

# PLANT THIS SEED, GROW A GARDEN

EXPLORATIONS IN CREATIVE-COLLABORATIVE PROVOCATION

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# ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explore a particular kind of collaborative process where partners are invited to transform one of my own pieces in their own way. I begin by sending the same initial piece of music to a filmmaker, a dancer, a taonga puoro musician, two visual artists and a poet, and ask them to create a response. I, in turn, compose my own responses to each of these works and compare outcomes. This is an appealing collaborative model as it offers partners a high degree of autonomy in their own creative processes, while also providing them some guidance with which to structure their responses.

The model also encourages me to consider new pathways in my own creativity. Each collaborator's work represents an intervention into my creative process, provoking unforeseen reactions and leading to novel solutions. This kind of deliberate intertextual thinking has similarities to the 'provocation operation' described by De Bono, or Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*. It also leads to a careful re-examination of prevailing models of musical transmission and problematises traditional notions of 'the work'. The resulting pieces are diverse and yet intimately connected, illuminating the interwoven nature of communal creativity even in cases where individual backgrounds, methods and interpretations differ significantly. The portfolio is in two parts, contrasting this collaborative model with more conventional creative frameworks and thereby examining the advantages and pitfalls of this collaborative approach to musical composition.

An interactive map, which enables readers to freely and intuitively explore the portfolio of works in this thesis, can be accessed at:

[www.simon-eastwood.com/plant-this-seed](http://www.simon-eastwood.com/plant-this-seed)

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# Chapter 1: THE TREMBLING GIANT

Somewhere in the Fishlake National Forest in Utah there stands a vast grove of aspen. The leaves are said to be quite spectacular in autumn when they turn bright yellow and gold, making a distinctive sound in the wind that gives this species its popular name: the ‘quaking aspen’. At last count, there were some 47,000 individuals in this grove spread over 43 hectares.<sup>1</sup> But astoundingly, these are not separate trees at all; rather, they are all part of one organism which began with a single aspen tree springing from a seed thousands of years ago. While the trunk of that tree is long gone now, its roots remain as a vast interconnected network that connects each genetically identical stem in the grove into a single organism known as a *clone*.

Quaking aspen frequently reproduce through a process known as ‘suckering’ where, rather than growing from a seed, the plant grows a new stem from its existing root system. This stem, in turn, extends the clone’s root networks, and grows suckers of its own. The process can be stimulated by the death of a member by natural causes or by wildfire, which also clears the undergrowth of competing species.<sup>2</sup> While each individual stem, or *ramet*, lives for around 65 years on average, the clone as a whole can live for thousands of years by drawing from its subterranean network. Weighing approximately six million kilograms, this clone is possibly the most massive single organism in the world,<sup>3</sup> giving credence to its nickname, ‘Pando: the trembling giant’.

Like ramets of the aspen clone, artists often find themselves connected to one another as they draw influence from those around them. A blank page can be terrifying and intimidating, but also exciting, with infinite potential waiting to be realised. In reality, however, although the page itself may be blank, we carry with us the shadow of our previous work, knowledge and experiences, as well as other influences from wider society. From this perspective, work can never begin from nothing, but rather builds upon or reacts against what came before.

When we collaborate with other artists, this effect is amplified as they bring their own network of influences into a project. In the opening lines of *Mille Plateaux*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note that the authorship of their previous book, *Anti-Oedipus*, is the product of numerous voices beyond their own: ‘since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd’.<sup>4</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, a book is an assemblage or multiplicity brought together by an interconnected structure which they describe as a *rhizome*, a network of shoots and

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<sup>1</sup> Paul C. Rogers and Jan Šebesta, ‘Past Management Spurs Differential Plant Communities within a Giant Single-Clone Aspen Forest’, *Forests*, 10.12 (2019), 1118.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffry B. Mitton and Michael C. Grant, ‘Genetic Variation and the Natural History of Quaking Aspen’, *BioScience*, 46.1 (1996), 25–31.

<sup>3</sup> Mitton and Grant, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 3.

tubers that grows under the soil in a decentralised fashion, similar to the roots of the aspen, so that any node in that network is capable of generating new shoots upward.

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in particular, composers have explored radical ways of intentionally incorporating collaboration into their creative processes. A heavily collaborative artform such as filmmaking typically relies on a structured hierarchy, where the composer, actors, and other craftspeople are ultimately subservient to the director's creative vision.<sup>5</sup> Other ways of working often undermine such hierarchies between artforms. The way in which John Cage and Merce Cunningham established chance operations as a guiding principle in their collaborative works undermined the established hierarchy that existed between music and dance, so that rather than the dance following the music or the other way around, both artforms could coexist simultaneously on their own terms. By the same token, in working closely with her collaborators to create music without the use of a written score, French composer Éliane Radigue demonstrates a less hierarchical approach to composer-performer partnerships that differs dramatically from the traditional 'top-down' approach whereby the composer writes a score and the performer merely interprets it. While opening up a creative process in this way introduces a degree of risk or a loss of control that would make many score-based composers uncomfortable, it also acknowledges something long celebrated in musical traditions that embrace improvisation, as is the case in jazz and in various folk traditions: that creativity is a communal exercise, and that each individual has an important part to play.

With advances in communication technology, particularly the rise of the Internet, decentralised modes of collaboration at a distance have become faster and easier to pursue than ever before. Notably, geographical and cultural restrictions are more easily overcome as scores and audio recordings can be transmitted around the world in fractions of a second, then edited, reworked, imitated or manipulated in a multitude of ways. Because of this, we are more connected and more exposed to a far greater network of influences today than at any time in the past. While these technologies are no longer particularly new, their increased availability, efficiency and sophistication has led to exciting and perhaps, in the age of COVID-19, essential ways of exploring the interconnected nature of creativity in a globalised society.

If we are to consider creativity as arising out of a rhizomatic system of artists and influences, in the way Pando spreads out from its interconnected root system, then this thesis explores such a system from the perspective of one node in this vast creative network. This is a story of my little corner of the creative cosmos and the ways in which my own creativity is connected to, and draws upon, this wider system. The mechanism with which I will explore these connections is the *provocation*, a deliberate external intervention into an individual's creative

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<sup>5</sup> There are notable counterexamples, such as the open-ended collaborative approach taken in the films of Mike Leigh, who begins filming without a script and develops a screenplay through a series of workshops and improvisations with his actors. See Bert Cardullo and Mike Leigh, "I Call My Films Subversive": A Conversation with Mike Leigh', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 39.1 (2011), 14–29.

process. This is an idea borrowed from the writings of Edward de Bono and I will define this concept in more detail shortly.<sup>6</sup>

My portfolio of creative works is split into two parts, the first of which considers the effect such provocations have on individual creativity by asking:

With reference to both my own creative practice and those of others, how can an idea, creative process or concept be transformed through the use of external provocations?

Here, I introduce a wide range of limitations, strategies, and disruptions into my own working process and examine how these factors influence my creative decisions. I then build upon these insights in the second half of my portfolio, moving my frame of reference away from individual creativity to consider a much wider-reaching question:

Can a systematic consideration of such provocations lead to a workable, non-hierarchical model of collaboration?

I explore this question through a particular collaborative approach which I have dubbed ‘the Model of Creative-Collaborative Provocation’. This model treats a piece of music as a form of provocation in of itself, and I begin by sending one work from the first half of my portfolio to collaborators from various disciplines and backgrounds. Each of these artists can then respond to that piece in any way they see fit. They might draw upon some aspect of the music itself or perhaps their personal reaction to it, but I do not personally interfere beyond the initial provocation. Their responses are then returned to me and I, in turn, create new pieces in reaction to each collaborator. I call these new pieces of music ‘second-generation works’ to clarify their position in this collaborative model. Accordingly, the works in the first half of my portfolio are called ‘first-generation works’.

There are, of course, many other models of collaboration with which one can explore my second research question, but I find this model particularly appealing because it mimics the way in which an individual artist is connected to the wider creative community by itself generating a rhizome of interconnected artworks. Ideas have a way of evolving as they move through communities like this, often generating vastly different results that can nevertheless be traced back to the same initial seed.<sup>7</sup> They spread out from their original source and give rise to new offshoots until, as with Pando the giant aspen clone, it is very difficult to discern where everything began.

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<sup>6</sup> Edward de Bono, ‘Serious Creativity’, *The Journal of Quality and Participation*, 18.5 (1995), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Something evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins realised when he coined the term ‘meme’, that being a fundamental unit of natural selection, analogous to a gene in evolutionary biology. Except in this case, the material being replicated is an idea rather than a strand of DNA. See Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2016), 245–60.

### 1.1. A PRECURSOR: THE PAKI TAI|MIGRATIONS PROJECT

My own fascination with collaborative structures began with my final MMus project at the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2012. I wanted to do something that referenced my origins in Aotearoa New Zealand, so I explored the idea of collaborating over distance with a performer of taonga puoro (traditional Māori instruments) in Wellington via video link. Because of the distances involved, a real-time video collaboration proved problematic, so I decided to take another approach.

To begin with, I sent recordings of my own original pieces to taonga puoro performer Ricky Prebble in New Zealand, who would perform a response while listening to these recordings on headphones. His performance would then be filmed and sent back to me in London, my original recording now absent. I then workshopped a series of group improvisations at the Royal Academy along with this video to create new pieces, which were presented in a multimedia concert alongside my original works called *Papaki Tai|Migrations*.

Far from being a compromise, this ‘turn-based’ approach to collaboration generated results that were much more interesting to me than anything a real-time video link would have produced. Each of the three original pieces had been mirrored and distorted, completely transformed by Ricky’s intervention. And yet it seemed as if some ghostly link remained. I found this transformation fascinating, yet difficult to explain. Aside from the fact that he has his own musical aesthetic, much of this transformation stemmed from the fact that Ricky, as a taonga puoro musician, had a very different toolset from mine, a toolset in many ways incompatible with the pieces I had sent him. One of these in particular, *Horror Vacui* (2011), was a virtuosic composition for solo accordion. It would have been difficult for a pūtōrino or kōauau—instruments that excel in subtle bends of pitch and timbre—to match the musical pyrotechnics displayed by the accordion in my piece, so Ricky opted to record a collection of sounds inspired by the piece rather than map his performance directly onto my recording as he had with the other works I had sent. In responding to this music, he had been encouraged to use creative licence and to ‘push things’ in a new direction.

It also demonstrated that, while collaborating from a distance in this way certainly presented obstacles, it also had advantages over other models: the main benefit being that collaborators have the time to listen to the recording multiple times and to create a response that best fits with their own personal aesthetic. As the initiator of the project, I had only interfered with Ricky’s creative process through the initial recording which nudged him in a certain direction. Once Ricky returned his response to me, the shoe was on the other foot as I had to decide what to do with a piece of music that had been created with very different tools than I was used to. This, in turn, pushed my own creative thinking in new directions.

## 1.2. INTERVENTION AND PROVOCATION

As stated earlier, ideas have a way of growing and multiplying in unpredictable ways. There are strategies, however, by which we can deliberately stimulate or direct creative growth in a new direction. To introduce another plant-based analogy, my flatmate once developed an obsession for growing avocado trees. She would germinate the stones in glass jars on our kitchen counter and I would often discover a new jar each time I came down to make my morning coffee. Over time, these jars began to dominate our kitchen counter like some bizarre science experiment, as if she were breeding an avocado army. She even began naming them after famous samurai warriors like Hattori Hanzō and Honda Tadakatsu. But the really interesting thing for me was the way in which my flatmate would encourage new growth by cutting the plant stems in half once they grew to around six inches. A few days later, the plant had not only begun to regenerate its main shoot, but it had also developed a secondary shoot to the side, growing in a new direction in response to my flatmate's pruning.

For artists, external interventions can also disrupt a 'typical' creative process, leading them in new directions and encouraging them to explore new ideas and perspectives. These interventions might be random or incidental, but they can also be established as deliberate creative tools.

This is exactly what Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt had in mind when they created their *Oblique Strategies*.<sup>8</sup> These strategies are presented as a deck of cards, each printed with a simple message designed to disrupt normal modes of thinking such as: 'Bridges-build-burn', 'Look closely at the most embarrassing details and amplify' or 'your mistake was a hidden intention'. Eno has employed these cards extensively in his own creative work, and also as a producer for other artists. By drawing one of these cards, the artist temporarily opens themselves to a random external intervention. One never knows which strategy will be drawn at any particular time, or what new thought patterns it might inspire. In this respect, Eno and Schmidt were clearly influenced by earlier uses of indeterminacy in the twentieth century, such as the chance operations of John Cage and Merce Cunningham.<sup>9</sup> But on the other hand, the artist can still decide how they respond to a given strategy, and if they do not find the card useful, they can always disregard it or draw another. Crucially, they can also decide at which point in their creative process to draw this card, which also has a noticeable impact.

Edward de Bono, an influential writer on creativity and lateral thinking, developed a similar idea when he coined the term *provocation operation*.<sup>10</sup> A *provocation* is an apparently illogical statement designed to promote lateral thinking. This may appear nonsensical when it

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, 'Oblique Strategies: Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas' (Self-published, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Kingsley Marshall and Rupert Loydell, 'Control and Surrender: Eno Remixed-Collaboration and Oblique Strategies', in *Brian Eno: Oblique Music*, ed. by Sean Albiez and David Pattie (London, UK ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), 175–192.

<sup>10</sup> Edward de Bono, 'Serious Creativity', *The Journal of Quality and Participation*, 18.5 (1995), 12.

is first stated, but it can lead to valuable insights when considered in retrospect. The thought process by which somebody arrives at such insights is called *movement*, when the mind moves out of its prevailing thought patterns into a new area—a square peg in a round hole forcing you to consider another approach. De Bono claims that such operations are catalysts to promote creative leaps that would normally happen by accident or insanity: ‘we can be temporarily “mad” for just thirty seconds at a time in a controllable fashion’.<sup>11</sup> In order to clarify that such statements should be taken as provocations rather than factual statements, de Bono prepends each provocation with the word ‘po’:

Po, cars should have square wheels.

Po, planes should land upside down.

Po, letters should be closed after they have been posted.<sup>12</sup>

Such nonsensical statements, when harnessed to create movement, can lead to useful results. The idea that planes should land upside down sounds ridiculous, but when considered another way, we realise that the pilot would have a much better view of the runway. With this in mind, does the cockpit necessarily need to be on top of the aircraft? Or, more practically, could there be a camera below the nose that would relay this view to the pilot?<sup>13</sup> In fact, such cameras are quite common these days.

De Bono writes that provocations can ‘arise’ by chance or accident, if we decide to consider a given prompt in the right way in order to generate movement.<sup>14</sup> But they can also be carefully planned, with *escape*, *reversal*, *exaggeration*, *distortion* and *wishful thinking* being some of the ways in which De Bono suggests we formally set up such provocations. Notably, de Bono does not appear to acknowledge *limitation* as a form of provocation, although this is possibly a consideration when he discusses creative focus.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps he sees limitation as something to be overcome, rather than as an aid to creativity. This is interesting, considering many of the participants in this thesis, myself included, extensively employed methods of limitation and restriction throughout our creative processes to guide our creativity in new and unforeseen directions.

It is important to emphasise that there is a subtle distinction to be made between *provocation* and *inspiration*. Artists are regularly inspired by beautiful scenes from nature, passages of scripture, scientific advancements, momentous events in history, and any number of other external influences. Such inspirations serve as a kind of impetus around which the resultant work is created, but do not affect the creative process itself. *Provocation*, on the other hand, is an intentional strategic tool that an artist can employ to alter or modify the way in

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<sup>11</sup> Edward de Bono, *Serious Creativity* (London: Vermilion, 1992), 214.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 140.

which they create. It is a deliberately placed ‘spanner in the works’ that forces them on a new creative pathway and in many cases generates new material or alters some aspect of the work’s structure. In any case, there are plentiful examples of both provocation and inspiration throughout this thesis.

While the concept of provocation certainly rings true to my experience with *Papaki Tai|Migrations*, it is not quite the same as de Bono describes. He creates provocations that invert or distort expectations based on language and logic; on the other hand, my provocation to Ricky was a piece of music. Music and art often revel in the absurd, and if a musical work somehow had ‘square wheels’ that would possibly become a feature of the piece, rather than an affront to musical logic. Having said that, musical material can still be transformed, disrupted or subverted by external interventions in a way that provokes a shift in the creative process, as happened with Ricky’s interpretations. Being structured as a two-way dialogue, the provocations in *Papaki Tai|Migrations* unfolded in a rather complex way, as the initial creative challenge I had set Ricky was turned back on me and I, in turn, re-worked his transformed material.

Provocations in this thesis take several forms. I repeat the creative challenge from *Papaki Tai|Migrations*, this time inviting artists from a variety of disciplines to participate. There are systematic processes and algorithms that I set up to usher my creative process down new and unusual directions. I also consider situations where other human agents have an unusual degree of influence on my creative process, such as an especially prescriptive commission for very young players. In this case, the brief precluded certain artistic pathways by virtue of the specific practical considerations of such a performance. The music had to be playable for musicians of varying levels, easy to follow so they did not get lost, but also engaging and not over simplistic. Additionally, these parts needed to be meaningfully woven into music performed by a professional orchestra. Such specific technical demands were unusual in my regular artistic practice and could be considered restrictive or stifling, but by considering these limitations as provocations I was pushed to create music in ways that were, for me, novel, unusual and interesting.

### 1.3. EXPLORING CREATIVE-COLLABORATIVE PROVOCATION

As I reflected on that project in London, I came to the realisation that I could go further and deeper with this model of collaboration. This way of working gives each collaborator the freedom to play to their particular creative strengths, while at the same time, the initial prompt also points the project in a certain direction. Framing such collaborative exchanges as provocations on one another’s creative process provides a way of explaining the links that form between quite distinct pieces of art.

As wildfire stimulates the aspen to sucker, these provocations are a way of promoting growth, diversity and connection in our own creative practices. Having said that, my idea of a provocation is different from de Bono’s. For me, an *intervention* is an external influence on a



creative process; these are potential *provocations*, but in order to be considered as such they must lead to *movement*, a clear shift in creative mindset or method. With this in mind, my definition of a *provocation*, for the purposes of this thesis, is simply:

A challenge or stimulus that leads to a noticeable shift in the creative process.

As will be seen in my creative portfolio, this shift frequently occurs through the generation or *transformation* of material, in the same way that Ricky's improvisations transformed and effectively *translated* my compositions from one domain into another.

To reiterate, the idea of a provocation is central to my two central research questions:

With reference to both my own creative practice and those of others, how can an idea, creative process or concept be transformed through the use of external provocations?

And:

Can a systematic consideration of such provocations lead to a workable, non-hierarchical model of collaboration?

In the first-generation works, which make up the first half of my portfolio, I have incorporated deliberate external interventions into my own creative process and investigate whether these definitively resulted in *movement*. In the second half of my portfolio, I have built on the procedure taken in *Papaki Tai|Migrations* by sending one of the first-generation works, *Triptych for Two* (2017/18) for violin and snare drum, out to six collaborators from different disciplines and backgrounds: Ukrainian painter Oleksiy Koval, New Zealand visual artist Lisa Munnelly,<sup>16</sup> Polish choreographer Justyna Janiszewska, poet Roya Jabarouti, taonga puoro musician Alistair Fraser, and New Zealand anthropologist and filmmaker Sebastian Lowe. I then asked these artists to create a response by accepting this piece of music as a provocation on their creative processes. Once these came back to me, I in turn created responses of my own—the second-generation works—based on the material they had produced. In addition to these collaborations, I also transformed one of the movements of *Triptych for Two* myself to create a new piece of music.

In seeking to understand the way in which *Triptych for Two* can operate as a provocation on the creative processes of others, I will begin in Chapter 2 by considering a piece of music as a 'text'. This means viewing the piece as a complex sign which, depending on your point of view, yields any number of divergent interpretations. I will then explore the ways in which texts interact with each other, considering how concepts such as *intertextuality* and *intersemiosis* can be used to frame the transformation of a text from one domain into another.

Chapter 3 considers established models of the creative process, with a particular focus on the compositional process in music, before considering the role external provocations play in

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<sup>16</sup> The procedure for Lisa Munnelly was slightly different, as she approached me first to collaborate on one of her projects. We then used *Triptych for Two* as a catalyst for this collaboration.

such processes and proposing a model for the process of creative-collaborative provocation explored in the second-generation works. Chapter 4 is an historical overview, looking at selected canonical examples that use provocation as a mechanism for structured collaboration in a variety of ways, as well as the creation of new musical works through the transformation of existing material. I will then explain the research methodology used in this study, inspired by ‘action research’, and also consider the ethical and cultural implications of this way of working in Chapter 5, before turning to the portfolio itself.

The first-generation works are considered in Chapter 6, many of which were commissions with very specific briefs that guided my own creative process in particular directions. Some of the results in this chapter were surprising seeing as rather dramatic forms of intervention did not always create the most noticeable kinds of movement. I then move on to the more radical model of creative-collaborative provocation in Chapter 7, I discuss my collaborators’ responses, their own experiences in using a piece of *Triptych for Two* as a provocation, and then reflect on my own experiences re-working these responses into the second-generation works. Chapter 8 reflects on the project as a whole, compares my experiences creating second-generation works with that of the first-generation, and also the way in which a diverse collection of ideas emerged and converged to create the wide range of pieces represented in the portfolio.

# Chapter 2: THE SPACE IN-BETWEEN

## SEMIOLOGY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND INTERSEMIOSIS

This thesis explores collaboration as a radical means of provocation on the creative process. In discussing the particular model of collaboration used, where an existing work is re-interpreted and transformed by a collaborator, it is important to consider a number of factors that influence the interpretation of said work, and the effects these have on the creative process. In this chapter, I therefore discuss a number of concepts that will help me to describe this process. The first, Jean-Jacques Nattiez's tripartite model of musical interpretation, has its origins in semiology, which deals with the interpretation of signs and symbols.<sup>17</sup> This model is one of the most widely cited theoretical frameworks to explain the interactions between composer, performer, collaborator and the audience. The collaborative process used in this thesis, however, along with those of other artists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, reveal the limitations of Nattiez's model.

The second concept, intertextuality, is a related field to semiology; however, it is more concerned with the way in which different texts influence each other. Viewed in this way, a text is not a text in and of itself but contains elements of other texts within it. This interrelatedness can exist on a historical level, coming from earlier texts in the repertoire, as well as between contemporaneous texts. Intertextuality can be unintentional or deliberate. Ultimately, it is a way of describing the interconnected nature of the creative enterprise and the diverse range of factors that contribute to the creation of each work of art.

The collaborative model used in this thesis deliberately employs intertextuality toward creative ends, a process that invariably led to dramatic transformations of my original work, *Triptych for Two*. Beaudoin and Moore's concept of 'musical transdialection' provides a useful way to frame such a process by examining extreme examples of musical transcription that radically alter the original work at a surface level, and yet somehow retain its original essence.<sup>18</sup> Extending this concept across disciplinary boundaries, the idea of 'intersemiotic translation' describes the way in which practitioners working in different artforms can employ their own creative faculties to re-imagine a work from one domain in a different medium.

The two-way 'conversational' method by which the collaborative pieces in this thesis were derived from *Triptych for Two* makes semiotic, intertextual, and intersemiotic approaches useful when situating each resultant work within my network of collaborative partners. Using these theoretical frameworks, we can define the interpretive challenges of each project and survey the space in-between each of us where those new works were developed.

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<sup>17</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University: Princeton, 1990), 17.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Beaudoin and Joseph Moore, 'Conceiving Musical Transdialection', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68.2 (2010), 105–17.

## 2.1. THE MUSICAL SEMIOTICS OF JEAN-JACQUES NATTIEZ

The musical work is not merely what we used to call the ‘text’; it is not merely a whole composed of ‘structures’...Rather, the work is also constituted by the procedures that have engendered it (acts of composition), and the procedures to which it gives rise: acts of interpretation and perception.<sup>19</sup>

These are the words with which Jean-Jacques Nattiez introduces his book *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*. The sentiment here is that the musical work is not a set entity, even when it is fixed in some form of notation such as a musical score. Rather, the score is a collection of signs that signifies the musical work, one that must be interpreted and realised in performance if it is to be communicated to an audience. The role of the audience is active, in that the way in which they perceive and interpret a performance is essential to any meaning they derive from that musical work. Nattiez’s book is a pioneering text in the domain of musical semiotics, taking key semiological ideas and applying them to music. In it, Nattiez further develops a tripartite model first proposed by Jean Molino in 1974. This ‘semiological tripartition of musical interpretation’, as Nattiez calls it, describes the relationship between the artist (or producer) and the interpreter or audience (the receiver) [Fig. 1].

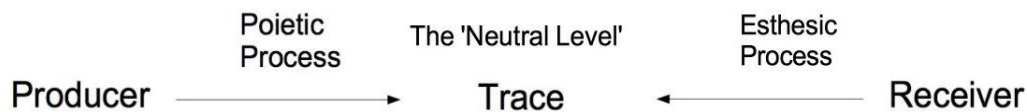


Fig. 1: Jean-Jacques Nattiez’s semiological tripartition of musical interpretation<sup>20</sup>

The relationship of each party to the work in question is described through two processes; the *poietic* process that refers to the act of creation, that is, the process by which the artist creates the work in question, and the *esthetic* process, that refers to the way in which the audience interprets that work. The work itself occupies a central position between these two processes in what Nattiez calls the *neutral level*, so-called because it is neither poietic nor esthetic. The neutral level has a physical embodiment in what is called the ‘trace’, which is normally a musical score. The trace is not the work, but a sign representing the work, and this distinction will become important later when we discuss the ‘text’. This tripartite model has been influential in the field of musical semiotics, with the introduction of the terms poietic, esthetic, and neutral level being especially important. It is largely concerned with the ‘traditional’ composer-performer relationship in Western art music, where a composer creates a score which is interpreted by a performer. But it does contain some flexibility; the trace, for instance,

<sup>19</sup> Nattiez. Preface.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 17.

need not necessarily be a traditional score. It could be a recording or a video, or a set of instructions for some procedure that will result in a performance.

The case of improvised music is rather more complex. Here, Nattiez says, the neutral level is embodied by forms and stylistic conventions which are passed down by oral tradition. The performer then oscillates between an analysis of this neutral level and a poietic process of their own.<sup>21</sup> In the case of works that involve close collaboration, the situation becomes even more complicated. Multiple producers mean multiple poietic processes and here the positioning of the neutral level becomes unclear, leading to a number of questions: Does the neutral level lie between collaborators, or between the artistic 'team' and the audience? Or is it both of these at once? In which case, where is 'the work'? Are all poietic processes to be considered equal? Or does one collaborator's vision outweigh the others?

Criticisms of Nattiez's work, and there are many, largely stem either from doubt as to the existence of the neutral level entirely, or scepticism as to Nattiez's ambition to apply the neutral level in practice as a tool to achieve an objective and scientific analysis of music, which consequently disregards important aspects of musical creativity.

In his book *Is Language a Music?* David Lidov criticises the notion of the neutral level as vague and meaningless: 'if all descriptions of music have their origin in the facts of production and perception, how is the neutral level possible except as a vacuous hypothesis?' He also accuses Nattiez of using the tripartition 'in practice to stage a retreat from the problems of meaning' and takes issue with a semiotics which 'discards so lightly the distinction between communicative and non-communicative symbols'.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Lidov makes a strong assertion that Nattiez's semiotics are not semiotics at all.<sup>23</sup>

Virginia Anderson argues that Nattiez's model neglects the influence of the performer, especially when indeterminate notation is used.<sup>24</sup> She points out that even in the most detailed score, the performer will make poietic decisions in their interpretation of a text, and in situations where the score is indeterminate or requires a level of improvisation the performer is in fact acting as a composer in their own right. The process of interpreting a score, Anderson argues, should also be considered as both an esthetic and poietic process. She cites John Cage's *4'33"* as a salient example because the instructions in the score, or rather the lack thereof, appear to demand a level of poiesis on the part of the performer: What should they do whilst they are not playing their instrument? Solutions to this quandary vary significantly and lead to a range of performance outcomes. A pianist might open and close the lid of their piano in

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<sup>21</sup> Nattiez. 87.

<sup>22</sup> David Lidov, *Is Language a Music?* (Indiana University: Bloomington, 2005), 86.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Dunsby, 'Music and Semiotics: The Nattiez Phase', *The Musical Quarterly*, 69.1 (1983), 27–43.

<sup>24</sup> Virginia Anderson, 'The Beginning of Happiness: Approaching Scores in Graphic and Text Notation', in *Sound & Score: Essays on Sound, Score and Notation*, ed. by Michael Schwab and others, Orpheus Institute Series (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 130–142.

order to articulate the three subsections of the piece, or they might mime their performance without touching the keys.

In fact, *4'33"* is even more problematic for Nattiez than Anderson suggests. In Cage's conception of the work, the performance on stage is *not* actually the piece. His intention is to draw the audience's attention to incidental sounds that occur around a musical performance: the creaking of chairs, a car driving past the building, the sound of a disgruntled audience member leaving the venue. In the film *Cage/Cunningham*, he says to the interviewer: 'Silence is not silence to me, not the absence of sound. But it's all of what we call non-musical sound. I actually prefer sound to, to music'.<sup>25</sup> In Cage's eyes, the piece is not four minutes and thirty-three seconds of 'silence' as it is often described, but a space in which to listen. In a sense it is the listener who *creates* the piece; here the process of listening is also poietic, or at least a very active esthetic process.

*4'33"* shows how the very foundations of Nattiez's tripartite model can be undermined once we leave traditional modes of musical presentation and consumption. Similarly, the creative work presented in this thesis also problematise some of the assumptions behind the tripartition.

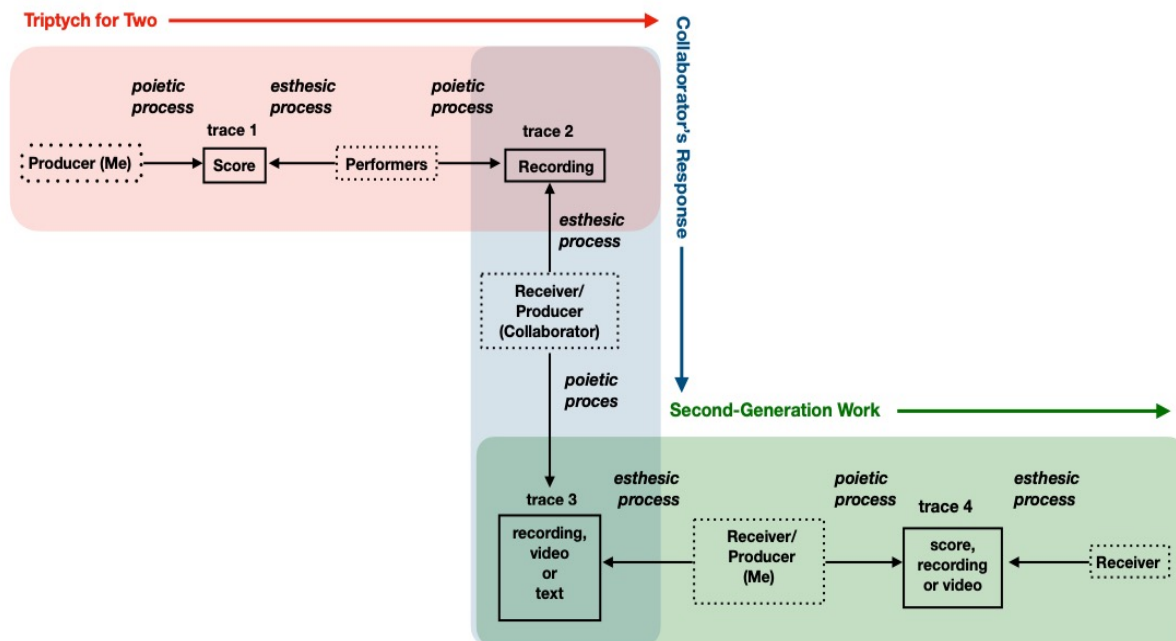


Fig. 2: The collaborative chain represented in the second half of my portfolio.

<sup>25</sup>"Cage/Cunningham". directed by Elliot Caplan. Merce Cunningham Trust Alexander Street video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/cage-cunningham. 19/01/2020.

## 2.2. INTERTEXTUALITY

Nattiez's model deals with the process of creating and interpreting a single work. This thesis, however, is also concerned with the way in which individual texts can influence each other. Where the first part of my portfolio deals with conventional compositional processes, the second part deals with a much more complex situation where my work is transformed through a series of 'collaborative chains'.<sup>26</sup> **Error! Reference source not found.** shows how we can adapt Nattiez's tripartite model to account for the more complex model of my creative-collaborative provocation process.

This arrangement problematises Nattiez's tripartition. As the trace is passed from one collaborator to another, the ontological status of the neutral level, this abstract space where the 'work' is supposed to exist, becomes considerably ambiguous. We might argue that as each step in this process has its own neutral level, it therefore represents an independent and self-contained artwork. But this idea is undermined when we consider that multiple artworks in my portfolio share a common poietic source in the piece *Triptych for Two*. Does each trace in this chain represent a different realisation of the same neutral level? This is also problematic, because how far does the neutral level now extend? And is the poietic input of the collaborators now ignored? Texts typically incorporate influences from several different sources, so much so that it could be said that those works also have a role in the creative process. 'Influence' is one term that could be used to describe this relationship, but the collaborative provocations and transformations in this portfolio are at a much deeper level and more creatively active than the term 'influence' usually implies. In this case, a much more useful term is 'intertextuality'.

Intertextuality is a term coined by French-Bulgarian philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in 1968.<sup>27</sup> It refers to the way in which a text incorporates, or is influenced by, aspects of other existing texts. This is particularly evident where existing pieces are actively appropriated in the creation of a new text: James Joyce's *Ulysses* is an intertext of Homer's *Odyssey*, as is the Cohen Brothers' film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* In Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*, the composer creates the third movement entirely out of a collage of excerpts from existing texts: music by Mahler, Ravel, Webern and Stravinsky sit alongside words by Samuel Beckett, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and others. Furthermore, many of *these* works contain intertextuality themselves: Ravel's *La Valse* quotes the scherzo from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, while the Mahler waltz that forms the backbone of the entire movement is based on Mahler's separate setting of the poem *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt*. These are examples of deliberate intertextuality, but it can occur in much more subtle ways as well.

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<sup>26</sup> Something which calls to mind C. S. Pierce's idea of 'interpretive chains', where a single sign can have an infinite chain of interpretants. Incidentally, Nattiez, preferring the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure, dismissed this arrangement as 'overly complex and contradictory', see *Music and Discourse* p.6.

<sup>27</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Le Texte Clos', *Langages*, 12, 1968, 103–25. (Translated into English in 1980 as 'The Bounded Text'.)

In *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, Michael L. Klein discusses several different types of intertextuality.<sup>28</sup> Two of these, ‘poietic intertextuality’ and ‘esthesis intertextuality’, are particularly pertinent to this thesis. Poietic intertextuality is that which a writer brings into their creative process: texts that are studied during the creation of a work and inform the work directly. Esthesis intertextuality, on the other hand, refers to texts that inform the performer’s reading of the score, or the audience’s interpretation of a performance. These are texts that exist in society at large, of which the author may or may not be aware. Klein also talks about ‘historical intertextuality’, in which we only consider a work in relation to contemporary texts, and ‘transhistorical intertextuality’, where a broader historical context is brought to bear. While this thesis is primarily concerned with my own intertextual relationships with my contemporaries, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge historical influences on a work as well. The notion of intertextuality, when considered in this broader context, reveals an interconnectivity between texts that extends to all corners of a society. Intertextual relationships extend beyond the boundaries of particular artforms and genres, so that an idea that originated with a choreographer or painter might be adopted by a musician, leading to a related concept, ‘intermediality’. Bruhn Jensen, in his encyclopaedia entry on intermediality, summarises this point particularly well:

Kristeva reemphasised that not just texts, but all signs are defined and understood in relation to other signs. As complex signs, texts acquire meaning as part of complex networks of texts, past as well as present: A current text in one medium resonates with meanings from cultural history as well as from other, contemporary media, genres and representations.<sup>29</sup>

In his article ‘Text and Subjectivity’, Raymond Monelle describes the complex network of influences that are incorporated into Mahler’s Third Symphony.<sup>30</sup> These include, among other things, the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche—particularly *The Gay Science*, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*—as well as the influence of German Nationalism and how this conflicted with the composer’s own Jewish heritage, which Monelle also views as kinds of texts. He further asserts that this level of interconnectivity between Mahler’s work and his influences is so significant that the symphony has no meaning without knowledge of this intertextual network:

There is nothing in the Symphony which is simply itself, unrelated to other texts, intelligible without reference to what is outside it, for such a thing would not be

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<sup>28</sup> Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Klaus Bruhn Jensen, ‘Intermediality’, in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (American Cancer Society, 2016), 1–12.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Monelle, ‘Text and Subjectivity’, in *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, by Raymond Monelle and Robert Hatten (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 147–169.



intelligible at all. The music is simply an epistemic nexus, the product of its significations as well as their producer, active as well as passive.<sup>31</sup>

Meaning is, of course, a problematic concept in relation to music. While it might be impossible to come to grips with the composer's own *poietic* intertextuality, to use Klein's term, the audience will nevertheless interpret meaning in the work through their own *esthetic* intertextuality. Klein's notion of the symphony as an 'epistemic nexus', however, is a compelling idea, and can apply to *Triptych for Two* as the source text in my network of second-generation works. [see Fig. 4 later].

The implications of Monelle's statement are larger than this, however: he views the artist, or rather the artist's epistemic avatar, as one point of convergence in an infinite network of signification.

The artist, then—the textual or epistemic artist, not the man or woman—is an intersection in an active network of creative forces; from the world and its histories and discourses comes every signification, and each is refocused and empowered by the artist's genius.<sup>32</sup>

When we consider that every artist also represents a point of convergence in this network, we start to see the importance of creative communities and collaborative ways of working. There are similarities here to the rhizomatic structure imagined by Deleuze and Guattari in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>33</sup> The rhizome, in this case, is a complex and decentralised network structure, with each node (or 'plateau') representing a multiplicity of influences, social, technical, and artistic. Any of which can form a point of origin for new growth in the network.

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive.<sup>34</sup>

This concept hints at the future potential of collaborating in this way. Each work in this portfolio, including those by my collaborators, can itself form a new constellation of derivative works with a series of collaborative chains continuing *ad infinitum*. But here, for the sake of clarity and simplicity I will only examine those works that derive from *Triptych for Two*.

The works in this thesis result from an exploration of my personal network. The first-generation works have qualities that demonstrate a nexus among a network of influences. The difference with the second-generation works, however, is that where Monelle describes

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<sup>31</sup> Monelle, 'Text and Subjectivity', 155.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>34</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 7.

Mahler's Third Symphony as arising from a point of *convergence* in Mahler's intertextual network, *Triptych for Two* is a point of *divergence* in mine, at least in a poietic sense.<sup>35</sup> By sending this piece out into my network of collaborative peers, I am enforcing a kind of intertext onto my partners' poietic processes, before the tables are turned and I must accept their influence on mine [Fig.2]. The question arises again as to the exact location of Nattiez's neutral level in this arrangement, it lies with neither one collaborator nor the other but rather in the space in-between us.

### 2.3. INTERSEMIOSIS

Kristeva's concept of intertextuality describes the way in which texts, by necessity, contain other texts within them. Furthermore, it is also evident that intertextuality frequently crosses disciplinary boundaries, as is evident in Monelle's description of Mahler's Third Symphony. Such an interplay between multiple semiotic systems is referred to as *intersemiosis*, and this can come in many forms. For example, tables and illustrations in this thesis could be considered a kind of intersemiosis in that a visual collection of signs comments on the written text while, similarly, the written text also describes the image.<sup>36</sup> But it may also come to pass that a sign which originates in a text from one domain such as literature, music, or dance is rendered in another, this is an *intersemiotic translation*.

As a case study, let us consider my collaboration with Ukrainian painter Oleksiy Koval, and the way in which the very first sound of *Triptych for Two* is realised in the domains of composed music, visual art, and guided musical improvisation. This collaboration took place in 2018 and concerns three pieces that are intimately connected by intersemiosis. These are my piece, *Triptych for Two*, Oleksiy's digital painting—also called *Triptych for Two*, and *Crux*, my score for guided improvisation based on Oleksiy's painting [Fig. 3: Evolution of the pizzicato sign in my collaboration with Oleksiy Koval..

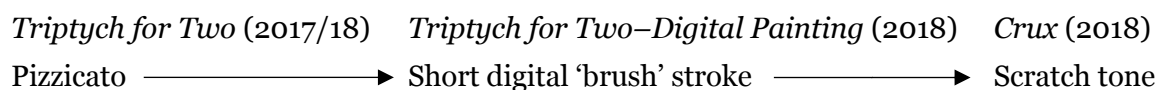


Fig. 3: Evolution of the pizzicato sign in my collaboration with Oleksiy Koval.

The first sign we encounter in *Triptych for Two*, is a short violin pizzicato D, played high up on the G string. This sign begins as a symbol in the musical score, which is then interpreted by violinist Monique Lapins as a particular action to be performed on her instrument. This act of semiosis follows well-established conventions within a particular musical domain, but in a different system of signs these conventions can no longer be taken for granted.

<sup>35</sup> If we were to consider this relationship in terms of esthetic intertextuality, the relationship would depend entirely on which piece is heard first. A listener could potentially start at one point in the network and trace their way back to the original piece.

<sup>36</sup> *Ekphrasis*, derived from the Greek word for description, is another term that is frequently employed in these cases. A poem which describes a painting, for example, is called an ekphrastic poem.

Upon hearing Monique perform this pizzicato in a recording, Oleksiy uses the tools at his disposal to render that sign in his own medium. He decides to draw upon his recent experimentation with digital media, performing a stroke on his iPad with an Apple Pencil. It should also be noted that Oleksiy records this action as a moving image, and therefore a sense of the music's original rhythmic and gestural profile is preserved in this digital 'brush' stroke. Since the sign began in this case as part of a musical score it is, in a sense, returning to the visual domain from the aural. But because the conventions and assumptions behind the medium of visual art differ from those of notated music, and because of Oleksiy's artistry, the sign is rendered in a different way.<sup>37</sup>

This becomes particularly evident when we once again return to the aural domain with *Crux*, my response to Oleksiy's digital painting. In this piece, I presented the painting to a pair of improvising musicians—violinist Tristan Carter and guitarist Jake Church—along with a simple score. In contrast to the more prescriptive notation in *Triptych for Two*, this score was essentially a legend that guided Tristan and Jake's performance as they responded to Oleksiy's painting.

At this point, neither Tristan nor Jake had heard *Triptych for Two*, and were therefore responding to Oleksiy's visual gestures without any 'coding' from the original recording. The main instructions given by my score were 1) The violin should respond to vertical gestures on screen and the guitar should respond to horizontal gestures, and 2) they should play noisy sounds when the screen is mostly black, and pitched sounds when it is mostly white. These rather vague directives gave both players the ability to draw from their personal improvisational vocabularies to render Oleksiy's painting as sound. Oleksiy's initial brush stroke, made in response to Monique's pizzicato, was vertical on a black background and so Tristan responded with a drawn-out scratch tone using his bow. The nature of that initial pizzicato had therefore been completely transformed by the end of the collaboration; it was still played on a violin, but with an entirely different means of tone production. Nonetheless a trace of the original composition's rhythmic and gestural profile remains. The sign itself has been radically altered but its relationship to other signs in the piece, while not entirely intact, is certainly tangible in the final piece of the chain.

I discuss the wider circumstances of this collaboration in Chapter 7, but suffice to say that a detailed analysis of the varying levels of intersemiosis behind every gesture of each piece of my portfolio would fill many volumes, and would take me beyond the scope of this thesis which is concerned with the role provocation plays in these collaborations. Having said that, it is

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<sup>37</sup>There are at least two kinds of intersemiosis here; there is the intersemiotic translation that we have just described as a part of the creative process, but there is also an esthetic intersemiosis that occurs when we watch Oleksiy's painting accompanied by my original composition. The way in which visual gestures appear to comment in this the audio and vice versa, colours our interpretation of both the audio and the visual. French film theorist Michel Chion refers to this as 'synchresis' in: Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2019), 64.

helpful to think in these terms for the collaborative projects because in many ways intersemiosis is the provocation, and different collaborators responded to this challenge in different ways. For instance, Polish choreographer Justyna Janiszewska deliberately sought to avoid one-to-one associations between her movements and elements of the music, the very associations that Oleksiy sought to exploit. Rather, she focused on her personal reaction to the piece and the meaning she instinctively drew from it. Poet Roya Jabarouti took a similar approach, and in these cases the collaborators drew on some essence of the original work by performing a kind of ‘paraphrase’ rather than a ‘literal’ translation.

To explore this point further, let us consider the analogy with language and how different languages express the same information differently. My collaborators come from diverse backgrounds and each interpret my original piece in their own way. As a result, the text itself is transformed and reshaped—‘translated’, if you will, from one domain into another. Even within the domain of music, there may be translation between different musical ‘languages’ or ‘dialects’ as evidenced by the practices of arrangement and musical transcription.

In their article ‘Conceiving Musical Transdialection’, Richard Beaudoin and Joseph Moore examine several transcriptions of the works of J.S. Bach throughout the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> The approaches taken in adapting this material vary from the exceedingly faithful to the wildly abstract. For instance, Ferruccio Busoni adds lines to his piano transcription of *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist* to recreate the sound of organ stops, but otherwise largely remains faithful to the original. Webern’s 1924 transcription of *A Musical Offering* leaves Bach’s notes and rhythms untouched but employs *Klangfarbenmelodie* to enhance the instrumental colour palette, and to highlight less obvious aspects of Bach’s voice-leading. Stravinsky adds his own idiosyncratic harmonies which are completely foreign to Bach’s harmonic language in his 1955 version of *Von Himmel hoch da komm’ ich her*, stretching the boundary between a ‘transcription’ and an intertextual composition. This ambiguity is taken to the extreme by British composer Michael Finnissy, in whose hands the chorale *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein* is scarcely recognisable. The chorale is present in this transcription, but it has been heavily distorted and stretched by Finnissy, who has also added a substantial amount of his own material.

Beaudoin and Moore assert that in such extreme cases, it is not the notes and rhythms of the original piece that are being transcribed, as these are largely absent by this point, but something ‘deeper’ and altogether more difficult to define. To explain this, they lean into the linguistic metaphor of music and describe Finnissy’s style as one of many musical dialects which have existed throughout history. To offer a literary parallel, a contemporary edition of the plays by William Shakespeare will often be accompanied by annotations that summarise or paraphrase the original meaning of the text. He spoke the same language as us, but the dialect is different. A translation of these plays into contemporary English would not translate

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<sup>38</sup> Beaudoin and Moore. ‘Conceiving Musical Transdialection’.

Shakespeare's words as such, since we still speak the same language, but would aim to convey the original intent behind them. Beaudoin and Moore argue that Finnissy's transcription similarly re-expresses Bach's chorale in his own musical 'dialect' rather than translating it into a different musical language because he has sought to preserve the underlying essence of the original even though the surface material is radically transformed. They therefore use the term 'musical transdialection' to describe this process. This begs the question, is this 'deeper' level of meaning being transcribed evidence of Nattiez's neutral level? Or is it simply that we must always resort to metaphor when we are confronted with something we cannot describe in familiar language?

While earlier in the article, Beaudoin and Moore say that 'Transcription aims at preservation', however, very little of Bach's original score is truly preserved in Finnissy's work.<sup>39</sup> If we consider Finnissy's work to be a transdialection of Bach this is not surprising, for even when translating from one spoken language to another, we frequently require creative licence in order to preserve what is perceived to be the author's original intent. This is particularly the case with metaphors, idioms and figures of speech that do not exist in both languages. Here we have the translator's dilemma: in this case what should be preserved, and what should be adapted? The way in which this conflict is resolved is itself a creative act and largely depends on who is doing the translating.

Intersemiotic translation is the process of adapting a text from one domain into another, consider a film adaptation of a novel, for instance, or a piece of music expressed as a painting. In this case the translator's dilemma is amplified. What is a 'pitch' in a painting? What is a 'sentence' in music?

When we talk about music, we often speak in metaphors that borrow from other artforms. Music can move, it can be a landscape, and it speaks to us, however, music does none of these things in a literal sense. Conceptual metaphors are an important way of describing the way in which we listen to music and the impression that it leaves on us, so they are an important tool when we try to re-imagine that music in another artform.<sup>40</sup> The needs of each medium are so different that the original artwork cannot be preserved, but only the translator's impression of it. As with Bach and Finnissy, the notes themselves are not translated, but something 'deeper'. In a sense this is a realisation of Nattiez's neutral level, but it is not 'objective' as he desired it to be. Intersemiotic translation is by necessity, an act of creativity rather than preservation. In the article 'Intersemiotic Translation and Transformational Creativity', Daniella Aguiar et al argue more specifically that this is a form of what Margaret Boden calls 'transformational creativity'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Mark L. Johnson and Steve Larson, discuss conceptual metaphor in music with more detail in "'Something in the Way She Moves'-Metaphors of Musical Motion', *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18.2 (2003), 63–84.

<sup>41</sup> I will discuss Margaret Boden in greater detail in the following chapter, which deals with the creative process itself.

[Intersemiotic Translation] is a semiotic relation...between different conceptual spaces: from cubist literature to contemporary dance, from surrealist painting to automatic writing, from dodecaphonic music to abstractionist painting, and so on...By translating from different conceptual spaces they create something new, surprising and valuable in their own conceptual space, transforming it and creating new possibilities to be explored.<sup>42</sup>

Each collaborator has taken a different approach, and each contribution is a unique creative entity in itself.<sup>43</sup> The variety of ways in which the original piece is transformed have provided me with a new perspective on my own creative process. Returning to the idea that these exchanges are a form of provocation *à la* De Bono; it should be emphasised that distortion, not preservation, is the ultimate aim of this exercise. Naturally, I am still interested in which elements from the *Triptych for Two* remain, but it is the way in which these elements have been transformed and being able to trace the path of these transformations back to their origin, that really interests me.

Fig. 4 visualises these intertextual connections, with *Triptych for Two* forming an epistemic nexus, to borrow Monelle's term, at the centre of a set of a network of pieces. Musical ideas that had their origin at the centre of this constellation might be unrecognisable once they reach the fringes; yet a connection to the original piece is still evident to those who know the process of how they got there.

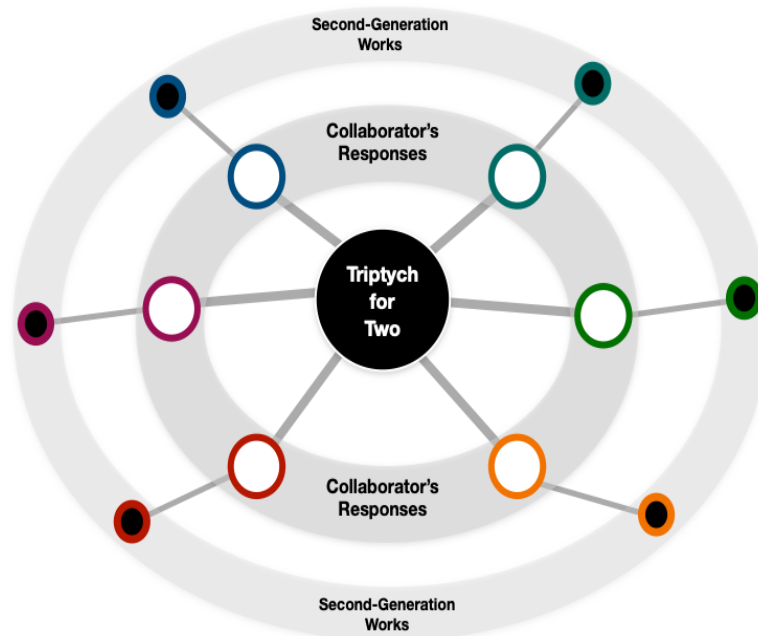


Fig. 4: A simple illustration of the relationship between second-generation works in this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> Daniella Aguiar, Pedro Ata, and João Queiroz, 'Intersemiotic Translation and Transformational Creativity', *Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics*, 1.2 (2015), 11–21.

<sup>43</sup> One of my collaborators, Oleksiy Koval, expressed a slightly different view on this subject in conversation which I will discuss later in Chapter 7.

## 2.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined semiological models of the musical work, especially focusing on Nattiez's tripartite model. This model provides a useful starting point from which to examine conventional scored works. However, compositional practices that do not rely on a fixed score as the main mode of musical transmission do not fit this model, my own use of the creative-collaborative provocation in this thesis being one example. Furthermore, the input of multiple collaborators into a poietic process problematises the notion of an objective 'neutral level'. Considering this issue intertextually is one way of coming to terms with this by situating the text within a wider epistemic network, however it should be emphasised that this relationship relies heavily on relational rather than purely objective connections. A sign is, after all, always interpreted in relation to other signs, and the influence of this network on my own creative process will be further analysed in the first part of my portfolio.

The creative-collaborative interventions in the second part of my portfolio interact with this network in a deliberate way, exploiting my own esthetic and poietic processes and those of my collaborators toward new creative ends by transforming my original work *Triptych for Two*. They also force me to take novel approaches to my own creative process that I would not have otherwise considered.

Finally, the transformations that take place as a result of these interventions can be likened to a kind of translation between forms, with the essence of one original work being realised in different ways by a range of artists. Although some aspects of the original piece are preserved between the first and second generation, it is the *differences* that interest me, contradicting the usual purpose of translation as an accurate preservation of as much of the original meaning as possible in a new language.

Where this chapter has dealt with the issue of semiotic interpretation, the next chapter will examine the creative process itself. In particular, it will focus on a number of models that describe the moment-to-moment decisions composers make as they create a piece of music. This will situate *my* creative process as the vantage point from which I experience these external interventions and interact with my network of creative peers.

# Chapter 3:

## THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN MUSIC

### TOWARD A MODEL OF CREATIVE-COLLABORATIVE PROVOCATION

In order to understand the impact external provocations have on my creative process, it is necessary to first have a robust understanding of how that process functions. A number of authors have contributed to a substantial body of literature that explores creativity in general, as well as creativity in the specific case of musical composition. These authors seek to model the creative process with one of three aims in mind: 1) to refine approaches to pedagogy in creative subjects 2) to explore how creative practices can engage with concepts of academic research, or 3) defining the creative process in order to investigate whether machines can be creative.

This chapter summarises two main investigations of creativity. Margaret Boden categorises creativity into three types: *combinational*, *exploratory*, or *transformational* creativity.<sup>44</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, on the other hand, discusses wider societal conditions that influence individual creativity.<sup>45</sup> In addition, I will discuss a number of specific models of the compositional process, beginning with an early example from Stan Bennett, before discussing more comprehensive models developed by later composers and researchers. While Bennett's model describes a largely linear process from concept to page,<sup>46</sup> later models depict the development of both concept and material realisation of a musical composition as a much more chaotic process occurring through a series of feedback loops, explorations, dead ends, and unexpected connections. Finally, I will discuss how creative interventions can modify the creative process before proposing my own model of creative-collaborative provocation.

#### 3.1. TYPES OF CREATIVITY

Margaret Boden has written extensively on the creative process, blending medical science with philosophy and psychology to explore the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence. She describes creativity as the ability to come up with ideas that are new, surprising, and valuable.<sup>47</sup> These ideas can be *H-creative* ('historically' creative), or *P-creative* ('psychologically' or 'personally' creative). An idea that is *H-creative* is completely novel; it is one that no-one has thought of before. Ideas that are *P-creative*, on the other hand, are novel only to the individual who conceives them and already exist elsewhere. Boden notes that ideas which are H-creative,

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<sup>44</sup> Margaret Boden, 'Creativity: How Does It Work?', in *The Idea of Creativity*, ed. by Karen Bardsley, Denis Dutton, and Michael Krausz (BRILL, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. (Harper Perennial: New York, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Stan Bennett, 'The Process of Musical Creation: Interviews with Eight Composers', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 24.1 (1976), 3–13.

<sup>47</sup> Boden.



must by necessity be P-creative as well. She describes three different types of creativity: *combinational*, *exploratory*, and *transformational*, each named after the psychological process used to generate the new idea. *Combinational creativity* involves the combination of familiar ideas to create something new. *Exploratory creativity* uses the stylistic conventions of a certain domain to produce new ideas. This form of creativity is especially common in the arts—in the domain of music alone, there are a multitude of works based on the same fundamental stylistic conventions which are realised in a unique way. Despite this commonality of means, the results of exploratory creativity can be varied and powerful: consider the multitude of fugues, dance suites, and sonata form movements composed throughout history, popular songs with exactly the same verse-chorus structure, and the number of jazz standards that share the same chord changes. An artist might learn these principles as part of their craft and explore them in a different way in each work. Indeed, the relationship of the work to stylistic convention forms an important part of the creative discourse, where much of the work's artistic potency results from the way in which it rearranges, stretches, subverts and even breaks conventions.

Boden's third kind of creativity, *transformational creativity*, occurs when these stylistic principles are undermined to the degree that the work no longer belongs to the existing paradigm. This inevitably results in some kind of *H-creative* idea, such as when the composers of the Second Viennese School transformed chromatic harmony to the point where no one pitch can be identified as a tonal centre. While the idea of tonal centricity had been progressively undermined by a number of late-Romantic era composers in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the paradigm shift brought by free atonality and serialism opened up the possibility for new structures in music that had not previously been considered.

Another exploration into the nature of creative thinking comes from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who states in *Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* that 'creativity does not happen inside people's heads but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context'.<sup>48</sup> His discussion of the creative process provides valuable insights into the nature of creativity, particularly the way in which creativity arises out of communities rather than individual genius. His 'Systems Model of Creativity' [Fig. 5] describes this phenomenon as being analogous to the model of evolution based on natural selection.<sup>49</sup> A creative person produces an idea that contributes to their particular field. This contribution is normally a variation on what is already known or commonly expressed in that field and is invariably influenced by a number of factors in that person's life, including their family background, culture, and relationship to society. This is an important observation, as we will discuss later. Csikszentmihalyi also states that whether this contribution is recognised

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<sup>48</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Systems Model of Creativity* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 165.

as genuinely creative is dependent on its recognition by a field of experts in that particular domain.

While Csikszentmihalyi does not categorise creativity to the same degree as Boden, he places strong emphasis on what he calls ‘creativity with a capital C’, that is, creativity that brings something new and novel to a domain, or that in some way changes the domain itself. This is essentially the same as what Boden calls H-creative transformational creativity. It could also be called ‘innovation’. I would describe my typical creative process as being very much what Boden calls *P-creative*, in that I frequently explore ideas that are new to me but are not particularly novel to others. With the creative-collaborative provocation, however, I am forcing myself to incorporate ideas that are generated by somebody else, a fact that resonates much more with Csikszentmihalyi’s system’s model.

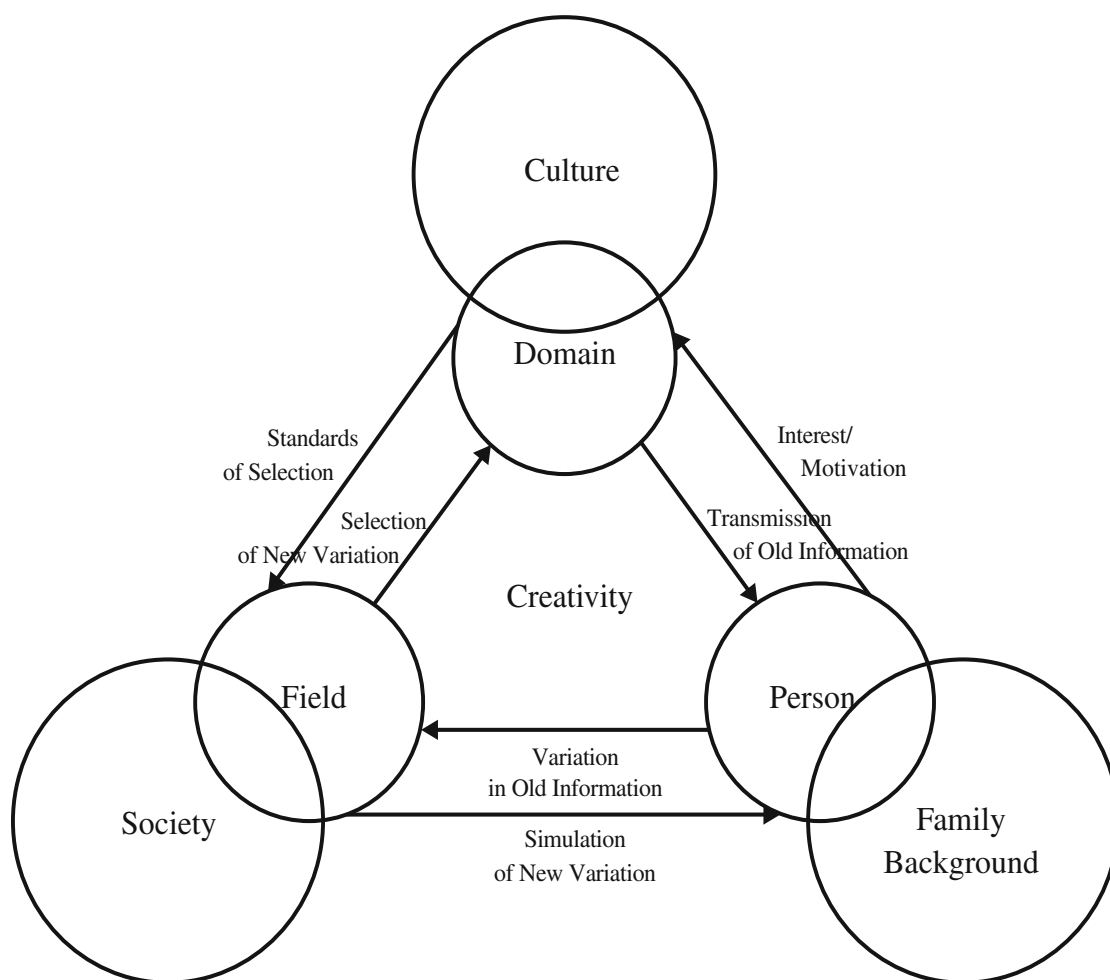


Fig. 5: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *The Systems Model of Creativity*, 166.

### 3.2. MODELS OF THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

Regarding the specific case of creativity in musical composition, a number of models have been proposed to describe this process. Stan Bennett's 1976 model [Fig. 6] describes some of the basic steps in a linear fashion.<sup>51</sup> This model is based on interviews with eight composers,<sup>52</sup> all living in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area. The composition starts with a 'germinal idea', such as a melodic idea, chord progression, or something more conceptual. This idea is then captured or transcribed as a sketch. Over a period of time this sketch is developed to produce the first draft, which is then elaborated and refined until the final draft is produced, with possible revisions thereafter.

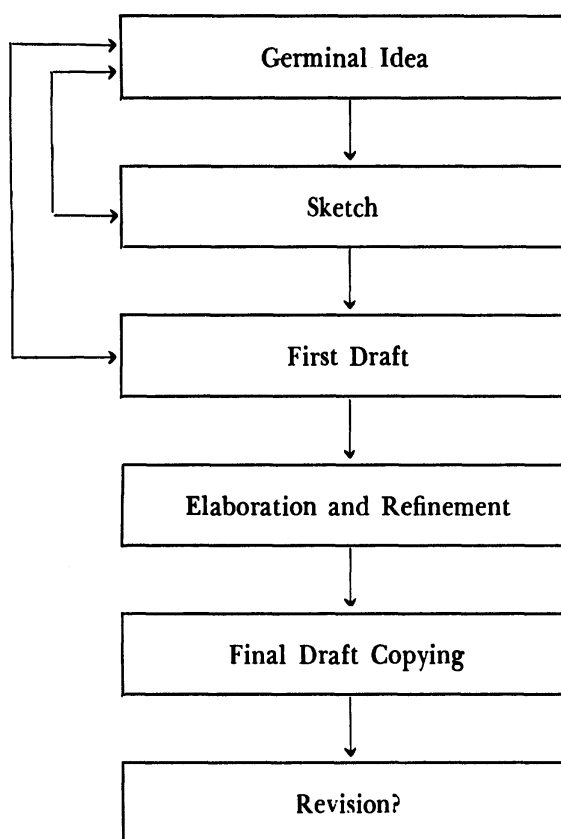


Fig. 6: Bennett's Model of Composition<sup>53</sup>

Bennett's model clearly describes the broad strokes of a relatively linear composition process, however the approaches I explore in this thesis do not fit this model well. In my experience, creativity is a far messier affair with the initial idea often leading to multiple diversions and off-shoots. Many of these turn out to be dead ends, of course, but the ones that work are often

<sup>51</sup> Stan Bennett, 'The Process of Musical Creation: Interviews with Eight Composers', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 24.1 (1976), 3–13.

<sup>52</sup> Bennett describes his interviewees as 'professional composers of classical music', whose music, 'is not what would presently be labelled as avant-garde, with one or two possible exceptions'. Bennett, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 7.

a long way from the place in which I began. Bennett's model also neglects the impact of outside influences on the creative process, something that is particularly important when talking about my collaborative projects.

We can argue that the model's linearity results from the nature of storytelling, in which we tend to describe our experiences in a linear fashion. Bennett's model was conceived through a series of interviews with local composers in Washington DC, and on the writings of famous composers from the past. I may even occasionally use a similar sequence of steps in this thesis when I describe my own process of creation, because I am attempting to make sense of the process as a 'story'. But the truth is that, when I look at my diary entries from the time, I can see that the sequence of 'stages' was much more complex and chaotic. To be fair, Bennett seems aware that his model may not apply to all composition processes when he describes his interview subjects, writing: 'Certainly they are not "chance" composers. Many compose linearly—that is, what occurs at the beginning determines what follows'.<sup>54</sup>

While Bennett's model provides a good overview of one kind of creative process, especially a linear approach to writing a conventionally scored piece of music, it is important to consider other approaches as well. Composer Simon Emmerson examines a different level of the creative decision-making process than Bennett, describing the composition process as a continuous feedback loop.<sup>55</sup> In Emmerson's model [Fig. 7], an idea (action) is tested by listening to it before it is either accepted or rejected. Accepted actions are stored (recorded), while those that are rejected may undergo some modification before being tested again. In this fashion, the composer continuously oscillates between a state of creating new material and auditioning or analysing it.

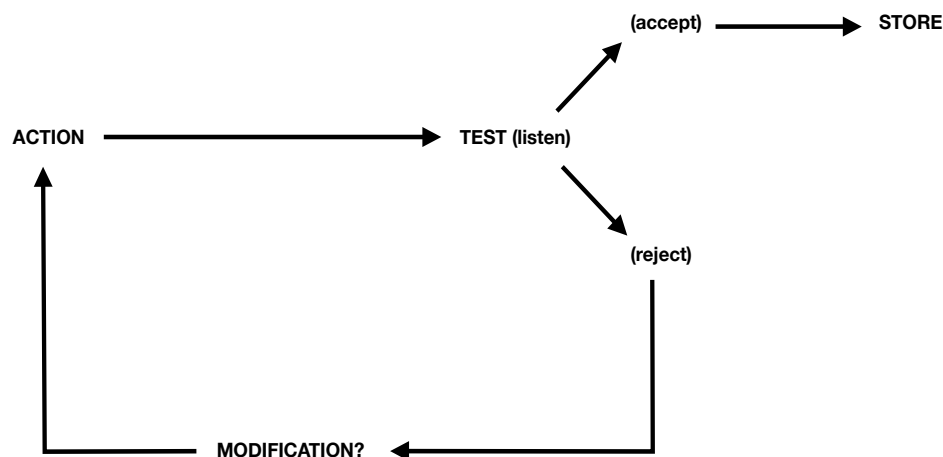


Fig. 7: Emmerson's Simple Model of Composition<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Bennett, 5.

<sup>55</sup> Simon Emmerson, 'Composing Strategies and Pedagogy', *Contemporary Music Review*, 3.1 (1989), 133–44. (Accessed from [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com) )

<sup>56</sup> Emmerson, 137.

New Zealand composer John Coulter further develops this model by connecting it to Jean-Jacques Nattiez's semiotic tripartition.<sup>57</sup> He describes the composer as alternating between poietic and esthetic states, creating material, and then auditioning and evaluating it. He visualises this approach as an ascending spiral, which as it rises gets closer to the final completed work<sup>58</sup> [Fig. 8]. Here, the composer oscillates between three stages: 1) conceptualising the piece; 2) producing material before analysing it; and 3) either accepting or rejecting that material. The geometry of this gradually reducing spiral appeals to me, since it is my own experience that as a composition becomes more concrete and nears completion, and the various creative possibilities are either accepted or rejected, the overall pool of creative options becomes progressively reduced until at the end of the process there is a certain inevitability to my creative decisions. This is not to imply that *all* composers experience the process in this way, but it does speak to my own creative experiences more than Bennett's model, especially in the case of non-collaborative pieces. Considering the collaborative framework explored in this thesis, however, these models become disrupted when a composer is obliged to accept a collaborator's input.

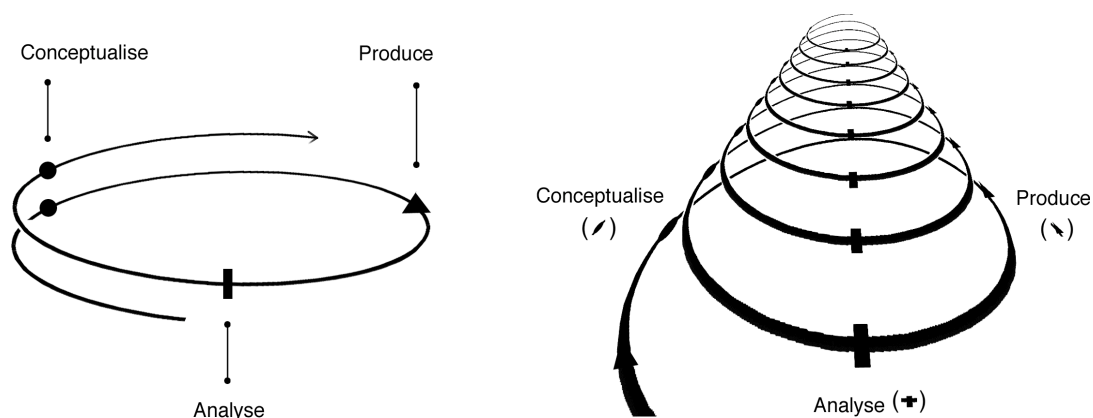


Fig. 8: Coulter's Multimedia Realisation Spiral<sup>59</sup>

One model which does incorporate outside influence is that of music education researcher Jackie Wiggins. In an overview of studies exploring the creativity of young composers in classroom settings, Wiggins describes a process that embodies many of the concepts mentioned earlier.<sup>60</sup> Musical ideas are generated through a process of exploration, experimentation and improvisation. They are then contextualised, repeated and refined as

<sup>57</sup> John Coulter, 'A Scholarly Approach to Composing Electroacoustic Music', *Canzona*, 29, 2008, 27–37. Coulter is specifically discussing electroacoustic composition here, but a similar process is applicable to score-based composition as well, even if the 'auditioning' only occurs in the composer's mind.

<sup>58</sup> John Coulter, 'Multimedia Composition as Research', *Electroacoustic Music Studies Network International Conference Series*. Montreal, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>60</sup> Jackie Wiggins, 'Compositional Process in Music', in *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education-Part 1*, ed. by Liora Bresler (Springer Netherlands, 2007).

work on the composition progresses. These are visualised as a set of overlapping spheres [Fig. 9]. Importantly, Wiggins also makes a crucial connection between an individual's creative process and their wider social and environmental context inviting comparisons with Csikszentmihalyi's Systems Model of Creativity [Fig. 5].

Wiggins also notes the importance of the overarching concept during the composition process, and notes that even young composers will have some conception of where the piece is going from the outset. This is an important observation. Looking at the models above it would be easy to get the impression that the compositional process could be compared to planting a seed in the middle of a flowerpot and watching the roots grow outwards into the surrounding soil. The reality is more complex: the plant is also reaching up toward the light. The truth is that the material of a piece and its concept are intimately linked. Coulter also mentions the importance of conceptualisation in his model, visualising a pyramidal structure with either a *top-down approach* in which the concept generates the material, or a *bottom-up approach*, in which the material generates the concept.<sup>61</sup>

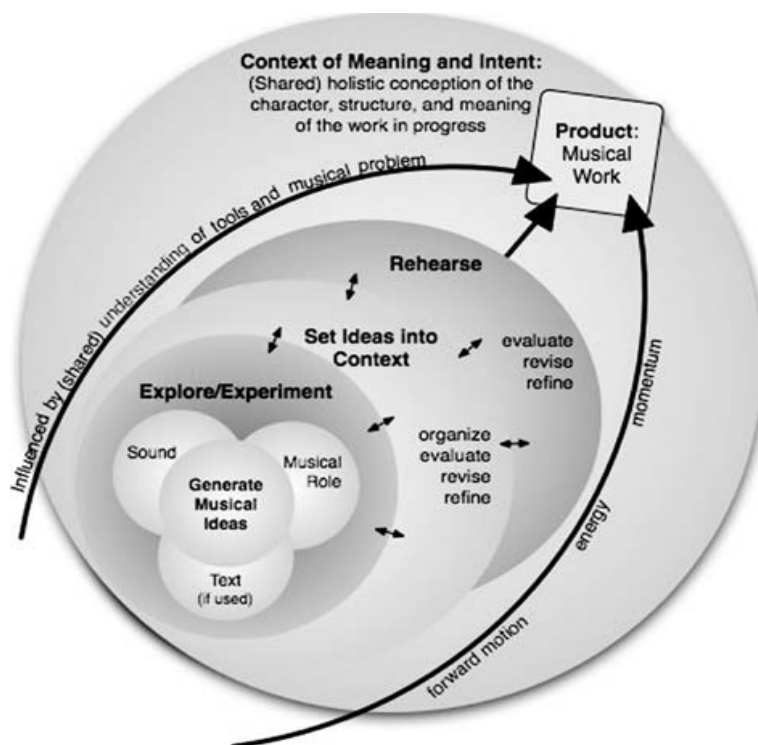


Fig. 9: Wiggins's model of the composition process<sup>62</sup>

While Wiggins's model comes from observations of students in a classroom, Palle Dahlstedt examines his own creative process while exploring the possibility that machines can be creative.<sup>63</sup> Dahlstedt, like Wiggins, draws a connection between the material being produced

<sup>61</sup> Coulter, 6. (2005).

<sup>62</sup> Wiggins. 461

<sup>63</sup> With recent developments in artificial intelligence, a number of authors have begun to take the question seriously as to whether machines can be creative, and a fascinating body of literature has arisen to reflect this including

during the composition process and the abstract concept behind it.<sup>64</sup> Crucially, however, he also draws attention to the fact that while the composer's initial conception of a piece leads to the generation of material, the material also reciprocally influences that initial concept as the creation progresses. Dahlstedt explains that during the creative process a work exists in two forms simultaneously: a *material representation* and a *conceptual representation*. The *material representation* refers to concrete and tangible outputs, such as sketches and sound recordings. The *conceptual representation*, on the other hand refers to the ideas and generative principles behind that work. For Dahlstedt, the current material form of a piece during any point in the composition process represents just one nexus in a wider network of possibilities. The space within which these possibilities exist is defined by the conceptual form of the work. Any reworking of the conceptual part of a work based on the current state of its material representation therefore also redefines the network of possibilities for that work. Likewise, the way in which this concept is implemented affects the nature of the material representation. This cycle has much in common with the feedback loop we saw with Emmerson and Coulter's models. The difference is that the conceptual aspect of a piece is represented as evolving in parallel with its material counterpart throughout the creative process [Fig. 10].

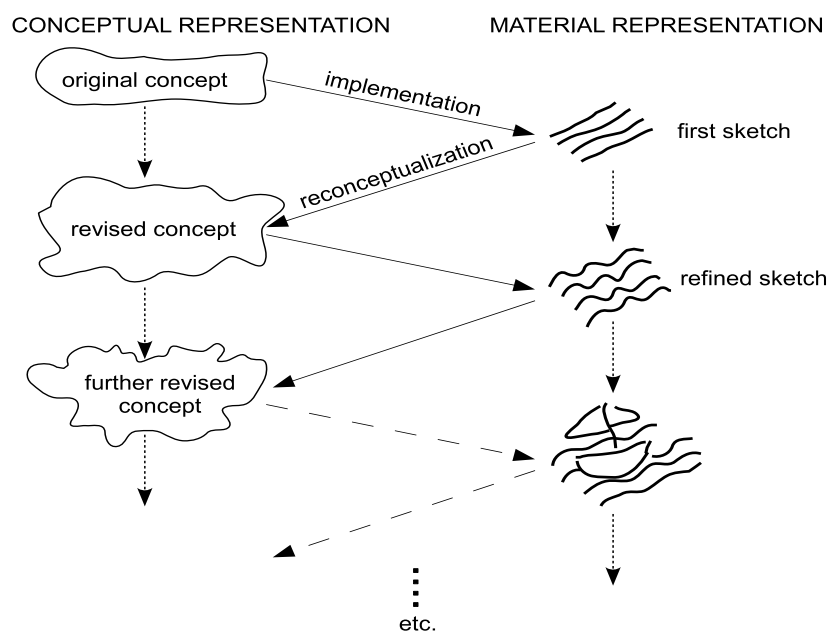


Fig. 10: Dahlstedt shows the development of the material versus conceptual representations of a work<sup>65</sup>

writings by Margaret Boden, Palle Dahlstedt, Oliver Brown, Daniel Jones, Andrew R. Brown, and Mark d'Inverno, among others. Much of this literature is outside of the scope of this thesis, but it has led to valuable insights into human creativity as well.

<sup>64</sup> Palle Dahlstedt, 'Between Material and Ideas: A Process-Based Spatial Model of Artistic Creativity', in *Computers and Creativity*, ed. by Jon McCormack and Mark d'Inverno (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012), 205–33.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 218.

### 3.3. CREATIVE PROVOCATIONS

Having discussed a number of models of the creative process, I will now describe the ways in which a creative provocation can disrupt a ‘typical’ creative process. To reiterate, a creative provocation is something that is outside of the artist’s control which they nonetheless incorporate into their creative process. This is often done to spur new ways of thinking and to enhance creativity, but it can also be a matter of necessity especially in collaborative situations. A key consideration is *when* this intervention takes place and here I offer three possibilities: 1) an *early provocation*, one that takes place before work begins on a project or at the very beginning of a creative process, 2) a *late provocation* intervenes on a creative process which has already begun and 3) a *dynamic provocation* which is an intervening force that evolves throughout the creative process.<sup>66</sup>

While it is tempting to label an early provocation as ‘inspiration’, this is a deliberate act of intervention that aims to stimulate new modes of creativity—while it might lead to a state of feeling inspired, it is not synonymous with inspiration itself. The important distinction, as De Bono states, is that a provocation must facilitate ‘movement’ from one creative space into another.<sup>67</sup> The decision to write a piece based on a theme, say ‘flowers’ for instance, creates an image for the artist to work with but does not necessarily impact the creative process itself. This would therefore not be considered a provocation, but rather inspiration. On the other hand, something like a data sonification of Jupiter’s magnetic field provides the composer with initial material that is out of their control, although they can still decide the manner in which they use it. This requires a level of consideration with regard to different creative strategies that can account for such unpredictability. An *early provocation* could be a puzzle or a problem to be solved, a rule or deliberate restriction, a decision to use a found object as the starting point for a piece or an especially prescriptive brief for a commission.

A *late provocation* disrupts a creative workflow that is already in process; a direction to ‘destroy the most important thing’ or ‘magnify the most difficult details’ from Eno and Schmidt’s *Oblique Strategies*, for instance, would fall into this category if drawn during a creative process and not before.<sup>68</sup> Such provocations aim to steer a work-in-progress toward new and more inventive solutions to problems posed by existing material. The timing of these provocations can have dramatically different results on the final creative output. Fig. 11 shows these provocations interacting with creative feedback loops inspired by Coulter’s Multimedia Realisation Spiral:

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<sup>66</sup> The conventional rehearsal process, in which players seek to refine the intentions of the composer, are not normally considered a provocation. However, some composers have been interested in the rehearsal process as a radical provocation tool, establishing a thorough workshoping process that allows greater input from performers. One example is the process of Éliane Radigue, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

<sup>67</sup> de Bono, ‘Serious Creativity’.

<sup>68</sup> Eno and Schmidt.



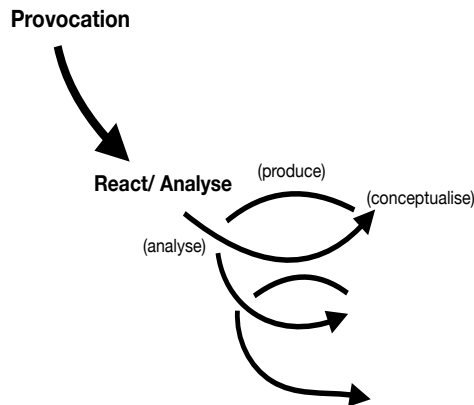
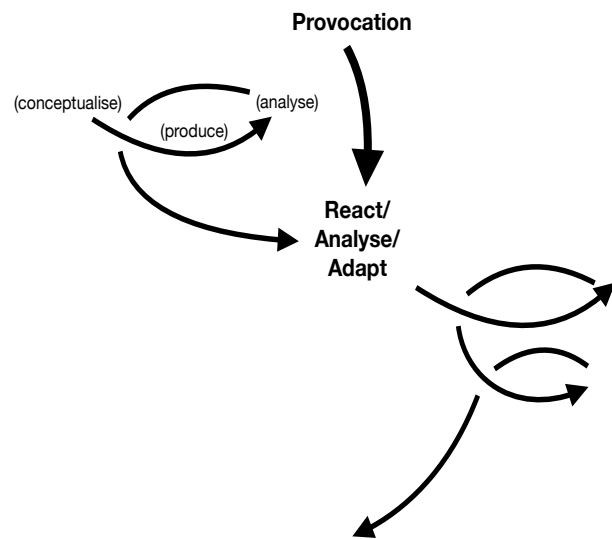
**Early Provocation:****Late Provocation (Interruption):**

Fig. 11: Early and Late Creative Provocations

A *dynamic provocation* [Fig. 12] changes over time as work progresses on a piece. If a composer were to shuffle and draw several cards from the *Oblique Strategies* over the course of a work's creation, the cards then represent an evolving influence that affects the creative process in a different way each time it is used. This could also be a two-way relationship if the composer decides how frequently the cards are drawn, thereby influencing the manner in which the provocation evolves. Other examples include chance operations like those employed by John Cage and external influence from collaborators, if these interventions occur throughout the creative process, as well as algorithms that change over time like the L-systems employed by composers like Hanspeter Kyburz.<sup>69</sup>

A linear model of composition is only possible in the case of an *early provocation*, and even then, it is not a given that the process will unfold in the way Bennett describes. Both *late* and *dynamic provocations* deliberately build a degree of unpredictability into the creative process but the way in which we react to these is a highly personal matter. While the composer can have some influence particularly with regard to the timing of interventions, these are largely one-way interactions. Such provocations are certainly relevant to the 'first-generation' (non-collaborative) works in my portfolio but discussing the 'second-generation' (collaborative) works requires us to consider these provocations as two-way interactions.

<sup>69</sup> I will discuss these further in Chapter 4.

## Dynamic Provocation:

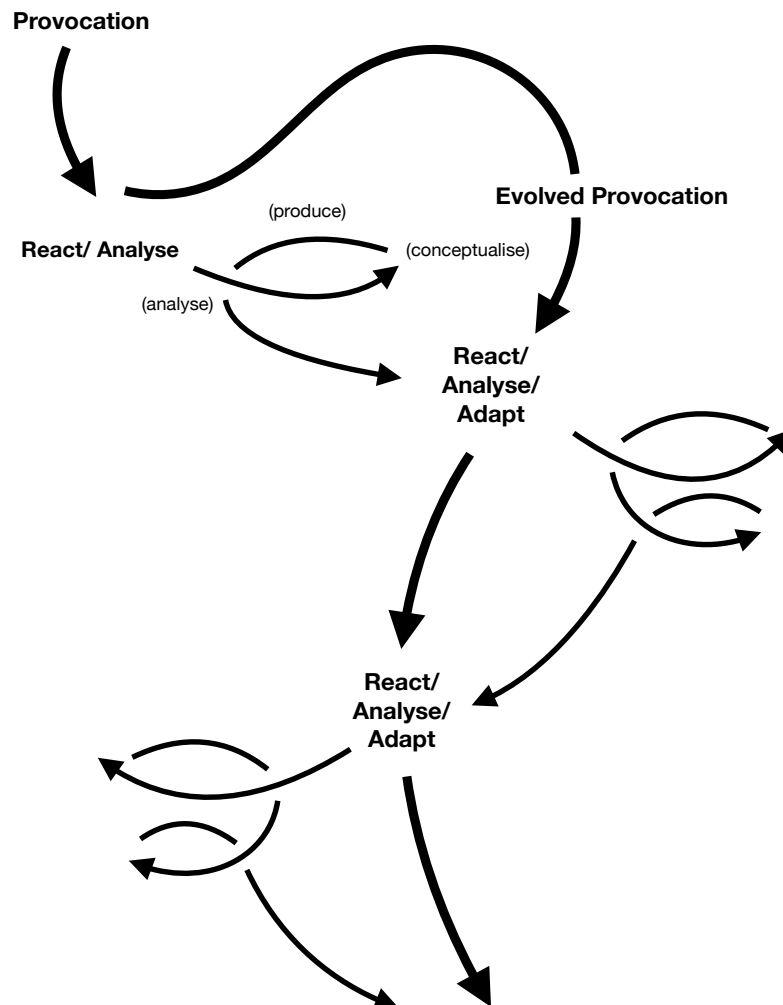


Fig. 12: Dynamic Provocation

### 3.4. A MODEL OF CREATIVE-COLLABORATIVE PROVOCATION

Whereas the *early*, *late*, and *dynamic* provocations describe external influences on one person's creative process, the collaborative model I have followed in the second half of my portfolio explores two creative forces which symbiotically influence each other. There are many ways of structuring such two-way interactions, but the particular model I chose to pursue in this thesis uses a turn-based approach where one partner offers a provocation to the other, who then offers their own provocation in return based on that supplied by the first collaborator.

The radical feature of this model is that, depending on your perspective, all three types of provocation take place at once. For me there is a *late provocation*, because my collaborator takes a piece that I have already worked on and alters it. However, for them it is an *early provocation* because they are being offered material before they start work. If this process

continues then a *dynamic provocation* is formed, with each piece created along the way being a part of a larger process that could continue indefinitely. This collaborative process aims to be guided but at the same time not overly hierarchical, each collaborator has the freedom to create as they see fit during their turn, as long as they respond to the initial provocation. That being said, there may also be some influence between parties during this process as collaborators share and discuss their works in progress.

Fig. 13 shows how this model incorporates several influences from those I mentioned earlier; notably the three steps from Coulter's Multimedia Spiral: *conceptualise–produce–analyse* become *analyse–create–provoke*, with my *analyse* and *create* steps broadly corresponding to Nattiez's *esthetic* and *poietic* processes respectively.

In this case the initial provocation is a piece of music, but it could potentially take many forms. Unlike the provocations mentioned earlier, the two-way structure of this model means that the returning artwork stimulates new ideas but also encourages new perspectives on a piece that has already been created. In my experience it has often been difficult to separate such realisations from the 'new' creative process I was undertaking, making me feel I was both starting a new creative process and continuing an old one. This realisation could be either an obstacle or an opportunity, depending on my own creative goals for that particular project. Finding a way forward required me to cede control over aspects of the piece and to be open to ideas or aesthetic decisions which might not fit with my 'normal' way of doing things.

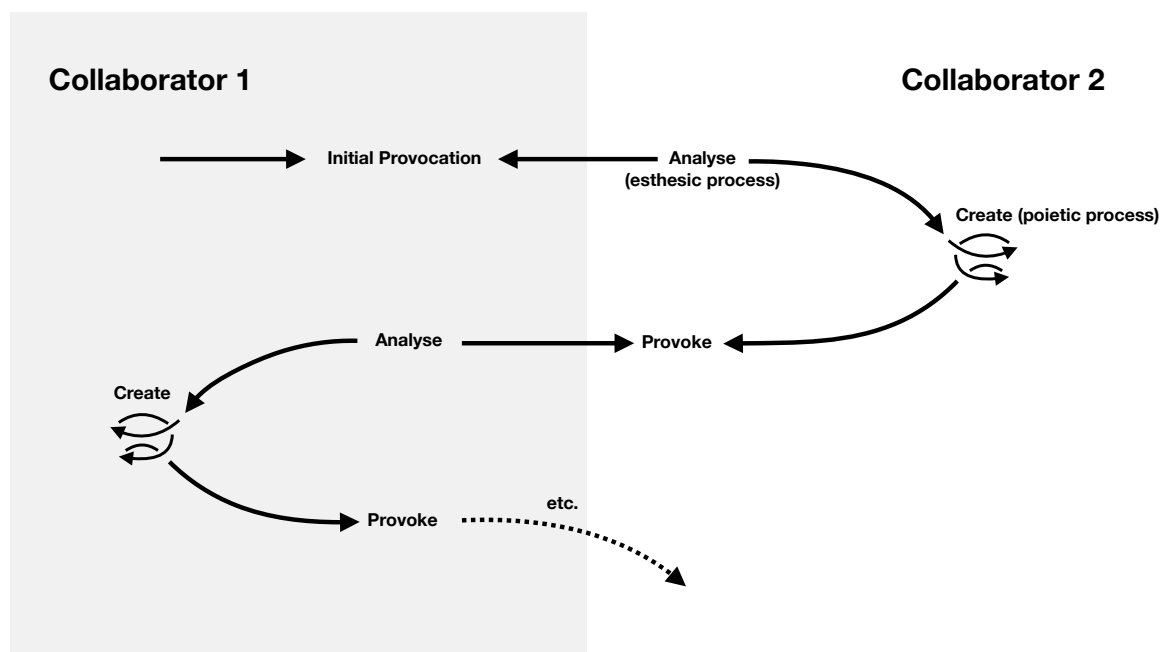


Fig. 13: Creative-collaborative provocation

### 3.5. CONCLUSION

For composers who ground their practice in the creation and interpretation of musical scores, as I do, the idea of handing control over aspects of their work to external influence might feel very uncomfortable; however, this is something the model of creative-collaborative provocation embraces.

Working in this way requires a certain release of ego, an openness to factors outside of our control, and a willingness to alter any plans or pre-conceived notions we had going into the project. It also illuminates many of the underlying concepts around creativity discussed in this chapter.

Csikszentmihalyi explains that creative ideas emerge from complex social structures, that social and cultural factors must be considered in any discussion of creativity, a notion that my model embraces wholeheartedly. Meanwhile Boden's three kinds of creativity: *combinational*, *exploratory* and *transformational*, describe the ways in which novel ideas can be uncovered and combined to create something new or surprising within the context of a particular domain.

In the domain of musical composition, while Bennett's model describes the general shape of a conventional creative process, it neglects key aspects of creativity and overlooks contemporary trends in collaborative compositional processes. Emmerson and Coulter describe in low-level detail the process of moment-to-moment decision-making for a composer, while models like Wiggins's and Dahlstedt's provide a much more flexible way of visualising this process in a wider context.

As more complex processes involving improvisation, collaboration, external agency, and flexible concepts of 'the work' become increasingly commonplace in the twenty-first century, the shortcomings of linear models of composition become increasingly evident. By offering an external provocation then giving each collaborator time to reflect and find their own way to respond, the model of creative-collaborative provocation promotes a less hierarchical approach to structured collaboration. It also leads to a radical transformation of the initial musical material, with the initial piece of music being reimagined and pulled apart in multiple ways.

These provocations have an unpredictable effect on the creative process. They drastically re-shuffle the deck of creative possibilities and, for me, offer a way to reflect on key aspects of my own process and to thereby 'map out' fertile terrain for future projects.

# Chapter 4:

## PROVOCATION AND TRANSFORMATION

### AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In the previous chapter, I discussed models of the composing process. With the exception of Wiggins, however, they largely neglect the important impact that other individuals, particularly performers, have on many composer's creative processes. The romanticised view of a composer living in isolation composing masterworks in a cabin in the woods is, at least for me, far from the reality of what it is to be a creative artist.<sup>70</sup> This thesis displays an approach to creativity that embraces radical external transformation as an intervention on a composer's 'conventional' creative process.

In this chapter I will explore examples of creative provocations from history—such interventions can take many forms and there will be many examples that I do not mention here. Instead, I will focus on a selection of cases that are especially pertinent to the work in this thesis, which I have divided into four overarching categories as shown in Table 1: collaborative provocation, non-human provocation, music as a 'found object' and collective provocation.

Category	Sub-Category	Examples
Collaborative provocation	Composer-performer partnerships	Éliane Radigue
	Rule-Based collaborations	The 'exquisite corpse'
	Anarchic/ chance collaboration	Cage/ Cunningham/ Rauschenberg
	Collaborative autonomy and improvisation	Richard Nunns/ Gillian Whitehead
	Curated Collaboration	Bob Ostertag
Non-human provocation	Algorithmic and computer-assisted composition.	Lindenmayer-systems, OpenMusic/ PatchWork
	Deliberate engagement with unpredictable phenomena	Alvin Lucier
Music as a 'found object'	'Reworking' old pieces	Berio, Boulez, Rhim
	Musical borrowing	Jack Body, Peter Ablinger,
Collective provocation	Collaborative communities on the Internet	hitRECORD

*Table 1: The categories of provocation discussed in this chapter*

<sup>70</sup> That is not to say that composers do not enjoy time alone. Gustav Mahler famously retreated to his summer cottage every summer to compose, John Luther Adams moved to Alaska because of the inspirations he found in the vast and empty landscape. But that is not the approach to creativity explored here.

Many of the examples cited in this chapter relate to specific pieces in my portfolio. Some provocations simply offer frameworks that guide this process in new directions, whereas others offer the composer new possibilities by dramatically transforming the musical material itself. However, they all involve cases where an artist has deliberately engaged with something outside of themselves which had a direct and often unpredictable influence on their creative process.

#### 4.1. COLLABORATION AS PROVOCATION

The first, and perhaps most obvious, example of an external influence on a creative process is that of another person. For many artists, collaboration forms an important part of their creative practice. These relationships can enrich our creativity by provoking new creative possibilities and can be structured in a number of ways. For composers who write scores, the relationship with the performer is especially important.

Composer-performer collaborations are an essential relationship in the creation of many musical works. This is particularly evident in the case of solo pieces and concerti, where a composer might work closely with a virtuoso to create a solo part that is both exciting and suited to that player's strengths. For instance, Johannes Brahms collaborated with Joseph Joachim to write his *Violin Concerto in D major, Op.77* (1878)<sup>71</sup> and similarly, Luigi Nono worked closely with flautist Roberto Fabbricani on *Quando stanno morendo* (1982) and many other works.<sup>72</sup> The later example typifies a particularly involved composer-performer partnership, which became more common in the twentieth century as composers sought to expand their sonic vocabularies with extended techniques. In such instances, the performer generates creative-collaborative provocations by offering the composer suggestions, solutions for problems and experimenting to find new musical ideas.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, many composers sought to offer performers a degree of freedom over musical material with aleatoric techniques and 'mobile' forms like that employed in Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1956). Some composers, however, embrace radical forms of composer-performer partnership that lead to a highly interdependent working process in which performers actively create material together with the composer, and eventually become vessels for the work's transmission as a kind of 'living score'.

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<sup>71</sup> Boris Schwarz, 'Joseph Joachim and the Genesis of Brahms's Violin Concerto', *The Musical Quarterly*, 69.4 (1983), 503–26.

<sup>72</sup> Roberto Fabbricani, 'Walking with Gigi', *Contemporary Music Review*, 18.1 (1999), 7–15.

<sup>73</sup> There is an extensive and fascinating field of literature on composer-performer collaborations in Western Art Music. Examples include: Fabrice Fitch and Neil Heyde, "'Recercar' – The Collaborative Process as Invention', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 4.1 (2007), 71–95; Zubin Kanga, 'Through the Silver Screen: The Collaborative Creation of Works for Piano and Video', *Contemporary Music Review*, 35.4–5 (2016), 423–49; Zubin Kanga, 'Inside the Collaborative Process: Realising New Works for Solo Piano' (PhD diss, Royal Academy of Music, London, 2014); David Gorton and Stefan Östersjö, 'Choose Your Own Adventure Music: On the Emergence of Voice in Musical Collaboration', *Contemporary Music Review*, 35.6 (2016), 579–98.

#### 4.1.1. COMPOSER-PERFORMER CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: ÉLIANE RADIGUE

Éliane Radigue's *Occam Ocean* series (2011–present) offers a particularly fascinating example of close collaborative partnerships, where performers actively generate material under the composer's guidance. Radigue initially gained widespread recognition for her work in electroacoustic music, particularly her pieces composed with the ARP synthesizer. Starting with *Naldjorlak I* (2004), however, Radigue began to compose for ensembles of acoustic instruments using her own idiosyncratic compositional process. Not having extensive experience writing for acoustic instruments, she needed a way of communicating the sorts of sounds and ideas she had explored with the synthesizer. As these sounds tended to be very long and slowly evolving, with subtle variations that would be difficult to notate in a traditional score, Radigue took a different approach, developing her pieces in collaboration with specific performers according to underlying principles that she supplied.

For the *Occam* series, two main principles in the development of each work were these: 1) that the performer should form an image in their mind of an ocean or body of water and 2) that when deciding whether or not to depart from a particular musical idea, performers should follow the principle of Occam's Razor, that the simplest option is normally the correct one.<sup>74</sup>

With these parameters in mind, a project would typically unfold like this: to begin with, a performer would often contact Radigue to initiate a collaboration. Radigue would then listen to that performer's previous work and speak to them over the phone before inviting prospective collaborators to her apartment in Paris to start work on a piece. She then introduces the performer to the key concepts behind the *Occam Ocean* series, and presents them with a prompt based on a ocean image. This could be a photograph, or Radigue might describe an ocean image to the collaborator, or the performer might describe a body of water that is personal to them. Once this image is chosen, a period of experimentation occurs whereby Radigue and the performer search for novel sounds and techniques particular to their instrument. Once this sonic repertoire is established, Radigue establishes a soundworld by selecting which sounds she wants to include in the piece. At that point the performer leaves the apartment to practise on their own. What follows is a feedback loop between composer and performer: the performer is largely responsible for generating material, but the composer selects, curates, and directs it to create structure. Once Radigue is satisfied, she will declare the collaboration complete and the performer goes on to perform the work publicly, although they will sometimes have a small performance for friends before this.

Sketching this process out visually [Fig. 14] we can see how interconnected the roles of composer and performer are in this process. Radigue gives the performer freedom to explore the material established by the initial experiments, but then molds that material into a form she is satisfied with. When the process is complete, there is no written score or definitive

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<sup>74</sup> Luke Nickel, having conducted several interviews with the composer, describes her process in some detail, see: Luke Nickel, 'Occam Notions: Collaboration and the Performer's Perspective in Éliane Radigue's *Occam Ocean*', *Tempo*; Cambridge, 70.275 (2016), 22–35.

recording; the performer is what Radigue calls ‘a living score’, who is then able to transmit the piece to other performers. Although Radigue is very much ‘in the driver’s seat’ throughout the process, it is nevertheless a process of dialogue between collaborators from the outset. The prompts that begin that this process, the water image of water and Occam’s Razor, are provocations that steer the performer’s creativity in a certain direction. The performer’s experiments then become provocations for Radigue as she shapes and guides the development of the work.

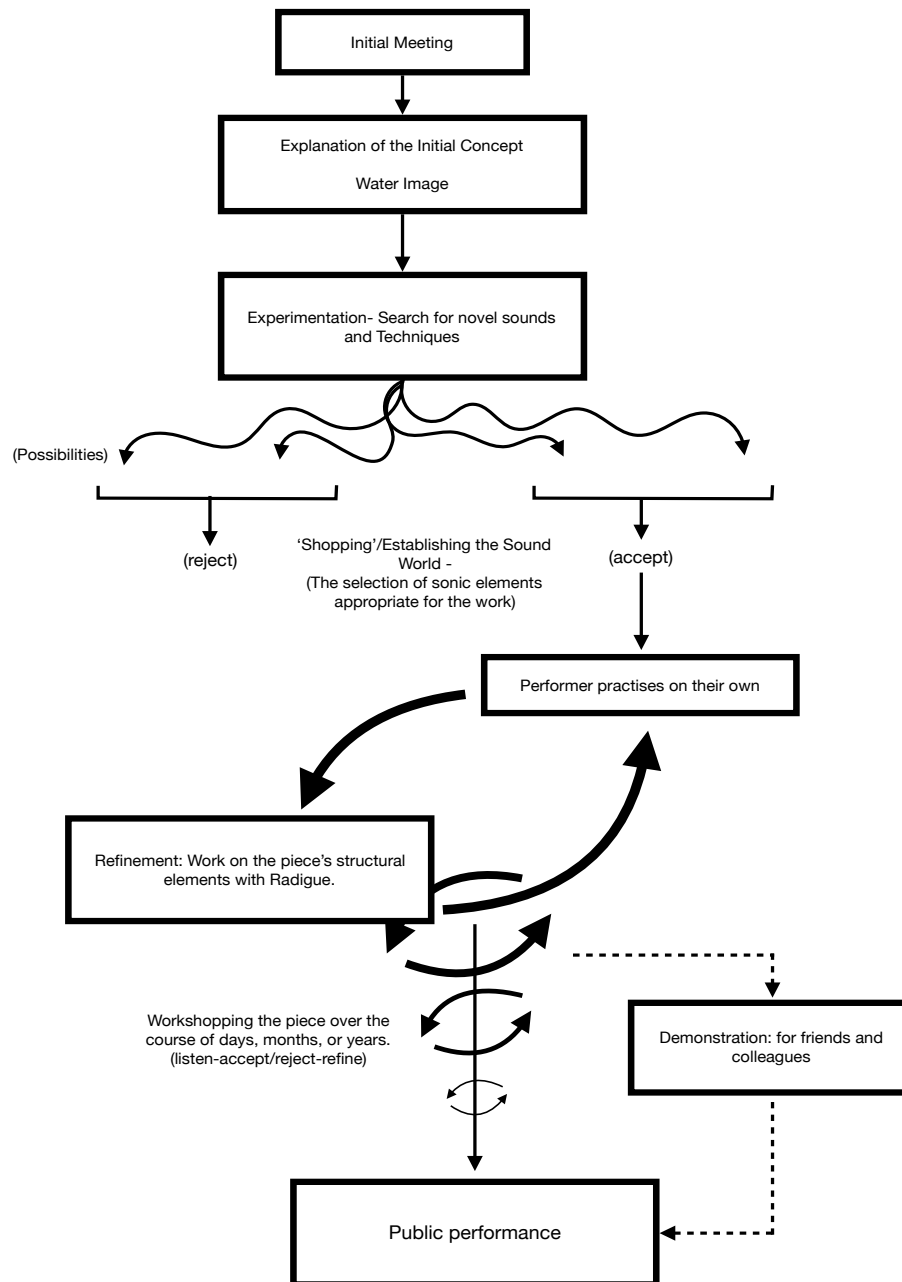


Fig. 14: Éliane Radigue's composition process for *Occam Ocean*, as described by Luke Nickel.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Image created by the author of this thesis based on Luke Nickel's description, *Ibid*, 25–26.



#### 4.1.2. RULE-BASED COLLABORATION: THE EXQUISITE CORPSE

While Radigue's idiosyncratic process is clearly very fluid, it still follows a regular procedure from one work to the next. The initial principles that underlie every *Occam Ocean* project exist as creative-collaborative provocations that steer the project toward a particular outcome. While Radigue allows her collaborators freedom to explore the material, she also has a particular end goal in mind. Because of this, each *Occam* piece sounds like an Éliane Radigue composition. In a similar way, other artists have also used predetermined rules to guide their creative processes toward unexpected outcomes, something typified by the Surrealists and their collaborative games.

In the early twentieth century, the Surrealist art movement embraced the use of unexpected juxtapositions between apparently unrelated elements. Such pieces sought to prompt associations between symbols to illuminate hitherto unrealised aspects of subconscious thought. To this end, Surrealist artists had a number of parlour games designed to produce unexpected outcomes and spur new modes of creativity.

One of the most popular and enduring of these games was known as the *cadaver exquis*, or 'exquisite corpse'.<sup>76</sup> In this game, an artist would draw a portion of an image on a piece of paper, fold the paper over to cover their contribution, leaving a small part exposed for the sake of continuity, and then pass it on to another artist to continue the drawing, before likewise folding the paper again and handing it over to a final artist to complete the drawing. None of the artists would see the complete image until the paper was unfolded at the end of the game. This represents an example of collaboration via indeterminacy, in that each partner in the game has no control over the actions of the others beyond a suggestion offered by the lines at the edge of each fold. It also shows how a piece can be generated via a well-defined structural algorithm, a simple set of instructions that produces complex and varied results.

Despite each image containing a random combination of elements, there is a unifying factor among all exquisite corpses, in that these drawings are inevitably divided by the number of participants in the game. This means that all 'exquisite corpse' drawings have a similar visual composition to one another. In many ways, the algorithm behind the 'exquisite corpse' mirrors the procedure undertaken in this thesis, in that collaborators have agency to contribute to the project in any way they wish, so long as they take my piece as their starting point. The main differences between my procedure and that of the Surrealists are 1) that each participant can listen to my work in its entirety before responding, so that their impressions of the entire work inform their creative processes, and 2) the collaborations crossed disciplinary and cultural boundaries, rather than belonging exclusively to one medium, such as drawing.

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<sup>76</sup> Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, Davis Schneiderman, and Tom Denlinger, 'The Algorhythms of the Exquisite Corpse', in *The Exquisite Corpse: Chance and Collaboration in Surrealism's Parlor Game* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 2009).

#### 4.1.3. ANARCHIC OR CHANCE-BASED COLLABORATION: CAGE, CUNNINGHAM AND RAUSCHENBERG

An important aspect of the 'exquisite corpse' game is the fact that each player has very few restrictions as to the nature of their personal contributions. This kind of collaborative autonomy was also explored extensively in the twentieth century by John Cage, Merce Cunningham and Robert Rauschenberg who, rather than using pre-defined rules to determine the parameters of their collaborations, employed chance operations as a provocation to achieve a more independent relationship between music, dance, and set design.

In the 1950s and 1960s, composer John Cage, choreographer Merce Cunningham and set designer Robert Rauschenberg adopted an approach that relied on an anarchic relationship between collaborative parties. Cage was already well known for his use of chance operations, in works such as *Music for Changes* (1951), and so it was a small conceptual leap to include such operations in his collaborative process as well. Merce Cunningham was likewise concerned with redefining the relationship between movement and music. Rather than creating a choreography to an existing piece of music, he would employ a range of processes to develop movement that would coexist with Cage's music while also developing according to its own independent logic.

...I just decided that it's perfectly possible to move around without music and, so that you could make a dance without music in the sense of depending on it, and then, when, John and I began to work together, that's the way we always worked, that he could make the music separate and I could make the dance separate and both the music and the dance would occupy the same time, but just occupy it in different ways, the music for the ear and the dance for the eye. So, it's not a thing about support, the music supporting the dance or framing it or making pictures or whatever. It was simply that the two activities could go on at the same time.<sup>77</sup>

The two artforms could exist in the same space together on their own terms, and with a degree of autonomy that undermined commonly accepted approaches to collaboration at that time. Although the process was certainly anarchic, in that correlations between specific elements of music and dance were left to chance, the works had a defined structure in the form of 'time brackets' that were decided upon early on in the process.<sup>78</sup> This meant that each artist could work independently of one another, sometimes only seeing all the elements combined at the first performance.<sup>79</sup>

This approach was first demonstrated at Black Mountain College in 1952. This event became known as the first 'happening', a term that would later be associated with performance

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<sup>77</sup> Elliot Caplan, *The Collaborators*. (Merce Cunningham Trust, 1986. Alexander Street,). 00:02:40.

<sup>78</sup> William Benson Fetterman, 'John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances' (unpublished Ph.D., New York University, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> Caplan. 00:03:40

art groups like Fluxus. It was a multimedia event that combined dance, painting, music and poetry readings, and comprised several solo performances during the same 45-minute period. Cage himself gave a lecture, Cunningham danced, Rauschenberg's painting hung suspended above the performance as he played phonograph recordings, Mary Caroline Richards and Charles Olsen read poetry, while David Tudor played the piano. Each of these solos was unrelated to the others, with performers being allocated a series of 'time brackets' in which to perform. In this case, the brackets were themselves predetermined by Cage through chance operations and would often overlap with one another.<sup>80</sup>

Again, the relationship between elements is anarchic, but not chaotic. Even though Cage is embracing chance as a provocation, these operations still provide the collaboration with a structure that guides the creative decision-making of those involved. This kind of anarchic independence would be further explored by Cage, Cunningham and Rauschenberg in many of their later collaborations such as *Minutiae* (1954), and *Variations V* (1966).<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.1.4. COLLABORATIVE AUTONOMY AND IMPROVISATION: TAONGA PUORO IN NEW ZEALAND

Cage, Cunningham and Rauschenberg sought to collaborate in such a way that each partner would have an equal part to play without one artform dominating the others. This is something composers also need to consider when working with improvising musicians. In this case, the composer is obliged to surrender certain aspects of their work to outside influence so that the improviser has freedom to practice their craft. Likewise, the improviser also has to adapt their practice to fit in with the language of the composer. This process can be creatively enriching for both parties, but it requires a large degree of sensitivity on the part of the composer with regard to what the improvising musician brings to the project, and vice versa.

This is particularly evident when working across cultures as historical power dynamics often come into play. In New Zealand, the partnership between composer Dame Gillian Whitehead and taonga puoro musician Richard Nunns is a pertinent example of a collaboration that successfully navigates these issues, particularly in light of my work with Alistair Fraser in this portfolio.

In late twentieth-century New Zealand, collaborations between performers of taonga puoro (traditional Māori instruments) and composers of Western art music also required an approach that guaranteed a large degree of collaborative autonomy. As with Cage and Cunningham the reasons for this were partly logistical, due to the ways in which these instruments functioned and the fashion in which they were commonly performed, but there were also cultural considerations at play. The process of colonisation that had begun centuries earlier created an unequal power dynamic between Pākehā (the descendants of European

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<sup>80</sup> For a thorough analysis of the varying accounts of this event see Fetterman.

<sup>81</sup> Leta E. Miller, 'Cage, Cunningham, and Collaborators: The Odyssey of "Variations V"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 85.3 (2001), 545–67.

settlers) and Māori. The influence of Western missionaries, the loss of key knowledge-holders in Māori communities, and in some cases government legislation,<sup>82</sup> led to the tradition of playing taonga puoro falling out of practice by the early twentieth century. The practice was revived in the 1970s by, amongst others, Dr. Hirini Melbourne, Dr. Richard Nunns and Brian Flintoff, who reconstructed the tradition from fragments of knowledge that existed in communities and historical ethnographies, such as the writings of Elsdon Best.<sup>83</sup>

Certainly, the resurgence of indigenous practices since the 1970s, frequently called ‘the Māori Renaissance’ is encouraging, but issues around colonial power dynamics nonetheless continue to be a source of friction for contemporary musical collaborations in New Zealand.<sup>84</sup> Including taonga puoro in musical works intended to be presented within a Western performing context raises the question as to whether or not Pākehā are colonising these instruments all over again, but this time with a musical score rather than a musket.

A sensitive approach to this issue is exemplified by the collaborative partnership between composer Dame Gillian Whitehead and taonga puoro musician Richard Nunns. In this particular pairing, it is interesting to note that Whitehead, the composer, has Māori ancestry, while Nunns, the prominent researcher, performer and advocate for taonga puoro, is Pākehā. This was a partnership which came at a crucial time for both artists, and also for the taonga puoro revival as a whole. New Zealand composers, searching for sounds unique to their country, were keen to incorporate these instruments into their works, but care had to be taken to ensure this was done in the right way, as Nunns himself wrote:

Taonga puoro had to enter this field on their own terms, not just be bundled into the concert mix. They had to be respected for what they could and could not do—they had to be understood. Gillian was the right person at the right time to facilitate this.<sup>85</sup>

As with many collaborative ventures, a degree of compromise was needed. While Whitehead would notate a conventional score for the Western instruments, when it came to the taonga puoro part, she would largely surrender control and only offer suggestions for improvisation in the score. Nunns would therefore be given creative autonomy to improvise his part, but that improvisation would need to fit within the musical framework that Whitehead had set. Nunns’s performance could also differ each time the composition was played, in a sense making each performance a continuation of the collaborative process. This has been the

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<sup>82</sup> For example, the 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act. See: Te Manaaroa Pirihira Rollo, ‘Ma Te Wai Ka Piki Ake Te Hauora’, *The New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy*; Wellington, 11 (2013), 51–80.

<sup>83</sup> Elsdon Best, *Games and Pastimes of the Maori: An Account of Various Exercises, Games and Pastimes of the Natives of New Zealand, as Practised in Former Times, Including Some Information Concerning Their Vocal and Instrumental Music* (Wellington: Board of Maori Ethnological Research for the Dominion Museum, 1925).

<sup>84</sup> See Elizabeth Kerr, ‘Maori Flute Lessons’, *The New Zealand Listener*, 14 May 1988.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Nunns and Allan Thomas, *Te Ara Pūoro: A Journey into the World of Māori Music* (Craig Potton: Nelson, 2014), 122.

prevailing model for Western instrument-taonga puoro collaborations ever since, and it has been widely speaking very successful.

One issue with this way of working, however, is that there can be a feeling of the improvised and notated parts existing in ‘parallel lanes’ with only limited musical dialogue. Efforts to resolve this, by having the Western musicians improvise as well, are sometimes effective but they depend heavily on the amount of rehearsal time, and the improvisational experience of the players. In my collaboration with taonga puoro player Alistair Fraser, *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, I have attempted another solution by using the transformation of *Triptych for Two* as a collaborative model. This allowed Fraser creative autonomy to create his part *before* I composed parts for the rest of the ensemble, allowing me to specifically create parts that resonate with his performance.

#### 4.1.5. CURATED COLLABORATION: BOB OSTERTAG AND ‘SAY NO MORE’

Other approaches to collaborative autonomy are much more heavy-handed. Composer Bob Ostertag’s 1993 album *Say No More* introduces a model of collaboration where improvisors start the process with complete freedom which is gradually ‘curated’ by Ostertag. To do this, he employs various interventions and disruptions to set up unrealistic expectations with the anticipation of failure.

Like my project, Ostertag’s took place in several collaborative phases. In the first phase, Ostertag invited three improvisers into a recording studio and asked each to perform for 30–60 minutes on their own, with no other instructions. Ostertag then edited the resulting recordings together in Pro Tools to create a ‘virtual’ ensemble performance, which became the basis for his album called *Say No More* (1993). The second phase occurred later that year when Ostertag sent the performers his edited recording, along with a score, and asked them to relearn their parts so they could perform the composition live. This was an exceedingly difficult task, because by editing the original recordings together Ostertag had created a performance that was physically impossible to recreate exactly. He *expected* the performers to fail at this task, and to find inventive workarounds in order to learn their parts. This led to the second album, *Say No More in Person* (1993).<sup>86</sup>

While the musicians start the process with a high degree of freedom and autonomy, Ostertag stages an intervention by editing their performances, shaping the material to his own ends. This is similar to the relationship I have with my collaborators, with some key differences. Firstly, I begin the process by offering an initial ‘spark’ which Ostertag doesn’t. Secondly, where Ostertag modifies his collaborator’s performances to provoke their creative processes, I ask mine to transform *my* work before I respond, thereby creating a two-way relationship. Thirdly, Ostertag’s expectation of failure is in my case replaced by an expectation of transformation; each of my collaborators has such a different way of working that there will

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<sup>86</sup> Christopher Williams, ‘Say No Score: A Lexical Improvisation After Bob Ostertag’, *Tempo*; Cambridge, 72.283 (2018), 21–33.

be a very low level of similarity between individual interpretations. Additionally, the modes in which they work are so different from mine that it would be impossible to reproduce my piece exactly. Even Alistair Fraser, a fellow musician, cannot exactly replicate the sound of *Triptych for Two* with his instruments, nor would he wish to. But in the same way that Ostertag's improvisors navigate 'failure' to find new pathways through the piece, Alistair's transformation of my work provokes novel approaches in our respective creative processes.

## 4.2. NON-HUMAN PROVOCATIONS

Ostertag's creative process demonstrates the kind of influence that one person can have on the creative process of a group of musicians. But let us entertain for a moment the possibility that external influence may not necessarily be human, and that these influences can be engaged with in non-collaborative as well as collaborative situations. Algorithms and systems can, even while operating within well-defined parameters, produce unexpected and surprising results that push the creative process in new directions. Meanwhile, engagement with unpredictable phenomena, such as the physical properties of sound, can also actively transform musical material in ways that are outside of a composer's control and in so doing also act as a kind of creative provocation.

### 4.2.1. ALGORITHMIC PROVOCATION AND COMPUTER-ASSISTED COMPOSITION

As we have already discussed, the 'exquisite corpse' is one example of an algorithm that provides a structural framework within which to explore collective creativity. Similarly, it is not unusual for composers to employ techniques or to set themselves rules and challenges to inspire more creative solutions to compositional problems, one example being the Lindenmayer systems employed by Hanspeter Kyburz in works such as *Cells (1993–94)*.<sup>87</sup> Lindenmayer systems (or L-systems) are fractal algorithms that mimic organic growth by taking small cells of material that multiply and transform over successive generations. I employed a similar system while writing *Triptych for Two*, inspired by the music of Hanspeter Kyburz, as a way of directing rhythmic development in the first movement, with each 'cell' representing a different kind of rhythmic material and this is the process I used: To begin with we have an axiom, a set of rules that dictates the way in which these cells evolve each time the algorithm is run. The cells themselves are represented as letters; for instance 'A becomes B' and 'B becomes B A'. Table 2 shows how this process unfolded over five generations:

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<sup>87</sup> Martin Supper, 'A Few Remarks on Algorithmic Composition', *Computer Music Journal*, 25.1, (2001), 48–53.

Axiom:  $A \rightarrow B, B \rightarrow B A$

1 <sup>st</sup> Generation:	A
2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation:	B
3 <sup>rd</sup> Generation:	B A
4 <sup>th</sup> Generation:	B A B
5 <sup>th</sup> Generation:	B A B B A
etc.	...

Table 2: The first 5 generations of the L-system employed in *Triptych for Two*

Eventually I introduce new kinds of rhythmic material, ‘C’, then ‘D’ and so on. The algorithm guides the development of material in a way that provides both variation and self-similarity, but the composer still decides what each cell represents. In this way, the composer sets up their own creative provocation by creating a system that guides their material into areas they may not have explored otherwise. On the other hand, if they are not satisfied with these outputs they can go back and re-write the algorithm, and so by adjusting the parameters of the system, the composer can guide their own creative process at a different level from the moment-to-moment decision making of which note follows the next.

I created my L-system for *Triptych for Two* by hand, but computer applications like OpenMusic, developed by IRCAM, allow composers to generate material through much more complicated algorithms with the help of a computer. Magnus Lindberg’s *Engine* (1996), for instance was composed using PatchWork, which is a predecessor of OpenMusic.<sup>88</sup> For *Engine*, each section could have between 30 and 40 interdependent rules or constraints that guide various aspects of the composition from melody and harmony to rhythm and voice-leading.<sup>89</sup> Again, by delegating certain creative decisions to an algorithmic system the composer frees up brain power to focus other aspects of the piece such as form, but Lindberg also treats this process as a way of analysing and improving upon his own compositional process more generally, something that is notably emphasised in the publisher’s programme note for the piece:

The reason he uses constraint machines is that he wants to find solutions enabling him to avoid the mannerisms of his own style. For the composer, establishing constraints also means analyzing and decomposing his style into rules, in order to master it better.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Mikael Laurson and Mika Kuuskankare, ‘Two Computer-Assisted Composition Case Studies’, *Contemporary Music Review*, 28.2 (2009), 193–203.

<sup>89</sup> Laurson and Kuuskankare, 196.

<sup>90</sup> Risto Nieminen, ‘Engine | Magnus Lindberg - Programme Note - Wise Music Classical’, trans. by Nick Le Quesne <<https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/7693/Engine--Magnus-Lindberg/>> [accessed 1 May 2020].

#### 4.2.2. DELIBERATE ENGAGEMENT WITH UNPREDICTABLE PHENOMENA: ALVIN LUCIER

Although algorithms can often produce surprising results, they nonetheless unfold according to pre-determined conditions. On the other hand, composers may also engage with more unpredictable phenomena to guide creative decision-making or transform musical material. John Cage's use of chance is one important example I have already cited, another is fellow American composer Alvin Lucier.

Lucier was less concerned with the social and performative aspects of music than he was with the physical properties of sound itself. In a 1979 article, Lucier wrote, 'We have been so concerned with language that we have forgotten how sound flows through space and occupies it'.<sup>91</sup> His compositions, therefore, take the physical properties of sound itself and exploit them to artistic ends. One famous example is his 1969 work *I am Sitting in a Room*. In this work, the composer sits in a room and records his own voice, reading a predetermined text. That recording is then played back into the same room and re-recorded with a microphone onto another tape. *That* recording is then played back into the same room and re-recorded, and this process repeats again and again until gradually, over several iterations of this process, the natural acoustic properties of the room reinforce particular frequencies in the original recording, destroying the original recording, or rather transforming it into a ghostly chorus of sine tones which inflect the rhythm of the composer's speech.

The following year, Lucier expanded on this idea to include the effects of multiple acoustic spaces on a much larger scale with *Quasimodo the Great Lover* (1970). Where *I am Sitting in a Room* was an intimate exploration of a single acoustic space, Lucier sought in *Quasimodo* to project sounds over great distances, inspired by whalesong. In this work, a sound is played sequentially through loudspeakers into a series of spaces, each with different acoustic properties. In the score for this work, Lucier suggests a variety of spaces for this process, including the rooms of an empty school building, or larger spaces like a prairie, glacier or ocean basin.<sup>92</sup> The sound is captured by a microphone in each space before being relayed to the next, where this process is repeated. As with *I am Sitting in a Room*, the original sound source is transformed by the differing acoustic characteristics of each space as it passes through the relay. In Lucier's score, the audience listens to the output from the final relay after the sound has passed through every space. He also suggests, however, that in some cases this system may be opened up for people to walk through and contribute their own sounds to this process, turning the piece into a participatory work. From a conceptual point-of-view, this kind of iterative process has many similarities to the process undertaken in this portfolio, since my original composition is also transmitted over larger distances. In my case, however, the

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<sup>91</sup> Elie Siegmeister, Alvin Lucier, and Mindy Lee, 'Three Points of View', *The Musical Quarterly*, 65.2 (1979), 281–95.

<sup>92</sup> Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, 'Quasimodo the Great Lover', in *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 55–65.



transformation that takes place is more metaphysical in nature being caused by the perceptions, interpretations and artistic practices of my collaborators rather than the acoustic properties of physical space.

### 4.3. MUSIC AS A 'FOUND OBJECT'

Alvin Lucier's *Quasimodo the Great Lover* transforms sound by having it echo through different physical spaces. The sound that audiences hear at the end of this array is essentially the same sound that was initially fed into the system, but modified by the acoustic process that Lucier had prescribed.

This gradual distortion of an existing sound object echoes the manner in which composers often take existing pieces of music and remould them into something new. In these cases, music is treated as a 'found object' something that can be transformed, recontextualised or commented on to create a new work of art, and also to provide a provocation by revealing new creative possibilities implied by the original.

#### 4.3.1. TRANSFORMATION OF EXISTING PIECES

This kind of deliberate intertextual thinking has been demonstrated in a particularly self-conscious way by a number of composers in the late twentieth century, a trend which continues to this day. One example is Berio's *Chemins* series, works for large ensemble created out of his *Sequenzas*, a series of works for solo instruments. Each of the *Chemins* takes the earlier piece and recontextualises it within a larger ensemble, who reflect, expand and distort the material provided by the solo part. Berio insists these works are more than orchestrations of the original solo works, and should instead be seen as *analyses* of them. As he writes in his introduction to *Chemins I* for harp and orchestra (1964):

The most profitable commentary on a symphony or an opera has always been another symphony or another opera. This is why my *Chemins*, where I quote, translate, expand and transcribe my *Sequenzas* for solo instrument, are also the *Sequenzas*' best analyses. The instrumental ensemble brings to the surface and develops musical processes that are hidden and compressed in the solo part, amplifying every aspect, including the temporal one: at times the roles are inverted so that the solo part appears to be generated by its own commentary.<sup>93</sup>

The ensemble therefore illuminates aspects of the original composition that would have remained hidden in a performance of the original *Sequenza*. In the case of *Sequenza VI* (1967) for viola, Berio took this process even further by basing several pieces on the same initial composition. *Chemins II* (1967) takes *Sequenza VI* and augments it with an ensemble of nine instruments, whereas *Chemins III* (1968/1973) does the same but with a large orchestra. In

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<sup>93</sup> 'Berio: *Chemins I* for Harp and Orchestra', *Universal Edition* <<https://www.universaledition.com/luciano-berio-54/works/chemins-i-1559>> [accessed 27 March 2020].

addition, *Chemins IIb* (1970) is essentially the ‘commentary’ from *Chemins III* reworked as a standalone piece for orchestra without the viola soloist, while *Chemins IIc* (1972) is identical to *Chemins IIb* but replaces the viola soloist with a bass clarinet. Each version presents a slightly different ‘reading’ of the *Sequenza*, and encourages the listener to consider the original work from a different point-of-view.

Pierre Boulez also had a habit of continually revising, updating and extending works in his catalogue. Paul Griffiths writes that ‘*Pli selon pli* exists in so many versions that perhaps one could consider it less a work than a nexus of possibilities, which, “fold by fold, have multiplied”’.<sup>94</sup> He also wrote a number of pieces that, like Berio’s *Chemins*, were developed by radically transforming material from earlier works. One example is *Sur Incises* (1996/1998), in which a ten-minute composition for solo piano, *Incises* (1994), is metamorphosed into a work that lasts 40 minutes and is scored for three pianos, three harps and three percussionists. Three equally virtuosic piano parts reflect and echo each other, whereas the harps add resonance to the ensemble by creating a harmonic shadow, while the percussion add rhythmic articulation and timbral variation. In many ways, the piece is not only a commentary on the original work, but also on the piano as an instrument. The ensemble mimics the piano’s construction, breaking it down into constituent parts. The three harps represent the strings, whereas the percussion are the soundboard and hammer mechanism.<sup>95</sup> Boulez transforms the original material in a number of ways: short gestures are broadened and elaborated upon, while the harmony is expanded through one of the composer’s signature techniques, frequency multiplication. *Incises* is therefore not only enhanced and extended, but exploded, dissected, and then reassembled into a kaleidoscopic exploration of the possibilities implied within the original work.

Whereas Boulez and Berio wrote commentary on works from the past, Wolfgang Rihm turned this idea on its head by writing cycles of pieces that comment on works he intends to compose in the future. The clearest example of this is *Jagden und Formen* (1995–2001/2007/2008), a large work for orchestra assembled from a number of smaller works composed between 1995 and 2001: *Gejagte Form* (1995/2002), *Verborgene Formen* (1995/1997), *Pol* (1995), *Nucleus* (1996) and *Gedrängte Form* (1995/1998).<sup>96</sup> The constituent pieces of *Jagden und Formen* look forward to the larger work, and were composed with this intertextual approach in mind:

All these pieces are written (not all, actually; not the first, but after the second they are all written) in the direction of one big piece. The first piece was *Gejagte Form*; the

<sup>94</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 214.

<sup>95</sup> Tom Coult, ‘Pierre Boulez’s “Sur Incises”: Refraction, Crystallisation and the Absent Idea(l)’, *Tempo; Cambridge*, 67.264 (2013), 2–21.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Rihm - Gedrängte Form for Ensemble’, *Universal Edition* <<https://www.universaledition.com/wolfgang-rihm-599/works/gedrangte-form-2613>> [accessed 27 March 2020].

second, *Verborgene Formen*, was only written with an idea that ‘You come together with the first piece and you will have a marriage and you will have children’.<sup>97</sup>

While each of the smaller pieces develops or contrasts musical material first seen in *Gejagte Form*, this is always done with the intention that this would later become one piece in a larger musical jigsaw. A perusal of the score for *Jagden und Formen* reveals subtle variances in formatting as Rihm shifts from one ‘sub-work’ to another: most sections are handwritten, while the rest are typeset. Although this makes the score rather difficult to follow at times, it reveals to us how Rihm has ‘patchworked’ the piece together.

While the fully assembled piece was first premiered in 2001, it has always been described as a continual work-in-progress, in many ways a commentary on the composer’s own creative process as much as anything else. The constant reworkings and revisions of each work in the cycle reveal a process of each part searching for its rightful place in the larger form hinted at in the title— ‘Hunts and Forms’ —and further reinforced in Rihm’s introduction to *Gejagte Form*:

There is a moment in which the pursuit of (a) form turns into (its) form. But this moment can neither be frozen nor stored; at best it can be conjured. Repeatedly. Shortly before and shortly afterward. But you cannot pin it down.<sup>98</sup>

The final version of *Jagden und Formen* was completed in 2008, although whether Rihm will make any further additions, revisions or alterations remains to be seen

#### 4.3.2. MUSICAL BORROWING

The kinds of deliberate intertextual thinking we see in *Chemins*, *Sur Incises* and *Jagden und Formen* represent a highly introspective approach to the transformation of musical material where composers rework their own material. It is also important, however, to discuss the way in which composers borrow from, comment on and transform the works of others. Such exchanges display the interconnectedness of creative minds, by creating wide intertextual webs across communities. In recent times, with the advent of recording technology and the Internet, the size, scope and geographical distribution of these communities has increased dramatically along with the speed of such exchanges.

Musical borrowing is certainly nothing new and has been done for numerous reasons; the widespread practice of writing variations on a theme by another composer, for example, is one way of transforming existing musical material into something new. Composers frequently quote the music of others as a form of homage or parody, such as when Béla Bartók sarcastically quotes Shostakovich’s *Leningrad Symphony* (1942) in his *Concerto for*

<sup>97</sup> Richard McGregor, ‘An Interview with Wolfgang Rihm’, in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, by Delège Irène, ed. by Max Paddison (Routledge, 2016), pp.349–60.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Rihm - Gejagte Form for Orchestra’, *Universal Edition* <<https://www.universaledition.com/wolfgang-rihm-599/works/gejagte-form-10840>> [accessed 30 March 2020].

*Orchestra* (1945).<sup>99</sup> Alternatively, there may also be specific extramusical connotations the composer wishes to evoke. The Medieval plainchant *Dies Irae*, often quoted to evoke a sense of doom and foreboding, is a prevalent example, having been cited in works as diverse as Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830) and George Crumb's *Black Angels* (1970). Additionally, as discussed in Chapter Two, the practice of musical borrowing can extend beyond mere quotation to the transformation of entire musical works, if one considers examples of transcription and musical transdialection, such as Michael Finnissy's reworking of a Bach chorale.<sup>100</sup>

While these are all examples of composers borrowing music from *within* the Western art music tradition, composers have for a long time also borrowed from *outside* the tradition.<sup>101</sup> The availability of audio recordings in the twentieth century gave composers access to sounds they may not have heard otherwise, and also to be able to analyse those sounds in extreme detail. An early example would be Bartók and Kodály's wax recordings of Magyar folksongs, from which they later published transcriptions. A more recent example comes from New Zealand composer Jack Body, who wrote a number of pieces based on transcriptions of music from other cultures. His *Three Transcriptions* (1998) take three field recordings of performances by non-Western musicians and reimagines them for string quartet. These works comment on and analyse the original recordings in much the same way that Berio's *Chemins* are analyses of his *Sequenzas*. While Body's creative adaptation of musical material from one cultural context into another serves to illuminate aspects of the original performance, they are also revealing portraits of Body himself in that they are filtered through his own perception of the performances. Additionally, there is an element of socialcultural commentary in taking field recordings of non-Western musicians and recontextualising them for one of the most typical Western musical ensembles, the string quartet.

Considering my earlier discussion of colonial power dynamics, there are certainly debates to be had about the ethics of such a process.<sup>102</sup> Body, however, emphasised that he saw these

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<sup>99</sup> Exactly whom Bartók is parodying here is unclear; he may in fact be parodying the German Composer Franz Lehár, whom Shostakovich also references in his symphony. It may also be a general piece of social commentary on authoritarian regimes. See David Cooper, *Bartók Concerto for Orchestra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54.

<sup>100</sup> Richard Beaudoin and Joseph Moore, 'Conceiving Musical Transdialection', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68.2 (2010), 105–17.

<sup>101</sup> To offer one interesting example, in the article, 'Listening Attentively to Cultural Fragmentation: Tradition and Composition in Works by East Asian Composers', Christain Utz describes the journey of one Chinese melody, *Molihua*, which was transcribed by the German Scholar Johann Christian Hüttner and published in 1795 when they returned to Europe, a version of this melody eventually found its way into Puccini's *Turandot* in 1924 after the composer heard it on a friend's music box. Chinese composer Tan Dun later quotes the same melody in his *Symphony 1997*, using an orchestration reminiscent of Puccini's version. See Christian Utz, 'Listening Attentively to Cultural Fragmentation: Tradition and Composition in Works by East Asian Composers', *The World of Music*, 45.2 (2003), 7–38.

<sup>102</sup> It should also be noted that allegations that came to light in late 2020 have further problematised Body's legacy. However, his work remains a fascinating example of transcription as part of a creative process. Body also worked

works as acts of homage to musicians he deeply admired, but whom he had never actually met. In his 2001 album *Pulse*, he presented the original recordings alongside his transcriptions as a way of referencing his source material.<sup>103</sup> He also viewed these recordings of music from other cultures as a kind of creative provocation, with the process of transcription challenging his own preconceptions of what music was and thereby enriching his creative process:

I don't regard my work with transcription as an end in itself, even though it produces transcriptions / arrangements / compositions which are played. It is the process itself which excites and stimulates me, for the way it challenges my preconceptions about how I hear and perceive music, as well calling into question the function and limitations of notation. I even feel that my compositions not directly related to transcription are frequently enriched and fertilised by my transcription studies.<sup>104</sup>

Another work, Peter Ablinger's cycle *Voices and Piano* (1998–present), takes a different approach by presenting recorded sound as part of the musical performance. This work pairs audio recordings of recorded speeches with a live piano performance. Again, this performance should be considered an analysis and commentary of the voice recording rather than an accompaniment, one that takes a familiar sonic object like the human voice and encourages us to listen to it in a new way, as Ablinger says:

the relation of the two is more a competition or comparison. Speech and music is compared. We can also say: reality and perception. Reality/speech is continuous, perception/music is a grid which tries to approach the first. Actually the piano part is the temporal and spectral scan of the respective voice, something like a coarse gridded photograph. Actually the piano part is the analysis of the voice.<sup>105</sup>

The work is not only an examination of the recording as a sonic object, but also of the intersection of two different artforms: music and the spoken word.

#### 4.4. COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES AND THE INTERNET

Considering examples of musical borrowing given above, the notion that music can be shared and transformed among creative communities is clearly well established. Works like those of Ablinger and Body, however, also demonstrate how the scope and speed of such exchanges has increased drastically in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries thanks to the rise of recording and communication technology. More recently, this trend has been further amplified by the Internet and social media. The advent of recording technology has enabled

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hard throughout his life to promote friendship and co-operation between musicians from diverse cultures around the Pacific and beyond.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Norris, 'Apropos Appropriation', *Canzona*, 2007, 40–43.

<sup>104</sup> Jack Body, 'Musical Transcription: From Sound to Symbol and Back Again', *Balungan*, 6.1–2 (1998), 26–30.

<sup>105</sup> Anny Ballardini, 'An Interview with Peter Ablinger after the Performance of "Voices and Piano" with Nicolas Hoges on the Piano at the Brunnenburg, Merano, Italy during the Festival "Transart" (Peter Ablinger Website, 2004) <ablinger.nur.at>.

composers, from the earliest examples of *musique concrète* through to uses of ‘sampling’ and ‘remixes’ in popular music today, to treat sound as an object that can be dramatically moulded, reshaped and recontextualised by technology. Additionally, it is also now possible for anyone to produce high-quality audio and video recordings from home and disseminate them to an international audience. This fact has been noticeably embraced by musicians on YouTube and other social media, the accessibility of which allows interactions between people separated by large geographical and cultural divides, operating in vastly different domains, at speeds which would have been unthinkable in the past.<sup>106</sup>

This has led to a number of interesting approaches to collaboration, and a number of online platforms have been designed specifically to foster these kinds of creative exchanges. One such example is hitRECORD, a production company started by actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt with his brother Dan in 2005.<sup>107</sup> HitRECORD encourages online collaboration by inviting artists working in any medium to contribute content to their website. That content then becomes a provocation for other artists in the community who can access that content, discuss it and offer feedback, and also well as download it, transform it, or create additional content in response. The site now acts as a repository of different responses to the same initial provocation; with the initial content uploaded by the original contributor remaining unaltered, but being displayed alongside responses from the wider community. Over time, this pool of contributions grows to form a vast rhizomatic web of artistic interaction, not unlike the intertextual network Monelle describes when he writes about Mahler symphonies.<sup>108</sup> The question as to what ‘the work’ is, and who ‘authored’ it, certainly becomes difficult to answer convincingly, but if any content is ever monetised, the company follows a democratic model, distributing profits among the contributors in proportion to their contribution. This ‘open-source’ model of collaboration is still relatively new, but it may be a sign of things to come. The sharing, borrowing and transforming of artistic material among communities has likely existed for millennia, but it is becoming easier and faster than ever before. It may be that future projects of this kind may force us as a society to dramatically reconsider concepts of authorship and intellectual property entirely.

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<sup>106</sup> Douglas Kahn describes an online performance of Lucier’s *Quasimodo the Great Lover* curated by Laura Cameron and Matt Rogalsky in 2007 (see Douglas Kahn, ‘Long Sounds and Transperception’, in *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts* (University of California: Berkley, 2013)). Additionally, in March of 2020 as I write this thesis a global outbreak of the disease Covid-19 has confined many musicians to their homes. Public gatherings and concerts have been banned in many countries and as a result, musicians around the world have been unable to perform in public and have turned to the virtual online community as a platform to create and disseminate work and collaborate online. As a result, I am seeing large numbers of my peers passing videos among one another over social media as a form of distance collaboration.

<sup>107</sup> Joel Stein, ‘Everyman Rising’, *TIME Magazine*, 178.12 (2011), 60–61.

<sup>108</sup> Raymond Monelle, ‘Text and Subjectivity’, in *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, by Raymond Monelle and Robert Hatten (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 147–169 (see Chapter 2).

#### 4.5. CONCLUSION

External provocations are frequently an important part of the creative process. They are an important tool with which an artist can transform and refine their creative practice, and come in many forms.

A person can be a provocation, as shown in the various collaborative projects I have mentioned, however, these collaborations can be structured in a number of ways that lead to different creative outcomes. Radigue's collaborative process in the *Occam Ocean* series embraces creative partnerships by developing music together with performers over an extended period, guided by underlying principles. Surrealist games, such as the 'exquisite corpse', refine and direct group energies toward a common goal while also allowing each participant a large degree of freedom in their individual approaches. The anarchic collaborations of Cage, Cunningham and Rauschenberg embrace chance operations to promote a more independent relationship between their respective artforms, whereas Whitehead and Nunns embrace collaborative autonomy as a tool to facilitate respectful cross-cultural collaboration. Ostertag's approach is altogether more interventionist, he gives his collaborators autonomy but curates the project by editing and disrupting their normal modes of playing. By giving them the task of reproducing their own edited performances, he sets them up to fail, and forces them to find new creative approaches.

However, there are also a variety of provocations that do not come from other people. Systems such as those employed Kyburz and Lindberg show how algorithms can also guide the creative process into new areas, while Lucier explores the way in which the environment can act as a creative provocation by demonstrating how physical spaces shape and transform musical material in *Quasimodo the Great Lover*.

A piece of music, or some other found object, can also act as a provocation. Berio, Boulez and Rihm take works from their own catalogues then dissect, expand and rework them into something new, while Body and Ablinger use found recordings as material to create new pieces. These pieces are a form of commentary on the original works, but also on art as a communal activity. The rapid advancement of communication technology has led to shared collaborative exchanges becoming wider and more complex than could previously be imagined, and with these developments come new ways to provoke artistic expression.

Where this chapter provided examples of creative provocations from the past, the following chapter will explain the manner in which my own creative projects were undertaken. This includes details of how my collaborators were chosen, how the process unfolded, and how the principles of action research guided a process of self-reflection between myself and my fellow participants.

# Chapter 5: METHODOLOGY

The creative portfolio of this thesis stems from an examination of my own creative process, and how it can be expanded and developed by engaging with external influences. In particular, I am interested in the way an intersection of my process with those of other artists can be used to deliberately disrupt and invigorate my own creative practice. These collaborative projects reveal much about creative processes in general, but also about the people who participated. Each person's worldview, their preferred tools and the conventions of their chosen medium have a strong influence on each artistic outcome. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the manner in which these projects were conducted and how these processes were documented then reflected upon. I will also discuss the factors which led me to adopt action research as a paradigm, before explaining the various practical and ethical considerations which had to be considered during this study, especially issues of intellectual property and cultural appropriation.

Practice-led research approaches like the one taken in this thesis often rely on a reflexive approach that documents an individual journey of exploration and discovery.<sup>109</sup> This study, however, also takes the influence of external forces into account, and at various points the creative process is taken out of my control entirely. While, as the instigator and curator of this project, this story is inevitably told from my point-of-view, a research approach is needed that embraces a plurality of views and allows each of those voices to speak freely and with autonomy.

## 5.1. ACTION RESEARCH

This study requires a research approach that is grounded from the bottom-up, self-reflexive, and embraces theoretical frameworks as well as practical application. One paradigm which satisfies these criteria is 'action research', a self-reflective research approach in which participants seek to critically analyse their own practice by actively participating in that practice then reflecting on what they observed. It is often used to enable practitioners to develop a better understanding of their own disciplines and the way in which they operate within these fields, as well as justifying their practice by combining practical and theoretical approaches. The term 'action research' was first coined by Kurt Lewin, who used the method to examine social practices such as discrimination against minority groups and food-buying

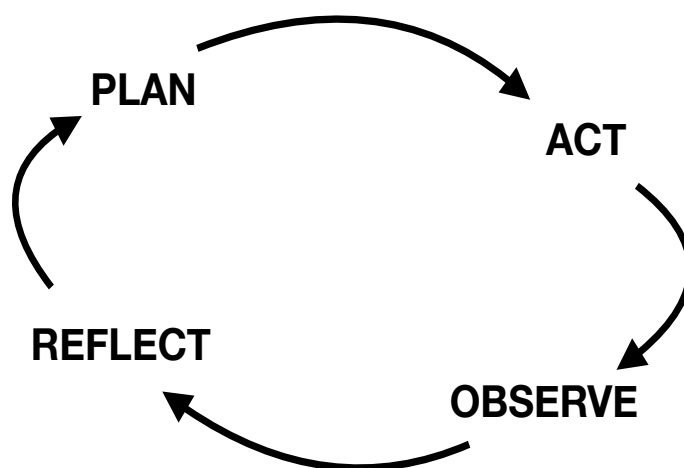
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<sup>109</sup> As with many creative theses, the question naturally arises as to what actually constitutes research: Australian pianist and academic Stephen Emmerson offers a succinct summary of the United Kingdom REF definition of research as the following: 1) a process of investigation 2) leading to new insights 3) effectively shared. Is creativity, then, a form of research? This is a set of criteria that could be applied to any creative act. Margaret Boden defines creativity as the ability to come up with ideas that are new, surprising, and valuable. According to Emmerson, 'it depends'. It depends on the way in which that creativity is framed, and how it is documented, discussed and disseminated. See: Stephen Emmerson, 'Is My Performance Research?', in *Perspectives in Artistic Research in Music*, ed. by Robert Burke and Andrys Onsman (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 27–46.



habits in the 1940s.<sup>110</sup> More recently the approach has been embraced by public health and education researchers such as Stephen Kemmis, Wilfred Carr, Gabriel Rusinek and Richard Winter.<sup>111</sup> The paradigm is suited to fields that require a balance of theoretical work with practical application in addition to extensive collaborative discourse. Education researchers, for instance, need to test their ideas in the classroom to see if they have merit and need to quantify the similarities and differences in experiences between other teachers and students.

For arts practitioners, action research is a way of conducting practice-led research that combines practical output with critical self-reflection and intellectual rigour. The methodology is based around a recurring cycle of four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting [Fig. 15]. Once this cycle is completed, researchers apply the lessons learned to a new planning stage and move into the next iteration of the cycle. In this way, researchers create a self-reflexive spiral, with each iteration of the cycle informed by earlier ones, gradually moving closer to some sort of overall realisation or conclusion about their practice.



*Fig. 15: The Moments of Action Research as described by Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis<sup>112</sup>*

There are a number of variations on the idea of action research and how it should be conducted. The ideal length of each cycle can vary considerably between researchers, and the separation between each stage frequently becomes obscured as research progresses, as noted by Stephen Kemmis et al in *The Action Research Planner*:

<sup>110</sup> Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (Falmer: Lewes, 1986), 164.

<sup>111</sup> See Richard Winter, *Learning from Experience: Principles and Practice in Action-Research* (East Sussex: The Falmer Press, 1989); Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon, *The Action Research Planner* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2014); Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (Falmer: Lewes, 1986); Gabriel Rusinek, 'Action-Research on Collaborative Composition: An Analysis of Research Questions and Designs', in *Musical Creativity: Insights from Music Education* (Taylor and Francis: Farnham).

<sup>112</sup> Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (Falmer: Lewes, 1986), 186.

In reality, action research is rarely as neat as this spiral of self-contained cycle of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting suggests. The stages overlap, and initial plans quickly become obsolete in the light of learning from the experience.<sup>113</sup>

The authors go on to assert that the cycle is only a tool to achieve the real aim of action research, which is to gain a nuanced and grounded understanding of practice as it relates to social context and to stimulate a genuine development of that practice. The important thing is to observe what you have learned and then to apply it. In fact, most writers also note that by itself the *plan-act-observe-reflect* cycle is not sufficient to guarantee a rigorous research approach at all. One important issue, as Richard Winter puts it, is ensuring the validity of any observations made as part of the research:

As practitioners we inevitably rely upon our opinions, beliefs, assumptions, and various forms of ideology, but if action-research is to be worth the effort then we must have a way of arguing that the procedures of action-research help us to 'go beyond' (to check, question, 'test') our opinions, beliefs, assumptions and ideologies, so that at the end our understanding and our practices are more securely based (and in that sense 'more valid') than when we set out.<sup>114</sup>

As both a participant and the instigator of this research project, I am very much in the position of an emic observer, one that does not objectively study events from a distance but is actively involved in and influences the outcome. True impartiality is therefore difficult to achieve and would actually be counterproductive since true insight into the creative process is most easily gained by participating in that process oneself. However, Winter's point here is that the research needs to *challenge* the researcher and to push beyond any assumptions they inevitably have going into a project. I could write and reflect on my practice endlessly, but if my reflections only ever confirmed my own opinions and assumptions, little would be gained from this process. Therefore, other factors beyond the reflexive cycle must be included to ensure that findings are both valid and pertinent. To this end, Winter suggests six key principles necessary for good action research: 1) *Reflexive Critique*: questioning one's own assumptions, 2) *Dialectical Critique*: observing and analysing social context, environmental conditions and relationships, 3) *Collaborative Resource*: giving weighting to each participant's contribution, 4) *Risk*: the possibility that projects will fail, 5) *Plural Structure*: the incorporation of many voices and points of view into the written work and 6) *Theory, Practice, Transformation*: the willingness to change one's approach based on findings from previous action research cycles.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon, *The Action Research Planner* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2014), 18.

<sup>114</sup> Winter, 36.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 38-77.

The inherent flexibility of action research is valuable for arts researchers because it provides the opportunity to reflect on and change their research approach based on observations made from project to project, and to refine their approach as they progress through the study. Action research is done ‘as you go’, and so it is able to faithfully capture the moment-to-moment evolution of creative decision-making. In fact, the way in which action research is carried out has many similarities with the models of the creative process discussed earlier in Chapter 3. The alternation between conceptual and material spaces presented in Dahlstedt’s model can certainly be correlated with the discursive and practical elements of the action research cycle [see Chapter 3, Fig. 10].<sup>116</sup> Simon Emmerson’s oscillation between poietic and esthetic processes in his Simple Model of Composition also comes to mind, [Chapter 3, Fig. 7] and John Coulter’s Multimedia Realisation Spiral is intimately connected to the idea of action research [see Chapter 3, Fig. 8].<sup>117</sup> Coulter’s spiral is based on a three-step cycle, *conceptualise–produce–analyse*, which is very similar to the *plan–act–observe–reflect* cycle of action research. His paper ‘Multimedia Composition as Research’, considers the possibility that the act of composition in itself can be considered a form of action research, using his spiral as a template. While it is an enticing proposition that one could conduct research by simply creating music and then reflecting on one’s own creative process, Coulter concludes that several key requirements for the action research paradigm would not be met in this case, most notably Winter’s conditions of collaborative resource and plural structure. These conditions require the researcher to incorporate multiple viewpoints and to treat them as being, as Coulter says, ‘equally significant as potential resources of creative interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the participants’.<sup>118</sup> These are important aspects of action research because they ensure that viewpoints other than those of the principal researcher are brought into the conversation. Coulter therefore concludes that one person working on a multimedia composition is not action research in and of itself, but it can form a part of a wider practice-led methodology.

This project differs, however, in that collaborative discourse forms a central part of the study. There is a multiplicity of voices in the portfolio because this work contains deliberate and sanctioned appropriation of my own work by others, which is then absorbed back into my own creative practice. This also means that the interviews and discussions I have with my collaborators are extremely important, because they help me gain insight into *their* creative processes, while also illuminating issues around their interpretation of my own work. In most cases these insights also influenced my own responses.

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<sup>116</sup> Palle Dahlstedt, ‘Between Material and Ideas: A Process-Based Spatial Model of Artistic Creativity’, in *Computers and Creativity*, ed. by Jon McCormack and Mark d’Inverno (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012), 205–233

<sup>117</sup> Simon Emmerson, and John Coulter, ‘Multimedia Composition as Research’, *Electroacoustic Music Studies Network International Conference Series*. Montreal, 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Coulter (2005), 7.

## 5.2. METHODS

The 2012 *Papaki Tai|Migrations* project in London was largely born out of practical necessity. It was a way to collaborate at a distance when technological solutions did not allow for convincing real-time interactions. But the thing that still fascinates me about this way of working is how it illuminates so many different facets of the creative process.

It shows how each artist's individual process is influenced by their circumstances, the capabilities of their medium and their own personal experiences. It also allows for a democratisation of the collaborative process while still providing some creative direction. In the previous chapter, we saw how John Cage and Merce Cunningham worked with a kind of anarchic independence which meant they could remain largely ignorant of the other's work until the performance, while Bob Ostertag set his bandmates the very specific and difficult task of exactly reproducing their own performances. This project offers an approach that lies somewhere between the two, offering the same prompt to all collaborators without any conditions as to the manner in which they respond. This kind of creative autonomy naturally creates a 'bottom-up', rather than 'top-down' collaborative structure. I am the 'curator' of this set of works, but I am equally a participant as well. Every time one of my partners re-interprets my piece, I create another in turn which frequently presents a number of interesting challenges. Finally, the project serves to enrich my own creativity by forcing me to approach my own works in new ways. Working with other artists through the conduit of creative-collaborative provocation helps me to better understand their creative processes, desires and considerations and to apply that knowledge to my practice. This is a powerful alternative to the traditional approach in Western Art Music, which is somewhat peculiar when considered in relation to other musical traditions: the composer writes a score, the performers play it and the audience listens, silently.

The first part of the portfolio, which contains what I call 'first-generation works', can be considered a 'control group' for this study in that these works illustrate a more conventional compositional approach: they were composed on my own, either onto manuscript with pencil and paper to be performed from a score by classically trained musicians or, in the case of acousmatic works, by manipulating field recordings in a Digital Audio Workstation. That is not to say they were written entirely without external influence. Some used algorithmic composition schemes such as the Lindenmayer-systems used in *Triptych for Two* and *Clink*; there were also examples of composer-performer collaboration, such as in *Interference Study*, which underwent significant workshopping with performers. These provocations are much less dramatic, however, than those explored in the second half of the portfolio which contains the 'second-generation works'.

In the second part of the portfolio, each participant was sent the same recording of the first-generation piece, *Triptych for Two*, and was invited to respond in their own time and in any

way they wished.<sup>119</sup> I chose this piece because of its clear three-part structure, hoping that this would assist my analysis of the responses. Additionally, as an exploration of rhythm, the work's abstract nature avoided any extra-musical connotation that would colour the interpretation of my collaborators.<sup>120</sup> They were given the choice to respond to the piece as a whole, or any section they chose, and were asked to document as much of their process as possible. I did not provide any further instructions as to how they should frame their responses, other than that they should use the recording as a starting point.

Participants were chosen from a range of backgrounds and disciplines to ensure a variety of different responses. Many were people I knew previously or had worked with before, and were chosen because of the quality of their work, as well as having had experience of multidisciplinary collaboration. Some responded very quickly; others took more time. Most chose to respond to the entire work, though a few chose to only respond to one or two movements. Once I received their response, I tried to document my own reaction to their pieces as objectively as possible, before conducting an in-depth interview looking at their individual approaches.

It was then that the tables were turned, and I created music in response to my collaborator's artworks. Sometimes these interviews would influence my process as much as the pieces themselves, as I attempted to replicate aspects of their creative processes and apply them to my practice. This required a different approach in each case: with Ukrainian artist Oleksiy Koval's response, I decided to transform his digital painting into a graphic score by inventing rules by which performers could interpret it. On the other hand, responding to taonga puoro musician Alistair Fraser's contribution required a detailed transcription and analysis of his performances before I could even begin work on my own response. The case of *[RE]Surfacing*, created with New Zealand artist Lisa Munnelly, was different because consecutive responses were passed between the two of us as the work developed, meaning that we were both working on the project in parallel with each other.

In both the 'first-generation' and 'second-generation' works, the various stages of creation for each work in the portfolio were documented reflexively in my research journal as they unfolded, and also in creative notes and sketches made along the way. There were a number of other forms of documentation as well, including photographs, video and audio recordings of workshops and rehearsals, my collaborator's own working notes that they were graciously willing to share with me, and finally the works themselves which also serve as documentation of the process which created them.

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<sup>119</sup> A notable exception being Lisa Munnelly, who first invited *me* to participate in her project before I sent her the recording of *Triptych for Two*.

<sup>120</sup> One extramusical reference was the allusion to the triptych in visual art, which did influence some participants.

Fig. 16 shows how this process relates to the action research cycle described above, and how I progress through the cycle with my collaborators at the project level while also experiencing a larger reflexive cycle myself as I move between different projects in the portfolio:

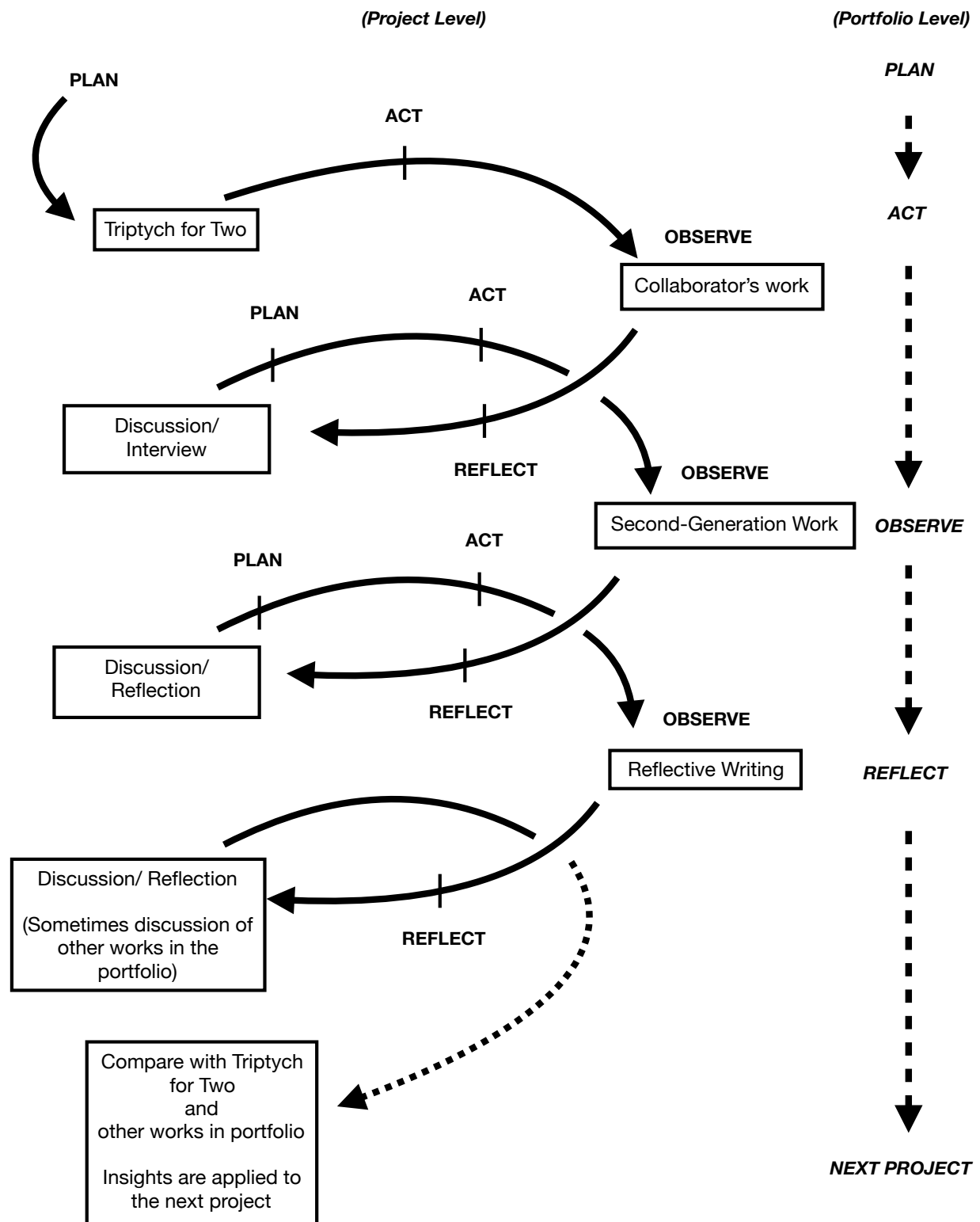


Fig. 16: The action research spiral modelling my collaborative process in this portfolio.

These steps were not followed perfectly in all cases; some parts of the process took much longer than others, meaning various steps in the process or even other projects overlapped with each other. Sometimes there were long periods when one project was on hold while I or my partners worked on another, meaning a short period of reintegration in order to continue work.

I do not claim that the observations of this exegesis are in any way universal—my aim is not to ‘explain’ creativity globally, but rather to tell a story about how my individual creative impulses become manifest in pieces of music, and how the people who surround me contribute to this process. If any insight into creativity in general can be gained, it is perhaps to make us more honest about how other people influence us as artists, and how we can deliberately embrace elements outside of our control to develop as artists. In a sense, every creative act is a collaboration.

### 5.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project poses a number of ethical issues. The first of these is how to treat the intellectual property of my participants with respect, and to represent their views accurately. Each participant’s view on the concept of intellectual property differs slightly and this became a critical talking point in many of our discussions. Cultural issues, particularly around the use of taonga puoro (traditional Māori instruments) were also a significant ethical concern going into this project. While ultimately this became a smaller part of this study than was initially intended, issues of colonial power dynamics and cultural sensitivity still had to be considered, especially in my work with Alistair Fraser.

As the one inviting these artists to contribute to my project, I felt it was important to structure these collaborations in a way that guaranteed participants a large degree of autonomy and enabled them to frame the conditions of their own participation. Participants had the chance to decide the manner in which I acknowledged their contribution to the second-generation pieces. Some chose joint authorship, while others were happy with a simple dedication. This project has been granted human ethics approval by the Victoria University of Wellington Ethics Committee (#26063) and each participant was asked to complete a consent form agreeing to the terms of their participation. Many of the people asked to participate were professional artists who make a living from their work. Because of this, it was important to offer them some kind of financial compensation for their time and expertise. This was discussed on a case-by-case basis with each participant, with some agreeing to a small fee and others preferring to forego payment. Participants also had the chance to review all transcripts taken from interviews, and also to read this exegesis prior to submission, and to make corrections accordingly.

#### 5.4. CONCLUSION

The principles of action research provide a tested way of structuring creative research in a way that leaves room for extensive periods of critical reflection and includes insights from a range of voices and differing points-of-view. These principles also allow me to ‘go beyond’ my own insights, reflections and prejudices to gain a degree of perspective on my artistic practice and apply those insights to develop it. The methods I undertook in this study, being influenced by these principles, gave me a robust foundation from which to examine my own creative process and how it intersects with those of others. While there are ways this process could be improved upon and expanded, such as allowing participants greater dialogue with *each other*, the diverse viewpoints of each participant have greatly helped me place my own reflexive observations into context. From an ethical standpoint, the autonomy granted to participants avoids many of the pitfalls of such research by allowing them to define the terms of their participation and to retain ownership over their contributions. In the next chapter, I will discuss the first-generation works, and how these reflect my standard creative process. This awareness will provide a foundation from which to later explore the collaborative works that disrupt this process in many ways.



# Chapter 6: FIRST-GENERATION WORKS

## EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PROVOCATION IN MY OWN CREATIVE PROCESS

The model of creative-collaborative provocation requires that participants respond to a provocation in the form of an external stimulus. The ways in which artists adapt to this prompt can noticeably influence the unfolding of their creative processes and can lead to new insights. But equally, it can pose significant challenges that require thorough introspective self-reflection.

While one could respond to the provocation purely as an intellectual exercise, there are also questions of practicality and context: *why am I being asked to do this? Where will this lead? What is the end goal?* Similarly, the task of creating a piece as a response to something, be that a piece of music, a specific brief, or a particular experience, can also be seen as a form of limitation that can be embraced as a creative catalyst or, alternatively, subverted in some way.

In order to be considered a kind of provocation, these interventions also need to demonstrate some kind of ‘movement’,<sup>121</sup> that is, some noticeable effect on the creative process on either a conceptual or material level. While in some cases this is quite easy to demonstrate as one idea leads to another, in other cases it is less so. In addition, provocations in this thesis also occurred at different stages in the creative process and behaved in different ways—these are the *early*, *late* and *dynamic* provocations I discussed in Chapter 3. The effects these provocations had on a work that was in progress were naturally very different to works that were only just beginning or in very early stages.

In this chapter, I will put myself in my collaborators’ shoes by examining the ways in which I respond to these kinds of challenges in my own writing. I call these pieces ‘first-generation works’, to differentiate them from the ‘second-generation works’ in the following chapter, which derive from my collaborators’ responses to *Triptych for Two*. The pieces discussed in this chapter were all written in response to specific challenges and limitations. While these were largely self-imposed in the case of *Triptych for Two*, other pieces were composed in response to specific briefs, situations or performance contexts.

Writing about a ‘normal’ creative process is in some ways misleading, since every piece I had ever written has unfolded in a very different way. That being said, this chapter represents a conscious effort to note and examine the various ways in which external provocations have pushed and shaped my own creative abilities, while also establishing a rough ‘blueprint’ from which to examine the second-generation works.

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<sup>121</sup> de Bono, ‘Serious Creativity’.

### 6.1. *TRIPTYCH FOR TWO* (2017/18)—VIOLIN AND SNARE DRUM

It is important to mention this work first, since it is the ‘seed’ from which the second-generation works in the next chapter are derived. There were a number of factors in the genesis of this piece that could, in themselves, be considered creative provocations. *Triptych for Two* (2017/18) was written for Ensemble Gô, comprising violinist Monique Lapins and percussionist Naoto Segawa. This struck me as an interesting combination, and the challenge of pairing percussion with a small instrument like the violin offered an opportunity to refine my approach to rhythmic development, something I wanted to develop in my writing at that time. With this in mind, I decided to introduce two provocations early in the creative process that would deliberately steer my focus toward rhythm.

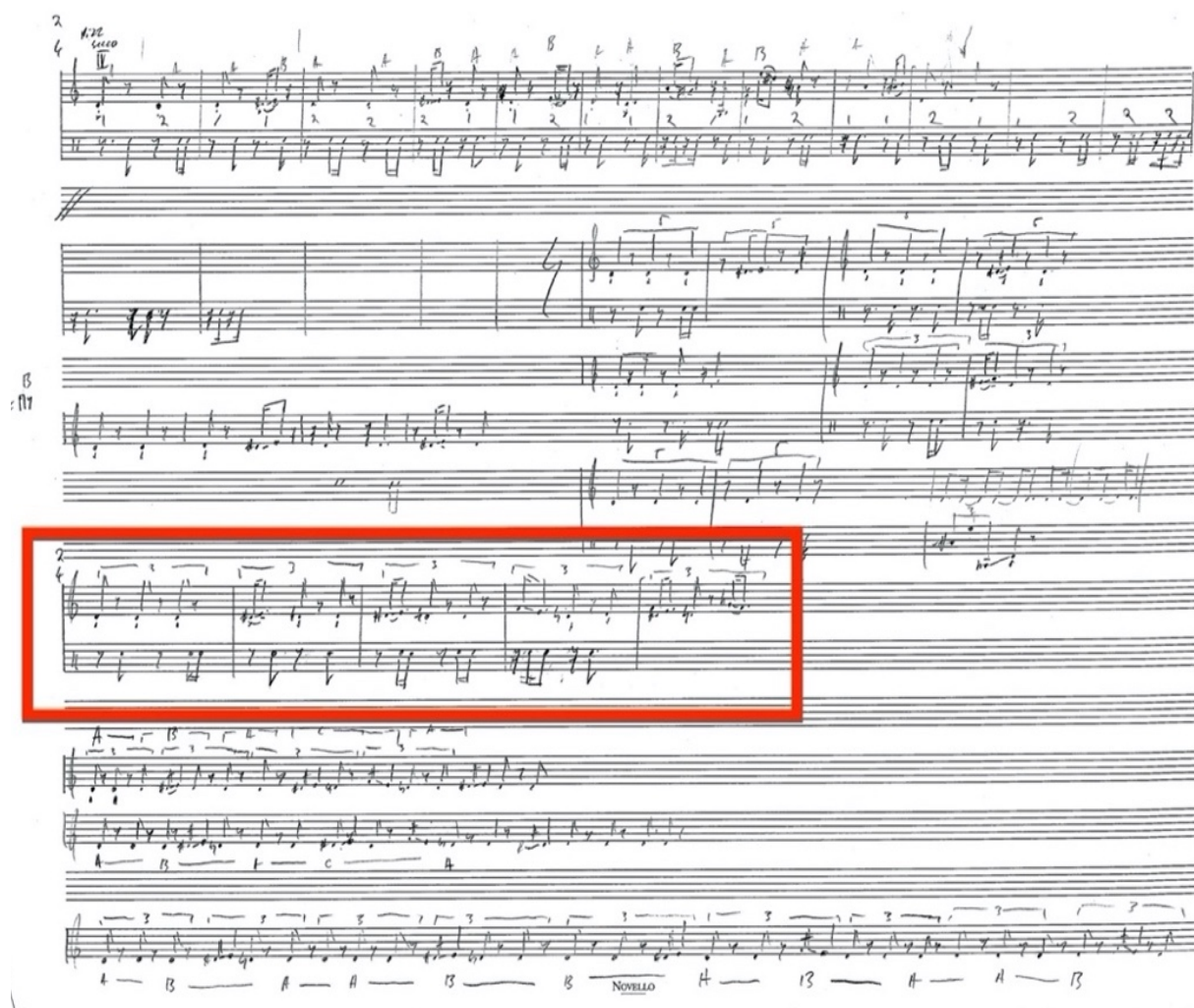
The first of these was a simple and rather austere limitation: the percussion part would be for a solo snare drum. This provided me with the intellectual challenge of writing music without the potential distraction created by the need to develop pitch material. It would also restrict and focus my timbral thinking by removing the decision of what instrument the percussionist should play at any given moment. Having said that, the snare drum is by no means lacking in timbral diversity; various mallets, sticks, brushes, rimshots and other techniques could be used throughout the piece to create changes in tone colour, and in this respect I drew a lot of inspiration from videos of military snare drum championships I had seen on the Internet. I also liked the idea of a very simple set-up which would increase the possibility of repeat performances, whereas larger and more complex set-ups often prove logistically prohibitive.

The second provocation focused on how rhythmic material would be developed, and here I turned to the technique of using Lindenmayer systems (or L-systems) as a way of guiding my rhythmic material. As discussed in Chapter 4, Lindenmayer systems are an algorithmic way of mimicking organic growth by taking small cells of material and having them multiply or transform in successive generations, following a strict grammar.<sup>122</sup> Unlike the limitation of writing for solo snare drum, which remained unchanged throughout the composing process, the L-system is a dynamic provocation because I interacted with and modified the system as work on the piece progressed.

Early sketches for the work searched for interesting rhythmic relationships that I felt would create a sense of forward momentum, settling on two parallel L-systems that would develop within conflicting pulse-streams. Ex. 1 shows an early sketch of the opening bars, where the violin has a base pulse of crotchet triplets against quavers in the snare drum. This rhythmic relationship of 3:4 provides a sense of rhythmic tension and forward momentum while also leaving open the possibility of exploring other relationships and varying degrees of rhythmic ‘dissonance’ later in the piece.

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<sup>122</sup> See 4.2.1 Algorithmic Provocation and Computer-Assisted Composition



Ex. 1: Early sketches for *Triptych for Two*, with the initial material for the piece highlighted in red

A great deal of time was initially spent finding the right L-systems that would develop in the way that I wanted. I would write a few lines with one L-system in place for the violin and another for the snare drum. If I was not happy with the result I would then go back and change the L-system and try again. Another approach was to free-write a few passages, and then create a system that emulated and continued that kind of writing [Fig. 17]. In many cases I would progress some way into the movement before deciding some variable in the underlying algorithm needed adjusting. In this way, my relationship to the L-system remained fluid throughout the composing process. Disrupting the pulse-streams at certain points by introducing cells of varying lengths helped the material to develop in a more organic way, while also increasing musical complexity. Another approach was to ‘recapitulate’ parts of the L-system, but transposing the material and introducing different rhythmic microvariations, thereby adjusting the system’s output toward the kinds of development I wanted in the piece.

### Vln / Snare

Vln.

A:  $\overline{1} \cdot \overline{2} \cdot \overline{3} \cdot \overline{4}$   
 B:  $\overline{5} \cdot \overline{6} \cdot \overline{7} \cdot \overline{8}$   
 C:  $\overline{9}$   
 D:  $\overline{10} \cdot \overline{11} \cdot \overline{12} \cdot \overline{13}$   
 E:  $\overline{14} \cdot \overline{15}$

F:  $\overline{16} \cdot \overline{17} \cdot \overline{18} \cdot \overline{19}$   
 G:  $\overline{20} \cdot \overline{21} \cdot \overline{22} \cdot \overline{23}$   
 H:  $\overline{24} \cdot \overline{25} \cdot \overline{26} \cdot \overline{27}$

---

1. A  $\rightarrow$  B  
 B  $\rightarrow$  BA 65  
 B  $\rightarrow$  CA  
 C  $\rightarrow$  DC  
 D  $\rightarrow$  E  
 E  $\rightarrow$  E(F?)  
 (F?)  
 E  $\rightarrow$  G  
 G  $\rightarrow$  GA 64

### Snare:

A:  $\overline{1} \cdot \overline{2} \cdot \overline{3} \cdot \overline{4}$   
 B:  $\overline{5} \cdot \overline{6} \cdot \overline{7} \cdot \overline{8}$   
 C:  $\overline{9} \cdot \overline{10} \cdot \overline{11} \cdot \overline{12}$   
 D:  $\overline{13} \cdot \overline{14} \cdot \overline{15} \cdot \overline{16}$   
 E:  $\overline{17} \cdot \overline{18} \cdot \overline{19} \cdot \overline{20}$   
 F:  $\overline{21} \cdot \overline{22} \cdot \overline{23} \cdot \overline{24}$   
 G:  $\overline{25} \cdot \overline{26} \cdot \overline{27} \cdot \overline{28}$   
 H:  $\overline{29} \cdot \overline{30} \cdot \overline{31} \cdot \overline{32}$

---

A - AAB  
 B - BA  
 n = 3  
 A  $\rightarrow$  C  
 B  $\rightarrow$  2  $\rightarrow$  C

Vln

1. A  
 2. B  
 3. BA  
 4. BAB  
 5. BABA  
 6. CABACAB  
 7. DCBDCCA  
 8. EDCDADCDCBDCBEDCCAEEDLDCB  
 9. EDCDCEDECCAEEDCCAEEDCCBEEDEDCB  
 10. EEDCEDECEEDCEEDCCBEDCCB  
 11. EEDCEDECEEDCEEDCCBEDCCB  
 12.  
 13.

SnD

1. A  
 2. AAB  
 3. AABAABCA  
 4. AABAABCAABAABCA  
 5. AABAABCAABAAB  
 6.  
 7.  
 8.  
 9.  
 10.  
 11.  
 12.  
 13.

Fig. 17: Notes showing the development of L-systems for the first movement of Triptych for Two

An additional late provocation was introduced into my composing process when I presented Monique and Naoto with three sketches of my work in progress [Ex 2]. The first sketch contained the work I had done with the L-system up until that point, while the other two sketches contained contrasting material that I intended to integrate into the system later in the piece. The second sketch explored a slower and more ‘consonant’ rhythmic relationship between the two parts, while the third explored more explosive material with higher levels of rhythmic tension. In the workshop, Monique and Naoto provided useful feedback with regard to the practical challenges the piece presented. But what really altered my approach to the piece was to hear the way in which they approached each of these sketches with very different characters. Up until that point, I had envisaged the work as one movement that gradually branched out into kinds of rhythmic material through my use of the underlying L-systems.

Hearing Monique and Naoto play these sketches in this way, however, helped me to realise that they were in fact very separate ideas, and therefore the piece was better suited to a three-movement structure. The piece was then reimagined as a triptych of miniatures based on each of the three sketches.

[illegible]

*Ex 2: The first sketch presented to Ensemble Gô for workshopping, with annotations to help me track the developing L-system later in the composing process.*

Thinking back to Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*, with their directions to 'burn bridges' and to 'destroy your favourite thing',<sup>123</sup> it is tempting to assume that creative provocations should always be very grand or destructive gestures. But this example demonstrates that they can actually be very commonplace. Simply hearing your music played by other people can have a radical effect on one's creative thinking, and dramatically alter the future unfolding of a creative process.

For many of the works in this thesis, the challenge of working around given limitations is a primary form of provocation. *Triptych for Two* had an external limitation in the form of instrumentation, which itself was rather luxurious if one considers the number of possibilities implied under the label ‘percussion’. Other limitations, such as the decision to use only one percussion instrument, were entirely self-imposed as a tool to focus and direct my own creative process. The next two pieces on the other hand, *Clink* and *Infinity Mirror*, had very specific briefs and imposed certain conditions on the composing process from the very start.

<sup>123</sup> Eno and Schmidt.

## 6.2. *CLINK* (2017)—BASS FLUTE, VIOLONCELLO, DRUM SET AND KEYBOARD/SAMPLER

*Clink* was commissioned by a residency programme called Keep Composers Weird in Melbourne. The event was sponsored by Two Birds Brewing, and the brief—rather unusually—asked composers to write a piece inspired by one of the company’s beers. The piece would then be premiered at a concert held in the brewery itself, combined with a tasting session where the audience could try beers that were paired with specific pieces in the programme. I thought this was an interesting idea because I was eager to explore alternative ways of presenting music, and the event would be a change from the traditional concert format. The company sent out tasting notes to get the composers started, and this is what I received:

PALE - Simon

This hazy and super pale Pale Ale was brewed with two types of oats to give a smooth, silky mouthfeel and the hops lend pine, pineapple and passionfruit notes.

Taking this prompt onboard as an early provocation, I started looking for a concept for the piece. I began by writing down keywords in response to the prompt: ‘fizzy’, ‘hops’, ‘sizzle’, and ‘drunken rhythms’, and also by looking for sounds and techniques within the given instrumentation (keyboard/synth, flute, cello, and percussion) that would evoke similar associations. The instrument that stood out to me in this respect was the keyboard, which could really make any sound I wanted it to, and with this in mind, I decided to have it play pre-recorded samples of sounds made by beer and beer bottles. Using the instrument in this way immediately struck me as more sonically interesting and more convincing than, for instance, having it emulate a piano. It also provided a way to interact with the brief in a very literal way by introducing beer sounds into a chamber music context, which immediately struck me as a slightly absurd and tongue-in-cheek way to undermine the stylistic conventions of that genre.

Once I had settled on this concept, the samples were recorded, trimmed, mastered, and organised into ‘families’ that had similar sonic qualities. They were then loaded into Ableton Live and each assigned to a particular key on the keyboard. The keyboard player would then be able to read their part if it were written for piano. Spectral analysis was also performed on a number of samples in order to derive pitch material for other instruments in the ensemble, with initial sketches searching for timbral relationships within the acoustic ensemble that integrated or complimented these recorded sounds. [Ex. 3]

I was working on *Triptych for Two* at the same time, and I likewise introduced an L-system in this piece to direct the way in which I developed material. In this case, each cell in the system was mapped onto a ‘family’ of samples in the keyboard part, while at the same time also representing complementary rhythmic material in the ensemble. This developmental material derived from the L-system runs throughout the piece but is interrupted at certain points by more static material derived from spectral analysis of the blown-bottle samples.



Working with samples also meant that I worked on paper much less than I normally would. Instead, workflow frequently switched between working in Sibelius notation software, to develop material, and working in Live, to test how material would work in practice with the actual recorded samples. The specific nature of the brief also had a number of impacts on my compositional process: the unusual prompt suggested a more subversive or humorous approach than I might have typically taken in a piece of chamber music. The intended context for performance, the player's virtuosity also informed many of the decisions I made over the course of composing this piece. Something that is once again evident in *Infinity Mirror*.

The image displays two pages of handwritten musical notation. The top page features staves for 'R. H. (Climb On)', 'B. I.', 'V.C.', 'Pvc', and 'Kghd.'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'. There are also handwritten annotations like 'TERT', 'mellows', and 'see party'. The bottom page continues the notation with staves for 'A = LU' and other musical elements. The sketches are dense and show a high level of detail, with many notes and markings.

Ex. 3: Early Sketches for Clink

### 6.3. *INFINITY MIRROR* (2018) – YOUTH ORCHESTRA AND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

While the brief for *Clink* was restrictive in that it required me to respond to a very specific prompt, I was nevertheless writing for virtuoso performers who could master virtually any technical challenge I gave them. *Infinity Mirror* (2018), on the other hand, required a very different approach as I would be writing for players of extremely mixed ability, as well as meeting other limitations stipulated in the brief. The work was commissioned by SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music as the inaugural SOUNZ Commission for Emerging Players in 2018, and the brief was to write a work for combined youth orchestra and symphony orchestra. The piece would be performed by Arohanui Strings and Orchestra Wellington in a pops-style concert at the Walter Nash Centre in Lower Hutt. The brief required that the piece be aesthetically well-suited to this setting, with the option of including a rhythm section in the instrumentation.

Arohanui Strings is a string orchestra for children ranging in age from 5 or 6 years of age until the end of high school. It is based in Taita, Lower Hutt, a lower-income area in the Wellington Region with residents predominantly of Māori, Pasifika, and immigrant backgrounds. The programme is inspired by the El Sistema model from Venezuela and aspires to create positive social development through music. I was very familiar with this group, as I had been working there as a double bass teacher for two years when I applied for this commission, and therefore knew the group's musical capabilities and also what kinds of music they liked to play.

The proposal I submitted to SOUNZ in late 2017 revolved around the concept of an 'infinity mirror', when two mirrors are placed side-by-side creating a recurring series of reflections. I saw this image as a fitting metaphor for the relationship between the two orchestras, with the youth orchestra being a younger reflection of the older group, who had themselves no doubt played in a youth orchestra earlier in their lives, thereby reflecting their own teachers and mentors. In this way the two orchestras represented two links in a long chain of intergenerational exchange that receded into the distant past.

The challenge was that Arohanui Strings needed to not only master their parts technically, but also to interpret the music convincingly. I decided that the best way to achieve this was to start with a simple melody, with simple accompaniment. Violinists and cellists at the most basic level could only play open strings, so I set up an ostinato pattern in fifths to be played on the D, A and G strings. The rhythm was syncopated in triple time, something I knew they would find tricky, but could master with practice. For more advanced violinists, cellists and violists, I wrote a melody in D Mixolydian  $\flat 6$ , which sat comfortably in first position on the violin apart from one extension back to B $\flat$ , which I was sure the players could handle.

There were a number of features embedded within this simple material that immediately struck me as interesting. Firstly, the Mixolydian  $\flat 6$  mode is symmetrical around its tonic, with



the same sequence of intervals going both up and down from its tonal centre. Writing lines in parallel motion around this central axis, therefore, could be used as a reference to the initial mirror concept. The other interesting feature of the scale was its close relationship to the Acoustic scale, which is itself an approximation of the natural harmonic series, and with this in mind I introduced a simple extended technique, the harmonic glissando. This would add some variation the beginners' parts, and at the same time invite these young players to explore new sounds with their instruments. From a conceptual standpoint, the harmonic series serves as a musical metaphor for infinity, as the series theoretically extends upward forever, and the dialogue between these two ideas, 'infinity' and 'mirror', became the rhetorical device by which the piece would unfold. This duality also provided a helpful 'hook', albeit a rather abstract one, on which to hang musical ideas as I explained the inner workings of the piece to older musicians in Arohanui Strings.

The challenge of working within the constraints provided in the brief therefore led directly to the conceptual underpinning of this piece, and also to a particular creative approach. The piece would be structured as a set of variations whereby the melody would gradually reveal its full form, giving the youth orchestra the spotlight at the climactic point of the piece. At the same time, the professional orchestra would reflect, augment, and extend the youth orchestra material, while also bookending the piece with an introduction and coda that establish the mirror/infinity duality as the underlying functional relationship for the work. [Fig. 18].

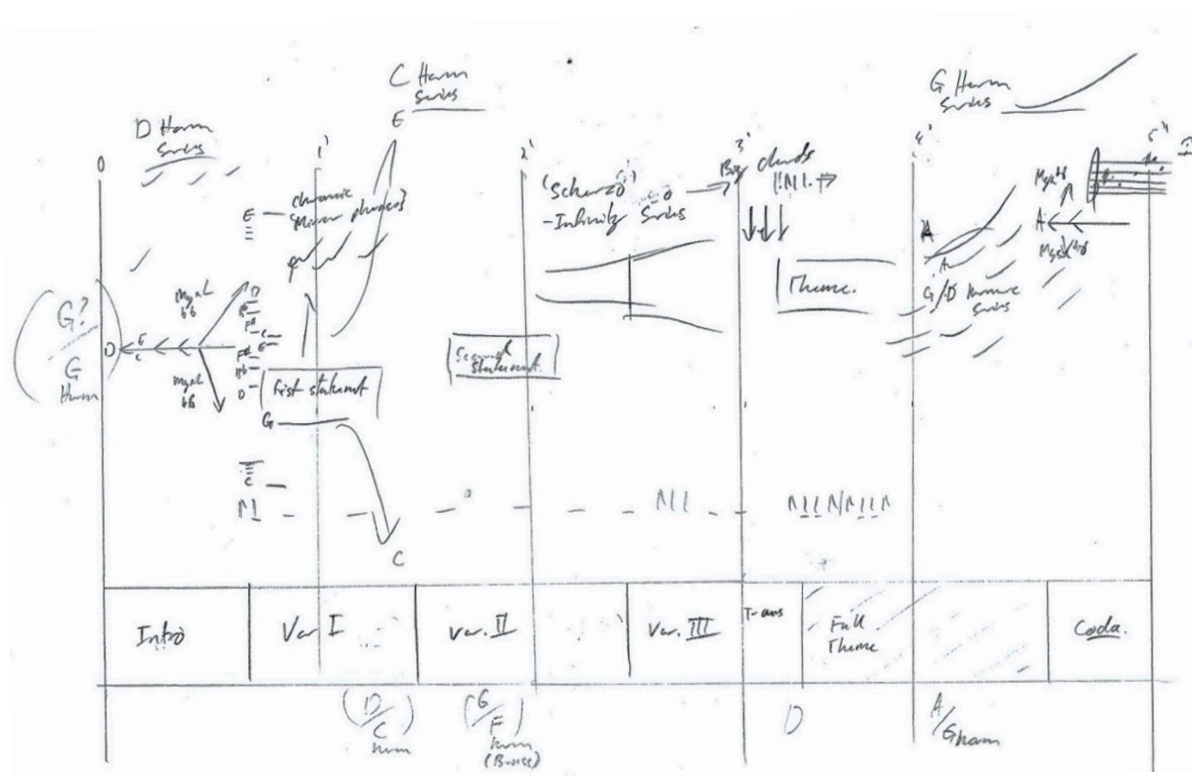


Fig. 18: Structural sketch for *Infinity Mirror*

#### 6.4. *WHERE THE RIVER FLOWS...* (2018)—VIOLIN, FLUTE, CLARINET IN B $\flat$ , VIOLONCELLO AND PERCUSSION

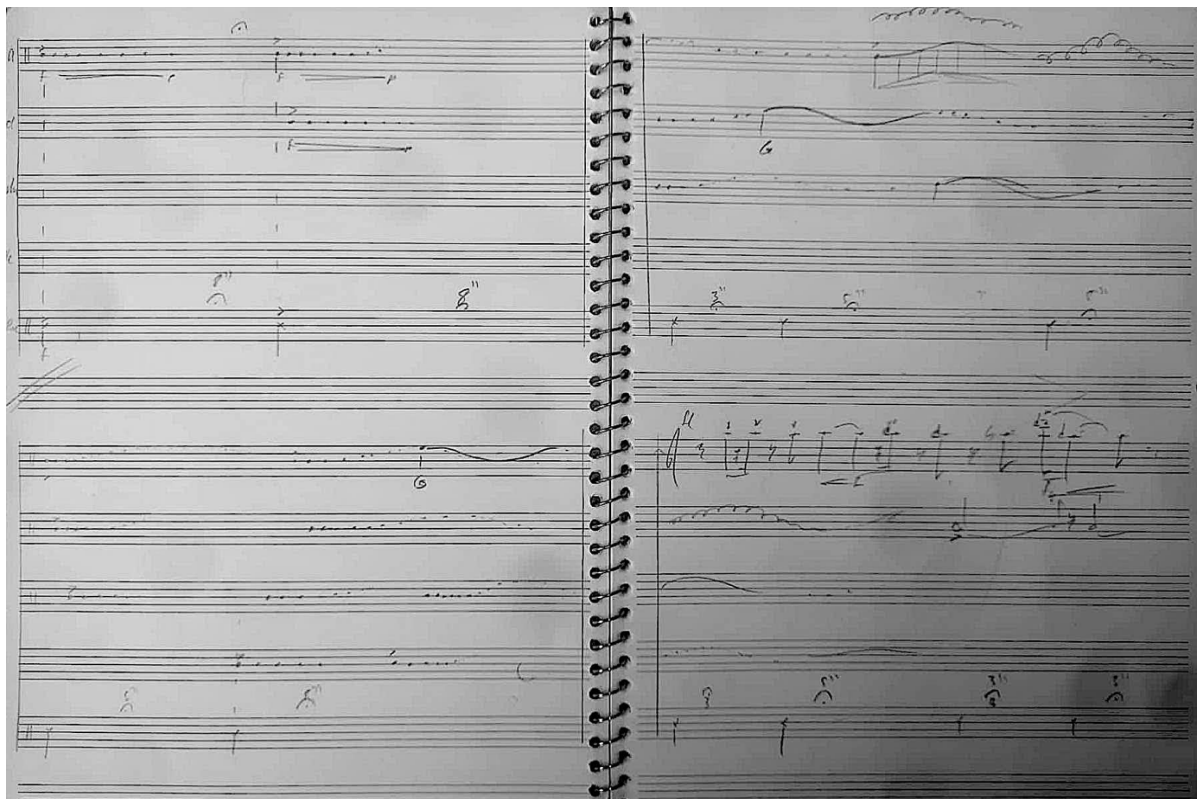
Whereas a project like *Clink* required a reaction to a specific prompt, another approach to early provocation asks composers to respond to a particular lived experience. This was the case with *Composing in the Wilderness* 2018, a field course led by composer Stephen Lias, presented by the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival in association with Alaskan Geographic, the U.S National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. Seven composers were flown into the Gates of the Arctic National Park, deep in the Alaskan wilderness, to take a week-long canoe trip down the Koyukuk River [Fig. 19], followed by three days in the remote settlement of Bettles where they would sketch ideas for a piece of music based on their experiences. Composers would then have an additional two months to complete that work, in time for its premiere by the festival's resident ensemble, Corvus, at the historic Federal National Hall Site in New York City.



Fig. 19: Landing on the Koyukuk river during *Composing in the Wilderness*, Alaska. (Photo: Stephen Lias)

The river trip itself was exciting and at times dangerous, but our guides Andrew George and Kate Zielinski kept us safe and in one piece. After floating into Bettles, I reflected on the previous week and a number of experiences stood out: the first was a surreal encounter with a pack of wolves in the distance one day; another was an eerie sense of connection to the rivers back in New Zealand, and in particular, the stones on the riverbank that were very similar to those found in braided rivers in the Orongorongo Valley. Having spent a lot of time with

taonga puoro musicians in New Zealand, I had acquired the habit of playing these stones as tumutumū kōhatu, striking one stone against another, opening and closing one's hand to modulate the pitch. As we camped along the riverbank at the end of each day, I would often comb the riverbank for stones that played particularly well. As we were in a national park, I knew I could not take these stones with me, but it was nonetheless a useful tool with which to connect with the landscape. Another thing that ran through my mind during the entire trip was that the park's superintendent, Greg Dudgeon, had told us before we left Fairbanks that a case before the U.S. Supreme Court could jeopardise the future welfare of the Koyukuk River. This drew my thinking back to the Whanganui River, which a year earlier had been granted the same legal rights as a person by the New Zealand Government. These were the things on my mind as I meditated on the possibilities for a new piece in Bettles and made some sketches out my initial ideas. [Ex. 4]



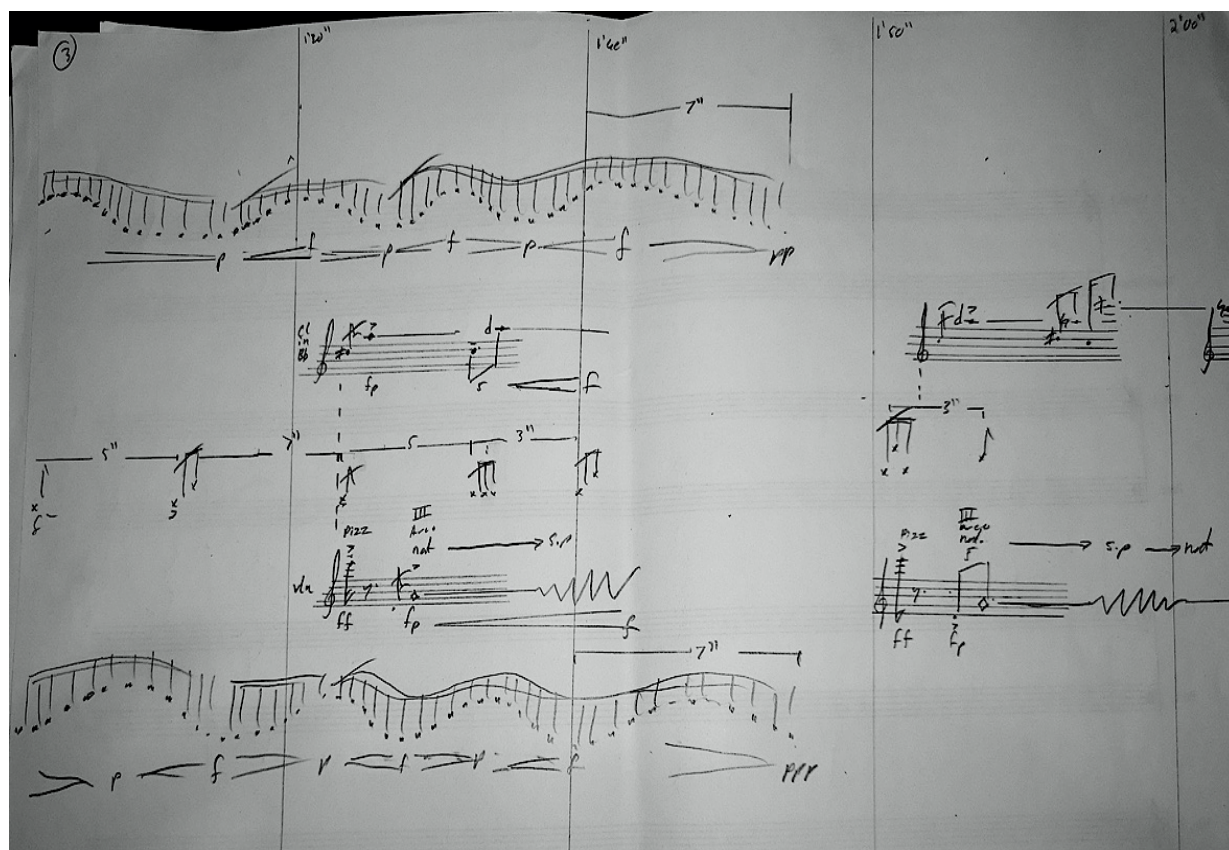
*Ex. 4: Initial sketches made while in Bettles, Alaska, immediately following the river trip.*

I also made a number of field recordings on the trip, including recordings of several rapids along the river, and a spectral analysis of these recordings revealed a number of different chords that I could use as pitch material for the piece. Additionally, we had been told that the concert in New York was to be in a very resonant, cathedral-like acoustic, and with this in mind, I imagined that the performers could evoke a sonic representation of the river in the concert space by playing stones in different rhythms. These sounds would then reflect around the room, creating an immersive experience for the audience. In order achieve the level



of rhythmic freedom required for this effect, I opted to use time-space notation for most of the work. In the absence of a conductor, synchronisation would be provided by the percussionist striking claves at the start of each phrase. The other players would have this included in their parts as a cue. They would then gradually transition from this free rhythmic material into stricter metrical notation, moving from the stones to playing their regular instruments.

Once we left Bettles, I proceeded to further develop this material [Ex. 5] while I travelled to Europe to pursue collaborative projects with Oleksiy Koval and Justyna Janiszewska.<sup>124</sup> I also took the time to consider alternative methods of presentation for this piece, including the idea of using the actual recordings from the river to augment the acoustic ensemble. In the end, however, the piece developed in a remarkably similar way to the initial sketch I had done in Bettles. At the end of the piece, I added a transcription I had made from a found recording of a wolf call, very similar to those we heard in the wild and this, combined with a restatement of the opening stone-based texture brought the piece to a conclusion.



Ex. 5: More developed sketches for *Where the River Flows...* made in London

Reflecting on the piece just before the premiere, I realised it had been a meditation on all of the things I had experienced and felt on the river. The piece clearly evoked forces of nature beyond our control and the untouched beauty of the Arctic mountain ranges, while at the same

<sup>124</sup> These are discussed in the following chapter

time it had also become a political statement reflecting on the Koyukuk River and its possible future.

While participating in Composing in the Wilderness changed my life in many ways, I am not sure that it changed my composing process. The case for this piece being the result of provocation, rather than simply inspiration, is much less clear here than it is with *Triptych for Two*, *Clink*, and *Infinity Mirror*, because it is difficult to specifically identify what De Bono would call ‘movement’. In these other pieces, provocations had an immediate influence on my compositional process, often affecting the way in which I handled material as I wrote. *Where the River Flows...*, on the other hand, was largely written after the fact and is more of an assemblage of interesting images I had picked up along this incredible journey.

Having said that, the field recordings I made along the river do represent an example of musical material that I brought back from the expedition, and while these did guide many of my musical decisions as I wrote the piece, in the end this material was used quite sparingly. Similarly, the idea of using stones was something that came to me on the river, but this was really a case of connecting my Alaskan experience with much earlier experiences I had in New Zealand.

There were a lot of other little experiences, moments, and influences from the trip that each left their mark on this piece in different ways. Rather than being able to point to any one specific thing, it is better to look at the entire expedition as one big experiential provocation. This trip took me far outside of my comfort zone and forced me to many things in different ways, an experience that resulted in me writing this piece.

## 6.5. *INTERFERENCE STUDY* (2019) FOR PERCUSSION

A much clearer example of provocation in action is the act of working with another person. An L-system does not have opinions, it simply unfolds according to the axiom you set up at the beginning of the process. Similarly, restrictions, limitations and lived experiences are passive partners in the creative process. A collaborator, on the other hand, has the ability to not only alter musical material while a piece is being written, but to tell you why they are doing so. Furthermore, they can also react based on intuition and experience, suggesting a range of solutions to compositional problems.

*Interference Study* (2019) was written as part of the Percussion Extended workshop at the 2019 Impuls Academy Festival in Graz, Austria, run by Michael Maierhof and Christian Dierstein. This was an intensive two-week programme that focused on the nature of percussion performance and how this might be extended. It was also a clear example of ‘dynamic provocation’, with composers having the chance to collaborate directly with percussionists in daily workshop sessions, meaning that every day presented an opportunity to drastically alter my approach in composing the work.



Fig. 20: Percussionist-collaborators Román Bayani and Mikołaj Rytowski

My initial proposal for the workshop borrowed a concept from an older piece of mine, *Interference* (2012) for two players at one piano. The concept was for two players to perform at the same instrument, but instead of playing as a duo, they would interfere with one another. In the piano piece, for instance, one player performs at the keyboard while the other dampens strings inside the piano. I thought that this concept could be extended beyond what was done in that earlier work and so submitted it for this course. Participants were given a small budget and taken on a trip to a local hardware store to find materials for their pieces. Some composers used their budget to build their own instruments from scratch. I decided to keep my materials minimal by choosing two metal sheets and one plastic sheet hanging on a frame. The key discourse of the piece would not be between the instruments, but between two players themselves. I was teamed up with percussionists Román Bayani (Argentina) and Mikołaj Rytowski (Poland), who both contributed enthusiastically and energetically to the collaboration [Fig. 20].

In this piece, I wanted to make the performance dynamic from *Interference* even more chaotic by requiring the players to physically interrupt each other. Early workshops therefore focused on exploring different kinds of interference and interaction through a series of games [Fig. 21]. Initially, I had not even intended to write a score for the performers but to have them improvise a piece based on a set of principles developed over the course of successive workshops.

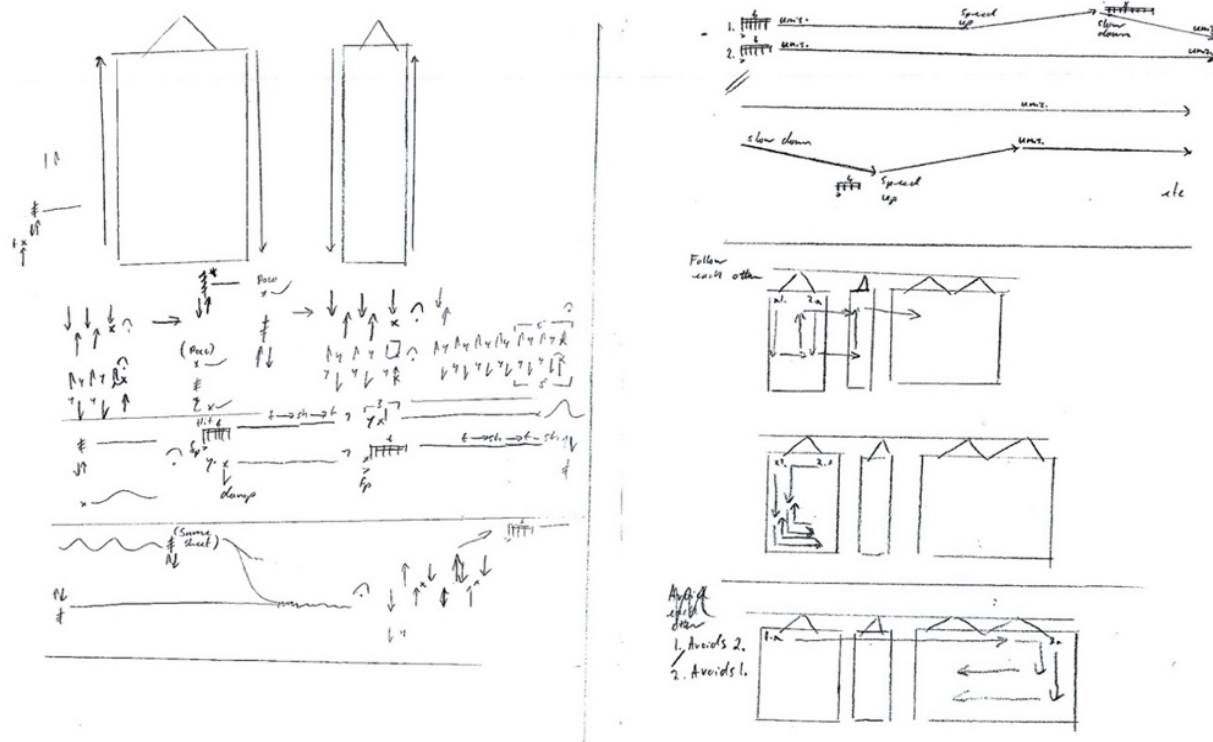


Fig. 21: ‘Game’ sketches for Interference Study

After a couple of days of working with this idea, however, it became clear that it would take longer than two weeks to make the ‘game’ concept work, and so I decided to write out what I wanted in full. The third sheet made of plastic was also clearly superfluous and not very effective, so the set up was reduced to just two metal sheets. The way in which the players interfered with each other would be carefully choreographed, with players being directed at certain points to block the actions of one another, or else to perform an action that could not be completed because of what was written in the other player’s part. For example, in the second bar of the fourth line in Ex. 6, the percussionists are directed to scrape their sticks along the sides of the same metal sheet and therefore collide with one another, creating a percussive effect as their sticks strike together.

Because the idea for this piece was so inherently theatrical, I wanted to avoid the players reading from a score. A simplified version of the score was therefore written on the metal sheets themselves [Fig. 22]. One final idea was suggested in the last workshop by Christian Dierstein. To end the piece, I originally had one player pulling the sheet away from the other while the other attempted to keep playing. The first player would then release the sheet and the second would play a restatement of the opening few bars while the sheet swung back and forth. Dierstein, seeing the theatrical nature of the piece suggested that we simply let the sheet swing silently. This was a much better ending for the piece and so was adopted into the final version.







## 6.6. CONCLUSION

These examples demonstrate the ways in which, even in a ‘normal’ compositional process, external interventions and provocations can have a noticeable effect on creative decision-making. While each project developed in a different way, nevertheless there are a number of generalisations that can be made. *Early provocations* had a tendency to ‘set the lay of the land’, to dictate the parameters within which a project could evolve and thereby guide my mind toward particular patches of fertile terrain. Careful consideration of the requirements of the brief was very important at the start of the process; *Clink* and *Infinity Mirror* required pieces that would work within particular performing contexts, *Clink* also asked composers to engage with a specific prompt: beer. *Where the River Flows...*, on the other hand, asked composers to respond to a particular experience on the Koyukuk River. The instrumentation and capabilities of the ensemble I was writing for also required consideration early on, and, for *Infinity Mirror* in particular, the varying levels of musical ability were important to consider and affected the creative process. These factors could be restrictive or limiting, but they also provided something to work against, and by changing one parameter, such as having a keyboard play recorded samples, the creative possibilities were enhanced rather than diminished.

Even in projects without a strict brief, a conceptual framework was still developed early on with the fundamental goals and aspirations of the piece articulated in order to set the project in motion. *Late provocations* such as performer feedback and workshopping situations often forced me to re-examine these underlying goals and assumptions, informed by material I had already developed. If these interventions happened with some frequency, as was the case with *Interference Study*, a feedback loop was created between my own process and the creative provocation. *Dynamic provocations*, such as the daily workshops with my collaborators at Impuls, provided me with a chance to regularly test and receive outsider feedback on material as it developed. In a similar way, the ability to continually go back and re-work an algorithmic composing process such as the Lindenmayer systems used in *Clink* and *Triptych for Two* offered a useful tool with which to continually re-examine and tweak the fundamental parameters I had set at the start of the compositional process.

These are some of the same challenges my collaborators would be required to solve in their own way in the works discussed in the following chapter. Examining creative provocations in this way reveals that they are indeed commonplace in my own compositional process and provide powerful opportunities to expand or refine my creative thinking. In the next chapter, I will examine how other creative minds react to creative provocations in their own practices by setting each the same initial challenge: to interpret and transform *Triptych for Two* in their own way. Once returned to me, these reinterpretations became perhaps the most radical provocation of all as I created new works based on the responses I had received from my collaborators.

# Chapter 7: COLLABORATORS' RESPONSES AND SECOND-GENERATION WORKS

The first-generation works in this portfolio show the influence that external creative provocations had on my own creative process, and that *early*, *late*, and *dynamic provocations* changed my creative thinking in very different ways. Now we will consider the more complex situation of those projects conducted using the creative-collaborative provocation model I described in Chapter 3. [Fig. 23] One collaborator provides a provocation to the other and then waits for a response which they in turn accept as a provocation on their own creative process, forming the feedback loop: *provoke–analyse–create–provoke*. While this process could then be repeated several times over the course of a project, in most cases here I have only used one iteration of this cycle.

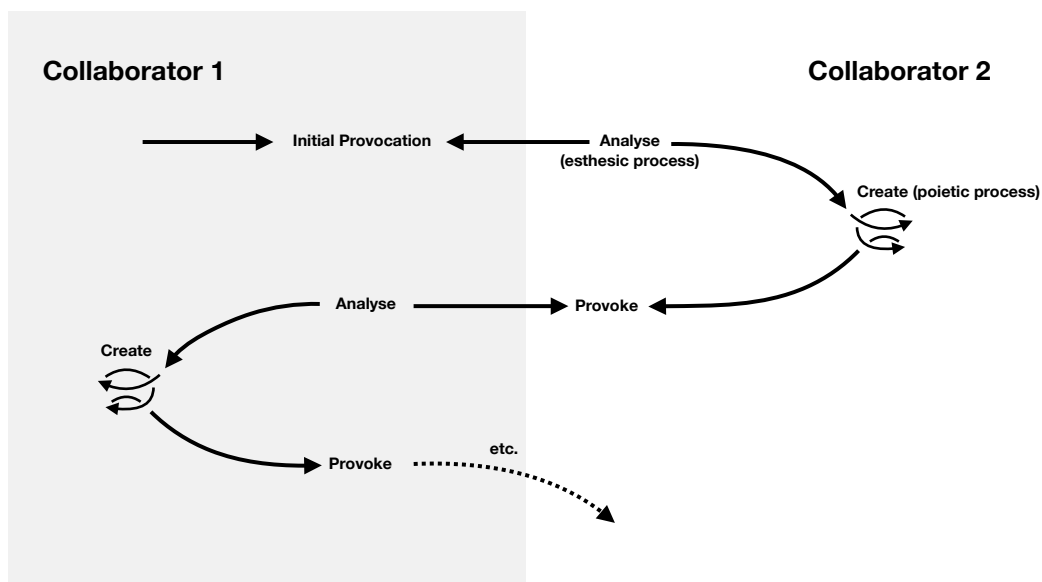


Fig. 23: The model of creative-collaborative provocation

I will discuss five collaborations that were undertaken using this model. These are the projects with visual artists Oleksiy Koval and Lisa Munnelly, choreographer Justyna Janiszewska, poet Roya Jabarouti and musician Alistair Fraser.<sup>125</sup> In most cases, my initial provocation was to ask my collaborators to reimagine the first-generation works *Triptych for Two* in some way, a notable exception being the project with Lisa Munnelly, who invited me to contribute to a project she had already set in motion. Even in this case, however, *Triptych for Two* was still used as a late provocation to move the collaboration forward.

Each project therefore reflects a slightly different reading of *Triptych for Two*, and I will discuss the different approaches taken by each collaborator, their initial reactions to the piece

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<sup>125</sup> A sixth project with filmmaker Sebastian Lowe is still unfolding at the time of writing.

and how the task of reinterpreting this piece of music acted as a provocation on their creative processes. Collaborators came from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, and live in completely different parts of the world, and yet they all drew on *Triptych for Two* in some way to contribute to this project. [Fig. 24]

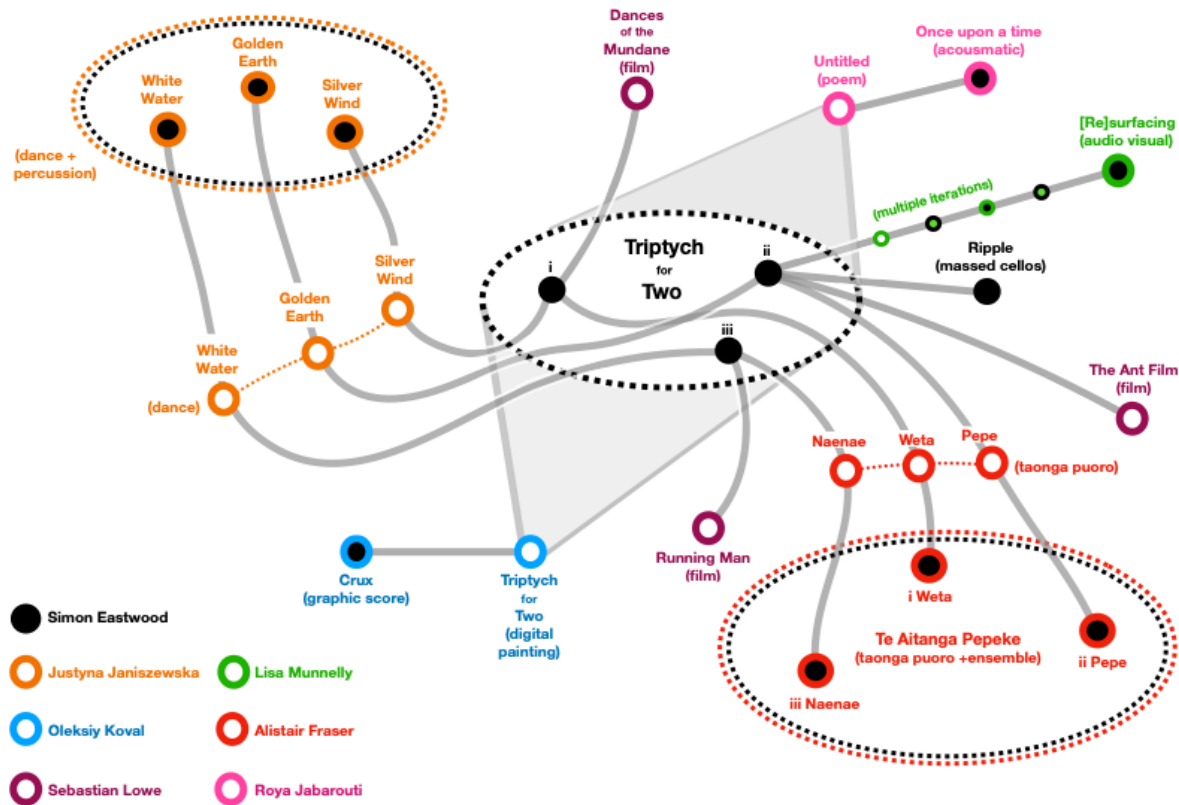


Fig. 24: My constellation of second-generation works. Justyna Janiszewska, Alistair Fraser and Sebastian Lowe chose to create separate responses to each movement of *Triptych for Two*, while Lisa Munnelly drew on the second movement exclusively to create *[Re]surfacing*, with each of us responding to one another several times before the piece was completed. Oleksiy Koval and Roya Jabbaruti, on the other hand, responded to the entire work as a whole.

I then discuss my own reactions in turn when the piece came back to me radically transformed by each collaborator, and how these changes led to provocation and movement in my own creative thinking as I composed what I call my second-generation works. I will then discuss a sixth project where I transform *Triptych for Two* into a new work by myself, deconstructing the earlier piece by using it as a ‘found object’.

At the end of this chapter, I will reflect on and discuss a number of important connections and common threads I observed throughout the project as a whole, and also the way in which the inherent intertextual relationships that arise from this way of working demonstrate, at a very small scale, how creative ideas are transferred, translated and transformed in society at large.

### 7.1. COLLABORATION WITH OLEKSIY KOVAL

Oleksiy Koval is a Ukrainian artist based in Munich. I first met Oleksiy in 2015 at the I:O Art Residency in Turkey, where I curated a second iteration of my *Papaki Tai* project, I was particularly fascinated by the way in which Oleksiy spoke about *rhythm* in visual art. His practice frequently embraces a multi-disciplinary sensibility, incorporating ideas from music into his paintings and collaborating with musicians in live painting performances including numerous projects with jazz saxophonist and composer Steve Coleman.<sup>126</sup>

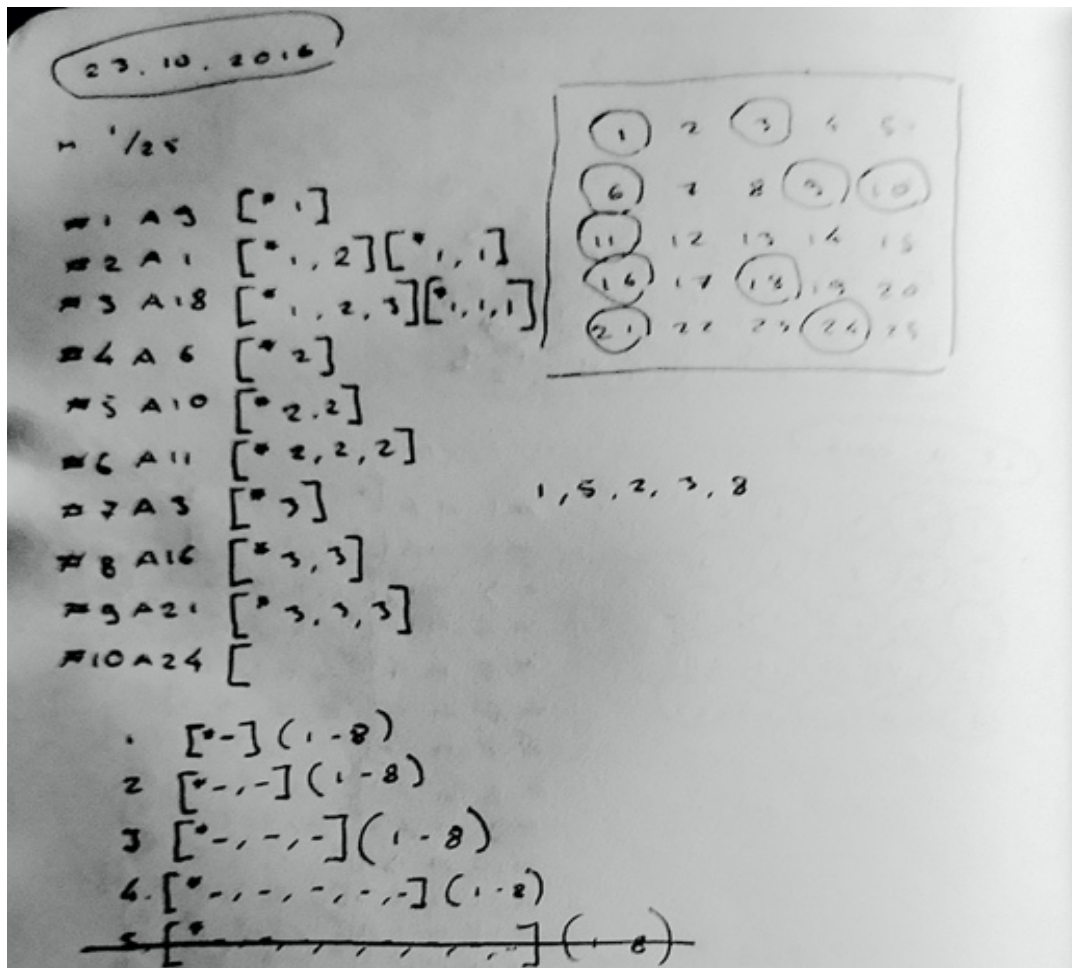


Fig. 25: An excerpt from Koval's notebook showing one of his compositions created with the Beautiful Formula Language

As a composer, I was also naturally interested to learn about a notation system he had developed called 'the Beautiful Formula Language' [Fig. 25].<sup>127</sup> This is a way of encoding both the visual composition and the procedure for a particular painting into a sequence of symbols which, like a musical score, can be decoded by other artists to create different interpretations of the same piece. 'The Beautiful Formula Collective', which Koval established to explore this

<sup>126</sup> See: <https://oleksiykoval.com/events/>

<sup>127</sup> For a much more thorough description of the Beautiful Formula Language and its application, visit: <https://oleksiykoval.com/2015/03/26/language/>

idea, uses his language to explore the transmission of works through the use of signs and symbols. While each interpretation may vary slightly at the surface level, they have the same composition through the use of this language. With these considerations in mind, Oleksiy was clearly one of the first people I thought of when looking for collaborators on this project.

More recently, Oleksiy has been exploring the potential of digital screens as a painting surface, and this is how he chose to frame his response to my music. Oleksiy created his response using a programme called Tagtool on an iPad. He did it in one take, in real-time while the music was playing, using some guiding principles, rhythmical motifs and procedures. He also allowed himself freedom to improvise and respond intuitively. Though clearly going into the process with some forethought, Koval explained that he did not spend too much time in the planning stage:

I listened a couple of times, and then I prefer to keep on the movement. In this time I was interested in using some digital tools, but I wanted to keep a spontaneous decision, and I wanted to do it in one move, you know, and so then I started to make some decision about the tools and about the colour, about the composition.<sup>128</sup>

In considering my music as a provocation on his creative process, Koval states that the most important aspect of a work is the procedure by which colour is applied to a surface through movement, and that in this case he drew his procedure from my music in a similar fashion to a performer interpreting a musical score:

I mean, if we stay with the example of your project and what I did, I will say the composition is the most important thing. You cannot separate it so clearly in visual art as you do in music, like you have composers and interpreters, but in this case I had your composition and it took away some kind of decision which I normally have to deal with, if I am doing my own piece.<sup>129</sup>

Oleksiy's work then takes the gestural language of my music and realises it in visual form, something I naïvely referred to as animation in conversation, to which he immediately replied that was not his intention at all. This work was rather an expression of the same concerns he had explored when working on physical canvases, these being: 1) the nature of the surface, and 2) the procedure with which colour is applied to that surface. This was not an 'animation', it was a 'digital painting'. [Fig. 26] The fact that it evolves over time was a reflection of the procedure of that painting in relation to the surface (the screen). This was similar, Oleksiy explained, to the way one can see the artist's layering of brushstrokes in an 'analogue painting' (with paint on a canvas), and thereby observe the procedure by which that painting was created. On a screen this layering is not visible, and so instead Oleksiy shows us the painting procedure unfolding over time.

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with Oleksiy Koval by the author

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.



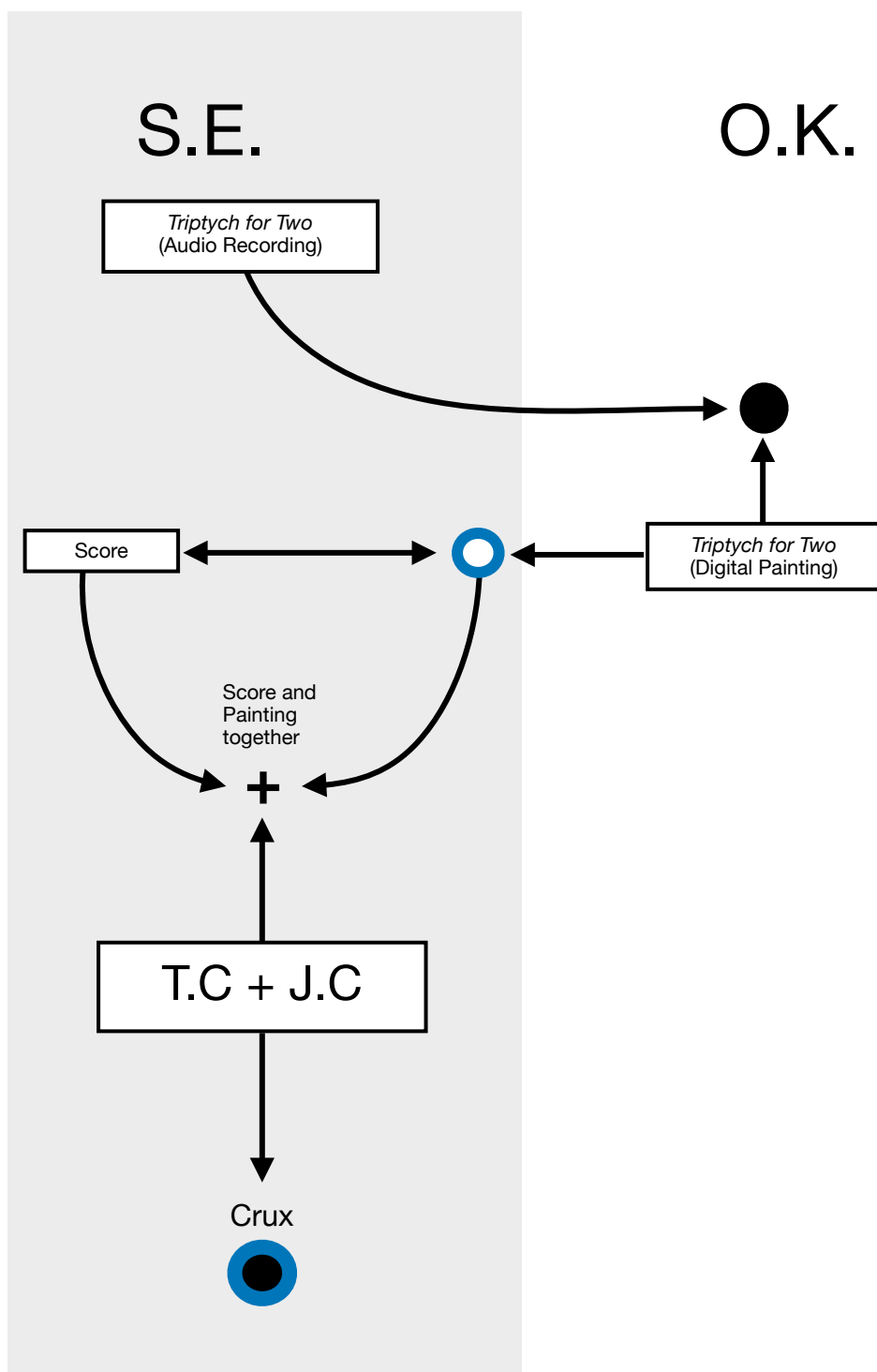
Fig. 26: Still from Oleksiy Koval's digital painting *Triptych for Two*

#### 7.1.1. *CRUX* (2018)

In seeking to interpret Oleksiy's digital painting, my first reaction was that looking at the painting changed the way I perceived my own music in a number of ways. He had interpreted each movement as having a distinct character, with different visual motifs: The opening movement started as a black screen with short darting movements in white gradually filling the screen, the middle movement began all in white and was characterised by a long unbroken black line wandering up and down the screen, the third contained a mixture of skittish black marks with stronger marks matched with the snare drum hit from the original music gradually returning the screen to total blackness.

There was a clear link between the rhythmic and gestural motifs on the screen with those found in my music, but to my eyes, this black-to-white-to-black movement also added an extra level of structure on top of these. In the original piece I had made a number of motivic connections between movements, but Oleksiy's painting had *provoked* me into seeing the piece as having a much longer form, rather than as three miniatures as I had previously.

Interestingly, Oleksiy later explained that the decision to use colour in this way was made at an entirely intuitive level in the moment.

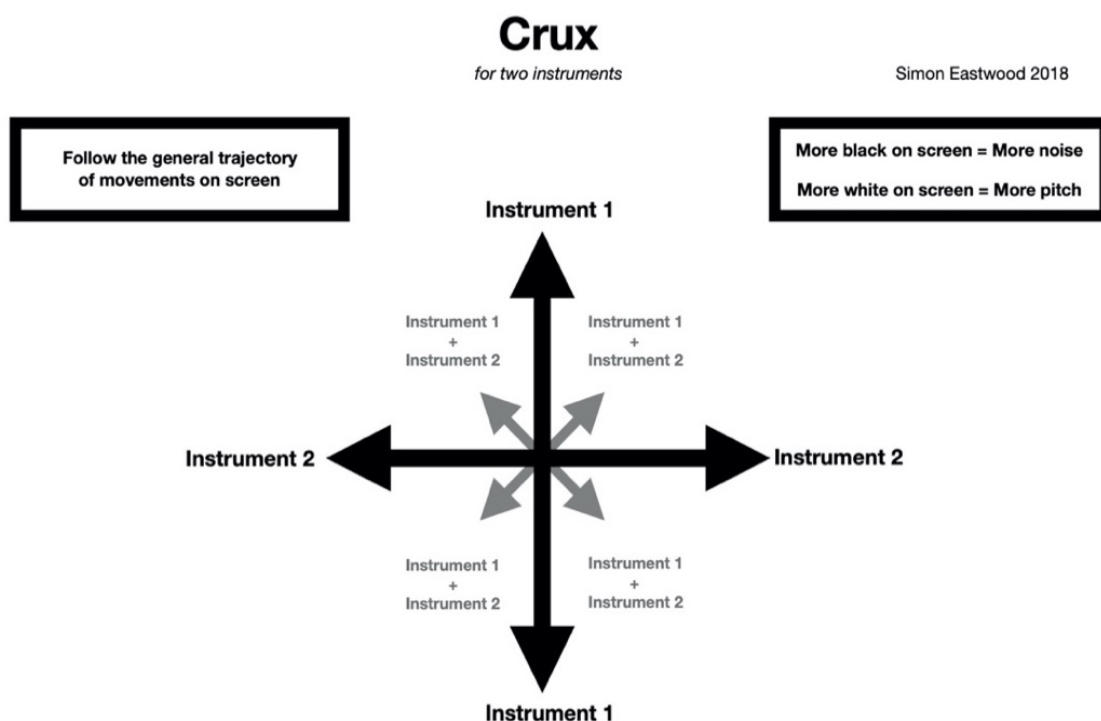


*Fig. 27: Creative-collaborative provocation in Crux. Employing the visual language of Nattiez's tripartite diagram, this image shows my contributions on the left and Oleksiy's on the right. Additionally, Tristan Carter and Jake Church act as performer/interpreters in the final stage.*

With these observations in mind my immediate idea was to transform the piece into a graphic score that could be interpreted by improvising musicians. However, I also wanted to find a

way to direct this improvisation toward a specific kind of outcome rather than to simply put Oleksiy's painting in front of a group of musicians and see what happened. My solution here was to create a score which would act as a kind of legend with which to interpret the movements displayed on screen. This score, when combined with Oleksiy's painting, formed a new work, *Crux* (2018), which would be interpreted by my friends and colleagues Tristan Carter (violin) and Jake Church (guitar) [Fig. 27].

Visual events and sound events inevitably form connections when they occur at the same time, something French film theorist Michel Chion refers to as 'synchresis', and this requires careful consideration when combining music with visual.<sup>130</sup> Something I wanted to avoid in this case was a direct mapping of pitch to the painting's vertical axis, which I was certain would be the musicians' first instinct.



Ex. 7: The score for *Crux*, which directs players in their interpretation of Oleksiy's painting

Asking musicians to respond to the painting as a graphic score would invariably lead to some sort of 'mickey-mousing' effect, so I wanted to ensure a level of independence from the visual was retained in at least one musical parameter, otherwise the relationship between sound and vision might appear flat or lacking in depth. I noticed that Oleksiy had also avoided this relationship between in his painting and *Triptych for Two*, and with this in mind, the score for *Crux* [Ex. 7] assigns each axis to a different instrumental part rather than to pitch. I then direct the players to respond to the general trajectory of movements in Oleksiy's painting with

<sup>130</sup> Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2019), 64.



the first player responding to movements of the vertical axis and the second to the horizontal. This achieves two goals; it encourages the musicians to disassociate pitch from the vertical axis, and it also encourages a degree of counterpoint between parts.

The other direction I gave players was to respond to the proportion of black versus white on screen. If a greater proportion of the screen was black, the players should perform more noisy sounds, if a greater proportion was white, the sounds should be more pitched. The goal of introducing this duality was to create an overarching structure to the improvisation, reflecting my own initial impression of Oleksiy's painting. These rules were deliberately vague enough to allow the performers freedom to use their own interpretive faculties, but specific enough to direct the performance toward a particular kind of outcome. The level of creativity displayed by Tristan and Jake in their performances was also, therefore, a very important part of this process.

## 7.2. COLLABORATION WITH LISA MUNNELLY

The nature of the digital tools Koval chose to work with heavily informed the way in which he responded to *Triptych for Two*, and by extension my creation of *Crux*. The same could be said for this next collaborator who is also visual artist but uses very different tools, and therefore responded in a different way. I first worked with Wellington artist Lisa Munnelly in 2017, when I performed an improvisation for her exhibition *Dirty Edges/Clean Lines* at Toi Poneke. At the exhibition opening, Lisa created a piece in front of the audience where she drew with charcoal around a piece of paper which was pinned to the wall. This paper was then moved and folded in particular ways to guide her drawing as the work progressed. At the same time, I would perform an improvisation in response to the marks she made on the wall.

Lisa's work often applies very strict rules and constraints in order to generate methodical drawing procedures. These processes are frequently very performative in nature, and often embrace physical engagement with her material. With the use of charcoal in *Dirty Edges/Clean Lines*, for instance, each mark required physical effort to overcome resistance with the wall; she was dressed entirely in white clothing which become covered in soot, and at the end of the performance, her hands had turned completely black.

As with Koval, the procedure by which a work is created as an important part of the work itself, and creating the artwork in front of an audience in this way lays bare aspects of Munnelly's creative process, allowing for connections to be made between elements of a work that might not have been obvious after the fact. It also hints at a part of the creative process which they do not see, namely, the wider search for ideas and forms, along with the synthesis of various influences that go into creating that procedure, something that speaks to my earlier discussion about intertextuality. [see Chapter 2] This concern with the interconnected nature of creativity is something Lisa also articulated to me when speaking about our work on *[Re]Surfacing* (2019), the piece included in this portfolio:

The drawing's actually speaking to the way that things emerge and how connections can be formed, and if I was to talk or write about that work I'd be talking about predecessors, I'd be talking about how other artists, how this work taps into other artist's work, how the form of the work or the idea of the work emerges over time, it's not fully apparent. So, I'm interested in the way that drawing can track or represent sometimes these intangible elements whether it be the creative process, or the knowing of the work, or whether it be sound in this case, I think it's really interesting.<sup>131</sup>

In 2019, Munnelly invited me to participate in another exhibition called *Invisible*, this time dealing with the idea of the 'unseen' in visual art. The exhibition was a collaborative venture between Massey University where Munnelly lectures, BWA in Wrocław, and the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Detroit, and would be displayed in all three cities. Although Lisa is a visual artist like Oleksiy, this project unfolded in a very different way, not least because this time it was Lisa who initiated the collaboration rather than the other way around.

### 7.2.1. [RE]SURFACING (2019)

At the initial meeting, Lisa explained the concept behind the exhibition and also an idea she had to use a special kind of calligraphy paper, on which water would produce a black mark that would gradually fade as the water dried. She explained the ephemerality of such a mark would be a good fit with the temporal nature of music, which likewise disappears once a musician stops playing, or, if it is recorded, when playback stops. Rather than being a performance as had been the case with *Dirty Edges/Clean Lines*, this would be a video that could travel from one city to the next. I immediately saw how this would fit in with the other collaborative projects I was pursuing and explained the process behind what would become my model of creative-collaborative provocation.

I was initially concerned that black marks on a white background would be too similar to Oleksiy's work, but then I remembered his comments on the importance of the material in painting, that it was the manner in which colour was applied to a surface that was the important thing. The materiality of Lisa's work was fundamentally different to Oleksiy's digital painting, and the physicality of this process tells a very different story. [Fig. 28] Lisa's idea also acted as an effective provocation on my creative process by providing specific material at the outset that led me toward a particular creative pathway. The idea of fading marks on paper, for instance, immediately made me think of sustaining sounds electronically to mimic this process.

As with the other collaborations in this portfolio, this project follows the model of creative-collaborative provocation. Interestingly, however, the initial provocation in this case was not *Triptych for Two*, but rather the concept and material Lisa introduced in that first meeting. In fact, in the first weeks of the collaboration I had initially created a sketch for a different

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<sup>131</sup>From an interview with Lisa Munnelly by the author 08/06/19

piece of music altogether which was much more rhythmically sparse, but this proved too unwieldy to work with and was dropped. On the other hand, Lisa found the steady rhythmic pulse of *Triptych for Two*'s second movement much easier to follow, and used that instead. [Fig. 29].

Another feature that differentiates this project from the others was the way in which the stages of the creative-collaborative provocation process occurred very close together, blurring the boundaries between one provocation and the next. The timeline for submission to the exhibition was very short—a little over a month—and so we had to be very structured in the way we collaborated. Living in the same city also meant that it was easy to have regular meetings in person to discuss any issues we had with our part of the project and to plan out the work structurally.

Lisa drew in response to the second movement of *Triptych for Two* on a loop for fifteen minutes. I then went into the studio with my double bass and recorded an improvisation to her drawing, a process which we then repeated, making this the only collaboration in this portfolio that represents two iterations of the provocation cycle. In each of Lisa's takes, the paper took several hours to dry completely, something that could be interesting in a durational piece, but in this case put the long 'fading' process at odds with the more performative first part of the piece. We therefore made the decision to gradually increase the frame rate so that the marks would disappear in ten minutes. I then created a simple Max/MSP patch that allowed me to sustain particular notes from my double bass performance one at a time through granular synthesis. These sustained sounds were then edited together to create a slowly evolving sonic texture to accompany the fading water marks.

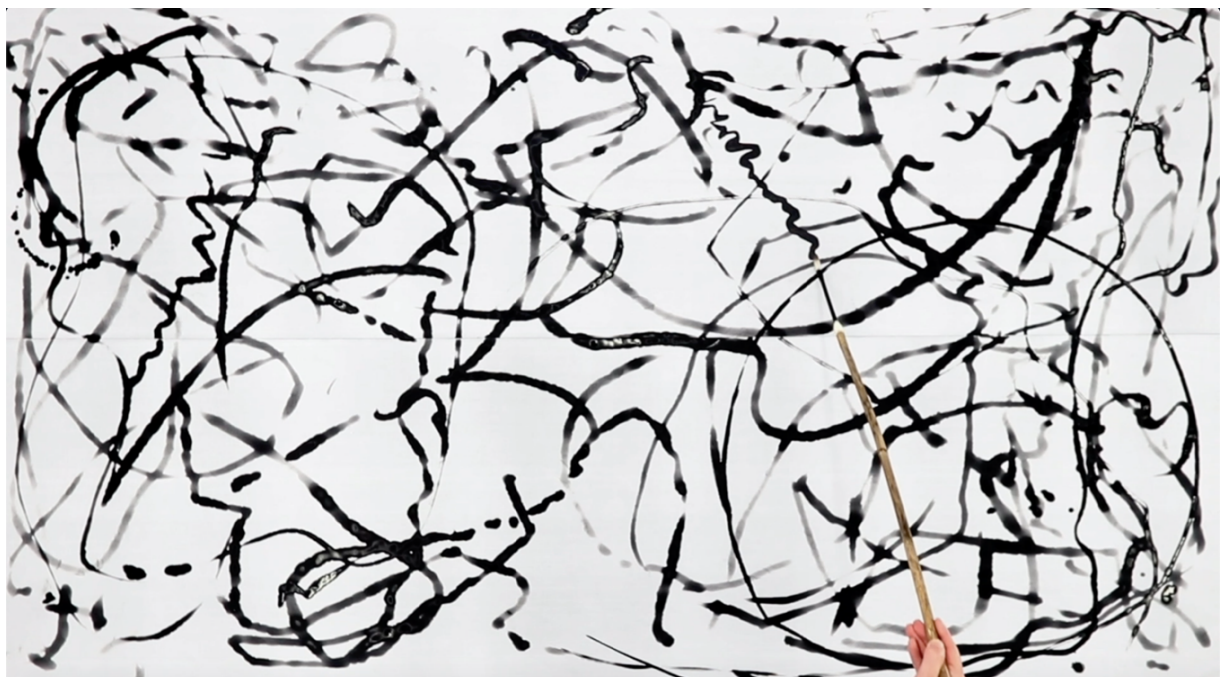


Fig. 28: Still from [RE]Surfacing

In my case, there were two main facets of this project that could be considered major provocations. I have already mentioned an early provocation coming from Lisa's material and how the idea of fading marks on paper led directly to my use of sustained but decaying sounds in the electronics. Another provocation, however, was the timeframe of the piece and the way in which it would be presented in an art gallery rather than in a concert. This encouraged me to take a slower and more patient approach to form, creating a work that is longer and moves much more slowly than anything I have written before. The piece has a kind of singular focus that, if I were composing with my 'normal' process, would likely have been broken several times during that timeframe. The way in which we had structured time in this piece, with a period where marks and sounds are created followed by one in which they fade, prevented me from deviating from this narrow path to the benefit of the work as a whole.

For Lisa, the process of responding to *Triptych for Two* presented a number of challenges that could be considered provocations. In contrast to the tendency toward structure I had experienced, she found that the structure became looser as work progressed. She had initially been drawn to the second movement because its steady pulse enabled her to pre-empt a number of gestures in the music. My improvisation in reply, on the other hand, had long gaps and breaks which made this sort of anticipation difficult. This led to a very different approach when she was drawing for the second time, an experience she frames as existing between the concepts of arrival and departure:

One of the most interesting things for me on reflection is this idea of arrival and departure...So when...you gave me some work to listen to, and they were quite short pieces, there were three different kind of moods to the three pieces and I started drawing to those short pieces and I found one in particular suited the brush and I nearly got kind of carried away and could pre-empt the form of it, because I got to know that work quite well and I could see it and I could keep up with it and nearly pre-empt it, and then when you started sending me this stuff you were giving for me, I couldn't pre-empt it at all. It was like, boom, it was there, and it was gone... And, it was a totally kind of unnerving kind of shift...It was nearly like, trying to catch these things that were skittering away from me, and because we were dealing with a much longer piece of time and there wasn't that set kind of structure...I couldn't determine this set, it wasn't as tight, it was looser. So that was really interesting so the experience of it was all about arrival, these notes or these sounds would arrive and then they were gone, and I was trying to catch them. And, in reflection when I'm thinking about it, when I looked at the final work that we did, you know, it was all about departure, because...you know the drawing itself is, the marks are leaving, fading, and then you did that long, slow goodbye, so there's this really

interesting divide between the experience of making the work and the experience of watching the work.<sup>132</sup>

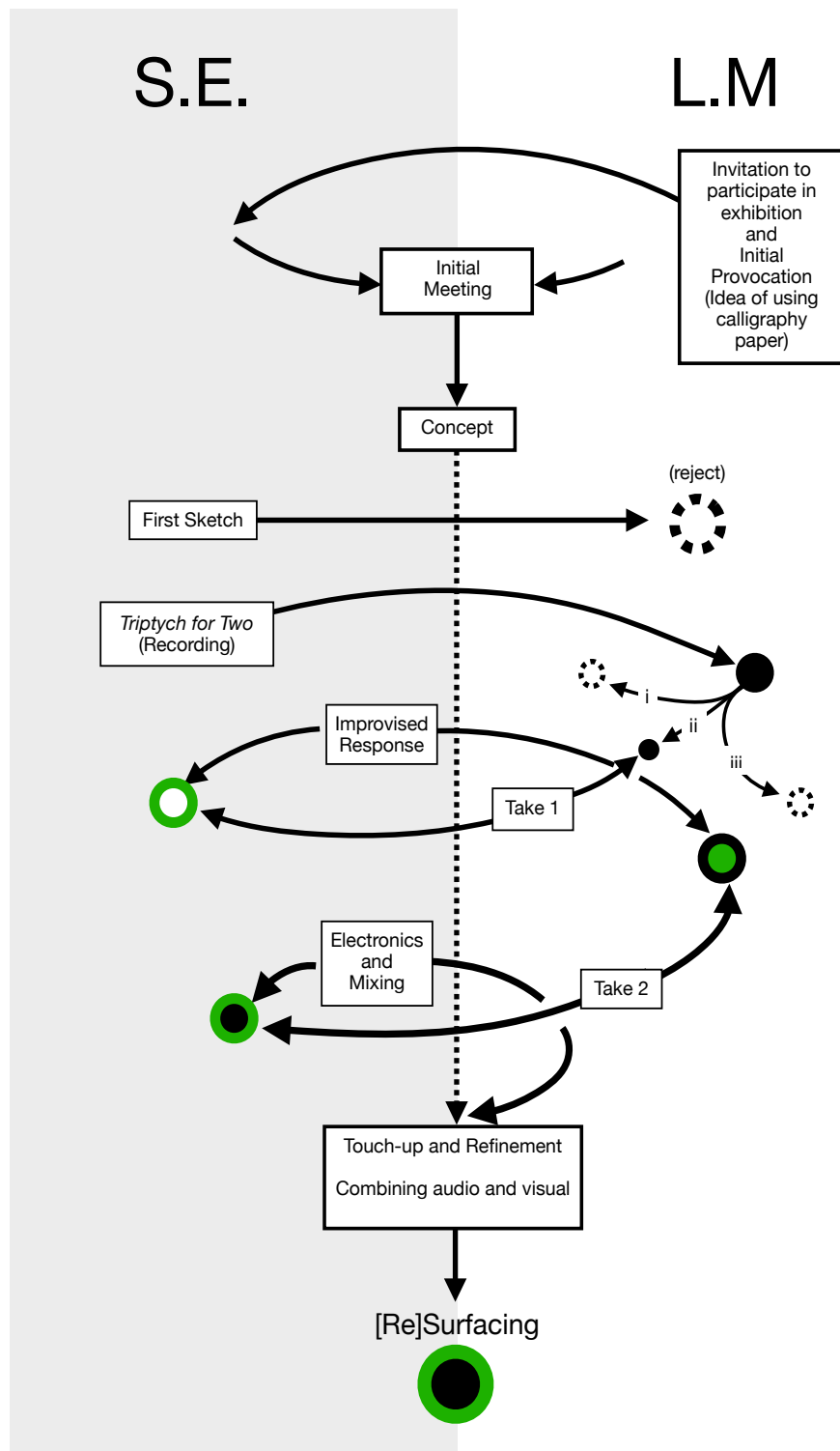


Fig. 29: The collaborative process for [RE]Surfacing

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

### 7.3. COLLABORATION WITH JUSTYNA JANISZEWSKA

For Koval and Munnely alike, the process of responding to *Triptych for Two* revolved around real-time interactions with a recording of that piece. Justyna Janiszewska, a Polish dancer and choreographer based in London, chose another approach entirely. We met in 2011 while I was studying at the Royal Academy of Music and collaborated together on a piece called *(Un)seen* in 2012. Justyna proved to be a generous and empathetic collaborator, with a practice that combines a playful theatricality with intelligent insight and understanding of multiple artforms, qualities which made her a natural choice as a collaborative partner on this project.

Rather than responding to the music in real time, Justyna created three short dance videos, each of which conveyed her impression of one of *Triptych for Two*'s three movements. These were recorded on her rooftop in London without music, the only accompanying audio being environmental noise from the streets below. She later explained that this was a way to approach the challenge I had set in a more creative way, by removing the potentially limiting compulsion to respond only to surface-level impulses in the music:

that was part of me trying to take the provocation in a different way, because it's really difficult hearing the music and to not hit the note, or avoid a temptation to follow the dynamic of the composed piece, or trying to match with the impulses and trying to be on the beat. So when I took the music away, I kept the memory of it, and that element helped me to surprise myself and feel more free when dancing. Normally I work in the way that I react to what I hear instantly, responding with movement But in this case I approach the music as if it were an image, moving in silence as a response to the feelings that music inspired in me.<sup>133</sup>

Justyna listened to the piece multiple times over a number of months, reflecting on each hearing and writing down particular images that came to mind. These could be visual metaphors like 'stones falling off a cliff', colours or elements that evoked the emotional responses she had to the recording [Fig. 30]. She also responded to certain structural elements in the set as a whole, perceiving the first and third movements as being connected with one another, and this is reflected in the visual composition of her videos. The first and third videos have the same backdrop, with Justyna entering the frame from the right in her response to the first movement and from the left in her response to the third. The second movement on the other hand, places a puddle that had formed on her rooftop in the middle of the frame, with Justyna seemingly performing a duet with her own reflection.

This visual framing was an integral part of the filming process, which in turn had an important influence on the way in which Justyna approached her choreography [Fig. 31]. As seen in Oleksiy's digital painting and Lisa's use of calligraphy paper, the tools we use dictate much about the manner in which our creative process unfolds and can act as a form of

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<sup>133</sup> [Interview with Justyna Janiszewska conducted by the author on 30/04/20.](#)

provocation. In Janiszewska's case, the process of filming meant that even while she was performing in a three-dimensional space, she needed to be aware that her performance was being captured and would eventually be experienced by others in two dimensions. The way in which she plays with the framing as a part of her choreography is clearly a response to this.

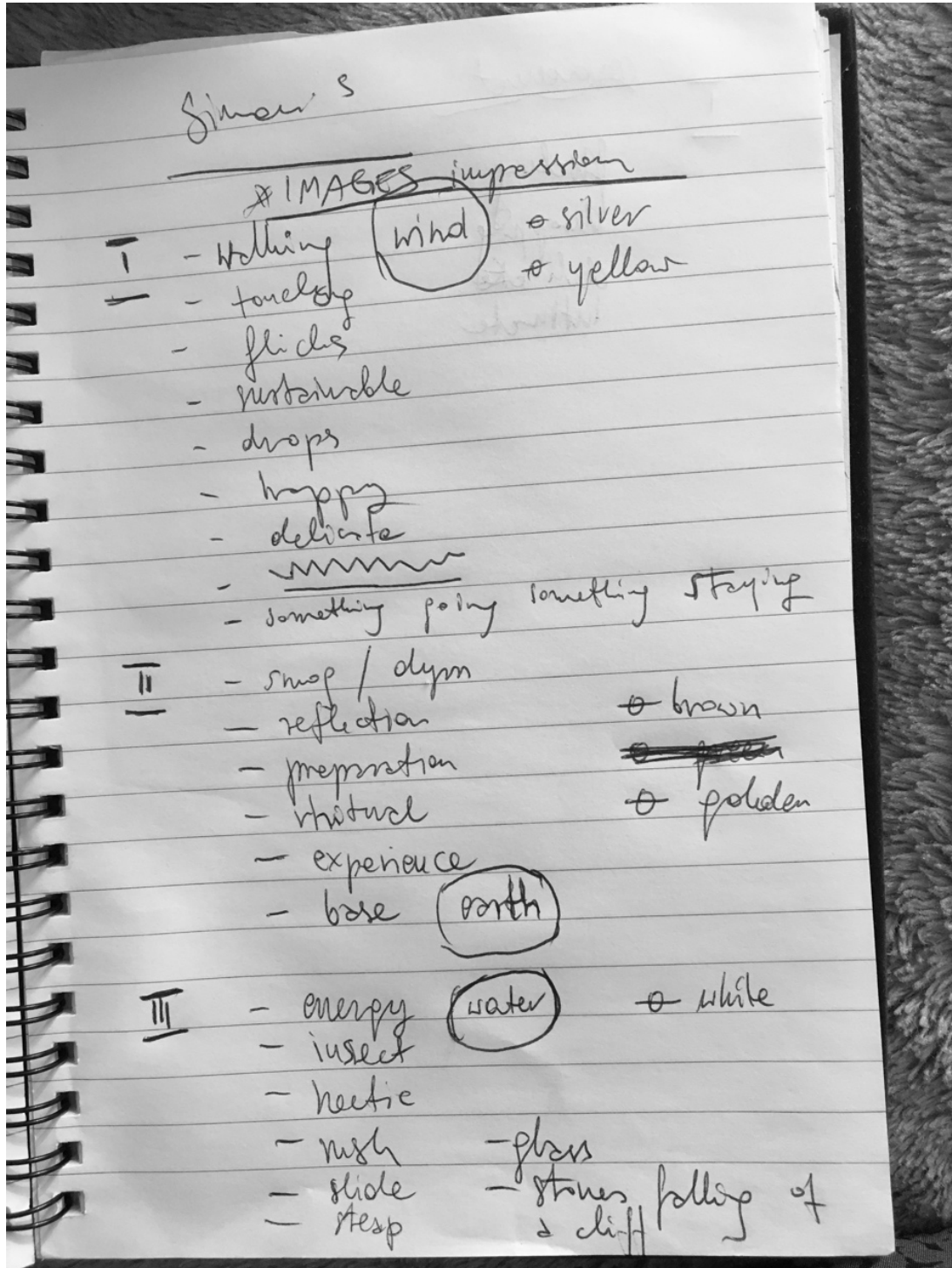


Fig. 30: Justyna's notes



While working within a camera frame like this could be seen as a limitation, Justyna also points out that having the time to reflect on a recorded piece of music enabled her to craft her movement in very different way to a live performance:

when I work with live music everything seems in flux, and the constant change is like a dialogue between the musician and the dancer, and the gap between the thinking and the doing is very small because everything happens here and in this very moment. So working with pre-recorded music gave me some space to think about it, to respond, to rewind, to go through it over and over and over again to the point that I nearly could hear it in my head. I absorbed an impression of it and moved in silence, responding to my memory of that now familiar sound that I could treat as an image or emotion rather than an audible suggestion.<sup>134</sup>

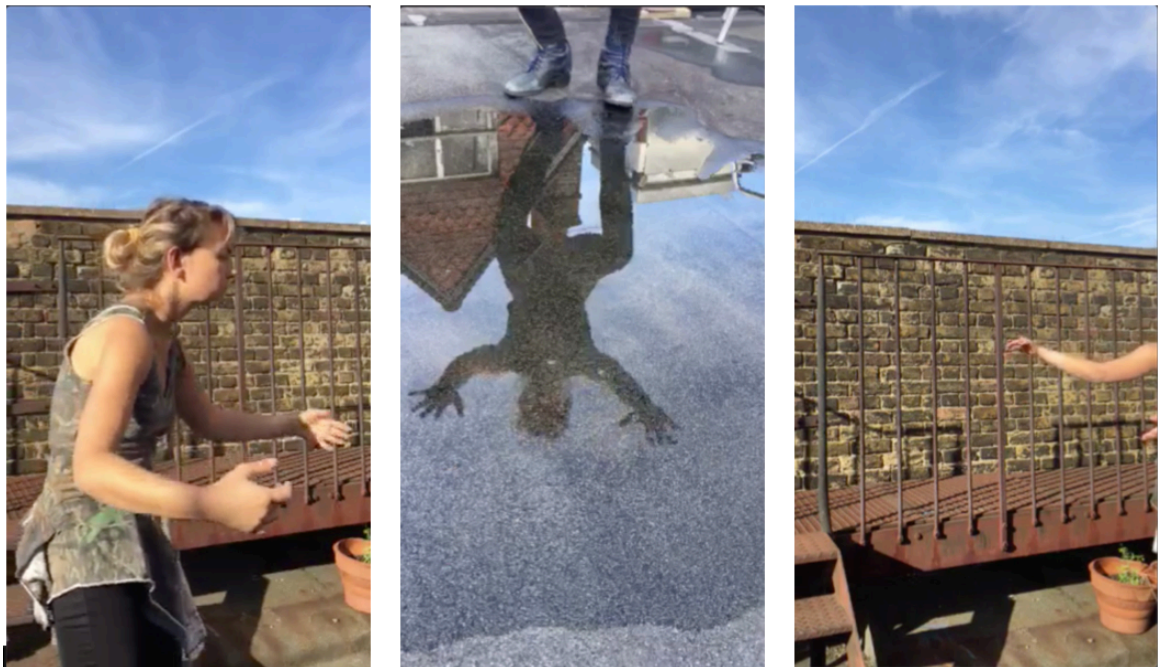


Fig. 31: Stills from *Silver Wind*, *Golden Earth*, *White Water*

### 7.3.1. *SILVER WIND, GOLDEN EARTH, WHITE WATER (2020)*

In responding to Justyna's choreography, I decided that I would try to emulate her process by writing a piece of music away from her movement but still using my impression of her dance, and the duration of her videos, as a guide. Justyna also very graciously shared her working notes and sketches she had made while creating the pieces, and this documentation along with interviews we had conducted also informed my process [Fig. 32]. Despite being aware of historical precedents of independent collaboration such as those of Cage, Cunningham and Rauschenberg [see Chapter 4], I am certain that I would not have worked in this way if it were

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.



not for Justyna's videos prompting me to do so. The level of uncertainty in the final outcome, that my score would not 'fit' with Justyna's video, was very risky from my point-of-view.

As was the case in Lisa Munnely's project, Justyna's particular way of working had also transformed one of the fundamental limitations on my response: time. Where Munnely had responded to one three-minute movement and created something much longer and more expansive, Janiszewska condensed the three movements into short statements or vignettes. This change alone had a drastic effect on my creative process, as a minute-long piece does not require the kinds of developmental procedures one would employ in a longer work and can instead focus on exploring small gestures, colours and images to create a set of 'musical haiku'.

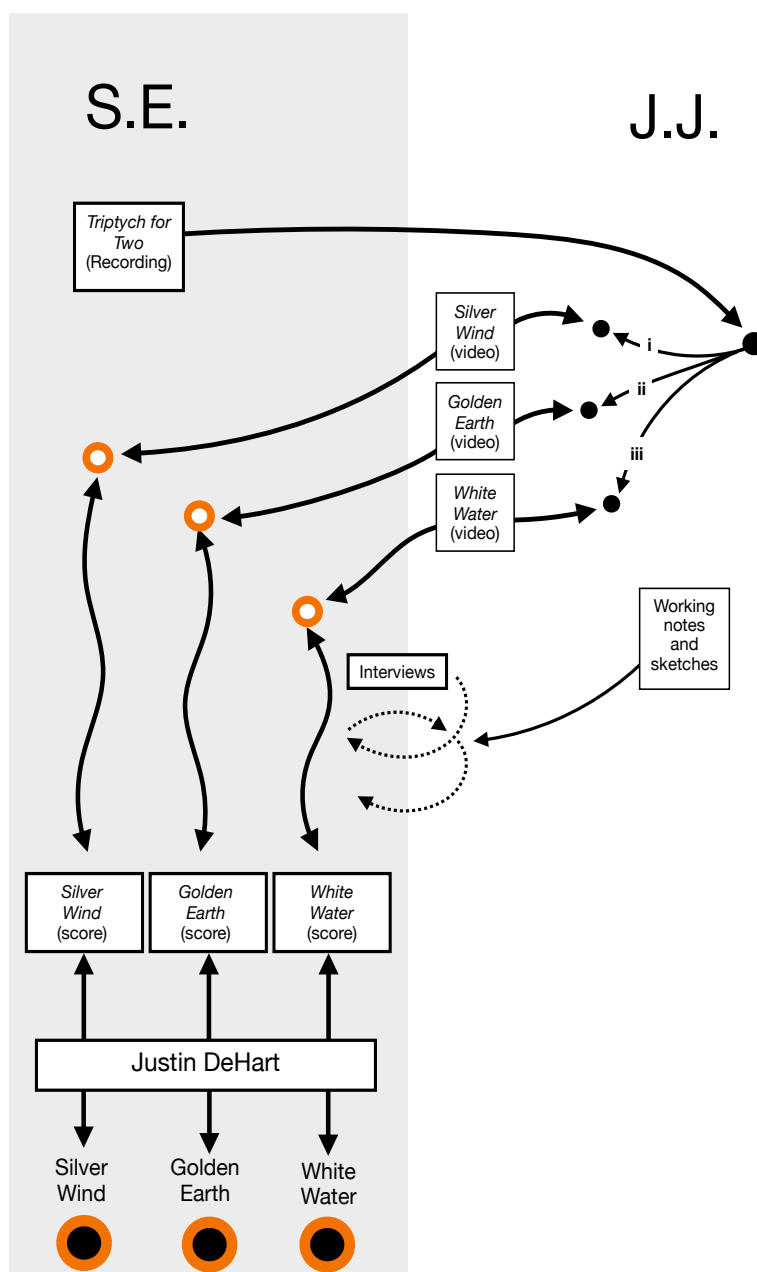
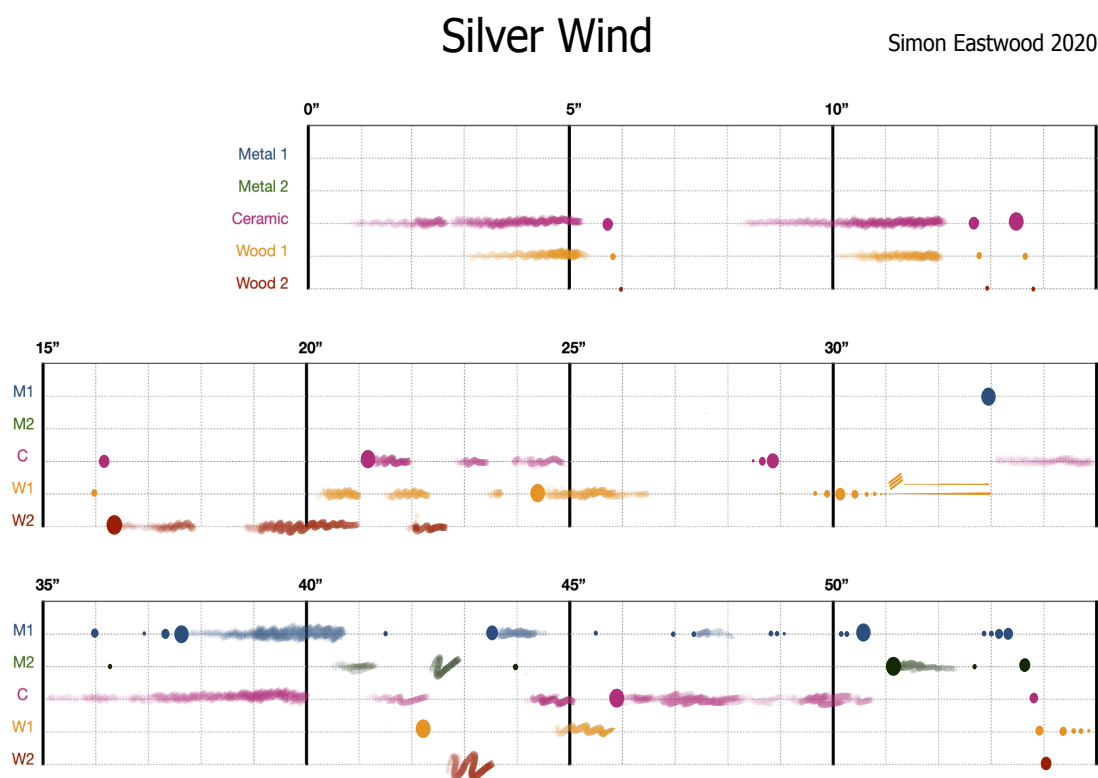


Fig. 32: The collaborative process in *Silver Wind*, *Golden Earth*, *White Water*

While percussion seemed like a natural fit with the elemental, almost ritualistic, nature of Justyna's movement, the soundworld I had in mind was not particularly rhythmic. I would instead explore subtle variations in touch, movement and velocity in the percussionist's playing. This made graphic notation the obvious choice for creating scores [Ex. 8]. These scores also extend significant creative freedom to the percussionist, thereby making their interpretation of each score an extension of the collaborative process, as was the case with Tristan Carter and Jake Church in *Crux*. The scores were interpreted by Christchurch-based percussionist Justin DeHart, who interpreted the scores in accordance with the timings I had specified without watching Justyna's video.

The player can choose five objects for the piece, two made from wood, two from metal and one ceramic object. The decision to use these materials was largely inspired by the background of Justyna's video which contains bricks, flowerpots and a steel walkway. The second movement is more prescriptive, with the percussionist playing a single timpano with superball mallets, a decision that was influenced by the gentle ripples that roll over the puddle in Justyna's video for that movement.



Ex. 8: The first page of the score for *Silver Wind*.

#### 7.4. COLLABORATION WITH ROYA JABAROUTI

Roya Jabarouti is a writer, translator and literary scholar. She is particularly concerned with intersemiotic translation and the 'internal soundworlds' of poetry, that is to say, sounds created inside a reader's mind when they imagine what the poet themselves might be hearing as they speak. In 2018, Roya invited me to collaborate with her by realising the internal

soundscapes of two Seamus Heaney poems, *Land* and *Oracle*,<sup>135</sup> as acousmatic pieces. The resulting works used field recordings and digital signal processing to convey, without words, the internal soundscapes evoked in my mind as I read Heaney's poetry. Afterwards, I asked Roya if she would in turn write a poem that was an interpretation of *Triptych for Two*, and this was her response:

Once upon a time  
the night went on,  
forever.  
Round like the cobblestones,  
in the street lamps glow, well away  
from the window.

The breeze comes in off the rhyme.  
Nothing can erase the night,

in the clear light,  
come, blaze, blast and spark.  
Throw your vast arms around the rock.

Heard footsteps are near,  
but imagined,  
come closer to ear.

We have far too long,  
been biding the perfect night.  
I shall remember the song.

Lean fast upon me,  
play on.<sup>136</sup>

Her process was in many ways similar to that of Justyna Janiszewska: she listened to the recording over a period of time, writing down a series of images and impressions the piece had provoked in her. Unlike Janiszewska, however, Jabarouti responded to the three movements as a whole rather than to each movement separately, with the underlying mood of the entire set suggesting the image of a person walking alone at night. This image bookends her poem and sets the overall tone, while the middle stanzas hint at each of *Triptych for Two*'s three movements: the first movement evokes footsteps, the second movement a breeze, while the line 'come, blaze, blast and spark' hints at the explosive energy of the third. Roya describes the final lines 'Lean fast upon me, play on' as being an image of someone playing a string instrument, suggesting the possibility that the poet's 'voice' in this poem is actually that of a musical instrument. Roya describes her process as one of drawing inspiration from the music rather than having a direct path from musical gesture to words on the page, but the open-

<sup>135</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Wintering Out*, ed. by Seamus Heaney (London, United Kingdom, London: Faber & Faber, 1972). These pieces are included in the "first-generation" portion of the portfolio.

<sup>136</sup> Untitled poem by Roya Jabarouti (2019)

endedness of these lines is powerful in the way it encourages the reader to extend their imagination beyond what is written on the page.

#### 7.4.1. *ONCE UPON A TIME: MEDITATION ON A POEM BY ROYA JABAROUTI (2020)*

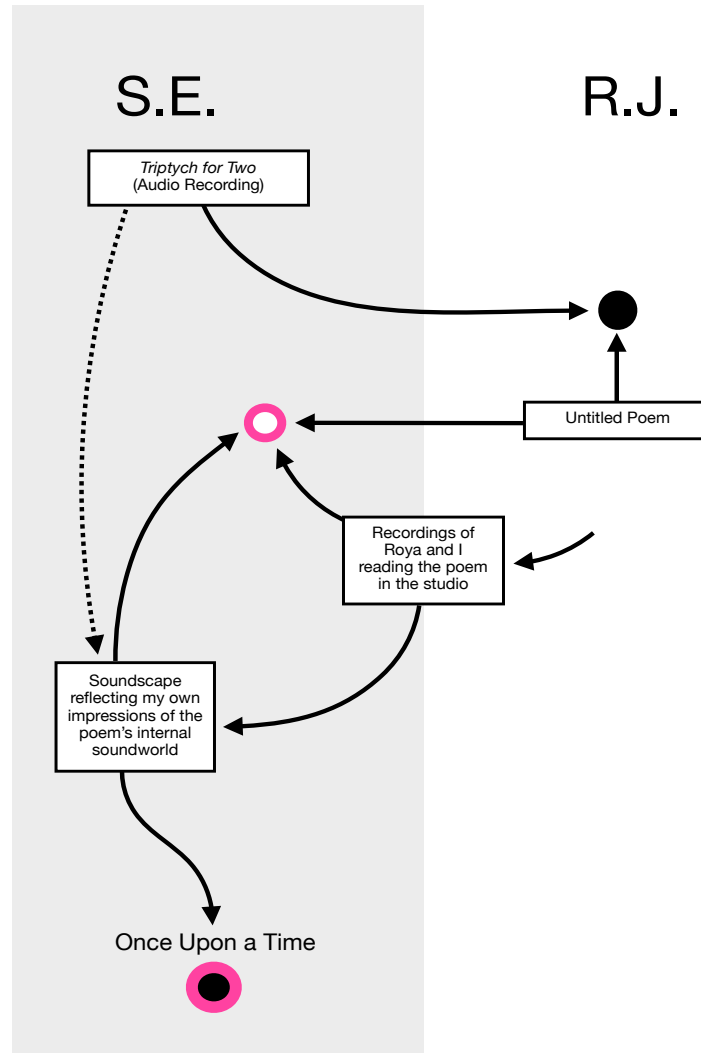


Fig. 33: The collaborative process for *Once Upon a Time: Meditation on a Poem by Roya Jabarouti (2020)*

Reading Jabarouti's poem, I could see a number of ways in which it could be treated as a creative provocation. To begin with, the way in which Roya could evoke a vivid memory of each movement from *Triptych* with a set of short sentences made me think about the nature of words as semiotic units, and how these words had the ability to convey much more than just their literal meaning. Going in the other direction, I thought about whether reducing these words as sounds, down to their constituent syllables until they became little more than utterances, would change the way this information was perceived.

Secondly, the poem made me think about the nature of voices. Normally when I read a poem, I have a tendency to hear the words in my own voice; in this case, however, the words

themselves, written by Roya, belonged to her authorial voice, as it were. This gave me the idea of having each of us read the poem out loud and use that as the sonic material for a piece.

Thirdly, I thought about the internal soundscapes that Roya had encouraged me to explore in *Land* and *Oracle*. While the imagery in Roya's poem evoked, for me, a vivid memory of the original piece, there were other sonic images as well which were more abstract and expansive. With this in mind, I thought about how I could transform the recording of *Triptych for Two* in a way that reflected the internal soundscape I heard while reading Jabarouti's poem.

I went about this process by first inviting Roya in the studio, where we would each read her poem in a number of ways [Fig. 33]. These recordings were then edited together in such a way that they began as full readings of the piece and were gradually broken down and interwoven in such a way that actual words became less and less recognisable. Underneath this, the audio from *Triptych for Two* was processed and transformed to recreate the soundworlds implied in Jabarouti's imagery. At times this is quite literal, such as the idea of night-time implied by the sound of crickets, while at other times the connection is far more abstract.

## 7.5. COLLABORATION WITH ALISTAIR FRASER

While Justyna's creative approach inspired me to adopt a rather free method of notation, and in Roya's case no notation at all, the approach I took in my collaboration with Alistair Fraser was, in contrast, extremely detailed and prescriptive. Fraser is a well-known and respected taonga puoro practitioner, instrument-maker and researcher based in Wellington, New Zealand. He is well-versed in cross-disciplinary collaborations and has performed several times with new music ensemble Stroma, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and as a duo with flautist Bridget Douglas, as well as with jazz bassist Phil Boniface on their album *Ponguru* (2018). Since this thesis was largely inspired by *Papaki Tai* (2012), my initial project in London where I collaborated with a taonga puoro performer from a distance, I was very interested in exploring this model again in New Zealand, this time working more closely with a player in person. Alistair has been an important advisor in my own tentative explorations into the world of taonga puoro, and with his rich and varied experience in multiple performing environments, I knew he would be a perfect fit for this project.

*Papaki Tai* relied heavily on improvised performances from the Western musicians, an approach that in many ways did not play to those musicians' strengths since they were mainly trained to interpret scores. On the other hand, the idea of having a taonga puoro musician create and record their own part provided an interesting opportunity to have a document that could act as an 'audio-part' for future taonga puoro players. Many puoro players, Fraser included, are well-versed in musical notation, but the idea of a fixed score does not generally sit well within taonga puoro practice. Each musician has their own collection of instruments that have very different ranges and acoustic properties; furthermore, much of the music created on these instruments relies on extremely subtle variations in pitch and timbre, so performers often find fixed musical notation in the form of a Western score counterintuitive.

My idea with this project was that the recorded taonga puoro part, in this case created by Alistair Fraser, could act as a framework from which another performer can create their own version of the piece. In other words, they know how the piece goes and can practice accordingly, but they are not strictly bound by a written score. My written score, having also been created in relation to that same recording via transcription, gives the Western performers a piece that interlocks with that taonga puoro part, while also working to their strengths as interpreters of musical notation [Fig. 34].

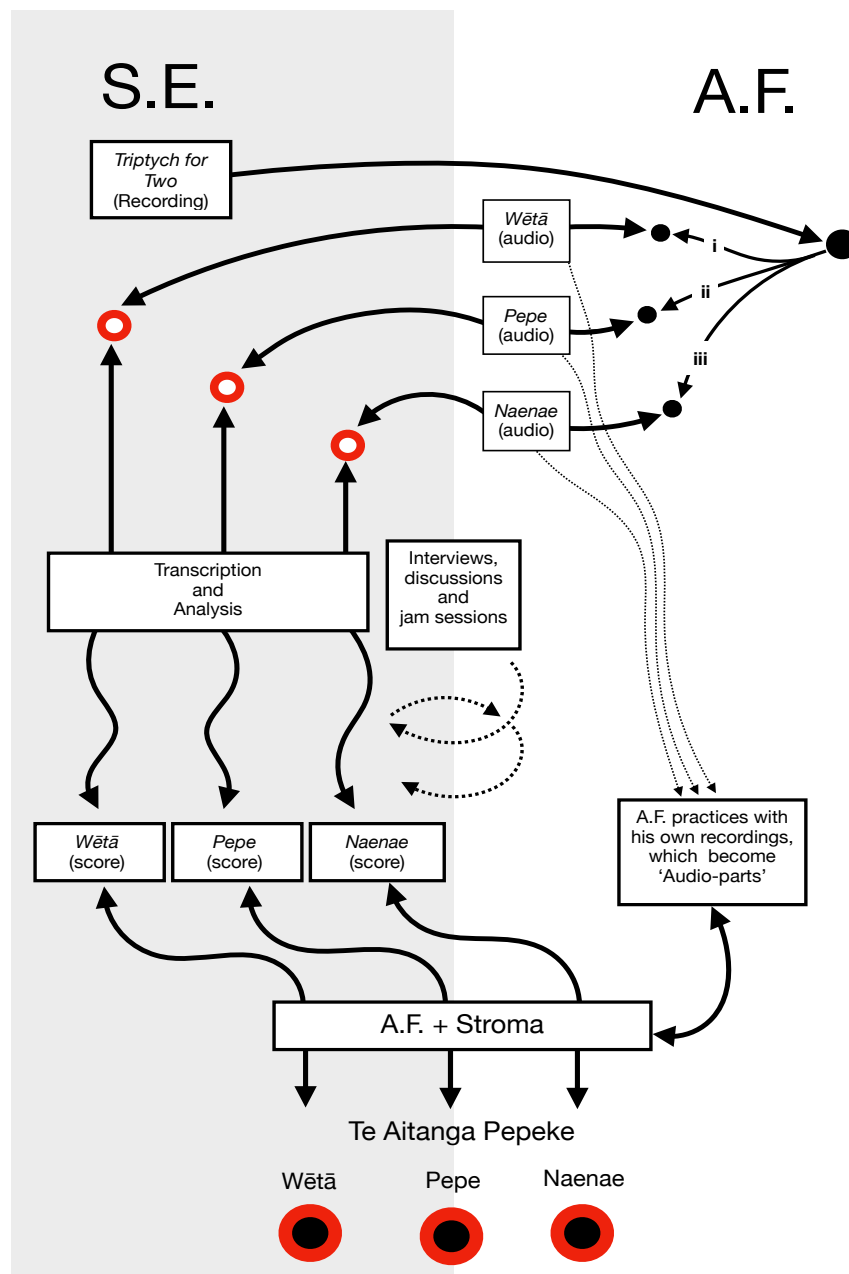


Fig. 34: The collaborative process for Te Aitanga Pepeke

As was the case with the other second-generation works, I began by sending Alistair a recording of *Triptych for Two* as an initial provocation to get the process started. Alistair improvised along with the original piece in his studio, recording himself on a number of

different instruments. Each take was done in real time with the original recording, responding to and mimicking the sounds of the violin and snare drum. Fraser remarked that he wanted to mirror the instrumentation of the original piece as closely as possible, but often found that matching the faster tempi of the original recording with taonga puoro was a challenge. In the first movement, he used the kū (a stringed instrument played using the mouth as a resonating chamber in a similar manner to a Jew's harp) as an analogue for the violin, whereas ipu kōrero (a bundle of dried flax fibres swung between the hands) represented the snare drum. In the slower second movement, the violin was represented by a pūtōrino (an instrument particularly unique to New Zealand which can be played as both a flute and a trumpet) and the snare drum by tumutumu upokohue (a pilot whale jawbone played as a percussion instrument). He found the third movement especially challenging because of its fast pace, and was initially unsure whether he would create a response to that movement at all, but he eventually found that with pākuru (a pair of sticks played against the mouth as a resonator) mimicking the snare drum and the kū once again paralleling the violin, he could create a fitting interpretation of the piece. The result was three short pieces for taonga puoro that we both remarked had a nocturnal, insect-like quality, and so named the set *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, or 'the insect world'.

#### 7.5.1. *TE AITANGA PEPEKE (2019/20)*

Creating my own response to Alistair's recordings presented a number of challenges that required me to re-think my approach to writing the piece several times. The first step was to make a detailed transcription of Fraser's performances, which was not to be used at any time as a performance score, but rather as a tool with which to analyse, augment and then recontextualise Alistair's work in order to create something new. Alistair had generously given me the stems from his recording session, synced with my original recording of *Triptych for Two*; I could then use the original piece as a reference point for my transcription. This also gave me a way to pin my analysis of Alistair's performance to the original piece, and to observe in detail how material had been transformed by this process of creative-collaborative provocation.

On the other hand, it is important to note that Fraser responded to a *recording* of *Triptych for Two*, not the score, and this made transcribing Alistair's performance in a way that fitted in with my original notation a difficult task. To begin with, Monique and Naoto, who play on the initial recording, had naturally interpreted the score with a degree of expressive rubato which, if one were only listening to the recording, could be interpreted as a lengthening or shortening of certain bars, or a gap in the music that could be filled in with more material. The same applies to tempo changes and accelerandi which could be interpreted in a number of ways from a strictly aural standpoint.

There were also a number of deliberate rhythmic ambiguities in the original piece that could be interpreted by the listener in a number of ways. To offer one example, the opening movement of *Triptych for Two* explores a polyrhythmic relationship between the two parts, a

ratio of 3:4 with snare drum having an underlying quaver pulse in 2/4 time and the violin playing triplets against that. While the score notates the snare drum as having the basic pulse, Alistair's interpretation takes the violin part as the basic pulse playing in 3/4 at a tempo one-and-a-half times faster than what I had notated [Ex. 9]. This could be likened to Rubin's vase, where the observer could alternatively see the same image as depicting vase or two people facing each other. To be clear, there is nothing 'wrong' about Fraser's rhythmic interpretation here; on the contrary, this shift of perception is exactly the point of a creative-collaborative provocation and this way of being forced to view *Triptych* through a different lens was exactly what I was hoping for.

The image displays a musical score for 'Triptych for Two', comparing the original notation with Alistair's re-interpretation. The score is organized into two main sections: 'Triptych for Two' and 'Alistair's Performance'.

**Triptych for Two:**

- Violin:** Notated in 3/4 time, playing triplets. Tempo: Steady ♩ = c. 76. Dynamics: *p* (pizzicato), *secco*.
- Snare Drum:** Notated in 2/4 time, playing a quaver pulse. Dynamics: *p*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*. Articulation: brushes snare on.
- Ipu Korero:** Notated in 3/4 time, playing a quaver pulse. Tempo: ♩ = 114.
- Ku:** Notated in 3/4 time, playing a quaver pulse.

**Alistair's Performance:**

- Violin:** Re-interpretation of the original notation, maintaining the triplet pattern.
- Snare Drum:** Re-interpretation of the original notation, showing a shift in tempo and dynamics.
- Ipu Korero:** Re-interpretation of the original notation, showing a shift in tempo and dynamics.
- Ku:** Re-interpretation of the original notation, showing a shift in tempo and dynamics.

The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, dynamics (*p*, *pp*, *mf*, *sf*), and articulation (*pizz*, *secco*, *brushes snare on*). The re-interpretation section shows a significant shift in tempo and rhythmic interpretation, particularly in the Snare Drum and Ku parts.

Ex. 9: The opening bars of *Triptych for Two* compared with my transcription of Alistair's re-interpretation



Initially, the practical solution seems simple—notate Alistair’s performance in 3/4 time at a faster tempo—until one considers that the original score contains tempo and metrical changes as well. 3/4 bars in the original score are therefore ‘translated’ into a 3/8 bar plus a 3/4 bar in the transcription, and likewise, 3/8 bars in the original become 9/16 bars in the transcription. A further degree of complication exists when we observe that in bar 14 of the transcription [see Ex. 9], Alistair introduces a 2/4 pulse pattern that, if we stay in 3/4 time, could be seen as a hemiola; on the other hand, when one actually *listens* to the recording, it is clear that this is actually the underlying pulse of his performance.

It is fascinating that, upon reflection, these issues only became apparent when I tried to write this music down, and in listening to Fraser’s recordings synced with Monique and Naoto’s performance, there is clearly a beautiful symbiosis in the way the parts complement each other. In hindsight, an easier approach may have been to abandon any relationship to the score of *Triptych for Two* altogether, but I had become determined by that point to write a piece that displayed the multi-faceted nature of its own creation. While the notation of these complex rhythmic relationships was difficult, it was also inspiring, and by the time I had finished my transcription I was almost in a state of ‘overload’ with regard to the possibilities going forward. At the same time, I was in a sense limited by my own attachment to the original work and was unsure what path I would follow in order to create just three short movements.

The process of transcription had radically re-shuffled and expanded my rhythmic conception of *Triptych for Two*; on the other hand, the limited nature of the harmonic material in Alistair’s performances also served as a provocation on my creative process. As I said earlier, taonga puoro musicians often work with very subtle variations in pitch and timbre, and it was not surprising to get a response from Fraser that revolved around just a few notes. The kū plays a B♭ harmonic series, throughout the first and second movements, and a D harmonic series in the third, although Fraser alters these fundamental pitches slightly in a few places by ingeniously bending the bow of the kū. The second movement is much more melodic, with the pūtōrino revolving around D. The pākuru in the third movement also have a slight semblance of pitch, which I notated in my transcription more as an ‘impression’ than a definitive statement of tonality.

My response, the ensemble score for *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, handles musical material in much the same way [Ex. 10]. This score places much more emphasis on rhythmic and timbral development, as opposed to harmony, as means to create form. Each part gradually evolves from one kind of sound to another as each movement progresses, but this is not particularly systematised, as I wanted to be able to respond to the fluid movements in Alistair’s improvised performance. Having said that, there are a number of ways in which I worked around this limitation in order to expand the harmonic language. Firstly, I use pitch as a vector with which to create directed development, movements that are less concerned with moving from one specific tonality to another and more with moving from low to high or from high to low.

## I. Wētā

SIMON EASTWOOD  
and ALISTAIR FRASER 2019/2020[illegible]

*Ex. 10: The first page of Wētā, from Te Aitanga Pepeke (2019/20). Note that this score contains my transcription of Alistair's recording in the kū part alongside my interpretation/elaboration of that same recording. This transcription acts as an 'example', offering the conductor guidance as to what the soloist will do in their improvisation.*

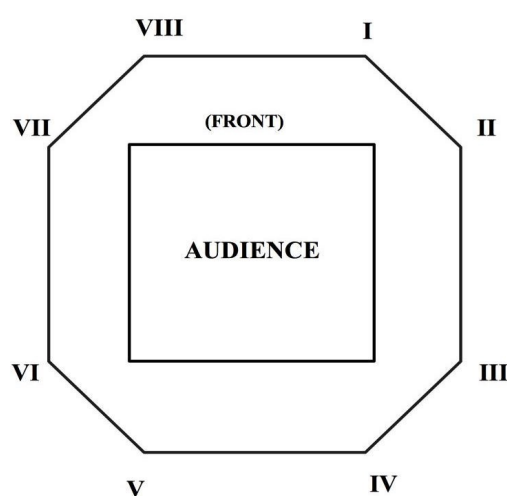
Secondly, I play both with and against the harmonic series presented in the kū at different points in the score, and for this reason I ask the viola and cello to detune their C strings to B♭. Thirdly, I re-integrate harmonic elements from the violin part of *Triptych for Two*. These chords appear as structural signposts and coincide with similar moments in that original piece, providing a contrast with the other two kinds of harmonic material, while also serving as a nod to the process by which this work was created along with the use of the snare drum in the first and third movements.

## 7.6. *RIPPLE* (2018)—REIMAGINING A PIECE OF MY OWN

Having seen how other people were responding to and transforming *Triptych for Two*, I was naturally interested to see what I could do with the piece myself by writing a new piece that analysed or commented on that earlier work in a similar way to Berio, Boulez and Rihm. As I was considering this possibility, an opportunity arose to write a piece for Cellophonia, a concert of massed cellos at Victoria University of Wellington.

The idea of writing for a massed group like this immediately suggested the idea of using space as a parameter for musical expression. I had already seen this idea explored multiple times, a canonical example being Stockhausen's *Gruppen* (1955–57), but in this case I thought particularly of the antiphonal writing in Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium* (c.1570).

The players would be of varying abilities, so the music had to be fairly simple. Although I was still interested in deconstructing my earlier work in the manner of say, Boulez, this limitation largely precluded the kinds of complex explorations of material demonstrated in works like *Sur Incises*. The second movement of *Triptych for Two*, being the simplest of the three, was the obvious starting point. I then decided that the celli would encircle the audience, with the original work being pulled apart into its constituent elements which would then be arranged in space, giving listeners an experience of *Triptych for Two* 'from the inside', as it were [Ex. 11]



Ex. 11: A page from the score of *Ripple* showing the intended spatial arrangement

14

127

G

Vc. I

Vc. II

Vc. III

Vc. IV

Vc. V

Vc. VI

Vc. VII

Vc. VIII

*sf*

*sempre ff*

136

Vc. I

Vc. II

Vc. III

Vc. IV

Vc. V

Vc. VI

Vc. VII

Vc. VIII

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

*sempre ff*

Ex. 12: A passage from *Ripple* that explicitly displays the use of space to create a musical gesture

The main provocation was therefore the idea of using space to create musical gestures, and *Triptych for Two* would be the musical object that enabled me to trace out these gestures in physical space. This object itself was in fact altered very little; there are some slight chord alterations, as well as being transposed and layered upon itself in a kind of heterophony. As was the case with *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, I wanted to make a clear statement about *how* this piece had been constructed, so that when one listens to both pieces, the link should be obvious. More importantly, having this existing musical material already in place meant that I could alter my normal creative process by spending less time thinking about the unfolding of specific sounds events, and more time thinking about the way in which these events were situated in physical space. In this way, musical elements that I would normally consider to be secondary or perhaps even decorative, became in this case the essence of the entire composition and the way in which I conceived form and structure.

Rather than pitch, rhythm or timbre, the important relationships in this piece became texture—the difference between a single part and a tutti, for instance—and spatial trajectory—whether events came from in front, from the side or behind the audience. Ex. 12 shows one such example from the score where a tutti passage, with sound coming from all directions is suddenly reduced to a single player in front of the audience. That player then performs a gesture that is then passed to the right around the circle. This is not in itself revolutionary, and I do of course consider these elements regularly as a part of my creative process, but, as De Bono would say, the *provocation*—creating a piece by moving an existing musical object around physical space—in this case clearly led to *movement*, with physical space playing a much greater part in my creative process than usual.

## 7.7. DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

At first glance, it is immediately apparent how different each collaborator's approach was. Having had the time to reflect on the task at hand, they each found their own way of adapting to the challenge of interpreting *Triptych for Two*, thereby developing personal approaches that were suited to their individual practices. Roya and Justyna spent significant periods of time crafting their responses based on deep introspection, whereas Oleksiy, Lisa and Alistair preferred to react in the moment as they listened to the music. Oleksiy and Alistair chose their tools based on their initial impressions of my work, while Lisa, on the other hand, had already chosen her materials before she invited me to collaborate.

Timing and synchronisation appear to have been the prevailing common threads across these collaborations, and this is particularly pertinent considering that three of my collaborators work in visual media.<sup>137</sup> The relationship between sound and vision was clearly something Koval and Munnelly both sought to explore by directly matching sounds with movements on a surface. For Koval, this act was similar to the interpretation of a musical score

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<sup>137</sup> Four, if we include my ongoing project with Sebastian Lowe.

by a performer and there is a clear connection between sound and movement in his digital painting. Likewise, Munnelly chose to respond to the second movement of *Triptych* because she felt she could easily pre-empt and match sound with movement. When she received my reciprocal improvisation, however, the challenge of ‘catching’ the sound as it arrived and then departed represented more of an intangible ideal, often just beyond her reach, yet nonetheless guiding and informing her movements on the calligraphy paper. In contrast, Justyna Janiszewska actively sought to avoid this kind of synchronicity in her movement, taking a more abstract approach by removing the limitation of time from her response. In this way, her approach bore greater similarity to that of poet Roya Jabarouti than one might expect from an artist working in an audiovisual medium. While the other collaborators display a variety of approaches to musical time, Roya’s text has a way of existing outside of it, with the subtle ambiguity of her imagery allowing a reader to dwell perpetually on the many possible readings of each stanza.

In my own responses to the visual works, my goal was to recreate a kind of counterpoint between sound and vision by mixing moments of synchronisation with material that was more free-flowing and moved with its own logic. For Justyna, this was achieved by imitating her own working procedure and writing away from her film but noting the duration of her performances. For Oleksiy, it was a consideration actively built into the very simple but slightly ambiguous instructions I gave to my performers. For Lisa, it was largely a consequence of taking an improvisatory approach where one naturally tends to oscillate between precise synchronisation and pursuing a free and independent course.

Turning from synchronicity of sound and vision to that of sound and sound, Alistair Fraser’s interpretation seeks to mimic the sounds of *Triptych for Two* but employs very different tools that, by necessity, lead to a dramatic transformation of material from the original recording. Taonga puoro are generally not well suited to the fast tempi and chromatic pitch material displayed in the original piece, so Alistair chose to focus on other musical elements, such as timbre, instead. This fact, combined with notable differences in musical perception as seen with the 3:4 polyrhythm in the first movement, pushed the material in a different direction, while also creating substantial challenges for me in creating my own response.

Each of these approaches resulted in radical transformations of the original piece that were unique and personal to each collaborator, while also retaining subtle hints of the common link that all of these pieces share with *Triptych for Two*. In interviews, collaborators consistently remarked that they strongly responded to the rhythmic nature of the original piece, possibly a reflection of the fact that I was particularly concerned with rhythm while writing that piece. It may also be attributed, once again, to the importance of time in musical perception seeing as another common thread was the reaction to musical form, particularly the three-movement structure of *Triptych for Two*. Some kind of reaction to a three-part structure is apparent in

all of the responses, with the exception of *[Re]surfacing* and my own *Ripple*, which both draw from the second movement exclusively. In both of these cases, however, a link can also be drawn between the structure of those pieces and the second movement of *Triptych*, with *[Re]surfacing* being by far the more interesting example. If one sees this work having listened to the second movement of *Triptych for Two*, there is very much a sense that the DNA of that movement has in some sense been transferred across, and that the drone-based texture of the original has been radically dilated and stretched out in time.

The sense that each of the second-generation works ‘echo’ *Triptych for Two* in some way is palpable, especially if one knows to look for it. There are elements in these pieces that suggest the way in which they share a common thread through a particular collaborative process. This recalls Raymond Monelle’s idea of an ‘epistemic web’, discussed in Chapter 2, in which a musical work can represent a nodal point where a universe of texts and influences converge. Michael L. Klein also illustrates this idea in the following quote, which is itself a clever intertext of passages from Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1984):

The frontiers of music are never clear-cut: beyond its framing silence, beyond its inner form, it is caught up in a web of references to other music: its unity is variable and relative. Musical texts speak among themselves.<sup>138</sup>

Intertextuality is not always obvious or clear-cut, but we absolutely know it exists in this case because we have seen it unfold. Creative-collaborative provocation by its very nature leads to intertextuality, bringing together by proxy a group of individuals who would likely have very little to do with each other if they were not involved in this project. That being said, the connections between these works are not obvious on first listening or viewing. In fact, with the exception of *Ripple*, the link between *Triptych for Two* and the second-generation works is so subtle that it might not be noticed at all unless it were explained beforehand. Each collaborator heard something different in *Triptych for Two*, and expressed this in a different way, reimagining, reworking and transforming the earlier piece until it remained as little more than a quiet echo in the second-generation works. This says a lot about the nature of collective creativity.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi states that ‘creativity does not happen inside people’s heads but in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a sociocultural context’,<sup>139</sup> and here we see, in miniature, a demonstration of this idea in action. This group of seven friends is like a little society, a case study of one point of connection, one nexus in a much wider network of societal interaction. Each collaborator has influenced my own creative process in a very different way by radically transforming the musical material of *Triptych for Two*, but equally it appears this

<sup>138</sup> Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>139</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. (Harper Perennial: New York, 1997), 11.

process has influenced their creativity as well by creating challenges, limitations, and suggesting new ways of working.

The idea that this constellation of pieces represents just one point in a wider network also points to possibilities for future growth. First of all, it is important to note that there is another collaborator, Sebastian Lowe who made three short films in response to each of the three movements from *Triptych for Two*. At the time of writing this collaboration is still ongoing. Secondly, there is also the possibility that collaborators could now respond to the second-generation works, that additional artists could be brought in to add their own interpretations to the constellation. These contributions, of course, need not necessarily be responses to *Triptych*, but could instead stem from a collaborator's response, or from a second-generation work. Decentralising the network in this way would lead us away from a web-like structure toward something closer to a rhizome as Deleuze and Guattari imagine in *Mille Plateaux*.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 3–25.



# Chapter 8:

## EMERGENCE/CONVERGENCE

At the beginning of this thesis, I posed two key questions: a) *how can an idea, creative process or concept be transformed through the use of external provocations?*; and b) *can a systematic consideration of such provocations lead to a workable, non-hierarchical model of collaboration?*

Considering the first of these two questions from the perspective of my first-generation works, an intervention can take the form of a very specific brief or a personal challenge established while composing a piece of music. While there are many more dramatic and radical types of provocation that have not been considered in this thesis, I established the general principle that external interventions, when viewed in the right way, can have a substantial influence on the creative process. Such interventions can help the composer to overcome blockages and to find new ‘fertile terrain’ by suggesting radically different ways of operating. Having said that, in the case of *Where the River Flows....*, one of the most extravagant examples of intervention in this thesis, in which an arduous journey into the wilds of Alaska provided a radical physical dislocation from my normal habitude, it was nevertheless difficult to define a noticeable form of *movement* in my resulting creative process. While I certainly drew a lot of inspiration from the journey, the creative pathways I followed while composing that work were demonstrably similar to pieces I had written in the past.

What this demonstrates is that while we may set up any number of interventions into our creative processes, there is no guarantee these will necessarily become a provocation. Drawing from Eno and Schmidt’s deck of *Oblique Strategies* could create a dramatic change in one’s creative process, or it might not—there is no way of knowing until after the card has been drawn. On the other hand, de Bono also describes *movement* as an operation that requires practice.<sup>141</sup> Perhaps I was not viewing this experience in the right way to generate the more dramatic kinds of movement I saw in the collaborative works. Then again, the series of images conjured in that piece feels entirely appropriate to the experience I had on the river; from that point-of-view, a dramatic shift in my creative process was not necessary. While the Arctic expedition certainly held powerful potential as an *intervention*, it ultimately served merely as inspiration for the resultant work, rather than a *provocation* that radically altered how I compose.

In many ways, the most influential provocations in the first-generation works were the most subtle, offering small shifts in perspective that led to changes at much larger scales: a simple formula, such as a Lindenmayer system, working in the background to guide my rhythmic thinking in different directions; the unusual restrictions or prompts associated with

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<sup>141</sup> Edward de Bono, ‘Serious Creativity’, *The Journal of Quality and Participation*, 18.5 (1995), 17.

a particular brief; or the feedback from hearing a set of sketches played by performers for the first time. In this regard, the cases of *Triptych for Two* and *Interference Study* point to the importance of having an opportunity as a composer to make changes to a piece following performer feedback. Where commissioned works are concerned, a case can be made for following models that incorporate performer feedback into the commissioning process by having a workshopping session with the ensemble prior to completion of the work. There are established projects that already do this, one example being the London Symphony Orchestra's Soundhub commissions. While there are obvious financial and logistic implications, I believe that the creative benefits of this kind of approach are demonstrated by the work in this thesis.

In the second-generation works, a deliberate, radical kind of provocation was introduced into the creative process in the form of a 'creative-collaborative provocation'. In these cases, the resulting forms of movement were much more far-reaching and dramatic, with each collaborator's response acting as a commentary on *Triptych for Two* and the process that created it. Each collaborator had a unique reaction to the piece that, once returned to me, generated periods of intense and self-conscious reflection by providing an outsider's perspective on my own work. As a composer, one rarely gets such detailed and intimate feedback about a piece from people who are not composers themselves.

Knowing my own experience in creating this work, this project has taught me much about the way in which that work is perceived by others. Negotiating these changing perspectives was often a difficult task, with my initial conception for *Triptych for Two* sometimes being at odds with the transformed material I was presented. This cognitive friction ultimately proved enlightening, as aspects of the original piece I had not considered important were highlighted in my collaborator's interpretations, forcing me to view my initial material in a different way. Furthermore, talking to my collaborators about their creative processes, and the way they had embraced this piece as a provocation to explore different options in their own media, encouraged me to reciprocate by exploring different avenues in my own practice.

The use of a notated score, for example, was often problematic and a poor fit for the needs of the project. In these cases, highly prescriptive notation was abandoned in favour of approaches that embraced directed improvisation, as was the case with Oleksiy Koval's digital painting in *Crux*. Work on *[Re]surfacing*, on the other hand, was much more instinctual, as both Lisa Munnelly and I reacted to one another's responses in the moment, although we also had the option of choosing from several takes if we preferred. In the case of *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, I nonetheless persevered with a score-based approach despite the obstacles this presented, creating friction in my creative process but leading to personal growth as well. Justyna Janiszewska's creative approach subverted the inherent limitation of time imposed by my music, and so inspired me to consider a new approach to time when composing my own

response. Roya Jabarouti's poem, on the other hand, deconstructed *Triptych for Two* into a series of abstract poetic images.

Observing these changes and using them to generate *movement* in my own creative process required a substantial degree of openness and flexibility on my part, while by a similar token, my collaborators had also been incredibly generous and open by accepting my initial provocation and sharing their inner creative lives with me. The model of creative-collaborative provocation explored in this thesis actively encourages such reciprocity, which is essential for a genuine collaborative partnership.

In addition to having a direct influence on my creative process, these collaborators also provided me with new resources and tools as I composed the second-generation works. I am not myself a skilled painter, poet, choreographer, filmmaker or taonga puoro musician, and so having Roya Jabarouti's poetry or Justyna Janiszewska's choreography to work with gave me unique material that I could never have generated myself. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge the debt I owe to my collaborators in helping me to create these pieces. A performance of *Crux* is impossible without Oleksiy Koval's digital painting; one could substitute a different visual stimulus, but I would consider this performance to be a different work since I created my score specifically with Oleksiy's work in mind. Similarly, while it may be possible to listen to the audio from *[Re]Surfacing* on its own, this performance feels rather incomplete without the visual input provided by Lisa Munnelly.

The second-generation pieces are hybrid works of art, intertexts of intertexts, and considering these projects in relation to Nattiez's idea of a 'trace' presents several ambiguities that problematise his tripartite model of musical interpretation. For example, a different taonga puoro musician could interpret Alistair Fraser's recordings for another performance of *Te Aitanga Pepeke*, in which case they would be mostly drawing on Fraser's input to create their performance, not mine. This is why, after debating this issue, Alistair and I decided the piece should have shared authorship on the score. Any performance of this work interprets two 'traces' with two separate composers: my written score for the ensemble and Fraser's recorded part for the taonga puoro player. If we go back even further, considering the fact that both Alistair and I drew heavily on *Triptych for Two* in order to create each of our 'traces', the 'neutral level' in this case becomes increasingly difficult to locate and define. As Deleuze and Guattari might say, this work is an assemblage or multiplicity, containing inputs from several different sources.

The second question at the start of this thesis asked if a systematic consideration of creative provocations could lead to a workable, non-hierarchical model of collaboration. Each collaborator remarked that they had enjoyed the process, found the results interesting, and would like to further explore this collaborative model in future projects. The model provides a high degree of creative autonomy to each participant, while also providing direction through an initial stimulus.

My approach here was rather ‘hands-off’, and collaborators often asked a number of questions as to what I specifically wanted from their contributions. When this happened, I would reiterate that the only limitation was to use *Triptych for Two* as a provocation to create anything they wished. The resulting responses by the collaborators could be seen as a kind of intersemiotic translation, or a ‘musical transdialection’ in Alistair Fraser’s case, of the original work into each respective medium. There are a number of approaches translators take when adapting a text from one language into another which can often lead to changes in nuance or meaning. In this case, such transformations are rather extreme, since there was no requirement to remain faithful to the original text, but only to draw upon it. The results were so varied that during the process I often wondered whether a random collection of contributions, with no connection whatsoever, would produce a similar result. But as the project progressed layers of intersemiosis became increasingly apparent, and my interactive map of second-generation works clearly shows how we can trace the way in which one idea transforms into another.<sup>142</sup>

There was still a degree of hierarchical organisation, in that the instigator sets the initial provocation and parameters for the project. In my case, I was involved in each project twice, as both the creator of *Triptych for Two* and the second-generation works. The project with Lisa Munnelly suggests, however, that this effect diminishes over time. Here, it seemed that the more iterations of the creative-collaborative provocation cycle we went through, the less hierarchic the collaboration became, as focus gradually moved away from the initial stimulus for the project and more on the material immediately at hand. Keeping in mind that Lisa had initiated that particular collaboration, I found myself gaining more ownership over the project as I had the chance to rework material again and again as Lisa’s work evolved in response to my input. If the project as a whole were allowed to continue and expand, with collaborators inviting new participants to transform their works, it is unlikely I would have any control over the way in which this unfolded.

Essential factors allowing the project to work in this way were the generosity of my collaborators, who gave so much of their time, as well as my own policy of not interfering in my partner’s creative processes. A more authoritarian approach might impose greater limitations on collaborative responses to steer them toward a desired outcome—it is really just a question of how one chooses to approach the task at hand, and to ask ourselves *why* we are interested in pursuing such collaborations.

A non-hierarchical partnership requires reciprocity. What does each partner offer the others? What do they take or receive in return? And what benefits will be experienced by all parties? While such concerns are particularly important with respect to taonga puoro collaborations, where colonial power dynamics come to bear, they are also critical in other situations involving creative partnerships.

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<sup>142</sup> To visit the interactive map, go to: [www.simon-eastwood.com/plant-this-seed](http://www.simon-eastwood.com/plant-this-seed)

Looking back to the original project in London, *Papaki Tai|Migrations*, I began on this path because I wanted to reference my origins in Aotearoa New Zealand while I was living abroad. On one hand, I was being an advocate by sharing taonga puoro with a new audience and helping to spread knowledge of this endemic New Zealand artform. On the other, as a Pākehā, I was also borrowing these sounds to enhance my own practice and to create a point of difference for my work as a New Zealander in London. In hindsight, this second motivation was not the best reason for beginning such a project. Over the course of creating that concert, however, the realisation dawned on me that this particular collaborative model could address issues of hierarchy in collaboration by first giving the collaborator a high degree of autonomy over their part, while also being able to influence the path of the collaboration as a whole by transforming the initial provocation and returning it to the instigator. It is unlikely I would have come to these realisations if I had not started this journey in the first place; in other words, even though my starting point was problematic, *Papaki Tai|Migrations* was an important first step.

In this thesis, even though the process was similar, I would like to think that the spirit is different. Collaborations took place over a much longer period of time, facilitating a real dialogue between partners. The participants in this study were people I had developed a strong personal relationship with, so there was a high degree of trust as we passed contributions between one another. We spent a lot of time developing and strengthening these relationships by doing things that were *not* directly connected to this project, and because of this we could also speak very frankly about our experiences, what we found useful, and what was difficult about the process.

The role of *Triptych for Two* here as a provocation was not a strict directive, order or brief; it was more an offering or invitation to contribute—a *question that can only be answered by another question*. This approach was a deliberate decision made as I started this project; another approach would likely yield different results. Here the metaphor of Pando the trembling giant, which served us well in my introduction to this thesis, begins to break down. Unlike the ramets in the aspen clone, we are not rooted in place and our relationships are not fixed; we each have the autonomy to explore different regions of our networks as we see fit, and also to seek out new connections and forge new relationships. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that as creative people it is our duty to seek out new connections and to find new ideas to transform and re-work.

With this in mind, all that the model of creative-collaborative provocation provides us with is a very structured way of observing and directing something that is happening around us all the time. Ideas do not just emerge out of communities; they converge within the collective and give rise to multiple offshoots with unforeseen connotations. Unless one is somehow completely removed from society, every act of creativity is, in a sense, a kind of collaboration

# COLLABORATOR'S BIOGRAPHIES



ALISTAIR FRASER

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Alistair Fraser is a manu whakatangitangi, a player, composer, maker and researcher of ngā taonga pūrō who has been making, performing and composing with these musical instruments since 1999. Al has elegantly woven taonga puoro into many projects that are recognised as being at the forefront of Aotearoa arts practice and puoro Māori, through collaborations with artists such as Dr Richard Nunns, STROMA, Riki Gooch, Ariana Tikao, Horomono Horo, Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal, Bridget Douglas, Grove Roots, and the NZ Symphony Orchestra, and in settings that span jazz and improvised music,

ambient and environmental music, film, dance, Māori and classical musics, the visual arts, and numerous recordings.



JUSTYNA JANISZEWSKA

Justyna Janiszewska is a Dancer, Choreographer and Musician. She gained an MFA in Dance Choreography from Roehampton University (UK) and MA in Theatre from A. Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy (Poland). She also studied violin and opera singing. Janiszewska's dance work is an ongoing scrutiny of the borderline between extreme emotional states, their embodiments and the transformational phases between. She has performed internationally as a dancer with

Evangelia Kolyra's project in Greece (Onassis Cultural Centre, Kalamata Dance Festival), Germany (Sophiensale- Tanztag Festival) and UK (The Place, RichMix). Her choreographies were performed in UK (The Place), Italy (Venice Schiume Festival) and Scotland (Edinburgh Fringe Festival). She worked as a puppeteer and movement artist on 'The Iron Man' by Matthew Robins produced by The Unicorn Theatre (London). She has also performed internationally with Arts Charity 'The Flying Seagull Project.'





### ROYA JABAROUTI

Roya is a writer, translator, and literary scholar. Her research interests include the semiotics of sounds and silence in comparative literature and translation. Roya discusses some of her findings in her publications.



### OLEKSIY KOVAL

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Oleksiy Koval, born in Kiev, is an artist who lives and works in Munich. He is the founder of the artist groups Rhythm Section and The Beautiful Formula Collective. Since 2002 he has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Germany and abroad.



### LISA MUNNELLY

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An artist and senior lecturer within the College of Creative Arts at Massey University, Lisa Munnelly's process-orientated drawing practice creates works that emerge and unfold over time.

A signature of her work is the extension of drawing via the multimedia collaborations she forms with other artists utilising sound and moving image.



## SEBASTIAN LOWE

[otismakers.com](http://otismakers.com);

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Sebastian J Lowe is a musical anthropologist from Aotearoa New Zealand. He is currently completing his PhD in anthropology at James Cook University in Australia and Aarhus University in Denmark. His interests include sound worlds, community anthropology, filmmaking and ethics.



## SIMON EASTWOOD

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Simon Eastwood is a DMA candidate at the New Zealand School of Music—Te Kōkī, Victoria University of Wellington.

He is the author and instigator of the ‘Plant this Seed’ project. Both a composer and a bass player, Eastwood completed an MMus with distinction from the Royal Academy of Music in London 2012, where he studied composition with David Sawer and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. He then spent several years working in London also attending residences in Dartington, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Lithuania, before returning to his native New Zealand in 2015.

As a composer, Eastwood cites a wide range of influences on his music from popular culture to the avant-garde. Subsequently, his own compositions encompass a range of styles.



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