Digital Performance in Flesh and Bones

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Abstract

This artwork investigates the Brazilian urban body through performance. Unifying concepts of new rhythmic music and conceptual dance in performance, this article uses artistic movements in Brazil that are suffering marginalization by breaking with the established aesthetic. Discoursing about aesthetic axioms, the influence of technology in people's daily lives and connecting those elements with music and dance history pieces; this article aims to project questions around the value of popular culture. Small sketches of public dance interventions with live music are used in order to analyse the potential of daily movements and popular dance by digital media. Musical matrix connected to traditional rhythms involving everyday gestures, repetitions with the gradual introduction of electronic music in choreography after the performance, producing a videoart built by metacreation and performance concepts.

We present a kind of critique of the new mass phenomenon that becomes a fever and viral spreads music icons and, through performance, invite the public to think about society reality and the questions around contemporary music, dance and old paradigms.

Keywords

Popular culture; aesthetic of art; creation process; metacreation.

Introduction

Those responses, meanwhile, should not be presented as immutable or fixed, but should be flexible and capable of prospects for changing. "Flesh and Bone" aims to interpret and analyze a characteristic phenomenon in Brazilian cultural production: prejudice or discrimination, recurrent and frequent in various historical periods, putting the cultural production in a resilience paradigm. Particularly we can see this matter in cases of discrimination and even criminalization of facts passed in Brazil due to certain popular rhythms and dance like Maxixe (XIX century); Samba (XX century) and Funk music (XXI century).

But in order to investigate such issues, it was necessary to take some precautions about procedures or values that though widely recognized and theoretically accepted in the field of Aesthetics, they seemed to us insufficiently adequate to approach the phenomenon today.

Therefore, in this work we used two kinds of approaches to deal with those issues:

- (i) creative research and
- (ii) relational approach.

The Creative searching

As creative searching, we understand a configuration that organizes two branches of aesthetic search and language; interlinked and indissoluble. The theoretical search of the listed questions or subjects and the application of some conclusions or considerations in the real work of artistic production.

The most important, in this kind of approach, however, is the coming and going of information and expressions, be it in the translate of theory in artistic movement (sound, choreography, projection, etc), be it in the theorization of how the interaction with the performance and the public was passed effectivelly. The relation between the two fields we can, hardly, call Adorno dialetic, were the conflict and questions inherent to each ones can't be solved in a possible media point, or mediation by center: it is solved by limits and extremes, not solving the problems, but opening perspectives and interpretation. That is, a choreographic questions can't be solved theoretically, as a theoretical questions can't be solved choreographically, but both of them was solved in interaction, exploring just the limits of their definition of fields, that is, the limits between theory and artistic pragmatically.

Relational Approach

The second point that origins that creative search is the relational consideration of aesthetic object. This work starts from the conception that the object of art can't be understood as a given object, which was recognized by an essentiality around the beauty and fixed in their aesthetics values.

On the contrary, the object of art is given socially, produced by artists, metaartists or by interaction with the public, directly. It is an object that can be fixed as aesthetic or, indeed, as a work of art just through determinated relations in a licit form of life [1]. This means that to the creative search "Flesh and Bones" it is not like to persecute or try to reveal the essence that flows from work of art; but interpretate and understand the phenomenous and social relation that figures the aesthetic universe, so that the work can be understood as a work of art. That is, it's suitable to investigate the game of language in a given society where it is

configured the universe of what is appreciated as a work of art [2].

Music and Math

Music and Mathematics have been traditionally closely connected. This relationship generated several notation systems, scales and different instruments manufactured. The seventeenth century was fundamental, while science was changing from theoretical to practical music was moving from science to art. The connections between music and science, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to composition have been further extended.

From the perspective of physics, sound propagation obeys mathematics equations. There is a relationship between scales, tone, semi-tone and math conceptions such as ration, proportion, logarithm sequence and others. This relationship between music and math is very intense and ancient.

The oldest system of scale construction is much older than Pythagoras (c.550 BC), but is described as *Pythagorean scale*. It is associated with the theoretical justification, in mathematical terms, of its construction. Pythagoras noted the harmonious relationships of the sounds produced by the hammer in a blacksmith's forge.

In European music tradition, Pythagoras influences the theoretical basis. Ancient Greek instruments such as the lyre (a stringed instrument similar to a small harp) and the aulos (a reed instrument) finally led to the modern-day instruments of a classical orchestra ².

In Oriental music tradition, the number of scale has more minimal interval between the pitches. Western ears are unusual to oriental scales causing them to have a unique sound not normally found in popular music. African music has a polyphony and the music system is focused on repetitive and rhythmic variation to achieve altered states of consciousness. [3]

Is the music Natural or Conventional?

The musical system can be called universes of 'meaning construction inducers' that work with building aspects of associations, a field boundary between consciousness and the unconscious expressions of given expression of the self; or of ideological configuration for the construction subjectivity, insensitive in daily life, but brutal in contrition of the bodies in your expression.

Wave sound can be represented by binary code, which is digital sound. This technology can be used to manipulate sound, recording, processing, reproducing, transmission, compression and storage it. Analog electrical signal can be convert into digital signal, like a microphone that use digital-to-analog converter (ADC), or it can be use to record in WAV, or MP3, for example. The opposite process, digital-to-analog converter (DAC), converts digital signal back into an analog signal, which could be a CD or MP3 player,

for example. ADC conversion results in lost of data, for a simple problem of that poverty points doesn't make a completely curve. Nevertheless, there are extremely good softwares that converts in a good quality.

In 1989, German researchers from Moving Pictures Expert Group created the MPEG Layer3, which is known as MP3. This is a code form much more compressed than its predecessors, compact disc (CD) and long-playing (LP). So, to transform, song to mp3 file, it becomes a 10 times smaller, in average, than a file in a CD. And this process takes just a few seconds. It is based on psychoacoustics that studies how people realize sounds. Human being does not get frequencies low than 20 Hz and higher than 20.000 Hz. The frequency of human voice is, for example, between 60 and 1300 Hz. Besides, human audition is not able to notice some combinations of bass and treble. The MP3 encryption starts from this limitation. The mp3 file is smaller than other because it softwares using algorithms and some sophisticated mathematics equations to eliminate everything that psychoacoustic affirms that we don't realize. In theory, this reduction does not affect sound quality, like human ear listen the music. An agreement among speech and language therapist talks about the physical MP3 player danger in ear. The expression "deaf generation" is used by them all because everybody listen to music in headset louder and damaging to health.

In essence, technology has changing how art is made anhow the audience may experience it.

Art as support for non-art or is it otherwise?

Since the beginning of the twentieth century and to recent days, artists had provoked the critics, some were shocked and some amazed or even angry, we can mention some aesthetic experience that undermined completely what was settled once for all. That is, the designation of some particular types of objects, which are very common in the world, but should stand out as art objects. In that manner an urinal (Fontain) is displayed at an exhibition causing great impact; a pile of market boxes is exposed as an artwork; a cloak made of pieces of cloth and debris left by visitors in a mental hospital is now to be showed in a Biennial art exhibition; or a huge number of disposed bikes and water-melons should be seen as a artistical installation. [4]

Exposing these 'ready made" objects, commonly used in everyday life, such as a cycling or un urinal named by Duchamp as a Fontaine he notes that only the place of exhibition makes these objects to be seen as works of art. It is the place that gives the aesthetic value to a common object, the less aesthetic that should be [...] The value changed location: being now related to the place and time, defected from the object itself. [5]

One issue that seemed so very well settled for the traditional art in the early twentieth century presents itself as a new aesthetic and philosophical problem. We can go further in questioning on issues hitherto considered truths and

opening a flank until then not thought of objects of common use treated as artistic works.

In 1958 the art critic William Kennick encouraged his readers to imagine a huge warehouse filled with all kinds of things in the world.

Now we will give instructions for someone to enter the warehouse and coming back, bringing with him all the works of art found there. Someone could do that successfully, however, as the very aesthetes admit, the person does not have a satisfactory definition of art as a possible common denominator. [6]

According to the philosopher and art historian Danto [7] perhaps the most profound impact that the twentieth century bequeathed to the arts is the disruption of what the tradition used to claim, as an essential fact about what should be considered or not an art object. Such questioning - he tells [8] (Danto 2009) as a kind of personal enlightenment that had to be faced first with the Brillo Box by Warhol [9] – could be put together in many favorable options philosophically and serve as art in several respects and prospects.

In general this question opens a very promising field for research that would approach philosophy of art as it begins to put under judgment something that hitherto was taken as a common sense: the art as having an essence that by itself should be define art as art.

If the aesthetics of the twentieth century inherited this tendency toward blurring the art object and the relational establishment of values; the contemporary trend towards meta-authorship points to the blurring between the author and the public, by referring to the public and a creative field of art itself build as an aesthetic discourse. And along with this, the lack of distinction between an art object and an object of ordinary life. At least one blurring field: one in which fragments of ordinary life, to be attached into aesthetically configured environments become aesthetic and artistic. Also otherwise, where the daily endeavor of a direct intervention of aestheticized movement, interacting with everyday life effectively.

Historical Aspects Through Music and Dance Prism

The musical diaspora forms a controversial mixture of persecution, discrimination and violence. The marginalization of rhythms is on several factors: the issue of race, religious and tonal accommodation. Samba is the famous Brazilian rhythm originating from the slums, invented by African descendants. Born on the Portuguese colonial farms where African slaves used dance to disguise the martial art called Capoeira. Later, the Samba rhythm hid at the top of hills in Rio's slums where today the police are trying to regain power.

After hiding in slum hills, the rhythmic moved down and approached the beaches, where it gained new clothes and a status with the label of. [10]

As Samba, another hybrid Brazilian rhythm called Maxixe borns in black guettos in XIX century. Slowly, this sensual music and dance attracts the attention the attention of a part of the population, where they started promoting small dance parties. In this century, this kind of meeting was represses and prohibited, even so they got notoriety among musicians and bohemians. Including – and perhaps – because it reproduction (scores and terminology) was censored and considered immoral. The books, when founded, were gathered. This is a fact, for example, that encouraged a composer called Ernesto Nazaré to rename the rhythm to "Brazilian Tango" and, the same music, could be distributed again.

Judged and cursed as music and dance, survived under a constant war. Resisted bravely through all those enemies. It hadn't founded safety among familiar groups, but Maxixe continued scandalizing, soberly, exciting others [11]

The musician and researcher Andre Rocha Haudenschild analyzed the influence of Samba weariness and American Jazz through the slow paced song of that turned more towards individualism, close to the sea leaving behind the modern city of Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 60's:

Would not be an coincidence that this 'creative tension' of Bossa Nova, also called "suspended animation" for Treece. Will be manifested in its many musical aspects his slow and differentiated rhythmic movements, their harmonic cadences, his arrangements, his instrumentations and their vocal performances - which point to a seductive and comforting sound enjoyment, whose musical ethos always acts as an antidote to the rapid and hostile forces of modern everyday life. By the way, that would explain the unique character of their sound: this quiet samba rhythm, harmonized by dissonant jazz chords. Among the heritage of secular African-Brazilian rhythmic rituality (their 'secular spirituality') and musical influence of modern Western rationality (his "formal refinement"). Bossa Nova is inspired by a modern experience in transition, born of a natural sociability between the sand and the sidewalks of the buildings of the carioca metropolis of the late 1950s. [112]

Haudenschild explains that the growth and movement of the city's central locations for Rio's south zone was due to the new process of urbanization and the guitar was the passport of entry to Bohemian bars and private parties.

If the guitar was one tidy and intimate instrument that dictates and moderates the tone of Brazilian music, the entrance of electric guitars and percussion increases the volume of Popular Music, introducing a sensuality of fever and provocative body movements of the 70's as was the introduction of the hippies mini skirt influenced by Beatle's rock.

Firstly, as an outsider but gradually by being exported to Carnival, it took on different rhythms in the Blocks. *Samba, Frevo, Capoeira* are the first rhythms and dances that leverage musical and artistic movements such as Modern-

ism and Tropicalism, paving the way for Brazilian Popular Music such as Rock, Hip Hop and Funk.

"In the case of Bahia's African-pop, there was a standard negotiation with the phonographic industry that assimilated the carnival music and spread it internationally. The mestizos musical models' sound improve through research and start to be more sophisticated. The rhythmic and melodic brings the inclusion of harmonic instruments of samba-reggae bands, for example, it raises the status of percussion, often overlooked in the musical plan." [13]

Tribal relations are not only limited to rhythm. Dance elements, the gesture and possessive trance from the yard of the religions manifestations become collective in the parties, trios and bands everywhere and popularized the way people dressed and talked in Bahia, seeking strong colors, valuing traditional African clothing.

The African descendants of the northwest of Brazil realized their role in the blocks and in the success of the music exported globally. The *Lambada*, *Timbalada* and *Axe Music* becomes a new fever that contaminates the music scenario of in the 90's.

The carnival music of the Lambada, the Timbaland and Axe music propagate outwards and gain space in the media. Stuart Hall described Diaspora a post-colonial behavior using the concept of Derrida's difference,

The concept of diaspora closed leans over a binary conception of difference. This founded on the construction of an exclusion boundary and depends on construction of an "Other" and a rigid opposition between the inside and outside. However, the configurations of syncretized Caribbean cultural identity require the Derridian notion of a difference that does not work through the binaries, veiled borders that not finally separate, but they are also places of passage, and meanings that are and positional relational always slide along a spectrum without beginning or end. The difference, we know, and essentially the meaning and the meaning and crucial culture. [14]

The explosion of Axe music was characterized by a new diaspora for the pride and appreciation of African values and the body's sensuality. It can be stated in a new Musical Diaspora that pervades popular music with new rhythms. The new emerging classes of suburbs and slums in northeastern Bahia bring new rhythm to the ghettos, valuing the culture and carnival sensuality, and new instruments are incorporated such as the electric guitar and percussive drums. The wave of movement mixes with the Caribbean rhythms of the North generating new melodies and rhythms with strong influences of reggae.

In Brazil, swing and jazz influenced the white Rio's middle class with *Bossa Nova* with the guitar as the main instrument. The reggae with samba generated the Axe Music, the mestizos in Northeast valuing the percussion. *Capoeira, Frevo, Forró* and *Maracatu* influenced the new hit of the swamp with the musician Chico Science that

mixed Hip Hop bringing American orality and poetry to music.

The black American musicians first created funk music with a more smooth and danceable rhythm. The new pattern for the younger generations of musicians: a song with a slower, sexy, loose rhythm and oriented repeated musical phrases. Funk and Hip Hop brought popular Brazilian music from slums and ghettos because they combine the repeated hits, sung poetry, percussion and repeated phrases with exacerbated sensuality.

Aesthetic and Marginalization

According to Hall, popular culture is the relationship that face up to dominant culture. Common sense says that popular culture is everything that the mass consumes, ignoring the context and social aspects and positioning popular culture in passive consume place. In the other hand, the anthropological view describes aspects of popular culture but – as Hall endorses – it's not a wakeless theory.

Looking through music and dance history pieces, the cycle of consuming illustrate how people have been accepting popular culture and how media deals with it.

As we've seen, there is an axiom present in different times in our history, as model that is followed season after season. First, a rhythm (regardless if it's a dance or music rhythm) is created. Thus, it gets spread and people incorporate it as local culture. At this point, the persecution starts. Exemplifying, in they sent sympathizers to jail; in Brazilian funk the media manipulate the information connecting the image of dancers and MCs as invaluable and illegal. The history starts changing with an outside view. Maxixe was extremely respected in Parisians saloons as well as funk was pretty famous in US, including with Beyoncé using Brazilian funk samplers. The history had it twist that time. Those rhythms came back to Brazil coated as new products and the Cultural Industry exports it. The product – and it becomes as a product - is vulgarized and stereotyped.

Social issues, as drug traffic and violence, are frequently bonded with popular movements. "Police sections" on the news hosted the entrance of funk carioca in media scene. As Filho & Herschmann, scholars, say

all the campaign and the encouragement to the fear around *carioca* funk – on TV News and mainstream media – contributed, in some ways, to that funk lifestyle and cultural production have fascinated other social groups beyond slums in Rio de Janeiro city. [15]

As popular movements are all balancing themselves in chord between a popular acclamation and danger sentences. Judging the sympathizers by values beyond art itself. Why, as any art movement, the values for popular art are different? Where our judgment of taste comes from?

To Pierre Bourdieu the ideology of natural taste owes its efficacy to the fact that, like all ideological strategies generated in the everyday class struggle, it naturalizes real differences, converting differences in the mode of acquisition of culture into differences of nature, it only recognizes as legitimate the relation to culture (or language) which least bears the visible marks of genesis, which has nothing academic, scholastic, bookish, affected, or studied about it. [16]

It's a fact there is a dialogue – that is a Brazilian cultural characteristic until currently days – between what is prohibited, what is moral and immoral; what is culture and what is tribal fetishism. This debate determines an intense cultural fusion, but, in the other side, establish a kind of aesthetic critique that coexist peacefully with a discrimination or criminalization of some types of cultural expressions. It brings to aesthetic campus a concept of "status evaluation" around what is erudite and popular.

The criticism of *Maxixe* wasn't exactly to a rhythm or dance, but to something – it wasn't socially well accepted – stronger than the method itself: the sensuality. There was a sensual language inherent to it, malice, cultural background and oppressed irony. Moreover, it faced up European an aristocracy that didn't allowed an enhancement of a Brazilian "black" image.

Nonetheless, this isn't happened just with *Maxixe*, we see it in *samba* and, nowadays, the same process with funk.

However, as a resistance culture, the artistic production of the bottom classes in Brazil, could be distinguished as part of a "group of attitudes, customs, beliefs, behaviour code of subordinate class in a historical period". An authentic culture that suffers constantly a disassembly and misappropriation process, that tends from a "popular culture" to a "culture imposed to subordinate class". [17]

Cultural Industry theory conceived a model of an aesthetic mercantilization that supported a method to manipu-

late the taste of people, in order to satisfy basics desires, symbolically poor.

That perspective points to a different direction, to be ruled the possibility of resistance face up to ideological imposition, endorsed by aesthetic. Under this point of view, it admits the possibility of transference and counter transference ideological; all the cultural imposition carries a resistance multiplicity impossible to map and with the time in favor by inhabit imposition.

The ideology, according to the French philosopher Louis Althusser "isn't a issue of 'false conscious', or misconception or epistemological limit". [18]

Ideology is a physical group of control apparatus direct and indirect, explicit or implicit, it means, implicit under a daily habit: controlling the time and movement. In aesthetic it isn't represent the cultural resistance, merely the movement of the bodies. The cultural struggle isn't the strengthening or the imposition of styles or types of culture, but the bodies expressions in dances, parties, ceremonies and everyday. Thus, this aspect, even the styles and the culture as concepts, being incorporated as products and returned as control rules over the taste, the multiplicity of ways of life guarantees a resistance. And this is a human capacity to reproduce and, invariantly, express and impose itself on it own control, in a cyclical way of submission and subsumption, of antipersonification and subjetivation.

Pondering about it, the performance presented on ISEA2015 mixed popular culture – funk, gestures and simple movements – in different daily situations, with contrasting styles and intensities to extract real reactions in real world. What's an old lady expression when she see funk dancers in a street market? Or contemporary dancers? As if those labels really exist.



Figure 1: Performance at Vale do Anhangabaú, São Paulo, Brazil. © Jefferson Alves

Technology and daily lives

The evolution of small communication devices in our day-to-day lives, connected with the Internet, with the growth and spread of the rhythms of Brazilian music and dance, create a jump in disruption; a leap in quantity and a disruption in quality. Choreography digitally recorded and intentionally posted to spread virally is measured by the amount of 'Likes'. Usage of repetitive motions associated with musical phrases that induce trace, force a spatial and temporal detachment using "points" from African religious beats. Also the generation that mixed mantras with electronic music of Eastern cultures forming the Rave Culture in the 90's.

worth the relationship and body aesthetic that the musical harmony implies, because it helps us understand the Brazilian adjustments and differences of scale and musical dissonance between the Brazilian south and northeast. A significant portion of our musical heritage comes from the European Southern region, which suffered the Arab influence with the Moorish invasions. Another of our musical influences come from Africa - pentatonic having a musical system composed by polyphony and the dissonance - and mixed with Brazilian indigenous musicality from the colonial period. [19]

Brazilian music and their atonal instruments with all their mixtures of influences directly affect day-to-day life. Entering bass and treble tones developed through its history, with repetition and changing rhythm become addictive because they induce the production of dopamine, creating other state of minds. Thus, it explains how performances of small clips become viral. But this has been going on for a long time in electronic games, carnival, and electronic music festivals or tribal rayes.

Digital Performance in Flesh and Bones

The performance, the experiment using theoretical concepts unfolded in actions to experience and enlarge the studies around this subject, is based on Rudolf Laban researches, meta-creation process and digital media.

The choreographer, dancer and intellectual Laban, changed how we see the dance movements. Expanding the dancer body, including and accepting the natural movements as dance. He put the focus on what the person makes and what it could possibly inspires on others.

Filming simple scenes, extracted from Brazilian everyday, these micro sketches are seen and reproduced in a choreographic posterior dance scene. The way that images are composed in edition shows all the process, since the naturalness of first shot until the choreography ready.

Gesture, the daily and the artistic

The elected theme was "daily gesture", included the large characterization of "gesture"; not only the individual gesture is considered, but the collective gesture, whose sub-



Figure 2: Performance at Santa Cecília street market, São Paulo, Brazil. © Jefferson Alves

stance comes from popular expressions, being it in cultural manifestation or ceremonial, being it in the daily gesture, regulated in the routine, duties and relationships.

In that way, it was represented by expressions of personal and collective gesture. Besides, it may be said that the gesture holds a duplicity in itself, from one side it is spontaneous, for it appears spontaneously, many times without rational control; but it appeared too, just dressing more usual clothes, and, from this point of view, it obeyed to a behavior predefined patterns, in great part of the cases called "spontaneous".

Creation Processs

The movements and actions produced in this performance are based on daily movements and funk steps.

Observing the routine and extracting some gestures from people on the streets, the dance borns with the repetition of these gestures and, thenceforward, it becomes a dance improvise.

The blend of intentions and places change the choreography forms and the creation process interacts with the dance that happens between theses signs, playing with intention, velocity, costumes and our own dance repertoire.

These interventions were filmed in several historical points of São Paulo, without rehearsal or direction. All those places – Vale do Anhangabaú, Santa Cecília street market and Fundação Nacional das Artes-FUNARTE (National Foundation of Arts) – are public and localized in downtown. The group chose them, because there are a wide number of diversity audiences.

Laban considered space what the body occupies to execute movements. His studies embraced the relations that human movement produces in the space, but how the space influence in movement as well.

his idea of 'choreutics', or the practical study of space harmony, is based on a distinction between general space, in the way geometry or topology might define space, and space as a field of relations produced by the moving body. [20] Encouraged by the Krauss' expanded fields concepts – that embraces the fusion of different issues of art to built a piece that floats among these ones – the music was created. After the performance images, the musicians worked on a musical arrangement to translate de movements in notes. As a meta-score, the body and the intentions, they have created a similar reasoning to compose the music.

The meta-creation process uses the material used as inductors or as guides to compositional procedure: true scores constituted bodies, scenes and movements. The captured images are reinterpreted by musicians, who put together noises and environmental sounds, and developing new layers of creation, by observing the projection on the screens

These qualities – expanded fields, Laban's studies, metcreation – have a characteristic in common: the hybridism. Krauss considers the intersection among the fields, Laban explore de space and body as a single piece and metacreation goes beyond synesthesia and put the components of ambience and dance as a conductor for the music harmony. Looking at funk history, the scholars say about plurality:

The hybridization process intrinsic to funk when it embraces several contents from various musicals branches allows that the empathy [with the music] happens in different socials environment. [21]

Disruption

What stands out in this creative research process is that theoretical production is constant and recurrent, subsided in different contexts, which are extending the original scope for another creative set. As a kind of stagecraft, dance or musical where what is considered to be the object of art is produced in real time, through various stages.

In this process, before setting the fixed content on rigid schemes the authors stablish optical fields, syntax or grammar, which induce the production of the final object, but not to be fixed it in an authoring way. These creators can be called meta-authors, because while producing, along the creation cycle, they don't deal with objects as such but situations, procedures and senses that drive the effective interaction between artist, audience and communication, producing in factual and real time the utmost artistic object. [22]

An experimental field that expands the boundaries between traditional artistic expressions (dance, music, videoart) and where the digital and the apparatus of the body reconfigure a virtualized space-time that expresses the inherent contradictions and co-existence: rhythm x arrhythmia; communication x noise; planning x randomness or even probable x improbable.

The point of this study is not just theorize the questions about art and digital universe, but create a product that blend the questions practically, unifying the past and the present in art (by digital and live performances) transposing that one piece without the other couldn't be possible without losing the layers that compose it.

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