Combining Musical Identities through Composition and Improvisation.

A portfolio and commentary submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Abstract:

This research project aims to:

- Examine how my musical identity as Music-maker can be fused with those of contributing improvising musicians, throughout the collaborative process.
- Form creative methodologies/strategies to sufficiently accommodate the improvisatory approaches of others around my own work.
- Develop appropriate communication methods, including original notational systems; and explore ways in which technology can be harnessed, to help fulfil the above objectives.

This research intends to explore the extent to which improvisation may be incorporated into compositions, by means of practical experiment and investigation. The written commentary will accompany a portfolio of audio recordings and scores. Key works demonstrating various approaches and techniques employed will be examined in detail. An appendix disc of supplementary audio recordings and videos will also be provided to show piece-development and the evolution of my music-making practice.

My point of origin straddles that of a professional guitarist experienced in an array of improvised music(s), including: rock, jazz, fusion and contemporary improvisation, and that of a composer interested in collaborative projects which take advantage of the eclectic experience and skill sets of the musicians taking part.

Contents:

1. Acknowledgements

Thanks first and foremost to everyone that helped me to conduct this research. Without your commitment to each project as collaborators, performers, directors, arrangers, sound engineers and so on, this portfolio would never have been produced. I am forever indebted to you all.

Extra thanks to Colin Riley and Peter Wiegold for their supervision and to Jeff Rielly, Christopher Fox and Richard Barrett for giving me the confidence to embark on this project.

Further thanks to my parents and friends for their continued support throughout.

2. Introduction:

'To be a creator, requires operating in a shadowy boundary line between order and chaos' (Briggs and Peat, Quoted in Borgo, 2005, p.83).

As an improvising musician I have often found myself in positions of compromise; having to taper my instinct to cater to over-specific prescribed briefs. Directions such as 'Can you play this like Wes Montgomery?' or 'Make a solo like the one from *Beat It*' are commonplace – particularly in the commercial industry – and whilst this approach is considered quite normal, and is often a productive part of the music-making process, I have repeatedly felt as if I were being asked to fulfil idiomatic or timbral conventions to promote the intransigent voice of the producer. It would be far more engaging in these situations if I were allowed the freedom to inject my own ideas into the music as I feel appropriate and project *my* improvisatory identity.

It is this sensation that I wish to evoke in the musicians who contribute to the musical projects I direct by giving them licence to *co-create* when improvising. Whilst I maintain an overall sense of what a piece and ensemble might or 'should' sound like, I am always interested in drawing from the wealth of experience, strengths and tastes that improvising musicians provide. Moreover, it seems to me that to not do so in a collaborative setting is to miss the point of such an approach to music-making entirely. At the same time however, I am not suggesting that it is feasible to allow contributing musicians to have free reign over the composed material, as this could potentially counteract the need for a composer, or indeed a piece, at all. The question therefore is that of *balance*. How, and to what extent, can I as composer communicate a strong musical identity whilst simultaneously allowing contributing improvising musicians to do the same? As an alternative I will propose that the term '*Music-maker*' might be used instead of 'composer' as my role often encompasses performance, direction, editing, etc., depending on the piece.

I conjecture that in the creation of collaborative pieces a *triangulation* of musical identities occurs: that of myself as Music-maker, those of the contributing improvising musicians and that of the piece itself. I intend to explore this

relationship by creating different pieces which employ varying degrees of control and freedom, thus altering the balance between these musical identities. The compositional methods used to construct pieces will be examined and presented in detail, as will the theoretical ideas behind each.

I am also acutely interested in the formation of original 'sound-worlds'. In particular I enjoy constructing pieces for ensembles comprising of musicians from an array of musical backgrounds and cultures; experimenting with the possibilities of combining their respective differences in improvisatory approach.

I believe that to accommodate a musician's improvisatory approach *sufficiently*, a Music-maker must first consider the following:

- The musician's idiomatic perspective towards improvisation.
- Any cultural meanings attributed to improvisation.
- How the musician defines 'improvisation' itself.

By formulating an understanding of the above the Music-maker can attempt to incorporate the improvisatory approaches and strengths of each member of the ensemble into a piece. This allows the work to preserve, or establish, some form of relevant contextual basis for the contributing musicians' performance. Within this submission therefore, there will be a particular focus on the development of original pieces which sufficiently accommodate the improvisatory approaches of musicians from non-congruent musical backgrounds.

Various aspects of music-making have been investigated in order to fulfil my research criteria. These include: the derivation of original notational systems, the development of a language to guide improvisations, the possibilities of live direction and an embracement with technology – both as a musical force and as a compositional tool. Each will be discussed in turn and their implementation will be highlighted by referring to specific examples from pieces.

Research methods used here are practical, consisting of rehearsals, recordings, ongoing analysis of piece development as well as dialogue with contributing musicians to obtain feedback. To ensure that this submission constitutes as comprehensive and empirical research as possible, I have endeavoured to

validate my methods and techniques by applying them across an array of different ensemble types, including solo and duo performances.

The commentary will begin with a brief synopsis of each piece, outlining ideas behind composition, realisation and compositional devices employed, in order to provide the reader with a contextual overview. This will be followed by a detailed explanation of original compositional techniques and devices, and an account of their development through working practically with various musicians and ensemble structures. An aesthetic discussion regarding musical identity within collaborative projects will then address the impact of cultural and idiomatic approaches towards composition and improvisation on the music making process, before concluding with a personal summarisation of post-research opinions and future artistic goals.

3. Synopsis of Key Pieces and Practice

3.1 *Primal Soup*

– for *Sonority*: small ensemble (Electric Guitar, Tenor Sax, Drums and 2 x Live Electronics)
Track 1 on Portfolio Disc 1

This piece was composed for my small ensemble *Sonority* which comprised of musicians whose playing strengths, styles and backgrounds I was very familiar with. I played guitar in this ensemble as well as directed rehearsals and performances when necessary; we rehearsed regularly together for approximately one year. The drummer and I have quite varied improvisatory experience; the saxophonist is from a jazz background and both live electronics artists almost exclusively perform contemporary music.

 The idea behind composing for such an ensemble was that, writing for players I know well – as opposed to providing generic instructions – would allow me to imagine individual part development and the overall texture of each section more clearly in advance of rehearsals. Moreover, this should allow me to produce an accurate reflection of my intentions as Music-maker within the written material. The piece possesses a solid and identifiable structural framework even though the parts themselves contain much improvisatory freedom.

In *Primal Soup*, the players represent five of the main elements needed in nature for life to form (methane, ammonia, water, hydrogen and energy) and the sections reflect the different stages in the theorised process of abiogenesis. Initially I, the composer, am 'the creator' and by the end, the band – through their combined improvisatory voice – are 'alive' and function as a 'self-organizing system' (Borgo, 2005, p.126). The gradual decrease in improvisatory direction aims to achieve this state – see score.

The live electronics parts also utilise samples which are vocal edits from biochemistry lectures on this abiogenisis. My intention regarding the samples selected was to draw an analogy between the controversial debates of 'religion vs. science' and 'conventional vs. contemporary' music-making.

This piece combines through-written material with improvisation by using my compositional devices: 'Improvisatory Models', 'Milestoning', 'Functional

Descriptors', 'Forced Interaction' and original electronic notation, as well as the use of 'Global & Supplementary Scores' (See chapter 4).

3.2 *Dastgāh Piece #5*
– for small mixed ensemble (Tar, Percussion, Electric Fretless Guitar, Clarinet, Live Electronics)
Track 2 on Portfolio Disc 2

The idea behind *Dastgāh Piece #5* was to create a piece which accommodates different cultural approaches to, and understandings of, improvisation; together establishing an original 'sound-world'. This ensemble consisted of two professional Persian classical musicians playing tar and percussion, as well as a professional contemporary clarinettist, a live electronics artist and myself on fretless electric guitar.

After working with Persian musicians previously, as well as living in the Middle East for a while, I became attracted to the instrumentation and subtle approaches to long extemporisations found in Middle Eastern music. I decided to fashion a piece which combines the subtleties found in traditional Persian improvisation, with the free and technology embracing approaches found in contemporary Western music.

The most important aspect for me when creating this piece was to ensure that each musician's indigenous *approach* to improvisation, from whatever musical background, was sufficiently accommodated. Thus maintaining a level of contextual understanding for all, which is something that seems to be often neglected in cross-cultural collaborations. Many of the ECM releases of the early 2000s for example, featuring collaborations with Jazz and world musicians (e.g. Jan Gabarek's *Madar*, Anour Brahem's *Thimar* etc.) sound to me like 'modal jazz with a hint of Eastern influence' and in fact comprise a dilution, or homogenisation, of both idioms as opposed to an eclectic work in which both can coexist, or better still evolve into something original. This sort of 'dulling down' of an improvisatory approach is exactly what I sought to avoid when composing Dastgāh Piece #5.

It is important to note that this piece was the fifth in an evolutionary series. The four precursory pieces experimented with combining different forces, utilising different approaches to notation, aural transfer, sectional style rehearsals etc.

They were all rehearsed and some were recorded (see tracks 1 – 3 on Appendix Data Disc). This research process spanned over a year and a half.

Dastgāh Piece #5 may therefore be seen as a final re-working, containing all the aspects from the previous incarnations that I feel worked in practice and sounded good. It is worth noting too that my original Dastgāh system (see Appendix, i and chapter 6) contains four Gušes (melodic sub-structures), but this piece only uses two. This was a matter simply of taste and combinatorics. Some Gušes sounded better played on certain instruments or when paired with other improvisatory aspects, therefore I used those which I felt were the most successful overall, that fitted within the context and soundscape of this piece.

All five of the pieces in this series have a common identity as they are all based around the same melodic material (i.e. the Dastgāh), and traditional Dastgāh form is preserved throughout each (i.e. opening with Darāmad, traversing through various Gušes and completing with Forud). The only difference being that traditionally in Persian music such a piece would be performed by a solo instrument whereas here, the horizontal form is preserved but interweaves vertically through multiple instruments. Having said this, some elements of Western form are also implied throughout.

At different stages in the piece, some players adopt improvisatory approaches more native to their colleagues. For example, at one point the wind *improvises around* the melody of a Guše, whilst the tar accompanies him using a modal instruction. This element of 'switching' usual approaches momentarily was included to add interest for the players and to keep material fresh. John Butcher (2012, p.31) echoes this sentiment talking about his work *Sharja*, '...one piece was me improvising with a bunch of Lebanese musicians, who had never improvised outside their particular idiom. It ought to be what improvisation is more about...'
Apart from such instances however, and on the whole in *Dastgāh Piece #5*, each player improvises using the approach(es) of their own musical background.

This piece utilises my devices: 'Global and Supplementary Scores', 'Improvisatory Models', 'Milestoning', 'Functional Descriptors', 'Forced Interaction' and original notation(s) (See Chapter 4).

3.3   *Dastgāh Piece #6*

— for tar and fretless electric guitar duo; *then* solo live electronics
Track 3 on Portfolio Disc 1

After rehearsing and recording Dastgāh Piece # 5, I realised I'd like to produce one more piece which made use of my Dastgāh system. I had been considering levels of improvisatory interaction in other pieces, and decided to experiment with collective realisations of material, performed separately. I wondered what might happen if a duo made live and intimate recordings of the core Dastgāh material then passed the audio on to a live electronics artist to improvise with? How could I structure such a collaboration which would result in an identifiable piece; that at the same time allows for freedom, incorporating improvisatory expression significant to each party?

In constructing this piece I had to consider three improvisatory approaches, namely, traditional Persian, contemporary Western (free) and live electronic. I wanted to accommodate all three, prescribing some contextual understanding for each performer, with the goal to produce music which sounded eclectic and original.

My procedure to realise *Datgah Piece #6* was as follows:

i.) Initially, the Dastgāh system was given to the Persian Musician to internalise the melodies prior to any performance (see page (i.) of score).

ii.) Each melody from my Dastgāh system was combined with material for a Western improvising musician to produce a series of 'Miniatures' (mini pieces derived from the more successful sections of *Dastgāh Piece #1* [see page (ii.) of score]). These were then performed and recorded by the tar and fretless guitar duo. Samples of these recordings were then passed on to the live electronics musician.

iii.) The live Electronic score consists of a flow chart containing information about which samples to use as well as instructions on how to perform each (see page (iii.) of score). The final piece is the solo Live Electronic realisation.

The structure of the solo live electronic score (iii.) is devised such that globally it pertains to traditional Dastgāh form (starting with Darāmad, negotiating a series of Gušes then concluding with Forud). Also, the characteristics used to describe each section and the instructions for their performance reflect those of the original Dastgāh as well as the models for the duo performance. This assures continuity throughout each stage of the process; from the Persian musician internalising the Dastgāh melodies initially, to the duo's performance of each model, through to the solo live electronic interpretation. However, the soloist has much control over the piece's final shape and structure, as there are choices as to 'where they may go next' when performing; sections may even be repeated, or omitted. This allows the identity of the piece to be transformed to a greater degree by that of the improviser, altering the balance and weighting of musical identities from one realisation to the next (see chapter 7).

It is important to note that in the duo performance, as in *Dastgāh Piece #5*, occasionally the musicians are expected to improvise from their partner's tradition (i.e. the tar provides rhythmic accompaniment to the free fretless guitar solo and conversely the fretless guitar has to *improvise around* a Guše melody etc.). This hybrid of perspectives enforces freshness for the musicians involved and also promotes originality in the piece's identity.

The live electronics performance also contains a free solo section which can be revisited often. Here the musician is instructed to utilise the sample of the free fretless guitar solo from (ii.), thus building subtle bridges of collaboration between the Western forces. It would also be feasible for stages ii and iii of this piece to be performed in real time as a longer live performance.

This piece uses my devices: 'Functional Descriptors', 'Supplementary Scores', 'Improvisatory Models', 'Milestoning' and original electronic notation (See Chapter 4).

3.4   *Rich's Brew II*

– for medium sized, mixed ensemble
Tracks 4 – 5 on Portfolio Disc 1

'Where anything is written down it serves not as a perfect expression of the music to be played but as a starting point, a guide.' (Bailey, 1980, p.39)

Rich's Brew II is a one-page score which attempts to combine improvisation and written material under live direction. Provided on the page are notated *Improvisatory Models* (see chapter 4) which are to be allocated to improvising musicians by a director, who has overall control of the piece's structure and development in real time. A set of director's hand signals also accompanies the piece (see score). *Rich's Brew II* draws stylistic influence from modern jazz, and is named after Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*.

I have worked closely with Peter Wiegold as both a PhD candidate under his supervision and a performer in improvisatory ensembles he has directed. He has over the years dedicated much time to developing a unique signalling system which he employs to guide open group improvisations, in particular with his current ensemble *Notes Inégales*. John Zorn has used similar systems, for example in *Cobra,* which is directed by cards and hand signals. It therefore seemed attractive to investigate this approach myself alongside a one-page score, as well as to expand upon and reshape it, making it appropriate to fulfil *my* research goals here as Music-maker.

To develop the hand signals I first included simple numbers corresponding to the written models. The next additions to the 'Wiegoldian' system were the functional roles 'Augment', 'Arbitrary' and 'Free-solo' – see Functional Descriptors, chapter 4.1. I also added a signal for, 'Emulate', whereby the non-musical *quality* of another player is to be replicated by another. Signals for dynamics, tacet and stab were lifted from those currently used by Peter Wiegold.

Rich's Brew II introduces a *fourth* distinct identity in its realisation: that of the *Director*. Here the composer provides the 'building blocks' or 'starting points'; the improvising musicians provide the variable inflections on the material and the director uses both to mould and structure the performance. The identity of the

piece itself in this instance becomes a more complex point of interest as it is greatly affected by so many factors – see chapter 7.3.

Rich's Brew was initially trialled at an improvisation workshop at Dartington International Summer School 2011. Methods and content were revised and re-worked over the course of a year with various ensembles to produce *Rich's Brew II*. There are two versions provided here on Portfolio Disc 1, one directed by me and another directed by Andy Hall (see chapter 7.3). This piece was also performed live by *Vlookup* as part of a Music Orbit event at the Brighton Fringe 2012 (see track 12 on Appendix Data Disc for live video,).

This piece uses my devices: 'Functional Descriptors', 'Improvisatory Models' and 'Graphics' under live direction (see Chapter 4).

3.5   *Collage Impronet*
– for vocals + others
Tracks 1 – 3 on Portfolio Disc 2

Collage impronet is also a one-page score and demonstrates my interest in experimenting with alternative methods to realise existing scoring systems.

As the title suggests, *Collage Impronet* is a collage compiled from cuttings and edits of part-improvised material recorded by a network of musicians. The musicians were asked to follow the instructions on the score and each yield eight short recordings which were to be returned to me. The recordings were then collated by me as Music-maker in the role of 'Editor'; various effects and editing techniques were applied as deemed appropriate throughout the assembling of the collage. The realisation procedure and the affects of editing on the identity of this piece are considered in more detail in Chapter 7.4.

There are three versions of *Collage Impronet* provided on Portfolio Disc 2 (see chapter 7.4). The instrumentation used in each was: vocals, trumpet, alto sax, glock, marimba, violin, cello, double bass, acoustic guitar and fretless electric guitar. All players that feature on the accompanying recordings were of a professional standard with significant experience of improvising; improvisatory backgrounds here are predominantly contemporary classical or jazz.

The improvising musicians have been sufficiently accommodated in the sense that they have much freedom in their interpretation of the models, thus allowing for idiomatic and cultural improvisatory strengths, preferences and contexts to be adhered to. There are also instructions as to what to do should one not be able to perform certain through-written material due to instrument limitations (this was integrated to allow scope to include non-Western musicians).The one hour time constraint (see score) was included as a way to encourage, or almost force, spontaneity. If the players only have a set time in which to record the material, they will be under more pressure and therefore should produce more 'improvised' improvisations.

The text consists of a haiku I wrote some time ago. I noticed that the melody of the theme coincidently had seventeen notes, thus matching the syllable content of a haiku.

This piece makes use of 'Improvisatory Models' and 'Functional Descriptors' (see Chapter 4).

3.6   *(CoMA) Chameleon* & *Chameleon Starmap*
– for *CoMa East:* medium sized ensemble
Tracks 4 – 5 on Portfolio Disc 2

This piece was commissioned by improvisation-based ensemble *CoMA East*, aka *Firewire*. This band consists of around thirteen members, each of varying improvisatory experience and ability (Some professional; others amateur; some could not sight read etc.). The instrumentation is also not fixed; members come and go throughout the year and some play different instruments on different pieces – one might say that the line up is in a constant state of flux.

I therefore had to create a piece which portrayed my compositional voice, maintained an identity itself and could be performed by an ever-changing set of musical forces.

My approach to tackle this was to create a through-composed skeletal piece containing various improvisatory models and a theme. Regarding instrumentation, I included a 'lead' line which any *one* member could take up, as well as generic parts for 'C melodic', 'Bb melodic', 'C chordal' and 'other' instruments in order to accommodate any current or future player (there are also sub-choices of voices within the parts – see score). The members are instructed by the score to pick one appropriate part and stick to it throughout that particular performance. All five main lines are to be played by at least one player. The 'other' line is 'Graphics' based (see chapters 4.1 and 5) and was included especially to accommodate players who could not read standard notation, those who wished not to, and any instruments that may appear in the near future which may not be in C or Bb.

This open force approach allows the piece to be performed by any configuration of players, as each has 'a part' they can adopt. The overall sound of this piece, whilst structurally fixed and containing a recognisable theme, is malleable and is significantly affected by the performers' part-choices at the beginning of each realisation. This notion is reflected in the title.

Due to unforeseen circumstances within the band (several members left unexpectedly and time constraints in the build up to the performance date meant the piece had to be simplified in order to rehearse it thoroughly), the piece was rearranged by bandleader and composer Julia Usher and was renamed *Chameleon Starmap* (see Appendix, iv for Julia's scores). I have included both this version as well as a realisation of the original performed by my ensemble *Vlookup* (see chapter 5), to draw comparison (see chapter 7.5).

(CoMA) Chameleon uses my compositional devices: 'Functional Descriptors', 'Improvisatory Models', 'Milestoning', 'Forced Interaction' and 'Graphics' (See Chapter 4).

3.7 *Double Helix Collection (I, II & III)*

– for double bass and fretless electric guitar duo (+ effects)

Tracks 1 – 3 on Portfolio Disc 3

'...one remains aware of the composer from a distance through his score. And the structural indications in the score...ensure that those elements at least will make the result completely different from a free improvisation.' (Bailey, 1980, p.80)

Double Helix was originally one long piece written for fretless electric guitar and double bass duo (+ effects). However, after several workings and recordings it became evident that it was simply too rich in ideas and options to sustain a strong identity as a single piece (see track 13 on Appendix disc for recording). I therefore decided to reduce the content and divide its more successful elements into three short pieces which comprise this collection.

The *Double Helix* collection combines through-written material with improvisation and specifically explores the notion of amalgamating pre-defined structures with improvisatory freedom (see chapter 7.2). The pieces are derived from a mixture of Western improvisatory approaches (contemporary classical, free improvisation, jazz and the embracement of technology) which, in conjunction with the use of two forces with an extended or prepared nature (use of effects, 'fretlessness' of the guitar, C- extension on the Double bass etc.), aim to create an original sound-world.

The players intended to perform this collection are from different musical backgrounds idiomatically speaking. Rob Hutchinson is an accomplished classical double bassist with sufficient experience of improvisation and myself. The parts are written specifically with each player's musical background and improvisatory approach in mind, for example, the bass parts utilise more traditionally notated material – drawing from classical tradition– and the fretless guitar parts include more 'Functional descriptors' and 'free' passages – drawing from free improvisation tradition (see chapter 5.2).

Double Helix I draws influence from open modal jazz and provides musicians with a skeletal structure, with minimal musical information, alongside which they are to improvise.

Double Helix II is a modern take on jazz standard structure – comprising of an introductory 'head' and its recapitulation at end of the piece; sandwiching 'solo' sections.

Double Helix III could structurally be described as a kind of contemporary 'extemporised fugue', whereby model (i.) is played by a designated performer whilst another, different, model is simultaneously played by the second performer. Both then traverse the 'Improvisatory Models' (see chapter 4) in the same order ending the piece on the model on which they started, echoing the notions of exposition, development and recapitulation. Either player can decide to move to the next model, which cues the other performer to move on also. This inclusion of choice allows the personalities and preferences of the players to affect the duration and structure of the piece and provokes an extra level of interaction within improvisations.

This collection makes use of my devices: 'Functional Descriptors', 'Supplementary Scores', 'Improvisatory Models' and 'Milestoning' (see Chapter 4).

3.8 *'The Series'* (*Box of Serial, Serial Killer* & *Why So Serial?)*
– for solo instruments
Tracks 4 – 6 on Portfolio Disc 3

This collection of solo pieces combines serialism with varying levels of improvisation. Each piece was written for specific people and the degree of improvisatory freedom reflects the improvisatory approach of the musician in question.

The Series uses my devices: 'Functional Descriptors' and 'Improvisatory Models' (see chapter 4).

Box of Serial – for solo flute.

Box of Serial was originally composed in response to the Primavera 30th anniversary call for scores: *Crossing Boarders* in 2011. Inspired by the theme 'Crossing Borders' and in conjunction with my own research interests, *Box of*

Serial explores the boundaries between through-composed music and improvisatory freedom by combining elements of serialism and free improvisation.

It was selected by the panel to be workshopped and then premiered by acclaimed flautist Nancy Ruffer on the 22nd October 2011 as part of the Colchester leg of the Crossing Boarders programme. The accompanying recordings were taken from this event.

This short piece, or etude, provides an opportunity for the performer to explore several extended techniques, interwoven with indeterminate options for improvising. The improvisatory models are presented as written examples intended to guide and stimulate responses.

The piece was written by producing a prime series, then organising melodies based on serialist permutations (e.g. retrograde, inversion, retrograde inversion and inverted retrograde). The elements of improvisation incorporated at various junctions are also largely based around these permutations (For example, the graphic line on page three resembles the melodic contour of the inversion). Therefore, whilst space for freedom and improvisation has been included, the piece has a solid identity based in its serialist foundations.

Serial Killer – for solo Bass Clarinet.

This piece was written specifically for a friend of mine Tom Jackson, a professional clarinettist and excellent improviser. It was initially written to accompany *Box of Serial* as part of a collection for wind instruments.

Serial Killer explores several extended techniques including multiphonics and 'Jaw vibrato' (a new technique developed by Tom), and contains more open improvised passages. I wanted to provide Tom the opportunity to play freely, a licence to be himself as it were, within the confines of a structurally identifiable piece. As the piece develops, the improvisatory content increases, and in fact overrides the serial properties presented at the beginning. Improvisation is the 'Serial Killer'.

Why So Serial? – for solo French Horn

This piece was written specifically for a friend of mine Laetitia Stott, a professional classical horn player who has a keen interest in contemporary and improvisatory music. This piece was included in *The Series* both to explore a different balance between through-written and improvised material and to extend the scope of this idea to apply to a predominantly classical player. I was also curious to work with similar material but using an instrument from a different orchestral section.

As with the previous two pieces in this collection, *Why So Serial?* makes use of several extended techniques for the French horn, including bends and different types of vibrato. As the piece was written for someone with a solid classical approach to music, the score is for the most part notated in detail. Improvised sections constitute variations on the written material and indeterminate options to allow fresh realisations.

4. Techniques, Devices and Notation.
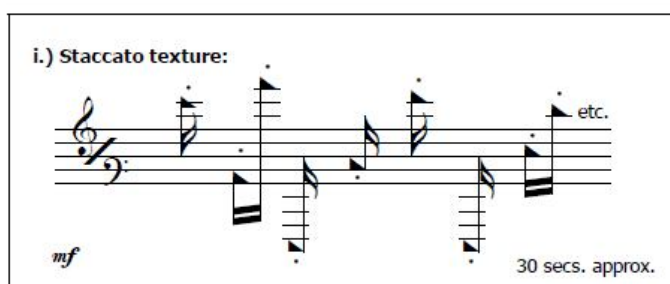
4.1. Outline of Compositional Techniques, Devices and Notational systems.

The following list describes some of the compositional techniques, devices and notational systems I have developed throughout this research project:

'Global Score' – a reduced complete-score from which every member of the ensemble performs (see *Dastgāh Piece # 5* Global Score). This shows all entries, major directions, interactions and function descriptors (see chapter 4.2) for all parts. Any additional details/ illustrations are found in supplementary scores.

'Supplementary Scores' – extra (individual/part specific) scores which accompany pieces to give further guidance or information for particular sections (see example in Appendix, iii,). These are usually written and presented in such a way as to relate to the improviser's individual approach (based on their musical background). These scores often provide illustrative examples of how improvisatory sections develop, however, they are guides only and should be observed, to assist improvisations, as opposed to 'read'.

'Improvisatory Models' – illustrative models which direct, assist and guide improvising musicians (i.e. notated starting points or examples of 'the kind of thing' they should play [*e.g. Rich's Brew II, Collage Impronet* etc.] or, a *choice* of melodies, rhythms etc. to incorporate [e.g. *Box of Serial*]). The musicians may be asked to perform one, several, all, or draw from as many as desired, depending on the nature of the piece.

E.g. 'Improvisatory Model' from *Collage Impronet*

'Milestoning' – where part-development for improvisers is guided by a chain of small notated figures/ examples. Used when improvised parts progress on the page from left to right (i.e. in linear time); usually contained within square brackets, linked with arrows (e.g. *Dastgāh Piece #5, Primal Soup* etc.*).
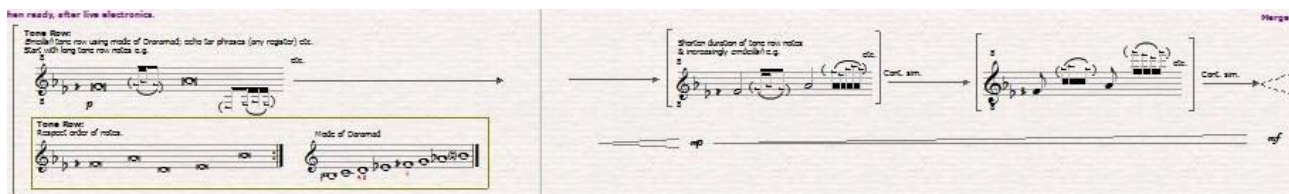
E.g. 'Milestoning' from *Dastgāh Piece #5* – Clarinet Part

'Functional Descriptors' – a series of terms which instruct players to play in specific ways or adopt various roles (see chapter 4.2). These may be used in conjunction with *Improvisatory Models/ Milestoning* etc.

'Forced Interaction' – where a performer is instructed to interact specifically with another part during an improvisation (E.g. '*Embellish* by echoing tar's phrases' – *Dastgāh Piece #5.*). This kind of instruction aims to provoke communication between parts at certain points within pieces, by encouraging selective listening.

'Graphics' – Graphic stimuli which consist of non-musical content. This may be a shape (E.g. (*CoMA) Chameleon*), an image or even a picture (e.g *Primal Soup*).

An **original electronic notation legend** developed through playing with and talking to live electronic musicians (see Appendix, page ii and chapter 4.3). Various symbols have specific meanings and improvisatory implications, which would otherwise necessitate much written direction on the score.

4.2. List of 'Functional Descriptors' (found in italics on scores).

These roles and instructions were developed by working with different sets of musicians in an attempt to create a musical language to assist and guide improvisation within pieces. Each definition evolved over several years of practical application.

Role based

The consideration of these four roles when playing improvised music is essential. An individual's role may change very often or remain quite static, depending on the piece.

Free Solo: Improvise freely; top layer, prominent, focal point of music.

Support: Do whatever is necessary to complement another player whilst improvising (usually the soloist). This may include providing accompaniment (passive approach) or pushing a player (aggressive approach). Sometimes an approach is specified.

Augment: Enhance another player (from any of the four roles) by emphasising their rhythms, pitches, melodies, motifs etc. when improvising. (This might include: playing in unison, harmonising a melody, copying a rhythmic figure etc.). Elevate yourself to same level of prominence as the player you are augmenting.

Play Arbitrarily/ other: Extra musical input such as: Atmospheric, silence, complete musical disagreement, 'glitter' or 'something else' (Usually written as 'create ...' etc.).

The roles above, other than Free Solo, are often accompanied by an instruction (see below).

Instruction based

Occasionally these instructions are accompanied by fuller, piece-specific direction.

Embellish: Decorate material provided.

Develop: Expand and elaborate upon material provided; do not deviate dramatically.

Improvise around: Improvise around the provided material with little restriction. Refer to/ Draw influence from written material but make your own.

Build Intensity: Increase overall intensity of improvisation by increasing content detail, register, dynamic, rhythmic syncopation etc. (apply any of above).

Reduce Intensity: Converse of Build Intensity.

See Supplementary Score: refer to Supplementary Score for detailed instructions for section e.g. Improvisatory Milestones, choice options (indeterminate), graphic stimulus, culturally specific notation etc.

Merge: Blend one section into the next (these may be improvisatory, through-written or combinations of the two).

Become disjointed: Gradually (or over time frame indicated) break away from linearity and other players. Introduce gaps in playing, and increase their frequency until completely silent.

Stop Suddenly: Abruptly cease section as directed by score. If no specific point is indicated on score, abruptly cease when you feel it is appropriate.

Freely Improvise: Play completely freely, adopting and changing roles as you feel appropriate.

4.3 Live Electronics Notation System

(see Appendix, ii)

This legend illustrates a notational system which was developed by working closely with several live electronics artists. The artists consulted each expressed the opinion that they are often included in works as a kind of superficial or atmospheric layer – or even sometimes simply to add a quirky 'modernism'. Therefore, I created this system in order to enable me to write inclusive and musical *parts* for such performers, as opposed to simply asking them to improvise alongside the pieces as they feel appropriate (see *Primal Soup* and *Dastgāh Pieces #5* & *#6*).

'Performing Rich Perks' compositions has been an eye-opening experience for me as a live electronics performer. My past experience of integrating laptops into instrumental performances has often been as something of an extra, following generalised instructions like "make a texture in the background" or "record and loop instrument x". These were nearly always verbal instructions, as musical notation is nigh on useless in the face of a Max/MSP or Ableton patch, and since no one could be sure what sounds I had available my input was often improvised. Rich has managed to devise a scoring structure which allows a very interpretive approach from the performer. General dynamics and important instructions are set in stone but the pitch, texture and tonal quality are left open, thus allowing the freedom needed in a world of rapidly evolving music technology. For the first time I felt that I was following a score with the ensemble, rather than being tacked on the side. The introduction of pre-recorded audio, created by Rich but manipulated by the performer, is inspired since it allows him to have a foot hold in the otherwise highly personalised sound of an electronic musician's setup, without dictating too heavily how the sounds must be used. Rich's approach to scoring for electronics is the most convincing I've seen in the five years or so I've been using a laptop in performance.'
– Sandy Finlayson, commenting on the notation used for *Primal Soup*, and *Dastgāh Pieces #3, #5 and #6*.

5. Ensembles, Duos and Solos

'[It's] not just me, but getting other people involved, in transforming something and making it something else'. (Zorn, 2004, in interview discussing his work and collaborative approach, *A Bookshelf On Top of the Sky*)

Throughout this research project I have worked with an array of different musicians and ensemble types. This chapter will discuss my practice methods as Music-maker and the development of the aforementioned compositional devices through different collaborations. Examples from pieces will be included where appropriate.

5.1 Ensembles

Sonority was the first band I put together at Brunel University, with the primary goal to develop notational guidance systems for improvisers; it comprised of guitar, drums, sax/clarinet and two live electronics artists. This band provided a particularly fertile environment in which to develop my skills as Music-maker, predominantly due to the fact that I knew each member very well and had worked with them individually in professional capacities for many years. This familiarity proved useful in several ways. I felt comfortable and confident in trying new ideas, moreover it allowed me to hone material and devices which catered to specific player's improvising styles; I could accommodate their differing improvisatory approaches easily. 'Milestoning', 'Functional descriptors' and 'original electronic notation' were initially established through my work with this ensemble (see chapter 4). The notation for 'Milestoning' evolved to *include* the 'Functional Descriptors' as I increasingly realised which aspects of interaction were intuitive to us and which needed prompting in order to reinforce the structure of the pieces. Various 'Functional Descriptors' were discarded as they proved to be less affective and others were added when necessary.


E.g. 'Milestoning with Functional Descriptors' from *Primal Soup* – Drum part

I also took advantage of the opportunity to work closely with the live electronics artists who would give me very direct and honest feedback regarding the notation, explaining to me any problems they encountered with my systems as well as those of previous composers and ensembles. At this time I was predominantly experimenting with pieces which develop linearly in time and which have a solid pre-determined structure. Musical content however had more room for improvisatory input and interaction. Over the course of a year we rehearsed several pieces, of which *Primal Soup* is featured in this portfolio. This ongoing practical exposition of my compositional devices was second to none and enormously influenced my later work. It allowed me to explore my 'own identity and the ways in which it may be shaped through immediate interaction with others *and* over time'. (Borgo, 2005, p.126)

Vlookup is an 'improvisatory workshop', and band, led by me and fellow PhD candidate Andy Hall; joint-hosted at Brunel University and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Regular forces include guitar, bass, trumpet, percussion, French horn, clarinet, piano, electronics, and a few homemade instruments linked to chaos pads. This variable ensemble continues to be very useful in the development of my music-making skills, in particular live direction and signalling and use of 'Improvisatory Models', see *Rich's Brew II*. Andy and I run the band as an open biweekly workshop and at each rehearsal various exercises, pieces or ideas are experimented with, allowing us to 'test-run' different devices and approaches to improvisation with a variable and wide ranging pool of players/ instrumentation. Drawing upon John Stevens' rehearsal approach, often 'a priority is given to the development of "aural sight" – the awareness of, and ability to listen and identify the sounds within the group environment.' (Stevens, 1985, p.60). Each meet is recorded from start to finish, which allows us to look back and assess which ideas were successful and which need further development. Band line-ups for performances are based on the nature of the gig and the pieces we are to perform.

CoMA East (aka Firewire) commissioned me to write a piece earlier this year. This was a great experience and was also quite challenging. The playing levels amongst the ensemble varied from amateur to professional and the attendance/ membership changed regularly. *(CoMA) Chameleon* was the product of approximately two months of working with the band and running rehearsals etc.

Given that some members of the ensemble were unable to/ preferred not to read standard notation, I added 'Graphics' to the piece which were to be openly interpreted.
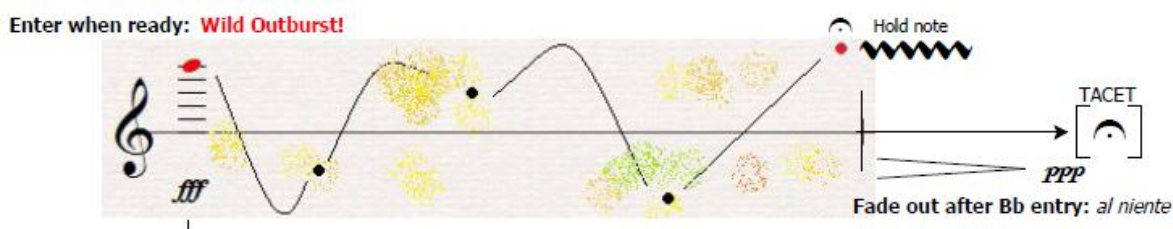
E.g. 'Graphic' from *(CoMA) Chameleon* – Lead/ Vocal Part
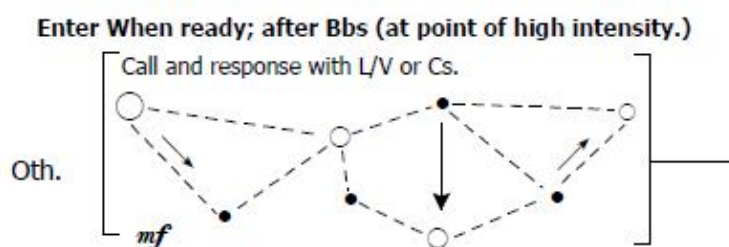
E.g. 'Graphic' from *(CoMA) Chameleon* – Others part

Unfortunately, prior to the scheduled performance of this piece several members left the ensemble, which reduced regular attendees from thirteen to six. Bandleader Julia Usher then rearranged this piece collating various Improvisatory Models and Graphics from my original into a one-page score as something 'freer', which was easier to rehearse with such fluctuating attendance and little time. The new version was named *Chameleon Starmap*. I therefore rehearsed and performed the piece with *Vlookup,* and *CoMa East* performed Julia's arrangement; both versions have been included in this submission.

I also worked extensively with a **Mixed Ensemble** of Western improvisers and Persian classical musicians when developing *Dastgāh Pieces #5* and *#6* (see chapters 3.2 and 6). The notion of performing from 'Global' and 'Supplementary' scores came from this project as did compositional device 'Forced Interaction'.

Tone Row:
Emellish tone row using mode of Draramad; echo tar phrases (any register) etc.
Start with long tone row notes e.g.

E.g. 'Forced Interaction' from *Dastgāh Piece #5* – Clarinet Part

5.2 *Double Helix*

'More time is spent rehearsing reactions than anything else: that is, the spontaneous translation of a framework (whose outlines are set) into a musical message.' (Jost, 1974, p.190)

Double Helix is the name of a duo comprising of Rob Hutchinson on double bass, and me on fretless guitar. We each utilise effects boards to technologically enhance our sound-palettes and both instruments are of a 'prepared' nature (see chapter 3.7).

This duo was set up several years ago and we have been performing contemporary material together ever since. I wanted to see if the techniques I'd developed in ensemble playing could be successfully translated to the more 'exposed' dynamic of a duo. The *Double Helix Collection* explores 'Improvisatory Models', 'Milestoning' and 'Functional Descriptors'. We found that scores, whilst useful initially to transfer musical intent and direction, quickly became redundant in practice as there were only two people's cues and interactions to consider when playing. Therefore we would rehearse through a score, learn the cues, functional instructions etc. then put it aside as to concentrate on the improvisatory qualities of the performance. This is particularly interesting when juxtaposed against the majority work with ensembles carried out in this submission, where I've found a score to be more necessary throughout. This level of confidence as an ensemble was only otherwise evident in *Sonority*, and that was after some time of rehearsals.

5.3 Solos

I thought it would be important for empirical completeness to experiment with solo works. Several solo pieces were written throughout my research and the way in which improvisation is incorporated has developed. On the whole the solo pieces included here in *The Series* are more conventional in their use of notation. They were written for musicians from Western Classical backgrounds and as such I felt it important to convey improvisatory directions in as familiar a way as possible. In each of these pieces the musician is provided with a linear score containing various improvisatory choices, stemming from indeterminate practice of the 1950s, and/ or embedded 'Improvisatory Models' where the model is placed *within* the through-written material. In such instances, a time allocation or number of repeats regarding that model is specified.

E.g. 'Improvisatory Model with choice' from *Box of Serial* – Solo Flute

E.g. 'Embedded Improvisatory Model' from *Serial Killer* – Solo Bass Clarinet

6. Cross-cultural Collaboration: The Persian Connection

'The least interesting form of influence, to my mind, is that of imitating the sound of some non-Western music...Instead of imitation, the influences of non-Western musical structures on the thinking of a Western composer is likely to produce something genuinely new.' (Reich, quoted in Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p.1)

This chapter will discuss the ways in which the culturally relative understandings and epistemologies of the Music-maker and the contributing improvising musicians might affect the identity of a piece.

When I began composing the *Dastgāh* series of pieces, I intended to explore the possibilities of combining improvisatory approaches from two different worlds: Persian classical music and contemporary Western music. Both of these traditions have rich and identifiable improvisatory characteristics which, due to the differences in cultural understandings attributed to a word as broadly used as improvisation, sound quite different in a number of ways.

Persian traditional music makes use of improvisation by way of subtle nuances and inflections based around melodic frameworks. It is on the whole devoid of harmony in a Western conventional sense and instead consists of combining melodic structures through cadential or pivot notes within these melodies. Also, the use of a non-tempered tuning system, which deviates from one set of musicians to the next, adds a further dimension to extemporisations.

Contemporary Western or 'free' improvisation on the other hand is based on the eclectic combination, or attempted negation, of idiomatic conventions mixed with European 'post-Cageian' tradition. There is often a sense of 'anything goes' regarding *what* is allowed to be included, providing the overall effect is desirable.

It seemed to me that to simultaneously accommodate such radically different approaches to 'improvisation' within a piece, one must also combine the respective compositional conventions attributed to each, thus yielding four potential 'cultural identity' outcomes:
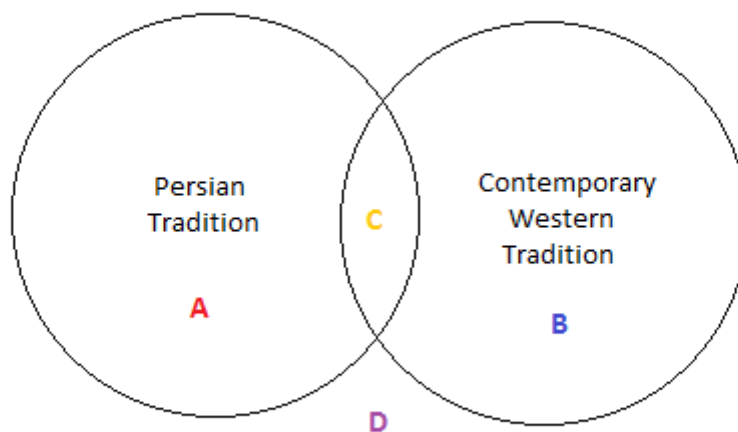
A — it 'sounds like Persian Classical music'

B — it 'sounds like contemporary Western improvisation'

C — it 'sounds like a combination of both A and B'; each are present but are distinctly identifiable.

D — it 'sounds like something else'; a true amalgamation of A and B has occurred resulting in an 'original, eclectic sound-world'.

Potential cultural identity outcomes for *Dastgāh Pieces*.

Considering the above diagram, when composing I hoped to create a piece which successfully achieved cultural identity D. It was therefore essential that the pieces, or 'compositional platforms', comprised a mixture of both cultures' compositional methodologies at a structural level, if unbiased sounding eclectic music were to be the result. It was imperative for me to avoid connotations of producing a contemporary Western piece which contained the superficial qualities of 'others'. I therefore ensured that each improvisatory approach was considered in a structured and pragmatic fashion to the best of my ability. Of course the desire to perform such a task is in itself inherently Western, so when I refer to eclecticism within compositions, I am referring solely to the actual methods and structures adhered to and not the 'need' to carry out such experimentation.

To begin with, I spent much time researching the twelve existing Dastgāh systems which constitute the Radif (collections of melodies, and attributed sub-melodies on which much Persian traditional –improvisatory– music is based; Farhat [1990] provides an extensive overview of the Dastgāh concept). I then constructed an original Dastgāh of my own, comprising of a Darāmad (opening section), several Gušes (attributed sub melodies) and a Forud (concluding section that returns to

point of origin). Care was taken to construct melodies and modal structures which echo and approximate the conventions found in the twelve existing Dastgāh systems (melodic characteristics, cadential properties, modulations, particular key signatures, emphasis of key notes, intervallic differences etc.), despite the content itself being new. The only exception being that I included the interval of an augmented second, traditionally not used in Persian music (Farhat, 1990), which adds a subtle Western tonality to my Dastgāh. Of course my scheme could only ever be an appropriation of such a rich and traditional system, but the decision to produce original material, as opposed to using an existing Dastgāh, was important for several reasons: Firstly, it would prevent the Persian musicians from reciting practiced extemporisations, within which habitual playing may be present, providing each performer with fresh and interesting material. Furthermore, it would allow my identity as Music-maker to exist within the Dastgāh's melodic content.

To assist with communication and in order to preserve relative performance practice, each musician received the material via different mediums appropriate to their musical background and worked with it accordingly.

The Dastgāh system was given to the musicians months before the performance. This was to enable the Persian musicians time to absorb and internalise the melodic content, as well as discover interesting ways the melodies might fit together etc., as would be the case if they were performing an existing Dastgāh traditionally. This allowed the Western musicians time to do the same, as well as become familiar with the non-tempered tuning system used here. Material was communicated through scores and recordings, as well as accompanying written descriptions of how each Guše is to be performed (style, feel etc.). This method of multiple-format presentation was essential if any form of true appropriation was to occur and moreover, it allowed for the establishment of 'my tradition' so to speak.

In contrast, the electronic musician's scores use an original notation to denote various sonic effects and textures, whilst the wind and fretless guitar parts combine a mixture of through-composed material and freedom, via my compositional devices – see chapter 4.

In *Dastgāh piece #5*, I finally felt that I had been successful in creating a piece with cultural-identity C which also contained sections of D. I felt satisfied that the piece

did not sound traditionally Persian, yet the 'Persianness' it did possess thwarted it from sounding like a Western free-improvisation with 'ethnic' instrumentation; on consultation the contributing musicians seemed to concur with this opinion.

> 'It sounds Persian, but not too much. I am happy someone has made some new Persian music!' – Payam Iranmanesh Zarandi, on hearing the recording of *Dastgāh Piece #5* for the first time.

There are passages of the piece, particularly towards the end of section B, where I feel that a state of an atmospheric non-traditional cultural-identity (D) occurs (refer to track 2 on Portfolio Disc 1 ≈ 5':25" onwards and score). This may well be facilitated by the inclusion of technology (effects and live electronics etc.) juxtaposed alongside the subtle nuances and timbres of traditional Persian instruments; however, I believe the improvisatory *properties* here are as influential in achieving this cultural-identity as the aesthetic.

About a year later, I decided to revisit this project and take it one stage further in an attempt to definitively achieve an original sound-world. In constructing *Dastgāh Piece #6* I wanted to experiment with the notion of different, non-traditional performance/ realisation methods. I liked the idea of experimenting further with live electronics, and wondered what might happen if I gave significant control over the piece's identity to a solo live electronics artist, having pre-loaded their audio material with devices used in the previous *Dastgāh* experiments – see chapter 3.3.

The duo recordings of the 'Miniatures' span cultural-identities A, B and C (see score page ii, and tracks 5 – 11 on Appendix Data Disc for individual recordings of miniatures). Once passed on to the live electronics artist, Sandy Finlayson, he was instructed to follow the structural rules and atmospheric aspects of the score, yet was left free rein with regards to sonority and manipulation choices. On listening to the first recording returned to me, it was evident that Sandy had tried to maintain the sonic content of the miniatures where possible and to decorate them with his own voice. I asked him to realise a second version, but this time to throw caution to the wind, emphasising that *he* was the focus of this solo piece and that the score and miniatures were provided as stimuli, not boundaries. This yielded a much freer and unique sounding piece; Sandy had this time injected the miniatures *into* his improvisations, as opposed to alongside them. The results

here, in my opinion, do achieve an original, eclectic sound-world and thus portray cultural-identity D from the previous diagram. The dissection of the performance approach seems to have enabled the soloist time to absorb the sentiment of the material and then channel it through his personal interpretation of the moods and basic structure defined by the score. The fact that elements of the miniatures – and therefore the original Dastgāh system – shine through at various junctures in this performance demonstrates how a sense of the Music-maker's *musical* identity has been maintained throughout each stage in the 'disjointed' realisation. The musical identities of the Music-maker, the contributing improvising musicians and the pieces will be discussed further in the next chapter.

7. Musical Identities

Having experimented with different ensembles and music-making approaches, this chapter will discuss the relationships between musical identities as well as the aspects of realisations which can be attributed to each.

7.1 Triangulation

The following models illustrate musical identity transfer for Music(s) which have influenced my research. It is important to note that these models are generalisations only; I am not suggesting that any example from each respective idiom pertains exactly to the identity transfer shown.

Western Classical tradition (and through-written music):

Composer —— Informs ——▶ Piece —— Informs ——▶ Musicians' realisation
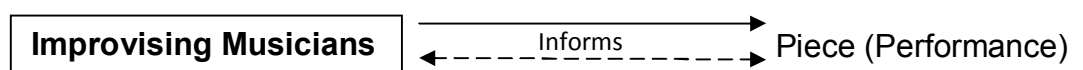(Score) (Performance)
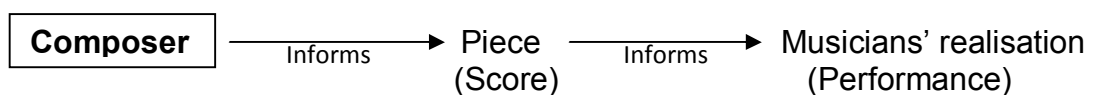
This form gives the composer's musical identity precedence and implies that the piece is a reflection of their intentions which is to be realised accurately by the musicians. The above chain implies a linear sequence of identity-transfer which starts at the composer and ends with the performance; the piece is defined by the score and the performing musician's identity is only present by way of inflections within the realisation of the written material. An exception to this might include figured bass in Baroque music, where the performer may indeed re-inform the piece using improvisation, however this would only constitute relatively minor adjustments to a piece's identity and the above order of identity-transfer would still apply overall. Also, if considering an orchestral score, the conductor's identity may be apparent from the score stage onwards, yet would not affect the musical content of the work.

The model for jazz looks slightly different, giving more emphasis to the identity of the performer by way of improvisation:
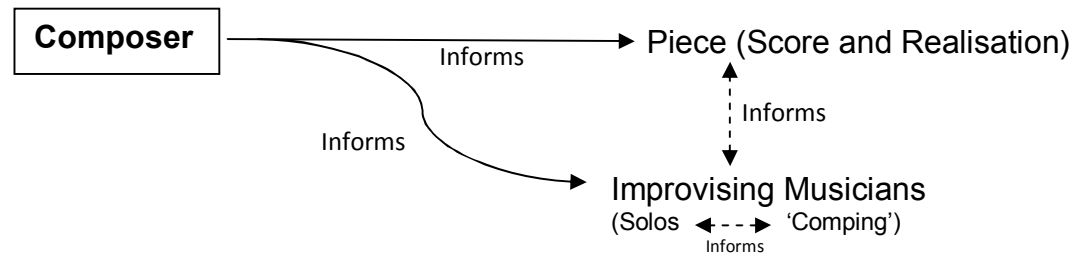
Here the composer has determined the compulsory thematic, harmonic and structural aspects of the piece – represented by the score – but allows the musicians the opportunity to improvise *within* his pre-defined framework. Traditionally an improvising musician may inform the realisation of a piece by deliberately deviating from the harmony, particularly in solos, in order to create various levels of tension and release; there is an interactive feedback loop between the soloist's and accompanists' improvisations which tends to adhere to idiomatic conventions. Musicians are also free to apply different stylistic 'feels' (i.e. Swing, Latin, Funk etc.) which again may inform the piece's identity. However, whilst the improvising musicians have influence over each individual performance, it is that which is recognisable across multiple realisations – the *constant* aspects – which fundamentally define the 'piece' and these are once again provided by the composer. Miles Davis' album *Cookin with the Miles Davis Quintet* illustrates this approach in that it comprises mostly of cover versions of jazz standards which contain much improvisation, yet the identity of each piece is clearly maintained.
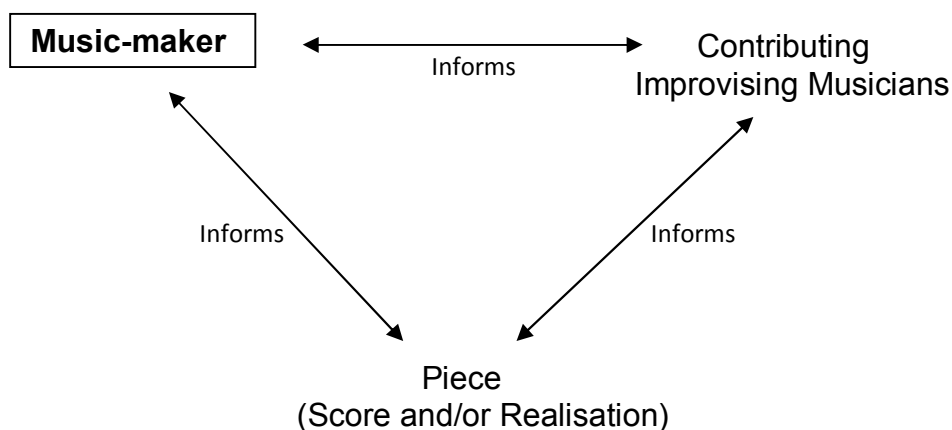
Freely improvised music, ranging from Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* to the 'non-idiomatic' work of Derek Bailey (1980), has a different starting point in so far as it has no 'composer' and no score. This yields the following musical identity transfer:

Here the improvising musicians create the piece as a performance, thus defining its identity as an exchange of improvisatory interactions in real time. The musicians then react to changes within this 'piece' and it evolves accordingly. This

process continues until it is decided that the improvisation is finished. The piece is spontaneous and as such is unlikely to be recognisable from one performance to the next, which is often the intention of free improvisation ensembles.

When considering the part-composed, part-improvisatory collaborations which feature in this portfolio, the analysis, recognition and attribution of musical identity becomes more complex. The three main identities present, 'Music-maker', 'contributing improvising musicians' and 'piece' (see introduction) cannot be mapped onto any *one* of the above models as the identity transfer is non-linear; each musical identity informs the other simultaneously and many aspects of one may merge with another. My approach to music-making has been significantly influenced by each of those above and consequentially the identity transfer in my work forms an amalgamation of all three. The model below therefore more accurately illustrates musical identity transfer in my work:

```
┌─────────────┐                              Contributing
│ Music-maker │ ◄──────Informs──────►     Improvising Musicians
└─────────────┘



        Informs                              Informs



                        Piece
                 (Score and/or Realisation)
```

Whilst I still provide the starting point of a piece, my *intention* is different to that of a conventional composer. Here a 'piece' is devised to function as a medium for collective expression, not as a reflection of one – *my* – musical identity, therefore the identities of the Music-maker and the piece itself must be considered independent (in contrast to the Classical and Jazz models above, where the identity of the piece is dependent on that of the composer). Also, the identities of the contributing improvising musicians may directly influence, even *define*, that of the piece as much as the Music-maker's, in some cases to a greater extent. Their decisions may even dictate the degree to which the Music-maker's identity is present, as well as how recognisable a 'piece' will be across realisations, depending on the piece.

As Larry Ochs suggests when describing his approach to composing for *Rova*, 'The devices used in any given piece are employed with the sole intent of realising the intentions of that composition. And the decision to use (structured) improvisation as a means of furthering those intentions is made in order to create the possibility of realising even more – more than the composer imagined possible when composing the piece (or section of the piece). Or, at the very least, to allow for the possibility of different – or fresh – realisations of that intention with each performance.' (Zorn, 2000, p.326)

The works presented in this portfolio have different weightings towards each musical identity from the above triangulation. Therefore to form suitable comparisons and analysis, these three musical identities must first be defined.

The identity of the Music-maker, which I shall refer to as *Character Identity* from here on, can be defined by the *musical* characteristics, qualities, preferences – 'the kind of things' – which feature often in their work (e.g. the inclusion of groove-based passages, dissonant melodic phrases, unusual chord voicings, odd tuplets, cross-genre/culture instrumentations, etc.). The more prominently these characteristics occur in the material or systems provided by the Music-maker, and/ or subsequently in each realisation, the stronger the Character Identity.

This is distinctly different from the *Piece Identity* however, which can be defined in terms of the specific aspects that are likely to be common from one realisation to the next. These may be determined by the Music-maker via the score and/ or by the contributing musicians during the realisation itself, depending on the piece. They may be *content based*, i.e. the theme is included in each realisation; *physical*, i.e. its overall shape/ structure is consistent; *methodological*, i.e. interactions occur in the same way etc. The more recognisable a piece is *likely* to be across alternate realisations, the stronger its Piece Identity.

To illustrate this difference, consider the two examples below (see Appendix Data Disc for recordings):
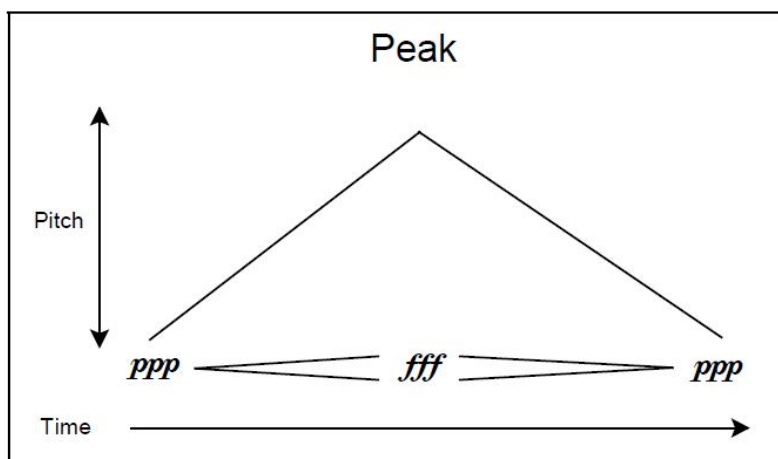
'Peak' – Rich Perks (track 15 on Appendix Data Disc).

In the above piece *Peak,* the Character Identity is minimal, reflecting very little indeed about the composer's tastes and musical preferences (other than perhaps that they like to give much freedom to performers). The Piece Identity however could be considered strong as its distinct shape would likely be recognisable from one realisation to the next regardless of duration, instrumentation, musicians who play it etc. Ultimately, it will always get louder and higher, then quieter and lower...it will form a 'Peak'.

'Scribble' – Rich Perks (tracks 16 – 18 on Appendix Data Disc).

Scribble provides a suitable converse to *Peak*, providing the ensemble with a score, *all* the ingredients of which are common to my voice as a composer. The Character Identity here is strong as, regardless of how much of the written material is ultimately included in a performance, *some* reflection of my voice as Music-maker will inevitably occur. However, as the content and structure of each

realisation is dictated solely by the improvising musicians, each performance might yield radically different sounding results overall. Thus the Piece Identity is potentially *completely* inconsistent, and therefore weak.

There are of course often elements of a work which may be attributable to both the Character and Piece Identity. Take for example a work containing a theme which is to be played compulsorily in every realisation. This theme would function as a substantial element of the Piece Identity but may equally reflect the Character Identity qualitatively. Therefore, individual elements of a piece may fall under either of the identity definitions above; they are not mutually exclusive.

The identity of the contributing improvising musicians, or *Improvisatory Identity*, can be defined as the degree to which the performers can exert their improvisatory personas in a realisation (i.e. how many musical factors they have control over). For example, a piece which only allows room for *Embellishment* or *Development* of existing musical content promotes a weaker Improvisatory Identity than one which allows the performers to *Improvise around* material, or define its structure (see chapter 4 for definition of Functional Descriptors). The relationship between Improvisatory Identity and Piece Identity is particularly important. If a piece is written such that the improvising musicians can make decisions which inform the subsequent musical content, in particular its overall structure, it could be said that it has a stronger Improvisatory Identity and moreover that this diminishes the strength of the Piece Identity. Chapter 7.2 discusses structure in more detail.

7.2   Structure

'...all my composed music has been concerned with the integration of composition and improvisation using non-traditional forms...inventing or reforming structures and systems that combine specific expectations (goals) with intuitive processes'. (Ochs, in Zorn, 2000, p.325)

A key attribute to Piece Identity is *structure*. The effects of varying structural responsibility on Piece Identity will be discussed here.

A pre-determined structure, provided by the Music-maker, increases the likelihood of consistency and therefore strengthens the Piece Identity. The shape, duration,

dynamics, interactions etc. are prearranged, giving more uniformity over multiple realisations (Note: This may also promote a stronger Character Identity if emphasis is given to the Music-maker's preferred musical characteristics). *Primal Soup* provides a suitable example of a piece with a consistent structure determined by the Music-maker.

If however the improvising musicians are able to make structural decisions, the shape of the piece becomes less consistent, and the Piece Identity becomes weaker; each realisation may sound quite different as a result of the piece's higher Improvisatory Identity. *Dastgāh Piece #6* provides an example of a piece whose structure, and therefore much of the Piece Identity, is affected by the improvising musician.

The following graphs help to illustrate these relationships:

Consistency/ Strength of Piece Identity in terms of Structural Input
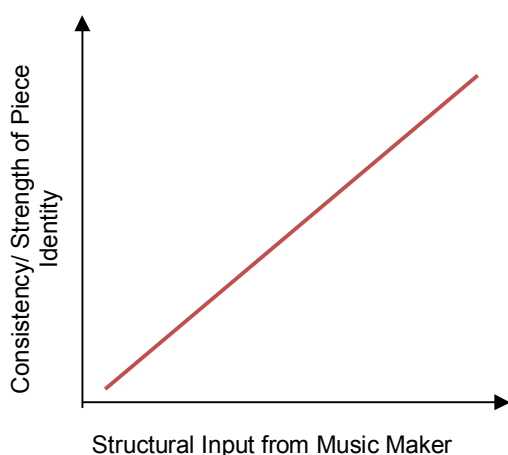
If the structural input provided by the Music-maker is high, the likelihood of consistency, and therefore strength of the Piece Identity, is also high.

Significance of Improvisatory Identity on Piece Identity reflected in terms of Structural Input
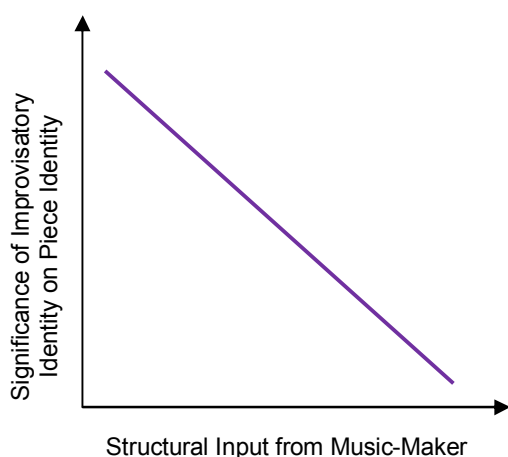

If the structural input provided by the Music-maker is high, the impact of the Improvisatory Identities of the performers on the Piece Identity is likely to be low.

Conversely, the less pre-determined the structure, the greater the significance of the Improvisatory Identities on the Piece Identity.

The *Double Helix collection* was created in order to explore this relationship specifically and provides suitable evidence to support the above notions (see pie charts below). *Double Helix I,* presents musicians with a fixed structure, a low Character Identity and much room for improvisatory interpretation. Rehearsing this track over a long period of time has confirmed that, despite it containing a good deal of improvisation, its Piece Identity is always perceptible if one simply observes the chain of musical events and interactions; the Improvisatory Identities of the performers essentially entangle themselves *around* the recognisable structure. A slightly different balance was explored in *Double Helix II,* which in addition to being based around a fixed structure, contains a very distinct theme – promoting a greater Character Identity – and incorporates improvised 'solo' sections. Here the inclusion of a recognisable theme combined with a fixed geographic contour, guarantees a strong sense of Piece Identity across multiple realisations. In *Double Helix III* the Character Identity is stronger still, with each model reflecting my characteristics as Music-maker, however more responsibility over structure is given to the improvising musicians, resulting in less consistency across realisations. The impact of the Improvisatory Identities is higher, due to the relinquishment of structural control, and thus diminishes the strength of the Piece Identity to a greater degree (see tracks 1 – 3 on Portfolio Disc 3).

Identity distribution of *Double Helix Collection*

| **Double Helix I** | **Double Helix II** | **Double Helix III** |
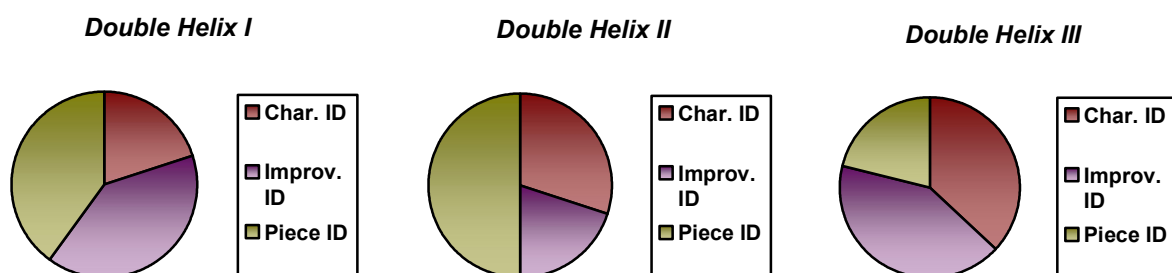
This trait is confirmed once again by *Box of Serial* and *Serial Killer*, which incorporate varying levels of structural freedom. The former contains improvised sections which are subtly embedded into the written material, and do not dramatically influence the form of the piece; hence the Piece Identity is very strong (compare recordings of *Box of Serial* – track 4 on Portfolio Disc 3 and track 14 on Appendix Data Disc). The later contains a 'free solo' section as well as open improvisations broken only by multiphonic chords, thus promoting a stronger

Improvisatory Identity and therefore a weaker Piece Identity (see track 15 on Portfolio disc).

It is important to mention that, where pieces are rehearsed extensively, players often develop habits or 'a set way' of tackling material. Under these circumstances it is possible for a piece to have a strong Improvisatory Identity (where the improvisers are responsible for structural decisions etc.) *and* a strong Piece Identity (due to their consistency across multiple realisations). Here though, the improvisers have essentially made the decision to shift the balance back in favour of the Piece Identity at the expense of a portion of their Improvisatory Identity.

7.3 The Director

Rich's Brew II has a variable identity distribution which is governed by a Director. This chapter will discuss the impact of direction on improvisatory collaborations.

As previously mentioned in chapter 3.4, the use of a live director introduces a *fourth* identity. Each performance of *Rich's Brew II* could sound distinctly different should it performed under a different director or contain a different set of musicians. This said, a sense of the Music-maker's identity must surely be present to *some* degree in any realisation. How much it is present though, depends on choices made by the director in that particular realisation. It is important to remember that the director has the ability to emphasise and enhance properties of the performance which do not relate directly to the written material (see score for Director's hand signals sheet).

Also, whilst the director is in control of the piece's overall structure and development, the fact that musicians improvise around the written material means that they have the power to take the piece in various directions which may have been unintended by the director. These then inform the director's subsequent choices and material allocation, as well as the way in which the other musicians approach their performance of such material, thus affecting the entire realisation itself.

Therefore each realisation of *Rich's Brew II* ultimately depends on decisions made by the Director, who governs a feedback loop between the written material and the improvisers in real time. See process diagram below:
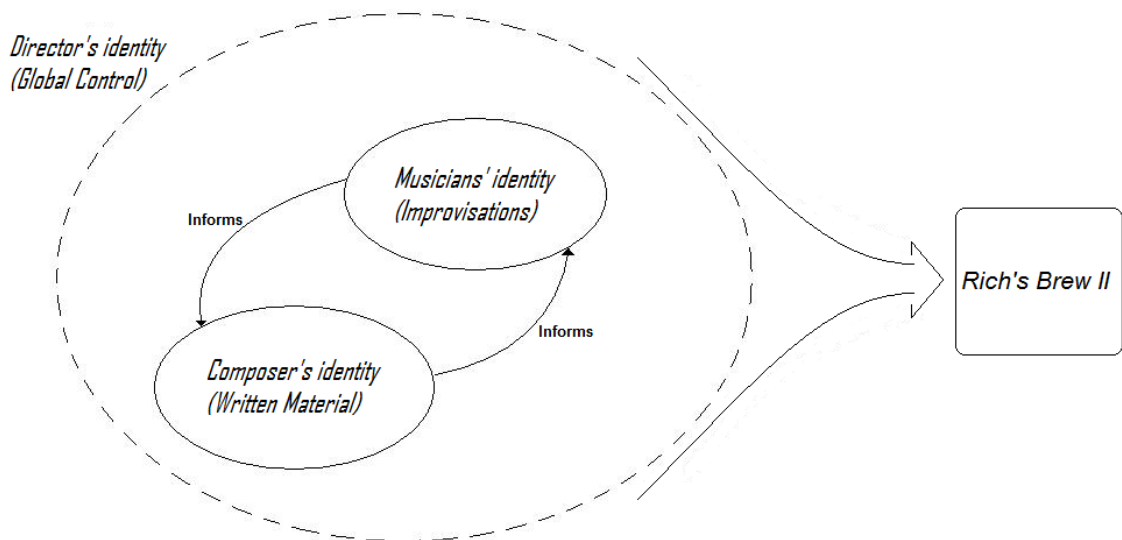
Realisation process for *Rich's Brew II*.

Several realisations of *Rich's Brew II* accompany this portfolio, but two have been compared here in detail. I felt it would be interesting to compare a realisation where the Director's identity is the same as that of the composer/ Music-maker, with one where it is completely removed. Would the former use more elements of the written material, thus promoting a stronger Character Identity? Or would they have an independent voice as a director? Would the later use less written stimulus, and focus more on the improvisatory interactions of the musicians? Both realisations discussed here were recorded by the same ensemble, *Vlookup,* on the same day and therefore constitute a controlled comparison.

The first realisation of *Rich's Brew II* was directed by me. Upon listening it is clear that the score is referred to regularly, with the *Theme* being particularly prominent (used similarly to a jazz 'head') and improvisations occurring over the constant bass groove. Direction is used predominantly to structure the shape of the performance, player's entries, and interactions. This frequent referencing to the written material does appear to illustrate a directional desire to emphasise my Character Identity. The second realisation however, directed by fellow PhD candidate Andy Hall, provides a complete contrast to the first. Here the scored material is referred to quite sparingly and instead his direction favours improvised excursions (See realisation-specific identity distribution charts.).

Whilst two recordings can only form a basic case study for comparison, by considering these polar examples; one can appreciate the degree to which identity distribution under the influence of a Director can be affected. As the score consists of Improvisatory models, all of which are characteristic to my voice as Music-maker, it is fair to assume that the Character Identity is quite strong. Furthermore, regardless of how many models are referred to in a realisation, *some* musical content is likely to originate from the written stimuli. This piece has no structural input from the Music-maker however and as the two versions sound very different, it can be seen that *Rich's Brew II* is potentially inconsistent across realisations. This may not be so apparent should many performances be compared of course, but the fact that an extreme difference is possible implies a weak Piece Identity overall. The Improvisatory Identity here has the potential to influence the structure and musical content of the piece, and is therefore also respectably strong. Clearly the most influential identity here though is that of the Director, whose preferences mould each realisation and affect the exposure of the other three musical identities according to his taste. The chart below illustrates a generalisation of identity distribution for *Rich's Brew II*, based on the two realisations considered here.

General identity distribution of *Rich's Brew II*

Rich's Brew II
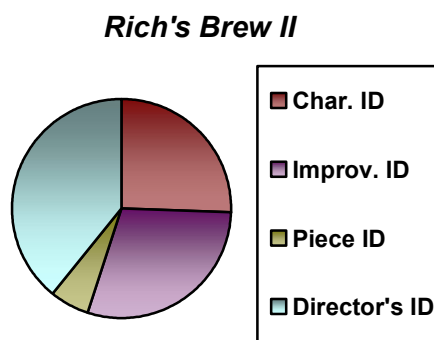
The proportion represented by the Director's Identity above essentially comprises a variable mixture of the other three musical identities. Here a Director does not introduce new musical content so much as guide or emphasise that which emerges from the Character, Piece or Improvisatory Identities. That is to say, what makes one director's influence different to another's (i.e. their 'voice') can be broken down in terms of their *preference* towards Character, Improvisatory or Piece Identity, as expressed in real time. The blue section above therefore could be re-distributed amongst the other musical identities to provide *realisation-specific* identity distributions for the two versions of *Rich's Brew II*. See Below:

**Realisation-specific identity distributions for *Rich's Brew II***
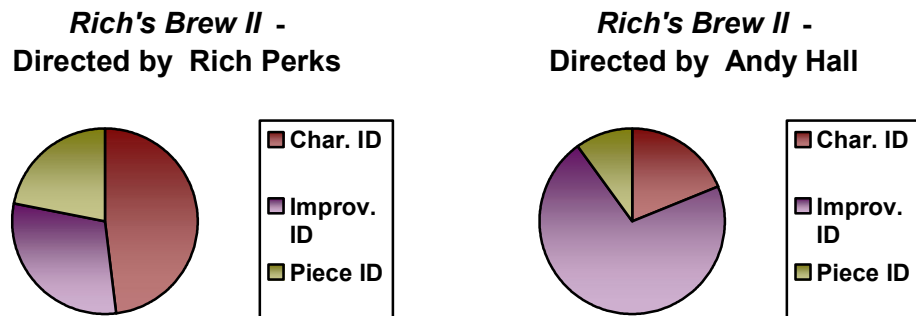
From these diagrams, the director's preferences for each musical identity can be clearly seen (see tracks 4 & 5 on Portfolio Disc 1).

7.4   The Editor

Collage Impronet also possesses a variable identity distribution, achieved this time by the regurgitation of improvised material via the Music-maker's 'filter'.

The realisation process can be seen clearly in the following diagram:
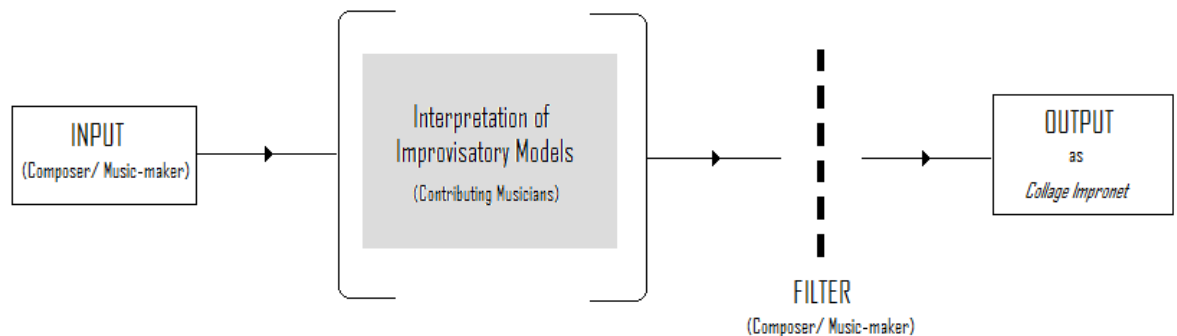
Realisation process for *Collage Impronet*.

From the diagram above, each stage of the realisation process can clearly be seen: the composer/Music-maker provides the input (score, instructions etc.), the improvising musicians interpret the material (providing recordings of models), the composer/Music-maker then edits and collates the material through his 'filter' and the output (audio recording) is realised as *Collage Impronet*.

Here it is as if the Music-maker samples the identities of the improvisatory musicians and then filters them back through his own; thus being able to maintain a strong Character Identity throughout, whilst utilising the musicians' improvisatory voices as an expressive palette to create the piece. At this filter stage the Music-maker is essentially acting as a musical identity 'Editor'.

I spent approximately forty-three hours editing the accompanying recording of *Collage Impronet* (see track 1 on Portfolio Disc 2) at the filter stage, where much time was spent aurally scanning the material for interesting and appropriate melodies, riffs, notes, sounds etc. then collating them together. It seems to me that it is *here*, at this stage, that the identity distribution for *Collage Impronet* is ultimately established. However it is not the taste of the Music-maker alone which determines this. Whilst elements of the original score are present in each of the musician's audio files, I found that often it was the more extemporised passages which yielded the most interesting music and enabled the piece to advance in different directions than expected. In fact, because of this, the piece was changing and evolving daily as I was editing the files together – almost as if I were improvising myself with the improvisations; with the added ability to 'correct'. Based on this realisation, the general identity distribution of *Collage Impronet* is approximated below:

General identity distribution of *Collage Impronet*
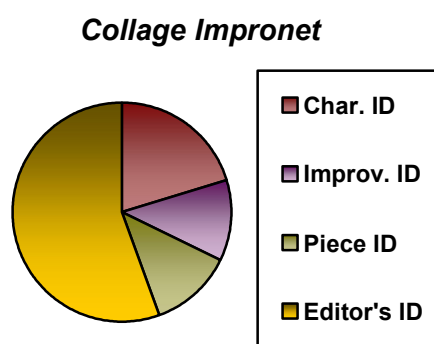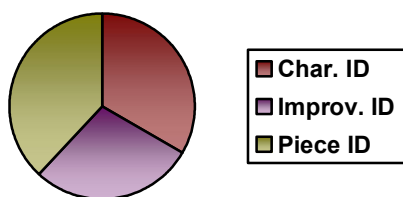
Collage Impronet

Here we can see that the Music-maker, acting as Editor, has an enormous influence over any realisation of *Collage Impronet*. As similarly discussed regarding the Director's Identity (chapter 7.3), the Editor's Identity essentially comprises a *preferred* combination of the Character, Improvisatory and Piece Identities. Therefore, the Character Identity emerges from both any inclusion of elements of the score which reflect the characteristic preferences of the Music-

maker, *and* the way in which material is collated together by the Music-maker in his role as Editor. The Improvisatory Identity is present through the amount of exposure and influence *allowed* by the Editor and the Piece Identity stems only from recognisable references to the score, as no structural indications are specified.

To perform a deeper analysis here, I considered the fact that the accompanying recording essentially consists of four distinct sections. These contrasting *parts* clearly illustrate the variability of the piece's identity distribution; they could even be thought of as four individual realisations. *Part 1* (0':00" – 3':30") is predominantly made up from material which notably reflects the models in the score; *parts 2* (3':30" – 7':28") and *3* (7':28" – 10':20") are based around more improvised elements from the audio recordings; *part 4* (10':20" – 13':03") provides a recapitulation, binding the sections together. I think of this realisation almost as a concept EP: whilst the sections portray different moods, they merge together to form one complete identifiable work. By considering each *part* of this recording individually, we can re-distribute the Editor's Identity to ascertain *part-specific* identity distributions:

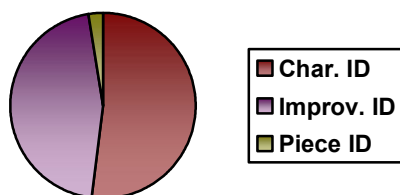**Part-specific identity distributions for *Collage Impronet:***

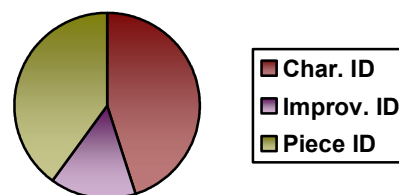*Collage Impronet -*
Part 1 (0':00" – 3':30")

Collage Impronet -
Part 2 (3':30" – 7':28")
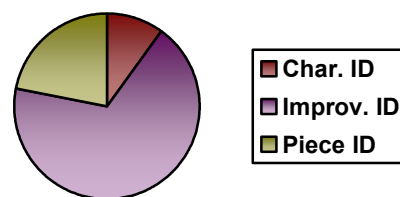
Collage Impronet -
**Part 3** (7':28" – 10':20")

Collage Impronet -
Part 4 (10':20" – 13':03")

Parts 1 and *4* draw heavily from the score and thematic material, thus promoting both a strong Character and Piece Identity. The recapitulation in *part 4* and the inclusion of the main theme and text play significant roles in establishing a recognisable Piece Identity. *Part 2* conveys a strong Improvisatory Identity, reflecting less in terms of Character Identity. The material is still derived from the score at this point however, so a fair sense of Piece Identity prevails. *Part 3* provides the most interesting analysis however. Whilst the audio used here stems almost entirely from the freer improvisations, and as such promotes a strong Improvisatory Identity, the way in which it has been edited together portrays a *very* distinct sense of my Character Identity. Therefore, extra Character Identity has been *distilled* from the Improvisatory Identity. As a consequence of these two identities being so prominent in *part 3*, any reflection of the score, and thus the strength of the Piece Identity, is almost negligible.

Having spent much time at the 'filter' stage when editing *Collage Impronet*, I felt that it may be interesting to produce a second version, this time with a constraint on the amount of time allowed to edit; thus limiting the amount to which I can favour my Character Identity and instead promoting the improvisations of others. I decided that the second version would be edited in no more than one hour – a complete contrast to the previous unlimited editing time (see track 2 on Portfolio Disc 2).

Identity Distribution for *Collage Impronet – Version 2:*

Collage Impronet Ver 2
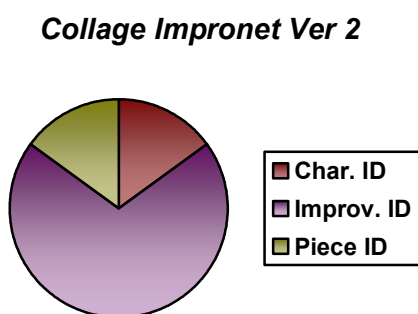
Collage Impronet – Version 2, was completed in fifty-eight minutes and very much confirmed the above conjecture. Whilst the inclusion of the thematic material portrays my Character Identity as well as the Piece Identity, this realisation relies much more on longer, unedited, improvised sections, thus promoting a very strong Improvisatory Identity. I found it particularly interesting how freer improvisations

could be successfully layered to create harmonic and textural foundations for the thematic material. This 'layering' approach emerged from the necessity to 'get finished quickly'; I had less time to 'correct' sections to make them reflect my Character Identity. This version also made me realise that the use of text (and voice) helps to establish some form of distinct and recognisable Piece Identity. As different realisations occur – whilst essentially any aspect from the recordings could be lifted or omitted by the Editor – the inclusion of words helps to weight the probability that *some* identity of the piece might be preserved from the input stage (score) to the output stage (audio recording), and across different realisations.

In order to be thorough I felt it was necessary to produce a third version of *Collage Impronet*, this time where the audio files were passed onto an independent Editor at the filter stage (see track 3 on Portfolio Disc 2). Until this point I had been acting as Editor and therefore any creation of original musical material at the filter stage must by default become associated with my Character Identity (as Music-maker). If an independent Editor is introduced to the realisation procedure, whose input creates original musical material pertaining to *their* Character Identity, then the Editor's identity cannot be re-distributed in terms of the other three and must be considered separately in any identity distribution or analysis.

The score and audio files were passed on to composer Josh Trotter whose only instructions were as dictated by the score; the effect of this fourth identity on the identity distribution can be seen on analysis of his version:

Identity Distribution for *Collage Impronet – Version 3:*

Collage Impronet Ver 3

- Char. ID
- Improv. ID
- Piece ID
- Editor's ID
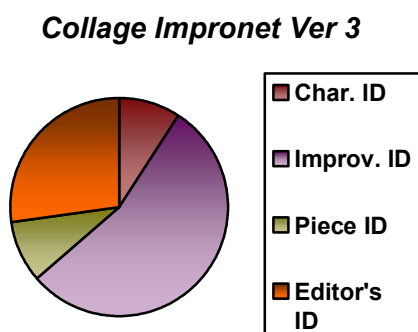
On listening to Josh's version it is immediately apparent that, unlike me, he had no bias or allegiance towards the thematic material when producing his realisation. The piece opens with a single disjointed interpretation of the main theme, which is

sparsely referred to subsequently, and only has passing references to the score, thus portraying weak Character and Piece Identities. He also used very little of the sung text which again reduces the strength of the Piece Identity. The bulk of the piece has been created by layering short chunks of the improvised passages to form new textures and melodies; these constitute original musical content and convey Josh's musical identity as Editor. It is comparable to my version 1, *Part 2* in that it develops primarily from the improvisatory material, and rather interestingly we both used the same exerts from the raw audio in places.

The potential possibilities for this piece, its realisation and this method of working are enormous: A different set of musicians could record the material, various time constraints could be added or subtracted, the musicians could improvise again over the Editor's mix etc. The list is endless. To explore each and every possibility regarding realisation here would not be practical and would span outside the confines of this research project, but they make for interesting discussion none the less.

7.5   The Arranger

When a piece is re-arranged a fourth identity is introduced in a similar vein to that of the Director (Chapter 7.3) and the Editor (Chapter 7.4). As previously discussed, the Director executes their influence on a live performance in real time and the Editor affects a final recording directly, post performance. The difference here is that the Arranger re-works, manipulates and alters the written material – thus affecting the improvising musicians' stimuli – *prior* to a performance.

(CoMA) Chameleon and *Chameleon Starmap* therefore, whilst sharing elements of Character and Piece identity, *must* have different identity distributions due to their respective arrangements. The realisation process of *Chameleon Starmap* can be seen clearly in the following diagram:
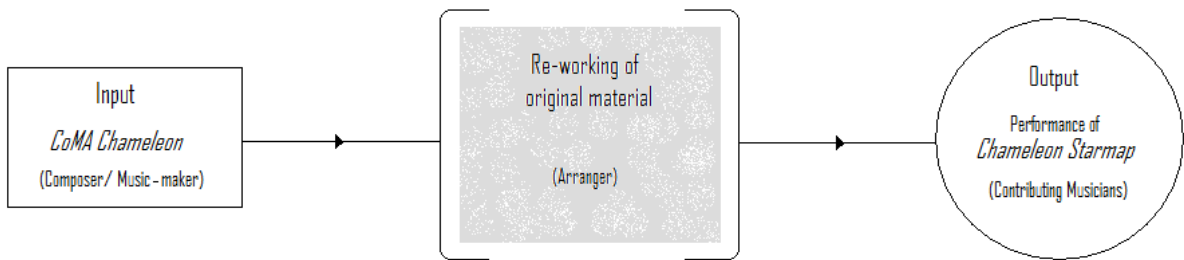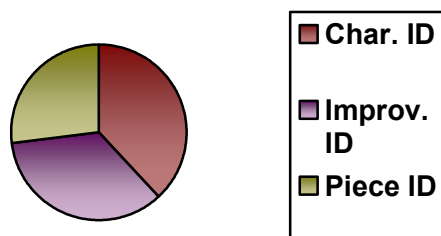
Realisation process for *Chameleon Starmap.*

Here the original score is given to the Arranger, who re-works the material into a new piece. This piece is then performed by the contributing improvising musicians. As previously discussed, I have included recordings of both *CoMA Chameleon* and *Chameleon Starmap*, with two different ensembles, as to compare the Character and Piece identities between the input and output stages above.

Comparative Identity distributions for *CoMA Chameleon* and *Chameleon Starmap*:

**CoMA Chameleon
- Rich Perks**

**Chameleon Starmap -
arr. Julia Usher**
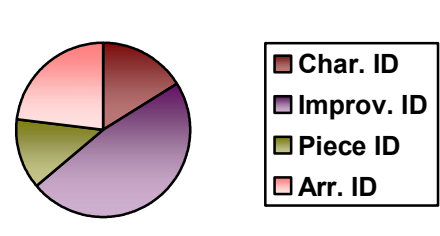
From the charts above we can see that both realisations reflect the Character and Piece identity to varying degrees (see tracks 4 & 5 on Portfolio Disc 2). *CoMA Chameleon*, performed by *Vlookup,* adheres to the improvisatory models and structure provided by the score, thus directly reflecting my compositional characteristics as well as promoting a strong Piece Identity. In *Chameleon Starmap*, performed by *Firewire*, the weighting of these two identities is reduced, via the identity of the Arranger, in favour of a stronger Improvisatory Identity. As was the case with the introduction of an independent Editor (Chapter 7.4), the identity of the Arranger cannot be re-distributed in terms of the other three as, by re-working the Music-maker's score into a completely different format, they inject their identity quite separately. I.e. by choosing to amalgamate the 'Bb' tonal

material with the 'Other' graphics – from the initial score (see scores) – Julia Usher has created original musical *content* and therefore has claim to a sufficient and distinct identity input.

8. Final Thoughts

This chapter will discuss my discoveries, thoughts and feelings having carried out this research.

When initially undertaking this research I set out to combine my identity as Music-maker with the improvisatory identity of others. I carried the notion that my Character Identity should constantly be perceptible to *some* degree whilst 'allowing' those of others to coexist within pieces/ realisations. However, on examining the various outcomes, with different identity weightings across alternate realisations, it occurred to me that some of the most successful realisations are in fact the ones which contain the least obvious amount of Character Identity (E.g. *Rich's Brew II* as directed by Andy Hall). This raised the question to me as to how *necessary* is it for a creator's voice to be heard at all in collaborative settings? In a modern and diverse world of music making, does it really matter if we can't hear the composer's voice distinctly? I have already stated that the identity of the Music-maker is apparent musically in terms of the characteristic qualities that are included in a piece (see chapter 7), and it has been shown that the degree to which this identity is audible can vary greatly across different realisations. Therefore perhaps what defines my identity as Music-maker should not so much be considered in terms of *musical* content (i.e. Character Identity), but in terms of the varied *practical* approach to creating music I choose to adopt. That is to say that my work is recognisably diverse, adaptable and accommodating; not that it necessarily always 'sounds like me'. As I tend to focus more on creating effective stimuli to provoke interesting musical outcomes rather than to portray a strong sense of myself to the listener, it could well be that what actually defines my Identity as Music-maker in *practice* is that it doesn't need to be present *musically* at all.

This being said, when considering the construction of pieces such as *The Series*, or *Primal Soup* (where I adopt a more 'traditional' compositional role, having much control over the musical content as well as the structure of the piece itself), my original notion is re-confirmed. In these instances, my Character Identity can be heard *very* clearly and is essentially infused with the performers' improvisatory identities. The 'inner-composer' in me feels that this approach is still arguably the most satisfying and tends to be received well by the musicians involved also.

It seems to me therefore that when collaborating artistically, there is a conflicting relationship between the end product (i.e. the music) and one's ego-driven desire to 'say what you want to say'. Whilst I personally feel that the purpose of collaboration is ultimately to produce 'the greater good', I would be lying if I were to suggest that I am content to negate my musical pre-conceptions entirely. *Rich's Brew II* demonstrates this paradox perfectly in that, as a listener, I prefer the version directed by Andy Hall, but as Music-maker I prefer the version I directed. This is possibly because the former contains interactions and structural movements, which were completely unforeseen by me as Music-maker, and is therefore engaging and exciting for me as a listener. On the other hand, the later sounds more like the initial idea I had when writing and thus quenches my thirst for artistic control.

Differences also exist when considering preferences as a player/ improviser and as a composer. As an improvising musician, even whilst playing on my own pieces, I perform quite independently from my compositional agenda. That is to say that once functioning as an improviser, I do not find myself necessarily trying to 'slip in' elements of my Character Identity as Music-maker. This is a complicated point of discussion as one might argue that I would compose my own guitar parts with my improvisatory voice already in mind, as part of my Character Identity; thus raising the question as to which identity informs the other? However, as mentioned previously, when acting as Director (and also performing), I clearly *did* try to promote a stronger Character Identity. So perhaps it could be said that when consciously *leading* a performance, my improvisations help me to 'nudge' those of others in various directions. However this can only occur in freer, improvisation based pieces, where parts are not through-written.

Another goal when setting out this research was to sufficiently accommodate the improvisatory approaches of the contributing musicians. To tackle this problem required an understanding of each player's improvisatory perspective, and the development of compositional methodologies which allow contextual space for each to coexist. *Dastgāh Piece #5* demonstrates a compositional strategy which incorporated very different improvisatory approaches simultaneously. Here, each musician worked from a notation and with definitions which were specific to their 'native' system of improvising. The result was a functional piece in which each

musician felt as if consideration had been taken to include their improvisatory background, and at the same time were influenced by the other players around them.

> 'The "free solo" I played was framed in a context that included specific material, such as microtonal pitches and certain melodic patterns. Being asked to "merge" into the solo demanded that I negotiate the material in such a way that is similar to my experiences in free improvisation. To end the solo at a certain climax was also an example of real-time problem solving that is familiar to the process of improvising music'. – Tom Jackson, discussing his performance of *Dastgāh Piece #5.*

The development of my Compositional Devices has provided some interesting outcomes. Some aspects aim to restrict performers; to make them perform in a way I (as Music-maker) want them to, whilst others encourage them to inject their improvisatory preferences as they feel appropriate. The integration of Functional Descriptors alongside Improvisatory Models has formed the basis of the majority of work presented here; the addition of roles proves useful in through-written pieces, particularly when not directed, as it clarifies to the performer what is expected of them within a certain improvisation, at a specific time. Milestoning has also proved very useful as Music-maker for maintaining a general sense of consistency within improvised parts, particularly if a strong Piece Identity was desired.

When considering the accommodation of improvisatory approaches, one of the most appealing tools to emerge from this research for me is the Functional Descriptor: *Improvise around*. The final definition of *Improvise around* (see chapter 4) evolved over several years of various careful amendments. The ironic thing about this instruction is that by maintaining a slight degree of ambiguity in its definition, it actually becomes more successful in achieving the goal of improvisatory accommodation. After presenting musicians with this direction (alongside an Improvisatory Model), and then consulting them afterwards, it was fascinating to observe their innate responses; particularly if the model used a stave. In such instances, musicians from a Classical background were still inclined to work from left to right. 'Looking at that model, I'd think you wanted me to maintain a sense of linearity' – Andy Hall commenting after performing *Scribble*.

This response is completely juxtaposed with that of the live electronics musician from the same performance who commented: 'as it says "with little restriction" in the definition, I immediately think great, I don't have to contend with sight-reading here; I can use the bits I like' – Phil Maguire. This interpretive dichotomy is illustrated once again by the performers' responses when directed to *Improvise around* the chordal model from *Collage Impronet*. Here the vocalist chose to sing slow melodic lines which traversed the chord tones, whereas the saxophonist saw this as an opportunity to play a bebop-style 'chord-cutting' solo. Therefore, the use of an instruction such as *Improvise around*, provides the Music-maker with an essential tool for extrapolating an improviser's native approach to a given stimulus. In practice of course, musicians often asked me to elaborate on the definitions, but I tried where possible to keep further explanations to a minimum when the intention was to evoke a natural response.

This research has enabled me to discover many new approaches to working with improvising musicians and to explore those which I feel yield the most successful balances of conveyed identities. Upon reflection of these findings, I intend to continue to develop working methods which nurture a music that allows each individual piece to lean towards any of the three identities considered above, whilst simultaneously allowing room for the others to co-exist. My compositional devices and definitions will inevitably further evolve through practical experience, but I feel that a solid foundation has been established here. Incorporating recording and editing techniques as Music-maker, as opposed to producer, (see *Collage Impronet*) introduced me to a new method of working which I wish to expand upon in future projects. I feel that the embracement of technology and knowledge of editing potential is of ever-increasing importance to any composer. As Stockhausen comments, 'I cannot imagine a composer making important advances in the future without a full knowledge of studio techniques.' (Stockhausen,1991, p.162). Working with such an array of ensembles has drastically improved my confidence in my ability to govern and direct musicians in order to get the best from them. This is another area I wish to explore in more depth in future work. I have discovered that in practice there is no substitute for clear and regular communication between collaborators in order to yield the best musical results and there is little room for a 'composer knows best' mentality, especially when dealing with improvisatory forces from such radically different musical backgrounds. 'So it is then that a composer working in structured

improvisations that are not formulaic must balance his/her desire for control with his/her desire to provide a vehicle for the players.' (Ochs, in Zorn, 2000, p.334)

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Jost, Ekkehard (1974), *Free Jazz*. Da Capo Press.

Maconie, Robin (1991), *Stockhausen on Music*. Marion Boyars.

Nyman, Michael (1974), *Experimental Music*. Cambridge University Press.

Solis and Nettl (2009), Musical Improvisation – Art, Education and Society. Illinois.

Stevens, John (1985), *Search & Reflect – A Music Workshop Handbook*. Community Music Ltd.

Sloboda, John A. (1985), *The Musical Mind – The Cognitive Psychology of Music.* Oxford University Press.

Titon, Jeff T.(2009), *Worlds of Music – An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*. Schirmer Cengage Learning.

Watson, Ben (2004), *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*. Verso.

Zorn, John (2000), *Arcana – Musicians on Music*. Granary Books.

10. Discography

CDs – Directly relevant:

Coleman,Ornette (1960). *Free Jazz.* Atlantic

Davis, Miles (1970). *Bitches Brew.* Columbia/Legacy

Parker, Evan (1993). *Conic Sections.* Pinnacle

Riley, Colin, and Whitehead,Tim (2003). *Tides.* Homemade

Scofield, John (2002). *Überjam.* Verve Records

Sharif, Farhang. Various recordings & *Youtube* performances.

Zorn,John. (1992/5). *Cobra: Live at the Knitting Factory.* Knitting Factory

CDs – Indirectly relevant:

Bailey, Derek and Oxley, Tony (1975). The Advocate. Tzadik.

Brahem, Anouar (2000). *Thimar.* ECM

Braxton, Anthony (1985). *Anthony Braxton Quartet (Coventry).* Leo Records

The Chick Corea New Trio (2001). *Past, Present and Futures.* Stretch Records

Davis, Miles (1956). *Cookin' with the Miles Davis Quintet.* Prestige

Davis, Miles (1959). *Kind of Blue.* Columbia

Davis, Miles (1960). *Sketches of Spain.* Columbia.

Davis, Miles (2001). *The Complete In a Silent Way Sessions.* Columbia

Garabek, Jan (2000). *Madar.* ECM

Holdsworth, Allen (1989). *Secrets.* Intima

Scofield, John (2000). *Bump.* Verve Records

Scofield, John (2003). *Up All Night.* Verve Records

Wiegold, Peter (2011). *Earth and Stars.* NMC

DVDs:

Baron, Joey (2004). *A Bookshelf on Top of the Sky.* TZADIK

TV:

Bailey, Derek (1992). *On the Edge.* Channel 4.

11. Appendix

i.) Complete Dastgāh System.
ii.) Live Electronics – Notation Legend.
iii.) Supplementary Score Example (from Dastgāh Piece # 5).
iv.) *Chameleon Starmap* scores – Julia Usher
v.) Portfolio Disc Contents and Personnel

i.) Complete Dastgāh System

Skeletal Melodies and Modes

NOTE: This collection of modes and melodies are to be practiced & internalised by all improvisers who utilise them within the piece, prior to performance.

F= *Finalis* (Final note)
A= *Āqāz* (Beginning note)
S = *Šāhed* (Prominant note)

♯ = *Sori* (Slightly sharp)
♭ = *Koron* (Slightly flat)

Note: Key signatures pertain to mode and range of Darāmad.

Mode of Darāmad
(And main mode of Dastgāh)

Darāmad

Mode of Guše 1

Guše 1: *Gentle*

Mode of Gušе 2

Gušе 2: *Energetic*

Mode of Gušе 3

Gušе 3: *Erratic*

Mode of Gušе 4 - (As mode of Darāmad - 1 octave higher)

Gušе 4: *Encompassing*

Forud - Cadential/ Binding section - played at end of Dastgāh.
(Based on same mode, range and key centre as Darāmad).

Descending melodic patteren with tremelo e.g.

Arbitrary descending melodic patteren with tremelo leads into Forud.

Hold trill.

In each Guše, the finalis may be approached by way of the 2nd above, or the 2nd below.

# ii.) Live Electronics - Notation Legend

Live Electronics
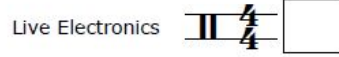
If stave is used, each line represents/indicates an output channel (e.g. 1 & 2 - Note: there may be less/more).

Whatever line symbols are placed on (or above/below) represents the channel through which they are to be played.
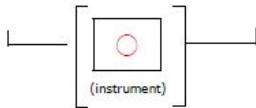
Large sound in low register. Expressed with volume swell. Usually accompanied by rhythm and/or harmonic directions.
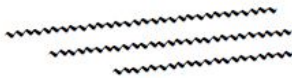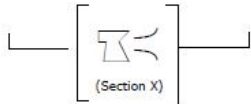
Layered/ sustained textures: Constant long sounds. The number of lines indicates texture & frequency density.
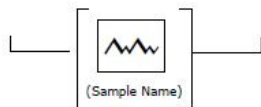
Spacious/sporadic texture: Constant short bursts of sound, over a wide frequency band.

(instrument)

Record specified instrument(s) for duration indicated.
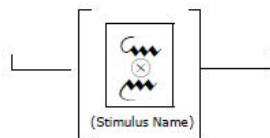
(Section X)

Regurgitate, extemporise with and manipulate material recorded in previous section for duration indicated (This may occur on one channel alongside other symbols/ instructions).

(Sample Name)

Incorporate specific pre-determined sample (often vocal) as directed, for duration indicated.

○ = Loop: Continuously repeat full sample.

(Stimulus Name)

Improvise from visual stimulus (i.e. Graphic score/ picture etc.) for duration indicated.

❋

Play any sound (providing consistent). Usually accompanied by directions.

iii.) Dastgāh Piece #5 - Wind

Supplementary Score
(Concert)

A

Tone row:
Respect order of notes.

Time:
0'.40" - 1'.00"
approx.

Enter, when ready, after live electronics

Embellish tone row with notes from mode of
Darāmad, echo tar's phrases (any register) etc.
Start with long tone row notes e.g.

p

Shorten duration of tone row
notes and increasingly embellish e.g.

Cont. Sim.

etc.

etc.

etc.

2'.00"
approx.

mf

Time:
2'.30"
approx.

Cont. Sim.

Merge

(after guitar entry)

Guše 2:
Improvise around Guše 2 melody.
(See supplementary Dastgāh System).

etc.

3'.45"
approx.

Build Intensity

f

4'.00"
approx.

Merge

(As L.E. &
Per. fade)

FREE SOLO

ff

5'.00"
approx.

**Stop suddenly
with tar.**

TACET

Build Intensity

fff

(after guitar tacet)

70

iv.) *Chameleon Starmap* – Scores arr. by Julia Usher.

C INSTRUMENTS

Bb PARTS

COR IN F
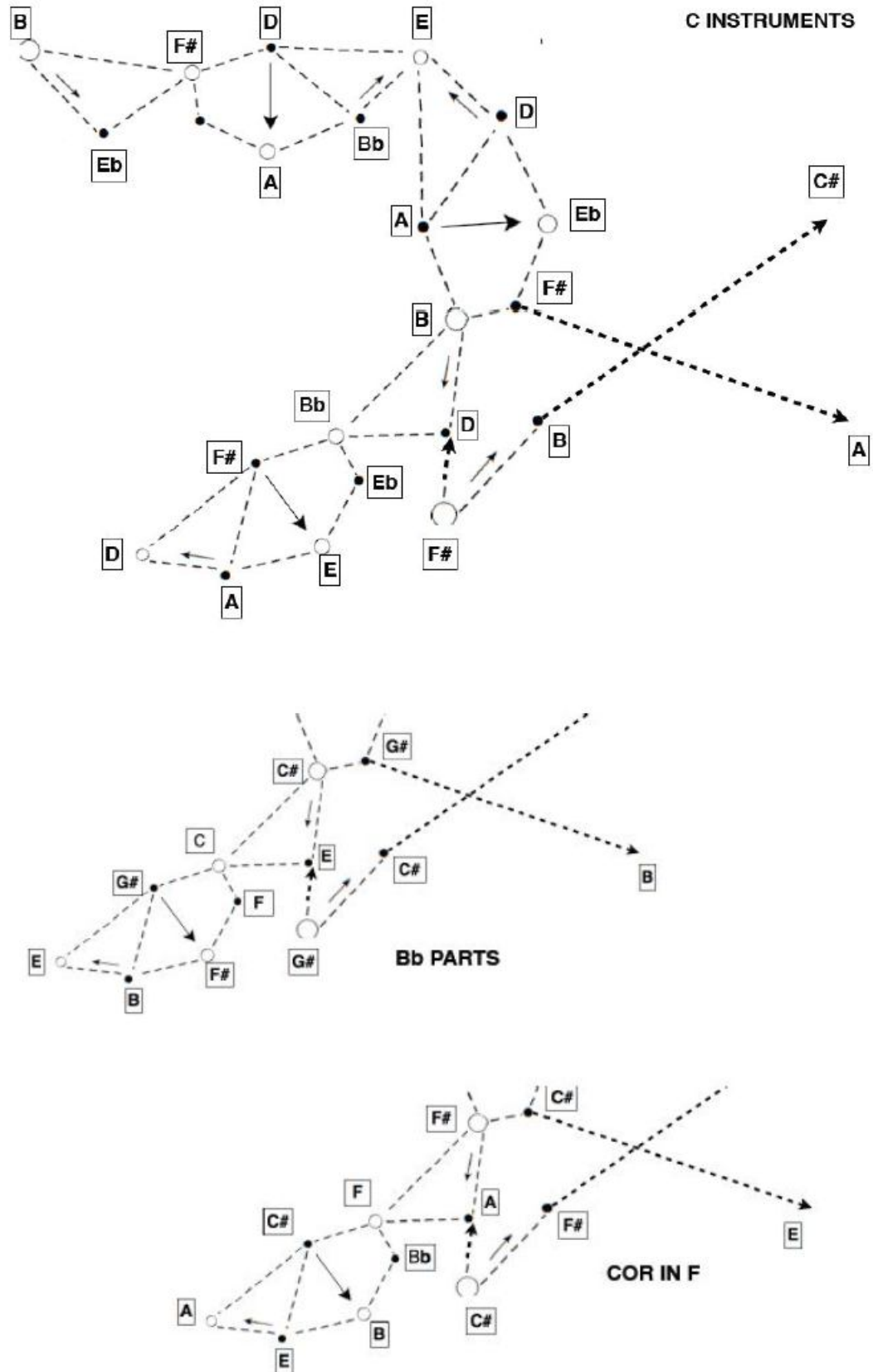
V.) Portfolio Disc Contents and Personnel:

Disc 1:

1.) *Primal Soup*
– for small ensemble
Recorded at Brunel University, April 2010

Performed by *Sonority*:
Ed Williams – Drums
Joe Brown – Sax
Sandy Finlayson – Live Electronics
Max Peake – Live Electronics
Rich Perks – Electric Guitar

2.) *Dastgāh Piece # 5*
– for small mixed ensemble
Recorded at Brunel University, June 2011

Performed by:
Ali Nourbakhsh – Percussion
Payam Iranmanesh Zarandi – Tar
Tom Jackson – Clarinet
Max Peake – Live Electronics
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar

3.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6*
– for tar and fretless guitar duo; then solo live electronics
Recorded by Sandy Finlayson, July 2012

Performed by:
Payam Iranmanesh Zarandi – Tar
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar
Then:
Sandy Finlayson – Live Electronics

4.) *Rich's Brew II (Dir. Rich)*
5.) *Rich's Brew II (Dir. Andy)*
– for medium sized, mixed ensemble
Recorded at Brunel University, June 2012

Directed by Rich Perks.
Performed by *Vlookup*:
Andy Hall – Trumpet
Dom Faber – Alto Sax
Martino Scovacricchi – Alto Sax
Laetitia Stott – French Horn
Mike Cuthbert – Percussion
Jack Polley – Bass
Josh Trotter – Piano
Cameron Graham – Drums
Al Lyle – Trombone
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar

Disc 2:

1.) *Collage Impronet Ver.1*
2.) *Collage Impronet Ver.2*
– for vocals + others
Edited at Rich's home studio, January – March 2012

Edited by Rich Perks
Improvisations by:
Kate Brown – Vocals
Andy Hall – Trumpet
Dom Faber – Alto Sax
Kate Shortt – Cello
Tom Atherton – Marimba
Mike Cuthbert – Glock
Rob Hutchinson – Double Bass
Violeta Barrena – Violin
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar
Rich Perks – Acoustic Guitar

3.) *Collage Impronet Ver.3*
– for vocals + others
Edited at Josh's home studio, December 2012

Edited by Josh Trotter
Improvisations by:
Kate Brown – Vocals
Andy Hall – Trumpet
Dom Faber – Alto Sax
Kate Shortt – Cello
Tom Atherton – Marimba
Mike Cuthbert – Glock
Rob Hutchinson – Double Bass
Violeta Barrena – Violin
Al Lyle – Trombone
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar
Rich Perks – Acoustic Guitar

4.) *(CoMA) Chameleon*
– for medium sized, mixed ensemble
Recorded at Brunel University, June 2012

Performed by *Vlookup*:
Andy Hall – Trumpet
Dom Faber – Alto Sax
Martino Scovacricchi – (Lead) Alto Sax
Laetitia Stott – French Horn
Mike Cuthbert – Percussion
Jack Polley – Bass
Josh Trotter – Piano
Cameron Graham – Drums
Al Lyle – Trombone
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar

5.) *Chameleon Starmap*
– for CoMA East; medium sized mixed ensemble
Recorded at Colchester Arts Centre, July 2012

Arranged and directed by Julia Usher
Performed by *CoMA East*

Disc 3:

1.) *Double Helix I*
2.) *Double Helix II*
3.) *Double Helix III*
– for Double Bass and Fretless Electric Guitar duo (+ effects)
Recorded at Rich's home studio, August – September 2011

Performed by *Double Helix*:
Rob Hutchinson – Double Bass
Rich Perks – Fretless Electric Guitar

4.) *Box of Serial*
– for solo Flute
Recorded at Crossing Boarders concert, Colchester, July 2011

Performed by:
Nancy Ruffer – Flute

5.) *Serial Killer*
– for solo Bass Clarinet
Recorded at Rich's home studio, January 2013

Performed by:
Tom Jackson – Bass Clarinet

6.) *Why So Serial?*
– for solo French Horn
Recorded at Rich's home studio, November 2012

Performed by:
Laetitia Stott – French Horn

Appendix Data Disc:

1.) *Dastgāh Piece # 1*
2.) *Dastgāh Piece # 1 alt. take.*
3.) *Dastgāh Piece # 3*
4.) *Dastgāh Piece # 5 alt. take.*
5.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature A*
6.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature B*
7.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature C*
8.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature D*
9.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature E*
10.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature F*
11.) *Dastgāh Piece # 6 Miniature X*
12.) *Rich's Brew II (live video)*
13.) *Double Helix (original)*
14.) *Box of Serial alt. take.*
15.) *Peak*
16.) *Scribble*
17.) *Scribble alt. take 1*
18.) *Scribble alt. take 2*