Doctor of Creative Industries

Project 2:

Music, Mime & Metamorphosis

'Blind Collaboration'; Mime; and the non-musical aspects of Musical Performance

VODcasts & Commentary

This paper accompanies and supports a series of VODcasts which, in combination:

1.   catalogue the process of 'Blind Collaboration' (DCI Project 1) in the recording of a contemporary music album (2006-2007)

2.   provide an analysis of the non-musical aspects of live musical performance

3.   examine the application of Mime performance techniques to the Music performance context, to enhance stage presence and communication between music performer and audience

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Music, Mime & Metamorphosis

'Blind Collaboration'; Mime; and the non-musical aspects of musical performance

ABSTRACT:

With confirmation by Kurosawa & Davidson's (2005) research that, 'little investigation has been undertaken to explore the nonverbal information specified in a musical performance and its functions' (p. 112), this paper seeks to both address that lack of investigation, and simultaneously explore areas where such 'nonverbal information' may be highlighted, stylised and exploited, in the interests of enhancing performer/audience communication, performance confidence and stage presence in the musical context.

This paper is presented in conjunction with, refers to, and supports a series of VODcasts which constitute the primary source for this analysis/discussion, and which:

    a) *catalogue an artistic process termed by the author, 'Blind Collaboration', in the recording of a contemporary music album*

    b) *provide an analysis of the effects of the non-musical aspects of live musical performance in the solo acoustic performance context*

    c) *explore the application of Mime performance techniques to the music performance context with a view to enhancing stage presence, performance confidence and the performer/audience relationship.*

Supplementary to and supporting the VODcasts (numbered 00 to 33 inclusive, ranging in duration from approximately 0:50 – 2:00 minutes), is the inclusion of written analyses of a variety of professional Concert performances (Appendix 2), both DVD and Live, providing both broad contextual information and specific examples. This analysis also includes performances by the author (Appendix 3).

CONTENTS:

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP:

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:..

Date:..

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Introduction: the Journey, the Focus:

This six-month Project represents the second in a trilogy of Doctoral projects.

Both individually and collectively these three projects, in conjunction with their respective written commentaries, are intended to:

- create new professional works
- illuminate and extend professional practice
- examine relevant professional contexts
- expand those contexts by establishing the works within and beyond their own individual contexts by:
- drawing together, through multi/inter-disciplinarity, disparate fields of practice into credible, cohesive works.

In so doing, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, both within and across those disparate fields.

Whilst my *Doctoral* focus on multi/inter-disciplinarity is comparatively recent, this journey actually began professionally more than 30 years ago (in the early 1970's) with my initial entry into the world of the professional artist through Music. Music eventually led me into the Theatre, which in turn led me comprehensively into and through the fields of Mime and Television to where I stand professionally today - as an educator in the tertiary, creative, and corporate sectors.

As that educator, all of my diverse and disparate professional knowledge, specialist expertise and experience, have coalesced into this, the *Doctor of Creative Industries*, which provides the opportunity, focus and framework within which to explore how creativity works, both individually and collaboratively, and how it can be adapted and applied to a variety of professional contexts.

The Projects:

The first manifestation of this practice-led exploration came with the successful completion of my *first* Doctoral project, *'Blind Collaboration'*. This is a process where individual musicians collaborate on the recording of an album of contemporary music, unheard, uncontacted, and therefore completely uninfluenced by each other. Both the resulting album, *'Once in a While'*, and its associated written commentary, *Project 1: Blind Collaboration* (Willems 2007), make manifest the specific outcomes of the creative/artistic/research process; how it evolved, how it was managed, how it was influenced by the particular artists involved, and how the Blind Collaboration process ultimately shaped the final musical work (this is also discussed further in Project 2 VODcasts – refer below).

This, my *second* project, consisting of a series of VODcasts, as well as this written commentary, both follows logically on from and builds upon Blind Collaboration by examining the non-musical aspects of musical performance, particularly in relation to taking the album's multi-instrumental works and situating those in the live, solo, music performance context. In exploring this, my view and approach is focussed through the lens of Mime, utlising its techniques of physical clarity, conciseness, and choreographed performance in which I am - with a 25 year career as a professional mime artist - highly experienced. This Mime background and focus provides a rich source of technique and stylisation with which to experiment creatively, aesthetically and practically.

The *third* of these projects explores this notion still further in terms of both content and context by applying the techniques of mime to corporate communication, with the resulting Workbook and associated short series of VODcasts, providing analysis of specific techniques applied to, and illustrative examples of, the body-language (or *physicality*) aspects of inter-professional communication.

Research Outcomes:

Taken together these three, six-month Projects, which are based in and informed by more than three decades of professional practice across: music; stage performance; television; corporate communication; design; and tertiary education sectors, together with the underpinning research into each of those professional contexts,

comprehensively investigate, demonstrate and incorporate, the notion of multi/inter-disciplinarity. In doing so they produce specific, workable, measurable and potentially commercial outcomes, manifest in different media - music; written word; audio/visual and digital - which clearly demonstrate both the potential and the effectiveness of reconciling disparate fields of practice by applying creativity and innovation to, within, and across those fields of practice.

The processes of these projects explore, expose and exploit areas where disparate and apparently conflicting fields of practice successfully and effectively intersect, interact and inform each other rather than conflict with each other, thereby adding value to each, both individually and collectively.

This approach is consistent with and makes manifest the most fundamental tenet of 'Creative Industries': the bringing together of disparate fields of practice. Its exploration in this Doctoral context situates and applies the research equally across both professional and academic spheres, thereby effectively reconciling the often irreconcilable 'professional/practice' and 'academic/theorist' points of view.

The complex and highly expressive visual information conveyed through facial expressions and body movements in music performance suggests a wide range of potential effects that still need to be examined in depth.

(Thompson, Graham & Russo 2005, p. 212)

SECTION 1:

'Blind Collaboration' - VODcasts:
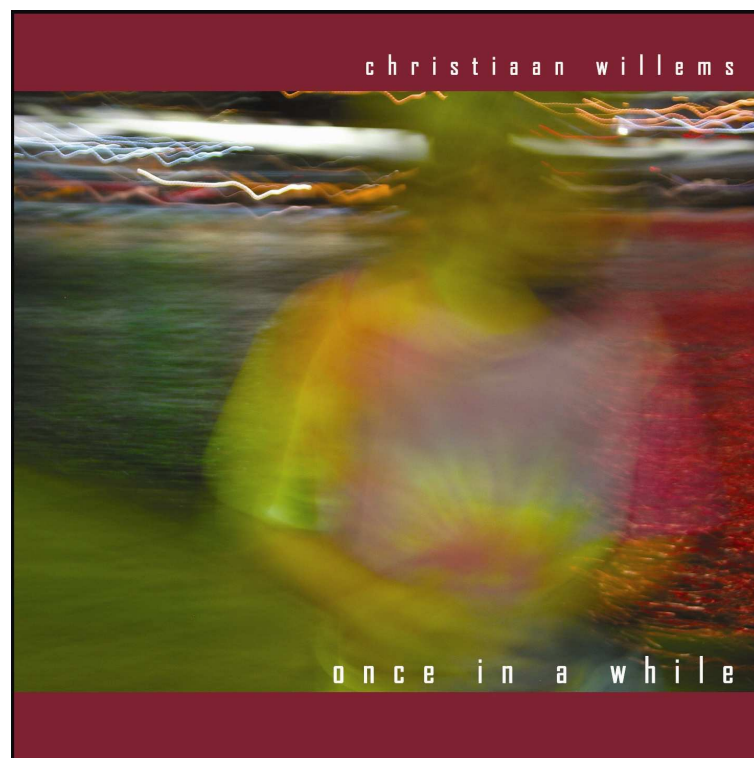
SECTION 1: *'Blind Collaboration'* - VODcasts

1.1   Blind Collaboration – the Process:

'Blind Collaboration' is a term coined by the author to describe a collaborative process developed and employed in the context of the recording of an album of contemporary music, where the collaborators are unheard, uncontacted and therefore uninfluenced by each other. This process is in direct contrast to that described by Weinberg (2002) who quite correctly suggests that:

> Music performance is an interdependent art form. Musicians' real-time gestures are constantly influenced by the music they hear, which is reciprocally influenced by their own actions… allow(ing) players to influence, share, and shape each other's music in real time…
>
> (Weinberg 2002)

By contrast, 'Blind Collaboration' describes a process which actually *precludes* the collaborators from influencing each other as there is no direct artistic/creative contact between them, nor indeed with the original composer, during their collaboration.

In terms of outcomes, the Blind Collaboration process produced a published audio CD titled *'Once in a While'* (www.music.artsmedia.com.au), together with a comprehensive written commentary detailing the process (Willems 2007). The success of the Blind Collaboration process is confirmed in academic terms by both examiners' reports, and in professional terms by the fact that the resulting Album became a 'Feature Album of the Week' on ABC Radio (refer Appendix 5) within two weeks of its completion in April 2007. Success from the point of view of the author, beyond the album itself and its recognition through broadcast airplay, is the role of Serendipity in its creation. - Where, 'aleotoric (or chance) principles were…a source of experimentation' (Lawson 2002, p. 13) – and very successfully so.

Whilst not overtly 'influenced by Zen Buddhism (according to which) John Cage offered his performers such options in his *Variations IV*' (Lawson 2002, p. 13), the very unpredictability of the 'Blind Collaboration' process contributed significantly, constructively and positively to the character of both process and product – a process and product in, and for which, I was not seeking 'perfection'.

Rather, what I sought was to explore a 'tantalising possibility', where any number of factors could, would, and indeed did, randomly but successfully interact – largely outside of my or any of the collaborators' control.

Yet, in exploring that tantalising possibility, that random interaction, what was produced was a work of significant musical, creative and artistic integrity which, on the surface of a first (or indeed subsequent) listening, may not sound very much different from other albums of a similar genre. However, the process itself and its very unpredictability, renders the work utterly unique.

This was indeed the point. To explore how differently (or not) such an album, resulting from such a process, might turn out.

As *The Who's* Roger Daltrey (1999) has expressed in regard to the *'Who's Next'* album, from the point of view of its own unique process and the musicians involved, 'if we hadn't been given the chance to at least be working for this kind of ethereal project…we would have just gone into the studio with the demos and just recorded the way all our other albums were recorded, *whereas this album is a real organic album'.* (emphasis added).

The Blind Collaboration, *'Once In A While'* album is similarly - but very differently in terms of process – certainly also 'a real organic album'. It was certainly not recorded the way other albums are recorded.

By way of explication of the process, reproduced below is the Abstract of the previously authored paper (Willems 2007, p. 3) detailing 'Blind Collaboration':

ABSTRACT – DCI Project 1: Blind Collaboration:

This paper examines the creation, development and implementation of an artistic process termed by the author 'Blind Collaboration'. The process involves musicians collaborating on an album of contemporary music where they, the collaborators, do not see or hear each other nor record in the same studio at the same time as their fellow musicians.

The notion of musicians recording separately or indeed remotely is not new; however, what *is* new is the 'blind' aspect of the process. Each musician is completely unaware of any others' contributions, and is therefore uninfluenced by what the others might

play. None of the musicians hears each others' contribution, or the overall result, until the final mix.

The purpose of the study is not to examine the technical aspects of recording, other than in contextual terms. The principal focus and intention of this case study lies in the analysis of specific aspects and outcomes of the creative/artistic process; how it evolved; how it was managed; how it was influenced by the particular artists involved; and how the Blind Collaboration process ultimately shaped the final musical work.

> *…it turned out not to be the same experiment for any one of the six of us...that's actually where the great collision comes from - the creative collision of everybody pushing as hard as they can, in a slightly different direction - creates this stretched envelope…this slightly defocused and quite rich and densely interconnected thing…called a record.*
>
> (Brian Eno 1999)

Selected aspects of the Blind Collaboration recording process are catalogued and examined through **VODcasts: 00-13**, which are structured as a mix of Video Journal and Commentary.

1.2 VODcasts – what are they?

The term 'VODcasting' is derived from its predecessor 'Podcasting', which is itself a combination of the terms 'iPod' and 'broadcasting'. VODcasting derives its name from **V**ideo-**O**n-**D**emand, which typically sees the broadcasting of video footage as short samples, or complete, self-contained audio/visual segments.

Peter Meng's 2005 White Paper explains the basics of Podcasting and VODcasting in non-technical language. He defines these in the following terms:

What is Podcasting?

The word 'podcasting' is an amalgam of the word broadcasting and the name of the popular MP3 player from Apple Computer called the 'iPod'… Podcasting is the process of capturing an audio event, song, speech, or mix of sounds and then posting that digital sound object to a Web site or 'blog'…**VODcasting** (also called 'vlogging') - the 'VOD' stands for 'video-on-demand' - is almost identical to podcasting. The difference is that **the content is video versus audio**, (emphasis added) and the content is more likely to be played on a laptop than a PMA (personal media assistant)...

(Meng 2005)

Deutsche Welle (2006) offers another description:

What is VODcasting?

After podcasting, which lets users subscribe to audio files, comes VODcasting, the easiest way to bring Internet video to your desktop. Here's how it works…

A step beyond podcasting, VODcasting, also called video podcasting or vlogging, adds video to the downloadable sound files podcast listeners are used to. Download(ing) the video files is a simple matter of subscribing to a VODcast in one of the many freely available directory programs.

After downloading and saving them to a portable video player, users can choose when and where they want to watch the video, making them independent of television programming schedules.

(Deutsche Welle 2006)

1.3   Why VODcasts?

What the relatively recently developed tool of the VODcast offers this Project is the opportunity to access different audiences by different means, well beyond the usual reach of the written word alone in the academic context. Taking advantage of the internet, VODcasting provides this project with an audio/visual medium which is accessible, contemporary, immediate, and which permits a richer and more detailed means of analysis to be disseminated to a wider audience. As Meng states in his White Paper:

Podcasting and VODcasting, and their pending derivatives…are very real and very practical distribution technologies. The ability to time-shift content versus traditional broadcast distribution models expands student teaching and learning opportunities significantly.

(Meng 2005)

However, unlike popularly utilised and widely accessible internet distribution vehicles such as 'You Tube' (www.youtube.com) and similar, the VODcast offers some measure of control over both the quality and distribution of the content. Even a cursory visit to various generally accessible online sites reveals some remarkably poor standards of vision, audio and camera skills, where the available footage has apparently been shot during a concert, using a shakily hand-held mobile phone video camera with a limited range of view and equally limited control over focus and content, resulting in something approaching an insult to both performing artist and viewer.

Such 'bootleg' style web-casting does the artist in question a great disservice - of which the artist themselves may not even be aware - through lack of quality, lack of clarity, and lack of control of one's own work and professional image. By contrast, the self-created VODcast offers at least some measure of control for the presenter/artist over both their content and the manner and quality of the presentation of that content.

However, beyond their role as just the particular distribution vehicle, the VODcasts themselves (numbers 00 to 13 inclusive) also revisit, in a different medium, aspects of a process already undertaken and analysed in words (and music) by way of 'Blind Collaboration' (refer above, and DCI commentary, *'Project 1: 'Blind Collaboration'* - April 2007). The content of the latter VODcasts (in particular numbers: 19 & 26 – 33 inclusive) is applicable equally to the corporate communication (Project 3) and music performance contexts. These are more instructional in nature, offering specific, detailed examples and techniques applicable to both those performance/presenting contexts.

The purpose of the VODcasts is to provide, in 'kilobyte-sized' chunks, detailed analysis as described above and in doing so demonstrate how different concepts are able to be brought together through separate, yet interrelated projects and manifested in different media, namely: Project 1 (music); Project 2 (video/internet); and Project 3 (written word), and present those through the technology and global immediacy of the internet, thus achieving the maximum exposure of the ideas, concepts, processes and their various applications to global access.

The multi/inter-disciplinarity of these projects, both individually and collectively, reflects the evolution of my professional career; my approach to the DCI; and in my view, the whole notion of Creative Industries – identifying, creating and exploring synergies through innovative, creative and productive cross-discipline relationships.

1.4   The VODcast Series:

My professional background(s) in television performance, production and presenter coaching, together with music performance, led me to combine these disciplines into the VODcast form. The logic of creating VODcasts in this context became inescapable, as not only did it provide the means by which to package the necessary

information/demonstration more clearly and concisely in visual form, but it also provided an opportunity for continued professional development in terms of the television medium and the internet options available.

The VODcasts themselves currently number 33 in total (including reserved/spare numbers 23 & 24), with the capacity for additional VODcasts to be produced and appended to the series in the future if appropriate. The VODcasts are arbitrarily grouped into three sections, respectively titled:

- **Blind Collaboration** (VODcast No's: 00 – 13)
- **Live Music Performance** (VODcast No's: 14 – 25)
- **Music, Mime & Metamorphosis** (VODcast No's: 26 – 33)

Whilst these three sections are notionally separate, they are inter-related to a greater or lesser extent by virtue of their content. For instance, aspects of particular VODcasts in Section 2 relating to the physical aspects of Live Music Performance, are equally appropriate and pertinent to Section 3 whose focus and discussion relates to the physicality, influence and techniques of Mime. Therefore, there is a level of inter-relatedness and inter-changeability in certain areas.

The entire three-Section VODcast series is generally chronological, however most VODcasts in the series can equally be viewed out of sequence with, and/or independently of each other.

1.5 VODcast Styles:

Beyond just providing information in a contemporary mode, creating and developing the VODcasts also provided the author/presenter with an additional professional development opportunity by way of 'practicing-what-you-preach' in the context of my continuing professional activity as a television presenter coach – as I have been over a number of years.

Conscious and deliberate choices, informed by and against the background of extensive professional experience in television, have been made in regard to the style of, audience(s) for, and contextual expectations of the VODcasts. These decisions are

reflected in the deliberately diverse and contrasting visual, shooting and presentation styles - ranging from the artistic/informal/chatty/video diary, through to the more formally presented and instructional.

In order to satisfy this range and combination of content, potential audiences and expectations, a commensurate range of filming/presenting styles has been included:

- Direct-to-camera
- Interview (off-camera interviewer)
- 'Walk-and-Talk'
- Voice-over
- Demonstration/narration
- Hand-held camera documentary style
- Professional level camera operator/lighting

In research, as in art and the professional arena, one draws inspiration, information, knowledge and advice - both formally and informally - from a wide diversity of sources, drawing together various threads to develop, crystalise and formalise one's own thoughts and research. So it was in this case. As author/producer/presenter of the VODcasts, I take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the extraordinarily valuable assistance in particular of Mr. David Tilburey. David was instrumental in not only filming the latter VODcasts in the series, but also initially proffering the suggestion of utilising VODcasts in this context, which set the entire process in motion. David also generously provided ongoing technical advice and support.

I also acknowledge Ms. Teone Reinthal who filmed some of the latter concert footage which appears within selected VODcasts and which complements, highlights and illustrates by example, aspects of their content.

SECTION 2:

Live Music Performance:

SECTION 2:   Live Music Performance - musical and non-musical aspects:

2.1   Background:

My interest in the notion of how a music performer deals with the change from the multi-instrumental recording context to the solo, live performance context, whilst still presenting a credible version of their songs, has its origins sometime in the 1960's.

As a teenager in this decade I was in the audience at a Donovan (Leitch) concert in Brisbane, Australia. It was not difficult to be a Donovan fan in those days. Even then as a young teenager I recognised a melodic depth, delicacy and lyrical romanticism in Donovan's work which I perceived to be lacking in his contemporaries - particularly Bob Dylan, with whom Donovan was inevitably compared at the time, being referred to by some as 'a British Bob Dylan' (Stuessy & Lipscomb 1999, p. 202). Indeed, the remarkably Americentric commentary on 60's music in *Rolling Stone* magazine's *'Illustrated History of Rock & Roll'* declares (1992, pp. 316-317) that:

> …once considered another Dylan, Scotsman Donovan Leitch failed to parlay an early plethora of exceptional love songs…into anything more meaningful than his unjustly famous and explicably disastrous psychedelic and flower power periods.

And further, that whilst:

> …the impact of that music on the mid-sixties was significant…it is hard not to regard Donovan's career as *unnecessarily tragic* because, even while he was floating away into the lilac mist, there were traces of a solid and uncommon talent. (emphasis added)

This statement is as remarkable for its profound ethnocentric ignorance as it is for its musical and historic inaccuracy. According to someone who was, literally, there at the time (Faithfull 1994, p. 49), 'Dylan was intrigued by Donovan…when he didn't think anybody was watching he'd put on Donovan's *'Catch The Wind"*.

Was Donovan's career really 'tragic' just because, in Rolling Stone's view[1], he did not restrict himself to an aspiration to emulate Bob Dylan, but instead forged his own distinctive and successful sound and style? A sound and style, continuing to this day, which produced several memorable 'psychedelic period' hits such as, '*Sunshine Superman* (which) was a smash hit, rising to the number 1 position', in addition to other distinctively notable hits such as *Hurdy Gurdy Man, Mellow Yellow, Season of the Witch* etc. (Stuessy & Lipscomb 1999, p. 202), which also met with significant international (not just American) success.

Dylan's approach was of course entirely different and he was obviously extraordinarily successful at 'being Bob Dylan' in terms of his persona, 'nothing less than the hippest person on earth' (Faithfull 1994, p. 40); his message; his political focus and his biting lyrics, all delivered in Dylan's unmistakable nasal twang, a voice of which Jimi Hendrix 'reasoned that if Dylan could go that far with a lousy voice, so could he' (Rolling Stone 1992, p. 413).

Unfashionable as it may have been (and probably still is), I actually preferred Donovan over Dylan. His beautifully drawn word pictures, his lilting melodies, richly nuanced vocals and elegant guitar playing (infinitely better musicianship in my view than Dylan's 'three magic chords'). Guitar playing which, interestingly, Donovan himself acknowledged in a slightly more recent concert (7 September 1997 at *The Tivoli*, Brisbane, Australia) when, in response to his new (young) record producer asking him to play some of his earlier works, he could not remember how he had played certain finger-picked passages at the time and could not now reproduce them, such was their distinctive technical complexity.

Such was Donovan's influence on me, this impressionable young would-be musician, that even before I owned a guitar I had purchased a Donovan song book (Donovan 1968), including music and lyrics, and in the absence of an actual guitar to play I had hand-drawn the strings and frets on a slide-rule case (having just commenced studying engineering, in an era prior to computers and calculators). Using my recently learnt

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[1] Rolling Stone's view is probably best put into perspective by Frank Zappa's famous (1980) quote, from within Rolling Stone's own pages, suggesting that 'Rock journalism is people who can't write interviewing people who can't talk for people who can't read'.

(Retrieved 6 May 2008, from http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Frank_Zappa/)

chord shapes and finger positions on the slide rule case, I proceeded to teach myself my first and very favourite Donovan song - *'Laleña'* (p. 18). A song which, according to Rolling Stone (p. 317), revealed Donovan's 'solid and uncommon talent' - a song which features, in addition to a beautiful melody and haunting lyrics, an equally beautiful and very distinctive flute solo. So, even before I had laid my hands on an instrument I could sing the song and, silently, accompany myself on the slide rule case (including whistling the flute solo of course). Eventually I acquired an acoustic guitar and transferred my fingers from the slide rule case to the much less forgiving, much more abrasive guitar strings - my fingers initially bled with enthusiasm and over-playing in an attempt to overcome the high action on my not very high quality acoustic guitar.

So, armed with intimate knowledge of my favourite Donovan song (and by then also some others), as both listener and player, of sorts, I enthusiastically took myself to his concert and was a little surprised to discover that he was performing the entire concert solo, seated as he was on his rostrum, on a Persian rug (an item which was to become an unconscious influence several decades later). There were no other musicians on the stage. Of course when it came to Donovan playing my favourite song *'Laleña'*, as he began to play the opening chords, I immediately asked myself; *'what is he going to do about the flute solo?!'*

What he did about the flute solo was, essentially, nothing. He did not try to fill the 'flute-less' space with any other melodies, voice or instruments. The only thing he did do was to dampen and 'percuss' his acoustic guitar strings during that passage, which very simply and very effectively changed the dynamic of that part of the song.

He simply changed the *dynamic.*

And changing the dynamic it seems, more often than not, is sufficient to change the nature of the work to the extent that it appears that there is nothing missing. Even if we know that there *is* something (musical) missing, we do not seem to mind. We are concentrating on different things and will accept significant changes because we are having a different experience.

We are experiencing the 'live' dynamic, embodying not just audio/musical information, but also visual and physical information, which becomes just as important - perhaps even more so.

Indeed, recent research by Thompson, Graham & Russo (2005), supports this view. They suggest (p. 201) that, *'visual aspects of music performance* can have aesthetic and perceptual consequences that *positively contribute to and enhance the musical experience'* (emphasis added). Visual aspects which include not only the 'continuously changing and meaningful use of facial expression, body movements, and hand gestures' (p. 203), but also, 'mesmerizing light shows, visual tricks and surprises, and elaborate sets' (pp. 223-224), which influence our perception of the music, of the performance, and of the performer. These statement are ones with which I can now, some four decades after that Donovan concert, entirely concur. The experience of an extensive and diverse career as a professional performing mime artist, director, movement consultant, musician and stage/screen designer, through a range of performance/presentation contexts - and the consequent influence of the detailed perception, analysis, manipulation, and stylisation of both body language and visuals - now informs my updated perspective on that same brief but significant moment-of-influence, recalled from so long ago.

But why was that moment-of-influence so profound? What is it about that particular moment in that particular concert which makes it so memorable? It is in fact, in musical terms, the only memorable moment of the concert. This is I hasten to add, in no way a criticism of the rest of the concert. Even though I cannot recall any other musical details, 'being left with only sketchy and generic impressions' (Thompson, et al. 2005. p. 222), I carry a vague recollection of having very much enjoyed and been completely satisfied (awed?) by the concert in overall terms at the time.

My only other detailed memory of the concert is more concerned with the visuals, the simple staging; a solo performer, sitting on a cushion, on a rug, on a rostrum, on an otherwise bare stage, against an unadorned background. This memory may have been enhanced and reinforced for some years after the concert itself by a grainy black & white photograph I took during the concert and which I later combined in the darkroom with another negative, of clouds, making Donovan appear to be floating in a cloudy, grainy, monochrome sky. A particularly appropriate image I thought, given the ethereal style of much of his music. However, notwithstanding this mechanical memory-enhancement, I am only really aware of the tiniest detail of this very significant event, at a very impressionable age, of seeing my musical hero.

Much more recently however, and at a much less impressionable age, I found myself revisiting this entire question. Having unexpectedly attended a concert of touring

Japanese Drummers at the Empire Theatre in Toowoomba, Australia (24 July 2007), and been impressed by the drama and spectacle of the concert, I was making my way out through the foyer at its conclusion and found myself enticed by the merchandise table. My initial instinct was to purchase a CD, but something held me back. What held me back was the realisation that what this concert was, and what made it so memorable, was that it was a *visual* spectacle as much as it was a *musical* spectacle – perhaps more so – and that therefore just listening to a CD was unlikely to bring the same kind of enjoyment or appreciation of the highly choreographed, physically disciplined, visually spectacular performance.

Indeed, this event and its aftermath – literally decades after my Donovan concert experience – once again brought home to me the realisation that whilst we may not remember the musical aspects of a concert, what we do recall, very clearly, is the visual spectacle.

The Question:

In summary then, both the 60's Donovan concert and the 2007 Japanese Drummers' concert were certainly memorable, but not for the reasons one might assume. Why is this so?

In order to examine this question, it may be useful to extrapolate beyond just those personal moments of revelation, spanning naïve youth to mature age, and bring to bear some of the research and writings of others – together with my own observations, experience and indeed, techniques - learnt from and developed over the course of my intervening 30-odd year professional performance career.

Firstly then, the most fundamental question which needs to be asked is: *What actually makes a concert memorable?*

2.2   What makes a Concert Memorable? (refer VODcast 17):

> *So, in looking at this question more broadly, I've trawled my own memories of about 40 concerts I've attended over a period of decades and noted what I recall about them. Surprisingly, the most memorable aspects of a Concert, for me, often seem to be unrelated to the actual music. It might be theatricality, the visuals, the performer's interactions with the audience (or not), the personality of the performer (or not). Or a bad audio mix. Whatever it is - musical or not – it all forms part of 'The Package'.*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 17 The Package - Concerts*

Casting the mind back over some 40 concerts attended over a period of decades, I have noted (refer Appendix 4) what I recall about them, indeed, what the most memorable aspects were. Somewhat surprisingly, these seem quite often to be unrelated to the actual music. Certainly there is the theatricality. There are the visuals, the occasional bad audio mix, the performer's interactions with the audience, and whether or not the personality of the performer comes through those interactions. Whatever impression one gains, whether musical or not, and in whatever combination, these aspects all form part of 'the Package' of one's perception. A Package which, consciously or unconsciously, encompasses not just the musical, but at least equally if not more importantly, the visuals, the lighting, the stage design, the audio mix, where one sits in relation to the stage, one's spatial relationship to the performer etc.

Some researchers have examined this question in the broader context of social interaction and dynamics, for example, Kurosawa and Davidson (2005, p. 112) suggest that:

> the 'watched' performance provides more specific information for the audience about the context – the social dynamics of the performer…and audience interaction – and arguably, a richer experience

With the exception of where in the audience the concert-goer is sitting, all of the elements mentioned above are beyond the control of any individual audience member. They are, however, generally well within the control of the performer – *whether or not all performers are aware of, or appreciate this, is another matter entirely.*

And this may be, partly at least, a function of the fact that, as noted by Reid (2002, p. 102), 'although musical performance is an extremely public experience, the preparation for a performance usually takes place privately, and often in complete isolation'. Given that isolation, given that privacy, it is of little surprise that some musicians will allow unconscious habits such as scratching their bottoms and/or crotch, to unwittingly become incorporated into their 'act' - unconscious behaviour, in front of an audience, consistent with the privacy of their own lounge room, but inconsistent with a professional performance or presentation. Given that same isolation, it is equally not surprising that the performer may be somewhat under-prepared for the reality of the venue, the lighting, the stage design, the audio mix - and indeed the audience, together with the perceptual biases they may bring with them. Therefore, as Davidson (2002, p. 144) points out, 'the work that takes place in rehearsal *must anticipate* the social context of the performance and the inevitable physiological and psychological arousal that situation will bring' (emphasis added). It must also anticipate the notion of audience focus/attention and controlling precisely where that might be directed. Situations such as backing musicians chatting to each other in the background or off to the side, or indeed with an off-stage (unseen) crew member, or broadly and very obviously gesturing to the audio mixer to tweak the 'EQ', while the featured musician is playing their heart out in an intense out-front solo, are not really acceptable. What this requires is performer *consciousness*, to influence how the audience perceives both the performer and their performance.

But how does the audience perceive the performer? Does the performer have any control over that? Do they indeed even want to control it? Whatever perception the audience forms of the performer, how does the performer manage that perception?

Jonathan Miller, renowned throughout the world in the performing arts, television, and medicine, 'having written and presented television series about the human mind and body…written books on Freud (and) evolution…produced and directed several of the BBC's Shakespeare series (and) held academic posts in neuropsychology, on both sides of the Atlantic' (Bragg, 1995), eloquently describes in a *'Southbank Show'* television interview, the nature of perception in the following terms:

the whole point about perception is that it is not…the experience that is delivered by the structure of the work that is in front of the eye, that it's a *negotiation* between the creative viewer and the object that is in front of the eye - and that hunches, guesses, prejudices, preoccupations, interests and so forth, alter the experience so that what you know, what you think, what you imagine, what you anticipate, have an irreversible effect on what you experience. And this isn't a sign of the fickle instability of the character. It's a sign of the structure of perception in general. That's what perception is like, it's a process of *guessing* as well as *seeing* what is out there (emphasis added)

(Miller 1995)

Etienne Decroux (1978) has similarly described this 'process of guessing' as part of one's perception of art by suggesting that, 'there is always something we guess at behind the feeling of the moment, something hidden' (p. 35)*.* So if the audience's perception is not, as many performers might assume, all about the art, all about the music, it must go beyond the music itself and be about the communication with the audience in some other way or ways. So, the question that emerges is: *How do we communicate with the audience - **beyond the art?***

To answer this question comprehensively, we need to analyse what some other performing artists actually do in terms of communicating with their audiences. Is it indeed as Thompson et al. (2005, p. 211) suggest, that:

> visual aspects of music performance can have aesthetic and perceptual consequences that positively contribute to and enhance the musical experience. In particular, facial expressions and bodily movements that occur during a music performance may greatly add to our experience of that music

If so, we need to examine in some detail not just what makes a concert memorable in overall terms, but some of the details which influence that perception and that memory. Is it just 'facial expressions and bodily movements', or is there more to it? What ingredients go into the mix, into the 'Package', to make that concert memorable.

2.3   Concert Analyses: – Various Artists

By way of analysis, it is worth examining some examples of how, if at all, high profile performers address this question. What kind of level of performance awareness, of physical consciousness, of visual detail – both within and beyond the music itself - do they apply to their performance (consciously or otherwise)?

Appendix 2 comprises analyses of a number of performances by a range of high profile, international, professional music artists, spanning a 33 year period – from 1974 (Van Morrison) to 2007 (Missy Higgins). These particular contemporary music concerts and artists have been chosen to be representative of a broad range of performers; male, female, long-established, recently emerged, across a variety of musical styles, and in a host of different concert venues.

The purpose of these analyses is to provide a context and basis of comparison. The analysis of each concert provides detailed examination of the non-musical aspects of the respective musical performances, and articulates some 'Key Observations' emerging from those concerts under broad headings including:

Audience Contact: Analysis/observation/discussion of the performer's contact with the audience and its perceived effectiveness

Banter: Discussion of the between-song-banter the performer uses to relate to the audience in terms of direct audience contact and what this reveals about the 'stage personality' of the performer

Musical Style: Brief comments on the performer's musical style by way of contextual information and whether/how that musical style influences the style of the non-musical aspects of the performance

Stage Presence: Analysis/observation of and commentary upon the observable stage presence of the performer

Design Impact: Brief discussion on the overall Design aspects of the concert and what impact the visual elements might have in supporting or distracting from both the musical and non-musical aspects of the performance presentation.

Other observations: Other relevant observations both general and/or specific, about the concert and the relationship between performer and audience.

For some of these concerts, in addition to the above key observations, there is additional detailed discussion of particular points of relevance. The analysis of these concerts is intended not as a commentary on the music itself, but seeks to highlight the crucial role played by the non-musical aspects of musical performance in the connection to and communication with, the audience. This includes the audience appreciation and enjoyment of the concert, together with the degree to which the performer reveals themselves - their 'real' selves or a 'stylised version' of themselves (Willems 2008 - in press).

To illustrate this analysis I have, for the convenience of the reader, included one of the concert analyses from Appendix 2 below. This concert has been chosen as a relatively recent (2003) one by David Bowie on DVD, and one which carries particular personal/professional significance.

2.4   Concert Analysis – David Bowie

(Reviewed: 1/11/2007)

Title:	***David Bowie – A Reality Tour*** *(DVD)*
Performer:	***David Bowie*** *(with band)*
Performance Date:	*November 2003 (DVD issued 2004)*
Location:	*Dublin, Ireland*
Style of Concert:	*Stadium/Auditorium - Large Concert*
Shooting Style:	*Multicam - comprehensive*

_____

Introduction:

There are very few times that one experiences a performance which is literally 'breathtaking'.

An overused term if there ever was one, but in my more than 30 years professional arts experience I have been in the situation only about three times where I had, literally, a 'breathtaking experience' – where one's body and being is so overwhelmed with the astonishment of the moment that it spontaneously and unconsciously draws in a huge lung-full of air.

These are:

- A concert by **The Flying Pickets** – astounding vocal harmonies

- Japanese theatre company **Sankai Juku** – a visual and performance feast full of overwhelming surprises – in complete, stylised, minimalist control

- The co-performance between **David Bowie** and bassist **Gail Ann Dorsey** – performing ***'Under Pressure'*** on this Concert DVD

Even beyond breathtaking, for me, watching this particular track (even repeatedly) elicits floods of tears - literally. Why is this so? My professional arts career - in music, mime, theatre and television - spans three decades, and after that amount of time, professional involvement, and (dare I say) professional cynicism, one is no longer easily surprised. This reaction surprises me – completely – and I examine this phenomenon more thoroughly below.

Relevance to Research:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists (Appendix 2), provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically, but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations from this Analysis:

Audience Contact:

Bowie is the supreme example of someone who not only contacts the audience but actually appears to draw energy from them. Not unlike the character he plays in his 1976 film, *'The Man Who Fell To Earth'* – as the alien who drew energy from watching multiple television screens - Bowie appears to be sucking in the energy the audience transmits to him, and he to them. His eyes are discernibly focussed on the crowd, not vaguely (un)focussed on some indeterminate point, and his manner is engaging, inclusive and inviting. There is a direct engagement between Bowie and the vast audience, to which Bowie seems to be speaking personally and individually.

And they respond.

Being energised by an audience is not new, nor is it unique to David Bowie, but there is a depth of reciprocity between Bowie and his audience, not just on this track (*'Under Pressure'*) but through the entire concert. This direct and seemingly intimate audience contact is in stark contrast to other high-profile concerts in this series of performance analyses – e.g. Van Morrison - who appears to treat the audience with utter disdain (refer Appendix 2).

Banter:

Bowie engages in some banter about particular songs and the stories behind their arrangement/recording etc. This is always in control, always a 'chat' with the audience. Never arrogant, although Bowie would have every right to be, given his history, success and extraordinary body of work. He never talks down to the audience, but always invites them in by his manner, never alienating them.

Musical Style:

Bowie has reinvented himself and his music so many times over the vast span of his career, that he is un-pigeonhole-able. If the word 'eclectic' had not been so thrashed to death by overuse in the past decade or so then Bowie would certainly represent its personification. From *Ziggy Stardust* to the 'Thin White Duke', to the leather-clad metallic-tinged 'Berlin' phase of his career, Bowie has simply adopted/created a particular persona at a particular point in time, utilised it until it became predictable, then discarded it at his own convenience.

Performer Stage Presence:

Bowie is the consummate Performer. He is a complete study in Performer Stage Presence.

Bowie demonstrates: focussed stillness; stylised, selective and beautifully controlled movement; genuine audience contact; co-performer respect, support and interaction. In every department Bowie excels. No ostentatious strutting about the stage. Bowie takes a position, holds it, centres himself and sings. He is a fairly slightly built man (although these days apparently more muscular than his previous incarnation as the 'thin white duke') yet he displays an enormous stage presence. Bowie uses stillness, together with minimal, selective movement, exceptionally well. By doing this, Bowie literally, *makes* the audience look at him. To expand upon this, by way of illustration, I am particularly focussing on one track from the concert in the 'Discussion' section below.

Design Impact:

We are presented with a 'clean and open' stage. If we ignore the rather pointless and unattractive floor painting (and we can ignore it because we rarely see it in shot), the concert Design is comprehensive, yet simple and tasteful.

Three-dimensional shapes and textures combine with/incorporate large projection screens. These background projection screens carry, at various times, combinations of simple visual designs and images, mixed with CU's (Close-Ups) taken from live camera feeds direct from the stage. Not overblown, not overstated, not over-hyped, and not intrusive, because it doesn't have to be. Bowie's stage presence negates the need for visual overproduction.

Of course this is a big concert in a big venue by a big name, so the lighting and projection is very comprehensive and at times spectacular, but always, from my point of view as both a professional Designer and an audience member, tastefully and appropriately applied. They are design concepts and application which always enhance and support, never distract or detract.

Other observations:

Refer Discussion below…

Discussion:
 'Under Pressure' (track 16)

As noted in the Introduction above, there are very few times when one experiences a truly 'breathtaking' performance. However, watching this particular track elicits deep emotions and tears. Why is this so? After 30 years of professional performance experience and associated professional cynicism, it takes an awful lot to surprise. For me, this reaction is a complete - indeed overwhelming - surprise.

In examining this phenomenon, this strange reaction to a piece of video footage which, by video's very nature, removes one from the human experience of the performance to a large extent, my (self) analysis leads me to the considered view that this level of emotional response is caused by a rich and dense mix of: professional admiration at the sheer quality of the performance; the extraordinary singing, certainly of both but particularly of bassist/vocalist Gail Ann Dorsey, and personal joy at observing the enjoyment of the players (and, vicariously, the audience).

But mostly what elicits tears is the emotional detail, subtlety and exposure of the players to yes, the music, and yes, the audience but, particularly, **each other**. In the context of a massive concert, it manifests not in the huge, not in the spectacular, but in the infinitesimally fine detail. The barely perceptible intimacy and closeness of the players is at once intense, playful, supportive, subtle and exquisite. It comes through in the playing of the music, and is I believe, whilst perhaps unseen, then certainly *sensed* by the (distant) live audience. The personal and interpersonal detail and nuance of this performance, virtually impossible to see at the concert as an audience member by virtue of distance, but which emerges in the detail of the DVD in close-up, affects me deeply, profoundly, emotionally. I think I know why.

In endeavouring to understand why this performance elicits such a profound response, I draw upon my almost three decades in mime and movement experience in performance and analysis, to achieve the following insights.

In contrast to Bowie's enormous confidence and presence, one observes in Gail Ann Dorsey a characteristic Bass player's 'backing musician's reticence' to be the main focus. Despite Dorsey's distinctive and striking appearance; black, shaven-headed, 'seaweed' skirt, and expertly handling an imposing Fender Bass, there is an apparent shyness, a vulnerability in Dorsey and her performance which is beautifully and sensitively supported and nurtured by Bowie through infinitesimally tiny details, moments, and eye contact between them. As the song progresses and her stunning vocals come to the fore and she literally, as Bowie suggests in the song's introduction does not so much *'join (him) in this next song'* but, ***'takes* that next song'**, one observes a growing confidence, beyond confidence, into 'statement'.

Dorsey has certainly stamped her own personality onto this song but along the way there are small and subtle looks between Bowie and Dorsey which elicit the tiniest hint of a smile from Dorsey as if Bowie is saying to her, *'it's alright, you're doing fine, take it away'* (in fact he initially

does say to her at the start of the song, *'go girl'*), which she acknowledges with a brief smile of approval, satisfaction, and increasing confidence.

Dorsey's vocal – solo and in duet with Bowie – is simply stunning. There is one particular section where vocally she slides smoothly from a quite low register to very high, and just when one thinks that that is as high as she can or will go she tops it. Again. With increasingly gutsy resonance. And all the while playing a pumping yet disciplined Bass line. These are the moments that a performer – any performer - aspires to. When it all comes together, everything works. It appears effortless. And the only reason it appears effortless is because of the enormous discipline, effort and technical expertise which has gone into it in rehearsals, and into the performance, to make it *appear* effortless.

By the end of this song Dorsey's eyes, locked in direct eye contact with Bowie's, are full of passion; for the song, the music, the lyrics, and the moment, of co-performance between them. Yet it is very much *her* moment - graciously and generously encouraged and supported by Bowie. It is subtle and rich and deep and stunning to watch. It is two consummate artists in full cry. It is, in my view, what performance is all about, and should be. It brings tears to my eyes, every time.

Conclusion:

If one ever needed evidence of the remarkable and positive influence of Mime in other performance contexts (refer Section 3), Bowie provides it.

Bowie's stance is pure Mime technique: neutral position; centred; stillness; slightly curved arms. There is a brief moment where Bowie holds out his hand in gesture to the audience. Its slender and elegant shape reflects pure Mime technique, where one contrasts soft curves with hard lines to mutually highlight and support both.

In my considered view, the stillness, centred-ness, focus and sheer presence of Bowie are the result not only of the decades of experience of the seasoned performer, often in a highly theatricalised Concert style (long before any other Rock music acts were theatrical), but, consciously or otherwise, make manifest the influence of Mime on Bowie's early (and subsequent) career.

As I often comment in coaching performers, actors, corporate communicators and television presenters alike, **stillness is much more powerful than movement**. Mime technique, studied, applied, and tested in performance over 25 years has proven this statement time and again. Whether a seven-minute performance piece consisting of nothing but imperceptible movement (virtual stillness) into which the audience is completely locked and engaged; or stillness as punctuation for movement, which re-engages the audience by making them look afresh; or a 'fingertip fixed-in-space' around which movement occurs.

Stillness is what the audience locks onto because it is so unusual in the everyday. We rarely see absolute stillness in the human population. We are more inclined to see it in a David Attenborough wildlife documentary on hunting animals. Just as one of the 'Big Cats' will be locked onto its prey just before springing into its attack, we are locked onto watching it in anticipation of that explosive moment. We are locked onto the presence, the tension, the anticipation, the *latent* energy.

Stillness is *very* much more powerful than movement. Bowie's performance is, in my estimation, that statement's best confirmation.

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2.5   Audience Communication (refer VODcast 30):

> *… Speaking of audience relationships, we'd all like to think as artists that we should just let the Art do the talking for us, and that's fair enough to some extent, but, I personally believe that the audience likes to know a bit more about the artist themselves, beyond just what comes through the songs. So I actually believe that you should rehearse the banter, the between-song banter with the audience as well, because through that they get a better sense of who the performer is, who the **person** behind the performance is…*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 30 The Internal Space*

We can see from the above analysis of the David Bowie concert that, certainly in the view of this writer, audience communication is an important component of the concert performance context. But why? Why should the performer need to communicate with the audience beyond the music? Because 'performance' is a social phenomenon.

As Clarke (2002) states, in *Understanding the Psychology of Performance*:

> the social context of performance (including co-performers, the audience, the influences of teachers and mentors, as well as recordings and performances by others, social attitudes to performance and performance 'fashions') is of paramount importance, but as yet is poorly understood in any explicit manner. It only requires the consideration of stage fright to see how dramatically the social and individual components of performance may interact.

(Clarke 2002, p. 68)

As artists we would all like to believe that we should be able to 'let the art do the talking'. That, in the case of the singer/songwriter, the songs should speak for themselves just as well in live performance as they do in recorded form.

But do they? What is it about going to a concert that is different from listening to an album of the recorded songs of an artist? The songs are essentially the same, the performer is the same. And while some musical arrangements might be different, there is generally a tendency to perform the songs live, in more or less the same way as the recorded version, possibly to meet historical/traditional expectations about 'whether the band is any good', based on how closely they can reproduce the recorded sound in the live context. In my view, this has largely become a redundant issue, as

current audio technology is capable of reproducing virtually any recorded sound live, but there remains perhaps some vestige of such expectation in the audience's mind. However, there are times when 'exact reproduction' is not possible, nor indeed desirable. In some cases, contemporary musical performers such as Yes (2004) and Joe Jackson have quite deliberately rearranged their songs; removing instrumentation entirely and performing an acapella version of the song as Joe Jackson did in his 1983 tour, or completely changing the tempo and instrumental arrangements, specifically for the live context.

However, apart from just the music, the audience has an unstated expectation that there will be some communication beyond just the music itself. Perhaps some hint as to the person who is the artist. As Davidson (2002, p. 146) notes, 'musical expression is intertwined with who and what we are'. Indeed, widely respected Australian jazz musician Don Burrows (1987/96), has taken this notion further, suggesting that 'there is a strong interest in artists speaking about what they do. This 'humanisation' of the work has marked public appeal'. This view is confirmed by singer/songwriter Missy Higgins who, in a recent Brisbane concert (23 November 2007), suggested that she liked to explain something of her songs and how they evolved so that people would have a better understanding of them. Kurosawa and Davidson's research (drawing also upon that of Frith, 1996), also supports this notion:

> Consequently, in popular music performance, performers arguably become central to the music's meaning, and part of the pleasure of the music is in the individual character of how the performer's voice/sound is produced and presented…it is experienced most strongly when the performer can be seen. Because music unfurls over time and space, the co-performer and the audience communicative process itself can have a powerful role in determining the performance and musical product, and makes extensive use of verbal and non-verbal systems in the process (Frith 1996)

(Kurosawa and Davidson 2005, pp.113-114)

So, from the point of view of the performer, much as we might like to assume that the art will speak for itself, it would appear that the reality is very different. It comes down to what I refer to as 'The Package'. And a significant part of that Package, and our perception of the performance, is formed not just by the musical, but equally by the *non-musical* aspects of musical performance.

Indeed, Davidson (2002, p. 99) rates teaching the 'presentation skills' of performance as fundamental as the technical skills of 'structure, notation and reading skills… aural skills… technical and motor skills… and expressive skills' (pp. 97-98). And further, that

one of the 'major difficulties with the way in which performance is taught and conceived of as a performance act in Western culture is that it takes place in isolation: practice is a solitary activity, and lessons are typically on a one-to-one basis. To develop performing skills requires a pull against the dominant cultural trend…Music is for all, with everyone participating as creators, listeners and performers'.

During my attendance at a recent Jazz performance by Clare Hansson, at the Brisbane Jazz Club (1 May 2006), I was once again reminded that there are generally accepted 'rules-of-engagement' between performer and audience. As I subsequently wrote of the concert, and its audience:

> It struck me that there was almost a requirement to be of mature years to be able to either play or appreciate jazz as a musical form – unlike Rock where the only ones capable of being taken anything like seriously playing into their 60's would be the Rolling Stones – and they are as much an Entertainment (and corporate) Spectacle as a musical group (I am not so certain they would go over as well in a small intimate venue with the only lighting coming from the sun through the windows and some dodgy parafloods).
>
> This 'age' thing inveigled its way into my thinking at and about this event, and extrapolating from that into my own sphere of music, which I would never presume to refer to as jazz (although someone recently has). The nature of the relationship between audience and musical performer varies significantly between music forms. For instance:
>
> •   In Classical music the audience refrains from applauding until the end of the entire piece, letting (to my perception) awkward silences hang in the air whilst the orchestra members shuffle their music about, getting ready for the next piece, no matter how passionately the audience might feel about the piece just played
>
> •   In Rock there is applause at the end of each 4 minute song, presumably because the song is a complete artistic whole in itself
>
> •   In Jazz the applause comes not only at the end of each musical piece, but also during the piece - after each of the musicians 'takes a solo' – this does not generally occur in Rock music
>
> These unstated, traditional, 'rules of engagement' between performer and audience appear to be strictly adhered to across the various forms, although there are notable occasions when there is a merging of these 'rules'.
>
> One which comes to mind is the classic Eric Clapton 'Unplugged' concert (DVD, 1992, refer Appendix 2) where the musicians are sitting, rather than standing, in a relatively intimate venue, playing (semi) acoustic versions of Rock/Blues songs - yet are applauded at the conclusion of (some of) their solos.
>
> This line of thinking relates directly to my approach to the notion of the 'musician as mini-corporation' and how the merging/fuzzing of musical forms might inform and/or affect that in contextual and audience perception terms.
>
> (Willems 3 May 2006)

Other Contexts:

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These particular observations are supplemented by similar observations of other concerts in various music performance context over the years which have also 'inveigled their way into my thinking' as to why, for instance, in a jazz type concert, while someone is playing a solo, their co-performers will quite happily begin to chat amongst themselves, with the effect, in my theatrical performance view, that they, the 'chatters', completely take the audience's visual focus away from the soloist who might be playing their hearts out in the foreground, apparently to little avail as the audience is hardly listening due to being so intrigued by the visually apparent but unheard conversation going on in the background.

I have observed this kind of split focus in the jazz context on a number of occasions and whilst it appears to be an accepted part of the jazz performance context for seasoned jazz buffs, I find it remarkably distracting and find that I have to force myself to look at (as well as listen to) the soloist. Perhaps it is just I, with my theatre performance background, who finds this apparently common jazz performance practice so distracting.

In the rock idiom, I have by contrast observed non-playing musicians physically turning themselves towards the soloist in order to 'throw the focus' of the audience onto that performing soloist. The simple effect of turning, even partially, towards the soloist, visually supports and highlights the musical focus which I believe both the soloist and audience deserve. A notable example of this occurs in the 1999 concert DVD of the Corrs, in particular during the duet *'No Frontiers'* between Sharon and Caroline Corr, where each turns toward the other during the other's respective solo verses in the duet context, thereby 'throwing the focus' onto the person actually singing at the time (refer analysis - Appendix 2).

A different context again, is that of orchestral players whom, in between their playing passages, have been observed distractingly shuffling about, vaguely looking around, or equally vaguely staring into nowhere (refer Corrs Concert DVD, 1999, Appendix 2), adjusting themselves, their sheet music and instruments. Obviously musicians need to turn sheet music pages, adjust their instruments in preparation for their next played passage etc., however in my observation it appeared that there was little conscious thought or consideration given by those 'non-playing' musicians to the musicians still

performing in their typically disciplined manner. Surprisingly, one of the highlights for me in watching orchestral performances is the many players moving as one - in physical (as well as musical) unison as they play. The visual distraction occurs and is highlighted when some non-playing musicians, sitting as they are in amongst these 'cloned penguins', appear to drop their performance mode entirely and revert to simply being their non-performing selves, moving loosely and untidily in an apparently undisciplined and unfocussed manner – just because they are not actually playing at that moment. There is an expression in the theatre context which demands that as a performer 'you keep acting *all the way* until you get off-stage' – i.e. maintaining one's stage character and not 'dropping it' until one is completely out of the view of the audience. A similar principle does not seem to apply to some orchestral musicians.

These observations and analyses have unconsciously, and increasingly consciously, become for me the most enduring memory of my concert attendances; that is, the visuals, the theatricality, the distractions, the 'moment', the event. These elements have become more prominent in my thinking than the actual music.

In contemporary music terms, one of the most iconic musicians/performers of the last half-century would have to be Eric Clapton. Clapton's iconic status as 'the unchallenged master of rock-blues guitar playing' (Rolling Stone 1992, p. 407) would rarely be in question; certainly not by those carrying placards or spraying 'the graffiti in London' declaring that 'Clapton is God'. But equally by those perhaps not quite so demonstrative in their respect for Clapton as primarily a blues/rock guitarist, but also as a songwriter of great skill and sensitivity. Given Clapton's undeniable international status, extraordinary skill, and experience as a performer, it is a little surprising that at a recent Eric Clapton concert (7 February 2007, Brisbane Entertainment Centre), I found that whilst the musicianship was truly brilliant and virtuosic, and I could and did appreciate it in musical terms, I came away quite unsatisfied with the event.

The concert was, for me, memorable only for the fact that it was not memorable.

Clapton communicated virtually not at all (other than through the music) with the audience - yet he did with his co-performers - adopting perhaps the rather florid and over-effusively described:

classic Clapton pose – back to the crowd, head bowed over his instrument, alone with the agony of the blues – suggest(ing) a supplicant communing with something inward and elevated: a muse or a demon

(Rolling Stone 1992, p. 407).

Whilst yes, one reminds oneself that Eric Clapton is first and foremost a guitarist, not an 'entertainer', and the guitar playing was indeed brilliant, one is left with a nagging sense of detached remoteness, which one can justify in intellectual terms because Clapton of all people would have every right to be detached, remote, and indeed arrogant, but… No, sorry, I want to be communicated with as part of an audience. I want to know something of the human being behind the myth, even though I have seen countless interviews, video concerts, and media snippets, and I fundamentally know, or at least have formed a perception, which paints Clapton as not overly detached nor particularly arrogant. But I want more than the genius, I want more than the brilliance, I want more than 'God'. I want some *humanity.*

Thompson et al. (2005, p. 204), expand upon this notion, stating that:

visual information is highly effective at conveying persona and attitude… emphasizing the music performance as reciprocal human interaction, whereas an absence of visual information leaves an impression that the performance is a solitary act in which the listener's role is primarily that of a voyeur. That is, visual aspects of music personalize the music, drawing performers and listeners together in a shared experience.

There is a little more humanity in Clapton's iconic 1992 'Unplugged' concert (refer Appendix 2). Despite being the same person (some years earlier perhaps), playing many of the same pieces, this performance context has the effect of softening this perceived remoteness – a little. Whilst the analysis of this concert reveals some inherently detaching traits, there is more humanity in this context than the larger concert performance (although there is a brief glimpse of 'humanity' in the larger 2005 *Cream at the Royal Albert Hall* concert, when Clapton makes a small technical error by coming in vocally in the wrong verse of *'Sunshine of your Love',* and we are treated to a subtle, wry, facial, 'human' acknowledgement of the error).

There is one particular example, and it is very subtle; probably missed by many of the live audience on the night due to sightlines and distance, but one which we are fortunate enough to glimpse in a close-up. It is Clapton's brief and gracious acknowledgement of the audience's warm applause at the end of his guitar solo in *'Old Love'* (track 14). Due to his need to get back to the microphone to sing and continue to

play the rest of the song, Clapton's nod of acknowledgement to the audience is almost imperceptible, but discernible nonetheless. It is sincerely expressed and certainly appreciated. It is an infinitesimally tiny but very significant moment, as it is one of the things that makes Clapton 'human' – despite being 'God'.

Based on my own observation, in many contexts (interview, concerts etc), Clapton appears to be someone who does indeed want his 'music to do the talking', and to a very large extent it does. I suspect that despite his international fame and stature, Clapton shares with the vast majority of artists an inherently introverted nature which makes him more comfortable in his own performance company, and that of his fellow musicians, rather than dealing directly with an audience. This is certainly the sense one gets from the large concert context (a perception further supported by observing Clapton's introduction and opening remarks to the audience in the 2002 *'Concert for George'* – refer Appendix 2), but even more so from observing the performer in the smaller, more intimate venue, which allows some closer inspection of the visual and physical detail.

So, if this more intimate context, by its nature emphasises, or at least allows us to glimpse that kind of subtle physical detail, then perhaps it is this context upon which the ensuing analysis should focus.

2.6   Solo Performance (refer VODcast 15):

> *So, you've recorded your album using a bunch of really good guest musicians. The album sounds great – they've provided all this richness and texture in your songs. Now, you find yourself playing those same songs, solo, with just an acoustic guitar. How are you going to contact the audience, and how are you going to hold their attention and in fact involve them, when there's just you and an acoustic guitar? No additional instruments to enhance the music. No guest players to share the stage with – you're on your own. With so much missing, how are you going to do the songs justice? How are you going to translate those multi-instrumental songs into a credible, memorable, solo acoustic performance? What that involves is what I call 'The Package'. And you might ask what this Package is. Well there's a couple of aspects to it and the first to look at are the musical aspects of 'The Package'.*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 15 The Package - Solo Performance*

The Concert analysis above (and in Appendix 2) refers mainly to multi-artist performances. Even in the case of a 'lead' artist with backing musicians, the situation is very much one of an ensemble of players which may, in terms of analysis, dilute the discernible detail of the main performer's performance by splitting the analytical focus across several performers. In analysing the true *solo* performer, it should enable us to better focus on the *detail* highlighted by that solo performance.

Having recorded a multi-instrumental album using a group of accomplished guest musicians providing a full range of instrumentation to provide richness, depth and texture, a performer may find themselves in the position of playing those same songs, live, solo, with just an acoustic guitar - probably in a small, intimate venue such as a performance club etc. The solo performer has no additional instruments with which to fill out the musical arrangement, and no guest players with whom to share the stage – the performer is, literally, on their own. With so much missing – musical and visual - how can they both do justice to the songs, as well as capture, hold, and involve the audience's focus and attention?   How are those richly musically detailed multi-instrumental songs going to be translated into a credible, memorable, *solo*, acoustic, performance?

The answer lies in what one might once again refer to as '*The Package*'. This goes beyond just the music itself and involves all those other elements of performance which constitute 'The Package', and to which the audience relates. As Rink (2002, p. 35) suggests, 'it cannot be denied that the interpretation of music requires decisions – conscious or otherwise – about the contextual functions of particular musical features *and the means of projecting them'* (emphasis added).

What those other elements are, and how we might project them, deserves some closer scrutiny.

2.7　　What constitutes 'The Package'? (refer VODcast 16):

> *With all those guest instruments missing from the Live context, how are you going to play the songs? Is the best idea to try and fill up the missing bits by over-playing the acoustic guitar? Or, is the best idea to ignore the fact? I've found that, for me, one of the best solutions lies in doing something entirely different with the arrangement of the song, and what this often comes down to is playing with the dynamics – both musical and visual.*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 16 The Package - Dynamics*

So what constitutes this 'Package' that we see in live concert?

For me, what I remember more than any other aspect of a concert is the personality of the performer. This does not come through just the songs themselves and how they are arranged (or indeed re-arranged), so much as the 'banter' between performer and audience – or lack of it. In addition to, and equally important as the banter, it is manifested in and through the performer's 'Physical Personality' [2] (Willems, 2008, in

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[2] 'Physical Personality' is described by this author as the unique set of physical characteristics inherent in each and every individual. Just as each person possesses a unique personality, each person equally possesses a unique and identifiable 'physical personality', evolved through: genetic pre-disposition; age; sports training; ballet training; childhood injuries, etc., and is the physical manifestation of any number of combinations of these factors, and which we are able to recognise in a person, even from a distance, before we clearly see their faces.

press), and that combination of visual perception and interpretation influences the audience's perception and assessment of who this artist really is (or might be).

In addition to the core presentation of the music itself, the audience's perception of the performer - The Package - is formed by the between-song banter, together with how the performer moves, looks, and physically carries themselves – i.e., the performer's Physical Personality - through which the audience gains a sense of who that performer is as a person, as much as they are the 'performer' or the 'songwriter'. It is the non-musical aspects of musical performance which, together with the musical aspects of musical performance, result in our 'sense' of the artist.

It is the Music, it is the Physicality, it is the Visuals…it is 'The Package'.

- It is **Jethro Tull's** musical tightness and discipline – together with Ian Anderson's wild popping eyes, one-legged flute playing, 70's wild hair flinging about. This, in 2003 (*Jethro Tull – Live at Montreux*), is no longer quite so wild, as a bandana (which probably hides the baldness of a middle-aged man), results in the residual hair-flinging motion no longer being anywhere near as theatrically effective as it was in the 70's.

- It is **Elton John's** distinctive piano style – together with outrageous costumes and huge glasses.

- It is the **Corrs** Celtic/folk-tinged musical tastefulness – together with their 'family-next-door' image.

- It is the 'prog rock' musical intricacy and virtuosity of **Yes** – together with their minimalist, visual presentation style, and a strangely uncharacteristic awkwardness in between-song banter - particularly evident in *'Yes Acoustic'* (*Yes Acoustic*, 2004).

- It is **David Bowie's** musically disparate stylistic departures – together with the chameleon reinvention of his image every few years, together with his remarkable performance presence.

- It is the Rock Opera of the **Who** – together with the microphone swinging of a Roger Daltrey, the lunatic drumming antics of a Keith Moon, and amplifier destroying, guitar smashing, leaping in the air of a Pete Townsend

- It is the musical muscularity (Frike 2006) and improvisational virtuosity of **Cream** – together with their god-like legend status, their 'magic blend' (Mayall 2006) of three-piece bare bones performance/presentation.

- It is the smoky huskiness of a 'revamped, recovered, rehabilitated' **Marianne Faithful**, 'performing Kurt Weill's Seven Deadly Sins…not simply because I've committed them all, but because the music corresponds so perfectly to my own sensibility' (Faithfull 1994, pp. 323-324).

- It is the melodic, lyrical, and vocal beauty of a **Donovan** – together with a simple Persian Rug and an unadorned stage.

- It is **Pink Floyd's** spacious orchestral grandeur – together with their 'super stadium concerts of the 1970's…Mesmerizing light shows, visual tricks and surprises…with its high ratio of visual machinery to actual people performing music' (Thompson, Graham & Russo 2005, p. 223)

- It is the lyrical and musical quality of **Missy Higgins** – together with a chatty, unashamedly Australian accent, freshness and openness.

- It is the musical scope and credibility of a **Van Morrison** – together with his dismissive non-communication with the audience

- It is the thundering regimentation of **Japanese Drummers** – together with the visual spectacle of highly choreographed, minimalist, stylised and powerful physical discipline. Listening to their CD might get boring, but it is spectacular to see/hear in live performance.

It is 'The Package'.

And as we have seen above, a good deal of this Package involves and is manifested in, the *'Physicality of Performance'*.

2.8   The Physicality of Performance:

Because live concert performance is a different experience, we need to look at how and why it is different and what the implications are for the performer. Of the 'scant research in this area' (Davidson 2005, p. 215), I concur with much of the most significant research which does exist and which has been carried out by Professor Jane Davidson, who suggests that:

> bodily communication is a crucial aspect of musical performance, and that performers can benefit from understanding how they produce their music, not only for musical understanding, but also for audience and co-performer engagement.

(Davidson 2005, p. 216)

In this context, Ekman and Friesen's (1981) categorisations of physical behaviour in performance - *emblems, illustrators, regulators* and *affect displays* - have been extensively examined and appropriately contextualised by subsequent researchers such as Davidson (2001); Kurosawa and Davidson (2005); and Thompson et al. (2005). Whilst these researchers make effective use of Ekman and Friesen's categorisations in their analyses of various artists in various performance contexts, it is not my intention to further refer to or draw upon these categorisations through the following discussion, but preferring instead - based on my own extensive experience in mime/movement performance - to examine the area less in a 'scientifically objective', categorised manner, and more in an 'artistically subjective' manner. An approach paralleled perhaps by playing music by 'feel' rather than 'reading the dots'.

However, if we are talking about 'reading the dots' and reconciling that with the 'feel', then there are other researchers, and musicians, who look to actually incorporate the physical, the gestural, into those very dots on the page.

Prominent amongst these is Edson Zanpronha, whose 2005 work, *'Gesture in Contemporary Music – The Edge Between Sound Materiality And Signification'* – examines the formal role of gesture not only in the performance, but also the creation of a musical work. In doing so, Zanpronha cites the work of such composers as Luciano Berio, Alfred Schnittke, Brian Fernyhough, Arnold Schoenberg, and others.

In pursuit of this topic, Zanpronha has in fact coined the term, 'Signification', to describe the gestural aspects of music performance and their relation to the content and its meaning:

> However, in less codified systems, and this is the case in which music is included, the relation of dependence between material vehicle and contents is much more pronounced. Material vehicle and content are so close (to) one another in music that the term 'meaning' really does not seem to be adequate. The term 'signification' seems to be an alternative to express the process of turning a sequence of sounds in music into something intelligible, without any reference to verbal language.
>
> (Zanpronha 2005, p. 4)

Zanpronha goes even further and extends the approach and reach of this notion of 'signification' beyond performance and into the music's composition:

> With regard to musical composition, gesture comes to be understood as a sound materiality movement that generates a delimited configuration recognizable by listening as a unit. This unity is closely associated to signification inside a work. Parameters tend not to be treated independently from one another anymore. They are treated as a set, and the multiple interferences they produce (in) one another are taken into account.
>
> (Zanpronha 2005, p. 4)

Zanpronha thus confirms the view (p. 12) that, 'gesture is not neutral, and brings different significations to the work', and that the relationship and reconciliation of these two 'closely related' aspects of music performance - Material Vehicle and Signification - form a significant part of the musician's role, and in a sense, responsibility to their audience's appreciation:

> Signification is closely related to its material vehicle in music, and almost blends with it. In this sense, material vehicle is not just a bearer of a musical idea that is strange to it. Material vehicle is a fundamental piece for the construction of musical signification. *That is why all gestures, which take part into the construction of material vehicle in music, i.e., its sound materiality, are not accessories. Instead, they are important aspects which deserve full attention.* (emphasis added)
>
> (Zanpronha 2005, p. 4)

Clarke (2002) agrees, referring to and acknowledging the significant research carried out in this area by Jane Davidson (refer above):

> A concern with the human body and the role of bodily movement recognises that structure is not the sole determinant of expression. A wide range of other factors will shape the result…*Movement and the human body are particularly significant in this complex set of relationships* (emphasis added)

<div align="right">(Clarke 2002, p. 66)</div>

This notion of 'expression' in music lies at the heart of the music-performer-audience relationship. Is that expression purely the role and responsibility of the music itself, or is it how that music is played – both instrumentally and 'visually' - and therefore, physically?

What does an audience relate to in music, or indeed any art? What is it that reaches an audience? Is it technical perfection? It may be for some. Perhaps in listening to the recorded version of the music technical perfection is a crucial part. Is it the 'strong emotional content' (Davidson 2002, p. 145) embedded in the musical notes themselves? There is absolutely no doubt that music – even recorded music – can stir human emotions. That is not in question.

In the final analysis, on a very personal and individual basis, human beings relate to the imperfections and humanity of other human beings – as expressed through their (imperfect) human art. Whilst Davidson (2002, p. 145) might fairly formally describe 'musical expression (as) a means of communicating basic qualities of human nature to one another'. I equally concur with the less formal question posed by internationally renowned rock musician, Phil Collins (1999) who asks, 'what is 'good'? Does it reach you, does it touch you?...that's the most important thing'.

In order to reach you, in order to touch you in that human way, there has to be some significant connection between performer and audience. And whilst 'the possibilities of recording fundamentally changed the character of music-making, (with) the studio gradually bringing a new reverence for technical accuracy which in turn found its way into the concert hall' (Lawson 2002, p. 12), simply playing the right notes in the right places – even with technical perfection - is not enough. As Clarke (2002) points out, 'over and above that, performers are expected to animate the music, to go *beyond* what is explicitly provided by the notation or aurally transmitted standard – to be 'expressive'. (p. 59). Further stating that:

> While some movement is inevitably needed simply to produce music on an instrument, the majority of the movements observed and studied in published research by Jane Davidson are *over and above this purely ergonomic baseline – and can therefore be regarded as expressive rather than practical*…movements of the whole body, as well as discrete bodily gestures, which are, *strictly speaking, 'unnecessary' for the basic task of producing sound* from the instrument (emphasis added)

> (Clarke 2002, p. 67)

These 'discrete bodily gestures', the use of particular physicality to enhance the performer-audience relationship, and the physical performance background which supports that, form the basis of this paper which accompanies, more particularly, the VODcasts which form the principal manifestation of this investigation and research.

As detailed in Section 3 below ('*Music, Mime & Metamorphosis – the Application of Mime Performance to Music Performance*'), 'having established that the body is vital in generating the technical and expressive qualities of a musical interpretation' (Davidson, 2002, p. 146), **it can be clearly demonstrated that the background of professional mime and movement performance may be successfully applied to this musical context.** The challenge, as always in art, is to maintain the balance between: control and spontaneity; between technical perfection and human imperfection, and between 'materiality' and 'signification'. As Zanpronha (2005) states (p. 4), 'gesture is on the edge between sound materiality and musical signification. It touches both sides'.

However, whilst I concur with much of what Zanpronha's research indicates, his suggestion that:

> With regard to musical performance, gestures…are much more important for the construction of signification in music *than to the construction of meaning in verbal language.* (emphasis added)
>
> (Zanpronha 2005, p. 4)

…is, to some degree, in question.

To suggest that the value of 'signification' – through the physical, the gestural, the 'body-language' – is exclusive to the *musical* communication context, as distinct from the broader *verbal* communication context , does not take into account the oft-quoted figures of Albert Mehrabian (1981, p. 76), whose research indicates that in any face-to-

face human encounter or communication, the perceptions human beings form of other human beings, the 'first impressions' of those we encounter, and they of us – the figures clearly demonstrate that:

- **55%** is determined by the ***visual/body language*** - how we carry ourselves
- **38%** is determined by ***vocal*** - how we sound, the tone of our voice
- **7%** is determined by ***words*** - the actual content of what we say

So, if the visual, the physicality, the body language impression is the most immediate, most important, and that to which the audience most closely relates, then, whatever the context – musical or verbal - the performer needs to ensure that, whatever audience perceptions are formed, they are *in*formed, by body-language, by physicality, by movement, by 'signification', which is clear, concise, and - in the musical performance context – appropriately 'expressive'. To achieve that, it needs to be *choreographed*.

In most instances, this does not occur. In my view, it should.

Because, as noted by Clarke of Davidson's experimental findings with music performers:

> The performer had only *limited conscious awareness* of the expressive movements that he made, and there was no evidence to suggest that the movements had been *deliberately developed or rehearsed* at any time. (emphasis added)

> (Clarke 2002, p. 67)

And, as demonstrated in Section 3 of this paper, it is precisely that conscious awareness, that deliberate development, and that rehearsal, which needs to be applied by performers to this context, in order to enhance the 'expression' in the music, enhance the music-performer-audience relationship.

However the notion that gestures might be consciously incorporated into the music itself, i.e. the written dots, is in my view questionable. Zanpronha concludes (p. 12) that 'being on the edge between sound materiality and musical signification, gesture turns out to be an efficient resource through which it is possible to transform what is non-musical into musical *inside a work'*. (emphasis added).

He also cites (p. 5) composer Brian Fernyhough, who 'considers gesture as an objective unit that has a specific configuration which is delimited by time and space...Fernyhough condemns the use of gesture as a representation of emotions in music because he considers that it produces a return to Romanticism'. Fernyhough, Zanpronha continues, uses the term, 'figure' instead, which is described in rather detached, scientific terms as, 'the result of gesture deconstruction in parameters'.

In my view, the danger in embedding the gestural, the 'signification', or the 'figure' in the actual composition itself in a predetermined, technical, scientific way, is that it becomes dehumanised - that, in the words of Zanpronha himself, *'the work can…become a set of gestures with no sense'* (emphasis added), if there is not a degree of 'human' spontaneity associated with them.

In this context, Clarke (2002, pp. 63-64), raises:

> an interesting problem for the psychology of music: to determine what makes a performance sound 'human' and musically effective, and to distinguish such a performance from one which sounds lifeless, implausibly mannered or wayward, or simply incompetent'

In the final analysis, I concur with the view later expressed by Clarke himself, almost in answer to his own question, that:

> Although it is in many ways productive to break down a complex phenomenon into identifiable components in order to study it carefully and systematically, it is also important to remember that the individual components are not independent, and that an attempt must also be made to reintegrate and synthesise.
>
> (Clarke 2002, p. 68)

Ultimately, it is that reintegration and synthesis which maintains the 'humanity' in the work. A gesture might initially be consciously choreographed, but with rehearsal and performance use it becomes incorporated into the fundamental fibres of the performer and their performance.

It is therefore important to recognise that in an effort to enhance the audience's appreciation, interpretation of, and engagement with the work - by making these unconscious movements, gestures, physicalisations etc, more conscious - that a

balance needs to be struck, in order to maintain the fundamental 'humanity' of both the music, and the engagement between performer and audience.

The notion of 'audience engagement' is one which, as noted above, can take on as much, if not more significance than the actual music in live performance. One of the most obvious, least subtle and dare one say, clichéd examples of audience engagement in the contemporary music performance context would have to be the act of pointing the microphone towards the audience in order to encourage them to sing along with the performer. That is, holding the microphone out to the audience for that audience to 'join in'. One would have to assume that, consciously or otherwise, most of the audience understands that this is more about a physical/visual cue than an audiological device, but they quite willingly 'play the game'.

From a purely technical point of view, the effective vocal pickup range of one of the most commonly used concert microphones – the *Shure SM58* - is less than one metre, and in fact, for lead or backup singing purposes, less than 200mm (Shure Incorporated 1999). Therefore, in order to actually pick up any significant singing from even one audience member the microphone would have to be much closer than the performer/audience distance typical of large contemporary concert venues – or even a relatively small venue. What the performer is doing is using the **physicality of the action** to cue the audience to participate – or participate more enthusiastically. Particularly good examples of this type of physical cue can be seen in the Simply Red (1998) DVD – *Live in London* – particularly on track 15, *'Come To My Aid'* and track 23, *'Money's Too Tight To Mention'.*

Mick Hucknall (lead singer/songwriter) of *Simply Red* effectively uses his hand-held, rather than stand-based, microphone as an extension of himself and his personality in communicating with the audience. This is particularly evident when he is encouraging the audience to participate and/or emphasising the beat of the music. As well as holding the microphone out to the audience to encourage them to sing along, he uses his microphone hand, rather than his free hand as one might expect, to punch the air to the beat. Given that the microphone he is using is one with an attached lead, rather than a radio microphone, and is therefore inherently encumbered by that lead, this is a little surprising. Hucknall demonstrates quite a different kind of stylisation of microphone-as-prop use from the kind of trademark overt feature famously exhibited by *The Who*'s, Roger Daltrey, who 'twirled his mike like a lariat' (Rolling Stone 1992, p.

396), literally swinging the microphone around his head in huge and violent circles like a lasso, to the extent that his microphone cable connection has to be substantially gaffer-taped in order for it not to completely disintegrate.

Large microphone movements in large concert contexts are one thing, but by contrast, what about the performance situation where the performer is restricted by being at a stand-based microphone, perhaps seated, often also playing an instrument? Beyond overtly swinging a microphone around or clapping one's hands together to encourage the audience to be more directly involved, what can that performer do? What are the implications in terms of audience involvement and communication when the performer's movement is seriously restricted?

This is, in part, simply a question of scale. A large concert in a massive auditorium requires larger movements in order to visually impart the energy inherent in the music – certainly in the 'Rock Concert' context. Whilst some suggest that:

> the visual aspects of music remain critical in live performance, but facial expressions, hand gestures, and other movements of performers are gradually being diluted or even replaced by other kinds of visual information that are present in popular music experiences. This movement away from the actions of the performer began with the super stadium concerts of the early 1970's…Mesmerizing light shows, visual tricks and surprises, and elaborate sets become markers of prestige in themselves. Music videos have continued this trend away from the performance itself…video images can be detached from the aural experience. Rather than consistently supporting the music, these video images may compete for our attention (and) …reinforce the separation of audio and visual dimensions of music…

> (Thompson, Graham & Russo 2005, pp. 223-224)

…and that the inclusion of visual elements such as large video screens 'dilutes or replaces' the need for awareness of and concentration on specific performer movement, I would suggest that whilst the video screens certainly show us the detail which cannot be seen from a distance, it goes beyond just the visual and scale in terms of just 'size' of performance, and enters the realm of the 'scale of energy' of the music; needing to match the scale of energy of the audience; needing to match the scale of energy required to 'fill the venue'. All of which, needs to be matched by the scale of physical engagement and energy of the performance. This can imply stillness equally as much as movement – even in a massive concert such as David Bowie's concert (analysed above). There is such a thing as 'latent energy' in performance. In my experience, latent energy, as described above, can often be significantly more powerful in performance than 'explosive' energy.

More subtle, subdued music demands a more subtle, subdued performance – even within the context of a larger, louder concert. A smaller venue demands smaller, more finely detailed performance. A small, quiet audience in an intimate venue is unlikely to relate very well to a performance or performer who leaps across the stage, swings microphones around and dives into the 'mosh-pit' - in a tables & chairs, cabaret style, configuration. It is a question of scale. And, if it is a question of scale, then it is equally a question of *detail*.

2.9   The Detail:

In the context of performance, either solo or small ensemble, in a small intimate venue, that detail becomes more critical because the audience can see it. Not only can they see it, but it becomes visually amplified simply by the absence of surrounding visual (and aural) distraction, and therefore that detail becomes much more significant. Kurosawa and Davidson's (2005) view supports this notion, suggesting that (p. 114), 'bodily information can provide very fine grained information about the emotional intention of the performer'.

The audience's ability to see and be aware of the small physical details of a performance in the intimate performance context, demands that performers themselves also become more aware of those physical details, and incorporate them more consciously into their performance.

This self-awareness of the detailed physicality of performance needs to be matched by an awareness of the surroundings, the layout, and the design of the performance area, because all the elements in the performance – any performance - are inseparably inter-related: the physical, the visual, and the musical.

This begs the question, what can one do as a solo performer, playing an instrument, in an intimate venue, to communicate more effectively with an audience, to get the audience more involved? Whilst not as apparent, nor indeed as blatantly obvious as those examples cited above, such as swinging microphones around or making gross and cartoony 'clap-along' movements, there is a perhaps surprising range of choices

the performer still has in terms of getting the audience involved in the performance, in the music, in the 'shared experience…an embodied, personal experience' (Thompson, et al. 2005, pp. 204-205) of *communication.*

In terms of that communication, if it is indeed about the 'Package', about the detail manifested in the 'Physicality of Performance', then there is in my experience, no better technique to focus, clarify, and communicate that physicality of performance, than the technique of Mime, because *Mime is the very definition of Physical Performance.*

SECTION 3:

Music, Mime & Metamorphosis:
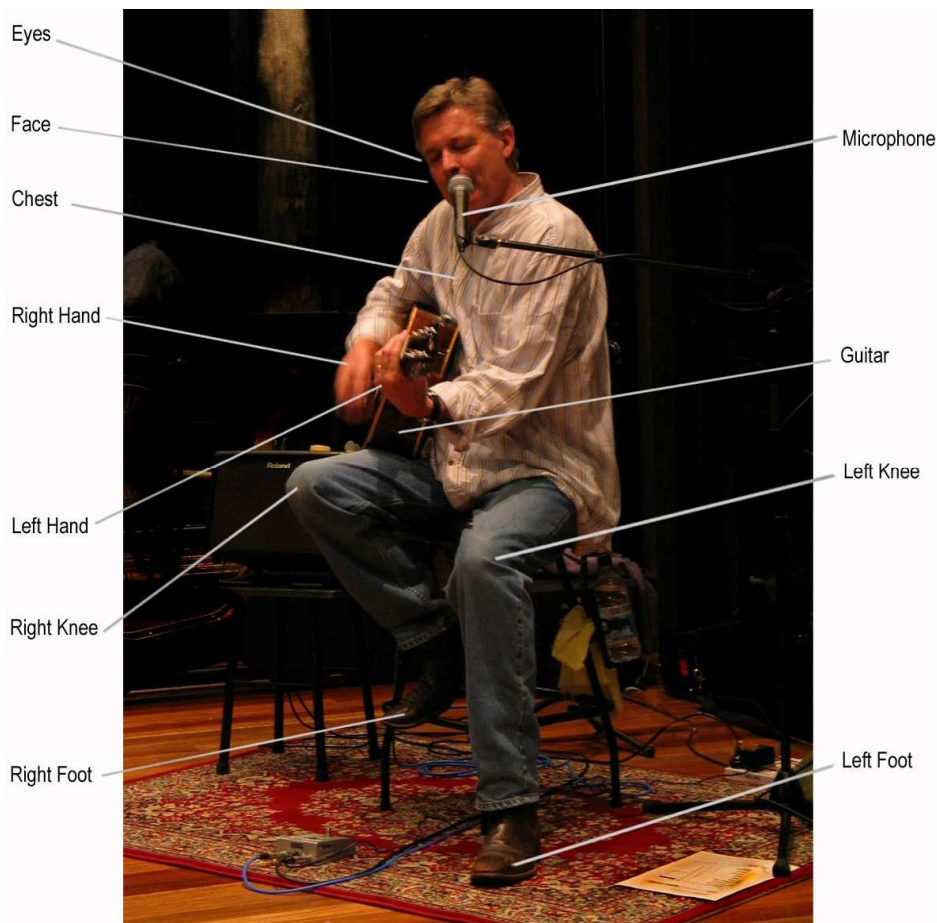
SECTION 3: Music, Mime & Metamorphosis:
The application of Mime Performance to Music Performance

> *…taken together, the facts about musical performance suggest that it is necessary for musicians to be able to use the full potential of movements in their preparation and performance to make music optimally communicable…Thus, musicians have to acquire a successful non-verbal means of articulating their musical 'messages'.*
>
> (Davidson 2001, p. 239)

3.1 Background:

This following discussion is informed by many professional influences, experiences and techniques. Having begun my professional arts career in Australia in 1972 as a musician, this in turn led me into the theatre, which ultimately led me to London in the late 1970's, where I lived and based myself until my return to Australia in 1981.

London provided the (unanticipated) opportunity to study both Mime and Television Design, simultaneously. To explore new artistic and professional fields which led to my working in Television Design at the BBC and to subsequently create several successful solo mime works as a creator/performer and director, eventually combining these two forms into a unique television adaptation titled, *Son of Romeo* (Willems 1990). This period of professional curiosity, exploration and development in the UK and Europe, was more than just an interesting time, it ultimately proved to represent a critical and complete professional/artistic career turning point.

My entire career focus was radically altered in entirely unexpected ways. I went from musician to mime artist; from engineering draftsman to television designer; from enquirer to explorer; and from explorer to professional specialist.

This intense period of professional exploration, knowledge acquisition and skills development, provided my professional career with not one but two, new and apparently unrelated directions. I have subsequently spent most of the last three decades exploring the creative potential of both of those directions (and more) and discovering - consciously, unconsciously and serendipitously – that apparently conflicting artforms can, and indeed do, with judicious application of some 'rational and aesthetic intelligence' (Decroux 1978, p. 43), ultimately influence, inform and support each other rather than conflict with, detract from, or diminish each other.

In my professional experience, *everything* in art is related. Every artform informs every other artform – often in surprising ways - but, if one allows the mind to be receptive, these surprising ways soon become *un*surprising, due to one's inter-disciplinary successes. With so much of my professional life having been spent combining artforms, this artistic, creative, and technical reconciliation; this cross-fertilisation and inter-disciplinarity, have become my 'normal'. So much so, that it can at times be frustratingly difficult to comprehend the suspicion of and resistance to the notion of inter-disciplinarity, from those who appear trapped in their own quite narrow areas of interest. The mutual suspicion between theatre and television is a prominent example. Having achieved significant works in both theatre and television, I have observed, first hand, those working in television dismiss those working in theatre as 'arty wankers', whilst those in the theatre equally dismiss television as 'commercial crap' (other than actors working in television of course).

Surely, particularly in exploring areas of creativity and innovation, if one has an idea, however unlikely or unusual, then one should - indeed *must* - explore it, whatever the medium:

> **Andrew Denton:** What is an idea?
>
> **Professor Susan Greenfield:** My own view of an idea is something that overrides facts, that sees a connection between one fact and another…taking two separate facts and seeing that there's a connection…making connections that haven't been made before that come together and you suddenly say, 'Wow'.
>
> ('Enough Rope' 13 September 2004)

Mime adapted to television. Consulting engineering adapted to television design. Television design adapted to the theatre stage. Mime technique adapted to corporate communication. The technological adapted to the aesthetic. The aesthetic adapted to the technological.

Having successfully proven these 'connections…that come together and you suddenly say, 'Wow'', it seems perfectly feasible, indeed essential, to turn one's attention to *Mime adapted to Music.* And, of all people to know of the potential connections between Mime and Music, it is the 'father of modern mime', Etienne Decroux, who states that:

> Helvetius said in the eighteenth century that to be imaginative one does not have to know lots of things…*it is the combinations one makes with a few things.* (emphasis added)

> (Decroux 1978, p. 40)

3.2   Mime and Music:

Despite regularly hearing comments about 'naturalistic' performance in the theatre context, there is, in my experience in performance, no such thing as naturalism, only 'degrees of stylisation':

> Movement which comes 'naturally' to the performer has largely desirable effects on how the performance is perceived…(however) not all 'natural' movement is positive. It may interfere with the technique of playing effectively, and it could be perceived as being awkward.

> (Davidson 2001, p. 238)

What might be perceived or referred to as 'naturalism' – implying the effortless, the unconscious, the normal, the everyday - is (or should be) in fact, a carefully crafted and selective performance style which is the result of a conscious process:

> Jimi Hendrix…was very awkward. He sang with his back to the stage or into his guitar, and mumbled so badly you couldn't understand a word…he hadn't got his persona together – he wasn't yet the 'voodoo chile' – and you could see he was painfully shy. But once he began playing he was transformed.

> (Faithfull 1994, p. 49)

At first glance, the notion of applying Mime to Vocal/Music performance might seem something of a contradiction. Mime performance is non-verbal, vocal performance clearly is not. However Mime as an artform exists not only to communicate silently from the stage, it is also equally about 'looking beautiful' to the audience's eye. The

two go hand in hand; moving beautifully, and communication with the audience. Even if one chooses to make a character 'look ugly' on the stage, there is a beauty, an 'attractiveness' to the audience in the manifestation of that character - quite literally attracting the eye of the audience. This is communication.

Vocal communication, in the musical context, is clearly also about communication with an audience: to 'sound beautiful', to attract the audience's ear, just as Mime has to attract the eye. But there is also the *visual* aspect of the musical/vocal performance, and this is where the two – the vocal and the visual, the mime and the musical - merge. There is, therefore, a process of melding the two artforms, of bringing together two apparently opposing and conflicting forms of communication, merging and 'morphing' those into a single, clear, concise, communicative, choreographed performance mode.

The common denominator for both is the level of *consciousness* required to achieve this metamorphosis.

3.3   What is Mime? (refer VODcast 26):

So where does Mime fit into all of this? Well, when you consider that, at its most fundamental, Mime consists of the analysis, manipulation and stylisation of Body Language - and that Body Language is so much a part of human interaction, it's not that surprising really. Contrary to popular belief, Mime is not about 'exaggerated movement'. In fact it's entirely the opposite. It's about selective, finely detailed and consciously controlled Movement – where, generally speaking, the less you do the more powerful it is. It's not about 'natural' movement. It's not about thrashing about on stage. It's about clarifying your physicality; it's about enhancing your stage presence; and it's about focussing the audience's attention on you, the performer.

Transcript: *VODcast 26 Mime*

The Macquarie Dictionary defines Mime as, 'the art or technique of expressing emotion, character, action, etc., by mute gestures and bodily movements' (p. 253).

There has long been and continues to be the widely held misconception that Mime is all about facial expressions and exaggerated gestures. Almost three decades of

professional Mime creation, direction and performance confirms, in no uncertain terms, that nothing could be further from the truth. Mime is in fact immensely subtle and exquisitely detailed - quite the opposite of exaggerated movement.

Leading British Mime exponent and teacher, Desmond Jones, refers to:

> pure mime …that does not need to interpret words by exaggerated gesture and facial expression…an art that…*reflects thoughts and states of being through controlled movement of the body*. (emphasis added)

<div align="right">(Jones 1980, p. 1)</div>

In the struggle to define, pigeon-hole, and categorise mime, it has been variously compared with other artforms, particularly those of Dance and Pantomime – neither of which it is. According to Etienne Decroux (1978), when it comes to comparisons with dance, 'we can say that mime is the opposite of dance…The traditional figure of the dancer is free and soaring; the typical figure of the mime is struggling and earthbound' (p. 51). In the case of Pantomime, Decroux himself, 'detest(s) this form…Pantomime is supposed to amuse people, it has never amused me...that play of face and hands which seems to try and explain things but lacks the words…That is not art' (p. 63).

What *is* art is the manner in which mime can take a moment, hold it, control it, define it and draw the audience into infinitesimally tiny detail. Indeed, in mime, one's choreography extends right down to a single eye-blink - literally. This is the great subtlety, infinite power and *art* of mime. Mime provides the capacity for 'exquisite physicalisation…(which) achieves as much…from absolute stillness as (it) does from frenzied movement' (Evans 1986). This is a product of mime's 'compelling sensitivity' (Evans 1986); a sensitivity which, by utilising, manipulating and contrasting that 'absolute stillness' with *selective* movement, provides unparalleled performance clarity, precision and concise communication with the audience:

> In mime you have to make sure you don't present anything extraneous, that's not precisely required to impart information

<div align="right">(Willems 1986, Sydney Morning Herald)</div>

Whilst (clearly-drawn) mime does indeed provide that clear, precise and concise communication with the audience, that same communication is *not direct* communication - in the sense that there is generally no direct eye-contact, physical

contact, or verbal contact with the audience. In fact, mime virtually demands that there is no such direct contact, in order to allow the audience their 'imaginative space'.

3.4   Mime – Audience Contact:

In Mime one does not contact the audience directly at all - quite the contrary. As the solo mime performer one inhabits an imaginary world, a world created entirely by the performance. The Mime artist creates this invisible world together with the audience, utilising the audience's imaginative input, their tacit agreement, and their willingness to participate. Provided that that invisible, imaginary world is drawn, sculpted and painted sufficiently clearly by what the mime artist does and how they move, that same world will also be inhabited by the audience, through utilising their own imaginations.

I refer to this as the 'imaginative contract' between Mime artist and audience (Willems 2004). By utilising certain movement and physical/emotional expression, the Mime artist first creates the world *with* the audience, and then invites the audience into that world, without a word and without any direct contact. This is both the magic of Mime and also its greatest danger. The audience may well, if the Mime artist is not sufficiently clear, create an entirely different imaginative and imagined world from the one the Mime artist themselves has created and intends, and hence go off on some imaginative tangent into a world where nothing the Mime artist subsequently does makes any sense whatsoever. Mime artist and audience can therefore be existing literally in different visual and imaginative worlds and it is therefore highly likely that 'never the twain shall meet' again.

Even with clarity mime is, as any art, always open to different interpretations, where the viewer will inevitably bring their own expectations and interpretation to the work. As Jonathan Miller (1995) suggests, the audience's 'hunches, guesses, prejudices, preoccupations, interests and so forth, alter the experience so that what you know, what you think, what you imagine, what you anticipate, have an irreversible effect on what you experience'. This can indeed alter the experience, even in seasoned viewers of the work, to the extent that a 'bit of finger-clicking to a bit of music', can be interpreted as 'expos(ing) the predatory nature of male-female encounters in the modern disco scene' (Nugent 1986).

For all this co-creation of an imagined world, there simultaneously exists a certain separateness between Mime artist and audience. Not so much the traditional Mime 'glass wall' but a theatrical distance across which the audience agrees to 'play the game' – the imaginative game. This is the tacit contract; never directly stated, never directly agreed, and with never any direct performer/audience contact.

In the solo performance of music/songs however, there is generally much more direct contact; eye contact, vocal contact through the songs, and additionally, vocal contact through performer/audience 'banter'.

3.5   Music – Audience Contact:

Perhaps due to my three-decade 'no-direct-contact-with-the-audience' solo Mime background, I find that, as a performer in the solo **Music** context, I am not good at nor comfortable with the kind of direct audience contact which music performance tends to demand. This is particularly evident in the area of spontaneous banter with the audience. I am not, never have been, and probably never will be good at this. I have also observed this to be a not-uncommon trait amongst other musical performers – even performers with decades of performance experience such as *Yes*'s Jon Anderson (*Yes Acoustic* 2004). Whenever I have tried to make spontaneous small talk between songs I tend, partially as a result of performance anxiety, to get tongue tied and say stupid rather than entertaining or witty things, generally coming across as ill-prepared, and not very confident. I have therefore developed for myself the notion of 'rehearsed spontaneity'.

The two operative, oxymoronic words here are: *'spontaneity'* and *'rehearsed'.*

These terms should, by definition, be mutually exclusive. However what it means for me as a performer is that I simply prepare my 'between-song-banter'. I write it down, and rehearse it, a lot (refer Banter discussion below). This is no different from a presentation, nor indeed performing a song. One is still 'in the performance', and one simply makes the banter part of that performance.

Not only does this 'rehearsed spontaneity' enhance one's audience communication, but it also tends to be an excellent technique for moderating performance anxiety. As

long as the performer is in control of the apparently spontaneous and informal communication with the audience, they are therefore also (as much as one can ever be, according to Miller's view), in control of how that audience perceives one as the person either side of the song, as well as and distinct from the person or character one is *within* the song. *(refer VODcast 30)*:

3.6   Mime & Music – Allies or Opposites?

Direct contact, through banter with the audience beyond the music, beyond the art itself, is very different. Whereas Mime by definition is an artform where the performer never makes direct contact with the audience, this kind of solo music performance is diametrically opposed in any number of ways. For example:

SOLO MIME	SOLO MUSIC
Non-verbal	Verbal
Silent	Audio/Music
Physical focus	Vocal/Instrument focus
Indirect audience contact	Direct audience contact
Paints visual pictures	Paints word pictures
Eyelines create 'world' & other characters	Eyelines contact audience
Movement defines 'Characters'	Movement defined by instrument & singing
No Props	Props (instrument)

However, whilst the two artforms are, in practical and performance terms, essentially opposites, they certainly share a surprising number of parallels.

I often describe Mime in terms of 'Visual Radio' (Willems 2004). In a Radio Play the audience has only part of the information, i.e. the audio, and has to imagine the physical and visual environment. In Mime, the audience also has only part of the information, i.e. the physicality of the performer/characters, and has to imagine the surrounding physical, visual (and aural) environment.

So whilst the form of the information in the respective artforms is entirely different, the similarity exists in the utilisation of the audience's imagination in creating the 'world' for both the characters and the audience to inhabit – either aurally through song's music and lyrics (music performance) or visually through physicality (mime performance).

However, if Mime and Music performance are indeed so opposite, so entirely unrelated apart from imaginative input, the central question then becomes, how then can one apply Mime to Music performance?

Firstly, what about the physicality of the two artforms? One tends to assume that, due to the need to articulate the chest in Mime (refer discussion below), there will naturally be a conflict between the musculature and physicality required to perform Mime and the musculature and physicality required to sing. However it transpires that the musculature required for both Mime & singing are actually remarkably similar – for different reasons and different outcomes – but, rather than being in conflict, the two artforms actually complement each other; physically, anatomically, communicatively, and indeed, for Etienne Decroux, also philosophically and technically:

> what I've done is to consider the human body as a keyboard – the keyboard of a piano…the human body should follow the example of the instrumentalist… the actor is an instrumentalist of his own body.

> (Decroux 1978, pp. 15-16)

What Decroux is referring to, at least in part, with this analogy is the notion of the separateness of the notes on the piano keyboard. The individual notes, coming together to create and form the music. Before we, as mimes can form our 'visual music', we need to be able to separate and isolate the various parts of the body. And it is only after we have discovered and managed this isolation of the parts, only then can we recombine those separate individual parts into the wholeness of physical performance:

> This is, possibly what my contribution to mime has been…I have arrived…at *corporeal* mime, the idea of the body as a keyboard. (emphasis added)

> (Decroux 1978, p. 40)

In the context of this isolation of the body parts, it is the Chest which is the centre of everything (refer below). It is that part of the body which reflects the full range of observable human behaviour from the deepest and subtlest of inner emotions, to the direction, attention, intention and outer physical shape, manifestation and presence of a character on the stage. The Chest therefore has, as a matter of fundamental Mime technique, to be physically moved and articulated. This requires a particular kind of physical effort and musculature. This musculature; diaphragm, intercostal and associated muscles, required to consciously articulate the Chest in Mime and support stage presence (refer below), is remarkably consistent with the musculature required to support the singing voice. As Miller (1996, p. 262) suggests:

> Many techniques of singing attempt conscious control over the diaphragm. Teachers of singing who urge diaphragmatic control may only be using such terminology loosely to indicate other possible muscular controls around the diaphragmatic region.

This notion of selective muscular control to articulate the Chest, essentially extends to the articulation of the entire body in performance.

3.7 'The Package' – Physicality (refer VODcast 18):

> *As a solo performer, playing acoustic guitar (or indeed any instrument) it might be difficult to imagine how you can use your physicality to communicate with an audience. Both your hands are busy playing, so you can't use those very much – unless you stop playing of course…but that's not really an option. So what have you got left? The obvious answer to that is the Face, but in reality, as well as that, you've also got your Feet. So, you've got your Feet, you've got your Face – and in fact, everything in between. You can pretty well use your entire body – including those very busy hands – to enhance your audience involvement in the performance. When you're playing an instrument (especially sitting) there's obviously not a lot that you can move a lot. What this means is that when you do move bits, selectively, the effect is amplified. You can't strut about the stage – you don't need to. In fact, I would argue, that the less you move, the more powerful it is, and the more Stage Presence you'll have. You can really enhance the detail of what the audience sees – and therefore relates to – by conscious, selective Movement. And yes, even those very busy hands.*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 18 The Package - Physicality*

As a solo performer, playing acoustic guitar (or indeed any instrument) it might be difficult to imagine how one can use one's physicality to communicate with an audience. Generally speaking, both hands are busy playing, so these are precluded from being used very much. It is not really an option to stop playing in order to involve the audience, so what aspects of one's physicality, which 'bits' of the rest of the body remain?

The most obvious answer to that is the Face. But in reality, as well as that, there are also the Feet. However, beyond just the face and the feet, there is, in terms of physicality, everything in between. One is able to use virtually one's entire body – including those very busy playing hands – to enhance the audience's involvement in the performance.

When playing an instrument (especially sitting) there is obviously not a lot that one can move a lot, however what this means is that when one does move particular body bits, selectively, the effect of that movement is amplified:

Everyone must be able to hear great thoughts; one does not whisper great ideas to a friend. They must be said to a population, one must be able to hear them. One needs amplification. One needs something that projects.
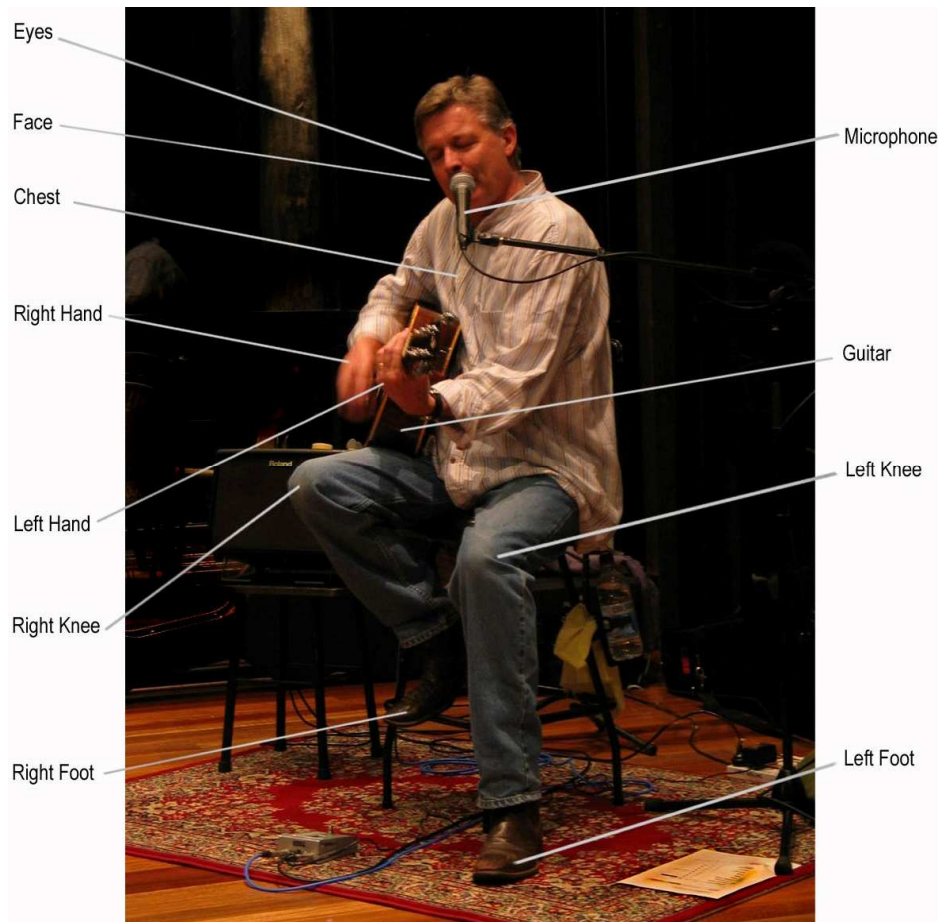
<div align="right">(Decroux 1978, p. 43)</div>

This kind of amplification, this projection, is not achieved by 'strutting about the stage'. There is no need to. In fact, based on the principles of Mime performance, I would argue that the less one moves, the more powerful it is, and the more one's Stage Presence is enhanced. The detail of what the audience sees, and therefore relates to, is enhanced by *conscious, selective* Movement - including those very busy hands.

So, if we indeed have all those bits at our disposal, we need, according to Decroux's keyboard analogy, to firstly identify them, then isolate them, and then control them.

Making music involves not only the communication of musical sounds but is also characterized by a continuously changing and meaningful use of facial expression, body movements, and hand gestures.

<div align="right">(Thompson, Graham & Russo 2005, p. 203)</div>

Eyes — Face — Chest — Right Hand — Left Hand — Right Knee — Right Foot — Microphone — Guitar — Left Knee — Left Foot

Body Bits – in Performance (audience p.o.v)

3.8   If it Moves, Control it (refer VODcast 19):

> *There's an expression that encapsulates the very fundamentals of Mime technique and that is, **if it moves, control it.** When you're performing a song, with a beat, it's perfectly natural for your foot to unconsciously tap along. But, in terms of involving your audience and enhancing your stage presence, and knowing what you're doing on stage, one of the best things you can do, challenging as it can be sometimes, is to make that unconscious movement, **conscious**. And then, selectively using and stylising that movement to enhance your audience involvement, communication, and ultimately, stage presence…*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 19 If it Moves…*

This is where Mime comes into the equation, into the picture, into the consciousness, and into the physicality of performance. This is where one may apply the kinds of skills and techniques used in Mime to enhance a performance in Music.   There is an expression I first heard uttered by Desmond Jones (1980) - my first Mime teacher in London - which encapsulates the very fundamentals of Mime technique: *'if it moves, control it'*. I would venture to go one step beyond this and suggest that, 'if it moves, control it' - and then *stylise it.*

As Kurosawa & Davidson note (2005, p. 114), 'when we observe music performance, we are receiving information that a performer may or may not intend'. Indeed we as performers have to make *all* of the 'information received' by the audience – musical, visual and physical - *intentional.*

When one is performing a song, with a beat, it is perfectly natural to *unconsciously* tap one's foot along with that beat. However in terms of involving the audience and enhancing one's stage control and presence, one of the best things one can do, challenging as it can sometimes be, is to make that unconscious movement *conscious*. And then selectively using and stylising that movement, to enhance audience involvement, communication, and ultimately, one's own stage presence.

It bears repeating: *'if it moves, control it' – intentionally*:

it seems that the generation and subsequent meaning of the movement behaviours of the performer are more or less consciously created for the onlooker (audience/co-performer), for social and musical ends.

<div align="right">(Davidson 2005, p. 216)</div>

So, if it is going to move, and one is going to control it – and indeed stylise it - the first task is to *identify* it. One needs to identify which body bits can do what, and then set about making those body bits work *for* the performance, rather than against it by being a distraction which undermines the performance. It comes down, in the words of Desmond Jones, to *'Awareness, Isolation* and *Control'.*

As Thompson, Graham & Russo (2005, p. 207) suggest, these movements must be:

> intentional aesthetic movements and gestures that serve to highlight, articulate, interpret, and clarify the music; that act to communicate emotion or personality; and that otherwise elicit specific interactions between performers and listeners. Whereas certain body movements are required in order to sing or play an instrument, others may function to encourage listeners to attend to certain dimensions of the music rather than others, to interpret those dimensions in specific ways, and to experience the event as a social interaction between performers and listeners.

Therefore, bearing in mind the influence that Mime technique can have in terms of selectively stylising movement to enhance performance, we need to first make ourselves *aware* of, then *isolate*, and finally, examine how we might *control* the movement and manipulation of those bits of the body - and the audience's perception – by starting at the top and working our way down.

In the words of Etienne Decroux:

> the head without the neck, the neck without the chest, the chest without the waist, the waist without the pelvis, the pelvis without the legs.

<div align="right">(Decroux 1978, p. 15)</div>

3.9   The Body – Bits and Pieces: (refer VODcasts 18; 20 - 27)

our anatomies and the instruments we play also have a critical role in shaping the musical outcome.

(Davidson 2005, p. 217)

3.9.1   The Face:

We generally assume that the Face is the most expressive part of our bodies. That may be true, or we think it is true just because the Face provides the most obvious manifestation of our feelings, emotions and expression. When some else is 'in your face' – eyeball to eyeball - we tend to know it. However, the face, whilst it is a significant part of the story, is just that, only part of the story. The expression of our very complex emotions actually involves the entire body, whether we are aware of that or not. The Face is one (very important) part of a much bigger and more complex, often only unconsciously recognised, picture:

because the body is made up of large parts…and the moment a large stick moves, everyone can see it. The face however is made of smaller units…we get pleasure from seeing the nuances played in the face, and the larger movements in the body.

(Decroux 1978, p. 34)

3.9.2   The Eyes:

The part of the face that we read most would surely have to be the Eyes – the 'windows of the soul'. Our eyes indeed express our innermost emotions. We can pull a face, we can fake a facial expression to some extent, but it is much more difficult to fake the expression in our eyes. The eyes tell others how we feel, where we are gazing, how far away our gaze is focussed, whether we are focussed on a specific object or just vaguely staring off into some indeterminate point, whether they are glazed over with boredom at someone's conversation, distant and detached, sparkling

with delight, deep and intense, or mesmerised by the beauty of someone or something. Our eyes reveal if we are passionately in love, filled with fear, afire with rage, awash with tears of sadness - or joy. Besides their fundamental function of allowing us to see where we are going, the eyes pretty well have it all in terms of depth, breadth and subtlety of expression.

However, during a performance our eyes can often be closed; '(B.B.) King frequently adopts an introspective demeanour, with eyes closed and a pained expression' (Thompson, et al. 2005, p. 207); in shadow due to stage down-lighting; or simply too far away for the audience to see, and yet the emotion of the performer and performance still comes through. How can this be if the eyes are so crucial?

The answer is the Chest.

3.9.3   The Chest (refer VODcast 27):

*Surprising as it might be to many people, Mime is actually not about the Face or the Hands, it's actually about this piece of body down here – the Chest. The Chest is the centre of everything in Mime. It shows emotion intention, attention, tension, relaxation, and it enhances your stage presence. Just because you walk across a stage, it doesn't necessarily follow that an audience is going to look at you for more than about 5 or 10 seconds. You have to **make** them look at you. And by adding a zing of tension to the Chest, it actually compels the audience to look at you…it defines, supports and enhances your stage presence. It makes you look more confident, and it makes you feel more confident.*

Transcript: *VODcast 27 The Chest*

Surprising as it will be to many, the Chest is actually the centre of our emotional expression – even/particularly when seen from a distance. Etienne Decroux (1985) describes 'precedence of the body over the face and arms', when he refers, in corporeal mime, to the 'hierarchy of the instruments of expression (being) as follows: *first the body, then the arms and hands, and last, the face*' (p. 68) (emphasis added).

In Mime, the Chest is the most important and fundamental part of the expressive body.

The Chest shows our direction, attention, intention, joy, anger, aggression, depression, tension, relaxation. In other words, pretty much the entire range of human emotions. The Chest also acts as the centre of impetus - from which all other movement emanates. The Chest is certainly the 'driver' of a Mime artist's performance. Whether creating a character; an illusion; simply moving across the stage; or expressing deep emotion, the Chest shows it all and is, largely unconsciously, read by the audience.

Given the Chest's fundamental, indeed crucially central role in Mime, it is not surprising that the Mime technique as developed and taught by 'the originator of modern mime', Etienne Decroux, and subsequently carried on by Decroux's students and international Mime exponents, such as Marcel Marceau, Jean-Louis Barrault, Desmond Jones, and their followers, involves, indeed demands, the *detailed articulation of the Chest*.

Britain's Desmond Jones - described in 1980 by the then Director of the London Mime Festival, Joseph Seelig, as one of Britain's leading authorities on the art of mime and analysis of movement, as well as a teacher and performer of international reputation - in describing Decroux's technique, concurs with and draws upon the words of Marcel Marceau, undoubtedly the world's most recognised and celebrated Mime artist:

> as Marceau has said, 'anyone who wants to perform mime must first learn the grammar of Etienne Decroux'…learn(ing) a sense of style and precision indispensable to the modern mime…the infinite subtlety the body is capable of.

> (Jones 1980, p. 2)

This 'grammar, precision, and infinite subtlety'; this expressive physical vocabulary, can be applied not just in the context of 'the modern mime', but is in my experience equally applicable beyond solely Mime performance to virtually any human performance context.

This physical control, subtlety and expression is substantially achieved through the articulation of the Chest through its '10 Movements'; which are in turn expressed

through and incorporated within the basic articulations of: **Rotation** (left & right), **Inclination** (left, right, forward, back) and **Translation** (left, right, forward, back).

These 10 movements of the Chest explore the 'endless possibilities…of line and dynamic quality… reduced to the essentials' (Leabhart 1982, p. 46), either individually or (usually) in combination, articulating the Chest in such a way as to enable it and therefore the body - and therefore the character - to clearly, concisely, and comprehensively convey to an audience the deepest inner emotions of that character - particularly from a distance. Through controlling and articulating the Chest it is possible for the performer to convey whatever character they want to convey – whether that is 'you' as a character in performance, or a *Stylised Version of You*[®] (Willems 2008, in press), of whatever 'you' the performer wishes to convey.

In order to effectively articulate the Chest through any and all of its 10 movements, the Chest has first to be isolated, 'separated' from the rest of the body - certainly from the waist to which it is immediately attached. Generally speaking, human beings do not separate their Chest from their Waist, however, in order to articulate the Chest it needs to be unencumbered by the Waist and therefore the two have to be both notionally and physically separated, as do the other major body parts. To reiterate, the process is, as described by Decroux (1978); 'the head without the neck, the neck without the chest, the chest without the waist, the waist without the pelvis, the pelvis without the legs' (p. 62). In the case of the Chest/Waist, this separation is achieved by lifting the Chest away from the Waist through selective muscular control (which includes the diaphragm), and then maintaining a degree of 'selective tension' in performance.

The other crucial role played by this selective tension in the Chest is that of supporting, defining, and enhancing stage presence:

> even when the speaking actor is not actually speaking he is physically present on the stage. There had to be an art, then, of standing and moving on the stage.

> (Decroux 1978, pp. 9-10)

Maintaining a certain amount of tension in the Chest actually attracts the audience's eye, and holds it. This is *Stage Presence*.

Just because someone walks onto a stage, it does not automatically follow that an audience is going to look at that person for more than about 10 seconds. As a

performer you have to *make* the audience look at you. Selectively using a combination of tension and relaxation, to add that indefinable 'zing' to the body, compels the audience look at the performer. Even if that performer is (apparently) doing nothing other than standing there, there is a sense of expectation, a 'latent energy', created by a certain amount of selective tension in the Chest.

The added bonus for the performer is that the enhancement of stage presence, in addition to making the audience concentrate on the performance, makes the performer themselves simply feel more confident. Because we as human beings manifest our basic emotions through our body-language, when we are depressed or intimidated our body/chest naturally and unconsciously collapses inwards. And when we are feeling positive and confident our body/chest naturally and unconsciously lifts and opens. The physical 'lift' created by the Chest's selective tension referred to above, tends to feed back through the performer and literally lifts the sense of confidence of the performer.

3.9.4   The Hands (refer VODcast 22):

> *…and that simple movement of the Hands, that splaying out of the fingers, reflects the sound that's coming off the guitar.*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 22 Detail – The Hands*

In (music) performance mode the Hands tend to be somewhat occupied playing the accompanying instrument. So, during the actual songs, there is a limit to what the Hands are capable of expressing. However I would argue that the hands play a crucial role in the visual aesthetics, not just the mechanics of playing the right chords and notes in the right place at the right time. When watching someone accompanying themselves on an instrument, it is useful to focus for a few moments purely on the detail of the movement of their hands and spidery fingers across the fretboard, keyboard, buttons, keys etc. It can be exquisitely beautiful - mesmerising.

In both my solo stage version and television adaptation of *'Romeo & Juliet'* - *'Son of Romeo'* (Willems 1984/1990), Shakespeare's entire Balcony Scene is performed using just two hands. Hands can be remarkably expressive if we so choose, and if we choreograph their non-playing movement. Yes, they are generally busy playing an instrument (and can indeed look beautiful just doing that), but in between songs they are free to explore a different kind of expression. Hands, apparently casually hanging over a guitar during banter with the audience, can 'casualise' the communication with that audience, in contrast to the Hands' formal role of playing notes. Through gesture (or stillness) Hands can enhance one's communication with the audience and even subtly indicate the end of a song (**refer VODcast 22**).

One should never underestimate the potential visual beauty, power and attractiveness of the Hands. They are there, they can be beautiful. We should make them beautiful by moving them, beautifully. This requires awareness.

3.9.5   The Knees/Legs (refer VODcast 20 & 21):

So let's have a look at how a 'sense' of bigger arrangement is created for the audience in the live, solo, performance context. The song 'Foolish' provides a really good example for this process…

Transcript: *VODcast 21 Example – 'Foolish'*

This is where we perhaps enter the realm of the 'you've-got-to-be-joking' part of this discussion. What can knees/legs possibly do in terms of communication - short of dancing across the stage?

It has to be acknowledged that when one is sitting on a stool playing a guitar there is a limit to how much the legs are able to move. But they can still move and can still add their own value to the communication between performer and audience. The degree to which one involves one's body – or how much of the body is involved – says a lot about both the

performer, and audience engagement, as well as supporting the music itself. A leg/knee tapping in conjunction with a foot (refer below), when one's hands and body are constrained by the demands of playing an instrument, indicates the degree of beat of the song. This can help to engage the audience in the song and its performance, and enhance the sense of a 'bigger arrangement' in the solo acoustic performance context.

The significant point about this is the *consciousness* brought to bear in determining the size and scale, the degree of 'big-ness' of the arrangement one wants to convey, reflected by a commensurate level of physical involvement.

3.9.6   The Feet: (refer VODcast 20):

*Feet…can be incidental things or they can be very useful things. When we're playing we tend to unconsciously tap our feet, but if you make that a **conscious** thing then you can actually use it to enhance the arrangement, or the sense of bigger arrangement, or the sense of getting the audience involved… Small details like a foot or a knee…become amplified…in the context of a big concert with fifteen people on stage, no-one is going to notice a foot tapping. But when you're on your own on stage, and playing, and it's the only thing that's moving, that's the kind of thing that people are going to notice. It's the **selective** movement you apply to the performance.*

Transcript: *VODcast 20 Selective Movement - Feet*

In music theatre there is an unwritten rule that the singers or performers do not tap their foot to the beat of the music. Yes, of course, if it is part of the choreography of a song-and-dance number it becomes a conscious, deliberate part of the choreographed performance. But any *un*conscious tapping of the feet while singing/acting destroys the illusion that the song is meant to be 'stylised dialogue', rather than a song as such.

Not unlike seeing the camera shadow or microphone boom in frame on television, or seeing the strings of a puppet, our disbelief is no longer suspended when we are aware of the mechanics of the art.

Of course, it is perfectly natural to tap one's foot to music, even (or especially) while performing, but rather than it being *un*conscious, by making it a conscious, choreographed element of the performance, it is possible to be much more in control of what the audience is seeing; how much we involve them; and how we define the nature of the song we are performing. In subscribing to the principle of 'stillness being much more powerful than movement' on stage - particularly in solo performance – the relatively small detail of a tapping foot is visually amplified and hence becomes a much more significant element in both visual and beat terms than merely an unconsciously beat-tapping foot, in the engagement of the performer and the audience with the music: 'One needs amplification. One needs something that projects'. (Decroux 1978, p. 43)

So, once again, there is a consciousness brought to bear in analysing, isolating, controlling and ultimately, stylising, this seemingly trivial physical detail.

3.10   The 'Package': Putting It Back Together: (refer VODcast 25):

*…much of tonight for me is about not **just** the music, it's about how I'm relating to the audience. It's the non-musical aspects of musical performance, as much as it is about the music. So I'm very conscious of the physicality of how I present in between songs, and during songs as well. How I can better relate to the audience through that physicality; through the banter; the physicality; establishing the relationship with the audience. It's really trying to define the whole Package… tonight is about defining 'The Package' of who Chris Willems is as a **musical** performer, as distinct from a **mime artist** performer…so there's going to be an awful lot to think about – throughout the performance.*

Transcript: *VODcast 25 Pre-Performance 07*

Having separated out the body bits as above, the task is then to reassemble those bits in order to create a conscious, cohesive, choreographed 'Package', where the music performer is in control of that most crucial of instruments - their own physicality -

Decroux's 'human body as a keyboard', through which we can always isolate one note from another.

So, we have arrived at the point where the 'consciousness' applied to the physical aspects and movement, needs to be reincorporated into the deeper inner reaches of the performer, in the performance context.

We have been through the various stages as noted by Reid (2002, pp104-105), citing psychologists, Fitts and Posner, who 'suggested that the acquisition of a skill occurs in three stages:

(1) the *cognitive stage*, an initial phase when conscious attention is required.
(2) the *associative stage*, characterised by refinement of the activity and elimination of errors
(3) the *autonomous stage*, where the skill no longer requires conscious attention as it has become automatic'

Thus by putting that physicality back together and articulating the 'bits' clearly, coherently, and cohesively, we hopefully arrive at the point of 'the whole being greater than the sum of the parts'. In terms of who and what we present to the audience. Putting that cohesive, coherent, choreographed physicality together, with the technical proficiency required to play the instrument and the use of the voice, we are some way towards creating our own uniquely individual 'Package'. Subsequently testing that 'package' in performance provides the opportunity for the performer to then (Reid 2002, p. 110), 'monitor their own actions in order to assess the effectiveness of their practice techniques', once again applying a certain level of consciousness to this monitoring process, such that necessary adjustments may be identified and applied to the 'choreography' of their performance.

And, as Rink (2002, p. 56) states, ultimately:

> The success of a performance will be measured by oneself and one's audience not so much by its analytical rigour, historical fidelity or even technical accuracy (at least in some circles) as by the degree to which 'resonance' is achieved in drawing together the constituent elements into something greater than the sum of those parts, into a musically cogent and coherent synthesis…Projecting 'the music' is what matters most, and all the rest is but a means to an end

In addition to choreographing and controlling the physical aspects of the performance, the consciousness brought to bear in choreographing the body's movement and presence, brings with it the beneficial side-effect of moderating that significant threat to performance enjoyment and quality - performance anxiety.

3.11   Performance Anxiety (refer VODcast 29):

So, you get nervous before a performance…well, welcome to the human race.

Performance Anxiety is a reality, even for very experienced performers. But when you consider the research that shows that public performance invokes the same physiological reaction as meeting a tiger, it's not that surprising really. So what can you do about it? Well, in my experience, the very worst thing you can do about it is, a) assume that you shouldn't be nervous before a performance, and then, b) give yourself a hard time when you inevitably are nervous.

By accepting the fact that you'll be nervous, that in itself actually lessens the degree of performance anxiety that you'll experience. Beyond that, there's various relaxation techniques that you can try like meditation etc. – different things work for different people, so do some research and find out what works best for you.

But, having said that – paradoxically - you don't want to stop your performance anxiety too much. You want to have some degree of nerves, because what that does is it energises your performance. In fact there's a very experienced British actress who refers to nerves as 'the batteries of performance'. Some degree of nerves gives your performance that spark, that 'zing', that 'edge' – indeed, that Presence

Transcript: *VODcast 29 Performance Anxiety*

Performance anxiety is a very common problem with performers – even very experienced ones. Indeed, some of the *most* experienced ones:

Andrew Denton: …you mentioned this new show that you say you dread. What do you dread?

Barry Humphries: Stage fright. You know, I think a lot of people think that we are nerveless people in the theatre; that we don't feel that kind of terror which traditionally

anyone who has to do any public speaking feels. It's meant to be one of the great fears, isn't it? People have nightmares about having to give speeches in public. It's worse for actors, because our livelihood depends on it. You see *(to audience),* your's doesn't. You can make a fool of yourself, if necessary. And so can I, and so I will! But…it's just the terrible… butterflies, you know. It is that anxiety.

('Enough Rope' 26 May 2003)

One musician whom I have coached in an effort to minimise their performance anxiety (refer Case Study below), whose virtuosity I would consider puts them amongst the top 5-10% of exponents of their particular instruments in the world, is, despite their widely acknowledged and unquestioned skill, so seriously afflicted by performance anxiety that they rarely perform in public. I consider this close to criminal.

But, given that according to Miller (2002), public performance 'often produces the same degree of emotional panic as meeting a tiger' (accessed: 29/11/2007), is this really all that surprising?

There are, as Miller further notes, 'few activities that can produce tension and anxiety as quickly and as thoroughly as performing in public'. A view supported by Leisner (1995) whose succinctly articulated view not only concurs, but quite correctly applies it to the wider human population by making the point that 'performance anxiety affects almost everyone, from the beginner to the most seasoned professional. It is truly remarkable what paranoid ingenuity most of us generate during performance in order to defeat ourselves' (accessed: 29/11/2007).

The notion of 'defeating ourselves', rather than someone or something external defeating us, is a very powerful one indeed. In my experience as both a performer and a performance coach, I have observed and indeed lived the destructive effect of negative thoughts creeping into one's performance consciousness; before, during and even after the performance. As performers we become, when the 'overload of Adrenalin…enters the bloodstream' (Miller 2002), hyper-sensitive: to criticism (self and others); technical/performance errors; minor distractions; physical irritations, and self-doubts etc., and whilst we are all individual human beings and therefore individual performers and we each manifest our performance anxiety in individual ways, there are certainly some classic symptoms common to most performers.

In general terms, as Miller's (2002) research indicates, we experience:

> Feelings of fear and apprehension…accompanied by increased and prolonged physiological arousal. Severe anxiety is where the arousal is too high for optimal performance. This arousal may be normal and temporary, or abnormal and long lasting and symptoms can be cognitive, behavioural and physiological.

> (Miller 2002, http://www.mostlywind.co.uk/performance_anxiety.html
> Accessed 29/11/2007)

In more specific terms, under these broad categories of cognitive, behavioural and physiological symptoms, there are the obvious manifestations of performance anxiety which most of us have experienced at some time:

> Physiological reactions…include difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite, increased heart rate, and shortness of breath, dizziness, butterflies, shaking knees, shaking hands and sweaty palms …and these physiological reactions interfere with performing by making it difficult to control finger actions and breathing. Cognitive symptoms of anxiety include fear of making mistakes and feelings of inadequacy and worrying about things happening. Behavioural symptoms are not being able to do things, which normally happen naturally.

> (Miller 2002, http://www.mostlywind.co.uk/performance_anxiety.html
> Accessed 29/11/2007)

One of the not so obvious symptoms of performance anxiety is inadvertently speeding up one's performance. In this context, Clarke (2002, p. 61) argues that, 'the stability (or otherwise) of the higher-level tempo shape can be...directly attributed to the stability of the performer's representation of the music: a performer with a clear and definite conception of a piece of music, and the requisite technical skills, is more likely to play it in a controlled and reproducible manner'. However this does not take into account the negative effects of performance anxiety.

Not only might the songs themselves be played too fast, but indeed one's entire performance might similarly be too fast; including the banter with the audience. The often fumbling, mumbling speediness and not allowing the performance to 'settle' in between songs, can have a negative effect on the perceptions of the audience so that even the audience themselves may become somewhat anxious at the performer's discernible anxiety and discomfort.

The tempo in performance may feel perfectly fine at the time, but with 'fight or flight' adrenaline coursing through one's body, the speed which feels perfectly normal at the time, turns out when heard on a recording playback, to be much faster than it should be or that the song can comfortably sustain. As well as having a negative effect aesthetically, playing too fast simply makes the music more difficult to play technically,

as the fingers have to move that much faster than the music either needs to be, or than the tempo rehearsed. This in itself can inevitably create technical errors which in turn promote anxiety. So, in our already hypersensitive performance state, an exponentially spiralling cycle of anxiety is created.

What can be done?

In my experience, the very *worst* thing a performer can do is, a) assume that they should not be nervous before a performance, and then, b) give themselves a hard time when they inevitably *are* nervous. There is no point in trying to 'not be nervous'. By simply accepting the fact that one is going to be nervous – to some degree or other – one's level of performance anxiety may already be reduced and/or redirected. As Valentine (2002, pp. 176-177) notes, 'it is therapeutically beneficial to accept anxiety as a natural element of performance and to use the consequent tension to mobilise one's preparation…for instance shifting attention from the anxiety to the task'.

In technical terms, there are any number of relaxation and other techniques such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, meditation, acupuncture, etc., which have been applied to the problem of performance anxiety – some more successfully than others. Medication is generally an undesirable option due to possible performance-threatening side-effects such as 'impair(ed) function and judgement' (Valentine 2002, pp. 174-175), and which also of course 'can be addictive if taken habitually'. Whilst there is some conflict of opinion as to the most appropriate treatment for performance anxiety, what is clear from the research is that different techniques work for different people and different performance situations.

However, whichever technique works best for whichever individual, paradoxically, *performers should not attempt to reduce their nervous energy too much*.

Nerves give an 'edge' to performance. Provided the anxiety is not overwhelming, experiencing some degree of nerves has the positive effect of energising the performance. Indeed, one of the most experienced and internationally acclaimed performers, Dame Judi Dench, in a backstage television interview once referred to pre-performance nerves as the 'batteries of performance'. Anecdotal this may be, however it is confirmed in hard research terms by prominent music/psychology researcher, Elizabeth Valentine (2002) who suggests that, 'a certain amount of anxiety is normal and indeed beneficial, turning a dull performance into a lively and exciting one' (p.

178). And, interestingly, the research also demonstrated that 'anxiety facilitated performance more for those with a greater degree of task mastery'. This suggests that those musicians whose technical skill and preparation levels were greater, benefited most from the positive effects of performance anxiety.

In my own 30 year performance experience I know that on the rare occasions that I was *not* nervous prior to a performance, I would become very concerned, knowing that I would have to work essentially twice as hard to achieve engagement with both the performance material and the audience. Nerves provide for the performer, and their performance; that spark, that 'zing' that 'edge' – indeed, that Presence.

This view about the positive effects of some level of anxiety, is supported by Miller (2002) whose research indicates that:

> Many researchers (e.g. Hamann & Sobaje 1983) believe that far from being a negative influence, 'State' anxiety (When a person's anxiety levels are affected by a situation) *has motivational and drive properties that are of benefit to performance.* Kemp (1996) also thinks anxiety can be motivational. Arousal can be enhanced by anxiety and therefore heightens the degrees of sensitivity and imagination. *In other words, a small amount of anxiety is not only normal but also it is helpful and necessary to perform tasks more efficiently.* Hamann and Sobaje (1983) showed that levels of 'state' *anxiety could actually assist a performance.* Clearly this correlates with research (Steptoe 1989 and Hallam 1998) and the Yerkes-Dodson law (Eysenck 1998)… (emphasis added)

> (Miller 2002, http://www.mostlywind.co.uk/performance_anxiety.html
> Accessed 29/11/2007)

This view is also supported by Leisner (1995) who, in his *'Six Golden Rules of Conquering Performance Anxiety'*, encourages performers to celebrate anxiety's positive influence on their performance and to 'let the adrenaline and your genuine lively passion for the music come through'. Further support for the notion of maintaining some level of performance anxiety is, perhaps surprisingly, to be found in the work of Lin, Chang, Zermon & Midlarsky (2007), in their study on the effect of Chan (Zen) Meditation on Performance Anxiety and Performance Quality, concluding that:

> The meditation group, however, seemed to benefit…in that performance quality actually increased with increases in reported performance anxiety levels. Perhaps the anxiety scores reflect awareness of internal (physiological) states that are typically associated with anxious feelings.

> (Lin, et al. 2007. p. 10)

Assuming that one can control the nerves to some extent and that one is not 'crippled by fear', there are ways of utilising nerves to one's advantage. There are also ways of

reducing to an acceptable degree, and masking performance anxiety, by utilising the techniques described below.

In the first instance, at the risk of 'stating the bleeding obvious', one of the best ways of reducing performance anxiety, whether in a performance or a presentation, is to be prepared. It is quite astounding how many people step onto a stage for a performance or presentation under-prepared. 'Bleeding obvious' though it may indeed be, sufficient preparation and rehearsal are amongst the best ways of reducing performance anxiety.

Another crucial aspect of that preparation and rehearsal, beyond just preparation and rehearsal of the material itself and hence reducing performance anxiety, lies in discovering and exploiting ways in which to 'take command of the space'.

3.12   Taking Command of the Space (refer VODcast 28):

*Whatever performing circumstances you find yourself in, whether it's a performance as such, or some other kind of public presentation, one of the most fundamental things you need to do is to 'take command of the space' – both the internal mental space and the external physical space. You need to create yourself an environment, a performance environment, that's beyond just comfortable, but actually feels safe and protected. By taking command of the space, that allows **you** to be in control, and being in control is one of the best ways I know of keeping a lid on performance anxiety…*

Transcript: *VODcast 28 Taking Command of the Space*

Whether one is presenting a performance as such, or some other kind of public presentation, one of the most fundamental aspects of being in control of that performance, is to 'Take Command of the Space'; both the internal mental space, and the external physical space.

What this means is that the performer creates a performance/presentation space which is so familiar to that performer that it goes beyond just comfortable, and indeed provides an inner (mental), and outer (physical) environment within which the performer feels, literally, safe and protected. The performer belongs there. It is safe, it

is familiar, it is a place where that performer truly 'belongs'. It is a place where that performer can feel confident. The fundamental purpose of rehearsal is not just to 'practice the songs', but equally, to practice 'being in the performance'. And ideally, in the actual performance space, so that one becomes familiar, comfortable, and confident with both.

'Taking Command of the Space' helps the performer be in control, and being in control, means, by default, that the level of performance anxiety is reduced.

By way of Case Study, one particular musician with whom I worked and applied several of the 'non-musical aspects of performance' principles outlined in this discussion, is the abovementioned virtuosic guitarist. With a repertoire consisting largely of instrumental pieces, but which also included the occasional vocal piece, the conscious use and manipulation of elements such as the performance space, the setup, the stage layout/design, and also props such as the microphone/stand, became significant choreographic non-musical features – not just during, but between pieces - which assisted in decreasing performance anxiety and increasing stage control and presence.

In terms of detail, some of those non-musical areas of focus were:

- **performance anxiety:** moderating performance anxiety by controlling the environment around the actual music (refer *Taking Command of the Space* discussion above) – e.g. deliberately taking more time than was strictly necessary to set up; setting up at a measured, deliberate, pace, and making the audience wait a fraction longer in order to establish himself in the space before commencing playing. Literally taking control of the time and not rushing and getting flustered, thus reducing anxiety

- **approach to the performance position:** the performer's physical approach to the performance position and applying a level of 'choreography' to that moment of maximum anxiety. A level of conscious choreography was applied to this with the intention of both reducing performer anxiety and simultaneously building a positive sense of anticipation in the audience

- **performance position & presence:** having been used to standing to play and being subject to a degree of unconscious and distracting 'jiggling about', we

introduced a tallish stool upon which to sit and play. This assisted in keeping the performer more still and centred, so as to both help control the performance environment and also enhance stage presence (stillness being more powerful than movement)

- **between-song 'banter':** rehearsing some of the between-song 'banter', rather than doing all of it spontaneously. This afforded a little more control and less rushing during guitar re-tunings etc., also enhanced and reinforced the positive performer/audience relationship and reduced anxiety

- **props (microphone/stand):** we experimented with offset placement (to one side and slightly behind) of the microphone stand so that the player could swing the microphone out of the way when not actually using it for vocal pieces. This meant not only that the musician was not 'hiding' behind the visual barrier of the microphone/stand for security, but in 'opening out' to the audience by swinging the microphone stand out of the way, it had the visual effect of a gate being opened to literally 'invite' the audience in for the instrumental pieces – welcoming them into the performance and at the same time removing a visual barrier, thus allowing them an uninterrupted view of virtuosic fingers performing their virtuosic fretboard magic

The above are but a few examples of the kind of analysis and consciousness one is able to bring to bear upon the performance situation to enhance both the performer and audience experience – in this case a solo guitarist/vocalist. There are any number of other elements which may be applicable in other performer/performance circumstances, and while general principles may be applied, each of those circumstances will to some extent be utterly unique, simply by virtue of: who the performer is; their *internal* mental space, and their *external* physical/performance space.

Working with Christiaan was a real eye opener. As a seasoned (jaded) back-line ensemble performer I had always felt comfortably invisible in my working environment, the focal point on stage always being the personable 'front' behind whom I worked fairly anonymously. Embarking on a path of solo performance suddenly threw me 'up in one', a place of no shadows. For me it was a totally new and largely uncomfortable experience. Through Christiaan's observation and analysis we were able to identify several areas of my presentation and performance that were hindering ease of communication and causing discomfort on both sides of the footlights. Though most of the 'corrections' suggested and implemented were subtle, they have translated into profound changes in my focus and confidence.

(Client/musician email communication 26/03/2009)

3.13   The Internal Space (refer VODcast 29; 30):

> *The internal mental space… can be filled up with a cocktail of rational and irrational fears of catastrophic failure due to a number of factors, including; lack of preparation, unrealistic expectations of one's own performance, technical errors in playing, whatever. So what I try to do is…to create a 'bubble of concentration' that's safe and secure. It's an internal space that's filled up with the details of the performance. So this goes beyond rehearsing just the technical details of the performance - beyond just where the fingers are, and what the voice is doing. It goes into rehearsing being 'in control'. You can actually rehearse being 'in control' – even if you're not. You can create the perception that you are, and pretty soon you probably will be.*
>
> *So the first thing you need to do is to know your material really well. It sounds like 'stating the bleedin obvious', but rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. You need to know your material really well so you've got some brain space to concentrate on the other aspects of your performance… Rehearse until you're sick of hearing yourself, because…the first time you perform the material should never be the first time you perform the material…*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 30 The Internal Space*

Knowing one's material as well as one possibly can is crucial, and it is surprisingly easy to lose sight of that fact. What feels 'comfortable and easy' in rehearsal, can suddenly feel terrifyingly under-prepared, upon stepping out in front of an audience.

In my experience, both as a performer myself and in coaching other performers, the best preparation is to rehearse until one is sick of hearing oneself. Over-rehearse, so that the material is almost 'playing itself'. This frees up at least some of one's consciousness, allowing the performer to allocate some percentage of their concentration to the non-musical aspects of the performance.   Over-rehearsing allows one the freedom to explore beyond just the technical details and into the character, personality, and nuance of the performance itself. Whilst you as the performer might be bored stiff with over-rehearsal, the crucial thing to remember is that it may well be the first time your audience has ever seen or heard you and/or your material. As Davidson (2005) states, 'Having the skill to play automatically, and also the potential to focus consciously on detail if necessary is a desired state of mastery' (p. 217).

We rarely experience nerves in rehearsal, so it is easy to assume that 'it'll be right on the night'. It rarely is. The reality of having many pairs of eyes drilling into us and having adrenaline coursing through our bodies in performance is what makes performance so vastly different from rehearsal. We invariably find ourselves in an unfamiliar environment, with a different 'feel' around us and all those people and their expectations (real or imagined), compounded by our own expectations (realistic or unrealistic). Everything is different. 'Some distraction, usually minor, occurs, and we become less and less able to concentrate. The results are nervousness, memory lapses, technical errors and general discomfort with and, ultimately, fear of performing' (Leisner 1995). This is precisely why we have to reduce as many variables as possible, and rehearse until we are sick of hearing ourselves.

It may well be the first time for the audience, but for the performer, the first time they perform the material, 'should *never* be the first time they perform the material'.

When actors and dancers rehearse they will invariably do several Dress Rehearsals, in the actual performance space, prior to the opening performance, precisely so that their bodies, minds (conscious and unconscious) and perceptions, are as familiar as possible not only with their dialogue and movement, but equally with the detailed topography of their physical environment: the feel of the floor under their feet; the weight, fall and flow of their costume; the texture and substance of their props; the focussed heat and distracting blindness of the stage lighting. The only ingredient missing is the audience. Through repeated Dress Rehearsals performers 'reduce their variables'. They conduct, 'a mental and physical preparation which aims to control or optimise arousal' (Davidson 2001, p. 237).

It is thus that seasoned performers will fill up their internal (mental) space with the fine details of not only the performance content itself, but also the peripheral minutiae of the performance environment. They will utilise, to their advantage, that 'overload of Adrenalin (in) the bloodstream' (Miller 2002), that hyper-sensitivity referred to earlier, to form their own personal 'Bubble of Concentration', filled with the most minute detail; physical, mental, environmental and observational, required to not just get them through the performance, but indeed to energise, vitalise, and bring that indefinable 'zing' and spark of life to the performance. This is the very energy and vitality which *compels* the audience to look, not just observe - which transfixes them.

3.14   The External Space (refer VODcast: 29; 31):

(refer Workbook: *'The Stylised Version of You'* [®] by C. Willems, 2008, in press):

> *When you arrive at a performance venue it's highly likely that it's going to be unfamiliar to you…especially if you're touring this is an issue. In every town, every venue and every stage is different. Every day. So what you need to do is to try and create a space for yourself where you can 'reduce your variables'. And by that I mean that you have familiar things in familiar places…in music performance terms it's a good thing to look at that and try to create a…space that's safe and familiar to you, because then you're in control, and if you're in control that helps performance confidence… Any performer can do this, it's not brain surgery…*
>
> Transcript: *VODcast 31 The External Space*

As noted above, one of the best ways to reduce one's performance anxiety is to 'reduce your variables'. What this means is that by surrounding oneself with the familiar in terms of the space one occupies, the props, instruments, amplifiers etc., the performance environment carries fewer unpredictable elements and therefore fewer distractions - and therefore, fewer things to potentially 'go wrong'.

Of course some of one's performance elements will inevitably be the same in terms of the instrument one plays, the amplifiers one plugs into etc. However, in an unfamiliar venue there are always differences from what one is used to; the physical environment, the space immediately surrounding the performer, the shape and size, the distance from the audience, the acoustics, the overall 'feel'.

Therefore, one of the first things necessary to create a safe and familiar performance environment, is to set one's physical parameters.

3.14.1   Setting Your Physical Parameters:

One of the things one does have some control over as a performer/presenter is the physical space one uses, even within an unfamiliar venue. Even though one might have been invited to perform/present in someone else's venue and therefore have little or no control over the details of how the venue is set up in overall terms, there are things that one can request and/or do for oneself which make life as a performer in that venue a little more under control.

As a touring Mime Artist some years ago I designed myself a simple Set which, whilst it was stylistically minimal, used to not only transform each space visually, but also provide me with a predictable, secure, performance environment.

This Set comprised a series of neutral background Screens, a Laundry Basket, and a Wooden Box. The Screens and other elements were always in precisely the same layout relative to each other and I therefore knew precisely how many steps it took to get from one point to another throughout my performance, even with my eyes closed. Not only did that create a familiar space for me, the performer, but the background Screens also neutralised any background distractions for the audience, thereby transforming the space. So, not only did I know that every audience was getting the same uncluttered visual stage picture that every other audience was getting, I also knew that the neutral background Screens were supporting the audience's focus on myself and my performance. Thus, I had simultaneously both enhanced my visual presence, and provided myself with the security and predictability of a familiar physical performance environment.

More recently I have applied the same principles to my Music performance environment and have designed a simple, tourable, layout which:

- is familiar and safe for me as the performer - whatever the venue
- is one of which I am in control
- looks reasonably attractive for the audience
- directs and supports the audience's focus
- enhances my stage presence
- can be quickly and easily bumped in/out

Whilst as a performer/presenter it is not *always* possible to carry a Set around, what *can* readily be done is to determine, set up, and be in control of, the physical parameters within the venue – whatever venue it might be.

With a little thought, any performer can do this. It is, as they say, not brain surgery.
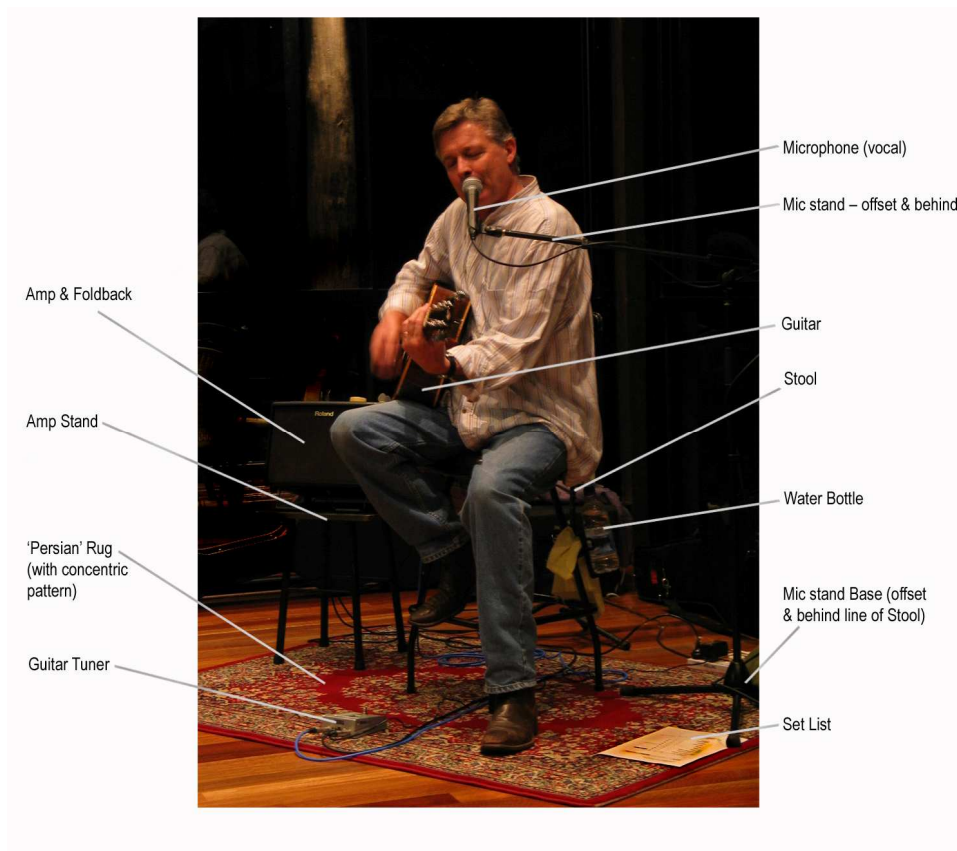
Stage Set-Up - in Performance (audience p.o.v)

3.14.2 Designing Your Space (refer VODcast: 32):

You don't have to be a qualified Set Designer to create a good, useful performance space for yourself. There's just some basic principles that are useful to follow. By way of Case Study, here around me is my own performance space. I've created this specifically for my particular circumstances…I've made conscious and deliberate choices about every aspect of this…I know where everything is, I can reach anything - even with my eyes closed…

So, it's familiar, it's safe, it's not unattractive, it focuses the audience's attention on my performance and my music, and that's what good design is all about.

Transcript: *VODcast 32 Designing the Space*
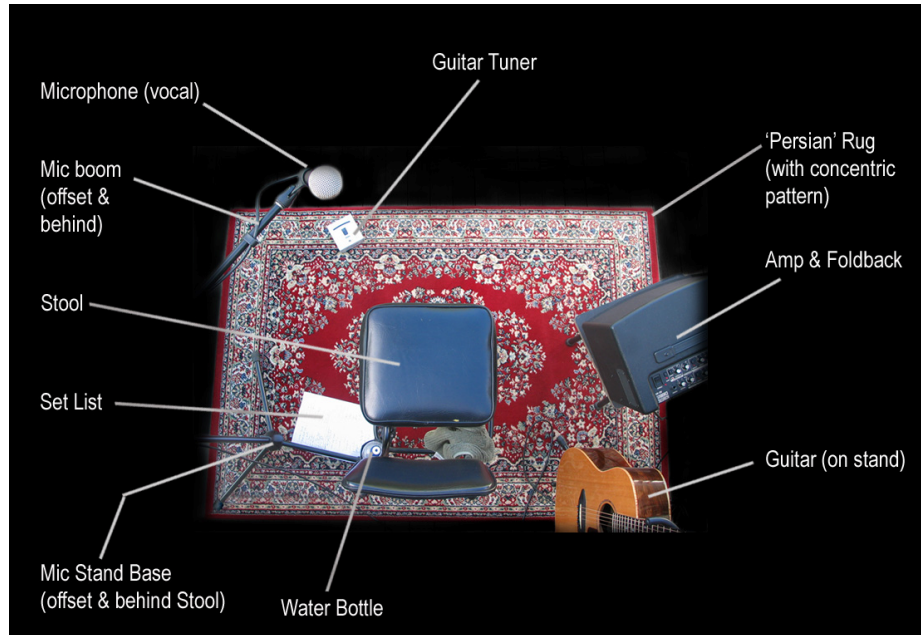
Plan View of CW Stage Pre-Set (performer p.o.v)

3.14.3   Reducing Your Variables – Physical:

By setting one's physical parameters one thus 'reduces the variables'. What this means is that one surrounds one's immediate self with familiar things in familiar places, and as a result, reduce the number of unpleasant surprises one might potentially be confronted with - each of which undermines one's performance confidence and therefore one's performance/presentation as a whole.

As a Music performer one obviously has (or should have) fundamental equipment; instruments and amplifier etc., in virtually the same place every time. But even small variations in placement can be distracting, throw concentration, and undermine confidence and performance. One has to stand or sit somewhere and sing into a microphone, so one has control over not only where that is on the stage, but also how the microphone stand is set up. For instance, is it directly in front, or off to one side? Is the microphone pointing slightly upwards or is it horizontal? All these tiny details, and being in control of them, influence one's performance confidence, stage presence, and audience perception.

3.14.4   Reducing Your Variables – Banter:

In addition to setting one's physical parameters to reduce one's variables, between-song-banter presents yet another opportunity to reduce those variables. Banter has the capacity to either support the perception of one's professionalism in performance or, by contrast, reduce that perception to a 'bunch of amateurs'; even for long-standing, utterly professional, virtuosic musicians. As Jon Anderson ironically confesses; 'here we are, 35 years and still trying to get it together' (*Yes Acoustic* 2004).

As discussed previously, not only does this 'rehearsed spontaneity' enhance one's audience communication, but it also tends to be an excellent technique for, if not overcoming, then at least *moderating* performance anxiety. The performer is then in much greater control of the (apparently) spontaneous and informal communication with the audience and is, as a consequence, also in control of how that audience perceives that performer as the person, either side of the song - as distinct from the person or character *within* and through the song. *(refer VODcast 30)*:

3.14.5 Banter: Case Study – 'Siam'

By way of Case Study, one response from a particular Listening Forum participant to the song *'Siam'* during the 'Blind Collaboration' *'Once in a While'* album recording/mixing process (refer Section 1 above), refers to the perceived obscurity of the lyrics (Cullen 2007), where 'the wordplay is intriguing and the setting sinuous. A mood piece, the point of which is not immediately clear (and which causes the brain to wonder and wander)'.

It was partly these comments which prompted me to actively write, expand upon, clarify, and formally rehearse the introduction to this song - telling more of the story which up to this point had consisted of the indeed quite obscure sentence along the lines of, 'Thailand used to be known as Siam many years ago, and as such was a very significant place for a great number of people, including my parents' (Willems 2006). However with the realisation that the song's lyrics were indeed probably too obscure for the audience to pick up on, as part of my conscious and deliberate decision to relate more closely and directly to an audience, and at the same time control my performance anxiety, I expanded upon the content of the story behind the song, writing a 'script' which I could memorise and rehearse - in the truest sense:

> This song tells of the journey of my parents, from their meeting in Indonesia prior to WWII, their incarceration as POW's under the Japanese, and their subsequent re-meeting at the end of the war, marriage in Siam (now Thailand), and eventual emigration to Australia.

> (Willems 2007, p. 18)

In the spirit of 'storytelling', and using a similar underlying rationale to that expressed in concert by Missy Higgins (2007), I thus not only expanded the story and placed the lyrics into a better defined context for the audience, but by scripting, rehearsing and consciously pacing the song's introduction, I also simultaneously added to that sense of control of the stage. Communicating with the audience in a controlled manner, contributes positively to performance confidence, hence reducing performance anxiety and, as a consequence, enhances stage presence.

3.15   Performance Repetition - the case for 'Case Hardening':

A key feature of musical practice is to ensure that the playing activity and the piece being learned become so well established in thought and motor activity that the player is more mentally 'free' to deal with the 'in the moment' aspects of problem-solving during a performance.

(Davidson 2005, p. 217)

Ultimately, the most effective way of 'reducing your variables' is by becoming so familiar with both the performance material and environment (internal and external) that it becomes one's new 'normal'; reducing performance anxiety through consistent, regular and repeated performance. One can rehearse until one is almost on auto-pilot and indeed 'sick of hearing oneself', but ultimately, there is no substitute for actual performance, in an actual performance venue, in front of an actual audience – *repeatedly*.   Nothing gives one that 'edge' like performance; live, real, terrifying, gratifying, satisfying, public performance.

Even though every audience is different, and unpredictably so, performance - especially consistently repeated performance - exposes the performer simultaneously to the fun, terror, and sense of achievement of getting the work out there in front of an audience, doing it well (hopefully), and gradually building up experience and therefore increasing ease about and resistance to the 'slings-and-arrows' of a critical (real or imagined) audience. In addition to, and beyond rehearsal and preparation, by far the best way to overcome performance anxiety is to perform as often as possible. Performance repetition provides something to which may be applied an appropriate and useful analogy from, perhaps surprisingly, the field of Engineering. There is a metallurgical process known as 'Case Hardening'; of chemically treating with carbon, furnace heating, and then quenching the metal, in order to harden the outer layer, whilst preserving the softer more malleable interior - described as follows:

The steel is heated to red heat…removed from the brazing hearth…and plunged into case hardening compound…the inner core is left untouched and so still (retains) properties such as flexibility and is still relatively soft…The steel…should now have a hardened outer surface and a flexible, soft interior. *The process can be repeated to increase the depth of the hardened surface*. (emphasis added)

(Ryan 2005, World Association of Technology Teachers
http://www.technologystudent.com/equip1/heat2.htm, Accessed 11/03/2009)

So, not unlike the gradual desensitising processes of cognitive-behaviour therapy, by *repeatedly* exposing ourselves to the 'red heat' of public performance and plunging ourselves into the quenching pool of performance 'survival', our resilience gradually (often imperceptibly) builds up until we find ourselves, ideally, maintaining that soft inner core of the sensitive artist, whilst simultaneously developing the hardness and resilience - or the impact resistance - of our outer emotional skin.

Artists have always lived with this strange kind of juxtaposition: the capacity to balance hardness with softness; sensitivity with resilience; achievement with failure; rejection with encouragement; fun with terror; crippling performance anxiety with the deep-seated, elemental, burning desire to perform.

Ultimately, artists do what they do because of a passionate desire to do it. Artists are driven, not always by the rational, but by an innate 'desperate desire to prove (one)self' (Bogarde 1978, p. 151). This is a desire which underpins the work of many significant artists; the need to find personal gratification in creating the work, developing that work to the artist's own satisfaction, and ultimately to show it off. But no matter how passionate the artist's need for such gratification, for cathartic expression, they must also develop the skill of communicating this catharsis through their work to others - beyond just themselves and their own gratification.

But if artists do indeed, 'fundamentally do it for themselves' (Willems & Hughes-Lucas 2004), then why bother about communicating with an audience?

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION:

4.1 Why Should We Bother?:

Why indeed should we bother about between-song-banter? Why should we bother about performance physicality? Why should we bother about visuals? Why should we bother about communicating with the audience at all? Why indeed should the art not 'speak for itself'?

When we have artists of the international calibre, experience and success of a Van Morrison having 'done very nicely thank you' without ever really bothering to contact the audience at all - indeed letting his art well and truly speak for itself - one might ask the question, well what's the point?

In my view it comes down to a fundamental humanity; a humanity which helps to 'personalize' the music. A humanity which, 'drawing performers and listeners together in a shared experience…an embodied, personal experience' (Thompson, et.al. 2005, pp. 204-205), creates that shared human experience which is capable of touching deep emotions, eliciting pleasure, tears, and enjoyment. Kurosawa & Davidson (2005, p. 113) similarly, state that:

> part of the pleasure of the music is in the individual character of how the performer's voice/sound is produced and presented as a 'personality within a body' (Frith 1996, p. 208)…it is experienced most strongly when the performer can be seen…and *the audience communicative process itself can have a powerful role in determining the performance and musical product'* (emphasis added).

However, apart from the art, and the humanity, there is another compelling reason to communicate with the audience. Notwithstanding the demonstrated success, both artistic and (presumably) financial, of the Van Morrisons of the world, very few artists, of whatever persuasion, meet with the kind of scale of commercial success with which we associate those comparative few, high profile, internationally recognised artists. However passionate and committed we might be as artists in creating great artistic work, we also have a commercial imperative driving us and our art. It is called, simply, *survival*. So, let us briefly turn our attention to the artist in the commercial context.

4.2   Artist as 'Mini-Corporation'

Whilst definitions of 'commercial' and 'commercially successful' and indeed 'success' itself might be broadly and differently interpreted by any number of artists in any number of contexts, the fundamental reality is that without earning income as a 'professional' artist, that professional artist simply does not survive. This is a harsh, brutal, and obvious reality. In addition to that harsh and obvious reality, to some extent or other, and whether it should or not, money *creates the perception* in others that one is successful - whatever one's own definition of 'success' as an artist might be.

Money *legitimises* one as a professional Artist.

Money *liberates* one as a professional Artist.

Money *defines* one as a '*professional* Artist'.

It is not until someone voluntarily pays money for an artist's work that that artist can legitimately feel like, refer to themselves, and be perceived as; a 'Professional Artist'. It is *the* major turning point in any artistic career and provides both the means by which, and the professional self-confidence to, continue their work. And, as many professional artists have discovered, there is a 'quantum leap' between creating art on the one hand as a past-time pursuit, and on the other, having to actually earn a living from it and survive by it. As a professional activity, the imperatives of survival alter, subtly or otherwise, the artist's attitude and approach to creating Art.

There is, in my view, nothing inherently ennobling about living the cliché of the *'starving artist'*.

So, if financial survival is one of the imperatives of life as a professional artist, then that artist has to operate within whatever definition of the 'commercial world' they choose, whether that be; publicly funded subsidy, private sector investment, box office, or listeners buying albums. Operating within that commercial context demands that the artist devote some attention to it, in the same way that they pay attention to creating their artistic works. Just like their performance, the artist needs to incorporate a degree of 'performance' into the commercial aspects. To some extent or other, the artist has to operate in the 'corporate' world'; perhaps to a limited degree; perhaps to the degree of what one might refer to as; a 'Mini-Corporation'.

4.3   Definitions & Context:

Now the term 'corporate' can present some difficulties of connotation these days. What with the recent proliferation of high-profile corporate collapses; (in)famous Australian and international examples of corporate dishonesty and corruption; apparently (judging by media reports) underpinned by an apparent complete lack of ethics, morals or integrity in senior management, with the result that the term 'corporate' has become tainted in the minds of many.   However, I use the term corporate, in its 'corporeal' sense.

The Macquarie Dictionary (1992, p. 99) lists the following words adjacent to one another:

- **Corporeal**: defined as, *'of the nature of the physical body'*
- **Corporate**: defined as, *'pertaining to a united body, as of persons'*
- **Corporation**: defined as, *'an association of individuals'*

Is this merely alphabetical coincidence, or do the words actually bear some significant connection to one another?

My own approach is to consider these terms beyond alphabetical coincidence and take literally the *'association of individuals'*, together with the *'nature of the physical body'*. And it is in this sense that my work, and research, resides.

Therefore, what I am suggesting is that the negative perceptual definition of the word 'corporate' – i.e. large, uncaring, and corrupt multinational - be jettisoned for the time being and the title applied in a broader, and indeed truer sense.   Not only the 'corporeal' sense, but also to a much smaller and dare we say, sensitive and caring corporate entity, the individual. In particular, the individual artist**.**

I remain fairly certain that most artists would not immediately associate themselves with the term 'corporate'.   However, as a business; SME or micro-business, the individual artist (or indeed collection of individual artists coming together for a project) has to deal with many of the same issues, for example:

- sourcing investment/funding
- project planning and monitoring
- creating their product/service (art)
- promotion and marketing
- attracting significant numbers of audience/consumers
- hiring staff/technical support
- costs of doing business
- managing sales
- dealing with suppliers and other business entities
- financial reporting
- dealing with media, etc.

This view is supported by Craig Mudge, Director of Macquarie University's Institute for Innovation, who recently wrote with reference to executives *'making meaning'* – that successful business is more than just focussing exclusively on making money, and that:

> frequently artistic people do not have the skills to fully capitalise and exploit their talents…Artists and other creative people can learn how to be enterprising without sacrificing their integrity. They can learn the skills that will empower them to make meaning.

(Mudge 2006, p. 16)

Not only can they, but it is absolutely crucial for their professional survival that they must – whether they want to or not, or whether they believe they can or not. As Mudge observes, 'many creative people, especially when young, may believe enterprise and innovation are categories that more properly belong to the suits - the business types and their beancounters'.   No matter how philosophically or professionally unpalatable the notion of 'business' and entrepreneurship might appear at the time when they just want to get on with the art, as an artist one reaches the point of being forced to be; 'the entrepreneur you are, when you're not an entrepreneur' (Willems & Hughes-Lucas 2004), and to regard their work, or at least the promotion of that work, as a business. They may not regard themselves as 'corporate' but any differences are essentially just a matter of scale and possibly style of approach.   The consistent underlying requirement being that of *effective communication*; of an idea, a concept, a business plan, a piece of art, or indeed an artist's personality. In terms of survival, business or artistic, it is about professional interactions.   It is about any kind of professional

interaction in any kind of professional context. Therefore, in principle, I would argue that the notion of 'corporate communication', applies as much to the individual artist ('mini-corporation'), as it does to the multinational corporation.

Helen Besly (2004, p. 1), Managing Director of Rowland, an organisation specialising in high level corporate communication, supports this view, suggesting that, 'the individual's voice is still the most credible and relied on…that makes corporate storytelling an essential part of the CEO's job'. And further, that 'every interaction…is an opportunity to influence perceptions, both of the CEO and the organisation…it's the moment of influence and it's precious…the moment when the CEO and the company are judged'.

And, the common thread with communication across these disparate, diverse disciplines, dealings and contexts, is that they benefit from conscious input.

If for example we take the situation of the performing artist, whilst the artist is in the act of performing, they are obviously communicating closely and effectively with their audience; 'it's your job, really, (to) take people on an emotional journey so you have to really throw yourself into that' (Blunt 2006). However, in those non-performance moments, when the artist has to communicate to other interested parties such as investors, interviewers, sponsors, or simply a potentially album-buying audience, they may become a mess of inarticulate babbling, simply because they are not in 'performance' mode and are thus ill-prepared, un(der)rehearsed, and unconvincing – sending out entirely the wrong message.

Upon recently discussing this notion with a group of executive workshop participants, one observed that perhaps this was the reason so many award-acceptance speeches are so 'incredibly awful', and the performing artist comes across so badly. This might on observation be difficult to refute, supporting the argument that, if we apply as above the notion of the individual artist as a mini-corporation, then this is a perfect example of how in non-performance mode that mini-corporate 'executive' might have 'blown it' in that crucial moment of influence, when applying even a modest amount of performance-awareness and effort, might have dramatically improved the situation and created a very different 'first impression'.

My own professional experience suggests that the focus of artists should, in addition of course to developing their artistic expertise, equally be in developing themselves as

'mini-corporations', skilled in not only creating and performing their own work, but having an entrepreneurial/corporate focus; in order to sell their albums, paintings, artworks of any description, ideas…and themselves. Reality is such that, not only does that artist/corporation have to merely *exist* in the commercial world, but indeed needs to profit to remain viable, if for no other reason than to be in a position to re-invest further time and resources in future professional activities and projects.

In that context, elements such as the 'between-song banter' in Music performance become as much 'corporate communication' as a Boardroom presentation. Many of the same skills come into play. However, they do perhaps demand a different style.

Because, there is Marketing, and there is Marketing.

4.4   'Soft' Marketing:

One of the best reasons for communicating with the audience is so set both oneself and the audience at ease. The other reason for communicating with the audience has a simple and basic imperative: to sell albums.

However, I have, neither personally nor professionally, ever been one for the 'hard-sell' approach. It goes against the grain, and is fundamentally at odds with my character, as both a person and an artist. Yet as a professional artist I need to sell my art. I need to sell albums to exist. So, rather than try and *badger* the audience into buying (like selling vacuum cleaners), what better way of getting the audience 'hooked' on the idea of buying the album, than involving them in the *story* of how the creative process occurred. This softer approach is not intrusive, not offensive, and tends to draw the audience in, rather than putting them off. Thereby, making them more interested and intrigued, by default, in the idea of buying the art. They feel closer to the artistic process, and it is a 'human' process to which they can, at least in part, relate.

One might argue that no one, other than the artist themselves, is necessarily interested in this kind of explication; which could easily be interpreted as self-indulgence, but, reiterating Australian jazz musician Don Burrows (1987/96) words as quoted earlier, 'there is a strong interest in artists speaking about what they do. This 'humanisation' of the work has marked public appeal'. The kind of 'public appeal' and direct involvement

provided in the storytelling, beyond the actual art itself, is surely a more attractive option for the 'marketing' of one's art than the; *you have to buy this album because it's really good because I say so',* approach. Let the audience make its own judgements, but give them some more information beyond just the face-value of the music itself. Add some value.

Indeed quite recently there have been instances where this very theory of Soft Marketing has proven itself, on a small scale, following a number of presentations during which the Blind Collaboration process (Willems 2007) and its resulting Album, *'Once in a While',* have been referred to, discussed, explained and illustrated. On all these occasions, the explanation of the process, together with a very brief sample of one or two of the songs, has been enough to entice people to purchase the album, with no overt 'selling' effort whatsoever on my part.

Whilst I acknowledge the lack of 'scientific rigour' or sufficient numbers to validate this assertion as 'research' in the strict sense, there is no doubt that the empirical evidence supports the success of 'Soft Marketing' thus far, certainly on a local level.

4.5   Metamorphosis?

As stated at the outset, this paper; in conjunction with and in support of, the associated series of VODcasts, provides an analysis, discussion and demonstration of the implications of the non-musical aspects of live musical performance. In particular, the influence to be brought to bear on those non-musical aspects by the application of Mime performance techniques to the Music performance context – with a view to enhancing the quality of performance through:

a)   developing increased awareness of, and fine-tuning performance physicality

b)   developing techniques to reduce performance anxiety

c)   developing and enhancing the performer/audience relationship.

In addition, in contextual terms, both the Mime technique and Music performance have been placed within the visual and physical context around the performance, in terms of the Design and utility of the performance space.

Whilst the two forms, Mime and Music, have been initially considered as separate - which they are - there comes a point in the incorporation of any technique(s) where, after firstly applying consciousness, and then conscious effort, to what may up to that point have largely been an unconscious process, one begins to absorb, combine, and then articulate the separate, perhaps disparate, techniques, until the two combining together become something else. They develop their own unique form, vocabulary, and opportunities.

Once this begins to occur, the process which began as an unconscious process, then became a conscious process, will ultimately, with continued rehearsal and applied performance, once again largely become an unconscious process, through familiarity and performance repetition. The performer's new 'normal'. It is then, and only then, that there has been a true *'metamorphosis'.* The gradual merging of two disparate forms to create one, new and distinct form, without losing the essence of either of the original two, and as a result, creating something greater than either on its own.

Multi/inter-disciplinarity explores those points where different artforms intersect, interact, inform, and enhance each other. It is my belief that ultimately, in Art, *everything* is related. Every artform informs every other artform. Every interdisciplinary union has the capacity to create a new form. A new artistic, technical, and aesthetic life.

This paper, together with the associated VODcasts and the processes articulated therein, clearly demonstrate that principle.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1:

VODcasts:

Number:	Synopsis:	Duration: (min:sec)
SECTION 1: BLIND COLLABORATION		
VODcast 00	*Intro to VODcasts*	0:46
VODcast 01	*My Recording Studio*	1:04
VODcast 02	*The 'Blind Collaboration' process*	2:36
VODcast 03	*Guest Recording Session with Ceri McCoy (Saxophone)*	0:49
VODcast 04	*QUT Studio Recording Session 1: Jeff Usher (Jazz Piano) & Steve Reinthal (Guitar)*	1:11
VODcast 05	*Chat pre-Cello regarding Recording Session*	1:52
VODcast 06	*QUT Studio Recording Session 2: Briony Luttrell (Cello)*	1:22
VODcast 07	*Changing the Rules – 'Foolish' Jeff Usher (Jazz Piano) & Steve Reinthal (Guitar)*	1:28
VODcast 08	*No conflicts yet – musical or otherwise*	0:29
VODcast 09	*Like any piece of Art – it needs to be allowed to evolve*	0:28
VODcast 10	*The Project is now gaining a momentum of its own…redo some Vocals for technical reasons*	1:15
VODcast 11	*1 December 2006 – re: solo spot at Performer's Cafe*	1:02
VODcast 12	*Recording software I am using is ProTools*	0:59
VODcast 13	*Outro to Blind Collaboration*	1:40
SECTION 2: LIVE MUSIC PERFORMANCE		
VODcast 14	*So Far...*	0:19

VODcast 15	*The Package 1 You've recorded your album…Musical aspects of the Package*	1:00
VODcast 16	*The Package 2 …playing with the Dynamics - both musical and visual*	0:40
VODcast 17	*The Package 3… What makes a concert memorable?*	0:47
VODcast 18	*The Package 4 Physicality…even those very busy hands*	1:27
VODcast 19	*If it moves…control it.*	0:35
VODcast 20	*Examples of Stylisation - Feet*	2:00
VODcast 21	*Example: 'Foolish'*	0:51
VODcast 22	*Example: 'Intoxicating': Details - Hands*	0:53
VODcast 23	*Spare*	0:00
VODcast 24	*Spare*	0:00
VODcast 25	*Pre-Performance – applying the techniques*	1:42
SECTION 3: MUSIC, MIME & METAMORPHOSIS		
VODcast 26	*Why Mime?*	0:47
VODcast 27	*The Chest*	1:39
VODcast 28	*Taking Command of the Space*	0:46
VODcast 29	*Performance Anxiety*	1:18
VODcast 30	*The Internal Space*	2:23
VODcast 31	*The External Space*	1:39
VODcast 32	*Designing the Space*	1:41
VODcast 33	*And Finally…*	0:51

Appendix 2:

Concert Analyses: (in random order)

N.B.   *The following represents the complete list of concerts analysed for this written commentary. Those shown in **Bold** are included in this Appendix.*

- **David Bowie – A Reality Tour**
- **Missy Higgins (Live)**
- **Eric Clapton - Unplugged**
- **Yes – Live at Montreux 2003**
- **Sade - Lovers Live**
- **Van Morrison - Live at Montreux 1974**
- **The Corrs - Unplugged**
- **Simon & Garfunkel – Live in Central Park**
- Marianne Faithfull Live in Hollywood
- Simply Red – Live in London
- Jethro Tull – Live at Montreux 2003
- Missy Higgins (Television Broadcast)
- Van Morrison – Live at Montreux 1980
- Concert for George
- John Williamson
- Yes – Acoustic
- The Eagles – Farewell 1 Tour

CONCERT ANALYSIS – *'David Bowie'* (Reviewed: 1 November 2007)

Title: ***David Bowie – A Reality Tour*** *(DVD)*

Performer: ***David Bowie*** *(with band)*

Performance Date: *November 2003 (DVD issued 2004)*

Location: *Dublin, Ireland*

Style of Concert: *Stadium/Auditorium - Large Concert*

Shooting Style: *Multicam - comprehensive*

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Introduction:

There are very few times that one experiences a performance which is literally 'breathtaking'.

An overused term if there ever was one, but in my more than 30 years professional arts experience I have been in the situation only about three times where I had, literally, a 'breathtaking experience' – where one's body and being is so overwhelmed with the astonishment of the moment that it spontaneously and unconsciously draws in a huge lung-full of air.

These are:

- A concert by **The Flying Pickets** – astounding vocal harmonies

- Japanese theatre company **Sankai Juku** – a visual and performance feast full of overwhelming surprises – in complete, stylised, minimalist control

- The co-performance between **David Bowie** and bassist **Gail Ann Dorsey** – performing ***'Under Pressure'*** on this Concert DVD

Even beyond breathtaking, for me, watching this particular track (even repeatedly) elicits floods of tears - literally. Why is this so? My professional arts career - in music, mime, theatre and television - spans three decades, and after that amount of time, professional involvement, and (dare I say) professional cynicism, one is no longer easily surprised. This reaction surprises me – completely – and I examine this phenomenon more thoroughly below.

Relevance to Research:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists (Appendix 2), provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically, but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations from this Analysis:

Audience Contact:

Bowie is the supreme example of someone who not only contacts the audience but actually appears to draw energy from them. Not unlike the character he plays in his 1976 film, *'The Man Who Fell To Earth'* – as the alien who drew energy from watching multiple television screens - Bowie appears to be sucking in the energy the audience transmits to him, and he to them. His eyes are discernibly focussed on the crowd, not vaguely (un)focussed on some indeterminate point, and his manner is engaging, inclusive and inviting. There is a direct engagement between Bowie and the vast audience, to which Bowie seems to be speaking personally and individually.

And they respond.

Being energised by an audience is not new, nor is it unique to David Bowie, but there is a depth of reciprocity between Bowie and his audience, not just on this track (*'Under Pressure'*) but through the entire concert. This direct and seemingly intimate audience contact is in stark contrast to other high-profile concerts in this series of performance analyses – e.g. Van Morrison - who appears to treat the audience with utter disdain (refer Appendix 2).

Banter:

Bowie engages in some banter about particular songs and the stories behind their arrangement/recording etc. This is always in control, always a 'chat' with the audience. Never arrogant, although Bowie would have every right to be, given his history, success and extraordinary body of work. He never talks down to the audience, but always invites them in by his manner, never alienating them.

Musical Style:

Bowie has reinvented himself and his music so many times over the vast span of his career, that he is un-pigeonhole-able. If the word 'eclectic' had not been so thrashed to death by overuse in the past decade or so then Bowie would certainly represent its personification. From *Ziggy Stardust* to the 'Thin White Duke', to the leather-clad metallic-tinged 'Berlin' phase of his career, Bowie has simply adopted/created a particular persona at a particular point in time, utilised it until it became predictable, then discarded it at his own convenience.

Performer Stage Presence:

Bowie is the consummate Performer. He is a complete study in Performer Stage Presence.

Bowie demonstrates: focussed stillness; stylised, selective and beautifully controlled movement; genuine audience contact; co-performer respect, support and interaction. In every department Bowie excels. No ostentatious strutting about the stage. Bowie takes a position, holds it, centres himself and sings. He is a fairly slightly built man (although these days apparently more muscular than his previous incarnation as the 'thin white duke') yet he displays an enormous stage presence. Bowie uses stillness, together with minimal, selective movement, exceptionally well. By doing this, Bowie literally, *makes* the audience look at him. To expand upon this, by way of illustration, I am particularly focussing on one track from the concert in the 'Discussion' section below.

Design Impact:

We are presented with a 'clean and open' stage. If we ignore the rather pointless and unattractive floor painting (and we can ignore it because we rarely see it in shot), the concert Design is comprehensive, yet simple and tasteful.

Three-dimensional shapes and textures combine with/incorporate large projection screens. These background projection screens carry, at various times, combinations of simple visual designs and images, mixed with CU's (Close-Ups) taken from live camera feeds direct from the stage. Not overblown, not overstated, not over-hyped, and not intrusive, because it doesn't have to be. Bowie's stage presence negates the need for visual overproduction.

Of course this is a big concert in a big venue by a big name, so the lighting and projection is very comprehensive and at times spectacular, but always, from my point of view as both a professional Designer and an audience member, tastefully and appropriately applied. They are design concepts and application which always enhance and support, never distract or detract.

Other observations:

Refer Discussion below…

Discussion:
 'Under Pressure' (track 16)

As noted in the Introduction above, there are very few times when one experiences a truly 'breathtaking' performance. However, watching this particular track elicits deep emotions and tears. Why is this so? After 30 years of professional performance experience and associated professional cynicism, it takes an awful lot to surprise. For me, this reaction is a complete - indeed overwhelming - surprise.

In examining this phenomenon, this strange reaction to a piece of video footage which, by video's very nature, removes one from the human experience of the performance to a large extent, my (self) analysis leads me to the considered view that this level of emotional response is caused by a rich and dense mix of: professional admiration at the sheer quality of the performance; the extraordinary singing, certainly of both but particularly of bassist/vocalist Gail Ann Dorsey, and personal joy at observing the enjoyment of the players (and, vicariously, the audience).

But mostly what elicits tears is the emotional detail, subtlety and exposure of the players to yes, the music, and yes, the audience but, particularly, **each other**. In the context of a massive concert, it manifests not in the huge, not in the spectacular, but in the infinitesimally fine detail. The barely perceptible intimacy and closeness of the players is at once intense, playful, supportive, subtle and exquisite. It comes through in the playing of the music, and is I believe, whilst perhaps unseen, then certainly *sensed* by the (distant) live audience. The personal and interpersonal detail and nuance of this performance, virtually impossible to see at the concert as an audience member by virtue of distance, but which emerges in the detail of the DVD in close-up, affects me deeply, profoundly, emotionally. I think I know why.

In endeavouring to understand why this performance elicits such a profound response, I draw upon my almost three decades in mime and movement experience in performance and analysis, to achieve the following insights.

In contrast to Bowie's enormous confidence and presence, one observes in Gail Ann Dorsey a characteristic Bass player's 'backing musician's reticence' to be the main focus. Despite Dorsey's distinctive and striking appearance; black, shaven-headed, 'seaweed' skirt, and expertly handling an imposing Fender Bass, there is an apparent shyness, a vulnerability in Dorsey and her performance which is beautifully and sensitively supported and nurtured by Bowie through infinitesimally tiny details, moments, and eye contact between them. As the song progresses and her stunning vocals come to the fore and she literally, as Bowie suggests in the song's introduction does not so much *'join (him) in this next song'* but, ***'takes** this next song'*, one observes a growing confidence, beyond confidence, into 'statement'.

Dorsey has certainly stamped her own personality onto this song but along the way there are small and subtle looks between Bowie and Dorsey which elicit the tiniest hint of a smile from Dorsey as if Bowie is saying to her, *'it's alright, you're doing fine, take it away'* (in fact he initially

does say to her at the start of the song, *'go girl'*), which she acknowledges with a brief smile of approval, satisfaction, and increasing confidence.

Dorsey's vocal – solo and in duet with Bowie – is simply stunning. There is one particular section where vocally she slides smoothly from a quite low register to very high, and just when one thinks that that is as high as she can or will go she tops it. Again. With increasingly gutsy resonance. And all the while playing a pumping yet disciplined Bass line. These are the moments that a performer – any performer - aspires to. When it all comes together, everything works. It appears effortless. And the only reason it appears effortless is because of the enormous discipline, effort and technical expertise which has gone into it in rehearsals, and into the performance, to make it *appear* effortless.

By the end of this song Dorsey's eyes, locked in direct eye contact with Bowie's, are full of passion; for the song, the music, the lyrics, and the moment, of co-performance between them. Yet it is very much *her* moment - graciously and generously encouraged and supported by Bowie. It is subtle and rich and deep and stunning to watch. It is two consummate artists in full cry. It is, in my view, what performance is all about, and should be. It brings tears to my eyes, every time.

Conclusion:

If one ever needed evidence of the remarkable and positive influence of Mime in other performance contexts (refer Section 3), Bowie provides it.

Bowie's stance is pure Mime technique: neutral position; centred; stillness; slightly curved arms. There is a brief moment where Bowie holds out his hand in gesture to the audience. Its slender and elegant shape reflects pure Mime technique, where one contrasts soft curves with hard lines to mutually highlight and support both.

In my considered view, the stillness, centred-ness, focus and sheer presence of Bowie are the result not only of the decades of experience of the seasoned performer, often in a highly theatricalised Concert style (long before any other Rock music acts were theatrical), but, consciously or otherwise, make manifest the influence of Mime on Bowie's early (and subsequent) career.

As I often comment in coaching performers, actors, corporate communicators and television presenters alike, **stillness is much more powerful than movement**. Mime technique, studied, applied, and tested in performance over 25 years has proven this statement time and again. Whether a seven-minute performance piece consisting of nothing but imperceptible movement (virtual stillness) into which the audience is completely locked and engaged; or stillness as punctuation for movement, which re-engages the audience by making them look afresh; or a 'fingertip fixed-in-space' around which movement occurs.

Stillness is what the audience locks onto because it is so unusual in the everyday. We rarely see absolute stillness in the human population. We are more inclined to see it in a David Attenborough wildlife documentary on hunting animals. Just as one of the 'Big Cats' will be locked onto its prey just before springing into its attack, we are locked onto watching it in anticipation of that explosive moment. We are locked onto the presence, the tension, the anticipation, the *latent* energy.

Stillness is *very* much more powerful than movement. Bowie's performance is, in my estimation, that statement's best confirmation.

Christiaan Willems
GradDipArtsAdmin. MA.

<u>CONCERT ANALYSIS</u> – *'Missy Higgins - Live'*

<u>DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (24 November 2007)</u>

Title:	*Missy Higgins – 'One Night Only' Tour*
Performer:	*Missy Higgins (+ 8 piece backing band)*
Performance Date:	*23 November 2007*
Location:	*Brisbane Entertainment Centre*
Style of Concert:	*Auditorium - Large Concert*
Shooting Style:	*Live concert (attended – not recorded)*

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N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A Live Concert presented at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre on 23 November 2007.

This was a live concert, attended by myself, and this analysis is intended to be read in conjunction with another analysis of a DVD recording of a previous concert by Missy Higgins (refer Appendix 2) in an open-air venue in the Northern Territory.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Missy Higgins communicates very well with the audience. She utilises her very charming, girl-next-door personality to chat amiably to the audience and seems as if – even in an enormous cavern of a venue such as the entertainment centre seating thousands of people – all this is just happening around the piano at home.

Banter:

Lots of banter with the audience, in Higgins' unmistakably Australian vernacular style.

Missy Higgins chats with the audience (and her band members) as if we have all been invited to are all simply attending an informal rehearsal session, but amongst the banter with her co-performers, we the audience never feel excluded.

Musical Style:

Semi-acoustic, comprehensive backing by an 8 piece band featuring both traditional 'rock' instruments such as Guitar, Bass, Keyboards & Percussion, but supplemented by some interesting instrumentation such as Strings, Trumpet and the occasional Glockenspiel.

Performer Stage Presence:

The seemingly unrehearsed, informal, shy, friendly, chatty style of her banter between songs – in an unremarkable but pleasant voice - is in stark contrasts with her powerfully distinctive singing, disciplined playing, and strong performance presence.

Higgins is certainly not a physically large person – she is in fact quite slightly built – however whilst actually performing, her stature grows and she certainly *'takes command of the space'* (Willems, 2007) and we are in no doubt that it is, as she says to her band in a good-natured, mock put-down when they begin to skylark and assert their own presence that, *'this is the Missy show – alright'*. A significant observation on the night is the striking contrast in stage presence between the physically slight Higgins and lack of presence of her support artist, Tim Rogers, who, although a much larger person physically, and who also stands to play guitar, appears to believe that by swinging one's arms and jumping around a lot that that will add to one's stage presence. The reality is that it creates entirely the opposite effect.

Missy Higgins divides her time between sitting at the piano and standing at the microphone playing acoustic guitar. When at the piano it is apparent that she has been taught appropriate playing technique, including the correct sitting position/posture which supports not only her spine but also her presence. She uses stillness well in that context - again, playing seated and singing into a fixed microphone significantly limits one's movement and this, perhaps paradoxically, enhances rather than detracts from ones stage presence.

By contrast, when she plays guitar she stands at the microphone and appears to enjoy the momentary liberation of movement that this performing mode permits. As she stated on the night after playing her hit song *'Peachy'* that, *'I get rid of so much aggression when I play that song'* there is obvious a certain liberation of both physicality and spirit.

Design Impact:

For a 'one night only' concert in the context of a national *'One Night Only Tour'*, the stage design was surprisingly comprehensive - yet simple, tasteful and effective. The design featured a projection cyc, three flown projection panels, flown lighting baubles and some tasteful featured lighting effects. The projections used consisted of a combination of abstract, real images and occasional live camera footage from a collection of fixed, miniature cameras. The images were generally tasteful and appropriate however there were in my (Designer's) view, too many images which were too literal in reflecting with Higgins' lyrics. The more abstract images tended to work much better than the literal translations we were presented with. Having said that, the design/projections never overwhelmed the performance and generally supported it visually very well.

Other observations:

Discussion:

Conclusion:

There is a self-assuredness about Missy Higgins which belies her young years and her relatively short (but spectacularly successful) professional career thus far. The way she relates to her audience comes back, in part at least, to her appealing personality, the quality of her music and her strong performance presence.

In other words, 'The Package' is complete – and appealing.

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<u>CONCERT ANALYSIS</u> – *Eric Clapton*

<u>DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (26 December 2007)</u>

Title: *Eric Clapton - Unplugged (DVD)*

Performer: *Eric Clapton (and backing musicians)*

Performance Date: *1992*

Location: *Bray Film Studios – Windsor, England*

Style of Concert: *Studio/Sound Stage - Small Concert*

Shooting Style: *Multicam - comprehensive*

_____

N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A recording on DVD as one of the MTV 'Unplugged' concert series. Performed and recorded in Windsor, England, at Bray Film Studios in 1992, the concert features Clapton in semi-acoustic mode together with a selection of top-shelf backing musicians.

This DVD is comprehensively shot with multi-camera coverage.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Not dissimilar in venue and feel to *The Corrs* Unplugged concert in the MTV Unplugged series, this Unplugged concert is recognised as one of the forerunners of the whole 'Unplugged' movement. There is an intimacy about the venue and its configuration with the audience around three sides in something of a 'thrust stage' configuration.

In terms of audience contact then there is ample opportunity for audience contact, yet this seems minimal. There is certainly much more contact between Clapton and his backing musicians, as this almost informal setting seems to invoke in the players a sense of a jam session in someone's living room.

Clapton sings with his eyes closed much of the time but plays with eyes open. There is therefore little direct contact with the audience – visual or verbal. The one exception to this, and it is very subtle – probably missed by much of the Live audience on the night but one which we are fortunate enough to glimpse in a close-up (CU) - is his brief and gracious acknowledgement of the audience's warm applause at the end of Clapton's solo in *'Old Love'* (track 14). Due to his need to get back to the microphone and continuing to play the rest of the song, Clapton's nod of acknowledgement to the audience is almost imperceptible, but apparent nonetheless – and certainly appreciated. It is a tiny but very significant moment in this analysis as it is one of the things that makes Clapton 'human' – despite being referred to by some as 'God'.

Banter:

There is very little banter with the audience. Clapton happily chats to his co-players and acknowledges the audience applause with a *'thank you, thank you very much'* from time to time to an audience who are clearly on side from the outset. The lack of banter and contact does not seem to diminish their enthusiasm in any way. It is possible that we are missing some banter due to the editing of the video footage, although it is interesting to note a technical lapse - forgetting to remove his slide at the end of *'Walking Blues'* (track 10) and leading into the intro of *'Alberta)*.

Musical Style:

Clapton's blues heritage is legendary – as is his skill and indeed iconic status internationally as a player and songwriter in various guises and styles including: *The Yardbirds, John Mayall's Blues Breakers, Cream* etc etc.

Performer Stage Presence:

The interesting thing to observe is the relatively static positions of the players – seated as they are (apart from percussionist Ray Cooper whose movement repertoire is both distinctive and famous, but not distracting). There is an intimacy about the concert, the degree of which can, on one viewing, be missed and the concert appear to be of a larger scale than it actually is. The (visible) audience appears to be quite small and Clapton, as one would expect, displays a strong stage presence, which is no doubt reinforced by both the lighting and the selectivity of the camera treatment in the choice of close-ups etc – to the extent that one would actually like to see a bit more of the other players at times.

Once again, the seated performance positions of the players is worth a closer inspection.

The normal height chairs lend an intimacy and casualness to the proceedings but may have the tendency to undermine Clapton's (and others') stage presence. As noted elsewhere however the choice of camera shots overcomes any problems in that area, at least for the Video audience if not the Live audience. The low chairs have the effect of making Clapton's foot/leg beat time in a fairly exaggerated way, simply because in 'getting into' a particular lead break (track 14, 'Old Love'), his body wants to move more than his low, seated position will physically permit. Clapton is actually tapping both feet alternately at times and these foot-tappings increase in amplitude as the song progresses. Combined with the not quite pigeon-toed but parallel, feet positions, and the tendency to look a bit knock-kneed in supporting the guitar, this slightly weakens him physically and tends to undermine Clapton's stage presence.

We get the sense that bits of his body are trying to 'get out' beyond the constraints within which they find themselves, so they (and he) can enjoy the feel of the music even more. This slight undermining of Clapton's presence is naturally much more noticeable in the wide shot (WS) than in the more selective medium close-up (MCU) or close-up (CU).

I emphasise these are not criticisms, merely observations of what are in fact very small details and unconscious movements, which together contribute to form a perception by the audience - or in this case one audience member.

On the other side of the analytical ledger we are treated to the beautiful detail of Clapton's fingers dancing across the fretboard and strings with the practiced ease of a virtuoso, famous for his melodic phrasing and tasteful, yet powerful and distinctive note selection – even on an acoustic guitar which by its unsustaining nature demands more notes to be played in order to sustain a melodic passage. His fingers are indeed a joy to watch and be mesmerised by. This kind of detail really brings home the advantages of watching a concert like this on DVD. We can appreciate the detail through the selective close-ups. In one sense, on screen at least, who **cares** about what Clapton's knees and feet are doing?

The scale of the event and the low seated positions is reflected in minimal gesturing and movement which, in a larger concert venue might naturally be wider, more sweeping and take up more of the stage area. This concert and playing configuration restricts performance gestures to smaller, more contained and more suggested movements, although it is interesting to note that Clapton takes the opportunity at various times during songs to briefly break from playing in order to adjust his glasses. One can do this in the context of being one of several players – even the lead player – as the music just keeps going on around you, but as a solo performer it is much more difficult to stop playing, however briefly, to make such adjustments.

Design Impact:

As with the *Corrs* concert, this concert is performed in a Sound Stage/Studio used for Film and Television production. As such it offers the obvious advantage of being set up for shooting a television production and one assumes that the acoustics would be first class.

The Performance area consists of a raised rostrum area which contains all the players. Those in the foreground, including Clapton, are seated on chairs (not tall stools like the Corrs). The backing musicians are positioned around in a fairly conventional layout, with the exception perhaps of guitarist Andy Fairweather-Low who sits closer and in the foreground, almost on equal par with Clapton himself. Other players actually occupy positions physically higher than Clapton although they are in the background, most notably Ray Cooper on percussion and Chuck Leavell on keyboards.

The audience appears, from the available shots, to be seated in 'thrust' configuration in relation to the stage – that is they surround three sides of the performance area. The players perform 'out front' (presumably biased for the cameras) for the vast majority of the concert.

The only other overt Design elements are some lit columns and drapery in the background (presumably taken from the Studio's Props store, judging by the style) which loosely define the space, including audience, in this performance configuration.

Other observations:

Discussion:

One of the things this concert/recording highlights is the fundamental difference between a large scale concert and a (relatively) small, intimate one.

The differences in scale of the venue are reflected in the difference of scale and size of the physicality of the performance – at least for some of the featured players. I am focussing my attention here on Eric Clapton in particular as the featured performer, as this seated position is presumably fairly unfamiliar in Performance mode - as distinct from Rehearsal mode. As such he is limited in his movement to the seated, playing and mic-on-stand configuration.

Conclusion:

I have focussed on this concert in detail largely because of the performance configuration, i.e. a seated singer/guitarist in a smallish, intimate venue. This relates directly to the associated VODcasts which analyse and comment upon that kind of performance.

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<u>CONCERT ANALYSIS -</u> *Yes*

<u>DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (7 October 2007)</u>

Title: *Yes – Live at Montreux (DVD)*

Performer: *Yes*

Performance Date: *14 July 2003*

Location: *Montreux Jazz Festival 2003 (Switzerland)*

Style of Concert: *Auditorium - Large Concert*

Shooting Style: *Multicam - comprehensive*

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N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A recording on DVD of a **Yes** concert at the Montreux Jazz Festival in July 2003. This DVD is fairly comprehensively shot with multi-camera coverage.

For this analysis I have largely focussed on Track 7 (*And You And I*) as this provides a variety of tempos, instruments, climaxes etc, is approximately half way through the concert and is one of **Yes**'s classic songs – from their truly classic *Close To The Edge* album.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Jon Anderson's eyes are closed on various Track 4 (*In The Presence Of*) (ditto tracks 5, 6 & 7 and others). However there is certainly no sense of a lack of audience contact – merely concentration and getting into the emotion of the song. I think this is the key. Provided that the between song banter relates to the audience, there is no problem with singing with one's eyes closed.

The reality might be a lack of confidence (and in this case it is unlikely) or performance anxiety, but the perception is certainly of someone engrossed in their performance.

Banter:

Minimal. The music is pretty much everything. (In fact in their recent *Yes Acoustic* performance one indeed wishes that they had adopted that principle, as the banter is almost excruciatingly embarrassing – in complete contrast to their utterly professional performance).

Musical Style:

Yes is a band which was a significant influence on the music of the 1970's. Referred to by some obsessed with labels as 'Prog (progressive) Rock', **Yes**'s instrumental complexity, long and intricate songs/pieces, the distinctive (and magnificent) vocals of Jon Anderson and strong harmonies, virtuosic playing and counter melodies, make **Yes** eminently listenable – still, after more than 30 years. It is quite extraordinary that Rolling Stone (1992, p. 494) would suggest that **Yes** and bands like them, *shared a commitment to* **unprepared**, *abrupt transitions from one mood to another'* (emphasis added). Having been in one such 'prog rock' band I the 70's, I can categorically state that the very last thing those kinds of transitions were, were 'unprepared' – requiring endless rehearsal and performance repetition to get tight, smooth and professional.

Performer Stage Presence:

Given the complexity of their music, most of the time the musicians are fully concentrating on their instruments. There is however what might be referred to as a 'collective presence' of the band.

John Anderson (lead vocals) is a small man. His small stature belies his powerful and distinctively textured voice. Presumably in an effort to increase his stature in amongst the busy visuals of this kind of band he has his own individual rostrum – which adds approximately 200mm to his stage height. His 'vocal presence' however makes up for his small stature and the rostrum is in my view redundant (but it probably makes him feel better about being in amongst some tall blokes).

Design Impact:

Basic but comprehensive rock band stage design featuring geometric shapes variously lit, together with curved lighting trusses as featured design elements

Other observations:

Interesting to see Jon Anderson's water bottle holder is an idea I thought I had thought of(!). Basically a racing bicycle water bottle holder in a different context – in his case attached to the mic stand and in my case to one leg of my high stool. I sit to sing, Jon Anderson stands – both of us have quick and ready access to our respective water bottles without having to have stands - which create a visual barrier between performer and audience - or bottles on the floor – which create an awkwardness whenever they are reached for at floor level (particularly from a seated position).

It is equally interesting to note a black music stand in the foreground which usually does indeed create a visual barrier between performer and audience. In this case however this barrier effect is minimised by adjusting the stand to a low height (approximately thigh height), and offset to one side.

Steve Howe playing/wearing one guitar, playing another (12 string) mounted on a stand and similarly playing yet another (pedal steel) on a different stand, throughout the piece (*And You And I* – Track 7). Illustrates the pragmatic approach to presenting such intricate music in the Live context, without losing the detail of the studio recording – a mix of art and conscious pragmatism as to how to construct the music/performance in a way as to simply be able to get from one instrument to the other in a very short time without interrupting the flow of the music. Some of these details I recall from seeing **Yes** in concert in Brisbane in 1973.

Jon Anderson stands on a Rostrum approximately 1200 square to gain some height in comparison to his playing colleagues – he is not a big bloke.

Discussion:

This is a band which appears to be more interested in the music than the presentation. Understandable, and not to the detriment of the presentation of that music.

Despite token efforts of 'showmanship' and costuming over the years by Rick Wakeman (Keyboards), it is my sense that that is a bit redundant – people listen to Yes for the music, and I do not believe that a Yes audience would have an expectation of any more in 'presentation' terms than they are already delivered.

Conclusion:

Yes - a band of 'musician's musicians'.

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CONCERT ANALYSIS – *'Sade Lovers Live'*

DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (21 October 2007)

Title:	*Sade Lovers Live (DVD)*
Performer:	*Sade (Sade Adu - with band also named 'Sade')*
Performance Date:	*September 2001*
Location:	*Arrowhead Pond – Anaheim CA (USA)* *Great Western Forum – Inglewood, CA (USA)*
Style of Concert:	*Auditorium - Large Concert*
Shooting Style:	*Multicam - comprehensive*

_____

N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A concert presented on DVD - evidently recorded over two concerts in California. This DVD is very comprehensively shot with multi-camera coverage which includes various shots of the audience very obviously and very thoroughly enjoying the experience.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Good audience contact. We get a sense of who Sade (the woman) really is. This sense might be completely misguided in reality – we may never know – but 'perception is reality', so as an audience we probably do not really care.

Banter:

Selective - not between every song – and tastefully consistent with every other aspect of the performance.

Musical Style:

Easy listening pop/rock. Smooth, jazz-influenced but not 'jazz'. Very well constructed, arranged, played and sung – the very essence of taste.

Performer Stage Presence:

Sade's stage movement, use of the space, interactions with the Audiovisuals and audience, focussed concentration, and apparently relaxed and friendly style combine to present a featured performer with enormous style and presence. She is the personification of my assertion that in performance, *'stillness is much more powerful than movement'* (Willems, 2007). She only moves when she needs to, and never in a staccato manner – always smooth (like the music) always deliberate, and always appropriate. One is always left with the impression of a confident, self-assured, and communicative performer and performance.

Design Impact:

Pure taste and class. Exceptionally good use of lighting, textures and rear projection, combining to create a tasteful performance environment, with just enough visual interest to keep the audience intrigued.

The projections are utilised more than just as a means by which to provide the live audience with Close-ups of the performer(s) - they become textured backgrounds in the close-ups for the DVD version of the concert as well. One particularly tasteful projection in *'Somebody Already Broke My Heart'* (Track 3) has a massive drop of water falling into a pool – perfectly synchronised with the particular beat in the music - of course. So effective and surprising is this small moment that it elicits spontaneous applause from the entire audience.

Wardrobe decisions have been made which again reflect a subtlety of taste which visually matches the tastefully played music. Sade's outfit is the very essence of taste – in silky silver fabric, it chameleon-like takes on the colour of the surrounding lighting state which it reflects – moving from a cold silver-blue to a rich warm gold. The band behind her are equally tastefully dressed in what is essentially a uniform without looking like a uniform. Low-key, tasteful, suited to all players but always allowing their respective individuality to shine – without ever distracting from Sade herself.

In fact the design - Set and/or Costume - never overtakes the presentation as a live music concert. It is at all times tasteful, understated, classy and comprehensively supports the music, never overpowering it. Even that most tacky of music concert props – a Mirror Ball – manages to be utilised in a way which renders it the epitome of taste and elegance.

Other observations:

This concert is highly choreographed – not in the sense of 'dance' but in virtually every aspect of Sade's stage movement, use of the space, and her interactions with her co-performers, the audiovisuals and the audience. Every moment is planned, every movement is intentional, every song is note-perfect, every nuance is controlled – but always human.

Discussion:

From the opening shadow-play silhouette to the final credits, this concert is production values, elegance, taste and style personified. Yet it still manages to embody a personalised relationship with the audience through Sade's low-key modesty in her audience chats. Although a specific date is not provided, it is clear that the concerts were performed just after the horror of 11 September 2001 terrorism attacks. This is never mentioned specifically but made hinted reference to in terms of *'especially in these times, we feel really privileged to be up here playing for you'*

There is a personalised sensitivity and vulnerability which comes across – despite the hugeness of the production – which would normally tend to maintain a remoteness between performer and audience.

Conclusion:

Pure class – in every way: production, performance, musicianship, singing, video coverage.

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CONCERT ANALYSIS – *'Van Morrison(1974)'*

DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (14 October 2007)

Title:	*Van Morrison: Live at Montreux 1974 (DVD)*
Performer:	*Van Morrison*
Performance Date:	*30 June 1974*
Location:	*Montreux Jazz Festival*
Style of Concert:	*Auditorium Concert*
Shooting Style:	*Multicam – comprehensive (but dated - reflecting its era)*

_____

N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

This DVD is shot with multi-camera coverage, but reflects some limitations in Video-production and production generally of an era more than a quarter century ago. The concert was presented at the Montreux Jazz Festival on 30 June 1974.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Morrison appears to make little or no effort to relate to the audience at all – either during or between songs.

Banter:

Non-existent.

Musical Style:

Jazz/rock/blues. This concert appears to tend more towards a jazz/blues style than Morrison's later (1980) effort at the same venue/festival.

Performer Stage Presence:

Great musical credibility and respect which gives him a presence but Morrison displays a fairly surly persona.

Design Impact:

Basic 'band' setup. The *'Montreux Jazz Festival'* signage – in horizontal banded signs in the background – is the only apparent design element and reflects the pretty basic visual production values, which ignores (thankfully) the 70's era's gaudy and garish design style.

Other observations:

Morrison sings with his eyes closed for the majority of the time. This, combined with the fact that there is virtually no audience contact between songs by way of banter, highlights the sense of remoteness of the performer from his audience. This is further highlighted by the fact that he turns his back on the audience to talk to his band between numbers.

Having said that, what we do read in the performance is a performer who is engaged, perhaps engrossed, emotionally in the songs he is singing.

Discussion:

Van Morrison is quite famous for his apparent total disregard for the audience. Despite that there is no denying his 'legend' status in contemporary music over he past half-century.

Conclusion:

An arrogant live performer - but eminently listenable. Probably better to appreciate as a recording artist than a live performer.

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DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (26 December 2007)

Title: *The Corrs - Unplugged (DVD)*

Performer: *The Corrs*

Performance Date: *5 October 1999*

Location: *Ardmore Studios – Co. Wicklow, Ireland*

Style of Concert: *Studio/Sound Stage - Small Concert*

Shooting Style: *Multicam - comprehensive*

_____

N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A recording on DVD as one of the MTV 'Unplugged' concert series. Performed and recorded in Ireland at the Ardmore Studios/Sound Stage on 5 October 1999, the concert features *The Corrs* in semi-acoustic mode together with a selection of backing musicians and a 'compact' (The Irish Film) orchestra. This DVD is comprehensively shot with multi-camera coverage.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

At the outset of the concert, Andrea Corr describes the event as *'an intimate little gathering'*. As such there is indeed quite an intimate feel about the concert which is highlighted by the informal chat between the players and something of an informal 'rehearsal feel' about it. It comes across as a mix of the formal and the informal as the performance moves into and out of the songs themselves, the prepared introductions and the *'are we ready?'* kind of internal band chat.

Banter:

There is almost as much banter between the players as there is between players and audience. This is by no means a criticism.

The less than formal nature of the concert encourages some appealing chat between players which at times extends to the audience – particularly in the instance of Caroline Corr playing a bum final note on the piano for *'Runaway'*, where the small technical error is remarked upon, either verbally or in 'looks' between the players, and then good-naturedly featured for the audience by Jim Corr who firstly facetiously refers to it as *'jazz'* and then announces to the audience that the song was '…*played in the key of 'F demented'*

Musical Style:

The Corrs' Irish heritage is strongly evident in music yet their music is in my view not that overtly Irish. It is really nothing like listening to a traditional Irish folk band. Their music has a broad radio appeal in an easy-listening style, which has obviously worked for them as evidenced by their international appeal and success – which is unquestionable. From looking at the detail of this concert performance alone – as well as the quality of their song-writing and arrangements – it is apparent that they are all very accomplished musicians and seasoned performers.

Performer Stage Presence:

The interesting thing to observe is the relatively static positions of the players – seated as they are. There is an intimacy about the concert, the degree of which can, on one viewing, be missed and the concert appear to be of a larger scale than it actually is. The (visible) audience appears to be quite small and the Corrs themselves – individually and collectively – display a strong stage presence, which is no doubt reinforced by the selectivity of the camera treatment in the (very appropriate) choice of close-ups and camera movement etc.

There is, in my view and viewing, an interesting contrast between lead vocalist, Andrea Corr, and her siblings in terms of stage presence. Not surprisingly, as lead vocalist, Andrea Corr's stage presence seems stronger than the others – certainly than when Sharon and Caroline Corr sing lead vocals on a duet of *'No Frontiers'*. There is an element of slight discomfort with both of them – suggested by Caroline sitting cross-legged and Sharon crossing her body with one arm – which is not surprising, for two reasons. The first is that this is the only song where neither of them are playing instruments (suggesting the classic *what do I do with my hands?* situation). The second reason is that they are more accustomed to singing Backing Vocals than being featured singers (even though they both have excellent voices). The discomfort is highlighted at the end of the song by the look between them – a nice shared intimate moment with more than a suggestion of both relief and pleasure at the achievement and now being able to get back to their more familiar territory as instrumentalists and providers of rich harmonies. Something particularly worth noting in this song is the 'visual support' of their respective physicality each provides for the other (and the audience) when one is singing a solo passage, the other is looking at or at least towards, the singer.

The seated performance positions of the players is worth a closer look.

My analysis from a physicality and movement point of view is that Andrea Corr appears less comfortable and somewhat restricted by this performance configuration. She does not look that comfortable on the stool as she is neither really siting on it nor standing away from it. The stools are tall enough that the height difference between sitting and standing is fairly minimal, and there seems a little discomfort in where to place her body exactly between floor (completely standing) and stool (completely sitting), so she seems to have adopted a compromise of being 'semi-seated' (a similar position is also adopted by Sharon but her violin playing makes that appear more comfortable).

The scale of the event and the semi-seated positions is reflected in her minimal gesturing which, in a larger concert venue might naturally be larger, wider and more sweeping. This concert configuration restricts those performance gestures to smaller, more contained and more suggested versions. This works fine in the context of the DVD as the selectivity of the camera provides the detailed focus and also frame within which a smaller gesture still makes a significant statement. A particular trademark gesture of Andrea Corr seems to be the brush aside of the hair over the face (and similar ones). Gestures such as these can be quite incidental in a large venue at a distance between audience and performer, but in a close-up or even an MCU that same small throw-away gesture becomes a significant and noticeable thing.

Design Impact:

The concert is performed in a Sound Stage/Studio used for Film and Television production. As such it offers the obvious advantage of being set up for shooting a television production and obviously the acoustics would be first class. In fact the acoustic panels on the walls are featured as part of the design – selectively and tastefully lit and surrounding the audience which itself surrounds the Performance area.

This Performance area consists of a raised rostrum area which contains all the players, including the Corrs themselves - who are seated on tall stools - the backing musicians (seated behind and lower) and the orchestra (also behind). This area is further defined overhead by a bulkhead containing strip downlighting. The audience appears, from the available shots, to be seated in 'thrust' configuration in relation to the stage – that is they surround three sides of the performance area with room at the front for the main cameras. The Corrs perform 'out front' (presumably biased for the cameras) for the vast majority of the concert.

Other observations:

Orchestral player 'vagued-out' when not actually playing.

Discussion:

One of the things this concert/recording highlights is the fundamental difference between a large scale concert and a (relatively) small, intimate one.

The differences in scale of the venue are reflected in the difference of scale and size of the physicality of the performance – at least for some of the featured players. I am focussing my attention here on Andrea Corr in particular as the lead singer, as she is the one in the presumably fairly unfamiliar situation of singing sitting down, rather than standing. As such she is limited in her movement to the seated and mic-on-stand configuration. One gets a sense of slight frustration at her feeling unable to move more fully - as she might normally be able to in a larger concert context.

Conclusion:

A high quality concert which demonstrates not only the Corrs' comprehensive individual and collective talent, but also provides a rich source for analysis of the subtle and nuanced in performance.

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CONCERT ANALYSIS - *Simon & Garfunkel*

DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (20 October 2007)

Title:	*The Concert in Central Park (DVD)*
Performer:	*Simon & Garfunkel*
Performance Date:	*19 September 1981*
Location:	*Central Park – New York*
Style of Concert:	*Open Air - Large Concert*
Shooting Style:	*Multicam - comprehensive*

_____

N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

A concert presented on DVD - recorded during a concert in New York's Central Park on 19 September 1981 – after a several years of not performing or recording together.

This DVD is fairly comprehensively shot with multi-camera coverage, but reflects some limitations in Video-production and production generally of an era more than a quarter century ago.   Having said that, the audio production quality of the recording is surprisingly acute.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Paul Simon is evidently much more comfortable in direct contact with the audience than Garfunkel, who appears awkward and uncomfortable, with his arms folded, or hands in various pockets, eyes glassy and seeming positively frightened for much of the time. He seems content to let his singing to the talking to the audience. And with singing such as in *'Bridge Over Troubled Water'*, it largely does.

Banter:

Again, Simon appears quite comfortable with banter – even very early I the concert. The following is a classic example.

'Well it's great to do our neighbourhood concert. I just want to thank the Police Department… (etc)…and particularly, people that never get recognised for doing good deeds for the city. A group of people that have donated half of their proceeds that they're making tonight, the guys who are selling loose joints are giving the city half of their income tonight' – to loud applause.

It takes well into the concert before Garfunkel ventures into banter with the audience at all.

Musical Style:

Acoustic/vocal duo – supported by 'big band'. The music of Simon and Garfunkel has become pretty much classic, spanning decades.

Performer Stage Presence:

There are some extraordinary aspects to this performance. Paul Simon is at the advantage of having his acoustic guitar strapped across his shoulders – giving his hands 'something to do'. Art Garfunkel by contrast plays no instrument and is hence entirely exposed and vulnerable.

He is at times, often in fact, visibly uncomfortable and awkward – to the extent that he actually folds his arms across his chest, whilst singing, on a regular basis. This is extraordinary for a singer, as the action of folding the arms tends to constrict the rib cage and therefore the diaphragm and the breathing – the actual driver of the singing voice. And yet what emerges is Garfunkel's extraordinarily angelic voice - which simply carries him (and his awkwardness) through the entire concert

Garfunkel's apparent shyness suits moments where he retreats into the shadows to allow Paul Simon to feature on the occasions where Simon's voice is soloed.

Design Impact:

The Stage Design appears to be based on a New York city rooftop – including fake air vents; fire stair exits etc. The fact that it has no wet-weather cover is an interesting choice for an outdoor concert of such high profile. The stage layout disguises the 'Big Band' to some extent – allowing the visual focus to remain with the S & G duo in the foreground for the majority of the time, and therefore featured as they should be.

Other observations:

Aside from occasional chatting to each other between songs, there are a couple of tiny moments which feature almost indiscernible communications between the two. Both occur in *'The Boxer'*. Firstly Art Garfunkel makes an error in timing of a lyric line (coming in too early) and then later in the song Paul Simon apparently plays a technical error on guitar (which is so subtle that it goes completely unnoticed by anyone other than Simon himself). Each instance invokes a look and/or touch between the players which is indicative of a strong professional and personal bond.

Bearing in mind that at the time the duo had split and had only recently come back together for this concert, these moments are quite precious. It's moments like these that these perfectionist artists demonstrate that they are indeed human after all.

Conclusion:

Besides being something of a musical and historical classic, this concert provides an excellent opportunity to study two complementary but contrasting personalities in performance in terms of their physicality and stage presence.

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Appendix 3:

Concert Analysis: Christiaan Willems

- 2007 Album Launch (*'Once In A While'*) – Performers Café

Concert 'Banter' Scripts:

- Introduction – Album Launch/*'Intoxicating'*
- *'Siam'* story
- *'Brand New Days'* – Audience participation

<u>CONCERT ANALYSIS</u> – *'Christiaan Willems*

<u>DCI Project 3 – Chris Willems (10 December 2007)</u>

Title:	*Album Launch Concert 2007 (on Video)*
Performer:	*Christiaan Willems (solo)*
Performance Date:	*2 November 2007*
Location:	*Performer's Café – Samford, Australia*
Style of Concert:	*Café Style – intimate venue*
Shooting Style:	*Single camera (Teone Reinthal)*

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N.B.   In electronic form, please view in 'PRINT LAYOUT VIEW'

Introduction:

As per Appendix 2 - Concert Analyses of Various Artists - similar observation analysis and discussion has also been applied to videotaped concerts of the author/performer spanning 2005 to 2007

These concerts cover the launches of two solo albums, in different venues, over that time, but the focus of this analysis is particularly on the 2007 Album Launch of 'Blind Collaboration album, *'Once In A While'* - brief excerpts of these concerts, illustrating particular points of discussion, also appear in various of the VODcasts associated with this paper.

It should be noted that this analysis is restricted specifically to the author's **Musical** performance context and not dedicated **Mime** performance context – other than the influence which the Mime has had over the Musical, and essentially forms the subject of these writings and associated VODcasts.

Relevance to DCI Project 3:

The analysis of this performance, together with the several others across a range of performance styles, contexts and artists, provides a comprehensive background for the question of what makes a good performance – not just musically but equally importantly how the performer relates (or not) to the audience in the non-musical aspects of the performance.

Key Observations:

Audience Contact:

Across a selection of concerts over a couple of years there is evidence of a growing clarity and confidence in performer/audience contact. The performer has created some specific and direct performer/audience interactions, but contact remains largely with and through the songs themselves.

In terms of contact with the audience, when I perform music (acoustic guitar & voice) I invariably have my eyes closed while singing. This happens mainly because eye contact with the audience is really difficult in a small venue/intimate setting. They are too close, too visible and – if I am honest – too intimidating. The only time I do not have my eyes shut is when I need to look at the fretboard of the guitar so my fingers end up in the right place for chord changes. In doing that my eyes still do not make contact with the audience, however it may be that this is a reasonable compromise – for part of the time.

Banter:

Therefore, what this means is that the only opportunity I have to contact the audience directly is via the between-song-banter. So I need to focus my directorial attention on this aspect of my live performance. Not only can and do I need to utilise this to reach the audience directly but also use it as an opportunity to re-reach the audience if any of them are 'put off' by my closed eyes during the songs. I want them to relate to me as a 'good bloke', an unassuming, modest but confident and easy-to-relate to artist/person. What I do not want to do is to create an impression that I am arrogant, 'up myself', self-obsessed or 'better than them', just because I am the one who is up there, in front of them, performing. This cannot be left to the chance of unrehearsed chat (especially when suffering performance anxiety) – it needs to be planned, composed and rehearsed.

Musical Style:

Semi-acoustic, solo. The songs reflect a style influenced and informed by many musical styles (and other non-musical artistic input and experience). Described by one reviewer as *'jazz tinged'* (Cullen 2007) the musical style has been (erroneously in many cases in my view) also compared with various artists/songwriters such as George Michael, Bernard Fanning, Norah Jones, The Whitlams, Van Morrison, Jethro Tull, Donovan, John Lennon, Gordon Lightfoot, Lisa Lauren, the Everly Brothers(?!) etc. The thing about musical styles is that we tend to selectively hear, tune into, and focus upon, details within an artist's songs which reflect elements of our own favourite artists' work and we then draw inevitable comparisons and hear similarities between them – real or imagined.

Performer Stage Presence:

When not actually singing into the microphone, the performer tends to hunch over the guitar somewhat, this has the tendency to undermine stage presence generally, whereas during sung passages the performer is more upright (for mouth to reach microphone) which tends to enhance presence. The issue of eyes being closed whilst singing is a tricky one – this could be perceived as a lack of confidence, undermining presence, or could be 'emotional engagement' with the lyrics and/or melodic structure – that *'introspective demeanour, with eyes closed and a pained expression'* (Thompson, Graham & Russo, 2005, p. 207) which reinforces engagement with the material, stage presence and audience involvement.

The jury is still out on that one.

Design Impact:

The Design – even in a small 'd' sense – is a crucial part of any concert. This may seem obvious but it is extraordinary how easily forgotten (or ignored) it can be. This performer has developed a simple staging layout to define the performance area (whatever the venue) and create an easy-to-focus-on performance space (refer 'Designing the Space', p. 77 & 78 and VODcasts 31 & 32)

Conclusion:

In terms of relating to the audience, there are essentially two aspects to this.

The first is through the music itself – the **indirect** audience contact through the content, style and character of the songs' music and lyrics. It could be argued that there is direct audience contact through the songs but the songs are themselves in a sense 'characters' through which the audience relates to the artist. They relate to the story of the song, the character portrayals within the song and the emotional impact the songs carries for each listener – which will be different for each individual (refer Jonathan Miller, 1995, p. 21).

The second is how one relates to the audience **directly** through the non-song communication. Therefore, in terms of relating to the audience directly, this tends not to occur throughout the performance of a song. The only opportunity for audience and artist to relate directly is through the 'between-song-banter'. The audience can choose (or not) to speak directly to the audience and expose something of their own personality, as distinct from the personality/identity as embedded in their art.

It is about the music, it is about the personality of the performer, it is about how that performer relates to the audience, it is about how that performer relates to the material, it is about how that performer relates to co-performers.

It is all about the totality of 'the Package'.

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Concert 'Banter' Scripts:

Intro:

Thank you and welcome.

Tonight is about launching this new album – titled *'Once in a While'*

Last time I played here was in December 06 and I was then in the middle of recording the album.

That Recording process was quite unique in that I sent my Draft recordings out to a wide range of exceptionally good musicians - Jazz, Rock and Classical – and invited them to add whatever they wanted to the album.

Which they did.

The interesting (and tricky) part of the process was that I didn't tell them what I wanted, and at no stage did they hear each other's work – even on the same track – until the final mix.

So they were working totally individually and in the dark – hence I termed the process **'Blind Collaboration'**

It must have worked because within two weeks of completion, it was a 'Feature Album' on ABC Radio.

The first track from the album that I'm playing here tonight is a really good example of just how well the Blind Collaboration process worked.

It features the extraordinary talents of

- Jazz Pianist, **Jeff Usher**
- **Briony Luttrell** on Cello;
- and guitarist **Stuart Day** - playing violin

But here, tonight, you're stuck with just me.

It's called *'Intoxicating'*.

<u>**Siam:**</u>

This next song is called *'Siam'* - and traces the journey of my Parents from:

- their first **meeting in Djakarta**
- becoming **Prisoners-of-War** when the Japanese swept through that region and…
- their re-meeting after the war, and **getting married** – **in Siam** (now Thailand)
- …and finally ending up **in Australia**

Serendipity has played a very significant part in the creation of this album – and not just in a musical sense.

In the same week that the album came back from being pressed in Melbourne, I was watching *'Australian Story'* on ABC Television and it featured a woman by the name of **Jan Ruffe-O'Hearne** – who is internationally recognised for her tireless work trying to extract an apology from the Japanese Government for their WWII 'Comfort Women' atrocity.

As her story unfolded, it was clear that there were so many parallels between her family's journey and my own, that I immediately decided to send her a copy of this song *'Siam'.*

So, via a very circuitous route through the ABC – because they're scattered all over the place at the moment - I sent her an album.

After hearing nothing for a couple of weeks, one day a beautifully hand-written note arrived from Jan – thanking me for the album and saying that she *'loved the song, Siam'.* It was also clear that there were even more parallels between our respective family's experiences.

So while the song was originally written about <u>my</u> parents' journey, it is relevant to many, many others who lived though a similar journey.

This recording of the song features some **truly breathtaking guitar work** by **Steve Reinthal**…

Brand New Days:

This next song celebrates a time in the early 70's when I was in a Band called *'Silas Farm'* – which also included:

- Mark Hilton – who plays Bass on this album
- Sid Kidman – who is recording tonight
- …and Phillip Crockford – whom some of you might know

We used to take our music very seriously – so seriously in fact that we wanted people to sit and listen rather than dance. So we would construct the music such that it was virtually impossible to dance to – with lots of strange timing and tempo changes so it wouldn't get boring.

Of course we didn't realise at the time that after a while all those tempo changes themselves became boring…but there you go.

So, to celebrate that music and those times, **I invite you all to try and dance to this song**.

In fact the best Dancer wins an album - signed.

Those too chicken-hearted to try can be judges.

Here's a hint – it's in 11/8 – for some of the time, I think…

Appendix 4:

CONCERTS – lasting impressions:

Concert:	Year (approx):	What I Remember:
Beach Boys Surfaris Roy Orbison Festival Hall, Brisbane	1965?	*Throwing drumsticks away (Surfaris)* *Roy Orbison – solo*
Donovan Festival Hall, Brisbane Tivoli, Brisbane	1966? 1997	*Cloud photo; Lelena – replacing flute solo with 'damped' strings* *Quality of sound + chats*
The Who Small Faces Paul Jones The Questions (Doug Parkinson) Festival Hall, Brisbane	1968	*Overall impression only* *Steve Marriott's hair, Itchycoo Park – lack of 'chorus'*
Purple Hearts & Coloured Balls Brisbane	1969 2006	*Sam forgetting to come back in singing – after Mick Hadley's harmonica solo*
Johnny Cash Festival Hall, Brisbane	1970	*Humming off-Mic to get key;* *New baby/June Carter*
Jethro Tull Festival Hall, Brisbane	1972	*Stage setup – 'roadies' caps & trenchcoats'* *'a rather lengthy piece' ('Thick as a Brick') + drummer solo*

		'good fucking evening'
		downstage
		Panama suit
Yes Festival Hall, Brisbane	1973	*Mirror-Disc; Alan White – drummer (not Bill Bruford)*
MacKenzie Theory UQ Refectory Brisbane	1973	*Amazing! Silas Farm support act to them – mutual respect for their/our music. Drummer in neck brace. Cleis Pearce. Rob MacKenzie's wild hair & glasses*
Albatross Nimbin Aquarius Festival	1973	*Touring in station wagon with small amps. Chat afterwards. 'Hi, I'm Al, he's Bert, and he's Ross – and together we're Albertross'* (formerly Taman Shud)
Leo Sayer Festival Hall, Brisbane	1976?	*Audience participation (dancing) not very 'involved' backing musicians*
The Tubes Hammersmith, London	1979	*Theatricality*
Boomtown Rats Hammersmith, London	1979	*'I Don't Like Mondays' – intro – upset a few people in the U.S.*
Supertramp Wembley, London	1980	*'Smoke'; sax player on top of Piano; Long way home…*
Ultravox	1980	*Curtain up, drummer standing away from percussion with Percussion (electronic) playing. Swinging Light Bulb*

Billy Joel Wembley, London	1980	*Sax player – in audience (security guards)*
Leonard Cohen Hammersmith, London	1980	*Humour; 12 + encores; Backing singers – turn around* *'Bird on the Wire' start/finish*
Joe Jackson Brisbane Festival Centre Adelaide Brisbane	1983 1984(?) 2005	*Versatility* *New arrangements (a capella) of 'Is She Really…' etc*
Phil Collins Memorial Drive, Adelaide	1984	*Curtain set on fire (outdoor gig); Roseanne*
Ross Ryan Adelaide Cabaret Festival	1985	*Sense of humour; Slide show sheep/maggots; lots of chatting to audience*
Tears for Fears Adelaide	1985	*One had a cold.* *(Vicki B)*
Eurythmics Memorial Drive, Adelaide	1985?	*Not very good live;* *Big Zip to open stage*
Spandau Ballet Adelaide	1986?	*Sparklers thrown on stage. I realised that the simplicity of their arrangements & playing might have been a function of them not being particularly good players – although it still worked.*
Don McLean Thebarton, Adelaide	1986?	*Gathered some stylistically inappropriate musicians around him – awkwardness of guitar solos etc*

Hunters & Collectors Thebarton, Adelaide	1986?	*Mark Seymour – Flu/Laryngitis Small No. of Brass to get the fat sound*
Flying Pickets Festival Centre, Adelaide	1986?	*Breathtaking harmonies. 'Red Stripe' + short bloke antics*
The Pretenders Festival Centre Adelaide	1987?	*Different Bass Player; Fringe in eyes*
Tracey Chapman Thebarton, Adelaide	1987?	*Nelson Mandella release; (Paul Kelly as support); dressed in black; Shy, lack of confidence*
Paul Kelly Thebarton, Adelaide QPAC Brisbane	1987? 1998 2004	*Great ability to play solo or band*
Marianne Faithfull Adelaide Tivoli,Brisbane	1995? 2000?	*Brecht songs (2nd Tour - Brisbane)*
Simply Red Brisbane	2000?	*Short concert – tied his hair back for the encore*
Sting Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2000?	*Solid, confident; Throat spray; Guest singer on 'Pilot'; audience member invited up to sing on 'I'm So Happy'*
Luka Bloom Tivoli,Brisbane QPAC, Brisbane	2000? 2003?	*Beautiful guitar sound; new guitar called 'Coogee'*
Ronan Keating Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2002	*Bad audio mix; overproduction; stupid & restricting Set (holes) for other musos*

John Farnham Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2002?	*Very good singer; Something about overproduction*
Elvis Costello QPAC Concert Hall Brisbane	2004	*Excellent quality – don't remember any musical detail but wanted him to sing 'Shipbuilding'; Cotton wool in my ears because of tinnitus and Audiologist appointment next day*
Joe Camelleri QPAC Brisbane	2004	*Excellent performer; Style of music (Cajun influenced) not really mine*
Finn Brothers Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2006	*Excellent harmonies; Horse costume at start; Tim more 'in charge' than I had anticipated*
Shannon Noll Toowoomba	2006	*I left after the start of the 5th song - which sounded exactly like the previous 4 songs*
Nora Jones Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2006	*Very nice - easy. Very good musos. (some stupid woman behind me loudly singing along with every song – asked her to be quiet)*
Eric Clapton Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2007	*Virtually no audience contact. Two very good (different styles) guest guitarists. A bit boring/disappointing overall.*

Bernard Fanning Convention Centre Brisbane	2007	*Night before he got ARIA Award, Good concert. Bad seat – sightlines rubbish but paradoxically an interesting perspective of both performer and audience.*
Robert Forster The Powerhouse Brisbane	2007	*Interesting concert, RF chatting to audience; Female bass player – small stature, large Bass, great presence*
Missy Higgins Entertainment Centre Brisbane	2007	*Good concert, Sore Leg, chatty, personable, good singing, self-assured; Good tight band.*

Appendix 5:
ABC Radio Website

'Once in a While' by Christiaan Willems – Feature Album of the Week

Image from ABC Radio Website (accessed 9 May 2007)

Appendix 6:

C.W. BIOGRAPHY:

CHRISTIAAN WILLEMS *GradDipArtsAdmin. GradCertTTL. MA.*

Mime Artist, Director, Designer, Performance Coach & Songwriter

Professional Biography (as at May 2008)

CHRISTIAAN WILLEMS has worked extensively in almost every aspect of the performing arts and television - as a performer (specialising in Mime), writer, director, designer, musician, producer and lecturer. Christiaan began his artistic career as a musician in the 1970's with seminal Brisbane band *'Silas Farm'* (http://www.silasfarm.com/) – starting a musical journey which ultimately led him into theatre and television.

This evolving artistic focus took Christiaan to London in the early 1980's where he studied both Mime and Television Design simultaneously, and he has, since that time, continued to specialise in both of these areas - applying them to a diversity of creative projects for both stage and screen. His Stage work has been presented from the outback to the Sydney Opera House, Adelaide Festival Centre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, whilst his work in Television includes BBC, ABC, SBS, commercial and independent productions.

In addition, Christiaan's involvement in the Adelaide Festival and Fringe; Montreux, Banff and New York Video Festivals; Melbourne Film Festival; Queensland Biennial Festival of Music, Commonwealth Games Festival, and others, bears testament to his innovative, multi-disciplined approach to and achievements in artistic practice.

In 1990 Christiaan brought his parallel specialisations of Television Design and Movement together in a unique stage-to-screen adaptation of his solo stage show '*Son of Romeo'*. This program achieved international sales, broadcast and awards and was, subsequent to being nominated for an International Emmy, and due to its

'innovative use of the medium', included in the permanent collection of the **Museum of Television and Radio** in New York.

Throughout this diverse career, Music has never been far from Christiaan's artistic work - invariably finding its way into his stage and television productions. He has recently returned to it – culminating in 2005 with the launch of his first solo album, *'Trust No-One',* followed more recently (2007) by his second solo album, *'Once In a While'* (http://music.artsmedia.com.au). This album, which forms part of Christiaan's current Doctoral research, was recorded utilising a unique collaborative process – and some of the best musicians around – and was a 'Feature Album' on ABC Radio within two weeks of its completion.

In the tertiary and professional education sectors, Christiaan has lectured at QUT, Griffith University, is currently a *Lecturer in Design & Performance for Stage & Screen* at USQ and is a guest lecturer at University of the Sunshine Coast in *'Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship'*. In addition, Christiaan coaches television presenters, journalists, actors and performers in other tertiary and professional contexts, including specialist Presenter training for corporate executives who need to present, and represent their organisations - either live or on-camera for corporate videos, videoconferencing and/or internet distribution.

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