (Goldstein)

From a personal perspective, working in the field of free improvisation and having practiced to a certain extent the Middle Eastern maqam improvisation system, I find it extremely interesting the way this state of losing oneself is described by these two improvisation practices. Middle Eastern maqam improvisation—largely called *taqasim*—is based upon an intricate theoretical system that demands years of commitment and thorough practice and it is closed in regards to its mediums of construction and communication. One of its functions, however, is to act as a vehicle of ecstatic arousal both for the listener and for the performer (*Saltanah* state). The ethnomusicologist A. J. Racy describes *Saltanah* in his book *Making Music in the Arab World* as a state in which “a performer becomes musically self-absorbed, and experiences well-focused and intense musical sensations...saltanah is creative ecstasy” (Racy 120). In a similar way, Jean During writes in the book *The Art of Persian Music*:

A state often associated with Oriental modal music is when the interpreter is submerged, as if possessed by the essence of the mode or the rhythmic cycle,
imposing on him its own internal law, without his having the impression of being a voluntary participant in the exercise. His own performance becomes unpredictable to himself, and that could be in itself the height of improvisation. Hence the idea that music comes from an outer source and the performer only picks it up. (During 96-97)

It seems, then, that the unforeseeable is an inherent characteristic of and a thread that runs throughout different improvisation practices. If this is true, then we perhaps approach with more confidence the core qualities—or in Heidegger’s terms, the essence, that which “endures...what remains permanently [through time]” —of improvisation (“The Question Concerning Technology” 30). Autoschediasm—from the Greek Αυτοσχεδίασμα, Αυτοσχεδιάζειν (autoschediasma, autoschediazin), “to extemporize”—whether or not it involves specific media and materials in the conventional sense, whether it is stylistically classified as free, jazz, or Middle Eastern, inspires a freedom which, in Heidegger words, “governs the open in the sense of the cleared and lighted up” (“The Question Concerning Technology” 25). In other words, improvisation becomes an artistic medium that brings all participants, either practitioners or listeners, closer to the “ground of our being” (Serres 13). It creates the possibility for “an absent world [to] descend into presence...[like the] body of the dancer...the body of the possible, blank, naked, non-existent”; it becomes “a proteus taking on any shape” (Serres 40, 14).

But improvisation also requires responsabilité, as Joëlle Léandre pointed out during her workshop at the vs. Interpretation symposium; a request and a calling towards humans to re-enchant our forms of knowledge—either artistic or scientific, either experiential or theoretical—with some grace and modesty, and to bring the self back into its true nature, into the modes of revealing allotted to us.

**Conclusion**

The rethinking of creativity as bringing-forth (poiesis) suggests an understanding of free improvisation as the techne of ‘making’ a spontaneous composition; an attempt to bring together sounds, worlds, perspectives, and ideas, and as a dialogue between the agents that shape our unique experiential content; a dynamic and exploratory process, investigating the synthesis between the flow of materials and the different realities inside oneself that enframe one’s practice. At the same time, it involves losing oneself, opening up to a freedom that installs the capacity to bring forth, with the sounds coming from the people freely improvising on stage being the gestalt streams that “cohabit in time” (Nelson, “Cohabiting in Time”). It requests from human beings—vessels that carry their own messages—to become the medium of the emergent figure, while listening to each other, and experiencing the unforeseeable as governed by “the flow of music” (Goldstein).
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my former composition teacher, Grigoris Soultanis, for starting me off on this journey and instilling in me the notion of composition as a process of investigating the synthesis between the different realities inside oneself.


The Notion of Seyir as a Conceptual and Typological Scheme for Comprovisation

Annotation

With this paper, drawing from Iannis Xenakis’ theoretical observations on musical architectures (outside-time, temporal, in-time), and Sandeep Bhagwati’s conceptual framework of notational perspective and comprovisation, a term which attempts to encompass practices that blend improvisation and composition, I aim to present the context and the outcomes of my practice-based research. During the past few years, I have been exploring ways that the temporal structure and the in-time modality of my violin improvisation performance-praxis could be transduced into the symbolic level, in order to generate a notational strategy for a comprovisation practice involving other performers. Throughout this process, I have been examining the outside-time architecture of a modal music tradition. This paper presents the notion of seyir, used in Middle Eastern makam music to describe the prescriptive path of melodic phases within a makam scale, denoting the “character” of a makam modal entity, and the ways it has informed the developed notational approach both conceptually and typologically. Drawing from the concept of seyir and makam modal music, the musical term melody is understood here as modulation and τρόπος (τρόπος – “way, mode, manner”) of transition between sound-configurations, in an attempt to re-introduce the modal into our current music-making practices.

Keywords: comprovisation, improvisation, composition, seyir, τρόπος, modality, outside-time, temporal, in-time, music notation, tablature notation, gestalt, sounding-gestalt, sound-configuration, melody, Iannis Xenakis, Middle Eastern makam music.

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.
“...”
Kublai Kan asks.
“...”
Marco answers, “...”
Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me.
Kublai Kan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds:
“...”
Polo answers: “Without stones there is no arch.”
Italo Calvino (1972), Invisibles cities

1. Melody and Musical Architectures

Iannis Xenakis, in his book Formalized Music, proposes a distinction between outside-time, temporal, and in-time musical architectures or categories (Xenakis, 1992: 183). The outside-time denotes the geometry of a musical system; a space where structures and sound organisms are being born “distinguished from their temporal manifestation”. The temporal is the ordering and the actual occurrence of events, or else, the “blank blackboard” of metrical time where “symbols and relationships” can be inscribed (ibid.: 192). For Xenakis, a compositional element, a melody or a chord, is created when an outside-time structure is related to a temporal category (ibid.: 183). The realization of these elements denotes the in-time, “a play that makes [the outside-time and the temporal] pass into the instantaneous, the present, which being evanescent does not exist” (Xenakis, 1969: 51, cited in Exarchos, 2012: 4).

If, in a kind of linguistic genealogy, we were to contemplate the musical term melody, we could perhaps observe that Xenakis’ theoretical conceptions are already encapsulated in the word’s origins. The word melody is derived from the Greek, μελοδία (μελόδια); a compound consisting of the words μέλος (μέλος, which means, “part of a group or body, member or limb”, and ὁδῇ (ὁδῇ), which means, “song, tale, story”. The noun μέλος (μέλος) is also related to the verb μέλο (μέλο, μέλωμα) which means “to take an interest in, to be an object of care or thought”, according to Liddell and Scott lexicon. On that account, the origin of the word melody implies that a thoughtful process is at work; one where certain relationships between a whole and its parts are composed outside-time, into a form that carries the potential of becoming in-time: a rhapsody to be sung, a tale to be told, a melody to be performed. In a like manner, by turning the word into an adjective and changing the term into a phrase – melodic line, melodic process, or, melodic development – its temporal dimension as flow, movement, or direction towards points or attractors is emphasized.

It seems then that the theoretical conception of melody needs to be examined as a dynamic system that relates to two main aspects:
1. The geometry of materials and processes that compose an outside-time architecture from which a melodic line might emerge;
2. The agents that bring into life a melodic gestalt by realizing its functions in an in-time irreversible temporal flow.
The enquiring into the phenomenon of melody through the lens of these two aspects becomes even more important when a compositional practice introduces improvisation as a compositional element, for which I would like to use the term comprovisation. Such compositional approaches not only give a significant amount of expressive freedom to the performers, but also suggest a re-configuration of the notion of melody within the framework of the musical content they introduce.

Following on from the above, in the next sections, I will discuss the two aforementioned points regarding the phenomenon of melody, in the context of my practice-based research. In particular, I will present the ways I have been exploring the notion of seyir, used in Middle Eastern makam music to describe the melodic development of a makam modal entity, as a conceptual and typological scheme for the notation of my comprovisations.

2. Improvisation and Composition

According to Richard Barrett’s view, improvisation is “a method of composition, one which is characterized by spontaneous musical actions and reactions” (Barrett, 2014: 61–62). Similarly to Barrett’s proposal, I have tried to suggest elsewhere that if we were to re-think creativity as a “bringing-forth” (poiesis; Heidegger, 1977: 11, 13), and composition as a process of investigating the synthesis between the different realities inside oneself, then improvisation can be seen as the techne (téchnē, tékhnē) of making a spontaneous composition (Papageorgiou, 2015: 45). In this sense, an artwork, either improvisation or composition, can be understood as a figure; a gestalt that emerges from the noise, or else the mishwork that constitutes our experiential patterns, and enframes our distinct creative practices in a dynamic and temporal manner towards this poetical bringing-forth (see Heidegger, 1977&1993; Serres, 1997; Ingold, 2007). Accordingly, the irreducible processes through which our unique experiential structures impart their qualities into the unforeseeable operations of musical decision-making, render all participants (performers, improvisers, composers) not only equal, but also as the collective medium of the emergent figure.

The framework of thoughts presented above is the lens through which I have been exploring the materiality of my practice (and vice versa), both as an improviser and as a composer, and in a kind of a feedback loop between the two. Regarding the former, and in a self-effacing manner, it is interesting for me to see the ways in which my violin improvisations have been transformed throughout the years into a “non-idiomatic” form, following Derek Bailey’s terminology. This transformation was the result of an explorative process that involved a “questioning of musical language” (Bailey, 1992: 84); a wrangling with the sound-historicity of the instrument, and an interaction with different communities of creative practitioners that influenced and reflected back into this process. For the sake of argument, I could perhaps describe the in-time manifestation of my current improvisation practice as a performance-generated “melodic” line on the violin, involving an opened-ended materiality, ranging from pitched sounds to unconventional playing and extreme extended techniques, mainly guided by the gestures and actions required to arrive at a particular sound.4

During the past few years, I have been researching methods that would allow me to bridge the two practices. Borrowing Xenakis’ words, I have been trying to discover the outside-time architecture enclosed in the open-ended character of my improvised sounding-gestures, to transduce these into the symbolic level, and communicate their in-time τρόπος (τρόπος – “mode, way, manner”) to other performers. At the same time, I was interested in developing a notational device that would allow me to present, in the score, the “internal relations between sound-configurations” (Tenney, 1973: 1–2) of a composition, while giving performers a setting for structured improvisation.

It seemed to me that in order to introduce the notion of “modality” into my compositional and notational practice, I had to examine the outside-time architecture of a modal system. Turkish and Middle Eastern makam music appeared like the ideal field for investigation, mainly because of reasons of familiarity and closeness. To be more specific, in the past, I had the chance as a performer to engage practically with Greek folk music; a tradition that demonstrates some similar characteristics with the makam phenomenon, considering the

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1 The term comprovisation is discussed further in section 4 of this paper.
2 Here I am referring to musical decision-making that occurs in both practices; either throughout the process of composing, re-hearsing, and performing a musical piece, or, in a solo/collaborative improvisation setting.
3 Derek Bailey introduces the terms “idiomatic” and “non-idiomatic” in order to describe two main forms of improvisation. With the term “idiomatic” he aims to recognise any form of extemporization that is “concerned with the expression of an idiom [while] taking[ing] its identity and motivation from that idiom”. With the term “non-idiomatic” he aims to denote a method of musical creation which is “most usually found in so-called free improvisation, and while it can be highly stylized, it is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity” (Bailey, 1992: xi-xii).
4 Some sound examples that perhaps can illustrate this description, can be found in the following link: http://www.dimitrispapa -georgiou.com/improvisation
common history of this geographic region. In addition, *makam* music not only encapsulates the *outside-time* modal structures of the past, both in its composed and improvised forms, but its theory is documented, and its praxis is still alive today.

3. *Makam* and *Seyir*

The term *makam* has been used since the 15th–16th centuries by different regions of the core Islamic world to describe their art music. Although the *in-time* manifestation of *makam* music as a melodic line, either composed or improvised, remains quite the same throughout this geographical area, there are differences regarding both the actual praxis and the theoretical conception of the system between the regions within it. That being said, this paper will focus only on what is known as the Ottoman *makam* composition/improvisation tradition, which developed in the late-19th and early-20th centuries into the modern Turco-Arabian *makam* theoretical system. In particular, I will present some basic theoretical concepts following Walter Feldman’s ethno-musicological studies that document Dimitrie Cantemir’s (1673–1723) early-17th century writings on the music composed and performed inside the Ottoman court. These will be followed by an introduction to the current theory of intervals and the basic modal nuclei. The presentation will close by discussing the notion of *seyr*.

The first step that Cantemir made towards theorizing Ottoman *makam* practice was to introduce its general scale in the form of textual instructions accompanied by a visual representation of the placement of the note-names on the neck of the fretted instrument *tanbûr*. The gamut of the system consisted of sixteen basic scale degrees (*tamâm perdeler*, or, whole frets), and seventeen secondary scale degrees (*nâ–tamâm perdeler*, literally “incomplete”, or, half frets; Feldman, 1996: 195, 201–203). (Fig. 1)

![Diagram](image1.png)

Figure 1. Illustration made by the author, as depicted in Ozan Yarman’s (1996) *79-Tone Tuning and Theory for Turkish Maqam Music* (p. 69). The gamut of the system presented in Dimitrie Cantemir’s early-17th century writings, showing the placement of the general scale on the neck of the fretted instrument *tanbûr*, including the Turkish names of the notes and their relevant intervallic distances; written in bold are the sixteen basic scale degrees (*tamâm perdeler*, or whole frets).
The word *makam* means “place, spot, state” and as a term it was coupled with a note-name to define a mode by its position (*makam*) upon the general scale (ibid.: 196, 198–199). Cantemir grouped modal entities into three main categories: i) “independent” (*müfred* makams; ii) “compound” (*müreckel* makams, and; iii) “compound/combinations” (*terkîbs*). Although it falls beyond the scope of this paper to present the differences between these categories, it is important to note that *müfred makams* are understood as modes that develop around a central axis, while *terkîbs* are compound forms of two or more modes that are subordinate to the one whose central axis becomes the *finalis* (*karar*) of the melody (ibid.: 223, 230–233).

In the beginning of the 20th century, Suphi Zühdü Ezgi (1869–1962) and Hüseyin Sadeddin Arel (1869–1955) among others, codified Cantemir’s general scale, the intervallic relations, and the basic modal nuclei of the system, in Western music notation. The current theory of intervals involves such discrete units as 1, 4, 5, 8, and 9 commas. The basic modal nuclei are six main tetrachords and pentachords (*genres*) of twenty-two and thirty-one commas respectively. *Makam* scales are created either by conjunct juxtaposition, or by conjunct juxtaposition and iteration of the *genres* resulting in octave-scales of fifty-three commas 

(Fig. 2)

The *seyir* of a mode, or else, its melodic movement within a *makam* scale, is that which gives a modal entity its “character”. As Feldman writes, the word *seyir* originates from the Arab verb *sâra*, which means “to move, to set out, to travel” (Feldman, 1996: 257), and as a musical term it can be understood to be a prescriptive path of melodic phases, an *outside-time* structure of melodic stages, following Xenakis, which transforms a sequence of notes into a *makam* mode.

![Diagram of makam modes](image)

**Figure 2.** Illustration made by the author. From top to bottom:

i) The units of the current theory of intervals and their equivalent sharps and flats in Western music notation;

ii) The basic *genres* (six tetrachords and pentachords) of Turkish *makam* theory, as depicted in Murat Aydemir (2012) *Turkish Music makam guide* (pp. 22–23)

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9 The closest approximation of the smallest unit in the current theory of intervals is the Holdrian comma; 53-tet, or, \([2^{\frac{n}{53}}]\), which for \(n=1\) gives a frequency ratio of 1.0131641 that equals to approximately 22.642 cents of pitch difference. However, Özan Yarman’s important empirical measurements suggest that practitioners perform intervals even smaller than that of the Holdrian comma. He goes on by saying that a closer approximation to the subtle pitch nuances performed by musicians is of the order of 159-tet (Yarman, 2008: 26–30, 87–128).

Figure 3 shows an example of two modes sharing an identical position on the gamut that can be distinguished only on the basis of their melodic development. As will be discussed later, the seyir of a makam is mainly transmitted orally, and therefore nuances between different teachers and schools do exist. However, the outside-time sketch of each of these prescriptive melodic phases has not been altered much throughout the years. Following on from this, Figure 3 is an illustration made from my personal notes, presenting the makam Uşşak and makam Beyâti melodic stages combining Ciniçen Tanrikorur’s and Murat Aydemir’s suggested seyirs (Aydemir, 2012: 106–111; Tanrikorur, 1994).

As shown in Figure 3, although makam Uşşak and makam Beyâti originate from the same makam scale (an Uşşak tetrachord and a Bûselik pentachord in conjunct juxtaposition), the seyirs of the two modes are different:

- **Makam Uşşak** has as a point of entry the first degree of the scale. It will then ascend by binary steps to the fourth degree; the dominant in this case.7 It might ascend for a while to the sixth degree, but then will descend back to the first degree by binary steps. Its characteristic note is the note *segâh* – note B on the third line; one comma lower than B natural, which in makam Uşşak is actually played 2.5 to 3 commas lower – on which the makam will suspend while descending. Before concluding on the first degree of the scale, it might move into a *rast* tetrachord from the note *yegâh* (note D, a fifth below the tonic).

- **Makam Beyâti** has as a point of entry the fourth degree of the scale, the dominant. It will then ascend and remain on the sixth degree until the point at which it reaches the octave above the tonic. It will then start descending by referencing another mode, the Nikriz makam shown here with black coloured note heads. Then, it will descend by binary steps to the first degree of the scale. (Fig. 3)

The notion of *seyir* is largely the preserve of the practicing musicians. Its understanding involves an exploration of the modes through a musical instrument, performing the repertoire, as well as imitating through praxis the teacher, who is there to provide verbal instructions regarding the character of each makam and guidance on the in-time ornamentation. The point of interest is that the modality, or else, the “way” to move and to emphasize certain points in these prescribed paths is taught in a manner that has not changed much since the 17th century. Feldman, in his study, has gathered a vocabulary of twenty-three verbs that appear in Cantemir’s textual instructions, used to describe the seyir of a makam. As he suggests, these twenty-three verbs are equivalent to approximately nine: “to begin”, “to move”, “to skip”, “to reach”, “to press”, “to manifest itself”, “to ascend”, “to descend”, and “to conclude” (Feldman, 1996: 262–264). (Fig. 4)

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7 The dominant of a makam is not always the fifth degree of the scale; it can be the fourth, or even, the third degree. Sometimes, a makam might even have more than one dominant like we find in makam Eviç for example (Aydemir, 2012: 181).
The development of verbalizable *seyirs* during the 17th century had a crucial effect upon *makam* composition and improvisation practice. In regards to the former, we can see from analyses of Turkish classical music repertoire (ibid.: 339–391), that a compositional process of correlation takes place; one where the *outside-time* sketch of melodic phases denoting the “character” of a *makam* mode (*seyir*), is coupled to the *temporal* category of an underlying rhythmic cycle (*usûl*). Similarly, the art of *taksim* improvisation, as a “performance-generated melody in a non-metrical ‘flowing’ rhythm” (ibid.: 275), not only requires an understanding of the architecture of the *makam* phenomenon, but also relies upon a knowledge-through-practice of the *outside-time* *seyir* of each *makam* mode; a knowledge that allows a musician to modulate freely between different modal entities. It is important to note that modulation here should not be understood as a transition to a new tonal centre, but rather as “a musical consonance of separate *makam* modal entities” (ibid.: 298) that occurs *in-time*, through performance.

4. The Notion of Seyir as a Conceptual and Typological Scheme for Comprovisation

4.1. Notational Perspective and Comprovisation

Sandeep Bhagwati suggests that notations are devices used to establish a distinction between “context-independent” elements, staying more or less the same between different performances, and elements considered to be “contingent” to a particular performance (Bhagwati, 2008: 1; 2013: 165). Bhagwati proposes the concept of “notational perspective” as a tool employed to examine the relations and functions of notational styles, types, or objects used in a musical score, in order to identify any biases towards the two aforementioned categories of performance elements (Bhagwati, 2013: 167, 173). He re-introduces the word *comprovisation* in an attempt to encompass “heterogeneous practice[s] situated somewhere between the poles of improvisation and composition” (ibid.: 168–169). He also suggests that *comprovisation* can be viewed as a creative musical activity “predicated on an aesthetically relevant interlocking of context-independent and contingent performance

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8 The rhythmic cycles (*usûls*) are the second most typical characteristic of Turkish *makam* practice. *Usûls* incorporate both concepts of meter and rhythm and can be understood as repeating rhythmic patterns (cycles). These are categorized according to the number of beats they have, which can range from two to 124. Their complex inner metrical structure involves both stressed and unstressed beats, differing in duration.

9 The term *comprovisation* seems to have been initially introduced during the ’70s, by the trombonist and free improviser Paul Rutherford. Rutherford described as *comporvisation* a working technique he used with his band ‘Iskra 1903’ (Derek Bailey, guitar; Barry Guy, bass) in which he “composed the repertoire fully, but offered the players the freedom to substitute newly improvised ideas for the written parts”. http://www.network54.com/Forums/393207/thread/1187262416/Paul-Rutherford-obit.

In 1991 Butch Morris released the album, *Dust to Dust*, which included a piece entitled “The Bartok Comprovisation”. Although I have not yet found any kind of textual evidence, I suspect that the title of this piece is related to Morris’ approach on free improvisation. Morris was the first to introduce a series of hand gestures to conduct an improvising ensemble. Since then, the term has been used in different contexts (a quick web-browser search can perhaps reveal this) and, in my view, only the composer Sandeep Bhagwati has approached the term “comprovisation” in a rigorous manner.
elements”, where the concept of “notational perspective” can be put into action in order to “identify individual practices of comprovisation” (ibid.: 171).

In the next sub-sections, echoing Bhagwati’s suggestions, I aim to document the perspective of my notational methods towards a comprovisation practice, and in particular, the ways in which I have been exploring the notion of seyir through my notational strategies.

4.2. From Improvisation to Transcription

At the first stages of my research, I mainly focused on developing a transcription-template, that would allow me to transfer into the symbolic level “snapshots”\(^{10}\) of the in-time sounding-gestalt impression of my improvised material. At the same time, I was exploring ways in which this transcription-template could be transformed into a notational device through which I could communicate to other performers the physical movements and the various actions required to arrive at a particular sound-configuration. This two-fold, quasi feedback-loop objective was explored through practice in several trial attempts,\(^{11}\) while drawing on the work of Richard Barrett, Aaron Cassidy, Klaus K. Hübner, Helmut Lachenmann, and Bogusław Schaeffer.

The still under development notational scheme is shown in Figure 5. It comprises a tablature stave-structure that allows the “decoupling of the various activities of sound production” (Cassidy, 2013: 308) and dissociates the left from the right hand. The approach involves combinations of descriptive as well as prescriptive notational types.\(^{12}\) In particular, a performer is presented with information concerning:

- bow technique (arco ordinario, arco tratto, col legno ordinario, col legno tratto);
- bow pressure (moltò flautando, flautando, normal, pesante, poco pesante);
- relative bow position, using a 7-line tablature combined with two clefs (from bridge to nut, or, from bridge to ‘sul tasto’); and,
- on-string placement, using a 4-line tablature combined with two clefs (from ‘tasto’ to bridge, or, from bridge to tailpiece).

Similarly, information is given concerning the hand controlling the body of the instrument, including the parameters of:

- relative hand position, using again a 7-line tablature in combination with its respective clefs;
- finger pressure (harmonic, intermediate, normal);
- finger technique, which involves either the use of one finger, alternations between fingers, or, chordal positions; and,
- on-string placement.

Gestural shapes are notated on the tablatures using graphic notation, involving either specific areas (points), or transitions (lines) between areas of the respective canvases (clefs). The metrical structure of these shapes is given either as fixed-time events, or as graphical rhythmic notation, combined with a sign of the form X[Y]. Numerical Y is an integer multiple of one second. Numerical X is the denominator of the ratio Y/X. The time-frame (T) of either changes between points (e.g, on-string placement changes) or transitions between areas (e.g, left/right hand movements) is given by the formula: \(\frac{1}{X} \leq T \leq Y\). The design of the symbol indicates the spatio-temporal gestalt character of the shape. An example is shown at the bottom of Figure 5, which can be understood as: “create a continuous (arrow) and irregular (graphic figure) gesture within the area of the canvas (clef) indicated by the circles (points), allowing each transition (line) to occur within a time-frame – T of: 1.5 sec ≤ T ≤ 3 sec”.

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\(^{10}\) “… it is necessary to distinguish structures, architectures, and sound organisms from their temporal manifestations. It is therefore necessary to take ‘snapshots’, to make a series of veritable tomographies over time, to compare them and bring to light their relations and architectures, and vice versa” (Xenakis, 1992: 192).

\(^{11}\) These trial attempts resulted in several musical pieces, such as: speculative or creative (2013), for string quartet; the theme is one of the variations (2013), for violin and computer; alba (2014), for violin and electronics.

\(^{12}\) As violinist Mieko Kanno writes, descriptive notation “informs us of the sound of a musical work”, while prescriptive notation “informs us of the method of producing this sound” with “the outcome becom[ing] known only by following process orientated instructions” (Kanno, 2007: 232, 235).
Following on from this, the performer is suggested to explore, in-time, the interplay between three main statistical levels of temporal structure:

1) the time-frame of the actions required, and the spatio-temporal gestalt character of each dissociated gestural shape;
2) the temporal geometry of the aggregated gestural shapes that yield a sound-configuration, or else a sounding-gestalt with its own modality;
3) the overall duration and the dynamics of a sounding-gestalt, notated on the middle line (neutral clef) of the scheme shown in Figure 5.

Thus far I have transcribed more than twenty sound-configurations, which I consider as the gamut of my current improvisation performance-practice. These have been ordered into a general scale with regard to the relative physical effort they demand. At the same time, these twenty sounding-gestalts also act as the outside-time category of my current comprovisation practice involving instruments of the violin family and other performers. Figure 6 shows one of these twenty sound-configurations as a continuous outside-time entity.
Figure 7 shows the same sounding-gestalt coupled with a metrical sequence notated on the middle line of the scheme. Figure 8 shows a selection of six sound-configurations from the twenty comprising the gamut.
4.3. From Transcription to Comprovisation

My second aim was to develop a notational device that would allow me to communicate to other performers types of modulation, and melodic movement between the sounding-gestalts of the general scale. In a similar manner to Dimitrie Cantemir’s vocabulary of verbs used to describe the seyir of a makam, I have introduced seven types of possible modes of transition, in the form of textual instructions (verbs) combined with a graphic symbol. (Fig. 9) Different melodic movements, or seyirs if you like, can be created by combining these types with the twenty sound-configurations of the gamut. These textual and graphic descriptors, depending on the sounding-gestalts with which they are combined, aim to denote either, differences regarding sound-production parameters and actions required; divergences in respect of the temporal geometry of the aggregated gestural shapes; or variances in terms of the relevant physical effort required while modulating/transitioning. Thus far, I have been exploring various melodic movements between the sound-configurations of the general scale, either as a pre-compositional tool, or as the score of a comprovisation.

Figure 9. Seven types of possible modes of transition between sound-configurations

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13 Modulation here, echoing makam music, is understood as a process of uniting different outside-time sound-configurations.
When these are used as a pre-compositional method, the developed seyr functions as an outside-time sketch of the overall structure of the composition. As I mentioned earlier, due to the design of the notational scheme three levels of metrical structure can be introduced: i) the spatio-temporal character of each dissociated gestural shape; ii) the temporal geometry of the aggregated gestures; and iii) the duration of a sound-configuration as a whole. This allows a significant amount of freedom to compose in detail the temporal dimension of a composition that favours, in the words of Bhagwati, “context-independent” performance elements. Figure 10 shows part of a seyr developed through improvisation, and later used as a pre-compositional tool for my piece, alba (2014) for violin and electronics. In this example (Fig. 10), the type: “to manifest itself” (see also Fig. 9) acted as the outside-time prescriptive path of melodic relation between the two sound-configurations, which, after being coupled to a temporal structure notated on the middle line of the notational scheme, was translated into a compositional element: in particular, bar twenty-two of the score. (Fig. 10)
When the resultant combinations are used as notational devices illustrating modes of modulation and transition between the sound-configurations with the aim of giving performers a setting for structured improvisation (*comprovisation*), then the score consists of two parts:

1. the micro-level, where the performer is provided with a list of all sound-configurations of the piece, each accompanied by a sound-file in an attempt to reconfigure in a quasi oral-tradition approach the composer–performer relationship, and

2. the macro-level, where the processes of mobility and relationship between the sound-configurations are presented following the seven types shown in Figure 9. The challenge for the performer is to improvise with the material and to explore the *seyir* of the piece; the modes of melodic movement between the sounding-gestalts. (Fig. 11)

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5. Epilogue

The compositional practice and its notational perspective presented above originated from a need to communicate the *in-time* spatio-temporal gestalt character of an improvisation performance-praxis, and to construct, through its symbolic representation, an *outside-time* architecture from which different *comprovisation* settings could be put forward. The musical term *melody* is understood here as a process of modulation, transition and movement between *outside-time* sound-configurations, each carrying its own modality and temporal structure. The notational strategy, although complex in its types, aims to emphasize the *trópos* of praxis, and intends to correlate the body of the instrument and the body of a performer into a choreography of sounding-gestures. The notion of *seyir*, borrowed from *makam* modal music tradition, is explored here as the conceptual parameter that links the above elements. The underlying objective is to initiate a dialogue between improvisation/composition practices and Western/Eastern theoretical-aesthetic viewpoints, in order to explore ways in which both the *modal* and the “unquantifiable” (Lachenmann, 1995: 101) can perhaps be re-introduced into our current music-making fields of thought and action.
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**Seyir samprata kaip konceptualios ir tipologinės „komprovizacijos“ schema**

**Santrauka**

Šiame straipsnyje, kuriamo remiantis Ianno Xenakio teorinėmis įžvalgomis apie muzikinę architektūrą (pvz., „išorinis laikas“, „vidinis laikas“ ar „laiko srangos parametrai“) ir Sandeepo Bhagwati „notacijos perspektyvos“ bei „komprovizacijos“ sąvoką, apibrėžianti improvizacinių ir kompozicinių praktikų susiliejimą, sarasinomis, pateikiamis asmenine empirine patirtimi pagrįsto tyrimo kontekstas ir rezultatai.

Pastaraisiais metais autoriaus išeiko jų dėmesio būdą, kaip išvesti savo smuko improvizacijų laiko struktūrą ir vidinio laiko modalumą į įvairių kalbų, kad galėtų sukurti notacinių strategijų komprovizacinei praktikai drauge su kitais ateitės. Šio proceso eigoje teko patyrinėti modališkes muzikos tradicijos išorinius muzikos autorių. Strainipi su aprašyta su seyr samprata (į *Vidurinių Rytų* makamo muzikoje apibrėžia melodinių frazių plėtotę pagal anksčiausiai nustatytą planą pasirinktame makamo garsėjyje ir nurodo tam tikrą makamo derminį pobūdį), taip pat su jų įvairiais būdais, kuriais ji konceptualiai ir tipologinėse pasekėse makamo notaciją. Remiantis seyr samprata ir makamo modaline muzika, šiame straipsnyje miglėjami seyr sąvokos, kuriose akišėme šiandieninę muzikavimo praktiką.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** komprovizacija, improvisacija, kompozicija, seyr, trépos, modališkes, išorinis laikas, laiko srangos parametrai, vidinis laikas, muzikinė notacija, tabulatūra, gėstalčiai, garsinė gėstalčiai, garsinė konfigūracija, melodija, Iannis Xenakis, Vidurinių Rytų makamo muzika.

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