

Un_conventional: experimental as the new normal

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In Portugal, experimental avant-garde approaches of the 1960s were fruitful for the emancipation of the sound potential of musical instruments and non-instruments. Since then, prepared techniques, the use of objects as sound producers or in the context of extended techniques, electronics and other processes of sound engagement brought along the potential for rethinking and reformulating the piano and the relations between the music bodies – susceptible to being acculturated, integrated and somehow accommodated as a new normalization, which in certain musical spheres is already happening: the experimental is the new normal. Connected to these approaches, new perspectives on experimentation with regard to the piano seems to be taking shape in Portugal, encompassing significant aesthetic, creative and technical differences from the previous experimental vanguards. This study addresses the piano as a disruptive element in the current Portuguese experimental context with regard to approaches, contexts and practices. These disruptions are marked by an association with digital media resources, innovative performative perspectives, and the creation of different aesthetic outputs. However, this is an unconventional disruption – not a disruption related to the past, but an occasional disruption with the past. The objectives are to identify how the piano is treated by former experimentalists and as a contemporary technological artefact (Wilson 2013) – including influences, techniques, languages, writing/recording materials, and the role of the performer – verifying the impact of its production, new conceptual transmutations, mapping composers and representative works, repertoires and formations, and the different roles assumed by the instrument.

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Francisco Monteiro maintains a regular activity as a composer since 2001 with pieces for different chamber formations. Francisco Monteiro is Professor in the Polytechnic Institute of Porto - Portugal (School of Education). He's a senior researcher in INET-md. He coordinated a research project dedicated to the Critical Edition of Jorge Peixinho's Chamber Music, a project funded until 2013 by FCT. He's now dedicated to Artistic Research and Music Creation (performance, improvisation, composition, sound, drama and visual objects creation).