

## THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MUSICAL CREATION: BETWEEN DATA AND MEANING (II)<sup>1</sup>

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**SUMMARY.** Building on the conceptual framework established in Part I—where informational transfer, context, and the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) are defined within the composer–performer–audience circuit—Part II shifts the focus from what is transmitted to how meaning is produced through transmission. It examines the listener’s perceptual and cultural filters, as well as the performer’s interpretive agency, as mechanisms that reshape musical data and produce additional layers of significance. Part II develops a pragmatic vocabulary for this level of musical communication (including notions such as informational inertia and informational gravity) and considers its relevance for functional and syncretic arts, where music interacts with image, text, space, and interactivity. Finally, it proposes concrete applications for composers and performers—ranging from rehearsal strategies and improvisational constraints to programmatic framing and interdisciplinary workflows—showing how shaping informational flow may sharpen expressivity, support reception, and facilitate collaboration in film, theatre, installation, and video games.

**Keywords:** Meaning-Making in Music, Perceptual and Cultural Filters, Interpretive Agency, Informational Inertia and Gravity, Functional and Syncretic Arts, Applied Composition Strategies, Audience Reception and Framing, Interdisciplinary Collaboration.

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## **1. The Informational Transfer Device (ITD): Composer, Performer, Audience**

The Informational Transfer Device (ITD) represents an entity that functions simultaneously as both a transmitter and receiver of information, facilitating its exchange and transformation within an interactive process. The ITD can be any system capable of actively processing, filtering, and retransmitting information, contributing to its modification and reinterpretation based on the context in which it operates.

The ITD functions as a bidirectional network between the composer, performer, and audience, with each playing an active role in musical communication. In other words, in the musical process, information does not flow in a single direction but is continuously transferred and transformed between composer, performer, and audience. The composer creates and encodes musical ideas, the performer decodes and transmits them through expressivity and technique, while the audience perceives and reinterprets them through the lens of their own experiences and sensitivities. Thus, music becomes a living phenomenon, constantly shaped through this exchange of information.

This model explains how musical ideas are created, mediated, and reinterpreted, influencing one another within a complex circuit of meanings and sonic experiences. Consequently, music is not merely a singular act of creation but a continuous process of adaptation and reformulation.

### ***The Composer as an Autonomous ITD***

The composer is not merely a passive transmitter of musical information but an autonomous ITD, capable of translating conceptual or emotional ideas into coherent sonic structures. Inspired by diverse stimuli—whether images, narratives, historical contexts, or personal experiences—the composer encodes these elements into a musical language, which is then decoded by the performer and reinterpreted by the audience.

A striking example of how extramusical inspiration can be transformed into a complex orchestral language is *Circus Maximus* by John Corigliano. This work evokes the atmosphere of a Roman stadium, employing compositional techniques designed to convey not only the physical dimensions of the space but also the explosive energy of the events held there. By using spatially distributed orchestration, where instruments are arranged to create a sense of circular motion, Corigliano successfully translates architectural space into an acoustic experience while also capturing the decadent nature of Roman entertainment. The tension and violence of these spectacles are amplified through brutal sonorities, aggressive fanfares, and fragmented rhythms, reflecting the decline of a civilization.

In a different aesthetic realm, *Harmonielehre* by John Adams illustrates an approach in which the composer's mental imagery serves as the foundation for an expansive sonic construction. Inspired by a dream in which an oil tanker rises from the water and launches into space like a rocket, Adams translates this symbol of ascension into an orchestral work characterized by a constant rhythmic drive and a progressive expansion of thematic material. This musical process reflects not only the idea of physical propulsion but also a gradual intensification of harmonic tension, culminating in a burst of luminous sonorities. The resulting structure is not merely a direct illustration of the dream's imagery but a metaphor for the continuous evolution of music, recalling post-Romantic tradition but reinterpreted through the lens of repetitive minimalism.

Another example of how extramusical inspiration is transformed into musical language is *Ad Absurdum* by Jörg Widmann. In this work, the composer explores the boundaries between virtuosity and noise, creating a sonic world in which the extreme technical difficulty of performance becomes a manifestation of absurdity. The musical material is constructed in a way that makes it seem as though the performer is struggling against their own instrument, caught in a cycle of extreme accelerations, impossible gestures, and dense textures that undermine the traditional meaning of virtuosity. This approach not only tests the limits of instrumental expressivity but also raises questions about musical perception — at what point does sound remain music, and when does it become noise?

These examples make it evident that extramusical inspiration is not mechanically transferred into music but undergoes a complex transformation, shaped by the aesthetics and intentions of each composer. Whether it involves the evocation of a historical space, the interpretation of a dreamlike image, or the exploration of instrumental limits, each of these works demonstrates the complexity of **informational transfer** in the compositional process. However, this process does not end with the completion of the score; the performer becomes the essential link that revives the music, bringing it to life through a series of artistic decisions that can amplify or refine the composer's original intentions.

### ***The Performer as an Active Mediator***

The performer is not a passive transmitter but an active mediator who transforms the latent information within the score into a living sonic experience. While the score contains precise data about musical structure, the performer infuses it with expressivity, shaping it through interpretative gestures, articulation techniques, and timbral choices.

This stage of informational transfer is essential, as the performer can amplify or diminish certain dimensions of the original message, thereby influencing the final perception of the musical work. Every interpretative decision—from tempo and dynamics to articulation and phrasing—contributes to the shaping of the auditory experience, adding a personal dimension to the act of performance.

In jazz, for example, improvisation plays a fundamental role in this process of transfer, transforming the performer into a co-creator of the sonic material. Here, the interaction between musicians becomes a spontaneous dialogue, where each musician responds to the ideas of the others, adapting in real time to the dynamic shifts within the ensemble. This flexibility ensures that the performer is not merely a conduit for musical information but an active agent who modifies, reshapes, and enriches the sonic content. Paul F. Berliner highlights this dynamic interaction, explaining that:

Just as the progression's varied timbral colors provide a rich setting for the head, they also highlight the features of solos. Moreover, the chords' pattern of change and its undulating scheme of harmonic tension and release create constant rhythmic motion, adding momentum to the performance.<sup>3</sup>

A saxophone solo in a jazz session is not merely an execution of a premeditated idea but an **organic construction**, guided by the performer's **intuition and reactions**, as well as the subtle responses of fellow musicians within the ensemble.

In classical music, the performer has the freedom to choose which elements of a work to emphasize, whether phrasing, timbre, or the accentuation of certain harmonic tensions. For example, a performance of a Beethoven sonata can vary significantly depending on the pianist's intentions and sensitivity—they may opt for a broader tempo, a more expressive legato, or a sharper attack in certain passages, thus transforming the overall perception of the piece. Similarly, a conductor can reconfigure the **sonic balance** between different sections of an orchestra, altering the relationships between themes and harmonies, thereby offering the audience a **distinct perspective** on a well-known composition.

In avant-garde music, the boundaries between composer and performer become even more fluid, and the process of **informational transfer** takes on an even more open-ended nature. The works of John Cage, for example, require the performer to actively participate in the creation of musical

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<sup>3</sup> Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

meaning, either through the use of chance operations or through decision-making processes that are not strictly dictated by the score. In *4'33"*, the performer becomes an **observer** of silence and ambient sounds, transforming each listener into a co-participant in the artistic act. In other works, the performer's choices regarding the order of musical sections or the manipulation of sonic parameters result in unique and unrepeatable structures from one performance to another. This flexibility extends the performer's role beyond mere score execution, granting them the status of **co-author** of the musical experience.

This redefinition of the performer's role is further reinforced by an extension of freedoms to the listeners themselves, with Cage going so far as to transform them into **active agents** of the musical experience. As Kyle Gann observes:

Not only did Cage grant anarchic freedoms to the composer and necessarily also to the performer, he even extended them to listeners, who, in the notorious silent piece *4'33"* (1952), are invited to discover music wherever they may within the ambience of the 'performance'—in coughs, grunts, rustles, natural sounds, which acquire new meanings when the context of an 'art-work' is added to them.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in Cage's vision, music is no longer merely the result of a process controlled by the composer and executed by the performer, but rather a **dynamic and open-ended act**, one that constantly reconfigures the boundaries between creation, execution, and reception.

Regardless of musical style, the performer is not simply a transmitter of the composer's intentions but an **active filter** through which musical information is adapted, nuanced, and recontextualized. Whether in the expressive freedom of a classical pianist, the spontaneity of a jazz improviser, or the guided aleatoric procedures of an avant-garde performer, each interpreter plays a crucial role in the process of informational transfer, imparting to its **uniqueness and irreproducibility**.

This complexity of interpretation is reflected in the classification of ITDs as either autonomous or subordinate. For example, a performer can be considered autonomous when improvising or engaging in experimental music, having the freedom to shape the sonic material according to their artistic vision. Conversely, they become subordinate when required to strictly follow a composer's score, striving to reproduce the composer's original

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<sup>4</sup> Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010.

intentions as faithfully as possible. This balance between autonomy and subordination is not fixed but varies depending on the aesthetic of each work and the interpretative traditions of each musical style.

### ***The Audience as a Reinterpretive ITD***

The audience is not a passive recipient of musical information but actively participates in the process of interpretation and meaning-making. Depending on each listener's cultural background, experiences, and sensitivities, the meaning of a musical work can vary significantly.

For instance, the perception of a Beethoven symphony differs depending on the listener's level of musical training. A trained musician may focus on structure and compositional techniques, analyzing stylistic details. A general audience member is more likely to respond to dramatic intensity, engaging emotionally with the music. In contrast, a listener unfamiliar with classical music may find it confusing or unapproachable, lacking familiarity with its sonic language.

This idea reflects the degree of informational transferability, which depends on the similarity between the transmitter and the receiver.

Beyond transmitter-receiver compatibility, another essential factor in informational transfer is its directionality. Unidirectional transfer occurs when information is transmitted without feedback, such as when an untrained listener is exposed to contemporary music without prior explanation. In contrast, bidirectional transfer involves both parties actively participating, as in the musical dialogue between composer and performer. Meanwhile, multidirectional transfer involves mutual interaction between multiple factors, creating a complex system, as seen in interdisciplinary collaborations between musicians, visual artists, and choreographers.

As seen in the following example, this diversity of informational transfer is also reflected in the classification of Informational Transfer Devices (ITDs), which are divided into two main categories:

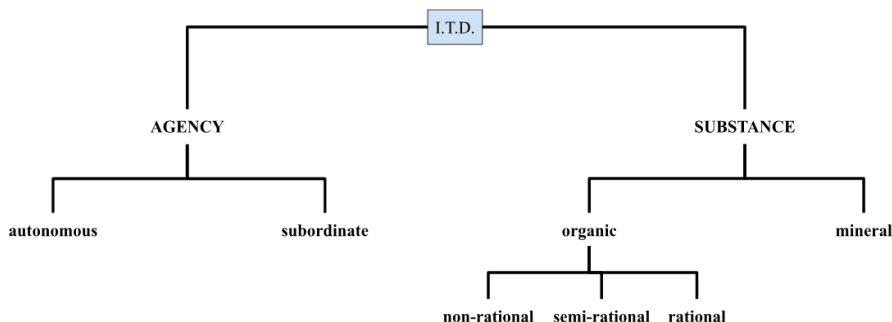
1. The first category is determined by their autonomy (agency, the operative cause).

2. The second category is defined by the material from which they are made (substance, the material cause).

ITDs can be autonomous, possessing an independent capacity for processing and interpreting information, or subordinate, relying on an external factor for operation. Additionally, ITDs can be either mineral or organic—the latter being further classified into non-rational, semi-rational, and rational, depending on the degree of information processing involved.

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Figure 1



**The diagram classifies I.T.D. into Agency (autonomous vs. subordinate) and Substance (organic—further divided by rationality—or mineral).**

We can conclude that in music, the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) describes the **dynamic relationship** between the composer, performer, and audience, with each of these agents participating in informational transfer in a distinct manner:

The **composer** functions as a transmitting ITD, translating sources of inspiration—whether external or internal—into a musical language, which then becomes available for decoding and interpretation.

The **performer** acts as an intermediary ITD, taking the latent information from the score and reconfiguring it into a sonic act, infusing it with expressivity and individuality.

The **audience** becomes a receptive and reinterpreted ITD, filtering musical information through their own experiences and sensitivities, thereby contributing to the resemanticization of the artistic act.

One of the most evident ways to apply the ITD model is in this relational framework, yet it can also function on an internal, structural level within music itself—whether in composition (for the composer), interpretation (for performers and conductors), or reception (for the audience). In this sense, a theme, a structure, or even a formal musical element can also act as an ITD, transferring and transforming information throughout a musical work.

The ITD concept provides a valuable conceptual framework for understanding communication processes in music. Music is not merely a finished product but a living process of informational transfer, in which the composer, performer, and audience form an interactive network of **adaptation, filtering, and reinterpretation**.

This framework not only explains the mechanisms of musical creation but can also be extended to other artistic fields, offering a method for analyzing cultural and semantic dynamics in various contexts.

## 2. Meaning in the Process of Informational Transfer

Although information can be transferred as a set of objective data, meaning involves an interpretative dimension. This distinction is particularly relevant in the musical context:

The **sensory and cognitive filters** of the audience determine how music is perceived.

The **emotional resonance** of a piece varies based on the listener's personal experiences.

**Cultural contextualization** contributes to the generation of meaning.

These aspects demonstrate that the process of informational transfer is **not linear** but rather subject to complex filtering mechanisms that redefine and reshape the initial significance of the musical message.

From the perspective of cognitive processing, sound perception is not merely a reflection of an acoustic signal but rather an active interpretation — a process in which information is captured, organized, and reconfigured according to a set of internal and external factors. Through perception and representation mechanisms, music becomes more than just a succession of sounds; it gains meaning through connections established between the listener's affective memory, pre-existing cultural models, and the context in which it is heard.

Thus, music does not merely communicate but also transforms meaning depending on the receiver. While a composer may construct a work with a clear intentionality, that intentionality can be distorted or reinterpreted by the audience, depending on their cultural background, previous experiences, or even their emotional predisposition. This phenomenon resembles the Kuleshov effect (discussed in Part I), in which the meaning of an image is shaped by the sequential context in which it is placed. Similarly, in a musical context, a chord, timbre, or sonic gesture may change in perception and interpretation depending on what precedes or follows it.

Moreover, the informational nature of music allows for a unique form of interaction between creators and listeners, one based on a complex transfer of **informational energy**. In physics, **inertia** is the force that keeps an object in motion or at rest; in music, informational inertia can be understood as the **persistence** of certain perceptual, stylistic, or cultural **patterns** that

influence how a work is received. On the other hand, **informational gravity**, as suggested by research on the **fundamental forces** in musical creation, may refer to the **natural attraction** between semantic and emotional elements that provide unity to a musical discourse.

In this context, the composer is not merely a transmitter of musical information but also an **architect of a perceptual space** in which the audience is invited to engage and project their own meanings. Therefore, in functional music, where the goal is to integrate music into a larger artistic ensemble (such as film, theater, or video games), the composer must be aware not only of their musical message but also of how it interacts with the **other informational layers** of the project.

The meaning in the process of musical informational transfer cannot be regarded as univocal or deterministic but rather as the result of a dynamic interaction between transmitter, receiver, and the context in which the music unfolds. In this equation, the listener plays an active role, reconstructing and reinterpreting information based on their own frame of reference, making every musical experience inherently unique and unrepeatable.

### 3. Applications for Composers and Performers

Composers and performers can apply the principles of informational transfer to enhance the impact of their works, both in terms of reception and expressivity. Informational transfer in music is not merely a process of communication but also one of transformation, in which information is filtered, reshaped, and adapted to its expressive environment. In this sense, both composers and performers function as informational transfer devices, each playing an active role in filtering and conveying an artistic message.

Furthermore, the transfer of information in music is not a passive exchange but a dynamic interaction in which meaning is continuously constructed, modified, and adapted. Performers introduce their own expressive nuances, audiences bring their personal and cultural perspectives, and historical and technological developments further influence musical perception. As a result, the final meaning of a musical work is never fixed but remains open to transformation, making music a living and evolving form of communication.

## ***Applications for Composers***

### ***1. Integration of Extramusical Elements***

Enhancing the semantic complexity of a musical work by translating concepts from other fields into musical language. Just as an apple can serve as a source of inspiration through symbolic or textural analogies, a composer can transfer meanings from an extramusical context into a coherent sonic discourse.

### ***2. Use of Evocative Titles and Programmatic Elements***

Titles can influence the audience's perception of a work, creating a semantic framework that guides the listening experience. As demonstrated in *The Pines of Rome* by Ottorino Respighi, a title can act as a "gravitational center" that shapes the interpretation and assimilation of the music.

### ***3. Experimentation with Unconventional Forms***

Exploring innovative musical structures can encourage creative reception by the audience. Inspired by the principle of informational transfer, composers can develop hybrid forms in which different layers of sonic material interact in a synergistic manner.

### ***4. Transformation and Adaptation of Sonic Information***

Just as information is altered and reinterpreted in the process of informational transfer, composers can use techniques such as fragmentation, citation, recycling, and manipulation of musical material to create a complex experience. An example would be incorporating a recognizable structure (such as a Baroque theme) within a modern harmonic and timbral context.

## ***Applications for Performers***

### ***1. Awareness of the Role as a Mediator***

The performer is not merely an executor but an active agent in the process of informational transfer. Through their approach to a score, they can emphasize certain semantic elements, guiding the audience's perception and shaping the expressive intent of the music.

### ***2. Improvisation Exercises Based on Limited Data***

Just as partial information can stimulate the interpretation and reconstruction of a message, improvisation under constraints can develop a performer's adaptability and creativity. For example, the performer may improvise using only a specific interval or a particular articulation type to explore new expressive possibilities.

### *3. Exploration of Dynamics and Timbre as Tools for Amplifying Meaning*

Dynamics and timbre are essential components of informational transfer in music. A performer can manipulate these parameters to alter the perception of a musical passage, transforming it into a personal and subjective experience.

### *4. Interactive Rehearsals and Audience Feedback*

Artistic performance is not a one-way process; it involves an ongoing dialogue between performer and audience. By engaging in open rehearsals or actively involving listeners, the performer can gain insight into how their artistic message is received and adjust its delivery accordingly.

### *5. Informational Transfer Exploration Exercises*

A performer can experiment with improvisations based on extramusical concepts (for example, the notions of "falling" or "gravity") to deepen their understanding of musical gestures and create new connections between sound and perception.

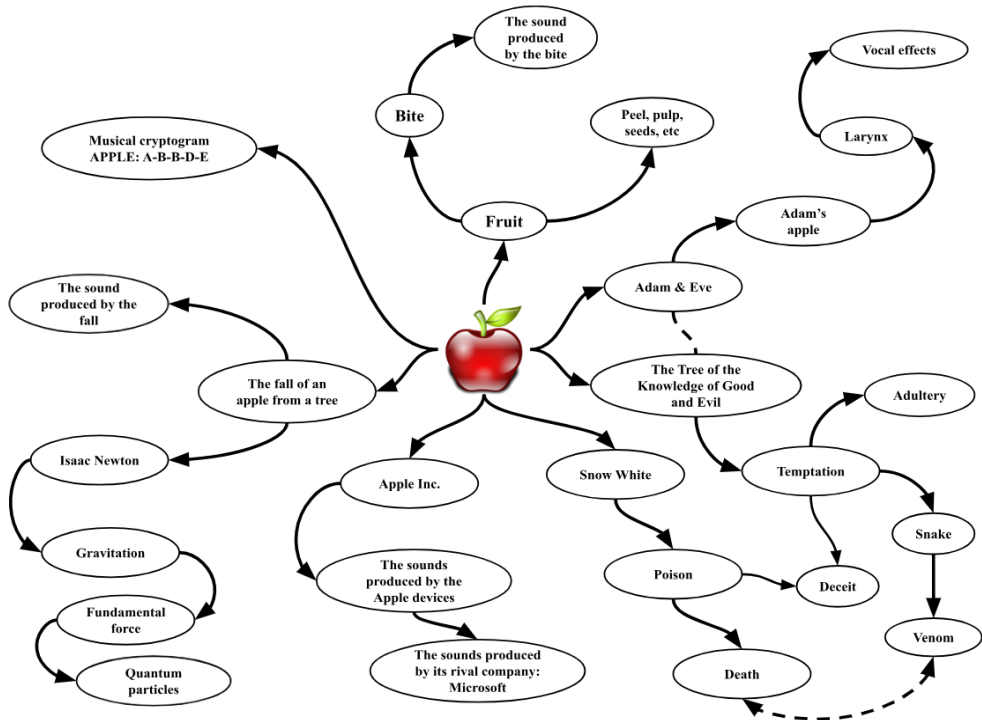
## ***Creative Scenarios: The Informational Transfer of an Idea into Music***

Let us imagine a scenario in which composers are asked to create a musical work using an apple as their primary source of inspiration. The only requirement is that, after completing their compositions, they must explain how this fruit has been transferred into their music. The resulting works would then be performed in three different concerts:

1. **Without any information about the music** – The audience listens without knowing anything about the source of inspiration.
2. **With only the titles of the pieces** – The audience is given only the titles, which provide an initial semantic layer for understanding.
3. **With both titles and composers' explanations** – The audience receives detailed insights into how the idea was musically translated.

The following figure illustrates just a fraction of the information that can be extracted from the proposed source of inspiration. This is made possible by the **properties of the human mind**, particularly two of its most fascinating aspects: **richness and associative access**.

Figure 2



**A visual representation of the rich associative connections that can emerge from the concept of an apple, illustrating how composers might derive musical inspiration from their historical, scientific, mythological, and cultural meanings.**

**Richness** refers to the theory that a vast number of thoughts and experiences a person has had still exist somewhere in their memory.

**Associative access** means that thoughts can be retrieved through semantic or perceptual associations—memories can be triggered by related words, categorical labels, a smell, an old song, a photograph, or even seemingly random neural priming that brings them into the field of consciousness.

A composer focused on **narrative composition** could explore the symbolism of the apple in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, where the fruit becomes a **central plot device**. In this version, the apple is not only poisoned but also a **tool of manipulation**—the prince uses it to deceive the stepmother and present himself as Snow White's savior.

The music could reflect this duality—attraction and danger—through a seductive theme that gradually transforms into a threatening motif. The moment of the bite could be marked by a sudden dissonance and tense silence. Moreover, if the role of the prince is emphasized, a subtle leitmotif representing him could appear in harmonies associated with the apple, intensifying as his plan unfolds. The composition would thus highlight not only temptation and tragedy but also the **power dynamics within the story**.

These perspectives demonstrate how an awareness of the **richness and associative** access of the human mind can open a universe of possibilities. This is the essence of informational transfer in music—the ability to **transform an idea, a symbol, or a sound into a meaningful artistic experience**

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that informational transfer is not only a fundamental principle of musical creation but also a key mechanism in the perception and interpretation of artistic expression. Music does not exist in a vacuum but within a continuous exchange of information between composer, performer, and audience. This dynamic makes each artistic act a living process, constantly being reconfigured and reinterpreted.

A crucial aspect of this analysis is the applicability of the concept of the Informational Transfer Device (ITD) in syncretic arts, where music interacts directly with other forms of artistic expression. In works such as theater, film, ballet, installation art, or video games, each artistic element—whether musical, visual, narrative, or performative—transfers information and influences the others. In this context, awareness of informational transfer mechanisms becomes essential for all creators involved.

In interdisciplinary projects, the interaction between music and other artistic forms plays a vital role in defining and enhancing artistic meaning. In opera and ballet, for instance, music does not function merely as a soundtrack but as a cohesive element that supports dramaturgy and choreography, establishing an organic balance between the auditory and visual dimensions. Whether through a leitmotif accompanying a character or a musical theme evolving alongside the narrative, music has the power to add emotional depth and shape the audience's perception of scenic events.

In film, the soundtrack does more than accompany the image; it actively influences it, altering the visual and emotional perception of a scene. Music can function as a subtle guide, directing the spectator's attention, heightening tension, suggesting hidden meanings, or even contradicting the

visual message to create intentional ambiguity. Whether reinforcing an emotional state or giving symbolic weight to a moment, film music is an integral part of cinematic language, contributing to the creation of an immersive experience.

In theater, music and sound serve as extensions of dramaturgical discourse, amplifying the atmosphere and emphasizing the inner states of characters. In contemporary performances, where the boundaries between theater and other art forms are increasingly fluid, sound can function as a meta-narrative commentary, a sensorial texture that enhances action, or even an element of scenic reality distortion. Whether through live music, electroacoustic compositions, or integrated sound effects, every sonic detail influences audience perception and the dynamics of the performance.

In video games, where the player's interaction with the virtual environment is essential, music must function dynamically, adapting in real time to the user's actions. Unlike film, where music is linear, in games, it must respond to rhythmic changes and create fluid transitions between different moments of gameplay. Whether through an adaptive ambient soundtrack that intensifies with tension levels or through sound effects that provide immersive feedback, the auditory dimension contributes to the realism and emotional involvement of the player.

In all these syncretic art forms, mastering informational transfer mechanisms is not merely an advantage but a necessity. Understanding how music interacts with other artistic elements and influences audience perception is crucial for creating coherent and expressive works. An artist who is aware of these mechanisms and can control them effectively not only optimizes their own contribution but also collaborates more efficiently with other creators, ensuring the organic integration of music into the overall artistic structure.

When the creators of syncretic art forms become aware of the informational flows circulating between disciplines, they can better harness the potential of each artistic medium. Instead of functioning as separate entities, music, image, movement, and text can interact organically, avoiding oversaturation, redundancy, or loss of narrative and emotional coherence. A clear understanding of how information is transmitted and reinterpreted between the various components of an interdisciplinary work not only facilitates balance among them but also enhances expressivity and authenticity. Such an approach optimizes the artistic outcome while also opening new avenues for creative exploration, providing audiences with more profound and captivating experiences.

Thus, the braking and acceleration of informational transfer must be managed with mastery, ensuring that the final product is not merely a collage of disparate elements but a cohesive work where each artistic component contributes in a balanced manner to the whole. This awareness, combined

with a careful application of informational transfer principles, has the potential to redefine the way syncretic works are conceived and perceived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In conclusion, by deepening their understanding of these concepts, composers, directors, scenographers, and all those involved in artistic creation can become more aware of the impact of each artistic choice on the overall work. Only through this approach can works be created where music, imagery, and narrative converge into a coherent common language, maximizing both artistic expressivity and audience impact.

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