

Body and Concentration in Musical Performance

The felt body and concentration during a musical performance Proceeding from the New Phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz, and on the basis of her own experiences as a concert musician, Yü-Yen Li's research examines the connection between the felt body and concentration from a philosophical perspective. Using the example of musical performance, she demonstrates that concentration is not simply a form of intellectual self-discipline, but that it primarily requires the awareness of the personal physical and emotional world. The concept of the felt body as conceived of by Hermann Schmitz incorporates all of that which a person feels and experiences in the immediate vicinity of their body without the use of exteroceptive senses. This includes first and foremost the intrinsic bodily dynamism of contraction and expansion, which manifests itself not only in embodied emotions such as pain and relief, but also in the affective involvement of feelings. The felt body is highly complex and consists of a virtually inconceivable heterogeneity. In it, innumerable embodied or affective stimuli might have an acute, latent, diffuse or accentuated effect at any number of frequently incongruous points in time. Whilst some aspects might be unfocused and continual, others in turn might have a directional or amplitudinal form. If the felt body is thrown off balance, it is forced to consume additional resources and can no longer efficiently focus its powers of attentiveness. This lecture deals with the internal disruptive influences on the felt body and the embodied conditions required for concentration during a musical performance. What constellations of feelings compromise the generation, sustainment and stabilisation of concentration? And what kind of embodied preparation is required to guarantee clarity of consciousness? The speaker is optimistic that this study's findings may also prove enlightening for research on concentration in respect to other activities