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## More than "Just" Music: Four Performative Topoi, the Phish Phenomenon, and the Power of Music in/and Performance

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### Abstract

This article explores the relevance performance studies to music scholarship by doing three interrelated actions. First, the author reassesses Pelias and VanOosting's influential essay "A Paradigm for Performance Studies," and suggest that their four performative topoi offer important insights into establishing transdisciplinary connections between music scholarship and performance studies. The second and third prongs of the essay unfold as the author moves through a discussion of two scholars' work and approaches to music and performance studies, Philip Auslander's and himself. Reflecting on the author's research on the U.S.-based band Phish and its scene, he attempts to leave the reader with a deepened understanding of (some of) the interconnections between music and performance studies.

**Key words:** Pelias and VanOosting, Philip Auslander, Performance Studies, Performative Topoi, Phish, cultural performance

### Resumen

En este artículo se explora la relevancia de los estudios de performance en la investigación musical por medio de tres acciones interrelacionadas. Primero, el autor reevalúa el trabajo de Pelias y VanOosting en su trascendental ensayo "A Paradigm for Performance Studies", y sugiere que los llamados cuatro topoi performativos ofrecen una posibilidad importante para establecer relaciones interdisciplinarias entre los estudios sobre música y los estudios de performance. La segunda y tercera partes de este ensayo surgen de la discusión del trabajo sobre música y performance de dos académicos, Philip Auslander y el autor mismo. Al reflexionar sobre su trabajo de investigación sobre la banda estadounidense Phish y su escena, el autor trata de dar al lector una visión más profunda de algunas de las interconexiones entre la música y los estudios de performance.

**Palabras clave:** Pelias y VanOosting, Philip Auslander, estudios de performance, Topoi Performativos, Phish, performance cultural

The genesis of this article was my interest in the relationship between music and the discipline of performance studies, particularly my continued curiosity about how the perspective and scope of performance studies might contribute to new disciplinary developments in music scholarship. Given that my background is in performance studies, I proceed under the belief that music can and should be understood as a phenomenon that is always already aesthetic, communicative, *and* performative.

Music, moreover, has characteristics that are qualitatively different from everyday communication and that allow, if not encourage, us "to regard it and the performer with special intensity" (Bauman 1992: 44). But, while it is true that music is *not* everyday life, it is also true that it is *not not* everyday life<sup>[1]</sup>. "All [musical] performance, like all communication, is situated, enacted, and rendered meaningful within socially defined situational contexts" (Bauman 1992: 46). There can be little doubt, then, that music is the result of one or more human beings behaving in such a way as to constitute or give rise to an event in which something has been accomplished communicatively through sound, i.e., through the willful, purposeful interpretation and articulation of musical notes—and that that musical communication happens within a wider performative *context*. Another way of putting it would be to say that music and its performance are acts of participatory and communicative ritual. Music not only involves musical texts, but also sensing and interacting bodies, be they the musicians' or those of the individual(s) present to audience a particular musical event. Moreover, by virtue of its (repeated) instantiation within specific sociopolitical contexts, music should be understood as shaping, defining, and otherwise interacting with culture itself. Viewing music in this manner establishes a need to understand music not as "mere" entertainment but, rather, as a significant performative occasion.

The value of a performance studies approach to music thus lies in the discipline's very exigency; in its interest in unraveling the performative dimensions present on the metaphorical as well as on the literal

stage. A performance studies view, with its interest in *all* levels of performative phenomena—both the micro and macro—can thus add valuable scholarly insights to popular music studies. In this article I do three interrelated actions. One, I look back to Pelias and VanOosting's "A Paradigm for Performance Studies," (1987) an essay that was published at a historically important, ground-shifting time for the discipline. The second and third prongs of my essay unfold as I move through a discussion of two author's work and approaches to music and performance studies, Philip Auslander's and my own. From my vantage as a performance studies-trained scholar, my overall aim is, to leave my reader with a deepened understanding of (some of) the interconnections between music and performance studies.

Around the mid- to late-1980s, a paradigm shift was signaled with an instance of magical renaming: "oral interpretation" became "performance studies." Oral interpretation, still at the core of what I have come to know as performance studies<sup>[2]</sup>, simply did not adequately circumscribe the new scholarship and practice that had been underway since the 1970s. The name change, then, reflected ongoing, concerted efforts within academia in general to interrogate, among other things, the lines that separated the canonical from the non-canonical; "high" culture from "low" culture; and scholarly erudition from everyday epistemologies. Pelias and Van Oosting's essay, as a disciplinary taking-stock, is thus situated at the heart of this paradigmatic shift. It was both a reflection and reaction to a number of pressing theoretical considerations at the time, considerations which came from a host of more or less cognate disciplinary homes, including continental and phenomenological philosophers, anthropologists, poststructuralists, semioticians, rhetoricians, literary theorists, and folklorists. As it has for many scholars in performance studies, Pelias and Van Oosting's essay has been quite influential in my own understanding of performance studies' history, as well as of some of its key theoretical-analytical thrusts.

Of particular interest, the authors parsed four topoi for understanding performance: *text*, *performer*, *audience*, and *event*. Though their work did not specifically address music, they nonetheless proffered an "inclusionary impulse" that does indeed position music as a viable object of scrutiny (Pelias and Van Oosting 1987: 223).

Regarding the first topos, Pelias and VanOosting (1987) note, foremost, that the discipline enjoys "a liberal position toward what constitutes a text" (222). As a result of wider trends in academia, a broad array of texts are opened up for examination in what might best be described as a textualizing impulse. Performance scholars whose practice had centered around the oral interpretation of non-dramatic texts now availed themselves of a wide array of texts to be studied, analyzed, and shared onstage. From autobiographical and auto-ethnographic writings to oral histories to experimental performance art, performance studies, reflecting post-modern relativizations across academe, became a wide-open space for textual study (one of the discipline's flagship journals changed its name, at this time, from *Literature in Performance* to *Text and Performance Quarterly*). So, both the nature of what was to be counted as a text, and what any given text's meaning(s) might be—as well as who was to have the power to decide what that meaning might be—were fundamentally destabilized.

In this light, it is not difficult to view music as a text to be regarded in this fashion. Understood as a series of notes arranged in a particular way so as to allow for an attendant process of signification, music is both the result *of* and results *in* something concrete toward which we can turn our attention. As Cook (2001) has noted, any given musical manifestation, though unique and discrete, also has an *a priori* relation to "the world in which it is generated and consumed" (2). Music thus becomes a form of social discourse; in short, a *communicative text*. Viewing music as a *text* rather than as a *work* represents a poststructural shift that acknowledges the cultural, political, and historical embeddedness of all human expression, thereby eroding modernist notions regarding the stability of a text's meanings and values. This turn toward text as always already *contextual*, then, renders music as metonymic, as relational rather than representational, in that musical expressions cannot be considered as islands unto themselves. Music's text, in other words, cannot be isolated from that which it stands (in) for.

Extant performance studies scholarship has dealt with the musical text in many ways. On a narrower stage, music can be engaged primarily at the level of its words, or lyrics (e.g., Delgado 2000; Dimitriadis 1999); wherein lyrical content can be taken as a text(uality) that instantiates—puts on display, enacts, codifies, reifies, entrenches, but also potentially subverts, resists, complicates, possibilizes—much more than surface-level content. In other words, lyrics and other musical elements can be seen as part of a broader performative framework. They can perform—be "about"—more than is first apparent. Dealing with music as contextual can also involve close consideration of the body as text (e.g., Jones 1999; DeChaine 2002; Eileraas 1997). Complicating the line separating text and performer, the body itself becomes a site of signification, with scholar, performer, and/or audience attaching meaning(s) to the corporeal and the gestural.

A musician, then, offers up much more than music; s/he also articulates an identity, a role, a place within the cultural-ideological landscape that surrounds that music. Music, as a particularly rich form of human discourse, thus "becomes available for participatory probes and critical inquiry" (Pelias and VanOosting 1987: 222). In this way, a musical text is understood as far more than "just" music; it is appreciated as an instance of *cultural memory*, of *participatory ritual*, of *intellectual inquiry* (HopKins 1995: 233). Recent music-related scholarship from Auslander (2006a and 2006b) and Cook (2001), for example, have already made this case, advancing a notion of music's text(uality) wherein performance and the performer are much more explicitly and undeniably part of what music is and what music does.

The second topos—that of the *performer*—undergoes conceptual treatment similar to the first. Indeed, who is considered to be a performer and what it is that a performer does are understood within broadly defined frameworks that not only include but also move beyond the category of "the artist" as traditionally understood. In this regard, Pelias and VanOosting (1987) offer four useful ways of appreciating the function of the performer: as *personal text*, as *social actor*, as *social activist*, and as *ethnographer*.

Understanding the performer qua *personal text* effectively authorizes "personal consciousness before

textual autonomy in the hierarchy of a performer's accountabilities" (Pelias and VanOosting 1987: 224). In other words, there is a recognition that the musician makes interpretive and performative *choices*, and that the (f)acts of choosing/interpreting are not at all unimportant. Those choices, along with the musician's private life, become *part of the music itself*. To paraphrase Schechner's dictum again, even though the musician is not the music, she or he is also not not the music. Here, traditionally held notions of the musician as confined to/by the structures of musical *execution* or *reproduction* is subverted, inasmuch as such a notion disallows an appreciation of her/his *interpretation* of a musical text (Cook makes much of this in his work). The musician, qua performer, is thus cast in an augmented, meatier role—as more than a simple vehicle for entertainment. This ties in to the second way of framing the performer, as *social actor*. The musician wields music not just for her/himself but also, potentially, for the wider community. The performer participates in the idiosyncrasies of the wider social drama. Here is a recognition that what the musician does as a performer does not happen in a vacuum, as his/her performing always already plays into ongoing socio-cultural processes.

The third way of appreciating the performer, as a *social activist*, recognizes that the musician possesses power. Here, musical performance can be marshaled, often explicitly and quite deliberately, in the service of a wider, socially-conscious agenda of disruption, change, and/or awareness-raising. Relatedly, the fourth framing of the performer, as *ethnographer*, foregrounds the fact that performing music is generative in an *extra-musical* sense; that the performer, through performance, often comes to understand more about a particular culture and, even, about culture itself. Perhaps more than any other academic discipline, performance studies takes seriously the notion that our very being in the world—our acting in/on it—cannot not elicit awareness and understanding. Performance, then, is a formally reflexive *methodology* (Pelias and VanOosting 1987; Bauman 1992; Schechner 1998; Bowman 1998; Coger 1998; Strine, Long, and HopKins 1990). I will return to this line of thought below. The point, here, is that performance always already involves "personal responsiveness, somatic engagement, and cognitive analysis" (Pelias and VanOosting 1987: 222). Performers never only "just" perform—more is always at work, and at stake.

Of course, both music's text and music's performer unfold in relation to an *audience* that receives, gives meaning to, and even participates in the musical performance. This third topos is important for two reasons: the audience, i.e., those present to witness music and its manifestation through performance, are no longer cast as inactive receivers but as *part of the process* that is music and musical meaning; and the audience members (i.e., the spectators, listeners, aficionados, or fans) can also be understood as performers—and as texts—in their own right.

Certainly, it is not the case that work within popular music and/or cultural studies has not considered, or dealt with, audiences. In fact, a large body of extant work does factor musical audiences into its analyses (e.g., Jensen 1992; McLaughlin 1996; Lewis 1992; Jenkins 1992 and 2006; Fiske 1992; Hebdige 1979; Friith 1996; Straw 1991; DeNora 2000; Negus 1996; Fraser 2005; Walser 1993; Grossberg 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002). But, as Auslander (2004) has pointed out, a full consideration of the role, place, and function of the audience in performance has been somewhat neglected: "Most of the work in cultural studies of popular music [. . .] examines the sociological, institutional, and policy contexts in which popular music is made, not the immediate context of the work of the artists who make it". This is tantamount to a denial, or at least a serious devaluation, of performance itself. Examining music's audience as one of the four prongs of performance can redress these engagements with music that have tended to care little about the contextual role of the spectating audience.

Though it seems like a truism to say so, the presence and influence of an audience is integral to musical performance. Cook's (2001) articulation of performative meaning as being strongly tied to the processual and, therefore, of music as "irreducible to product," places the audience rather squarely within the sights of performance-aware scholarship (7). A performance studies approach emphasizes "the extent to which even a Beethoven symphony, understood as a *dynamic practice within contemporary culture* rather than a historical monument," is the result of the work and/or presence of a host of individuals (Cook 2001: 7, italics added). With the audience now out of the shadows and in the spotlight, music is thus ineluctably contextualized; it is situated, rhetorical, performative.

Truly, performance cannot be studied well without, almost by necessity, considering performance qua *event*, the last of the four performative topoi. Musical performances can be appreciated as "experiments in space and time" that carry, in addition to musical-aesthetic considerations, concomitant psychological, sociocultural, and political concerns (Pelias and VanOosting 1987: 223). We are interested here in subverting the modernist idea that a musical performance, is a "discrete or bounded 'work of art'" (Cook 2001: 32). Instead, performance is dissolved into "the contingencies and instabilities of the 'event' [. . .] penetrated by unstable and unpredictable exchanges and processes" (Kaye 1994: 117). Given our realizations regarding the efficaciousness of performance, it follows that a performer's performing is, indeed, event(full).

Music as event fully opens up music's text, music's performer, and music's audience to their polysemic possibilities and inter-influential realities. Music is placed squarely in the realm of everyday life; no longer on the periphery of our individual and collective experiences. Seeing music as an event turns up the house lights, not only admitting to the presence of an audience, but also actively inquiring after that audience's ontological status and epistemic role with(in) music and its performance. Musical texts, and their eventuation in/from the bodies of performers, are always already working both out of and into their surrounding circumstances. This is why and how music can be seen as problematizing, subversive, contestatory, possibilizing, and/or resistant, even when it is not consciously intended to be (e.g., Eisenberg 1990; DeChaine 2002; Rogers 1994; Jones 2007; Nelson 2000; Lengel 2004; Holton 1998; Eileras 1997; Wong 1994; Kvetko 2004; Shope 2004).

To grapple with music's event(fullness), then, is to regard music and its performance as culturally and politically fraught. It is to explore the fragile building, in and through musical performance, of "communitas not so much as a modality but as a project—an opportunity for reflection; a potential for

change; a becoming; an instructive, collaborative energy that we breathe (or scream) into each other's ear. In the space of musical experience, we foment transformation" (DeChaine 2002: 95). Put simply, there is always a *lot* going on when "musicking" takes place<sup>[3]</sup>. The actual music is of course at the core of the experience. But it is only part of what is happening. To cast music as an event is to recognize that music is not fully appreciated and apprehended if only its strictly formal characteristics are attended to.

At this point, my reader should have a good working sense of Pelias and VanOosting's four performative topoi. As I have overviewed them, and tied them to our subject of study, I have also linked to some of the current scholarly dialogues seeking to understand music and performance. The four topoi, both explicitly and implicitly, will inform the remainder of my work here, as I turn to two authors' work situated in the music-performance studies nexus.

In the simplest terms, it could be said that what a performance studies perspective does is attune us to the theatrical elements of performance—in our case, musical performance. This statement, of course, is both obvious and unhelpful. However, the statement takes on more meaning if unpacked; for, like performance studies' history, there's a lot at work—and at stake—in attending to the theatrical and/or performative elements of music and its performance.

Auslander (2006a) clearly and explicitly deals with music's theatricality, and an overview of his work will prove useful at this point. In his book, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music*, he brings to his analysis of glam the sensibility of a theatre scholar, paying close attention to elements such as staging, costuming, lines, gesturing, and blocking; as well as to myriad sociocultural contextualities. He does so in order to make the case that much more than music happens when, say, David Bowie performs. To be sure, the music is at the core of the experience, of what happens. But, as scholars/critics/ fans we miss a lot if we don't pay close attention to all that goes along *with* that music; that is, to associated performative phenomena that are both musical and *extra*-musical. This is where Auslander's conception of musical personae—and his avowed performer-centeredness—comes into play. Put briefly, he has us hone in on the power of the semiotic (particularly the visual) in music, as written onto/by the performing bodies. By attuning us to the theatrics of musical performance—which take place on many levels, often at once—Auslander cues us to the way that the theatrical/performative interacts with and reflects not only that music but also its attendant (sub)cultural context; a culture that the music comes out of even as it helps to create, to constitute, it.

In contrast to the preceding psychedelic rock era, glam for Auslander represents an interesting pendulum swing. As he points out, there were antitheatrical, and anitocular biases at work in the ethos, and thus in the modus operandi, of psychedelic era rock musicians (2006a: 15). Choices about what to wear and how to behave onstage, and about what good, legitimate music and musicianship was supposed to look and sound like, were thus laden with significance. In and through performance, more than music was being worked with/on. Auslander thus makes clear that notions of authenticity are very much *constructed*—i.e., *performed*. Whether or not glam rockers realized what they were doing—and why they were doing it—the fact is that their embodied actions instantiated a great deal of semiotic and cultural material to be unpacked for meaning. In other words, behaviors were modeled, orientations were posited, values were enacted.

Glam rock's explicit and quite deliberate embrace of spectacle, of highly visual/theatrical performance choices, was an upending of late-sixties countercultural values; values both musical and extra-musical. In unpacking this, Auslander makes the case that it is not so much about one style of music being right in claiming more or less realness, and/or authenticity. Rather, the crux of the matter is that those sorts of judgments are wholly relative to the performative context—to the culture—within which they unfold. Any and all theatrics that accompany music and its performance are reflections of cultures (or sub- or counter-cultures) whose way of iterating themselves—of knowing, maintaining, and propagating themselves—is *through performance*. Whether, for example, the costuming is deliberate (as in the case of glam rockers) or not (as in the supposed non-contrived everydayness of, say, a Pink Floyd member's street clothes), the point is that life, whether onstage or not, is nothing if not a series of performance choices. It is in this way that the structures and changes inherent in music can be linked to culture and its shifts:

Glam provided very public images of alternative ways of imagining gender and sexuality, images that audiences seized upon and from which they constructed the musicians' identities and [in turn] articulated those identities to their own. The demand for the freedom to explore and construct one's identity, in terms of gender, sexuality, or any other terms, is glam rock's most important legacy. (2006a: 234)

The "lesson" Auslander leaves us with is that, in the end, music, performance, and everyday life always already exist in relationship to theatre. Musical performance and the wider context within which it unfolds are intricately intertwined.

Perhaps we have here arrived at the key insight about performance analysis and music (which is, incidentally, the key to understanding the much-cited concept of "performativity"). The operative notion is that any act of performance—and, it should be clear by now, that anything and everything human is or can be understood as performance—is both *generative* and *responsive*. It is *responsive* because no act of human expression can take place in a vacuum, outside of history. That is, no performance act is ever free or independent from a whole trajectory of culture and politics that is both highly complex and utterly ineluctable. Performers cannot *not* respond to the deep past that precedes the moment of performance, the event of articulation, the instance of communication. Performance is also *generative* because—despite admonitions regarding the overdeterminations of the postmodern subject—the status quo of the past can never fully contain the drive toward change, innovation, newness; the human drive to create, to explore, to express. The infinite diversity that makes humanity so rich means that, even when we try to keep things the same, they *will* change. We, as individuals/performers, cannot help but put our mark on what, in the present, we send into the future. In other words, performance generates

new meanings, even as those meanings are shaped by the past. Performance thus is—or, at least can be—heuristic, constitutive, expansive, restrictive, hegemonic, liberating. As we study music, then, our interest is in uncovering how and why this is the case.

Another key insight here is that performance as always already contextual, is possessed of latent utopian potential.<sup>[4]</sup> This is indeed one of the ways that a performance studies perspective might enrich popular music studies. The theatrical metaphor, paired with a strong(er) sense of how and why performance is both a method and a form of (re)presentation, encourages a full, rich consideration of what happens when music happens. As is the case with a great deal of both performance studies' and cultural studies' current scholarship, a much more explicitly critical lens can be applied to the study of music. Indeed, to follow critical performance theorist Warren (2003), "if we can combine the magic of performance with the critical insight gained by this performative way of seeing human action, then we might find hope" (161). It becomes possible—if not necessary—to take a particular interest in the *how* and *why* and to *what effect* of musical expression vis-à-vis ideological expression.

Again, this is not necessarily a radically new insight or approach to studying popular music. Ethnomusicologists already understand well that there's a connection between culture and music. Writers aligned with cultural and communication studies already have made it clear that power dynamics and systems of articulation and subjugation are at work in the (productive) tension between art, media, and reception. One of the ways that performance studies adds to the body of extant music-related scholarship, however, is to shine a light on those aspects of musical performance that are explicitly theatrical. A performance-aware perspective asks us to hone in on the small, and not so small, choices that musicians put on display for us as players in concentric circles of unfolding drama. Thus, the contribution of a performance studies perspective might lie in its sensitization to the theatrical (understood in conventional as well as metaphorical terms); in a marked recognition and thematization of the extra-musical dimensions of embodied performance.

In my own scholarly work, I operate from much the same place. I, too, appreciate music the most when I factor in the elements that make it a *performative whole*. As a performance studies scholar, my work on Phish has extended my understanding not only of their music, but also of Phish "phan" culture, as well as of the power and efficacy of performance itself.

For those not familiar with Phish, a very quick explanation is in order. Phish are a U.S.-based band known for their live concerts and devout legion of cult-like "phans." Their live performances are centered around a highly improvisational ethos, with no two shows the same. During the course of two-set shows, what songs are played when varies widely; as well as the length of each song, since the band may exercise the right to "jam out" in myriad ways. Phish's musical prowess is highly celebrated by phans, and the unpredictable nature of each show—with some reaching high levels of accomplishment and band/audience excitement—has eventuated a sizable core of phans who strive to see the band perform multiple times. Some phans, in fact, actually follow the band on their cross-country concert tours, a practice which results in ethnographically rich parking lot "scenes" outside the venues where the band plays. The practice of taping and trading live shows is also a big part of the phenomenon.<sup>[5]</sup>

In dealing with the Phish phenomenon (in a forthcoming book) I write from a place of both personal experience and scholarly insight. As a succinct description, what I do is tune in to the ways that Phish work with/in the space(s) of musical and extra-musical performance, both of which are ever entwined. So, while I don't come from a place of musicological analysis (I do not closely engage notes, keys, time signatures, compositional and structural insights), I do pay attention to the *how* and the *why* of their performances. Again, the key is that my analysis is not confined to strictly musical elements. In dealing with Phish *qua performers*, their music is definitely at the center of it all; but, for me, it is always already circumscribed by wider, concentric circles involving extra-musical matters. I think here of Schechner's (1998) nested circles of performance analysis, where the performance *script* is circumscribed by wider *dramas*; by layers of interpretation and understanding radiating outward to include the immediate audience and place of performance, as well as the cultural-political-historical space(s) framing it all.<sup>[6]</sup>

A portion of my analysis involves an elaboration of Phish's performance work as evidencing a series of six *commitments*. I make the case that Phish's performances—which include, but are not limited to, the music itself—can be seen as representing a deliberate, concerted commitment to *flexibility*, to *groove*, to *play*, to *risk*, to *communication*, and to *reflexivity*. By way of example, Phish's commitment to play is important in many ways, on many levels.<sup>[7]</sup> Play, as a special modality of human interaction and communication, is evident in their music, to be sure: in silly lyrics; in playful tunes and melodies; in playful improvisation. But it is also evident in the way that they perform that music, and in what goes along with the music: in staging choices; in all manner of stage antics; in stage banter; in games, both musical and non-musical; in their interactions with the media; in interactions with their audience that are both spontaneous and deliberate; in the way that they pay attention to, and take an active interest in, the physical spaces surrounding the concert event. So, following Pelias and Van Oosting, my understanding of Phish and their music is that, as *performance*, there are musical *texts* at work, *performers* performing, a uniquely present *audience*, and, most certainly, the recognition—a strongly felt sense—that it all unfolds as a meaning-full *event*. It is theatre writ musical; music writ theatrical. It is about the performativity of performance, the way that a creative/expressive act is its own thing, but also, always, so much more. There is a recognition that play—play(*fullness*)—matters not only in terms of the resultant music, but also in terms of the psychosocial, cultural, and political spaces being worked with/upon.

Thinking through the Phish phenomenon, then, has helped me further appreciate how and why performance is a *method*, a form of (re)presentation, and a *metaphor*. A musician, *qua performer*, makes music. But the music itself isn't all that that performance achieves—all that happens, all that transpires. A musical text is written/created/expressed, to be sure. But, understanding performance as a *method*, I become interested not only in the musical work itself, but also in how and why the

performing of that music can elicit emotional responses, generate insights, play/interact with its socio-historical context(s). The basic understanding here is that the act of engaging a particular musical text *in performance* is epistemic, through and through. That is, performers—in and through performance—can come to know a text, and themselves, in greater depth. The guiding principle is that the act of taking a text into one's body and performing it out loud for an audience is a process—a *method*—that yields knowledge and understanding. And this for both the performer *and* the audience member, who are both intertwined within the performance event.

As a form or (*re*)presentation, performance is seen as a way for a performer to share the knowledge that is derived in/from performance. In other words, performance, even as it is method of research, is also a way of making public those research findings. By way of example, let us hearken performance studies' oral interpretation roots. If we think of the performance of a poem, even while the performer, in performing, is interested in what she or he is learning about the poem itself, she or he is also having to make decisions, along the way, about how best to communicate what is learned through the use of her or his body, stage props, dress, lights, etc.—i.e., about how to *communicate* the text effectively. Performance, then, is a way of sharing one's knowledge/discoveries, in embodied form, in direct contact with an audience. Phish's performances, then, are indeed a making public, an act of sharing. They share song-texts, first and foremost; but also, in the process, are making public all the meanings, insights, and understandings that may be attached to, or have resulted from, that music.

Finally, "performance" can also become a generative *metaphor* for understanding the contextual performative whole. Here, the guiding question is, what happens if we view *as performance* phenomena not traditionally defined as such? We thus leap past the theatrical stage's proscenium into the realm of every existence, without leaving behind a performance-attuned awareness. As with all uses of metaphor, the considerations that come attached to the *something* being applied to *something else*—in this case, *performance* being applied to *everyday life/action(s)*—present generative, heuristic fodder. The exercise encourages focusing on the *embodied, scripted, put-on-display-for-an-audience, in-a-specific-context* aspects of any given individual and/or sociocultural eventuality. It is in this view, then, that "performance" is opened up widest. Performance and/or performing can now move off the literal stage and into the metaphorical stage of our life-world.

This performance-sensitive lens can be applied to a wide range of phenomena, from micro-level everyday interactions to macro-level sociocultural rituals. At base, two questions are at work here: 1) what can we learn about a particular phenomenon by seeing it *qua* performance?; and 2) what can we learn about performance itself by doing so? To my view, this heuristic, open-ended turn "explains" current performance studies best (even as it makes the discipline's scope and focus appear hard to grasp, at best, and easy to dismiss, at worst).

In seeing music as performance—in seeing it as a metaphor for/of life itself—I take the qualities and particularities of performance and use them to better understand Phish's music, as well as the wider Phish phenomenon. My understanding of what Phish do, as performing musicians, then, is not limited to their music or to the stage on which it is created. I am authorized, then, to see in phan culture an undeniable link between what happens in musical performance onstage and cultural performance offstage. I see Phish's performative commitments as radiating off the concert stage into a raptly present audience, into the carnivalesque atmosphere of the parking lot scene outside the venue, and, finally, into the everyday lives of phans. Given this, I mine diverse bodies of literature (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) concept of *flow*, fan studies, cultural studies, and social anthropology, among others) in order to unpack the performative implications of Phish in relation to phan culture.

Ultimately, what is at the heart of my work, is a deep realization that what Phish do onstage as performing musicians matters long after the actual performance event is over. *In potentia*, the musical values put into play by the band are related to cultural values, inasmuch as the psychosocial space inhabited by band and audience during the moment of performance always carries with it both musical and extra-musical implications. With Phish, in particular, this has meant for me a deep appreciation for not only musical performance, but for improvisational performance. My performance studies sensibility has helped me realize just how much is at play—at stake—when the musical specifics and experiential contours of any given performance are so indeterminate. I wonder, therefore, about what it takes to pull this off, as Phish do. I am keenly interested, then, in tracking the choices the band members have had to make—as musicians performing in/as a band, and as persons in the world—in order to elicit each unique live show. Concomitantly, I pay attention to what these performative choices eventuate, what they result in. How does the music itself reflect, in both form and content, the band's performative commitments (to flexibility, groove, play, risk, communication, and reflexivity), with improvisation as a central, guiding paradigm? Finally, I ask how and why there are interconnections between the performances of the band and the performances of its audience of phans. I thus come to a deep appreciation and understanding of Phish; and not, only, of their music (for I am well aware that individual aesthetic criteria and musical tastes vary widely). I fully recognize the fact that it is deeply meaning-full that Phish and their audience step into the performance spaces that they do. As jazz enthusiasts well know, it takes a particular brand of performer and audience to inhabit such spaces, where the risk of failure and the joys of accomplishment are so closely conjoined. And this realization is perhaps the most important realization about *all* performance: that it is nothing if not a productive, dialectical tension between knowing and not knowing; between past and future; between music and non-music; between individual and collective.

Truly, we are both "constrained and enabled" by the tensive binds that inhere within improvisation, in particular, and performance, in general (Baxter and Montgomery 1998: 9). We realize, moreover, that meaning itself is on the line, that it is "dynamically and contextually defined within the ambiguous situation of performance" (Peterson and Langellier 1982: 246). Once again, performance (especially, I think, improvised musical performance) is thus never "just" performance. "In the process of performing," Peterson and Langellier (1982) note, "new and unforeseen possibilities for communication [and thus for life itself] are elaborated" (249). I am keenly interested in these possibilities. My own experiences with improvisation—as a performer, but, also as an avid Phish scholar and phan—have

meant experiencing those possibilities as richly thrilling. Performing music, understanding music, performing one's self, and understanding one's self: these all take place—at once, in many ways, and on many levels—as part of the overall phenomenon. In the end, I learn that, as with all performance, music can indeed *model behavior and posit an orientation*.

Of course, this has been a very abridged recounting of my work. I have shared it here as a way (one way) of illustrating how performance studies and music scholarship can intersect. Both Auslander's and my approach are at heart very similar. We both take an active interest in unpacking the *more* of music, tacking back and forth between performance specifics (both musical and extra-musical) and more macro cultural and political implications. We recognize, as performance scholars, that music is compelling stuff, that it is rich and complex.

Goodall (1991) has stated that music "is more than music, or music in relation to culture, or even music in relation to politics; it is a way in which people are induced to know, to be, to do, and to act" (6). This statement gets at the crux of what I am after connecting music and performance. But, I think Goodall might have gotten it backwards. Indeed, it is precisely *because* music is—in and of itself—an inducement to know, to be, to do, and to act that it *is* a potentially meaning-full event, always already standing in potent relation to society, to culture, to politics. Music performs on far more levels and in far more ways than the aural, the auditory. Music is physics and *metaphysics*, intertwined inextricably. Music not only *is* waves, it *makes* waves.

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## Notes

- [1] I am playing, here, on Schechner's (1985) oft-cited dictum about performers. As he notes: one of the interesting things about performance is that, when a performer is performing, she or he is not really him or herself: she or he is performing (accessing, acting out, embodying, exploring, etc.) something/someone *other* than him or herself. Yet, a performer is also not not her or himself: the performer's real-life persona(e) are never really gone, effaced, erased. Thus, performance represents a doubled epistemology, for both the performer and the audience; an act of presence in/and absence.
- [2] I must note, at the outset, that I mostly deal with, and draw from, performance studies in the U.S. In this context, there are two schools, or branches, of performance studies. They are commonly known as the Midwestern branch and the NYU branch (my own scholarly trajectory is informed by both, though I am primarily grounded in the former). The Midwestern branch's roots trace back to Northwestern University, where performance studies has previously been known, among other names, as oral interpretation. It is closely associated with the National Communication Association, and with the journal *Text and Performance Quarterly*. The NYU branch of performance studies (obviously) comes out of New York University, and is associated with Performance Studies International, and with the journal *The Drama Review*. In the U.S., there exist relatively few institutions granting doctoral degrees explicitly in performance studies: Northwestern and NYU, Southern Illinois University, University of North Carolina, Louisiana State University, University of Texas, Arizona State University, University of South Florida, and Bowling Green State University. Brown University and the University of California at Berkeley have newer programs (pairing, respectively, theatre and dance with performance studies). It is also worth noting that, most recently, Texas A & M has established a new Department of Performance Studies (with a Master's program set to debut in the Fall of 2010) with the country's only stated program joining music and performance studies.
- [3] Here, I am of course borrowing Christopher Small's (1998) useful term. To turn "music" into an active verb is to recognize that music is not a stable, passive phenomenon; but rather, that it is a highly active, ongoing process.
- [4] For more on performance and utopia, see Jill Dolan's *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005).
- [5] Though they differ in many important ways, some readers might get a fuller sense of the Phish phenomenon by thinking of the musical-subcultural phenomenon of the Grateful Dead and Deadheads.
- [6] A leading, foundational figure of the NYU branch of performance studies, Schechner's contribution to performance studies is inestimable. With Schechner, the anthropological turn in/of performance studies, and its contribution to the discipline, is quite clear (e.g., see 1985; 1998; 2002).
- [7] Among others, Victor Turner's work is crucial to understanding the theoretical and practical implications of play in/and performance (e.g., see 1988; 1974)

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