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Title

Improvising the Round Dance of Being: Reading Heidegger from a Musical Perspective

Abstract

The secondary literature concerned with the thought of German philosopher, Martin Heidegger commonly attempts to elucidate key themes from Heidegger's thinking by appealing to simple examples. Hammers and jugs are particularly favoured, being consistent with Heidegger's own examples. While discussions that draw upon such examples effectively convey, in broad terms, what is at issue in Heidegger's thought, the simplicity of these examples and the fact that the same examples appear time and time again often leave unsaid or underdeveloped certain progressions and consequences of Heidegger's philosophy. In this chapter, three related themes from Heidegger's thought – "equipmentality" (*Zeugsein*), "dwelling" (*Wohnen*), and "Event" (*Ereignis*), each of which relate to Heidegger's broader concept of 'world' – are considered with respect to improvised musical performance. Such performance, and so "improvisation" more generally, is understood as a spontaneous attending and responding to the unexpected and unforeseen (*improviso*) that emerges from the temporospatial happening that is the "Event" (*extempore*), the *Ereignis*. As such, improvisation is not so much something subjects *do*, but something subjects *participate in*. At the same time as Heidegger's thinking can offer insight into the improvisational character of musical practice, the consideration of musical improvisation also illuminates aspects of Heidegger's thought that are commonly left unacknowledged or underdeveloped in standard readings, including Heidegger's own appeal to ideas of the improvisational and even the musical.

I

Despite Heidegger's lack of direct engagement with music, there have been several attempts to draw on Heidegger's work to address questions pertaining to music.¹ In this chapter we undertake our own exploration of the relevance of Heidegger's thinking to music, specifically with respect to improvised musical performance. We argue that Heidegger's thinking provides insight into the fundamental character of such performance, but equally, that its consideration also highlights certain aspects of key Heideggerian themes in ways typically not considered. A key point of focus in our discussion is Heidegger's idea of "world," as this relates to three central concepts: "equipmentality" (*Zeugsein*), "dwelling" (*Wohnen*), and

“Event” (*Ereignis*), each of which are addressed in turn. With respect to improvised musical performance, “equipmentality” offers insight into the relationship between players and their instruments; “dwelling” highlights the way in which performing music always goes beyond a purely musical context; the “Event” draws out the dynamic and appropriative nature of improvisational engagement. What is offered is both a musical and improvisational understanding of what Heidegger refers to in *Being and Time* as being-in-the-world, and so of world itself, and a “world-oriented” ontological understanding of musical improvisation.

Improvisation is a commonplace term in musical discussion, as it is elsewhere, but as is the case with so many terms, such familiarity can be a barrier to thinking more essentially about what is at issue. One way of overcoming that barrier is, as Heidegger suggests, to “listen” to language,² that is, to attend to the larger context to which a word or phrase belongs and which is often initiated, in Heidegger’s work, through a reflection on etymology. Such reflection is certainly instructive in the case of improvisation, which is originally connected to the Latin *improviso* and also *extempore*. *Improviso* means “unexpected” or “unforeseen.” *Extempore* is literally “out of time” – *ex* (out of) *tempore*, ablative of *tempus* (time) – but in the sense of being that which is *of* time or “*of* the moment,” and so stands out from time. *Improviso* and *extempore* convey the idea of a dynamic event that is without antecedent, and so is unprepared for and unanticipated, and, on reflection, one might say the same of improvisation. Understood thus, improvisation is not primarily the exercising of musical virtuosity, or the exhibiting of mastery of an instrument, musical genre, style, or structure, nor a demonstration of the collaborative possibilities of an ensemble. Rather, on the basis of a learned familiarity involving one’s instrument, musical tradition and culture, and other performers – a “coming to be at home,” or better, a “becoming oriented” in the *topos*³ (the topological ordering) of the musical – one gives oneself over to the unexpected and unforeseen possibilities of the event, and so come to *belong* as well as contribute to a happening that is both singular and complex.

Although we may tend to think of improvisation, especially in music, as a particular kind of performance or performative skill, to understand it as an event in the way suggested allows it to be seen as something essential to human engagement in the world. Improvisation, in the broadest sense of the term, not only characterizes what it is to genuinely be in the world – to be genuinely *engaged* – it also characterizes the happening of world as such. Indeed, what Heidegger calls the Event is itself an improvisation, as will be made evident below. Below we attempt to elucidate the details of what an improvisational account of being-in-the-world might mean and how, by drawing on improvised musical performance as

an exemplar, such an improvisational account can be found in some of Heidegger's own key texts.

II

We begin where, in an important sense, Heidegger himself begins – with the world. It is Heidegger's overall understanding of world, a brief sketch of which is the aim of this section, that provides the immediate context for the ensuing discussion. Much of Heidegger's work can be understood as an attempt to elucidate *world* no less than *being*, and the idea of world is one that Heidegger claims has gone entirely unrecognized by previous thinkers.⁴

For the early Heidegger, "world is that which is already previously unveiled and from which we return to the being with which we have to do and among which we dwell."⁵ World is prior to *Dasein*; it is that in which one always already finds oneself. It is that which there *is*, for *Dasein*. Importantly, world is that in which one is *situated* when one relates to other humans and things. To be "situated" is to be "set *in place*" – to find oneself *already placed* in a certain topological configuration with respect to other things and attend to the circumstances that arise from the way those things relate to one another.⁶ The situation is the very structure that gives rise to thinking and acting – one *is* in response to the circumstances one encounters and attends to. The world in which one is situated is not something one can ever stand apart from and view objectively; one *is* in the world in the midst of the world, always already there. According to Heidegger, the world is not for us, instead the world is comprised of myriad things; we are but one of those things, albeit holding a certain privileged position insofar as we have a "world" and not merely an "environment." The "world" is an issue for us in a way that the animal's environment is not; for Heidegger, animals are "poor in world," and innate objects are "worldless."⁷

From the mid 1930s onwards, the idea of world bears a more explicit relation to truth in Heidegger's thinking. For Heidegger, truth does not merely refer to "correctness" (Heidegger often uses the Greek term *orthotēs*), usually understood as a matter of correspondence between assertion (or thought) and world, but is rather that which itself makes such correctness possible. In simple terms, the possibility of making a claim about something that could be true or false (in the ordinary sense associated with correctness) already depends on things being made apparent such that claims can be made about them – the making apparent of things that occurs in the midst of world is thus necessary for making claims or having thoughts whether they are, in the ordinary sense, true or false. In the sense of that which first makes things apparent, and so makes correctness possible, Heidegger

refers to truth as unconcealment or unhiddenness (*Unverborgenheit*), or disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*), also using the Greek term *alétheia*.⁸ Heidegger's developing account of truth, already presaged in *Being and Time*, but becoming more salient in the 1930s, is one in which truth is itself an event of the happening of world as that in the midst of which truth – as unconcealment or disclosedness – occurs. As fundamentally disclosive, truth is always a bringing of things to appearance from out of concealment, and this means that truth, as unconcealment or disclosedness always stands against the background of concealment, closedness, or untruth.⁹ This has the consequence that truth, as it is disclosive, is never apart from concealing, and so is never complete; truth is always tied to the situated and singular event of disclosedness, and yet is always open to the possibility of other disclosures.

Understood as the event of disclosedness or unconcealment that belongs to world, truth makes especially evident the character of world as relational, and so as always implicating a totality, and yet as also situationally articulated. The relationality of world is worked out in and through the singular happening of truth which is always the happening of situation or place. For Heidegger, there is no genuine relation outside of the relationality of world and so outside of this sort of singular dynamic situatedness. The basic themes that appear here play out in various ways across Heidegger's thinking, and they bear closely on the other key concepts that are the focus for discussion: equipmentality, dwelling, and Event. In what follows, the concepts at issue are taken up in ways that draw on what has gone before but which also deploy those concepts in the more specific context of musical performance, and especially of improvisational musical performance, so as to illuminate both the nature of such performance, and the improvisation at work in it, and the concepts themselves. By considering the insights Heidegger's thinking offers for our understanding of musical performance and improvisation, a particular reading of Heidegger will emerge – a reading in which being-in-the-world is seen to be essentially improvisational in a way that mirrors the basic structure of improvisation in musical performance.

III

'Equipmentality' is the first of the three ideas mentioned above that will be addressed – partly because it is the earliest of the three to which Heidegger gives detailed attention ("dwelling" has the same early provenance, but without the same development). What is at issue in equipmentality, simply put, is *Dasein's* active relation to things in the world. Some things are "ready-to-hand" (*Zuhanden*), such that one may use a thing without thinking about it directly, while others are "present-at-hand" (*Vorhanden*), such that one directs one's attention toward

and actively considers a thing.¹⁰ For Heidegger, equipment is “something in-order-to...”¹¹ We can thus infer from Heidegger that the proficient guitarist, for example, “uses” the guitar plectrum “in-order-to” strike the strings of the guitar without apprehending the plectrum theoretically. This is because the relationship between player and plectrum, Heidegger would say, “has in each case been outlined in advance in terms of the totality of such involvements.”¹² The way the player acts when using the plectrum is already structured by the use the plectrum is known to serve the actions of the player. If the plectrum cracks and begins catching on the strings however, the player may begin attending to the plectrum directly, as something “present-at-hand.”

While examples such as these do some justice to what is at stake with respect to equipmentality, they pass over a wealth of information about the way in which equipmentality structures being-in-the-world. Considering equipment with respect to a more complex relationship, such as the broader relationship between musicians and their instruments, yields a greater insight into what is at issue. It highlights, for instance, the way in which equipment not only serves a particular use, but also the way in which equipment itself shapes and modifies modes of worldly activity and engagement (and so Heidegger’s account of equipmentality, along with other aspects of his thought, can be seen to prefigure contemporary ideas of extended cognition¹³).

When an experienced player sits with an acoustic guitar, they do not consciously intend all of their actions toward the guitar. Largely, the guitar itself structures the bodily position and actions of the player. For instance, by virtue of the equipmental structuring of the guitar, the player’s right hand (assuming they play right-handed) moves vertically between the highest and lowest strings, and horizontally, achieving brighter tones as they strike the strings closer to the bridge of the guitar, and warmer tones as they move up the body of the guitar toward the neck. The fingers on their left-hand press strings to the fretboard to alter the pitch, and the hand stretches to execute certain large intervallic leaps. The right arm wraps around the guitar, gently holding it in position against the player’s body as the left arm holds the player’s hand in position such that their thumb rests on the back of the guitar neck, stabilizing the fretting fingers to enable them to apply the appropriate pressure to the strings.

For the experienced guitarist, assuming they play in the traditional manner described above,¹⁴ the instrument demands this basic configuration. The instrument configures the body and brain of the player.¹⁵ Alva Noë observes,

The expert's performance ... deteriorates if he focuses on the mechanics of the task. ... It has been shown, for example, that highly trained experts – musicians, athletes, etc. – show a decrease in overall level of brain activation when they are engaged in the performance of their skills compared to beginners.¹⁶

The player is not consciously acting toward the instrument. Rather, in their knowing how to play the guitar they allow the guitar to structure their acting.

To know how to play a guitar then, is to know the *topos* the instrument brings with it – the player comports themselves, thinks, and acts in a manner consistent with that which is required of the instrument in the given situation. Playing one's instrument is the enactment of certain topological structures such that inasmuch as the player plays the instrument, the instrument plays the player. To spontaneously engage with one's instrument while one improvises music, then, is, in part, to allow oneself to be *played by* the instrument. There is a certain relationship between player and instrument that comes about only when player and instrument relate to one another in this way. If the relationship breaks down, as it were, perhaps the guitar breaks or malfunctions in some unexpected way during performance, the topological structures that afford the decrease in brain activation mentioned above are interrupted, and new relationships emerge – perhaps the guitarist perseveres with a broken string and for the most part the original relationships are reconfigured, or perhaps the interruption is so severe the performance is forced to an early close.

At issue in “equipmentality” is the way in which certain material configurations of things we use structure our being-in-the-world. We are in the world, in part, through being amidst such configurations, and on this basis the way in which we each *are* in the world can be said to be structured by the world itself (although, since the world is not entirely given in terms of things for use, neither can the way we are in the world be entirely structured so either). Musicians develop certain skillsets because there exists in the world a reason to have such a skillset; musicians assume the *topos* of their instrument, in large part, because that is what the *instrument* demands. To engage in improvised musical performance, then, is to assume a certain topological relationality with the world. That situational responsiveness, and so the more specific relationship between player and instrument (a relationship captured in Heidegger's notion of the equipmental), obtains regardless of whether or not it is explicitly or consciously acknowledged by the player. Put in more general terms, the equipmental structure of the world – and so the way the world already configures possibilities for action – means that our being-in-the-world, as it is worked out in activity, is always shaped by the world itself. Our own being is thus inseparable from the being of the world.

IV

The account of equipmentality in *Being and Time*, although more narrowly focussed than any of his later discussions, is nevertheless a precursor to the account of “dwelling” Heidegger gives in essays from the 1950s such as “The Thing.”¹⁷ Indeed, the account of equipmentality is part of Heidegger’s elaboration of the structure of being-in-the-world that, in *Being and Time*, he explicitly designates as having the character of “dwelling.”¹⁸ The problem, however, is that the focus on the equipmental can all too easily be read as implying that the world is in some sense produced by and in relation to the structure of “useful” or “practical” that arise from *Dasein*’s own purposes and activities. The danger is thus that the world is seen as somehow a product of “subjectivity” (taking *Dasein*, as developed in *Being and Time*, to be a fundamental mode of subjectivity and so also of human being). The problem, which extends across the analysis of *Being and Time* more broadly, is one that Heidegger himself recognizes, even if he often treats it as a problem of the way his work is read rather than as intrinsic to that work.¹⁹ Part of the shift that occurs between Heidegger’s earlier and later work is in terms of a shift towards a clearer focus on the structure of world as that in which dwelling is founded.

The idea of “dwelling” may thus be seen to develop or re-articulate the way in which the world is something of which mortals (the term that essentially replaces *Dasein* in the later work) are *a part*, as opposed to something produced by, or something that is *for*, *Dasein*. Heidegger’s idea of the “fourfold,” which is intimately tied to dwelling, presents the world as the co-responsiveness or happening of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals.²⁰ Earth, sky, and the divinities are not *for* or *produced by* mortals; the world only *is* insofar as there is this mutual *belonging* together of these four elements. While the basic ideas central to equipmentality are certainly present in Heidegger’s account of dwelling and the fourfold, equipmentality alone does not capture, for instance, the way in which one’s participation in an activity goes beyond the context of that individual activity. From the perspective of dwelling, playing music is a mode of being that encompasses more than just the musical. To play music is to participate in the world, enacting the oneness of the fourfold – gathering earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. To play music is to set forth the world in a particular way, through the medium of music. In this section we will outline what a consideration of dwelling offers our understanding of improvised musical performance.

What is at issue in dwelling is realizing that one is not separate from the world. To dwell is to find oneself intimately related to those other elements that belong to the fourfold,

attending and responding to that which is given in the enactment of that relationality. Dwelling refers to a certain topological ordering where one finds oneself already placed as one of four essential elements in the fourfold. Indeed, what Heidegger addresses through the concept of dwelling, where the world is not merely some backdrop against which mortals conduct themselves or that is available to them, is exactly the sort of situatedness at issue in improvised musical performance. This situatedness is not particular to music alone; Heidegger argues that to *be* is to *dwell* – he writes, “I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is ... dwelling.”²¹ Nonetheless, music and musical improvisation, like any and every human activity, can only be understood against the background of dwelling as that which characterizes the nature of human, or mortal, being. Moreover, as we argue below, by looking to the character of improvised musical performance we are also able to draw out the improvisational character of dwelling itself.

To improvise is to attend and respond to the unexpected and the unforeseen (exactly what is suggested by the etymology of *improviso* and *extempore*) in the temporospatidynamicity of the Event such that what the player encounters is not reducible to the player alone nor to something only the player contributes. That which is encountered comes forth *in* and *from* the Event and is *there* with the player, calling for attention and response. When one improvises, one encounters the world as the world presents *itself* in *that* situation, and thus a certain aspect of the world is disclosed and made salient. In the openness of receptive engagement – an openness to the unexpected and unforeseen – the improviser does not offer responses on the basis of the world as it is already known. Rather improvisation allows the world to come to be in a way that is indeed unforeseen and new – *improviso* is also *innovare* – it is original and originary, as Heidegger would say. Through improvising one comes to “be at home” in the indeterminate happening of the musical – one comes to dwell in the musical, and therefore the world.

The improvisation of music is demonstrative of precisely what is at issue in Heidegger’s account of dwelling, and improvisation more broadly points to what is at issue in a “dwelling life.”²² That improvised musical performance is a spontaneous attending and responding to the unexpected and unforeseen means improvisation cannot be reduced to a set of rules, principles, or precepts. Equally, as dwelling is a spontaneous happening, where one owns up (even if one does not recognize it as such) to being *a part* of the world and is therefore open to receiving the world, dwelling is equally not reducible to rules, principles, or precepts. That dwelling demands an improvisational comportment to a world largely

concealed from mortals means there can be no overarching rules or principles that would allow us to shift our responsibility for engagement to those rules or principles. To dwell, one must simply attend and respond to the place in which one *is*. Rather than being an attempt to control or manipulate the world, dwelling is a participation in the improvisational happening of the world – improvised musical performance providing an especially salient exemplar of such engagement.

Thinking dwelling in terms of improvisation, we can make sense of what is sometimes thought to be a tension in Heidegger's thinking. On the one hand, says Heidegger, "to be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell,"²³ and on the other, he insists "that mortals ... *must ever learn to dwell*."²⁴ There can be no method for attending and responding to that which is unexpected and unforeseen. To meaningfully engage with those aspects of the world one must be genuinely attentive and responsive. This improvisational engagement is never "over," as it were – one never "masters" improvisation, just as one never masters the world. Equally, no one ever masters dwelling. Although dwelling is indeed the fundamental way in which mortals *are* in the world, it is a constant task. Like improvisation, it is not something that can simply be set in motion and then forgotten, it is an activity always calling for engagement. We must, as Heidegger says, "*ever learn to dwell*," in much the same way that we must "ever learn to improvise," since every encounter that calls for improvisational engagement is an encounter in which we learn to improvise anew.

V

If Heidegger's analysis of equipmentality illuminates *Dasein's* engagement with things in the world, and the analysis of dwelling further acknowledges our topological embeddedness *in* the world, Heidegger's account of the Event or *Ereignis* draws out the appropriative nature of the fourfold. The idea of the Event is an improvisational happening in which mortals are "taken up by" the circumstances present in the situation in which they find themselves.²⁵ The Event is the co-responsive happening – the "mirror-play,"²⁶ as Heidegger says – of the fourfold. Players appropriate the broader structure of the situation whilst simultaneously being appropriated by the situation. To use Heidegger's language, it is an "event of appropriation."²⁷ Or as Heidegger's student, and founder of philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer says, not only do players "play" the game, "all playing is a being-played."²⁸ The Event, which emphasises the experiential and transformative nature of the

happening of the fourfold,²⁹ is thoroughly improvisational insofar as it is spontaneous and indeterminate.

In being appropriated by the Event, one finds oneself in the midst of the interplay of concealing and unconcealing. The musician who improvises, entering into the timespace opened up by the fourfold, also enters into a domain that encompasses the near and the far, the familiar and the strange, the authority of tradition and the open possibility of futurity. As it can be compared to the Event itself, so the play of improvisation also mirrors the “turning,” the *Kehre*,³⁰ that is at work in the Event; we are always turned back to the world and to our own being as given in and through the world. Improvisation is a constant responding to the improvisational situation, but a responding that is also shaped by that situation at the same time as it contributes to it.

For a player to be capable of orienting and reorienting themselves in the midst of the familiar and the strange, the expected and the unexpected, is not something achieved through a deliberate series of actions whose course is predictable in advance or that are arrived at through the application of a determinate technique or method. The very nature of *improviso* means players can never know in advance precisely what they will encounter. Yet insofar as they are improvising, as they are participating as one element in the happening of the fourfold, so they also allow themselves to be appropriated and *led* by possibilities disclosed in and through the situation.

Moreover, that one is genuinely improvising – that one is attending and responding to the unexpected and unforeseen that is disclosed in the situation, and not merely “going through the motions” – means that one necessarily engages with that which is given in the situational happening, no matter its strangeness or unexpectedness. In their “turning” and returning, in the oscillation or “vibration” of the Event, the anticipated and the unforeseen balance themselves through the responses of the players. From the perspective of the players themselves, this is experienced in terms of giving oneself over to the music and to the improvisational situation. Indeed, the player who endeavours to pre-empt the situation – which invariably means to focus on what can be predicted, on what is, in one sense or another, already known and familiar – has already lost touch with the very situation that calls for their response. Such a pre-emptive response is not only a problem for the player who is fixated on what is familiar or can be anticipated. The player who looks to engage purely with what is taken to be the unfamiliar or the unexpected has also pre-empted the situational engagement that is called-for. Such a player risks losing any genuine sense of situatedness; they risk becoming overwhelmed, disoriented, or as jazz musicians say, “lost” (where to be

“lost” may be understood as having been overwhelmed by the situation in a way that also entails alienation from it). One should add too, that, to use the language of Heidegger’s fourfold, the fact that players are the recipients of possibilities granted to them by the divinities³¹ does not necessarily mean that their improvisational appropriation of or responses to those possibilities will constitute a work that has worth or significance. The divinities grant, they make gifts, but they do not explain what is given just as they do not explain themselves or their giving (and one might even say that this is the very nature of the true grant or gift).³² The divinities thus illuminate a way forward, they show a path, but they do not tell us how to move or to follow nor where the way is headed. The player is thus at the mercy of the divinities, is in thrall to the music, is, one might almost say (noting the qualification introduced below), “played” by the improvisational situation itself. The player’s contribution is thus not in the conscious or insightful direction of what occurs, but in the preparedness that allows an appropriately rich and attentive participation in the improvisational event.

Neither in the musical case, nor more generally, however, should the role of the human participant in the happening of the Event, which is also the happening of the fourfold, be taken to be merely “passive”– which might indeed be suggested by the idea of the player as the one who is “played.” Thus, if we do emphasise the reversal of the primary focus of agency from player to situation or situational happening, then this cannot be construed to mean a complete loss of agency on the part of the player. The player, and mortals or human beings more generally, have a capacity for response that is not determined in advance nor is it, in its own turn, merely a “product” of some situational context that stands apart from the player or from human being. The point is not that the human is entirely determined by its situation, by its place, but rather that the situation, the place – in which human being is already embedded – always exceeds any determination that human beings may attempt to impose. Insofar as one has a “world,” one is active in and participates in that world, but one neither controls nor directs it. In the play of situational or improvisational engagement, the world is opened to us – as we are to the world – but the world also remains, as world, that which goes beyond us and is never subject to us. It is always we who are subject to the world and to the inexhaustible possibilities that it presents.

VI

This chapter has positioned Heidegger’s philosophy and the phenomenon of musical performance next to one another. On the one hand Heidegger’s concept of “world” has been

employed to elucidate the way in which improvisation, as exemplified in musical performance, is no mere subjectively determined mode of engagement, but is rather a genuinely participatory engagement with the world. On the other hand, it has become clear that the idea of improvisation itself offers a certain insight into the attentiveness, responsiveness, and engagement at issue in Heidegger's own thinking. Improvisation can be taken as a characteristic feature of what Heidegger refers to as the Event or the happening of world that is the fourfold. And more than this, one might even say that the musical is itself already at work in Heidegger's thinking – especially in his thinking of the fourfold.

In his meditation on the role of ordinary things in the bringing together of the elements of world, Heidegger writes, in "The Thing," that "the fouring, the unity of the four, presences as the appropriating mirror-play of the betrothed, each to the other in simple oneness. The fouring presences as the worlding of world. The mirror-play of world is the round dance [*Reigen*] of appropriating."³³ The mirror-play at issue here is the unified happening of each element of the fourfold – earth, sky, divinities, and mortals – as they are gathered into and reflected back within that unity. This happening or appropriating, which is the same happening or appropriating that is at issue in the Event, appears here as a round dance. Dance is "musical," both in the sense that it belongs to one of the muses and in the sense that it is bound up with music in the ordinary sense (Terpsichore is the muse to whom both dance and music belong together). The Event, the happening of world or of the fourfold, is thus itself musical. Indeed, one may argue that the movements of the dance of the fourfold, the dance of the world, are themselves movements set to the music of the Event, in the sense of *extempore*. The tempo, rhythm, and dynamicity of the music emerges from the world and the Event *is* the round dance of the world – appropriating and being appropriated in and by music. The mirror-play of the world that is this joining in dance is "play" in the sense of improvisation, where one participates in and is taken up by the happening of the fourfold. The movements of the round dance – always responsive to the Event – cannot be pre-learned, due to the unexpected and unforeseen nature of its emergence. Rather the dance must be improvised – responding and attending to that which is given by the music of the world.

The music of the world, in the sense articulated here, has been present in philosophy almost from the very beginning, perhaps most evidently in Pythagoras' harmony of the spheres, where mathematics and philosophy are thought to derive from the structures of music. But Heidegger himself, in the Heraclitus Seminars of 1966/67 (with reference to Aeschylus' *Prometheus*), speaks of the way in which one is bound to the rhythm of language, such that one is "rhythmed."³⁴ Moreover, referencing the musicologist, Thrasybulos

Georgiades, Heidegger asserts that humans do not make rhythm, rather, it is something that “approaches us.”³⁵ We may say, then, that the rhythm to which Prometheus says we are “bound” emerges from the music of the Event – from the “extemporary” music of the world. It is to this music that the round dance is responsive, so that the round dance is indeed “the ring that joins while it plays as mirroring.”³⁶ The ring comprises the elements of the fourfold, dancing in unity; “the ring joins the four.”³⁷

Just like partners in a round dance, the four “nestle into their unifying presence, in which each one retains its own nature.”³⁸ Mortals are immersed in the round dance of the fourfold, always retaining their own sense as mortals. But, as Heidegger tells us with respect to dwelling, mortals often do not live in the understanding of their dwelling, or of their round dance. Enraptured by the pace of modernity, of the leaps and bounds of science and technology, mortals typically forget to ponder and listen to the music of the world. Thus, Heidegger’s call for mortals to “*ever learn to dwell*,” may equally be a call for mortals to ever learn to improvise a round dance with earth, sky, and divinities to the music of world, and in their dancing, “so nestling, ... join together, worlding, the world.”³⁹

¹ See, for instance, Günther Pöltner, “Heidegger,” in *Music in German Philosophy: An Introduction*, eds. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner and Oliver Fürbeth, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, 187-210, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010; Jeff R. Warren, *Music and Ethical Responsibility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; Bruce Ellis Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Eduardo Marx, *Heidegger und der Ort der Musik*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998.

² Martin Heidegger, “Art and Space”, *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal, trans. Jerome Veith (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 307.

³ The term ‘*topos*’ is used here in a manner consistent with Malpas’s account. See Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 26-28.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 165.

⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 165.

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “situation,” accessed July 24, 2020, <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/view/Entry/180520?redirectedFrom=situation&>. We employ the term ‘situation’ in manner that is largely consistent with the topological

associations Malpas evokes in his discussions of ‘place’. See Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995), 176.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, 15-86, New York: Harper Perennial, 2013.

⁹ Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 53.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 2008), 93-107.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97.

¹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116.

¹³ See for instance, Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers, “The Extended Mind,” *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (1998): 7-19; Shaun Gallagher, “Body Schema and Intentionality,” in *The Body and the Self*, eds. José Luis Bermúdez, Anthony Marcel, and Naomi Eilan, 225-244, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001; Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.

¹⁴ One’s acting in the world is always historically mediated. While guitarists from other traditions and cultures may approach the instrument differently, and therefore the configuration will be altered, the basic relationship between player and instrument remains.

¹⁵ Heidegger’s own discussion equally acknowledges the relationship between equipment use and experience. See *Being and Time*, 97-98.

¹⁶ Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, 100.

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger “The Thing,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 161-184.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 80 – the translation somewhat obscures what is at issue here, although Macquarie and Robinson do include an extensive note on the passage.

¹⁹ Heidegger’s unhappiness with aspects of *Being and Time*, and especially with the way its treatment of equipmentality was taken up, emerges very soon after the publication of the work – see, for instance, Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 177.

²⁰ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 161-184.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 145.

²² Martin Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 209-227.

²³ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 145.

²⁴ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 159.

²⁵ Although there is a commonplace tendency to think of the Event, the *Ereignis*, as *temporal*, the Event ought properly to be understood as encompassing both the temporal *and* the spatial – as, in fact, topological (place being both temporal and spatial). In the *Contributions*, for instance (in which the Event emerges as a central idea), time and space are dealt with as ‘time-space’ (*Zeit-raum*) – see Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 293-306.

²⁶ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 177-179.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 36-40.

²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 111.

²⁹ See Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology*, 213-219.

³⁰ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 246.

³¹ On the idea of the “divinities” (*die Göttlichen*) as they figure in Heidegger’s fourfold, see Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology*, 274-276.

³² Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 96.

³³ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger and Eugen Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, trans. Charles H. Seibert (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1979), 55.

³⁵ Heidegger and Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, 55.

³⁶ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.

³⁷ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.

³⁸ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.

³⁹ Heidegger, “The Thing,” 178.