

TransVariations: Beethoven in the age of AI

Alfonso Benetti¹, Øyvind Brandtsegg², Trond Engum², Francisco Monteiro³

1 – INET-md & Department of Communication and Art, University of Aveiro.

2 – Department of Music Technology, Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet.

3 – School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Porto.

FIGURE 1

TransVariations: conceptual image.

FIGURE 2

Artech Residency at University of Aveiro, November 2023.

What if...Beethoven were here today? In the context of Western-Art Music, performance has been intimately linked to interpretation based on the idea of authenticity in relation to a certain musical text. This tendency normally excludes interaction with contemporary technological tools, circumscribes the musical piece as an element of the past, and isolates the performance as a secondary and imperfect entity in relation to a particular work. *TransVariations* address the use of innovative technological approaches to problematize the relationship between artistic creation and interpretation in the context of Western-Art Music. It includes the exploration of resources associated with modern timbral shaping in the context of Beethoven's piano repertoire using feedback and adaptive processing methods as modes of experimentation. Techniques include the analysis of sound features departing from real-time playing and the use of extracted expressive control signals to adjust electronic processing. Expressive features to be extracted include amplitude, rhythmic patterns, timbral sharpness, spectral density; and processing includes reverberation, convolution techniques, granular processing, spectral shaping, freezing and time modification. This approach enables the (re)creation of past artistic works and the production of new outputs through the use of contemporary technological interfaces; the improvement of new technologies related to artistic creation; the reshape of the idea of expressivity in music; and the dissemination new resources, technological tools and practical related strategies for artistic interpretation and creation. Thus, a new idea of authenticity emerges based on a perception of the past through innovative contemporary means: a new reality is reconstructed according to current mechanisms of understanding where, in practice, the original exists within a specific context and temporal space as part of the present.

