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ROGER MOSELEY
KEYS TO PLAY: MUSIC AS A LUDIC MEDIUM FROM APOLLO TO NINTENDO
Oakland: University of California Press, 2016
pp. xv + 452, ISBN 978 0 520 29124 9

Roger Moseley's *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* takes an unabashedly anarchic stance toward history and historicism. Leaping in the span of a few pages from Schiller's aesthetic theory to twentieth-century video-game representations of Chopin and back to Apollo and Marsyas's mythic duel, Moseley is concerned with the capacity of the keyboard's ludic interface to 'obtrude from the passage of spacetime', eliciting modes of play that make possible epistemological connections across historically disparate sites (23). He uses this capacity as a point of departure from which to argue for a methodological shift to an archaeological and genealogical approach which can account for transhistorical simultaneity.

It may, then, initially come as a surprise that the historical particularity of the eighteenth century emerges as a frequent reference point – even a kind of refrain – within this temporally wide-ranging project. Moseley persuasively argues that eighteenth-century debates over sound, technology and play present uncanny parallels with more recent twentieth- and twenty-first-century concerns. In making this argument, he defamiliarizes canonical eighteenth-century artefacts – including Mozart's manuscript scores, Kant and Schiller's aesthetic theories, and musical dice games – while at the same time problematizing the tendency to focus on the present in recent work in ludomusicology and sound studies.

Indeed, one of the most productive aspects of Moseley's work is the broadened sense of 'ludomusicology' that he invites us to engage with. Drawing on work by Johan Huizinga (*Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949)), Roger Caillois (*Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001)) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Truth and Method*, second edition, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004)), Moseley urges music scholars to take seriously the phrase 'to *play* music' – the 'profound "affinity between music and play"' (2; quoting Huizinga). To this end, he theorizes play as a recursive act that renders unstable the boundaries between subject and object – between playing and being played – and exposes both to uncertainty and risk. Rule-bound but open-ended, by turns cooperative and agonistic, the concept of play Moseley elaborates is both capacious and finely honed.

This expansive sense of play unfolds throughout Moseley's text and marks an important contribution in its own right; but it also serves as the basis for two further lines of argumentation. On the one hand, Moseley uses a staggeringly wide range of musical and technological case studies (which I discuss further below) to argue that the interface of the keyboard, far from being merely an instrument for the realization of musical works, has acted as a mediating technology that playfully negotiates between digital and analogic registers. And on the other, he argues convincingly for the relevance of archaeological methodologies as ways of accessing ludic and material domains of knowledge that have resisted traditional historiographic approaches.

These three strands interweave throughout Moseley's five 'keys', an alternative appellation for 'chapters' that evokes the five black keys in an octave on the piano's keyboard. Indeed, Moseley's five sections are grouped in a 2 + 3 arrangement, with the first two keys comprising part 1 ('Fields and Interfaces of Musical Play') and the last three comprising part 2 ('Play by Play: Improvisation, Performance, Recreation'). While this parallel between form and content may seem a bit arch, it serves to emphasize deeper structural parallels between Moseley's text and the keyboard interface, and between musicological work and musical play. The arrangement evokes a playful ambiguity between order and disorder: the sequential ordering of the chapters, like the sequential ordering of pitches in a scale, is but one of many ways one might creatively organize them – albeit the most transparent one. This image is, indeed, consonant with the theme of digital combinatoriality that runs through Moseley's text.

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Within this arrangement, Keys 1 ('Ludomusicality') and 2 ('Digital Analogies') introduce the two principal conceptual apparatuses that undergird the project. Key 1 concatenates a dizzyingly heterogeneous array of sources in order to elaborate how the simulative nature of (musical) play cuts across time, potentially – if fleetingly – 'bringing the future of the past within range of twenty-first-century sensoria' (66). Thus, for instance, the third section of Key 1 draws connections between the violent mythic duel between Apollo and Marsyas, Athanasius Kircher's seventeenth-century development of systems of musical encryption, Friedrich Kittler's reflections on the relationship between entertainment technology and the military-industrial complex, and early video games, all of these read, through Lessing's *Laocoön*, as mediations between the 'spatially juxtapositive' (in their digital code) and the 'temporally progressive' (in their game play) (48).

Key 2 likewise playfully moves between (among others) Shakespeare, game theory, early telegraphy and eighteenth-century interest in the keyboard's capacity for sensibility to argue that the digital (understood in its invocation of digits-as-numbers and digits-as-fingers) and the analogue (understood in its evocation of proportion and similitude), far from opposing one another in a binary, depend on one another. According to this line of thought, the analogue is not an unbroken continuity that exists prior to the digital; rather, it is because of the distinctions within digital epistemologies that the analogue is thinkable as such. Moreover, the keyboard – at which digits produce discrete sounds that are understood through analogic relations with the bodies that produce, and are produced by, them – becomes a privileged interface for playing with this reciprocal mediation.

Having set up these ideas, Keys 3–5 explore, by turn, three modes of musical play: improvisation, performance and recreation. Perhaps in an effort to give the reader a sense of the epistemological conditions required for a player successfully to realize each of these modes, these sections indulge less in transhistorical speculation and instead focus on individual case studies. Moseley's virtuosic close readings of the materiality of musical artefacts – the precise (analogic) sweep of Mozart's pen on the (digital) medium of a handwritten score, for instance – features particularly compellingly here.

In this vein, Key 3 ('The Emergence of Musical Play') considers a constellation of eighteenth-century combinatorial practices: the fashionable trend of musical dice games, which allowed players to generate complete keyboard works through aleatoric processes; the improvisatory practices codified in *commedia dell'arte* performance and in partimento music pedagogy, both of which facilitated playful extemporization through the internalization and creative recombination of stock formulae; and the short-lived excitement around a mechanical invention that purported to compose original pieces of music. Combining these with the 1994 computer game *C. P. U. Bach* (which algorithmically generated music in eighteenth-century styles), Moseley argues that, far from merely representing an outdated episteme, these practices playfully operate at the border of chance, technical knowledge and (in)calculability. Key 4 ('High Scores: WAM vs. LVB') moves from improvisation to the performance of written musical scores. Taking Mozart and Beethoven as key figures, and putting them in counterpoint with Super Mario Brothers, Moseley argues for a reading of the musical score as a 'game plan' that 'encodes, facilitates, and regulates' players' behaviour, setting out obstacles and opportunities the player must imaginatively navigate (219). And finally, Key 5 ('Play Again?') uses close readings of two musically rich Nintendo video games (Toshio Iwai's *Otocky* and Bandai Namco's *Nodame Cantabile*) to reread the previous four chapters in the context of a turn toward recreative play – play that, in the face of increasing standardization and specialization, instead emphasizes ostentatious kinetic pleasure, infidelity to origins and open-ended remediation.

Taken as a whole, *Keys to Play* is a tour de force in the sheer range of materials it invokes and in the way it juxtaposes theoretical texts, aesthetic objects and elements of musical and technological praxis without reducing one to the other. The consequence of this approach is that the reader may at times become lost in the dense web of citations: even beyond the sheer number of names mentioned, Moseley's methodology frequently blurs distinctions between primary and secondary sources and between historical and fictional representations. On a larger scale, the final three chapters trace an uncannily familiar historical narrative of the closing, and re-opening, of musical performance: these chapters take the reader from extemporized

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performance through the emergence of the work concept and the hero-composer and into the era of increasingly mobile and manipulable technologies of musical recreation. Moseley's emphasis on play does much to nuance and open up this narrative. At the same time, the consequences of this historiographic 'return of the repressed' (to cite Freud's definition of the term ('Das Unheimliche', *Imago* 5 (1919), 297–324)) demand further scrutiny. Indeed, this speaks to a broader methodological paradox with which scholars building on Moseley's work will have to contend: that of building an explicitly anti-canonical, heterodox methodology around a framework of sources that are often well situated within the musicological canon.

If at times it may seem to evoke some well-known historiographical tropes, Moseley's approach also offers novel and productive means for the historian to account for transhistorical epistemological connections without losing sight of the historical specificity of individual artefacts. Indeed, it is a great strength of his methodology that the eighteenth century functions neither as a point of origin nor as an untimely precursor of more recent technological developments: rather, it furnishes a set of practices whose material remnants persist even today. And while Moseley's text presents real challenges in asking its reader to be willing to move rapidly and sometimes unpredictably – indeed, exhaustingly playfully – between multiple discourses and modes of analysis, these challenges are, for this player, amply rewarded.

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GIUSEPPE SIGISMONDO (1739–1826), ED. CLAUDIO BACCIAGALUPPI, GIULIA GIOVANI AND RAFFAELE MELLACE, TRANS. BEATRICE SCALDINI
APOTHEOSIS OF MUSIC IN THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES
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pp. lxxviii + 346, ISBN 978 8 894 15046 9

Propelling the present wave of academic interest in eighteenth-century Neapolitan musical practices have been the concerns of music theory – the partimento tradition in particular has offered unique insights into historical compositional technique, with implications for modern analysis and pedagogy. Somewhat less attention has thus far been devoted to the social and cultural circumstances of the four Neapolitan conservatories and to the biographies and oeuvres of the *maestri* who emerged from them (at least in anglophone scholarship). One of the most important sources that provides a perspective on these matters is without doubt the *Apotheosis of Music in the Kingdom of Naples* (*Apoteosi della musica del Regno di Napoli*), by the lawyer, archivist and 'famous amateur' (vii) Giuseppe Sigismondo (1739–1826). Compiled in 1820–1821 but never completed or published in its entirety, Sigismondo's *Apotheosis* has existed until now only as a manuscript in four tomes, housed today in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (D-B, under the shelf mark Mus. ms. autogr. theor. Sigismondo). 'I declare [myself] to be a simple amateur', writes Sigismondo in his introduction to tome I, albeit one with 'an invincible, almost innate passion, cultivated since my most tender years' (3). Though he was an accomplished performer, composer and teacher, Sigismondo did not set out to write a theoretical work:

> I shall hardly touch upon the precepts of the art, neither on the laws of harmony, nor fugues, nor canons, nor double counterpoint or the *cantus firmus*, etc., but I shall dedicate myself entirely to the history of music of the past three centuries as taught in *conservatori*, as performed in churches, and as it was introduced and has evolved within our theatres (3).

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