Dishes as Performances. Authenticity, Normativity and Improvisation in the Kitchen

Alessandro Giovanni Bertinetto [†]
alessandro.bertinetto@unito.it

ABSTRACT

The relationship between 1. recipes, 2. ingredients and 3. dishes may be understood in analogy to the relationship between elements in the performing arts: for example, in music, 1. musical works (and / or scores), 2. 'musical ingredients' (notes, scales, intervals, arpeggios, pauses etc.) and 3. performances. The recipe's inventor is a 'composer' and the cook is a 'performer'. As I will argue, both in musical performances and in the preparation of dishes, the application of norms requires 'creative' adaptation to the concrete specific situation and the final product emerges from practical interactions that involve transformations of their own normative bases. Hence, both in culinary practices and performing arts like music, the improvisational case is paramount for understanding how their normativity, as paradigmatic of the normativity of human practices in general, works.

1. A sound and tasty analogy

It sounds plausible to argue that the relation between recipes and dishes is interestingly similar to that of musical works and their performances. Indeed this analogy, sometimes linked to the discussion of food as an art, is recognized as heuristically important by many scholars.[1] Just as a musical composition can be understood, at a first glance, as a set of instructions (often notated in a score) for the realization of a performance, a recipe can be understood as a set of instructions for producing a dish. Accordingly, the cook is the 'performer' of the recipe.

[†] University of Turin, Italy.
[1] For discussions on food as art, see Korsmeyer 1999; Kuehn 2005; Perullo 2013; 2014; 2016; specifically on the analogy between recipes and musical works, see Monroe 2007; Marrone 2014; Borghini 2015; Sweeney 2018.

A musical work gives performers the rules they must follow to perform it properly, i.e. respecting the instructions provided by its composer in accordance with the artistic standards of the relevant cultural context. On the one hand, performers can comply more or less exactly with those rules. On the other hand, performers maintain a margin in which they may express their creativity in offering the work to the audience. So a musical performance can be more or less correct (and 'authentic' as compliant with the score), but may also be more or less aesthetically successful by virtue of the performers' expressive contribution (and 'authentic' as expressing performer's creativity).[2]

Similarly, a recipe presents cooks with the instructions they must follow in order to prepare a dish. These instructions are established by the author of the recipe, based on a tradition of culinary practices. On the one hand, the instructions provided by the recipe can be followed in a more or less correct way; on the other hand, while following the recipe instructions correctly, a cook can prepare the dish more or less creatively, contributing to it with her own personal touch.

Schematically, the relationship between 1. (usually written) recipes, 2. ingredients, and 3. dishes may thus be understood in analogy to the relationship between elements in the performing arts: for example, in music, 1. (usually scored) musical compositions, 2. 'musical ingredients' (such as notes, scales, intervals, arpeggios, pauses etc.) and 3. performances.

Following this line of thought, we can deepen the comparison between musical works and recipes further. A recipe is an artifact that bears a label through which is identified. It depends *constitutively*, but not entirely, by human *fiat*: it «cannot exist unless someone declares its existence» (Borghini 2015, p. 727). Moreover, in order to be effective, the declaration of existence must be carried out by a qualified agent, who acquires this qualification «through a process of apprenticeship» (Borghini 2015, p. 727), and must be accepted as valid by a community of restaurant goers, eaters, culinary experts, etc. The same goes for the realization of a dish following a recipe: the cook must declare her intention to realize a certain dish and must be qualified for doing this. It goes without saying that the appropriate qualification can be acquired precisely through the performance (the elaboration of a recipe or a dish), provided that this is recognized as valid by the gastronomic community.

---

[2] See Kivy 1995. For recent accounts of the issue of musical authenticity see Bertinetto 2019a and Kania 2020, pp. 178-203.

This happens in the musical realm as well. A musical work is an artifact that bears a title (a label) affixed by a qualified agent: this agent is usually (but not always)[3] a composer, who thus publicly expresses her intention to author a work. Moreover, even in this case, the declaration of existence must be recognised as valid by a community of listeners, concert goers, critics, etc.[4] Performers of a musical work must be acknowledged as agents endowed with the skills for performing the work, which are acquired thanks to an appropriate apprenticeship,[5] and must publicly communicate the intention to perform the work (for instance through a concert program).

2. Correctness and success

In both cases, musical and gastronomic, declaring one's intention and being able to realize the performance of the musical work or the dish are not sufficient conditions to adequately perform the work or prepare the dish. The performance presents the work and the dish instantiates the recipe if the instructions are followed in a sufficiently correct way. Two questions then arise. The first is how to achieve and how to assess this sufficient correctness. The second is whether the correctness with respect to the instructions is sufficient and/or necessary to guarantee the instantiation of the work/recipe and the success of the dish and of the performance.

With respect to the first question, many[6] are tempted to answer that the correctness of the performance (and of the dish) depends on satisfying the author's intentions, presented in the score (or in the recipe) or elsewhere (letters, diaries, etc.), or obtainable by considering cultural conventions in place at the time of the composition (or of the recipe).

With respect to the second question, a reasonable answer (at least with respect to the musical case) seems to be that correctness is sufficient for the presentation of the musical work, even if this alone does not guarantee the

---

[3] Titles may be assigned to cultural works by agents others than composers. On the role of titles for artworks see Levinson 1990, pp. 159-178.

[4] Contrary to what one anonymous reviewer observed, my intuition is that compositions that never receive recognition from some kind of public (at least a small cultural niche) do not have the «aesthetic value of a musical work». At least I cannot find any example of such a case.

[5] As I hope it will be clear later (see Section 4), the appropriateness of the apprenticeship cannot be judged externally to the very practice in which the apprenticeship is involved. The norms of human practices are not external to those practices, but are formed and *trans*formed by the practices themselves. See Bertinetto & Bertram 2020.

[6] Regarding music paradigmatic of this view are Davies 2001; Davies 2002; Davies 2012.

artistic success of the performance. On the one hand a correct musical performance may be shallow or expressively uninspired. On the other hand, two performances, both correct, could vary in their artistic success due to their different performative styles.[7] But is correctness also *necessary* for a successful performance, or for a successful dish?

No. Artistic success can trump correctness with respect to (some) authorial intentions or historical accuracy to the point where the violation of the instructions for the performative realization of the musical work can result in an artistic success.[8] A performance can be artistically successful even though it is incorrect from the point of view of score compliance and faithfulness to its author's intentions. This occurs when the performance is able to provoke the transformation of the aesthetic criteria by which is to be judged, so that the transgression of the scored instructions does not yield a demerit, but an artistic merit. For example Andreas Staier's performance of Mozart's Rondò alla Turca takes two of the intentions that Mozart seems to understand as fundamental for the performance of his Rondo alla Turca as contradictory and chooses to satisfy one at the expense of the other[9]. In order to convey to the contemporary public the orientalism that Mozart intended to entrust to his music, this performance departs significantly from the Mozart's score, since this is deemed no longer able to express the content intended by Mozart. Here departures form the score seems then required by fidelity to the work (see Kania 2020, pp. 190-195).

But there are more radical cases, such as Jimi Hendrix's famous rock version of the American National Anthem performed with his distorted electric guitar at Woodstock, 1969 (see Bartel 2011). At least part of this performance's success is due to the pragmatic implications of the musical references to the political situation of the time and, in particular, to Vietnam war (see Bertinetto 2017, p. 10). The performance adds meanings to the work.

A similar situation can also occur in the culinary field. Disregarding some of the instructions provided by the recipe is not always the cause of the failure of the dish. The creation of a dish that violates, intentionally or unintentionally, the instructions provided by a recipe can lead to gastronomic success (see Section

---

[7] For example, think of two performances of the same Beethoven's Piano Sonata n. 2, such as those of Wilhelm Kempff and Stanislav Richter.

[8] Of course the issue is controversial. See Sherman 1997 for a very well informed musicological exploration of the topic. Philosophical accounts are offered by Kivy 1995, and more recently by Bertinetto 2019a and Kania 2020. Both discuss also the view defended by Dodd 2015.

[9] Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEcZLbY8f2k.

5). I am referring for example to instructions regarding cooking lengths or the use of specific ingredients as well as to habits and conventions with respect to taste that are manifested in various culinary and gastronomic precepts (such as that of not accompanying fish with red wine).

Thus the question of musical or gastronomic success does not coincide with that of ontological respect for the identity of the musical work or of the recipe. In both cases, the violation of normative constraints may bring about the success of the performance or of the dish and *may* lead to the generation of a new musical work or recipe, although related to the one from which it derives. Depending on how the performance or the dish are considered by the participants, they can be understood as versions (or covers) of the 'original' work, or as a musical performance or a dish that instantiates a different musical work or a different recipe,[10] or both.[11] For example, due to its artistic meaning, which includes a declared civil commitment, Hendrix's performance can be considered not only as a revolutionary version of the American National Anthem, but as a new musical work as well. Similarly, there may be different versions of *carbonara* pasta: with or without cream, with or without egg whites, etc. Moreover, a version of a traditional meal 'signed' by a renowned chef can become a new recipe, an *author*'s recipe (again, the cook may become a chef renowned for her creativity precisely thanks to the invention of *that* dish). After all, whether the musical piece or the recipe offered by the performance or by the dish is the same piece or the same recipe altered through the performance or through the dish, *or* a new piece or a new recipe generated by the innovative performance or the innovative dish depends on whether or not the participants in the practice are willing to attribute a strong authorship to the musician or to the cook. Which, in turn, can depend on several reasons, not least economic ones, and must be decided on a case by case basis[12].

---

[10] For instance, the ornamentations of Yuia Wang's version of Mozart's Rondò alla Turca (cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJdzGLK3gfc) are so radical that this is credited as an arrangement, and not as a rendition, of Mozart's work (cf. Kania 2020, p. 190). However, this categorization may change with time (along with Mozart's piece) and in any case I still think that a music critic imbued with musical traditions less tied to the 'sacral' rigidity of the musical work than is the Western 'Classical' musical tradition can easily understand Wang's version as a performance of that work.

[11] The issue has been discussed in reference to music in Bertinetto 2016a, pp. 19-30; 219-231; 321-324.

[12] A pragmatic criterion for deciding whether a piece (considered in a given historical period) is a

It is known, for instance, the case of the great saxophonist Charlie Parker, who, not receiving royalties as an improviser, was forced to transform himself into the author of 'new' compositions by appropriating the harmonic grid of an old standard and using an improvised melody as theme of a 'new' tune. Like the American National Anthem, which derives from an earlier English song, many of Parker's compositions are indeed 'contrafacts': tunes composed by appropriating other tunes (cf. Bertinetto 2013; Bertinetto 2016a, ch. 6). We can find similar cases in the culinary field. The version of an old recipe can be considered as a new recipe depending on the chef's creativity and on her ability to be publicly acknowledged as an *author* and not only as a (however creative) performer of inherited recipes. Whether a «dish is or is not a rendition of a recipe» (Borghini 2015, pp. 727-8), and not a failed attempt or a completely new creation, will depend on the produced artifact as well as on the cook's declaration of intention and on its acceptance within the community of *aficionados* and experts. For this reason, 'strange' dishes, like Ferran Adriá's '*deconstructed tortilla de patatas*'[13] and Massimo Bottura's '*bollito non bollito*', are not, respectively, failed (incorrect and inauthentic) '*tortilla de patatas*' and '*bollito*'. As the results of creative re-appropriations of traditional Spanish and Italian recipes, they can be not only new versions of the traditional recipes or new forms of existence of the old recipes, contributing to their evolution, but even the first forms of existence of new recipes, depending on how the chefs' operation, based on various practical factors, are evaluated (cf. Perullo 2011b, p. 230).

Analogously, whether Jimi Hendrix's Woodstock performance of the American national anthem and Staier's performance of the Rondò alla Turca are incorrect versions of a musical work, correct versions of a musical work (given the new cultural context) or instances of a new musical work, or maybe all this at once, depends on how they are received by musical communities. Different musical communities may consider and treat them differently and the work's identity varies depending on the way they are culturally considered and treated.

work or a version or performance of it could be the presence or absence of a dedicated entry in a relevant encyclopaedia.

[13] Adriá's methodology is called «culinary 'deconstruction, 'which involves the breaking down of familiar dishes into their constituent parts, changing the physical identity of at least some of those parts, and then reassembling the pieces in new ways, so that the dishes take on different forms while retaining sensory connections with their models». Sweeney 2018, p. 5. See Perullo 2011a.

To sum up, performances and dishes can be correct in very different ways, since sometimes different aspects of the musical or gastronomic work cannot be manifested in the same performance or dish. Correctness and success of a performance or of a dish do not always coincide. Finally, both in the musical and in the gastronomic case, the same item can be considered as a version (or cover) of an old work or recipe, as the new form of existence of an old work or recipe, or as the instance of a new work or recipe based on a previous work or recipe.

3. The authentic type/token ontology of musical and gastronomic practices

The analogy between recipes and musical works can be plausible and heuristically useful, if it is properly explained in order to help understand the human practices in which these cultural artifacts come into existence. My point is that dishes and musical performances are interestingly analogous because they do not only respectively manifest musical works and recipes, but can *transform* them to the extent that they can also bring about the invention of new musical works and recipes. They might not only be more or less accurate ways to accede perceptually and epistemically to an unchangeable item (the musical work or the recipe): they can both contribute to the evolution and even to the inventions of the musical pieces and the recipes they instantiate. This transformative power of performance and dishes is consistent with the practical, social and cultural nature of artifacts like musical works and recipes as well as performances and dishes.

However, this view contrasts strikingly with an ontological model (still quite widespread in the musical domain; cf. Dodd 2007; 2014) which denies that performances may contribute to transforming the musical work. In fact, according to this 'Platonist' model (as it is commonly called) the musical work is an immutable entity. Hence, surely, the analogy between musical and culinary practices that I am exploring in this article is unlikely to displace the defenders of this ontological model from their position. But since this analogy is, mistakenly, in my view, occasionally used to reinforce the plausibility of that erroneous ontological model and of an equally erroneous conception of musical authenticity, elaborating on that analogy in the transformative and pragmatic sense I am proposing here could provide an incentive to pursue in their theoretical inquiry for those who think that the works of human ingenuity and creativity, as cultural artifacts, can change over time, and that this is particularly evident in the case of artifacts, such as musical and gastronomic works, which,

in order to be offered to listeners and eaters, require a contribution, that can be creative, from other agents –performers and cooks[14]. Or so I contend.

Let's start with music, whose ontology appears in the current philosophical debate as a model of the ontology of the performing arts, in general (see Davies 2011). As explained in more detail by Bertinetto (2016a; 2019a; 2020), the mainstream model of musical ontology takes as a fact that a musical work is possibly manifested in multiple performances. Therefore, it understands musical works as *types* having multiple possible instances or *tokens*: the musical performances. Moreover, it assumes that musical works, as types, are tokened in their performances, *without undergoing transformations.* Performances manifest the musical work without modifying it, but simply repeatedly portraying it as it is. In other words, the differences between the performances do not affect the identity of the work they present. This means that the identity of the musical work is established independently of its performances and, in this way, it can provide the criterion for the performances' correctness.

According to some versions of this view, if a score indicates that at a certain temporal point in the performing plan of the piece a certain instrument (say, the clavichord) must perform a certain note (say, a G sharp), the performance will be correct (authentic as compliant with the score), *iff* the clavichord at that point will play that G sharp, even though, for instance, this note may sound weird to a contemporary listener, especially, say, if played precisely by a clavichord, rather than by a piano – to whose sound the ears of contemporary listeners are certainly much more accustomed[15]. Otherwise, the performance would be incorrect and inauthentic. According to this model, Hendrix's Woodstock performance of the American National Anthem and Staier's performance of Mozart's Rondò alla Turca are failed performances, because they are strikingly unfaithful to the musical pieces they are the performances of, as traditionally and customarily performed.

---

[14] I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point. For the anti-platonic view of recipes as artifacts see Sciacca 2020.

[15] Some 'sonicist' accounts claim that the correctness of the performance of a work can also be achieved with instruments other than those indicated by the composer, if the resulting sound is the same (the corresponding situation in the culinary field would be that of a recipe made with different ingredients, but capable of achieving the same taste). Other 'contextualist' accounts claim instead that making the work with the instruments indicated by the composer is part of the requirements for a correct performance (the analogue situation in the culinary field would be that of a dish that uses the very same ingredients indicated by the inventor of the recipe). See Kania 2020, pp. 168 ff.

Other Platonist accounts of the type-token musical ontology (see Dodd 2015) allow for a great variability of performances. They believe, for example, that playing a musical work with different and more modern instruments, or otherwise interpreting it in ways that depart intentionally from the score can be excellent ways to manifest the deep musical content of the work, *without* changing it. And they can easily argue that when the performance's departure from the score is too radical, then the performance is not of work *a*, but of a new work, *b*, discovered precisely through the innovative performance, or of a *version* of work *a*. All these argumentative solutions (or subterfuges, as a malicious adversary of Platonism may say) which I cannot investigate in this article (having however done so elsewhere: see Bertinetto 2016a), depend on the assumption (which I do not agree with) that the reality of the musical work is metaphysical, not cultural and that the composer (who is only a discoverer, not a creator[16]) presents in the score, according with the performance conventions of her time, the mandatory instructions for its manifestation through the performance.

Two problems of this view seem to be precisely the interpretative freedom granted to interpreters (not only in the adoption of modern instruments), and the ontological role of versions. As for interpretative freedom, arguing that even moving away from the letter of the score can be a way to manifest the profound content of the work runs the risk of being counterproductive for the Platonist[17]. First, this strategy requires distinguishing between a 'profound' (or 'rich') content (manifested by the creative performance that deviates from the score), and a 'superficial' (or 'modest') content (presumably manifested by the correct performance in terms of compliance with the the score). Second, however, it must be explained in what sense the creative performance – the one capable of grasping the profound or rich content of the work – is also a performance capable of instantiating the work.[18] And this is not an easy task. Of course, correctness is a matter of degree, but if the measure of the degree of correctness

---

[16] Those who, like Levinson (cf. 1990, pp. 215-263), think that the composer is not just a discoverer, but a creator, weakens Platonism by embracing a contextualist version of it and arousing the criticisms of strong Platonism.

[17] Cf. Kania 2020, 188-197.

[18] In fact, as argued by Kania (2020, p. 195), the point of a correct performance is that it has to manifest the content of the work *by correctly instantiating* the work. Many other things (for instance cultural artifacts such as other musical works and artworks, arrangements, literary works, critical interpretations etc.) may manifest the content of the musical work without instantiating it (neither correctly nor incorrectly).

is the score and the creative performance departs from the score, the explanation of how creative interpretation is still an instance of the relevant work seems to require Platonists to dismiss some of their key assumptions. How can a creative, but deviating, performance correctly instantiate the musical work, if the criterion for correct instantiation is the score, from which the performance deviates? If the Platonist makes cultural conventions come to the aid of the score as a criterion for determining whether or not a creative interpretation is still an instance of the work at issue, maintaining that the score alone does not represent the musical content of the work correctly or completely, then Platonism goes towards a contextualist/constructivist weakening, which, I believe, its defenders would like to avoid. In fact, cultural conventions change historically, and if the identity of the work is consigned to historical mutability, it seems impossible to respect the idea of the immutability of the work.

As for the versions, one line of reasoning to show how they can be used not to help the thesis of the immutability of the work defended by Platonism, but on the contrary to prove its falsity, could be this: Versions offer new possibilities for manifesting the work. Before version b (Staier's performance) was available, the work x (Mozart's Rondò alla Turca) was always manifested according to version a (which however was not known as version a, but simply as work x). When version b is realized, work x can be manifested both in version a (as it was always manifested in the past), and in version b. This disjunctive possibility (being able to be played as a or as b) introduces a change in the work compared to the time when version b did not exist. So version b (perhaps produced through a performance), transforms work x[19]. To block this consequence of the theoretical use of the notion of version, Platonists cannot but insist that the work is an immutable type and that the version is also an immutable type, related with the work-type: accordingly, the new version (b) is another entity which manifests differently (by means of instantiation), but does not transform, the starting immutable type (x). If it does not manifest x by instantiating it, it is not a version, but a new work, y[20].

However, this seems to contrast too strikingly with cultural practices. While it is true that versions of musical works are commonly spoken of as artifacts that allow a certain work, x, to be manifested in different ways, it is also true that a new version introduces a new way of accessing x. It seems reasonable to me to

---

[19] I take this argument from Terrone 2017.
[20] This seems to be, at least in part, García-Carril Puy's (2019) line of argument, if I understand it correctly.

argue that (at least if x is a work of art[21]) the manifestation of x is part of the ontological set of x. Version b introduces a new (possibility of) manifestation of x. So version b changes work x. Moreover I do not see any plausible reason to deny that a version can produce a new work y. This occurs when the changes introduced by the version are so strong that the manifestation of the work x leads to another work, y, which in cultural practices is picked out separately from x, or, in other words, to which a specific entry is dedicated in a relevant encyclopaedia. To cut a long story short, it is the moving magma of cultural practices that determines, in a revisable way, whether version b changes work x, providing a new possibility of manifestation, or adds another work, y, to the world[22].

Analogous views can be applied to the relation between a recipe and the dishes instancing it. It could be argued that a recipe is a type tokened by dishes without transforming its identity. The recipe's identity is allegedly established independently of the dishes that instantiate it and provides the criterion for the correctness (authenticity) of the dishes. This seems to be implied in what Stan Godlovitch thinks: through the analogy of an ancient recipe he defends a 'philological' view of the authenticity of musical performances. As he claims, just as the preparation of a dish based on an ancient recipe must not adapt the recipe to contemporary conditions – because this adaptation would allegedly bring about illegitimated changes in the identity of the recipe – but reproduce what is indicated in the recipe, based on the original historical situations, a musical performance must not adapt to contemporary conditions, but be faithful to the text of the score, which, so *his* story goes, provides the only valid requirements for the correctness of the performance of the work as intended by its author. Accordingly, the aim of preparing a salad following a fourteenth-century recipe is «not tracking down the taste sensation of a fourteenth-century salad-eater. The recipe never promises that we can taste what they tasted.» Instead, the point would be getting a «good reason to think that we can at least prepare salad much

[21] I can't argue about it here, but I think this also applies to conceptual art.

[22] I am aware that this thesis should be corroborated by some solid reflection that explains my commitment to the thesis according to which the ontology of music (and most generally the ontology of art) must respect practices, since artworks have the sort of properties are attributed to them in appreciative and critical practices (the so-called «pragmatic constraint»: cf. Davies 2004), and I an aware that the defence of this view may require an ontology of practices. Not having the space to carry out this task here, I limit myself to assuming that cultural practices are historically changing normative contexts that govern human interactions which in turn contribute to changing practices. In relation to artistic practices, I share the views and the arguments developed by Bertram 2019.

as they did (…)» (Godlovitch 1999, p. 162). Analogously, Godlovitch thinks, the aim of a performance of an old musical work is not to experience the original listeners' auditory sensations, but to perform the old musical work as it is. Consequently, following Godlovitch, Staier's performance of the Rondò alla Turca is inauthentic and incorrect.

However, this view is undermined by three problems concerning the musical work/performances and the recipe/dishes relationships, as well as listeners' and eaters' experiences.

1. Is it possible to establish the identity of the musical work/recipe (i.e. what the musical work/recipe are) independently of their realizations by means of performances and dishes?

2. Is it impossible, or illegitimate, that performances and dishes transform the identity of the musical or culinary work?

3. Is the experience, and the pleasure, of listeners and eaters really superfluous or irrelevant when it comes to manifesting the (content of) the musical or culinary work through the performance/dish?

All these three questions must be answered in the negative.

1. The assumption made by the mainstream ontological model of the musical work according to which the identity of the musical work, as *type*, is established independently of the performances that are its *tokens*, is unwarranted. In fact, the sense by which a musical work or a recipe is identified by examining the score or the text is much weaker than that by which a musical work or a recipe is identified by the performance or by the dish. If a performance or a dish that contains inaccuracies with respect to what is indicated in the score or in the text of the recipe are incorrect manifestations of the work or of the recipe in this regard, what should we say of a performance or a of dish only imagined by means of reading of the score or the text? In a sense, in these cases all the indications for the manifestation of the work are disregarded, because the musical work or the recipe are not manifested at all through the performance or the dish[23].

---

[23] A similar line of reasoning can also be adopted to reject the possible objection that the view I am defending fails to account for the identification of works that have never been performed. If I had the space to articulate here an answer to this possible objection, I would base it on the idea that the sense for which a composition or a recipe never performed really is a proper musical or gastronomic work is, to say the least, much weaker than the sense for which compositions and recipes are works manifested in performances and dishes.

Musical works – and something similar can be said of gastronomic ones – are concretely real, as music, only thanks to their performances that offer them to listening experience: otherwise they exist as cultural constructs, physically indicated by scores. Many key qualities that make them the musical works they are are grasped only by virtue of listening to their performances that form (and, as I will suggest soon, *trans*form!) their identities as cultural constructs. The sonic nature of the musical work, as well as the gustatory nature of a recipe, seem to be relevant to its identity. Moreover, few Platonists would be willing to deny the relevance of the sound structure (or, in the case of a recipe, of the gustatory qualities) for the identification of the work. Therefore the performance or the dish seems required to identify in a robust way a musical or gastronomic work 'savoring' its properties[24].

2. Assuming the answer to the first question is acceptable, I see no reason to deny that musical or gastronomic works which are identified, thanks to their performances and dishes, can also be transformed by virtue of these manifestations. I do not want to get rid of the type/token ontology altogether here. In fact, it is fairly reasonable to conceive of a musical work as a *type* capable of having different *tokens* (its performances). The type/token ontology is an elegant way to explain both how to recognize a musical performance as the performance of a certain musical work and, consequently, to establish the requirements that a performance should satisfy in order to be a performance of a certain work. The same can be said of the relation between a recipe and the dishes that manifest it[25]. But inferring then that the musical or the gastronomic work has an identity independently of its performances/dishes, of the ways in which they are experienced and of evaluations and judgments of cultural communities and that it cannot be modified (both in fact and in law) by its performances/dishes and by the ways in which they are received (by means of listening and eating) seems to be a misstep. The identity of musical works (and

---

[24] I thank very much an anonymous reviewer for pressing on this point.

[25] Therefore, although I share with Moruzzi 2018 and Sciacca 2020 the idea that musical works and recipes can change over time due to the transformations produced by performances and dishes, I do not think it necessary to reject the type/token scheme to understand the relationship between musical and gastronomic works on the one hand, and performances and dishes on the other. The view of works and recipes as cultural objects whose identity varies depending on the ways they are performed in changing cultural contexts by musical performances and dishes through which they are perceived and savored can be well explained by understanding types as quasi-abstract particulars extended through time and transformable by their tokens in the same way that an action can modify the corresponding action plan while realizing it. See Sections 4 and 5.

something very similar can be said of gastronomic artifacts) is negotiated by their performances which shape them sonically in different ways, adapting them to specific performing spaces, specific audiences, and specific cultural aims, thereby possibly transforming them to different extents. Hence, the assumption of the immutability of the musical work through its manifestations is unrealistic: it clashes with what happens in musical practices. This assumption is wrong because it takes as a metaphysical truth a cultural ideology – the *Werktreue* ideal, the ideal of fidelity to the Work with capital 'W' – which (of course in different ways[26]) governed a particular historical Western musical tradition (cf. Goehr 1992; Ridley 2003). Yet nothing, apart from cultural prescriptive constraints of the ideological stripe, prevents tokens from inducing changes in the type they instantiate, precisely through the way in which they instantiate it, realizing it in specific cultural and environmental circumstances.

Hence, even though from a descriptive point of view the issue of authenticity seems simple and factual (not 'value-laden') – a dish is authentic if it matches its recipe intended as a reference category; a musical performance is authentic if it matches its work as a reference category – the reference category is not fixed and not independent from aesthetic and other values[27]. The authenticity of a performance (or of a dish) can be assessed only thanks to experience and evaluation of performances (and dishes) within changing cultural contexts, linked to different and changing cultural and aesthetic ideals.

3. In order to argue (in the last part of this Section and in Section 4) in defence of this view, I now question the relevance of listeners' and eaters' experience for the way performances and dishes manifest the musical or gastronomic work. What I just said of musical works applies very well to the gastronomic case as well. There is no way to establish how to comply 'authentically' with instructions provided by an ancient recipe independently of their realizations through dishes produced by contemporary cooks and eaten by contemporary diners (cf. Montanari 2015, pp. 13f.). As in the case of musical works of the Baroque era (for example), composed or readapted for specific

---

[26] For example, as previously seen, some understand fidelity to the work as fidelity to the text (the score), others as fidelity to the 'rich' or 'profound' content of the work (whatever is meant by it).
[27] Therefore I do not think that the question of authenticity (at least in reference to food and music) can be resolved simply by resorting to Walton's 'categorialism' (see Walton 1970), as Strohl 2019 seems (partly, at least) to believe. I have clarified my view on Walton's 'categorialism' in Bertinetto 2019b and 2020. I thank an anonymous reviewer for making me aware of Strohl's paper.

occasions, for specific interpreters, and for specific audiences, it is impossible to establish the authentic essential and a-historical Identity (with capital 'I') of recipes prepared taking into account the specific occasion to which they had to serve, in terms of local traditions, availability of ingredients, diners' tastes, etc. Not only the correctness of a dish with respect to the recipe would depend on the practices in which different agents (recipe's authors, cooks, restaurant-goers, aficionados, experts, etc.) are involved. Rather, following philologically all the instructions established by the letter of the recipe may involve betraying the author's intentions with respect to the taste qualities of the dish. Tastes and culinary habits change with time and a recipe that once seemed cheap, can today be a refined gastronomic proposal; a dish once considered tasty, can be too strong and indigestible for the contemporary palate. As Montanari (2015, p. 14) writes,

> (...) it is not at all the case that philological fidelity to the text is the best way to re-create the sensation of the past. The very opposite can occur; that is, the highest degree of adaptation – knowledgeably controlled – may turn out to be much more faithful than formal fidelity. To take one example, the mortar and pestle are very different from an electric blender, and the consistencies obtained from the two utensils are also very different. However, in our experience it is the blender that works best to 'grind finely,' as did the mortar during the Middle Ages. The two sensations, objectively very unalike, can coincide on a subjective level, but we will never know for sure.

Peter Kivy (2002, pp. 224-250) advanced analogous arguments with respect to musical authenticity. In order to satisfy the author's intentions with respect to the sonic effects of a Baroque orchestra, instructions regarding the instrumental equipment of the orchestra must be *disregarded*. Accustomed as we are to large orchestras, today the solemnity that Bach wanted sometimes to achieve with the orchestras of his time, small in size, can only be achieved adopting much larger orchestras. In other words, our acoustic perception is accustomed to sounds different from those used by the listeners of the Bach era. So to obtain the aesthetic effects allegedly intended by Bach as constitutive of the correctness of the performance of his compositions, today performers must adapt Bach's music to different listening situations and to different listeners. More generally, instructions for performing a musical work are effective if they suit the concrete performative situation in which they are applied. Even when they aim to present the work faithfully, musical performances appropriate the musical content

conveyed by the score or by the recording and adapt it to the performing situation, which is specific in material, technical, historical, social, cultural, aesthetics, and artistic terms, and could not be anticipated by the composers of the piece. So, performers variously understand, integrate, interpolate, and appropriate the information provided by scores or recordings. For instance, the acoustics of a concert hall can induce a conductor to make decisions about how to concretely perform a musical work – for example, regarding the spatial arrangement or the orchestral crew or the musical tempo – that violate the score's indications. Moreover, aesthetic considerations can induce musicians to perform the work in ways unthinkable for her composer (just think of Glenn Gould's famous Bach performances, or the previous discussed Staier's performance of the Rondò alla Turca).

My point is that creative interpretations and adaptations and interpretive appropriations lead – to different degrees – to transformations of the musical work.[28] In order to perform the work correctly ('authentically') it is not enough to appeal to the rules valid in the musical practices in force in the historical-cultural context of the era in which the work has been composed. Performers must take into account the way in which normative instructions can be implemented in *their* specific performance situation, in terms of instruments, acoustics and cultural taste. And these interpretations feed back the work and modify it, at least because subsequent performances will consider how the work has been performed by the interpretative performance. To put it with Gadamer (2006), the work is (trans)formed by the history of its effects: its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. The acoustic, environmental, and cultural conditions of interpretation and fruition of the work retroactively affect its musical content, including the rules for its performances[29]. In other words, the criterion of correctness, and of success, of performances is dependent (partly, at least) on cultural and environmental conditions. And not only that: performances also contribute to changing the criteria of correctness and of success, thereby impacting the cultural context of their practice. Think again of the Rondò alla

---

[28] Of course, this s not Kivy's view. His 'Platonist' view of musical ontology contrasts blatantly with his pluralist and dynamic view of musical authenticity. A very similar objection is addressed to Dodd by Kania (2020, pp. 195-196).

[29] It is certainly possible to (try to) perform a musical work as it would have been performed at the era of its composition and of its first performers. However, the result of this operation would be a today's performance of a work as it is now thought that this work would have been performed at the time of its composition (see Taruskin 1995 and Cook 2013 for musicological developments of this insight).

Turca example: Staier's performance influences the criterion of correctness of Mozart's work's performances, possibly changing the cultural conventions on which the performance of the work is based.

However, misunderstandings may arise about the use I make of the notion of 'retroactivity'[30]. So a clarification is in order here. A performance retroactively transforms the musical content of a musical work and therefore also the rules for the performance not in the counterintuitive sense that now the way in which in the past the work was considered to have been performed correctly is no longer correct or that on the contrary a performance that was incorrect in 1920 is correct in 2020[31], but in the sense that by applying what is considered the rule for the correct manifestation of the work, changes are introduced which ultimately transform the rule to be applied for performing the work. In other words – I will come back to this point in Section 4 – the application of the rule may transform the rule. If, to return to the previous example, I play the Rondò alla Turca in a more oriental way in order to render today the oriental sense that Mozart intended as a structural property of his work, I modify different sound properties of the work (in terms of melody, rhythm, touch, expressiveness...) through which Mozart intended to convey the quality of orientalism. To apply the rule, therefore, I am changing it, both because now the performances of the work can choose whether to satisfy the rule by performing the work in the old way *or* by following the novelty I introduced (and this simple new disjunctive possibility alters the rule) *and* because future performances may take my new performance as a reference – in turn adapting it to the new performative situations, and thus continuing the transformation of the work. Hence, in a 'Waltonian' vein, it could be said that the innovative performance changes the reference category to which it belongs. Obviously, the modification is valid from now on (and for those who accept the 'orientalizing' performance as valid): it does not affect the performances of the past – even though it may have an impact on the contemporary evaluations of recordings of performances of the past: in this sense it really is so that a performance, that was considered successful at t, *can* be considered defective starting from t+1, because a new performance (or set of performances) has changed (what we now take as) the (authentic!!) musical content of the work. The retroactivity, therefore, is not so much

---

[30] I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

[31] Actually I believe that our feeling when listening to the recordings of old performances of musical works is precisely this, but in fact it can only be a feeling, since the fact that different rules apply now at time t+1 does not change the fact that other rules were in force in the past at time t.

temporal – although now we may regard the once considered failed performance as interestingly anticipating a way that is today considered correct and/or successful for performing the work, and the once considered correct performance as an old, now not very compelling, way of satisfying the norms for correctness – but *structural*, and maybe a better term than retroactivity may then perhaps be *recursivity*: the application of the rule (i.e. the performance of the work) recursively transforms the rule (the work) precisely by applying it.

Be that as it may, the gist of my view is that the identity of the musical work is negotiated *within* the practice. It cannot be determined independently of performing and listening practices, and cannot be considered as the external normative criterium for evaluating performances. A musical work's properties (i.e. its identity) are specified by performances and evaluations in musical practices (based also on testimonies and documents like scores, composers' and interpreters' annotations, critical literature, recordings, transcriptions, etc.) that are historically and culturally changeable and that take into account performers' and listeners' experience and taste. Performances, as interpretations, are evaluative; evaluations are performative, in that they impact on the identity of the musical work. As cultural constructs, musical works are ontologically flexible, because they are (trans)formed by the performances that adapt them to a specific physical and cultural situation in order to offer them to listeners. Performative and critical interpretations (cf. Levinson 1993) affect artistic properties of a musical work and its identity as a cultural artifact. So the plausibility of the idea that the type/token dichotomy elegantly explains the relationship between the musical (or culinary) work and its multiple performances (or the dishes that manifest it) does not contrast with the rejection of the immutability of the musical (or culinary) work. Rather, the idea that performances should match immutable musical works fails as a criterion for evaluating correctness and success of musical performances.

The moral of the story is that if the tasty analogy between the musical and the culinary fields is sound, which it is, then recipes are also not immutable, since they are transformed by the normative relationship that connects them to their performances: the dishes. The transformations of the recipe may be due to the need of adapting it to the concrete circumstances of the meal, to eaters' culinary preferences, to the ingredients available, to the cook's creativity etc. *Pace* Godlovitch, recipes are, like musical works, changing cultural artifacts. Hence the preparation of a dish based on an ancient recipe

cannot serve as independent example for defending that musical performances must simply manifest or mirror the musical work as it is (or was!). The musical work and the recipe are not the criteria of validity of the authenticity of the musical or culinary performances detached from the concrete performing and culinary practices, but are involved in the practices that they regulate. Their normative role is played in the concrete cultural-historical and empirical situations in which they are offered to musical and gastronomic appreciation. Authenticity itself – in a more interesting sense than that of the factual belonging to a category – is a *process* by which authority is attributed to a cultural construct. As such it is negotiated in the practice.[32] Hence, in order to be effectively and *authentically* realized by performances and dishes, musical works and culinary recipes are transformed according to the concrete situations in which they are offered to appreciators.

4. Improvisational normativity in action, while cooking and making music

As already suggested, the normativity ruling the work/performance relationship, as well as the recipe/dishes relation, is dynamic and situated: norms are (trans)formed through their concrete applications. Tokens applying the type (the norm) adapt the norm to the specific situation. On the one hand, only in this way they can satisfy the norm; on the other hand this adaptation transforms the norm. This is the ordinary case in cultural practices – artistic, and gastronomic, practices included.

In order to account for the transformative character of the normativity of musical (and, more generally, artistic) practices, it has been argued that *improvisation* is paradigmatic for the musical practice as a whole, and more generally for art (cf. Bertinetto 2020). In fact, the concrete normativity of a musical improvisation is generated during the performance itself. Although based on material and cultural preconditions of different kinds, its normative validity emerges through improvisational interactions with and within the performance situation. So the sense of an improvised musical passage – and the same could also be said of actions, gestures and speeches of improvising actresses and dancers – does not depend on the producers' intentions, but

---

[32] The notion of 'authenticity' as individual and social process of authentication is discussed, also in relation to food and musical issues, in Cobb 2014.

emerges retroactively thanks to the responses it causes (see also Bertinetto 2019b). For example, in a musical improvisation, the pianist's phrase acquires its musical sense thanks to the saxophonist's response to it. The piano phrase, as any other musical contribution during the performance, *makes* sense by virtue of the concrete musical interactions in which it takes its place (see Bertram 2010).

This retroactive and transformative model of improvisational normativity explains the dynamic relationship between the musical work and its performances. The musical work prepares the conditions regulating and constraining the performance, but the concrete sense of these conditions and normative constraints emerges through the musical performances that 'respond' to them while applying them in specific situations, thereby (trans)forming the artistic sense of the musical work and its identity as cultural construct. In other terms, the musical content of a musical work is (trans)formed not only by the composer, but also by creative interpretations. That is why a musical work can change.

This also holds in the gastronomic case. For instance, some instructions of a recipe can be characterized by a vagueness such as to require the cook's creative contribution. To determine how much salt is a pinch of salt, the cook will resort to the conventions she is accustomed to in the context of the community in which she works, to dietary recommendations and, ultimately, to her personal taste. Furthermore, the specific context of the meal in which the dish will be served can influence the cook's decisions. The very spicy flavor of a first course (a dish of *penne all'arrabbiata*, for example) may make it appropriate to make the second course tastier, precisely in order to be faithful to the (interpretation of the) recipe. Within the context of a concert similar considerations may, for example, make it appropriate to speed up the performance of a piece of music following a very fast song, so that the second piece does not seem *too* slow. Therefore, even the respect of certain intentions of the author of the work or recipe may make it necessary to neglect or even violate other intentions. Like in the Staier/Mozart example: respect for an aspect of the musical content of the Rondò (orientalism) may induce the performer to disregard another aspect (the notes of the score). The decision as to what the respective normative weight of the author's different intentions is in relation to the musical piece/recipe is up to the performer/cook: at the end of the day, the normativity that regulates the musical and culinary practice is developed within the practice itself, like in an improvisation.

Just as performances of a musical work do not repeat the work without modifying it, but adapt the score using it as an ingredient of the performance (as it is paradigmatically clear in standard jazz: see Feige 2014), in cooking, recipes – i.e. the instructions that guide the preparation of a dish – are appropriated and transformed, more or less intentionally, and to a greater or lesser degree. While producing the dish, recipes are used, and *ab*used. Hence, it makes sense to say that in this way a *recipe* becomes an *ingredient* of the final product: the dish through which it is *performed* (cf. Bertinetto 2012, p. 120)[33].

In other words, both in artistic performances and dishes, the application of norms requires a 'creative' adaptation to the concrete specific situation and the final product emerges out of practical interactions that involve transformations of their own normative starting bases. Both in culinary practices and performing arts, the improvisational case is paramount for understanding how their normativity, as paradigmatic of the normativity of human practices in general, works.

---

[33] Obviously enough a recipe (and even less the piece of paper that instantiates the text in a cookbook) is not an ingredient of the dish in the same sense as salt, meat, eggs and the like are ingredients of a dish that result from the act of cooking, i.e. concrete material parts of the concrete and material product. In fact, recipes (and musical works) are quasi-abstract entities (quasi-abstract, since, although they have not material parts – but only material instances – they are extended through time). Yet, in another sense the recipe, as quasi-abstract cultural object, is an ingredient of the dish, since, if differently from the material components of the dish, it enters into the dish ('ingredient' comes form the Latin ingrediens', the present participle of 'ingredi': 'to enter') as the dish manifests (while possibly modifying) it in concrete situations. Maybe, this way of saying is close to expressions like 'care and creativity are ingredients of this dish', which, I think, are ordinary, and understandable, ways of saying, when what is meant is that care and creativity are resources (attitudes, skills, knowledge, etc.) which, as can be the case with a recipe, are made available to the culinary performance that creates a dish. But the anonymous reviewer that pressed me on this point (and I thank her for that) may possibly think that my use of 'ingredient' is confusing for readers and that I should clarify, as I have just done, that I am actually mixing the two senses of 'ingredient'. However, I also think that this possible confusion is a price to pay that is not too high if it helps making readers understand my main point: the transformative and creative, and not merely passive, power that a performance (as well as the creation of a dish) can have on musical (and culinary) works. If Platonists find a foothold in this possible confusion to confirm their view, it doesn't worry me that much, since I don't think my view can convince Platonists to change their thesis. Certainly, however, Platonists will have to offer an explanation of the way in which they can support at the same time the thesis of the immutability of the work and that of the creativity of interpretation in the performance of the work, which on my view are indeed not compatible.

This idea is confirmed by recent developments in the philosophy of action and material culture that highlight the role of improvisation for human action. Musical works and recipes may be thought of as plans requiring improvisation in order to be enacted. As persuasively argued by Beth Preston (2013), in human practices the realization of any project, and action plan, requires improvisation. The «centralized control model» of action, as Preston calls it, is a model of action of Aristotelian origin, adopted by most of contemporary philosophy of action, according to which human action is articulated into two separate phases: the intelligent preparation of plans and intentions and their subsequent execution. Countering this model, she plausibly defends the mutual link between planning and execution, as well as the active role played by performances in specific circumstances for determining the plans themselves.

First, the very structuring of a plan usually requires changes from the initial idea to account for changes in the situation. In other words, the design itself is a situated action (Suchman 2007). A plan, a rule of action, cannot simply be imposed on a situation, but must adapt to the situation in order to be realized. This adaptation involves the retroactive and transformative impact of the action on the plan. Second, the transition from an action plan to the realization of the action involves choices not determined by the plan, but suggested or constrained by the concrete circumstances in which the plan is implemented. The plan does not regulate its own realization (cf. Wittgenstein 1953), but emerges out of the situated (inter)action.

The natural, social and cultural environment is dynamic and can change both during the development phase of a plan prior to action, and during the phase of realization of a plan through action (Pollack 1992). In order to be effective, human plans must be able to be modified, adapting plastically to environmental changes. The development of plans and projects takes place through the dynamic network of interactions in which human beings are involved: they are structured through concrete activities. Projects are determined through their realization, which requires adaptation to concrete circumstances and revisions: in other words, it requires improvisation. Hence, Preston draws the conclusion that improvisation is the fundamental trait of human action. In fact, plans, as normative networks of intentions of actions, must plastically adapt to a changing reality that they cannot anticipate. Plans are not *algorithms* (cf. Bertinetto & Bertram 2020), and human action does not function on the basis of a structured theoretical knowledge separated from the actual performance, but on the basis

of the artisan model of a situated know-how generated through concrete performances (cf. Sennett 2008), i.e. *ex improviso*.

Musical and gastronomic practices are paradigmatic examples (along with many others) of this *improvisational normativity of human action*. On the one hand, this applies to the design of a musical work or a recipe. Usually, the composer of a piece (a sonata, a symphony, a song, etc.) takes into account, consciously or unconsciously, specific cultural and environmental conditions: aesthetic criteria and habits, instruments, acoustics, performing spaces, and in many cases, also individual performers. Similarly, recipes are gastronomic projects that take into account the environmental and cultural situation in which the writer of the recipe is involved, as well as concrete alimentary, technological and human resources.

On the other hand, both cooks and performers fulfil a plan, the musical work or the recipe, adapting it to circumstances not predetermined by the plan. In order to do so, they go beyond what is prescribed in the plan, *and improvise on the plan*, in order to fulfil it. First, musical works and recipes, as action plans, are partly indeterminate, and their realization requires musicians and cooks to make decisions regarding what to do concretely in order to fulfil the plan: for instance, if the score indicates that a passage must be played *ff*, the performer will determine from time to time what the indication *ff* means in the specific performative situation; if a cook has to prepare a *pesto*, it will be up to her to decide (also based on the resources available) which kind of basil to use. And it will be the judgment of a community of listeners and eaters to evaluate the success or failure of the musical performance and of the dish, as well as their correctness and authenticity with respect to the musical work and recipe at issue. Second, musical works and recipes are also appropriated by musicians and cooks, who re-elaborate them creatively in order to express their own creative personality. In this regard, Richard Sennett offers a nice example from the gastronomic field, presenting the different ways in which a recipe (or maybe better: a field of recipes), the '*Poulet à la d'Albufera*', is appropriated, interpreted, and narrated by cooking teachers who (trans)form it in original ways, following their preferences and their specific biographic situations (Sennett 2008, pp. 182-193).

5. Cooks as improvisers

One might wonder why the notion of '*improvisation*' is used in reference to the situated performance of action plans and the adaptive applications of norms such

as musical works and recipes. Does not the notion of '*interpretation*' already serve to stress the performative and transformative aspect of music and gastronomic practices (as suggested by Valgenti 2014)? In some respects the two notions indeed overlap. Those who improvise are often also interpreting, working with and on inherited cultural materials already available that are appropriated for original creations: for example, a jazz standard or a traditional dish that is reworked through the cook's or the musician's personal expression. But also a 'free' improvisation, although unrelated to extant scores or recipes, still uses musical or gastronomic materials already elaborated and from which it draws to make something different. Conversely, those who interpret a piece in order to perform it faithfully, without using it for their own ends, are still improvising, albeit unintentionally: in fact, they still have to adapt, *hic et nunc*, a cultural construct (a musical work or a recipe) to the concrete and unpredictable specificity of the performative situation (cf. Bertinetto 2016a, pp. 92-106). Hence, explaining a musical performance and a dish (as a culinary performance) in terms of *executions* of instructions (in a sense similar to that of the running of an algorithm) is too simplistic (Haden 2011, pp. 253-4). My point is, then, that the key role of the situativity of musical performances and of their transformative potential towards the musical work, which (as argued by Bertinetto 2016a) makes improvisation paradigmatic for musical ontology (and not, as is often believed, a case difficult to explain according to the mainstream ontological model), also accentuates the plausibility of the sound and tasty analogy between musical works and gastronomic recipes.

In addition, just as in the musical case in which the performer plays her own composition, in the kitchen the 'composer' and the 'performer' may be embodied by the same person: a cook can be the inventor of the dish she herself prepares. Moreover, as in the case of musical improvisation, the roles of composers and performers can be not only embodied by the same person, but carried out at the same time. In home cooking, dishes are often improvised, based on the ingredients available, on the cook's skills, and on the gastronomic conventions and traditions that guide her practice. Sometimes this does not exclude that the cook achieves excellent results while improvising her dish. Yet cooks may also consciously decide to improvise in order to create unprecedented dishes.

The two cases are similar to those of *reactive* and *deliberate* improvisation in the field of performing arts (cf. Goehr 2016). If during the interpretation of a musical work something goes wrong (for example a violin string breaks), the

performer is *forced* to improvise in order to continue the performance, and this (reactive) improvisation can also lead to creatively excellent results. Yet, improvisation can also be deliberately *chosen* by musicians as a mode of creative performance. Based on available forms, materials, skills and knowledge, musicians can produce valuable music by inventing it on the spot. Similarly, based on their experience and skills and on the ingredients at their disposal, cooks can prepare dishes that realize recipes of which they are not only the first instances, but also the inventions. Cooks can improvise on a recipe like jazzmen improvise on a standard. Just as jazz players use a melodic and harmonic base as a springboard for their inventions on the spot, the *chef* can, perhaps interacting with other cooks, use an existing recipe as a starting point for her creative inventions. Yet gastronomic improvisations can also be similar to those typical of free jazz or free improvisation, in which one does not improvise on a pre-existing piece. In this case, cooks invent a new recipe starting from their previous knowledge and creatively working with the ingredients and the tools available.[34]

However, it should be clear at this point that I consider gastronomic (and musical) improvisation as having even greater scope. In particular, Preston (2013, p. 41) considers it as a significative example of her *improvisational model of human action*. After having presented a version of the recipe of *'Rolled Pecan Cookies'*, she writes that «(...) cooking practices do not regard construction as unintelligent execution.» Cooks, like musical performers, do not «faithfully follow recipes.» Rather,

> cooks typically use recipes as a basis for improvisations of various sorts. Improvisation is normally a response to local conditions. Sometimes, these are difficulties encountered in the construction process. When you do not have an ingredient called for by a recipe, you can often substitute something else – cocoa and butter can be used in place of baking chocolate, for instance. On the other hand, sometimes, local conditions serendipitously make available resources you can exploit. A cook with a walnut tree in his backyard might substitute walnuts for pecans in the recipe above. A third type of condition involves the special needs or desires of the cook and/or her clientele. In the cookie recipe above, a vegan cook would substitute a vegetable shortening for the butter. Cooks sometimes arrive at a stable customization of a recipe after a period of improvisatory experimentation. (...) On the other hand, recipes represent a permanent possibility of doing something different on the next

---

[34] I thank an anonymous reviewer for a comment on this point.

occasion, perhaps even just on a whim rather than because of some specific difficulty or opportunity. A cook might just try rolling these pecan cookies in colored sprinkles or shaved chocolate instead of powdered sugar.

Briefly, improvisation enters the kitchen contributing both to the design of the recipe and to the realization of the dish, by means of altering – reactively or deliberately – the design, rather than following it faithfully. Therefore gastronomic improvisation is paradigmatic of human action.

One may object that cooks sometimes consider improvisation as an indication of a lack of preparation and organization, which, far from exhibiting a form of creativity, is rather the clear proof of its absence, as Massimo Bottura seems to think (Perullo 2011a, p. 231). According to this view, creativity involves research and experimentation that allegedly cannot be accomplished during the preparation of the dish itself. In short, the *authored* dish, an original creation with aesthetic qualities comparable to those of a contemporary artwork, cannot be created on the spot. It is an idea comparable to the prejudice which says that musical improvisation offers nothing really creative, because it forces performers to repeat monotonously old and chopped stereotypes (cf. Adorno 1989-90).

However, the matter can be viewed differently. First, following Preston, it can be argued that the design phase, thanks to which a recipe is developed, also involves improvisation. Second, and most importantly, it can be argued that the idea of the artwork as resulting from the creations of an Author (with a capital 'A') is a prejudice that improvisation contributes to unmasking, while showing the shortcomings of the action model based on the distinction between intelligent design and faithful mechanical execution. Improvisation foregrounds the way in which agents, acquiring, thanks to repeated practice, an expertise, as embodied and creative intelligence in a field of activity, draw on a cultural background, appropriating and transforming it thanks to a contribution that is their own, but is also due to those with which they interact both on the spot and in the long run. Improvisers are not undisputed *domini* of their actions, but participate actively-passively in a practice, interacting with other subjects as well as with materials, traditions, tools, and cultures that they use and abuse for their achievements. Using the resources at their disposal and taking advantage of

encounters with others, they generate unforeseeable transformations starting from inherited cultural constructs.[35]

Improvisation is, then, an exercise in «distributed creativity» (Born 2005). It is not just a matter of collaboration between agents, and artists, but between different subjects and objects. The improvising musician not only interacts with fellow musicians, but with her own musical instrument, with those who produce it, with composers and performers of the past, with other artists, with critics, with the place where she performs, and with the public which does not passively contemplate the performance, but interactively participates. Creativity is not the prerogative of the performer alone, but is precisely distributed among various subjects, objects, and activities (Cf. Clarke & Doffman 2018).

This clearly applies to the gastronomic field as well. As suggested by Kamozawa & Talbot (2007, p. 277), creative recipes are developed by means of improvising on others' creations. The cook interacts with those who produce the ingredients she uses, with waiters and diners (who interact with the cook, precisely through the act of eating), past cooks, colleagues and critics, recipes books, and various utensils. Improvisation in the kitchen catalyzes all these creative contributions.

In the spirit of Preston's criticism against the central control model of action, this allows us to overcome the rigid distinction between «*craftsmanship oriented*» and «*design oriented*» gastronomic creativity (Perullo 2011a, pp. 85-6). Like in music, also in gastronomy, the performance may bring about the (more or less successful) rendition of extant recipes and the invention of original recipes. And, as seen in Section 2, the same dish may be appreciated and understood in both ways: the new interpretation of a traditional recipe and the invention of a new recipe. Moreover, a failed instantiation of an extant recipe may succeed as invention of a new recipe. In fact, in the context of a creative performance, both in cooking as well as in other artistic practices, even mistakes may contribute to produce «impromptu creations». Mistakes may be «opportunities to discover something new», so that «a failed cake» can be turned «into something different and equally delicious» (Kamozawa & Talbot 2007, p. 278), precisely by means of *making* sense, i.e. (by trans)forming the normativity at stake in the practice (see Bertinetto 2016b). Think about the cocktail *Negroni*

---

[35] See Hallam & Ingold 2007 for investigations on the improvisational character of human culture.

Sbagliato: the name itself ('mistaken Negroni') reveals the mistake behind its invention[36].

Also in the gastronomic field, improvisation brings together, or in any case *can* bring together, habits and tradition with creative experimental research, showing that they are complementary attitudes in human practices. Tradition is continuously tested, and tasted!, in its application in the concrete circumstances of the practices; it is re-invented through the practices that evoke it, the same way habits of human behavior are plastic dispositions changing through their exercise (cf. Bertinetto & Bertram 2020). Experimentation, even the most radical, is based on the traditions from which it produces new inventions.

As a result, the understanding of the the analogy between musical works/performances and recipes/dishes from the perspective of improvisation calls into question both «the hierarchies between idea and execution, art and craftsmanship, innovation and tradition» (Perullo 2011a, p. 88) as well as the hierarchy between musical works and recipes, on the one hand, and performances and dishes, on the other hand (Perullo 2011b; Bertinetto 2018). The rules of human practices, such as musical pieces and recipes in music and gastronomy, are not immutable structures or fixed computational algorithms insensible to world's changes. Rather, they are plans or models that are transformed thanks to their applications. And their applications, as in the cases of musical performances and dishes, are not just mere executions: more precisely, they are *performances* that impact on the world and its inhabitants, included the musical works and the recipes they instantiate, sometimes in transformative ways.

REFERENCES

Adorno, Th.W. (1989/90). On jazz. *Discourse*, 12/1, 5-69.

Bartel, C. (2011). Music Without Metaphysics? *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 51, 383-98. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayr033

---

[36] «The Negroni Sbagliato was invented in Milan in 1972 as a consequence of a mistake. The bartender Mirko Stocchetto was preparing a Negroni, but he confused prosecco with gin» (Sciacca 2020, p. 242). The mistake occurred in the bartender's performance provoked a change in the normativity of cocktails which lead to a new recipe according to which preparing the drink using gin is not a mistake, but a requirement.

Bertinetto, A. (2012). Paganini Does Not Repeat. Improvisation and the Type/Token Ontology, *Teorema*, 21/3, 105-26.

Bertinetto, A. (2013). Improvvisazione e contraffatti. Circa il primato della prassi nell'ontologia della musica. In: A. Arbo and A. Bertinetto (eds.), *Ontologie musicali.* Special issue of *Aisthesis*, 6/2013, 101-32.   DOI: 10.13128/Aisthesis-14098

Bertinetto, A. (2016a). *Eseguire l'inatteso. Ontologia della musica e improvvisazione.* Roma: il Glifo (eBook).

Bertinetto, A. (2016b). «Do not fear mistakes – there are none» – The mistake as surprising experience of creativity in jazz. In: M. Santi, E. Zorzi (eds.), *Education as Jazz.* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 85-100.

Bertinetto, A. (2017). Sound Pragmatics. An Emergentist Account of Musical Meaning. *Rivista italiana di filosofia del linguaggio*, 11/2, 1-29. http://www.rifl.unical.it/index.php/rifl/article/view/438

Bertinetto, A. (2018). The Birth of Art from the Spirit of Improvisation. *Quadranti*, 6/1,

119-147. https://www.rivistaquadranti.eu/riviste/07/8_Bertinetto.pdf

Bertinetto, A. (2019a). Musical Authenticity as «Being True to the Moment». *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, 54 (3/2019), 9-28. DOI: 10.19205/54.19.1

Bertinetto, A. (2019b). L'emergentismo nell'arte. *Philosophy Kitchen,* 11/7: 177-91. https://philosophykitchen.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/PK11-11-AB.pdf

Bertinetto, A. (2020). Improvisation and the Ontology of Art. *Rivista di Estetica* (n.s.), 73 (1/2020), anno LXI, 10-29.

Bertinetto, A., Bertram, G. (2020). "We Make Up the Rules as We Go Along" Improvisation as an Essential Aspect of Human Practices?. *Open Philosophy,* 3/1: 202-221. https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2020-0012

Bertram, G. (2010). Improvisation und Normativität. In: G. Brandstetter, H.-F. Bormann, A. Matzke (Eds.), *Improvisieren. Paradoxien des Unvorherschbaren.* Bielefeld: Transcript, 21-40.

Bertram, G. (2019). *Art as Human Practice: An Aesthetics.* London: Bloomsbury.

Borghini, A. (2015). What is a Recipe? *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 28, 719–38.

Born, G. (2005). On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology, and Creativity. *Twentieth-Century Music*, 2, 2005/1, 7-36.

Clarke, E. F., Doffman, M. (eds.) (2018). *Distributed Creativity. Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cobb, R. (2014). (ed.). *The Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalised World.* New York: Palgrave-McMillan.

Cook, N. (2013). *Beyond the Score. Music as Performance.* Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.

Davies, D. (2004). *Art as Performance.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Davies, D. (2011). *Philosophy of the Performing Arts.* Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Davies, S. (2001). *Musical Works and Performances.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Davies, S. (2002). The Multiple Interpretability of a Musical Work. In: M. Krausz (ed.), *Is There a Single Right Interpretation?.* University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 231-50.

Davies, S. (2012). Authentic Performances of Musical Works. *Teorema*, 21/3, 81-8.

Dodd, J. (2007). *Works of Music. An Essay in Ontology.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Dodd, J. (2014). Upholding Standards: A Realist Ontology of Standard Form Jazz. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 72, 277-290. https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12088

Dodd, J. (2015). Performing works of music authentically. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 23/3, 485-508.

Feige, D. M. (2014). *Philosophie des Jazz.* Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2006). *Truth and Method.* London & New York: Continuum.

García-Carril Puy, N. (2019). The Ontology of Musical Versions: Introducing the Hypothesis of Nested Types. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 77/3, 241-254. https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12651

Godlovitch, S. (1999). Performance authenticity: possible, practical, virtuous. In: S. Kemal, I. Gaskell (eds.), *Performance and Authenticity in the Arts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 154-74.

Goehr, L. (1992). *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Goehr, L. (2016). Improvising Impromptu, Or, What to Do with a Broken String. In: G.E. Lewis, B. Piekut (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies,* vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 458-80.

Haden, R. (2011). Lionizing Taste Toward an Ecology of Contemporary Connoisseurship. In: J. Strong (ed.), *Food, Drink, and Connoisseur Culture*. Lincoln / London: University of Nebraska Press, 237-90.

Hallam, E., Ingold, T. (ed.) (2007). *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Oxford-New York, Berg 2007.

Kamozawa, A., Talbot, H. A. (2007). Balancing Tastes: Inspiration, Taste, and Aesthetics in the Kitchen. In: F. Allhoff, D. Monroe, *Food and Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 276-85.

Kania, A. (2020). *Philosophy of Western Music. A Contemporary Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge.

Kivy, P. (1995). *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Kivy, P. (2002). *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Korsmeyer, C. (1999). *Making Sense of Taste*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kuehn, G.. (2005). How Can Food Be Art? In: A. Light, J. M. Smith (eds.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 194-212.

Levinson, J. (1990). *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Levinson, J. (1993). Performative vs Critical Interpretation in Music. In: M. Krausz (ed.), *The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 33-60.

Marrone, G. (2014). Goodman in cucina. Le attivazioni di Babette. In: N. Perullo (ed.), *Cibo, estetica e arte. Convergenze tra filosofia, semiotica e storia*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 69-82.

Monroe, D. (2007). Can Food Be Art? The Problem of Consumption. In: F. Allhoff, D. Monroe (eds.), *Food & Philosophy: Eat, Think, and Be Merry*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 133–44.

Montanari, M. (2015). *Medieval Tastes: Food, Cooking, and the Table*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Moruzzi, C. (2018). Every performance is a stage: Musical stage theory as a novel account for the ontology of musical works. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 76/3, 341-351. https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12579

Perullo, N. (2011a). Esperienza estetica, cucina, gastronomia. *Estetica. Studi e ricerche*, 1/2011, 72-92.

Perullo, N. (2011b). Cibo e arte. Una conversazione con Massimo Bottura. *Estetica. Studi e ricerche*, 2/2011, 227-235.

Perullo, N. (2013). *La cucina è arte? Filosofia della passione culinaria*. Roma: Carocci.

Perullo, N. (2014). Cibo, estetica, arte: convergenze non sistematiche. In: N. Perullo (ed.), *Cibo, estetica e arte. Convergenze tra filosofia, semiotica e storia.* Pisa: ETS, 7-19.

Perullo, N. (2016). *Taste as Experience.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Pollack, M. E. (1992). The Uses of Plans. *Artificial Intelligence.* 57, 43-68. https://doi.org/10.1016/0004-3702(92)90104-6

Preston, B. (2013). *A Philosophy of Material Culture.* London/New York: Routledge.

Ridley, A. (2003). Against Musical Ontology. *Journal of Philosophy,* 100, 203-20.

Sawyer, R. K. (2003). *Improvised dialogues: Emergence and creativity in conversation.* Westport, CT: Ablex.

Sciacca, G. (2020). Towards a Particularistic Metaphysics of Recipes. *Argumenta* 5/2, 231-246. DOI 10.14275/2465-2334/202010.sci

Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sherman, B. D. (1997) Ed. *Inside Early Music.* Oxford/New York. Oxford University Press.

Strohl, M. (2019). On Culinary Authenticity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 77/2, 157-167. https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12631

Suchman, L. (2007). *Human–Machine Reconfigurations Plans and Situated Actions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sweeney, K.W. (2018). *The Aesthetics of Food.* London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Taruskin, R. (1995). *Text and Act.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Telfer, E. (2002). *Food for Thought. Philosophy and Food.* London/New York: Routledge.

Terrone, E. (2017). On Fictional Characters as Types. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 57/2, 161-176.

Valgenti, R. T. (2014). *Cucinare come interpretazione.* In: N. Perullo (ed.), *Cibo, estetica e arte. Convergenze tra filosofia, semiotica e storia.* Pisa: ETS, 57-67.

Walton, K. (1970). Categories of Art. *The Philosophical Review,* 79, 334-367. doi: 10.2307/2183933

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.