

# rosenberg 3.0

*not violin music*



**CURATED BY JON ROSE**



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## a dysfunctional museum for a dysfunctional species

Very few museums can claim to be as dysfunctional as The Rosenberg Museum. Some, left in the hands of the unimaginative, die a slow death without ever reaching the promised state. Others, the majority, incorporate the latest cool promotional techniques in an embarrassing display of popularism complete with restaurants and overpriced souvenir shopping facilities, vainly attempting to prevent the tottering towers of collected knowledge from disappearing, along with the physical biodiversity upon which we all depend. No need for despair. The practice of dysfunction can be celebrated by the few institutions whose very existence is testimony to the struggle for the impossible. The Rosenberg Museum is a paradigm of impossibility. Indeed, it is now clear that ‘dysfunctionalism’ has taken over from the various codes and escapades of postmodernism as the defining theory of our times. As many readers will have already grasped, dysfunctionalism can be applied to any epistemological source, ontological artefact, or locus-defying expression signature analysis—including sonic (and often chronic) disabilities like playing the violin.

The Rosenberg family has always demonstrated simple democratic process. The method pertains to the functional *Prinzip der Einfachheit*: whoever conceives an idea is obliged to throw that particular thought ball directly to the next handy player and see where the receiver runs . . . often straight off the field of play and onto unexpected places, it seems. So, what could be more appropriate for a survey of current

dysfunctionalism than this selection of writings—both hard-boiled and raw—by and about family members?

Many voices are heard in this compendium: predictions from the previous century, arguments of considered allegory in the face of chaotic meltdown, jokes about the state we're in, and an encyclopaedic set of surprisingly optimistic definitions of *music* in the 21st century. Half-cries of despair suffocated by the cushion of mediocrity; moments of uninformed rhetoric (so much a part of today's debate); the odd witty jab below the belt of power; and imaginative explosions of the fantastical that belong to a parallel existence intent on ignoring the cultural dog's dinner that informs our lives—these all find their way into the coming narratives. The underlying thread linking these disparate and spiky musings engages writers who are musicians or commentators closely involved with the medium of music—hence, an atmosphere of loss—the waning of a creative culture—pervades many of the texts. Those who insist that all is well in the musical firmament might utter a few whoops and return this volume to its shelf—but for you, dear Reader, a survivor of a more concerned, investigative, and critical persuasion, there are provocative pleasures in store.

There are almost no page numbers in this book for reasons that will become apparent if you read the last chapter first. Chapter headings also go missing from time to time. There are copious footnotes, however, so the levers connecting this collage of cognitive transgression can be traced in the external world, if so demanded.

Jon Rose

- Curator, *rosenberg 3.0* - not *violin music*

Dr Jozef Cseres

- Director, The Rosenberg Museum

## a vote of thanks

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An unexpected outcome in the process of finalising this book was the response to the challenge of defining the nature of music in the 21st century. Despite the trying circumstances in which practitioners find themselves, music itself clearly remains enigmatic, desirable, and of communal value. The Rosenberg Museum thanks those who took part in the anecdotal survey.

This book also contains a *photo-narrative* featuring a small selection of violin artefacts from the Rosenberg Museum's collection.

Jon Rose, 25th October 2014

The opinions expressed in this book belong to each individual author and are not necessarily the views held by the Rosenberg Museum. All efforts have been made to check bona fides, factual information, footnotes, web URLs, photo accreditations, and the medical records of those appearing in the following texts. Please alert us to any factual blunders.





## my life with strange violins

In the course of time, due to my older son Jozef who is a professional in the field of contemporary arts, I was confronted with many bizarre things and situations. Though I am accustomed what everything can be considered for the art, my son still surprises me. But one of his surprises was exceptional, quite pleasantly strange—the collection of violins he was accumulating last ten years in the apartment I am living in. He turned one of its two rooms into a stock room packed with so called works of arts—various sculptures, violins, paintings, books, and unidentified objects. Some of them I really like (that is the mentioned surprise) but most of them I simply don't understand. They seem to me as old shlocks so I would like to throw them out with big pleasure. One of my favourites is a framed tapestry with embroidered kneeling violinist. I like it so much that I hanged it on the wall in my room to see it every day.

As a pensioner I have plenty of time, I like to read, so I would like to read some of the books from the strange collection but these are published in English that I don't speak. Many times I just angry because I cannot clean up the room; here and there it is packed till ceiling so I cannot reach the dusty places on the top to clean them. The biggest problem is a dust; shlocks attract a dust. Other day my son announced me a joyful news—towards the end of this year he will empty the room forever. No more violins, no more shlocks! Finally I can redecorate.

Melánia Cseresová

Mother of The Rosenberg Museum Director



## a prophesy from web 1.0

[http://www.jonroseweb.com/sound/e\\_cult\\_comment\\_violin\\_world\\_2.mp3](http://www.jonroseweb.com/sound/e_cult_comment_violin_world_2.mp3)

Good evening and welcome to VIOLIN WORLD[1], using this computer voice may make you think I am a robot, well, I am not, I am a violin, I'm just like you. You are now living in an anaemic, sanitised world, a world with little content but plenty of packaging, a world of slight knowledge but much information, a world where nothing is made anymore but it's all available, a world of theme parks with the same numbing simulation, the numbness of the drone. I too have my concerns, I have feelings that can be hurt, I often feel that I am a victim, the magazines tell me who to blame, it's normally *you*, they also tell me that I have now more choice and more control than at any time in the history of our species, but actually I feel helpless most of the time, choice is no longer a word in our vocabulary because we have it all, all the time, you can have your cake and eat it and vomit all at the same time, and you can keep having your cake and vomiting forever and ever, Amen, or at least until someone turns the power off, but we don't have the balls to turn anything off, otherwise you would have already have turned me off, and now of course, it is too late, I, THE VIOLIN, have already entered your consciousness.

I am not cynical because I have taken the correct courses to cure that, I have never been healthier, I listen to the drone, I am from a new age, I am a tourist, we are all tourists, we cut and paste, we listen to the drone, it's what we want, VIOLIN WORLD has been created for us. I cannot bring you salvation because you have been saved already, you appeared on the show, I cannot bring you redemption because suffering is the sin, and failure an incorrect process, I cannot make you higher because Wall Street is always booming, boom, boom. I cannot bring you to sanity because you will need a lawyer for that, I cannot bring you music because you are sitting in VIOLIN WORLD, I, the professional, tell you that you have lost touch with your feelings, you can buy the book at the airport, I can bring you some comfort, like all the components of today's cultural purée, I won't survive the next 20 years either... [2]

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[1] July 1996—now that was a prediction!

[2] Might be a wrong prediction; we'll see.



# stoneberg

Edel Weissman, *Weekend Gardening*, July 2014[1]

## **the sound track**

The worn and dusty instruction manual to Rosenberg's data violin gives little indication as to how it operates. There are hints on the most appropriate places for installation, a few clues as to its hit-and-miss mechanism, but little on offer as to why the consumer would have been persuaded to buy such a device in the first instance. A casual observer might conclude that the violin was always destined for a museum without ever having gone through the perfunctory life span of usefulness to someone somewhere at some time. The musical results of this violin are in accord with the action of the bow on the strings—a range of stuttering and imperfectly formed sonic events that give the impression of impending failure. The skin of the violin shows its age, peeling off like wallpaper. A perpetual motion machine it is not, but somehow the musical instrument self-regulates and, despite the impression of imminent demise, keeps going. On the back cover of the accompanying manual are a few words that acknowledge the manufacturer's original intent: 'From the few to the many; from the powerful to the compliant; from Wall Street to the world'. In a data-free world, however, it is unclear how the violin continues to play.

## **atmospheric sound effects**

The sound of stones: stones falling, stones being chipped by stone tools, stones rolling around without direction, stones devoid of obligations or function, stones just being stones.

## **the story so far**

Dr Rosenberg has been released from cryonic suspension. The Hp3 virus is devouring all data.

## **dust**

Back then, the government had subsidised the cryonic option; people wanted out from the data-driven fast lane. For a mere \$29.95, you could free your body from the constant strain of all implants, microchips, and robotic intrusions, hand over your remaining body fluids, and (not) die with a little dignity. Rosenberg had paid his money,

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[1] Subscription magazine only, not available online.

but somehow the authorities had screwed up what was considered a straightforward operation. Considered harmless at first, the by-product of the fast freezing cryonic process was Hp3 dust (a non-flammable mutation derived from the toxic gas phosphine).

‘One Person Once’ started to appear in various parts of the former metropolis written on broken infrastructure in indelible green dust, or sometimes aggressively in a postmodern chalk. There were rumblings of complaint as the populace belatedly started to live out their predicament. The amount of unrest, as might be expected, depended on the weather or the proximity of a beach. Initially the authorities were confused; was this an expression of harmless art or a demonstration of defiance by the masses?

It was as inevitable as extinction. With the complicit knowledge of the many (the final count was 12 billion) collected in bunkers owned by the few, nobody had come up with a plan B should the unimaginable be simply imagined. The side effects of a harmless procedure like cryonic suspension had brought a traditional-style catastrophe upon the species. Concerned scientists collected the particles, which had a translucent quality—and *that* green—well, it had never been witnessed before, a cadmium green so psychedelic that not even the toxic salt lakes of Western Australia could compare. Within weeks, the entire memory banks of mankind had been turned to dust—almost biblical.

With no receptacles or plastic bags, and no memory of how they had been invented, the central management had simply allowed the dust to blow freely hither/thither amongst the piles of stone axes. And where there are stone axes, there must be also the remains of a musical tradition. In the quarry, they had found Rosenberg, once an educated man but now sentenced to a life of un-knowingness. Nothing to be done about not knowingness—in the contemporary stasis, this had become a common state of affairs.

Knee deep in Hp3 dust, Rosenberg pondered the truth of clinging viscosity, which made the true hard surface of the quarry floor difficult to judge and his footing somewhat uncertain. This was a Heisenberg paradise (he recognised) as he stumbled around looking for suitable rocks. There were no shelves where the dust could collect, no sewers that could be choked, no carpet to be swept; it was not raining Hp3,

and anyway an umbrella wasn't going to help because it had not yet been reinvented. A stone quarry filled with a shallow lake of green dust, an ex-violinist with time on his hands trying to make sense of it. Other problems would reveal themselves, but the most pressing issue was his cognitive ability, or lack thereof . . .

### **random access—so last century**

Working with fine detail and the craftsmanship of a lost age, Rosenberg chipped away at his neo-classical stone moulding—actually Dorian in structure but with a touch of Gothic surrounds on the astragal. A beta gargoyle was slowly being revealed, liberated even. Chip chip. He was taking extra care with the supporting columns; Dorian required a precise thickening in mid-column, creating the sought after slightly pregnant optical illusion. Ha! Those Greeks, look at them now (he chuckled). A half thought registered. Am I supposed to not know that? (he questioned). They may have *knowledged* their Doric order set with the height at seven times the diameter of the base, but they had placed their columns directly on the floor without benefit of a pedestal. How stupid can the civilised get? You may not like gravity, but you can't avoid it (as he dropped his stone axe on his foot). Couldn't they have predicted falling columns and the disappearance of data? Still, they had known about proportion, about perspective, about power. Power was still useful.

### **the counting**

How many computers had he created since his release from cryonic suspension? It was an ethnological question: one, two, or many?[2] Well . . . many. He looked down at his fingers to support this neurological discharge. If we had needed more fingers, wouldn't we have invented them (he surmised). Maybe his *granulars* did need a recharge. He chipped away for a few seconds more at the refined classical abacus that supported his new computer. A Dorian *meisterwerk*. It's coming along—no need to rush. He estimated his chip rate—was it one, two, or many? At just under 'many a minute', probably too high for a prisoner of conscience, the quarry manager had

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[2] Many ancient languages such as Warlpiri only have words for 'one', 'two', and 'many', needing no more to practice a traditional lifestyle in Central Australia for at least 40,000 years. The inference from Barry J. Blake's *Australian Aboriginal Languages* (1991, University of Queensland Press) is that if they had needed more words for numbers, they would have invented them.

indicated. *Many*—the all-encompassing word that needed no justifier, intensifier, or number. The word had become stone, dust—mortified by its own self-recognition, a true selfie (he clicked).

This computer's algorithm will eventually perform one action, for one person, once. And once that one person is no more, then there is no further need for the computer, which will crumble into a small pile of stones from which it originated. He'd always struggled with machine logic (the temptation of the controller). What if there were two identical computers? *Ach*, such flights of fancy, better to keep a grip on reality (he told himself). There were other quarry inmates who could worry about that proposition. Besides, their chip rate was in single figures, two single figures to be exact. He was considered a master mason and wore his badge with pride. 'Many Minter', it stated; 'First Class'. The badge was also made of stone, tough flint, bad grammar, wrong vocabulary. If you tossed the badge along the floor, sparks flew. That's how fire had been invented just last week (he told himself). Up to that point, it had been freezing with the extreme cold of a dysfunctional memory.

### **culture of stones**

The problem: how to make *many money*, the one game of make-believe we can all agree on. There were plenty of ready-to-go, small stones in the quarry, so no issue actually minting *many money*. But how were they going to count it? One stone in each hand, that part was clear, rational. After that? What could possibly be the next step? Grow another hand was the solution of simple people, and he was now one of them. Why, the life of a professional musician seemed but a stone's throw away (he heard the data violin playing on the other side of the quarry).

Instead, he had qualified for a world bombarded with ill-informed opinion; it was what they had all been waiting for, what they wanted. With information overload had come the extremes of dysfunction, too many options, too many decisions in order to keep one's place of standing still doing nothing in particular, too much life latency, digital gossip filling the spaces—and the talk of growth, everywhere the growth talk. Suddenly, it was all over, the data had disappeared, gobbled up, digested by the now infamous Hp3 dust, the banks of data blown away in a farting, powdery display of disgust.

Somehow, Rosenberg's data-driven violin played on throughout the whole debacle—how was this possible? There were complaints: people



wanted the damn thing switched off. But the maestro had forgotten the code and promptly been arrested; the court's judgement (for even here there were fully employed lawyers): cryonic suspension or death. Without powering up his *granulars* he had chosen the former. He was released (like being disappeared), but still he could not choose death. In the Western democratic sense, he was free and powerless.

'You mean it won't be necessary to squeeze another few billion humans into Antarctica after all?' the quarry manager laughed as he passed by, casually flicking a ball of Hp3 dust in Rosenberg's face. A few billion? What did the word mean? Some kind of joke? The former virtuoso of violin lent forward and gently stroked the fluting of the column, his column, tracing the curve of the cyma recta. A residue of sexual excitement caused a *granular* twitch.

### **what if no piano?**

Just then a *Gedanken* popped into the Doctor's upper ganglier; the *granulars* started churning. What if the piano had never been invented? He didn't mean any of the chordophone precursors or lateral zithers like the dulcimer, cimbalom, koto, guzheng, or santur. He meant all those ivories that had come through the European tradition. Christoforte, what were you thinking? Even the harpsichord is not blameless. Without the piano, there would be no tortured counterpoint (the only true invention in his view) and none of that Mozak modulation nonsense where you end up in a different key but with the same intervallic relationships. He was thinking into oblivion the entire Western canon. He imagined the big *Plonkathons* that had echoed through the castles and cathedrals of Christendom. He turned his gaze and rendered to dust all that religiosity (that easy eh?) All right—even if you allowed the music through the grinder, there were still those God-awful cantata texts—all that coming (*ich komme*), all that blood. Luckily, he had forgotten most of his German. Rosenberg warmed himself on the ashes of classicism and musicologists who had found yet another forgettable, second-rate 18th-century hack court composer. As he focused the sun's rays through his eyeglass and onto the romantics, he smelt the smoke of sonata form contentment—conveniently sidestepping Beethoven. *Aber ich bin Beethoven!* yells some deranged detainee from the other side of the quarry. *Ach*, they all think they are Beethoven. No more stodgy Brahms, no tortured Schoenberg, and none of that mediocre pop music.

Well, there would be some sonic remnants, of course, when it was all over, some crumbs for the birds to pick at. After all, *their* music had

been around long before the human variety and was arguably more functional (he would have whistled if he could remember how). Surviving a wholesale passerine onslaught, the quarry still echoed with the song of the lesser spotted warbler, despite being an import of ill repute. I hate these *Gedankens*, (he thought). Just when you are chipping away to get past the surface sensations of the scotia and fillets and on into the ravishing wonder and sub-smoothness inherent in the Dorian lower torus, a *Gedanken* gets stuck in your *granulars*. Didn't he have more pressing concerns?

### **the computer keyboard**

You couldn't have ended up with all *that* music without the piano; it had been the musicologist's dream instrument. Apart from it being blindingly obvious where all the notes are and hence a reductionist's hammer taken to the basic principles of 'other' in music, the keyboard (for that is what it had come down to) haunted Rosenberg, who had lived long enough to see that 84 keys were an extravagance in passing (he blinked). The piano was clearly responsible for the computer—and Steve Jobs had been tone deaf (he noted). It now took one keyboard click to play the entire works of any sonic event ever heard by anyone at any time in any place, including the quarry where he was now working, building his final contribution—a one-stop shopping marvel to confound: the irreducible computational device made of stone.

Could Rosenberg invent a tiny stone screw with an impossibly difficult head—a screw head too difficult to reverse engineer—and thus insure that the 'once only once' aesthetic and integrity of the designer were maintained? Rumour had it that Apple had foreshadowed this with their iPhone, allegedly to stop consumers from changing the battery and hence be encouraged to upgrade. Rosenberg pondered a new tool—the screwdriver! (thinking different, he thought).

There was an Ozymandias spark across the *granulars*. Rosenberg smiled as he thought he remembered the day when millions closed their Facebook account, or at least had tried to, first a trickle of stones (a hunch), then an avalanche of incalculable ferocity—one that defied gravity. There had been much noise, but the data remained.

*Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains: round the decay*

*Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.* (Shelley)

### available notes

Appropriation—or corporate theft, to call it by its user-friendly nomenclature—is straight-out piano music. Plagiarism is only possible when the tools of copying are easily accessible, whether it be oil paint, the quill, or most effective, the keyboard—namely the piano (he plonked). Piano music is the plagiarist’s delight, the cover band in one instrument. What is this all for? (for he had thought it). Rosenberg had once been accused of having used up all the available notes—the availability of notes being like a red rag to a bull if you sit down in front of a piano (he fumbled). In Rosenberg’s landmark series of 1985 lectures (Berlin, Kreuzberg 36, eine Pension im Hinterhof, gegenüber) entitled ‘sich selbst zu retten . . . in einen kalten leeren Raum’, he had argued the contrary, insisting that although the option exists, it does not mean that usage is imminent, or to state it succinctly, the gaps between the piano keys are a series of voyages to a ‘musical language of slippage’. Once on the slipway, an ocean of thought bubbles and unstable tunings become available, and the landlocked blocks of keyboard constraints are left where they belong—behind. (Indeterminate *granulation* started to bleep in Rosenberg’s head). The jaw harp is designer-free of this problem; simply a question of *Öffnen und Schliessen des Mundes, mein Herr*. Or as Miles said to Trane, ‘Just take the fucking horn out of your mouth, man’. That kind of thing can happen in *slipping music*.

What is the easiest key on the piano to play in? E major. And why E? —the student asked, trembling in front of the ivories master (intermittent noise starts to inflict the violinist’s head). Because your tragic, still semi-evolved hands easily fit the keyboard that way, you tiresome child (he painfully remembered). No struggle, no strain, no gain. This is the musical equivalent to painting by numbers (it occurred to him). Tying your shoelaces is harder (then he realised he had no shoes).

A chastened, bare-footed Rosenberg continued his contemplative labour. Here a chip, there a chip, everywhere a chip chip. The keyboard was the super paradigm of the Enlightenment. The Cartesian balloon sent aloft in the unlimited fresh air released with the decapitation of the

French nobility and its gastronomic cake. What could be more damning than the simple elegance of a pianoforte—duality in abundance at the table of the bourgeois? The black keys could be white, and the white keys could be black. It didn't matter as long as there were two sets clearly demarcated for all to see and hear, all in their places with bright shining faces (Rosenberg pondered between movements, his stone axe raised in anticipation).

### **clouds**

Did it have to be like that? The doctor was smoothing the footing of the left column—the basis of all Dorian aesthetic. Greeks? Slaves? What if the 'One Person Once' failed, and the computer crashed on the first power up (assuming electricity is re-invented)? The management had been thorough with its research; no stone remained unturned. Since the quarry had resorted to massed slave labour, all computer companies had forecast big returns and rampant growth going forward (into the new Stone Age). Solar-powered computers had passed into history as a hopeless trope (the hopeless, useless, pointless trope) because of the pitiful amount of sunlight still reaching the earth through the green haze of Hp3. Global warming had turned out to be both right and wrong. Instead of unlimited sunlight aligned with an out-of-human-control-heated atmosphere, the reverse had happened. As the planet had warmed, the sky had been covered with obnoxious (get out of my fucking way) green clouds, encouraging other clouds of all kinds—clouds of new and exciting poisons, clouds of worn-out, half-life toxicity, clouds with a new design portfolio, old faithful Joni Mitchell-type clouds, giant iClouds the size of military installations, clouds trying to stop smoking (he coughed), sad lonely clouds with no place to go.

Rosenberg chipped on through the rock. He was now harnessing the central stony grains to deliver some of his favourite computer decor, the dentils—the undulation that had come to define the doctrine and relevance of the Doric order. This was not idle repetition; this was the artist as former violinist, operating with intent. Corinthian decadence and novelty would not be tolerated here (a little more of his *granulars* melted and dripped from the end of his nose). The violin music continued to be heard across the quarry.

### **forgotten or misremembered**

Occasionally, the quarry manager would call a production meeting with Rosenberg, for this was how it used to be. They would stare at each other, tacitly, each trying to remember the agenda. One time, the

violinist thought he heard the sound of scribbling. Writing on stone tablets? Surely such a useful tool would have left a data trail as to its method and purpose? Every activity had left a trace, whether taking your dog for a walk, boiling an egg, or playing the violin. All begat data—data that had been generated, stored, sold, and then lost. But even the most effervescent of data with the lightest of footprints had needed a physical reality in which to exist. Electricity; the guilty conduit. Can you run me through that again? Coal, air (impossible to breathe), power stations, rare earths . . . the manager of the quarry could not remember the rest. They continued to observe each other for many, many moments before mutually assuming (after an inadvertent movement of the head) that the meeting was over.

And so in a data-free world, how had the data violin kept playing? (Rosenberg's part-time brain opened a little; a few *granulars* rolled over).

It had been the speed stakes, the era of straight lines to Wall Street. The faulty wiring was thus rationalised: data travelled fastest in cables of straight lines to and from the market; he whose data arrived first had won the day, and this had become the mantra of the time. Fortunes were made on millisecond advantage. By comparison, the Rosenberg-designed data violin had taken the alternate scenic route and failed to even compete.

The data that drove the former maestro's instrument was simply too late too often, and travelling as it did, decidedly unconnected and unnoticed. Dysfunctional. This was not useful data and as such, had been discarded or just ignored. Artificial Intelligence, as exhibited by Hp3, required that for data destruction to occur, its inherent value must be recognised for the process of annihilation to commence; if worth, value, or saleability was not displayed, the 'data to dust' option was not viable. When the Hp3 virus began to turn the stored knowledge of generations into dust, Rosenberg's unconcerned music stumbled on—undisturbed by the necessities of economy and constraints of linear time.[3]

Meanwhile Rosenberg continued crafting his pet project, the 'One Person Once' computer . . . the tongue and grooves on the architrave were causing some trouble. Shouldn't this object of beauty be dedicated

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[3] But who is generating the data now, if Wall Street is history? Intergalactic sub-particles, a quantum computer chip, the Sun, God, a real violinist?

to a Greek God? (A *granular* popped open). Although a mere king, Sisyphus appeared to be the reductive but logical choice. With this inspired thought, Rosenberg smiled, and his day brightened up (thinking after all). He tried to recall the stony image of eternal punishment. Like practicing the violin[4], this activity would be useful occupational therapy—the expectation of progress, pushing a large rock up a hill, the inevitable slip, watching gravity win in the end. As a large stone resumed its position at the bottom of the quarry, so a *granular* in Rosenberg’s brain rolled over and ground to a halt. He had forgotten already the repetition of the algorithmic process . . . the only functional currency in a stone quarry.



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[4] Recent research into cognition shows that playing a musical instrument remains one of the most complex activities that members of homo sapiens undertake—certainly more demanding on brain power than any of the constituent parts of the music experience—such as listening (passively), imagining (through composition), memory (in the abstract), or analysing (in real time). See, for example, <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/jf06/alacarte.asp>