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Interactions in improvised music: people at play

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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: .....

Date: 10/02/2014

Abstract

This project began as an open exploration of musical interactions in a trio in which I have played bass for many years. We gave three concerts for the project and I explored our interactions by talking with the pianist/bandleader and drummer after each concert. They described a broad range of interactions and explored a number of different conceptions of what entails a musical interaction. The musicians were keen to talk about the factors that motivate them to perform together, mainly the desire to *play*. Play, for them, is its own reward. They aim to collaborate in the moment of performance to create something fresh, rather than display their instrumental technique or present music that has been preconceived. An appreciation of this motivation is needed to understand their interactions in concert.

Audience members were also interviewed after every performance. They each experienced the concerts differently, in a way that reflects their preoccupations and interests as much as it reflects the concert event. The research thus provides a view of individuals and their differences that contrasts with the body of music research focused on common experiences within particular musical cultures and the acquisition of the skills required to participate in those cultures.

This practice-led research project was allowed to develop and find focus gradually in cycles of performances, interviews and analysis of interview transcripts, concurrent with an ongoing exploration of texts about doing research. Various interactions – during the performances and interviews, between the researcher and the interview transcripts and between the researcher and research texts – contributed to the project's development. These interactions can be thought of as play between foreknowledge and the unknown. Accordingly, *play* as described by the musicians and as defined in hermeneutics, was actively pursued as a way of developing an appropriate methodology for the project.

Preface

This qualitative research project involved interviews with volunteer participants. Approval for this project was granted by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee: Protocol Number 13034, on 17th August, 2010.

I was awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award to do this project for which I am very grateful. I would like to thank the greater academic community that maintains this excellent scheme.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I love playing music. I have been playing double bass for many years and enjoy the feeling of making sounds with it. However my greatest pleasure comes from playing with other people, interacting in the moment to co-create music for an attentive audience. At its best this is a very human experience, intimate and joyful. It requires total commitment to each moment of performance, which makes it completely absorbing.

My first thought when starting this project was to find a piece of music that was highly interactive, and then examine it. As a musician and music student I am experienced at musicological analysis, and it seemed logical that to find out about musical interactions I should examine the products of those interactions – for example, a recording of a performance. I play jazz, so I thought that the best choice would be an *important* recording by an *acclaimed* jazz artist. However, as I explored this line of research it became obvious that a project based on a recording of somebody else's performance would not be very successful in conveying the *experience* of playing music.

Research into music has changed dramatically in the last few decades, particularly in the fields of jazz and popular music. Increasingly, sociological tools have been used to study the culture that surrounds musicians and their music-making activities. In addition to examining transcriptions of musical performances, researchers have started talking to performers to find out about their practice. They focus on musicians' experiences playing music, and investigate the social processes involved in making music.

The experience of each musician is, of course, different. In this project I explore the musical interactions in a trio that I have been a part of for about ten years. I explore our interactions by talking with the musicians and with audience members after three concerts that we gave for this project. This project is not an analysis of pieces of music, or of jazz culture, but of the experiences of the participants in those three events. My attention has been on discovering what the participants felt and thought about the concerts, and their different understandings of "interactions in improvised music".

I didn't just discover something the participants already knew and write it up in this dissertation. The way that each of us understood the topic of "musical interactions" changed many times during the project. Meanings are not fixed things but are constantly changing as

they are produced and reproduced in different contexts. It would be more accurate to say that we co-created, in our conversations, many different meanings for the topic. It was also not possible for me to be a neutral observer, gathering data to be assembled into meaningful order. I was a member of the band, performing at a conservatorium, recording conversations about a topic I had chosen that would form the basis of a dissertation. From a critical perspective, these factors inevitably affect the research process and need to be consciously considered at every stage of the project.

Consequently, the project was not an uncomplicated process of assembling a catalogue of different types of musical interactions, and acquiring the academic skills needed to produce a thesis on the subject. As the project progressed I was able to draw on knowledge gained from years of playing music, to help make sense of the research. The musical world at the centre of this project is not focused on the acquisition of skills and production of musical works. For the participants in this project, there is no single correct way to play music, and the purpose of their music performances is not to demonstrate their skills. They come to each performance determined not to re-create music they've made before, but to discover the right sounds to make in that particular place at that particular moment. It is the experience of interacting in performance that entices them to play, not the thought of producing a lasting musical artefact. Rather than simply acquiring a set of skills and then using them to research music, I found myself interacting with texts about research methods throughout the project. My interactions with the project's participants affected the way that the project evolved, as did my ongoing interactions with philosophical and methodological texts. This dissertation is as much about doing research as it is about playing music, and the two activities are tightly intertwined through the concept of interaction.

A musical performance can be experienced as an opportunity to put oneself at risk, to throw oneself wholeheartedly into the moment. A performance approached with this attitude can be an opportunity to learn about playing music and about oneself. Similarly, engaging with texts about doing research can be a transformative experience in which one learns about the world and about oneself.

A feature of this project is that I didn't know what I was looking for. During the first round of interviews I sometimes found myself wondering if I should bring the conversations back to the topic of musical interactions. Often however, these meandering parts of the conversations would become the most stimulating and useful parts. My original conception of the topic

changed and broadened as I allowed the participants to lead the conversations where they wanted, which added to the project's interest for me. Similarly, the musicians who are the focus of this study don't know at the beginning of a concert what the music they are about to play will sound like – and that is a large part of the band's appeal for them.

In Chapter Three I wander through the methodological field, exploring different texts that had an impact on the development of this project. The chapter is loosely organised around my attitudes towards playing music – aesthetic principles which were largely unconscious at the start of this project but which started to find expression during its course. For example, sometimes events prior to a concert can trigger a defensive attitude in a performer, an attitude of careful self-editing and conservatism that stifles the band's performance. When I stumbled across an article that discussed the dangers of this type of attitude amongst researchers, it resonated with my understanding of music performance and triggered a search for more academic material on this topic. As another example of knowledge about playing music informing the research process, I over-prepared our first concert, anxious that everything would go smoothly and that the music would be the best it could possibly be. My attempts to pre-plan and control the outcome of our concert hampered our musical interactions during the performance. My understanding of how this had happened developed during the interviews after the concert, and resonated with research literature that explores the value of not rigidly pre-defining a research topic and methodology, but allowing a project to evolve and change.

A musical performance is a journey that can take the audience and performers to familiar or exotic places. In an improvised group performance musicians interact in a variety of ways to negotiate their collective journey. These interactions may be easily recognisable call-and-response episodes, collective rhythmic syncopations, or large-scale dynamic shapes. Interactions such as these are relatively straightforward to identify and analyse, but other types that profoundly affect the music often go unrecognised. Intangible nuances in one performer's playing can have far-reaching effects on fellow band members and the path of the tune. Often too, the performers seem to be travelling on parallel paths. Their voices don't appear to intersect or overtly interact, yet the music is cohesive and powerfully evocative. Frequently it is unclear who's leading whom. Accompanists can shape the course of the soloist's narrative with

subtle musical gestures. Pieces played dozens of times before can follow new and unexpected paths in the course of performance without any premeditation or obvious cause.

Musicians interact with each other. They interact with the sounds that they are making, with the audience and perhaps with past events in their memories that have little to do with the current moment. They interact with memories of other people's performances of the tune they are currently playing and with memories of their own past performances. Many of these interactions are experienced by the musicians as problems or hindrances – something that takes them away from just enjoying the moment of performance.

The main participants in this project are the pianist and drummer in the trio. I had long conversations with them after each concert, and those conversations moved in directions I hadn't expected. They spoke about different types of interactions between the musicians on stage. They also spoke about problems they'd experienced while performing. What they were most keen to talk about, however, was not *what* they played or *how* they interacted, but *why* they played. They talked about wanting to make something beautiful, to interact in a personal way with the music and to allow space for the other band members to be heard. They talked about rebelling against a competitive approach to music performance that has the demonstration of skills as a prime goal. Their motivations for playing are not at first glance directly related to the topic, but the interactions that occur in performance can be best understood only if we appreciate *why* the players are there.

Problems that occur in a concert can often be traced to unacknowledged and conflicting motivations. For example, the desires to demonstrate technical mastery of an instrument and to co-create beautiful sounds in ensemble are not always compatible. A desire to entertain an audience can conflict with the goal of honestly expressing one's emotions. These two specific examples arose in conversations following the first concert, and led to changes in my preparations for the subsequent concerts. They also led me to re-appraise my reasons for doing this project. Was I doing it to become a better musician, or in the hope of starting a new career as a researcher? Was my primary goal to impress an academic audience, to portray the musical worlds of my participants as authentically as possible, or to use their words as a vehicle to express my own knowledge of musical interactions? Are there any conflicts that might arise between these different motivations, or is there a way that they could co-exist peacefully? And finally, what have methodologists and philosophers written that could be helpful in understanding these questions and their implications for the project?

In this dissertation I also examine interactions between band and audience. Audience members co-create their experience of a concert, and the audience participants in this project provided a range of contrasting perspectives on the concerts that we had all shared. In the interviews held after each concert, I let our talk wander around the word "interactions" and the concert they had just attended. What emerged from those conversations is that audience members bring their own preconceptions and current preoccupations to a concert that shapes their experience of the event in various ways. Each person's concert is unique.

The conversations with audience members also provide important contextual information for the project. Music concerts don't happen in a vacuum. They happen at specific times in the acoustic environment of particular venues with an audience comprised of unique individuals. These concerts were held for an audience in a conservatorium as part of an academic project. The conversations that provided the data for later analysis happened in particular places that affected the way we communicated. Although this dissertation is the result of much reading, contemplation and typing in a quiet room, it is grounded in the physicality of particular musical and conversational encounters. Those encounters are described and explored more fully in Chapter Four.

This essay follows the usual format for doctoral dissertations. This introductory chapter is followed by an exploration of academic texts about musical interactions that helps to more clearly define the topic. After that is a discussion of methodological literature relevant to this project, followed by a chapter on the methods that were actually used. This leads to the final chapter that presents findings. In fact, the process of doing the project was not so orderly. If I were a more gifted writer I would attempt to present a dissertation that reflects more accurately the meandering course of this project. I am convinced that *not knowing what you're looking for* is a vital and positive aspect of doing a project like this. I suspect that people often find what they're looking for, or see things through the filter of what they hope to find. For much of this project I didn't know what was going to emerge as important from the material that I was collecting. I didn't know how the existing literature on musical interactions would relate to what I found. I interacted with the participants in a way that *felt* right, while trying to be as sensitive as possible to my influence on their words. My interaction with texts about doing research and texts about music was intertwined with my interactions with the participants and with my supervisor. I have constructed this dissertation in a way that I hope makes it easy to read, but it doesn't reflect accurately my research journey. I most definitely

did *not* choose and refine a research topic, then choose the most suitable methodological approach, and then design and carry out a data-gathering enterprise.

I am not trying to provide a general theory of musical interaction, or even looking for the true meaning of each interaction.

> The quest for real, true meanings came to an end in philosophy some years ago. … A postmodern approach forgoes the search for true fixed meanings and emphasizes descriptive nuances, differences, and paradoxes. (Kvåle, 1996, p. 225)

I hope that this dissertation brings to life in some small way the musical worlds of the wonderful musicians who agreed to be a part of the project. I hope this dissertation conveys our love of playing music in a group – what our drummer calls "the interaction of humans playing musical instruments".

CHAPTER TWO: TEXTS ABOUT MUSICAL INTERACTIONS

Musical products

Being comfortable with musicological analysis, I took that approach for my Master of Music project that looked at the bass lines of Eddie Gomez in the Bill Evans Trios of 1966-1976 (Holgate, 2009). While the results were fascinating, it left me frustrated that some of the more interesting questions were unanswerable through musicological analysis. How did the band achieve such a cohesive sound? What was Gomez's conception of his role during those performances, and what did it *feel* like to play that music?

There has been recognition in recent decades that musicology is not always an appropriate analytic tool for examining improvised music (Kenny, 1999)[1]. Musicology developed as a tool for the analysis of European Classical music with its focus on the written score, a stable representation of a piece of music that has been developed and refined by the composer sometimes over months or years. Analysis of the score can offer useful detachment from the emotive power of the sound and provide insights into the mechanical workings of the music, because "Vision is, more than any other sense, the faculty of distancing, control, intellectual analysis and analytical focus" (Johnson, 2002, p. 101).

When applying a musicological methodology to improvised music, an audio recording of a performance is transcribed into a score, and this score becomes the object of analysis. Transcriptions of improvised music are often viewed "as objective 'renderings' of musical practice, when in fact they hide as much as they highlight" (Jackson, 2002, p. 90). Even the most thorough transcription of an improvised performance will leave out "an enormous amount of musical information" (Walser, 1993, p. 363), including nuances of pitch, timbre and timing. Walser, a musicologist who has written extensively on jazz and other popular music styles, finds it useful to provide transcriptions in his musical analyses. Nevertheless, he has "no illusions about the capacity of musical notation to represent musical performances completely or accurately" (p. 363). Transcriptions of improvised music do provide useful analytical

[1] Kenny's article provides an overview of jazz analysis and explores "theoretical issues concerned with representing and analysing jazz" (Kenny, 1999, p. 56).

distance, but they "radically reduce musical activities to formal abstractions that often shed little light on how music is experienced" (Walser, 1993, p. 347).

Walser also criticizes musicological analyses that inappropriately apply aesthetic criteria from European Classical music to jazz performances, and is one of several musicologists who draw on H.L Gates' theory of African-American literary criticism in their analyses of African-American jazz[2]. Rather than searching for unity and order in Miles Davis's solo on "My Funny Valentine" (on *My Funny Valentine: Miles Davis in Concert.* Columbia CS 9106) Walser considers the trumpeter's "rhetoric" or "affect" by developing an analytical model that can "articulate links among reactions, theories, performance choices, and technical details" (Walser, 1993, p. 359). He calls for analysts to recognize the "dialogic flux of meaning" (p. 360) in music, and to confront the challenges of grounding music analysis in a "web of social practices, histories, and desires" (p. 360).

Musicologists have done much to raise the status of jazz as an art form. Schuller's essay on Sonny Rollins (Schuller, 1958), Thomas Owens' two volumes of "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation" (Owens, 1974), and Lewis Porter's analyses of solos by Lester Young and John Coltrane (Porter, 1985a, 1985b) are seminal works that provide insight into the workings of master jazz improvisers. Musicological studies such as these have provided a means for jazz to become a legitimate subject for study in the academy. However as Walser argues, musicological analysis is "inadequate to the task of helping us to *understand* jazz and to account for its power to affect many people deeply" (Walser, 1993, p. 359).

As musicology was "originally developed to study notated European music" (Sawyer, 2003, p. 16), musicological studies of jazz tend to focus on compositional aspects of performance. Schuller's (1958) musicological essay celebrates Sonny Rollins' saxophone solo as evidence of the evolution of jazz towards motivic coherence. Tirro (1974) finds that "great" jazz performers develop and expand motivic material in their improvisations in a manner "comparable to that found in notated compositions of Western music. The best jazz solos are indeed constructive in nature …" (Tirro, 1974, p. 286). He goes further, calling jazz "America's Classical Music", stating that "like all classical music, it conforms to established patterns of form and complexity" (1993, p. 3). In focusing on ways that the music is similar to (and almost as good as!) Western classical music, these studies can miss what is unique in improvised music – the

[2] For example: Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (1991), Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry; and Murphy, J. P. (1990). Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence.

"extraordinarily dense, unexpected and complex individual and collective decision-making processes [that take place] in an acoustic field that is unscripted" (Johnson, 2002, p. 105).

Hodson (2000) finds that most theoretical and analytical writings on jazz improvisation "focus on single improvised lines, rarely considering the possibility that the simultaneously improvised parts of the other members of the ensemble could have an effect on the solo line they were analyzing" (p. *v*). Butterfield (2007) supports this claim. "It seems bizarre that so much jazz analysis treats the solo in isolation from its accompaniment" (p. 242). In his dissertation, Hodson (2000) develops a model of interaction that provides a framework for understanding the improvised jazz solo in the context of the interactive field that surrounds it. By "moving beyond the focus on the single improvised line to a consideration of the entire texture of the performance" (p. 274) he comes "closer to capturing and understanding the dynamic fluidity of jazz improvisation" (ibid.). However, his approach is based on transcriptions of musical performances and the analysis leaves me with the same sense of frustration that I feel looking back at my own musicological efforts. The analysis doesn't bring us closer to *understanding* the music and its power to affect the listener. In a review of Hodson's (2007) subsequent book, Butterfield reflects that when analysing a transcription of a jazz performance it is too easy to impose an interpretation onto musical events that reflects the analyst's enthusiasms more than it illuminates the music (Butterfield 2007, p. 247).

Historically, most musical analysis has been of musical *products*. When applied to improvised music, this involves recording a performance then transcribing a part of the recording onto a musical score and then analysing the transcription. This is unsatisfactory for several reasons: transcriptions cannot capture many important nuances of a performance; such analysis typically focuses on single instruments or the compositional elements of solos while ignoring the interactions between instruments; aesthetic criteria relevant to European classical music are inappropriately applied in the analysis. The field of musicology has, however, changed dramatically in the last few decades. In the mid 1980's a number of individual musicologists came to share concerns with recurring issues "that reflect(ed) a wider post-modern move to displace positivism and the concept of the autonomous musical work" (Beard, 2005, p. 92). They started "to engage with disciplines outside musicology, in particular those in the humanities and social sciences" (ibid. p. 92). Their idea was "to combine aesthetic insight into music with a fuller understanding of its cultural, social, historical, and political dimensions than was customary for most of the twentieth century" (Kramer, 2003, p. 6).

Musicology now includes "historical, critical, empirical, ethnographic, theoretical, analytical and organological approaches" (UK Research Assessment Exercise quoted in Clarke, 2009, p. 71). An important contributor to developments in musicological methodology is UK's Arts and Humanities Research Centre, which from 2004 "sought to re-evaluate musicology's priorities and move the foundation of musicological ontology from musical scores towards performances" (Dogantan-Dack, 2012, p. 35) through the establishment of the Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music. Since 2009 "the focus of research has shifted to live music performance practices" (p. 35) with the launch of the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice. As I finish this thesis some of the research instigated by the centre is just becoming available.

Musical processes

The *processes* of making jazz, rather than the transcribable *characteristics* of the music, help to define what is unique in the music. For Keil (1995), "music is about process, not product; it's … play and pleasure" (p. 1). Many scholars find it helpful to shift the focus of research from the products of musical interaction to the processes involved in making music. Alterhaug (2004) explores the triple themes of creativity, jazz improvisation and communication. He states that "improvisation is more a process than a product" and argues that "it is important to investigate the rhythms of interaction that ensue during the course of performance" (p. 104). Along with Branker (2010), he stresses the importance of the dialogic exchange that is an integral part of the group improvisatory experience. Elliot (1997) discusses recent changes in music education that recognise the importance of studying musical processes and practices alongside the music products that have been the traditional subject of music education.

In recognition that traditional musicological methods aren't necessarily appropriate for examining improvised music, scholars have looked to alternative analytic tools. Johnson (2002) argues that jazz is "better understood in relation to non-musical improvisational practices than with non-improvisational musical practices" (p. 103). Sawyer (1992, 2000, 2003, 2006) takes this approach in his studies of improvised theatre and improvised music. His focus is the *process* of interaction, "the contingency from moment to moment" (2003, p. 16) that is involved in performances, rather than on an end product.

Small, a classical pianist, also asserts that music is best not viewed as an object or product, but as an activity (Small, 1998). This activity, which he calls "musicking", involves both performers and audience in the co-creation of a music performance. He also distinguishes composed music from improvised music by noting that

> composed music is the account of the journey of exploration, which might well have been momentous, but it is over before we learn of it, while improvisation is the journey itself, which is likely to make small discoveries rather than large, or even no discoveries at all, but in which everything that is found can be of interest or value. (Small, 1998, p. 176)

The *journey* of playing improvised music as a group is a wonderful part of music-making. This essay explores the many facets of that journey and I hope, will convey some of its joys.

We are so used to associating the topic of "music" with musical products that it can be difficult to break free of that mind-set. By immersing myself in cognitive scientific research into music performance I was able to re-focus the research to the *activity* of making music. Psychologists and cognitive scientists look "at improvisation as "skilled behavior," akin to speech, athletics, or other kinds of specialized human functioning" (Pelz-Sherman, 1998, p. 63). Works by cognitive scientists: on the musical mind (Sloboda, 1985); on improvising as a neglected field of scholarly enquiry (Nettl, 1998); and on improvisation as a cognitive process (Pressing, 1984), a physiological and neuropsychological process (Pressing, 2005), in free jazz (Pressing, 2002) provide an alternate way of viewing music performance. These works remind us that music is not just a product to be consumed, but also a complex human activity.

However, the methodological approaches of cognitive science and psychology are "individualistic and reductionist, holding that creativity involves human agency, intentionality, decision-making, and problem-solving – the classic hallmarks of symbolic AI" (Sawyer, 1999, p. 455). They assume that properties of group behaviour can be best understood by studying the individuals involved, "with the further assumption that an individual's mental function is best understood by breaking down higher level cognitive functions into smaller components" (p. 454). Creativity is considered a property of human brains. While these works are fascinating to read, a reductionist approach doesn't get far in understanding group interaction and the co-creation of music. A group musical improvisation is unpredictable and chaotic. Meanings and intentions for each musical statement are ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. As

the music unfolds, new musical statements re-contextualise those that came before, opening them up to more re-interpretation (Sawyer, 1999). A methodological approach that relies on breaking down a group improvisation into discrete bits is soon overwhelmed by chaos.

Group interaction

There is a tendency for us to attribute a group's performance to a single leader's creativity. Sawyer (2006) describes the "canonical portrait [that] shows the soloist lost in thought, often with his eyes closed, oblivious to his surroundings" (p. 153). Portraits like these reinforce our notion that a group's performance can be attributed to a leader's creativity. He makes the analogy that most bird flocks don't have a leader at all. When we see a V-shaped flock of birds it is natural to assume that the bird in front is leading, when in fact the orderly pattern is created by each bird responding only to the ones nearby, not to the direction of a single leader (p. 154). A finding that emerges from this research project is that the music itself can become the leader, with each performer contributing in different ways to its unfolding. To understand this point of view requires us to first become aware of our tendency to assign creativity to one leader – and to move, as the title of Resnick's (1996) article suggests, "Beyond the Centralized Mindset".

Sawyer's thoughts on interaction during group performance are relevant to this project. In improvised "music and theater, the performers are not mere interpreters; they are creative artists" (Sawyer, 2006, p. 148). The performance is a result of their "interactional dynamics" rather than the creativity of a composer or bandleader. Interactional influences also extend beyond the band members to include the audience, who provide "the social context of the performance" (Sawyer, 1992, p. 255). The interaction between the music and audience is felt by musicians to be of critical importance. However, many are ambivalent about this relationship, "stating that the performance is more creative when the musician is not influenced by the audience" (1992, p. 256).

Sawyer distinguishes between conscious and non-conscious interactions during performance (1992, p. 257) and finds that there is a constant tension between these two processes that must be consciously resolved to achieve "a balance appropriate to the moment" (p. 257). Another tension explored by Sawyer is that between innovation and tradition. We learn, both formally and by watching and listening to bands, what is appropriate in a particular

music genre. We absorb what is aesthetically acceptable in performances and what is bad taste or simply *not jazz*. Individual acts that don't fall within the constraints of accepted behaviour are seldom viewed as creative by the social group that defines what that behaviour is (1992, p. 258). Creativity consists of innovation within these constraints, of "breaking the rules" in acceptable ways (p. 259). Another way at looking at this area is by exploring interactions between the unfolding music and previous performances, as Murphy does in "The Joy of Influence" (Murphy, 1990). His paper examines the relationships that exist between a jazz musician and his precursors in the jazz tradition, and asks "what are some possible sources of the meaningfulness that performers and audiences find in the process of playing and listening to jazz?" (p. 7).

Sawyer's early work on group creativity looked at a jazz band (1992). His research relied on data from interviews with the musicians in the band. It is interesting to observe that all his subsequent work on the *processes* of group creativity focus on improvised theatre groups. Those analyses examine transcripts from theatre performances, exploring how a performance emerges collaboratively from the deliberately open lines of dialogue contributed by each performer. Interviews with the performers aren't needed, as the transcripts are sufficient to illustrate the processes. This is not the case with musical improvisations. The instruments in a music performance sound at the same time, yet because of their different timbres, each voice can be distinguished as an individual sound. It is difficult to analyse each overlapping musical phrase for possible meanings and influences, or even to decide what a unit of meaning might be. It is impossible to demonstrate from a transcription of a musical performance how the performers contribute to the music as a whole.

Reinholdsson's "Making Music Together: An Interactionist Perspective on Small-Group Performance in Jazz" (1998) has a similar subject area to this project. Like this project, it focuses on data gathered from interviews with members of a band directly after a performance. However his perspective and methodology result in an essay that has little else in common with this one. His methodology involves symbolic interactionism, "an empirical and interpretive sociological research tradition that traces its lineage to the American pragmatists " (p. 46). The language of the essay is thick with sociological terms such as "etic", "emic", "significant others", "generalized others", and "'I', the active subject, drawing upon and observing the passive 'me' within self and that of others" (p. 129).

He uses two different bands, videotaping performances that were held without an audience. One of these bands was a trio that hadn't worked together before, and there were technical sound problems for some of their performances. Much of the discussion consequently dealt with the musicians' problems in playing together in that artificial environment. The author notes that "this circumstance also made it possible for me to realise a collective case study of how players socially construct musical realities in unusual performance situations" (p. 414). Some of the performances are described in writing and graphically. There are charts (in standard Western notation) of some of the tunes performed and there is an accompanying CD with recordings of the performances discussed in the text. Reinholdsson uses these different media to "elucidate some situations and moments of interactiveness (p. 240). His focus is therefore on discrete moments of interaction that can be readily recognised and described. In contrast, this study aims to explore musical interactions from a naturalistic viewpoint. Rather than attempting to fragment the subject into individual interaction events, we explore the multiple realities of the participants. Rather than creating an artificial performance environment and discussing how the musicians dealt with resulting problems, we provide a setting that is as close as possible to a regular working environment, to stimulate conversations about a range of things that are important in the participants' musical lives.

An analysis of a piece of improvised music will not get very far in illuminating the human interactions and processes that were involved in producing that piece of music. To shed light on the interactions, the focus of attention needs to shift to the experiences of the musicians. It is not enough to focus only on soloists or bandleaders either – group improvised music is a collaborative enterprise that depends on the creative input of all the players. A live performance is also affected by the audience, so the interactions between band and audience need to be considered. Those interactions are grounded in a musical tradition and take place within a larger social context so an analysis of musical interactions needs to consider these contextual issues.

Musical cultures

Some researchers focus on the *culture* that surrounds the practice of making music. Becker writes about the "Etiquette of Improvisation" (2000) – the unwritten rules that musicians learn about through years of playing together. These rules govern the way that musicians interact

with each other and with the knowledgeable audiences that comprise the larger jazz community. His viewpoint, explored more thoroughly in *Art Worlds* (Becker, 2008), is consistent with contemporary sociological research into jazz music: that a study of musical interactions needs to include not just the interactions between musicians in a band, but the context of those interactions in a musical community. Greenland's (2007) thesis argues "for a radically inclusive conception of music-making" (p. *xi*) that has audiences, promoters and musicians all collaborating and co-performing in equally essential ways to the activity of music making.

Becker writes of the "aggressively egalitarian" (2000, p. 172) ethic that pervades jazz. Musicians listen closely, offering tentative ideas, until a group direction emerges. Ideally, the musicians "develop a collective direction that … feels larger than any of them, as though it had a life of its own. It feels as though, instead of them playing the music, the music, Zen-like, is playing them" (p. 172). Later in his essay, Becker poses the open question of what might motivate people to "overcome divisive selfish interests" (p. 175) and collaborate in "getting the job done" of making music together. Perhaps enjoying the collaboration is enough motivation?

Motivating factors and goals play a vital part in the shaping of a musical performance. Sawyer (1992) notes that the purpose of an improvised performance is generally not to generate a product (a recording) that can then be presented for sale. "Instead, the performance is its own goal" (2003, p. 5). For him, the processes of performance *are* the product, which "forces" the researcher to focus on the interactions that comprise group creativity (p. 5). However, if the performers' aim is not to produce a musical artefact but is directed towards enjoying the interactive performance itself, then surely the researcher could learn much about the interactions in performance by exploring the performers' goals.

Ethnomusicology

In order to find out about the world of interactions that make up a collaborative improvised performance, sociologists interview members of jazz groups (and their audiences) to gain an understanding of the social processes that are involved in making music. More specifically, if jazz is viewed as a product of a cultural sub-group, then it becomes a subject for ethnomusicological study. *Thinking in Jazz: the infinite art of improvisation* (Berliner, 1994) and *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Monson, 1996) are ethnomusicological studies that take the approach of finding out about jazz by talking to the people who create the

music. They focus on the lived world of musicians, and have become key texts about jazz (Doffman, 2012, p. 203).

For his (1994) book, Berliner immersed himself in the world of jazz over a period of fifteen years, collecting over sixty interviews with a range of jazz musicians. The transcriptions of these interviews took up over three thousand pages, and his initial careful reading of the material took over six months. The participants in his study are mostly African Americans who "devoted their careers to bebop or related hard-bop styles" (p. 7) and were motivated to participate in the study by an "interest in educating audiences and young musicians" (p. 8). It is not a practical manual for learning to improvise, but documents the "traditional learning practices" of the jazz community (p. 15). An important aspect of the study is its focus on the "value-laden music culture of jazz", and not just on the artworks produced by its community.

Within the musical culture that Berliner explores is a broad range of interactions. Perhaps most relevant to this project are the interactions between the musicians during a performance. When attempting to describe nonverbal aspects of group performance his participants favour the metaphor that collective improvisation is a conversation.

> "Playing with musicians is like a conversation", Chuck Israels observes. "If when I speak, you say, 'Yes' or you look at me and blink your eyes or interject some comment of your own, that keeps me going." (p. 354)

They emphasise that this conversational aspect of jazz performance is vital to the genre, and interactions between performers take up a substantial portion of Berliner's book. However, there are not just interactions between band members. He explores many other types of interactions that are crucial in understanding jazz performance. For example, musicians familiarise themselves with a band's repertoire by going through a period of interaction with the musical structures they improvise over (pp. 170-191). In concert, there are interactions between the unfolding music and the musicians who are performing it, as illustrated in this quote from drummer, Max Roach:

> "After you initiate the solo, one phrase determines what the next is going to be. From the first note that you hear, you are responding to what you've just played: you just said this on your instrument, and now that's a constant. What follows from that? And then the next phrase is a constant. What follows from that? And so on and so forth." (p. 192)

For many musicians, this interaction is an essential part of any successful performance. Saxophonist Lee Konitz says "if you're not affected and influenced by your own notes when you improvise, then you're missing the whole essential point" (p. 193).

Berliner briefly discusses the effect that the physical acoustic properties of a venue have in moulding and shaping the sounds produced by musical instruments (pp. 449-452). How a musician interacts with the sounds bouncing around a room is an essential element of performance. The interaction between audiences and performers is discussed at length (pp. 455-473). Like Sawyer (1992), he finds that the relationship between improvising musicians and their audience is problematic. The effect of audience approval or disapproval is immediate and can tempt the musician to reproduce the effect which provoked positive reaction, becoming eventually an actor performing his tricks (Bailey, 1992, p. 44). On the other hand, Berliner draws our attention to the fact that for performers, the presence of an audience increases "the reward of performances … heightening their sense of being in the moment" (Berliner, 1994, p. 455). He points to Kofsky's (1973) dissertation on social change and stylistic development that focuses on the art of saxophonist John Coltrane. Kofsky reports that for Coltrane, listening to music is an act of participation in the music. An audience member who is moved by the music is "like having another member in the group" (Kofsky, 1973, p. 861).

The interactions that Monson (1991, 1996) invites us to consider extend beyond interactions between musicians on stage, beyond interactions between the band and audience, out to the wider community, and backwards in time through "the context of the richly textured aural legacy of jazz and African American music" (1996, p. 2). *Saying Something* (1996) develops the ideas presented in her dissertation (1991), taking "a different interpretive trajectory" to Berliner, concentrating on race and culture and on how the "perspectives of musicians can contribute to the reshaping of social analysis" (1996, p. 5). When the musicians in Monson's text play music they are "saying something in music and about music – as well as in music and about identity, politics, and race" (p. 2).

Both Monson and Berliner's books are extremely thorough and their participants are amongst the best jazz musicians in the world. When learning to play jazz, particularly in the academy, we learn about the history of this unique American art form, and focus almost exclusively on recordings by American artists. If I consider myself a *jazz* musician and the topic of my project to be interactions in *jazz*, then I can only approach the project as an outsider looking in at the world of Berliner's and Monson's authentic interviewees who have

helped create and define what jazz is. At best I can only hope, as an Australian musician/researcher, to offer an alternate perspective of what it feels like to make jazz from the periphery. However, although our music can be called "jazz" and is certainly influenced by the American tradition, we aren't a part of the cultural sub-group that is the focus of these ethnographic studies. The books contain a wealth of information about musical interactions that is relevant to this project, but Monson and Berliner's book *aren't about us*.

Monson herself offers an interesting perspective on the cultural specificity of her study as she reflects that her participants are the elite in the jazz community, which creates a particular type of bias in her interviews.

> A long tradition of interviews with jazz musicians in jazz periodicals has established the interview as something of a secondary performance genre for musicians. Taped interviews, I would argue, bias for positive reporting. A desire to come across as a thoughtful artist and an inspiring human being with something to say … seems to shape a musician's responses during such an interview. (1996, p. 20)

For this project, I held clearly in mind that I wasn't talking to the participants as representatives of a particular community, and I wasn't expecting them to epitomize improvising musicians. I wasn't talking to them to find out about the world of "jazz", or about the world of "Australian jazz". In other words, they weren't representing anything but themselves, and were free to talk about whatever musical interactions meant to them.

Intersubjectivity

Sociologists acknowledge that performers and audience members come to an individual understanding of a performance that "can be highly individual and idiosyncratic, for they draw upon each individual's past experiences" (Jackson, 1998, p. 15). However, sociological studies focus on the shared understandings that emerge through participants communicating with each other over time (p. 16). The opposite is true for this study. It is not so much the shared understandings that are of interest, but the differences. It is "impossible for the performers to have identical representations of what is going on" (Sawyer, 2003, p. 9), so to search only for agreement amongst the participants is to limit what can be found.

Intersubjectivity is traditionally defined as “a state of overlap of individual understandings” (Matusov, 1996, p. 25). Matusov argues that there is an emphasis on agreement and shared understandings in social research that can lead researchers to disregard other aspects of the phenomena under study. Intersubjectivity can be more fruitfully constructed “as a process of coordination of participants’ contributions in joint activity” (p. 25). Traditionally, shared understandings in social processes are viewed as a final stage in “progressing from disagreement (or lack of agreement) to agreement” (p. 25). Matusov argues that this can lead to a “static comparison of individuals (e.g., their action, perspectives, goals) and the collapsing of individuals into each other by focusing only on what is in common among them” (p. 27). However, the differences between members of a band and their divergent experiences during performance add great richness to the music they co-create and to each musician’s world. Understanding that world requires a perspective from both the musicians and the researcher that can “take paradoxes and differences in point of view as a given, not as something to be explained away” (Monson, 1996, p. 6).

Creolization

Researchers of popular music have begun to focus “less on the experience of a given 'community' and more on the experience of individual subjects” (Guilbault, 1997, p. 38). In presenting their findings, they have “tried to provide a sense of the multiple possible constructions and interpretations involved in such phenomena” (Guilbault, 1997, p. 40). Musicians in the twenty first century frequently exhibit multiple allegiances in their musical practice, and the meaning of that practice is fluid from setting to setting (Guilbault, 1997, p. 41). Cohen (2007) argues that “creolization”, the practice of creatively merging influences from different cultures and endowing them with new meanings, “is a key aspect of cultural globalization” (Cohen, 2007, p. 369). Creolization is particularly relevant to this study because the members of the trio work in a variety of musical genres, including pop and country music, rhythm and blues, and funk. American jazz music is a powerful influence on our local “jazz” scene, but the influences of classical Indian music, Korean music, Scandinavian improvised music, and popular music genres are also important. The music we create in the trio incorporates diverse influences subject to different aesthetic criteria from the music created by Monson and Berliner’s American jazz artists.

Other explorations of musical interactions

In Petan's ethnographic dissertation on "Gypsy Music in Kosovo: Interaction and Creativity" (1992), interaction is presented as the trade between musics of different ethnic groups. Gypsy musicians acquire and then creatively transform repertory from Indian film music, Turkish popular music, Bulgarian gypsy music, and newly composed Bosnian and Serbian folk music. This type of interaction between different musical cultures is addressed tangentially in my project, however it is the moment of performance that is my primary focus.

Fodor's (1998) thesis presents a collective case study documenting "how members of two precollegiate jazz combos employed verbal and musical interactions within coached and uncoached rehearsals to reach their musical goals". He notes that until recently few studies have sought to examine the interactions between musicians in small-group jazz performance (p. 1). Like this one, his is a naturalistic study into interaction, with attention to process rather than the musical product. A difference between his study and this one is in the methods used to gather data. Fodor audio- and video- taped rehearsals for transcription, gave a music theory test, a questionnaire, a survey, and conducted two interviews in which sections from the audio- and video- tapes were discussed. The analysis is firmly directed towards students' learning experiences and ways that jazz combos can be effectively coached. Moments of interaction are isolated and separated into categories and examined qualitatively and quantitatively. His main categories of interaction are verbal, musical and hybrid. Each of these is further broken down into subcategories – musical interaction, for example, can be melodic, harmonic or rhythmic.

However, in performances by a band that has played together many times, interactions between the performers can be subtle and not discernable on a video recording. Questions about these interactions would probably evoke equivocal answers – not the kind of response that is possible in a questionnaire. Fodor states that "research is needed which examines one specific category in greater detail" (1998, p. 284) and he suggests the category of "Musical Interaction" as a candidate. But what a "musical interaction" actually *is* remains a complex question. If a drummer hears a rhythmic figure from the piano and chooses, for whatever reason, *not* to respond to it, does that count as an interaction? If the musicians have their eyes closed and are intensely focused on allowing the music to unfold in a way it never has before,

is that a musical interaction? Is it harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, or maybe textural or even historical, or a combination of all of these? Musicians interact with each other, with the music itself, with memories of previous performances, and in ways that cannot often be isolated as just one thing or another.

Many sociological and ethnographic studies of interactions in improvised music are located in New York City. Greenland's (2007) thesis explores the city's community of jazz lovers: not just the leaders interviewed by Monson and Berliner, but the

> legion of locally based, relatively inconspicuous, rank-and-file artisans and aficionados who have established (or are trying to establish) full-time careers in jazz, as well as those who engage as active amateurs. (p. 3)

He elicits perspectives from musicians, and also from venue proprietors, producers and promoters, authors, artists, critics, photographers, publicists, retailers, tour guides, educators and fans (p. *xii*). This focus on context is not just an aid to explaining interactions in the moment of performance. Context is everything. It is seen "not merely as explanatory, but as constitutive" (Jackson, 1998, p. 12). For Greenland and most jazz aficionados, New York City is the centre of jazz culture, and the place they need to go to understand that culture. The participants in my project agree that New York City is the centre of jazz culture, but jazz culture is only one of many influences in their musical lives. Equally important to them are their connections with musicians in diverse musical genres, and with artists in different media.

One of the most stimulating and useful texts on musical interaction that I found was not about jazz at all. In *Knowing music, making music: Javanese gamelan and the theory of musical competence and interaction*, Brinner (1995) explores the unique music-making of Java, but also develops "a theoretical structure that is rich enough to capture the detail and mirror the complexity of interaction in specific musical contexts without losing a level of abstraction sufficient for comparison" (p. 169). The book develops his earlier ideas (Brinner, 1985) on musical competence and interaction in a particular type of Javanese music, in order to make them applicable to other sorts of music. While studying and acquiring the musical competences necessary to participate in Javanese gamelan ensembles, Brinner realised that a central part of that competence was interactive knowledge and skills (1995, p. 3). Understanding how to play his instrument and understanding the structure of the pieces wasn't enough. He needed to understand *how and why the musicians interacted*.

Brinner proposes four constellations of concepts that can be used to analyse interactions in music of different styles from different cultures. These four constellations are not discrete categories to enable dissection of the topic into separate parts, but are overlapping perspectives from which to examine interactions. *Interactive network* looks at the musicians and the relationships of influence and control that exist between them. *Interactive system* consists of the "means by which the performers communicate, coordinate and orient themselves" (p. 183). It includes the conventions that musicians entrenched in one specific musical culture may take for granted – in jazz music, the 'tunes' that they improvise over, the common structure of melody statement followed by solos and concluding with another melody statement, and visual and audial cues that facilitate progress through a performance. *Interactive sound structure* is his third constellation, which deals with "constraints and possibilities inherent in the ways that sounds are put together" (p. 169). Finally, *interactive motivation* looks at the "why" of musical interaction, the goals, rewards and pitfalls, or the ethics and aesthetics of interaction. He observes that any study of musical interaction should attempt to discover interactive motivations because "musical interaction is not a mechanical system but a way of human being" (p. 202).

The four constellations of concepts are explored in detail and provide an extensive structure that does indeed capture the richness and complexity of musical interactions across a range of genres. Some of the *interactive network* topics covered which are important to this study are: the division of leadership responsibilities in a constant or shifting arrangement; the explicitness and recognition of leadership and positioning of these leaders; and their degree of control or influence (pp. 172-178). Brinner explores the implications of labels attached to different roles in the ensemble. *Leader* implies *followers*, whereas the words "accompanist" and "supporter" carry different connotations (p. 173). The book enables the reader to step outside the labels and assumptions embedded in whatever genre of music he wishes to explore, and see more deeply into its underlying principles. Brinner provides an example from Western classical music:

> In a string quartet leadership is traditionally vested in the position of first violin, with the second violin, viola, and cello cast in supporting roles. The very concept of "second fiddle" has entered the language signifying subordination or marginality. This is a superficial view, contradicted by the numerous passages in which the focus shifts to second violin, viola, or cello and by the fact that leadership responsibility is not necessarily linked to the domain of melody – an "accompanying" part often sets tempo or dynamics or initiates a phrase. (p. 181)

Applying Brinner's analytic framework and language to my own project enabled different aspects of interaction to come into focus. *Musicians set up on stage and play tunes*. There is a lot of information in this simple sentence that would be easy to take for granted, but not if we look at it through Brinner's theoretical structure and his language of interactive systems, networks and sound structures. By how much does the stage elevate the band and distance it from the audience? Does the band attempt to breach this distance in their interaction with the audience, and how? Where are the instruments placed in relation to each other and the audience, and what does this imply about their various roles? How do the acoustic properties of the instruments in the venue affect their roles, and what are the expectations of the performers and audience regarding those instruments? What are the elements that comprise a *tune* and make it a suitable subject for an improvisation? What aspects of the tune do we expect to be played around with, and what are considered inviolate?

Brinner's analytical framework provides a language for describing interactions and organising them into different categories. More importantly, it provides different perspectives from which to look at interactions. It encourages scrutiny of aspects that might otherwise be overlooked or disregarded as irrelevant. In particular, it invites us to consider the importance of goals, ethics and aesthetics to a study of music performance. Where the music is largely improvised these issues have a profound effect on the course of the performance.

Summary

The collaborative and interactive nature of improvising in a group makes it a rewarding activity. Berliner's (1994) book contains many enthusiastic comments from his participants on the "magical moments" (p. 388) and the "total communication of individuals" (p. 389) that occurs when "everybody can feel what each other is thinking" (p. 392). Such moments of shared empathy, and contrasting moments of surprised delight at an unexpected musical interjection from a fellow musician, have been the highlights of my musical career. Traditional musicology can't begin to explore this area, and there has been increasing recognition that other methods are needed for the analysis of improvised performances.

For many musicians the activity of playing is more important than any musical end product that may arise from their activity. This is especially (but not solely) true for improvised music. There have been many studies of the cognitive processes involved in musical improvisation

that help to shift the research focus from recordings of performances to the *activity* of playing music. However, the reductionist approaches of psychology and cognitive science don't get far in understanding the unpredictable and chaotic nature of a group performance.

Increasingly, studies of improvised music in recent decades have been ethnographic studies that seek to understand a musical culture through interviews with musicians who take part in that culture. Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz*, and Monson's *Saying Something* point to a range of interactions that may be involved in an improvised performance. They describe interactions between musicians, interactions between performers and their audience, musicians and the acoustic environment, musicians and the musical structures they play over, and between tradition and innovation. Ethnographic studies also point out that egalitarianism is an important feature of the music.

These studies tend to focus on the shared understandings of a particular musical culture, which can lead researchers to disregard the richness of individual differences. Increasingly in our multicultural world, researchers acknowledge the multiple allegiances in people's musical lives, and focus on their individual experiences rather than on musical communities. There is also increasing recognition that the context of a concert has a powerful effect on the music, and studies that attempt to isolate discrete moments of interaction without regard to the context of the performance will have only limited value.

CHAPTER THREE: INTERACTING WITH TEXTS ABOUT RESEARCH

Before I began this project I knew almost nothing about qualitative research. As I explored the field I slowly realised that I already had a store of value-laden knowledge about music and about researching music that needed to be brought out and articulated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this "tacit knowledge" that we all hold from our life experiences, and which "intrudes into *every* inquiry whether or not the investigator recognizes that fact or is willing to own it" (p. 197). To be useful, tacit knowledge has to be thought about explicitly so it can be articulated and shared with others (p. 198). This chapter outlines my interaction with texts about doing research, through which I learned not only about a diverse range of research practices, but about myself. As this interaction progressed and my tacit knowledge started to cautiously become explicit, the knowledge I held from years of playing music and in particular from playing music in this band, began to inform the research process.

Praxis and phronesis

The type of musical knowledge that I refer to here encompasses the values, understanding and practical interpretive wisdom about playing music (in this band) that has been gained through the activity of engaging musically with the other band members over an extended period. This practical activity, or *praxis*, "is about doing the right thing and doing it well in interactions with fellow humans" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 207). There is no separate product as a result of praxis – a person *becomes* a 'good' musician, human being, teacher, etc. through doing the activity. Aristotle divided human activity into two forms, practical activity or *praxis*, and productive activity or *poiesis*. Poiesis is directed towards producing some thing or some result. It requires technical knowledge, or *techne*, that is transferable from person to person. For a musician this might be knowledge of scales, harmony, rhythmic complexities and improvisational approaches – the type of knowledge taught in music academies. In contrast, practical activity, or praxis, is associated with a distinct type of knowledge called *phronesis*. "Phronesis is intimately concerned with the timely, the local, the particular, and the contingent (e.g., "What should I do *now*, in *this* situation, given *these*, circumstances, facing

this particular person, at *this* time?")" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 208).[3] *Phronesis* involves values and aesthetic judgement. It goes beyond analytical knowledge and technical know how (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 284). A musician with a thorough technical knowledge of music and practical skills on their instrument can enjoy a rich and varied performance career. However, one who also draws on phronesis adds depth to the experience of everyone at their performances.

This dissertation is a situated account of three performances that gives some insight into the musical world of the participants. It is not focused on technical knowledge about playing jazz, and is not intended as an instruction manual of how to interact successfully in improvised music. Instead, it explores values, aspirations and aesthetic issues that are important to the participants. The following pages describe how my practical knowledge of making music with the band correlates with my approach to this research project, and how that practical knowledge resonates with various research methodologies and paradigms. An exploration of tacit knowledge doesn't just involve making my own explicit, it encompasses sensitivity to what the participants *aren't* talking about.

> Good qualitative research delves beneath the surface to explore issues that are assumed, implicit, and have become part of participants' common sense. Noticing, analyzing, and unpacking this knowledge is key to understanding interaction and behavior in the scene. (Tracy, 2010, p. 843)

For many researchers, this requires spending "significant time in the field" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Prior to officially starting this research project I had spent decades "in the field", so revealing the participants' tacit knowledge required first that I uncover my own.

Some of the texts that I discuss here were only read toward the final editing period of this project, and others were encountered early in the project. Rather than arranging them chronologically and telling a story of my journey through all of these texts, I have loosely organised the chapter around my tacit knowledge of playing music. In the course of doing the project through cycles of reading, talking with the research participants and critical reflection, I gradually uncovered a number of assumptions I had unconsciously made during my time with the band, assumptions that had become taken-for-granted 'truths'.

[3] The term *praxis* is often used in association with emancipatory research that aims at achieving social change by the research project (Cho & Trent, 2006; Lather, 1986, 1986a). I don't want to imply that this project has an agenda of empowering the participants. The term *praxis* is used only to help define a particular type of knowledge.

1. Playing music is not a competition.

2. There are multiple and equally valid experiences of a performance.

3. Playing music is a co-creation.

4. Taking risks makes the endeavour more rewarding.

5. Labels can be misleading and cause unnecessary problems.

6. Starting a performance free of presuppositions is beneficial.

It is not a competition

A competitive and defensive attitude from anyone in the band will suck the life and joy out of the musical interaction. Further, the audience at a concert is not in opposition to the band – the audience is a part of the performance and affects the music produced. An audience member who is moved by the music is "like having another member in the group" (Kofsky, 1973, p. 861). Research is sometimes described in terms of competition – the researcher undertakes a project to elevate their status by being 'published' or by producing a thesis that, if successfully 'defended', results in higher academic standing. The phrase 'defending a thesis' suggests an attitude in which texts written by respected academics are used to construct an edifice that protects the researcher from criticism. I have a mental image of the researcher hiding behind and also being imprisoned by this barricade. Pryke (2003, pp. 177-180) invites us to deconstruct the binary opposition between researcher and audience. He explores Edward Said's "notion of the interplay between researcher and audience achieved through the movement of ideas" (p. 180), and presents Gayatri Spivak's suggestion that the audience be thought of as co-investigators.

These ideas were critical in helping me find a way to write about the many texts that have enriched and informed this thesis. As a result, I do not attempt here to present an orderly overview of the different qualitative research methodologies and then position this project in a specific place within this spectrum. Rather than gazing in a detached way, from the outside, on different research methods and the principles which underpin them, I wander through the field engaging with some of the texts that have enriched this project (Schwandt, 2001, p. xxiv).

Just as this project presents a local and situated account of musical interactions rather than a general theory, this chapter presents a local and situated account of the various texts on research that shaped my understanding of qualitative inquiry. Some of these texts happen to be seminal works and others have seldom been cited. Some were recommended by my supervisor or referenced in books and articles I was reading. Others found their way into my life through serendipity – they happened to be on the shelf in a library or were mentioned by chance in conversation.

My purpose in writing about these research texts is not to defend the methods I use to explore musical interactions nor to provide justification for the various stages of data collection and analysis by positioning myself within a particular research tradition. The project has required me to embrace a more deconstructive approach that "refuses to view methodology simply as a set of technical procedures with which to manipulate data" (Agger, 1991, p. 114). The various texts about qualitative research that I refer to in this chapter enabled me to construct and reconstruct an understanding of what this research project is about (Schwandt, 2001, p. xxv). They challenged my preconceptions about what research *is* and provided a vocabulary with which to think and write while doing the project.

Some research projects fall firmly into an established methodology with clearly formulated methods and a conceptual framework that spells out what is important and credible. A strength of such projects is that they are relatively easy to dive into and don't require excessive time and energy to be spent on conceptual matters (Patton, 2002, p. 69). This project doesn't fall neatly into any qualitative inquiry approach. Much of my candidature was spent doing research about doing research. It was spent discovering my own worldview and uncovering hidden assumptions that I held about interacting to create music for an audience. It was spent uncovering the values I held that led me to pursue this particular topic in this particular way. It was spent ensuring that the worldview, methodological approach and methods used in this project resonated with each other and those values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38).

The methods, methodology and conceptual framework affect each other. Crotty (1998) visualises arrows that go from one's epistemological view to the theoretical perspective to the methodology and on to the methods. The methods used to gather and analyse data are affected by the methodology or strategic design of the project. The theoretical perspective or philosophical stance informs and provides a context for the methodology. Firmly surrounding and informing the theoretical perspective and hence the methodology is the epistemological

stance (Crotty, 1998, pp. 2-3). However, the influences flow in the opposite direction as well. Crotty points out that many researchers start out with a problem or question and then develop methods and a strategy that will address the problem and issues implicit in that problem. A theoretical stance and conceptual framework are then considered and explicitly put forward to justify the project and make the findings plausible or convincing (p. 13). In this project the arrows flew in all directions. Sometimes a participant said something to me that suggested a new way of looking at the topic and raised questions about my view of the world. My research into established methodologies and their philosophical underpinnings suggested new ways of viewing my methods and methodology, and of course raised many more questions about the validity and trustworthiness of any findings I might make.

Multiple and equally valid experiences

Musicians interact on stage to create some music. The music has no objective meaning in itself – each musician and each audience member experiences the music in their own way and there is no right or wrong way to do this. Constructionism is the view that there is no objective meaning 'out there'. Meaning is constructed through the interaction between people and their world. Crotty (1998) writes that

> all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed within an essentially social context. (p. 42)

Two main research focuses arise from this worldview. Some researchers uncritically study each person's unique way of understanding the world with the view that they are equally valid. Others take a more critical approach, recognising that we are all embedded in societies and conventions that existed before us. They emphasize the all-pervasive hold culture has on us in the construction of our thoughts, emotions and reality (Crotty, 1998, p. 58).

Conducting unstructured interviews with participants is the research method most commonly associated with constructionism, as unstructured interviews have the greatest possibility of exploring the participants' diverse experiences. Constructionist research recognises that the language we use to think and express our ideas shapes our understanding. It also emphasises that the relationship between the researcher and the researched affects the

outcome of the research. It recognises that the researcher's background shapes their interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 8). For this reason the researcher has to be visible in the research report.

A research approach that specifically examines people's different experiences of a phenomenon (in other words, the interaction between people and their world,) is phenomenography. Phenomenographic research does not separate subject and object to study each in isolation, but explores the relation between them. This *non-dualistic* approach focuses on the experience itself, and on the variations in different people's experiences of a phenomenon.

> That doesn't mean it just describes the structures that are in people's heads either. Phenomenographers have the view that meaning is constituted in the relation between the person and the phenomenon. The meaning of all phenomena is the total of all human experience of that phenomen[on]. It is expected that there will be qualitative variation in that experience. This is the relational or constitutionalist view which underpins phenomenography. (Trigwell, 2000, p. 63)

The phenomenographic research approach grew in the 1970s in Sweden from attempts to understand why some students are better at learning than others. Ference Marton and his associates set out to understand what kind of meaning the learning event had for students, and how this differed from student to student. They eventually came to see that the "learner's ways of experiencing the learning situation – their approaches to learning [represented the] most fundamental aspect of differences in learning" (Marton, 2000, p. 103).

Musicians are perpetual students, and improvisers especially view themselves this way. It seems, as an improvising musician, that the more you know, the more you realise that you don't know. In the following passage I have replaced the words "learning" and "student" with "interacting" and "musician". With this small change, Marton's (2000, p. 103) description of the development of phenomenography mirrors the initial aim of this study.

> The point of departure was the seemingly rather straightforward observation that some musicians are better at interacting than others. We wanted to take as little for granted as possible. Above all, we did not assume that we knew what 'being better at interacting' implies, hence we decided to explore the meaning of the variation between musicians in interacting. Furthermore, we settled for the idea that the best way of doing it was by trying to find out what kind of meaning interaction has for the musician. We thus set out to study the musicians' experience of interacting.

This research project examines the different ways that people experience interactions, and it examines what the world of interactions that people experience is like. “And of course: these are not two things. They are one” (Marton, 2000, p. 115). Marton and other phenomenographers’ clear explanations of the non-dualistic outlook had a profound effect on my conceptualisation of this project. Through reading their texts I was able to see that a study of musical interactions needn’t be either a study of musical products or of people’s cognitive minds, but could explore the relation between them. I explore that impact in more depth later in this chapter (pp. 41-44).

Co-creation

For many years my conception of how to be the best accompanist was to have no musical personality, to not interfere with the musical voice of the bandleader or soloist. I worked at developing sensitivity and empathy to their musical expression. However, I gradually had to come to terms with the fact that my musical voice (whatever that is) comes through regardless of my intention. The correlation to this research project is that as I attempt to bring the world of the participants to life in the dissertation, I can’t be a totally neutral non-voice in the background. In performances with Ben’s band it is not enough for the bass and drums to follow the leader to bring his musical vision to life. It is much more exciting and fulfilling for him and for us if we co-create the music. Similarly, in this project I have the role of leader, but if I am willing to allow the participants to co-create the project with me it becomes a richer and more meaningful experience for all of us.

As a consequence of this, the interviews in this project did much more than just provide data to address the research topic. The interviews shaped the topic. The research process was, as is common in qualitative research, not a sequential process of problem formulation then data collection followed by analysis. It was a cyclical and iterative process (Henn, Weinstein, & Foard, 2006, p. 48). Each conversation, particularly in the first round of interviews, revealed different aspects of the topic ‘interactions in improvised music’. Rhythmic interaction between the various instruments in the band was a common starting point. The interactions between the band and audience, both verbal and non-verbal, were raised as an important aspect to consider. Some respondents told stories that initially seemed away from the topic, but on consideration were seen to be vital aspects of ‘interaction’. For example, one person spoke of

the conflict between the goals of expressing emotion through the music and of displaying technical excellence. Another spoke of consciously not playing in a traditional American jazz style. Interactions between personal goals and prevailing culture, and between different aesthetic principles, became a focus of subsequent interviews and important findings of this project. A strength of unstructured in-depth one-to-one interviews is that the participants share control of the data production with the researcher (Henn, et al., 2006, p. 162). The participants in this project were encouraged to explore the topic in their own way and shape the future direction of the research.

Taking risks

Some of the best and most rewarding nights I've had playing music occurred when I followed my instincts into unexpected and unfamiliar places, exposing myself to the risk of crashing or falling. For this project I had to accept that I didn't know where it was going. I didn't know what questions I needed to ask or how to shape the interviews. Some of the conversations that seemed interesting but irrelevant at the time impacted significantly later in the project. Embracing the idea of being 'at risk' throughout the project made it a more rewarding experience. Whatmore (2003, pp. 97-100), writing about philosopher Isabelle Stengers, explores the joy of research "when the materials the scientist is working with force an unexpected possibility into the exchange. It is a joy less of knowing than of *not* knowing …" (p. 98). I accepted that I wasn't in control of each interview, and didn't know where the project was going. I wasn't collecting data to support a hypothesis or to fill a particular gap in knowledge on musical interactions. I wasn't following guidelines laid out by a specific methodology but was discovering my own world-view as the project progressed. This made it seem a fragile and risky endeavour, but also illuminating.

Labels

Labels such as 'jazz' and 'improvised music' are a distraction from what we do. We play *music*, and can leave the categorisation to others. Distracting labels intrude into the research process too. In this chapter I cite texts that have influenced and informed this project, but will refrain as much as possible from labelling the project or categorising what type it is. Similarly,

just as jazz isn't necessarily in opposition to rock music or hip-hop, the different strands of research methodologies needn't be in opposition to each other (Schwandt, 2006). Because this research project involves my own performances it falls into a fairly new and sometimes fiercely debated category of academic endeavour – practice-led research. I spent some time exploring this field to evaluate my place in it, and also to help me understand how this project might be of value.

Practice-led research

It is fairly easy to imagine how new knowledge and understanding from research into education, nursing and sociology can have important benefits to the lives of (for example) students, teachers, patients and minority groups. It is more difficult to see how research by performing artists into their own performance can benefit society. However, there is growing recognition that creativity, the arts and aesthetic experience are becoming more important in society and in the economy (Bakhshi, Desai, & Freeman, 2009; Jaaniste & Haseman, 2009). Research that uses performance to research performance is "a relative newcomer to the academy" (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Nicholson, 2011, p. 252) and has recently "been the topic of fierce debate amongst practitioners and researchers in various areas of the creative and performing arts, from the visual arts to theatre and music" (Schippers & Flenady, 2010, p. 1). Artists bring creative approaches to research and new forms of knowledge that can enrich our lives (Bennett, Wright, & Blom, 2009). There are also financial reasons why performance based research would be fiercely debated amongst artists, researchers and the academic community. The amount of funding for this type of research is a minute fraction of the total research expenditure (Grueber & Studt, 2010; Roth & Buttsworth, 2010), but for a struggling painter, dancer or musician, research funding can be vitally important. Performance-based research also benefits academic institutions because each completed research project brings extra government funding and recognition to them (Hanrahan, 2005).

Musicians often see themselves as on a lifelong journey of learning and discovery, with reflection on their own performance an integral part of their professional life (Kurkela, 2004; Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 2). Many would like the opportunity to have this 'research' recognised by the academic community (Paltridge, et al., 2011; Wright, Bennett, & Blom, 2010). A recent study of creative artists who teach in universities found that there is a lack of recognition for creative practice in the academy (Bennett, et al., 2009). The "government-directed research

environment … is unable to quantify [and therefore] recognise the value of creative research" (p. 1). The study states that "the lack of recognition for creative practice either condemns the artist academic to the lower ranks of the university system or condemns creative practice to the realms of an extra-time activity or, at worst, to inactivity" (p. 3). Some artist academics have mixed feelings about creative practice as research, expressing concern that analysing the creative process might put their creativity at risk (Bennett, et al., 2009, p. 9). Others believe that having to express their ideas in words may corrupt or spoil the art (Hanrahan, 2005), and that it "distorts the communication of practice" (Haseman, 2006, p. 100). Haseman calls for a whole new research paradigm of "performative research". He argues that research findings expressed symbolically in artworks should be just as acceptable in the academy as research findings expressed through the symbols of words and numbers in a dissertation. Despite these mixed attitudes, research using creative practice is already expanding rapidly in universities, bringing new ways of thinking about and conducting research. Smith and Dean (2009) believe that creative practice as research can revolutionise academic research, and are committed to exploring the reverse, how "academic research can impact positively on creative practice" (p. 1).

There are different types of performance-oriented research. The type that arouses the fiercest debate is called practice-*based* research (Candy, 2006). In this research, the artist or performer formulates a topic to do with their practice and studies it through their practice (Bennett, et al., 2009). The outcome of the research process is a design, artwork or performance. Words are used to describe the project but a complete understanding of the research is only possible through direct experience of the artwork (Candy, 2006, p. 1). For many scholars, this is unacceptable as research. A research project is about putting ideas into words. The act of writing shapes the ideas, and it also shapes the person who is doing the writing (Kamler & Thomson, 2007). To have the work recognised formally as a research project, an artist/performer needs to fully articulate his or her thoughts and demonstrate a "conscious, critical and creative relationship with the principles that determine his or her conception of the unknown that we call reality" (Kurkela, 2004, p. 59). This process of fully articulating ideas is not only beneficial for the scholar but for the academic community, as it encourages exchange between the different arts and disciplines (Hanrahan, 2005). Unlike practice-*based* research, practice-*led* research aims to fully describe the results of the project in words (Candy, 2006).

Practice-led research "often falls within the general area of action research" (Candy, 2006, p. 1). Like all action research, it aims to advance knowledge about practice (for example, playing music) and uses practice as an integral part of its method.

> Action research tends to be…
>
> • cyclic – similar steps tend to recur, in a similar sequence;
>
> • participative – the clients and informants are involved as partners, or at least active participants, in the research process;
>
> • qualitative – it deals more often with language than with numbers; and
>
> • reflective – critical reflection upon the process and outcomes are important parts of each cycle. (Dick, 2000, para. 3)

Action researchers do not need to immerse themselves in theory or have a clearly defined topic before starting a project – the cyclic nature of inquiry allows for a continual refinement of the topic and gradual reading of relevant theoretical texts as the project progresses (Coats, 2005). Action research's cyclic, participative and reflective characteristics are crucial to my project on musical interactions. However, my purpose in doing this research was to bring to life the musical worlds of the participants and their love of playing music, and action research is usually concerned with bringing about change and improvement (Coats, 2005; Dick, 2000) or solving a problem (Patton, 2002, p. 213). Patton points out that clarity of purpose is vital because "decisions about design, measurement, analysis, and reporting all flow from purpose (2000, p. 213). For this reason I did not actively follow action research methodologies, but continued to search for the right ways to approach this particular project.

Central to my practice-*led* research project are the three music performances. I could have researched 'interactions in improvised music' without involving my own performance. I could, for example, have interviewed a number of musicians about interactions in bands that they play in. However, playing in the trio is fun. It is an opportunity to explore the boundaries of making music rather than playing in a particular style or for a particular function. The opportunity to undertake a Ph.D. program that included putting on concerts with this band was irresistible, especially as I progressed through the project and finally understood that the purpose of the concerts wasn't to assess my ability as a bass player. The performances expanded and heightened my experience of interactions and stimulated the conversations that are the basis of this thesis.

The words we use to describe and think about our activities have a powerful effect on those activities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Symbolic interaction is a social science theoretical perspective (Maines, 2003; Thomas, 2003) that emphasises the importance of meanings and interpretations of language in our human interactions. It "spawned the research methodology known as grounded theory" (Crotty, 1998, p. 78) which I explore later in this chapter. A few *words* developed significance early in this research project and began to inhibit my performances and hence the project. I take a moment here to explore the impact of these words.

Recital

I initially used the word 'recital' to refer to the performances because that is the term used in the Conservatorium Handbook. However, the word is not an appropriate description of the events and carries negative implications. A recital is "a musical or other entertainment given usually by a single performer" or "the act of reciting" (Delbridge, 1982). It entails the idea of repeating something "from memory, especially formally or publicly" (Delbridge, 1982). A performer who has spent considerable effort in memorising a challenging program of music to present for an audience is indeed putting on a recital. However, to describe our improvised performances in those terms is to trivialise the skills required to present a set of music that emerges spontaneously on the night, and to devalue our common goal to co-create music in a fresh way each time. An alternative word to 'recital' that is often used for a jazz performance is 'gig'. Gig is a colloquial term, which refers more to the employment aspect of a performance. It is a "booking for a jazzman or pop star" or "any job or occupation" (Delbridge, 1982). Calling the performance a 'gig' encourages a less formal attitude, which could help to relax the participants, but it fails to capture the thoughtful and serious nature of the music that the trio presents. One of our audience members suggested the word 'concert'. The Macquarie dictionary offers several definitions of the word. It is a "public performance, usually by two or more musicians". The word also means "agreement of two or more in a design or plan; combined action; accord or harmony" (Delbridge, 1982). These two quite separate definitions of the word encompass the performances of the trio in a more positive way than the words 'recital' or 'gig', so I called the final performance a 'concert'.

Accompanist

Another defining word in this project is 'accompanist'. There was some awkwardness in my first recital notes as I juggled the words (and the concepts) 'accompanist' and 'collaborator'. There was nervousness during the first 'recital' as I wrestled with trying to lead while not leading. Underlying this was an unarticulated feeling that less worth is attached to accompanying than to leading, particularly as the leader also wrote many of the tunes. Band leading and composing are skills that are more highly valued in our society than accompanying (Johnson, 2002; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 153-154). Public and academic recognition is usually given to composers and leaders. Accompanists in the classical world often feel undervalued (E. L. Rose, 1981). In 1989 the accompanying program at the University of Southern California was renamed "Keyboard Collaborative Arts" as it was felt that the name 'accompanying' has some negative baggage attached to it (Lee, 2009, p. 5). Despite any negative connotations 'accompanist' might have, I didn't in the end feel a need to find a replacement for it. An examination of the reasons behind my discomfort with the word was enough. This project wasn't directed towards finding out what skills are necessary to become a successful leader. The information gathered during the interviews was not being compiled into a manual of 'how to lead your own interactive band'. Nor was I trying to develop a hierarchy of understandings of music performance with bandleaders at the top of the pyramid, accompanists or collaborators beneath that, musician audience members next, and audience members who are not full time musicians at the bottom. (In fact, the interviews with the non-musicians were particularly valuable in this project.) The different experiences and insights of the participants are equally important in building a comprehensive picture of a live, interactive, improvised music concert.

Play

We 'play' music. Is this an appropriate word to describe our efforts to create music in concert? Yes! In some philosophies *play* can be a serious event that leads to new understanding (Schwandt, 2001, p. 194). *Play* is not necessarily opposed to or incompatible with *work*. We can *play* with intense *conviction* and *sincerity*. Presenting these terms as opposite or exclusive categories can lead us astray (Ellis, 1973, pp. 11-22).

In philosophical hermeneutics, *play* is a kind of activity that shares the following features with the event of understanding:

> There is a back-and-forth movement; each player or party is exposed, vulnerable and at risk; and in each event, one player recognizes that other players or dialogue partners have something to say, and this requires not the subjectivity of a distanced onlooker but participation and involvement in the play or conversation. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 195)

Playing, in this sense, is exactly what we strive to do in our concerts. In high points of a performance the fascination with musical play takes over the player and "playing is a kind of being-played" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 194). This feeling is often described as the peak of musical experience (for example, in Berliner, 1994, pp. 388-395). Play "can be inventive of the new, not just a metaphorical redescription of it" (G. Rose, 2003, p. 47). Play also needs to have some spontaneity and unpredictability (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 360). It involves freedom, but "a freedom that involves the intentional self-restraint that goes along with any effort to accomplish something. It involves what Gadamer refers to as a profound commitment" (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 360). The desire to *play* emerges in this project as the central motivation for the band's performances.

Play is a dynamic interaction between committed players. This commitment can extend to the audience. Only an audience member who is actively engaged with the music can become part of the concert, and understand it in a meaningful way. The same is true for someone reading a text,

> for the literary text also finds its life in the event in which its meaning is grasped by an audience. The reader has just as much of an active role in the meaning of the text, as the spectator does in the life of an artwork. The artwork and text are conceived by Gadamer as two forms of tradition that we attempt to understand through the same playprocess. (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 361)

Following on from this idea, gaining an understanding of something new requires that we don't stand separate to it and gaze upon it objectively. Instead, we need to immerse ourselves in it, *playing* and engaging with it fully. We approach any new text with our own set of presuppositions that provide a background or context into which we can integrate new information. We interpret it based on what we already know and it replies "that's not yet what I mean" (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 361), challenging or resisting some of our presuppositions. By

bringing these presuppositions to the foreground we can examine and transform them – so we can understand the text better. It is only by engaging in this type of play, a back and forth between the text and our assumptions, that understanding can take place. Detachment and striving for objectivity will not necessarily lead to new understandings.

> On the contrary, we are to engage ourselves fully with that other meaning we are confronting, test our prejudices, allow them to be played out, and risk ourselves and our prior understanding: In short, we are to get in the game and allow ourselves to be affected. (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 362)

Here is a central theoretical principle of this project: that exploring the experience of *playing* in the band leads to a better understanding of how to undertake the research, and that playing with texts on research leads to a better understanding of the experience of playing in the band. The relationship between play and understanding was thoroughly developed by hermeneutic theorist Hans-George Gadamer (2004), whose work I discuss in the following section.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics examines the language that we use to express our experiences. It is the art and science of the interpretation of texts (Kvåle, 1996, p. 46). Hermeneutics began as the science of interpreting Scripture. Biblical scholars in the seventeenth century were dealing with texts that had gone through several translations and modifications from their original language (Hughes, 1990, p. 89). To discover the original meanings required more than linguistic skills. It required that the texts be related "to the wider social context in which they were originally produced" (p. 90). The word hermeneutics has grown to apply not only to biblical studies, but also to studies of other texts. Language is central to human beings, and so contemporary hermeneutics can be applied to human practices and situations, not just to texts (Crotty, 1998, p. 87; Patton, 2002, p. 114). People shape society, but are also a product of their society. Language doesn't just reflect society – it creates social reality. Hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for "questioning the conditions that shape interpretations of human acts or products" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 6).

Hermeneutics has, from its beginning, been a practical discipline aimed at understanding the meaning and intent of texts. To understand something we need to begin somewhere, with

words we already have and in terms of what we already know (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 34). "Understanding turns out to be a development of what is already understood" (Crotty, 1998, p. 92). Central to the hermeneutic process is the notion of entering the hermeneutic circle – of "relating parts to wholes, and wholes to parts" (Patton, 2002, p. 497). To understand individual sentences and ideas we need to look at the whole situation and context in which they were expressed. To understand the whole situation requires an understanding of all the different individual sentences and ideas. The aim of undertaking the circle of interpretation is to gradually come to an understanding where there is harmony between the parts and the whole (Schwandt, 2001, p. 112).

Hermeneutics has a long complex history and has been defined in a number of different ways (Gallagher, 1992, p. 3). Gallagher groups hermeneutic theorists into broad types. In *conservative hermeneutics*, scholars aim to "transcend historical limitations" (p. 10) in order to understand the meaning or intention of the author. They strive for "universal, or at least objective, truth" (p. 10) by following clearly defined hermeneutic guidelines. *Radical hermeneutics*, in contrast, aims at deconstructing a text to displace "concepts such as unity, identity, meaning, or authorship, which operate in and around a text" (p. 11). The aim of radical hermeneutics is to show that all interpretations are relative and conditional. *Moderate hermeneutists* such as Hans-Georg Gadamer are more optimistic than this, accepting that "no method can guarantee absolutely objective interpretation", but believing that interpretation is a creative act that "enables some access to textual meaning" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 10). They don't agree with conservative hermeneutics that we can completely understand a text, arguing that prejudices are embedded in language itself, which "limits our interpretive powers and keeps us from gaining an absolute access to any textual meaning, even the meaning of our own texts" (p. 10). Interpretation, in moderate hermeneutics, involves a dialogue between text and reader that heads towards, but never attains, a completely objective understanding.

In *Truth and Method* (2004), Gadamer works towards an understanding of the hermeneutic process by first exploring 'play'. Being committed to playing is necessary and "somebody who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport" (p. 103). Play involves a to-and-fro movement. Play is its own purpose and is not aimed at an audience (p. 108). The game draws the players into itself and takes them over so the players are in fact being played: the subject of playing is not the players but the game itself (p. 106, p. 484). Play is an experience in which the player loses himself and then returns transformed. Rather than developing procedures that would lead to better understanding, Gadamer considers that it is the work of hermeneutics to "clarify

the conditions in which understanding takes place" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295). Those conditions are best understood in terms of play.

In any learning experience there is play between our preconceptions and the unknown. Anything that we can try to understand already has some contextual element of familiarity to us. The play between this familiarity and the unfamiliar is the place where new understanding takes place. Understanding is not a technical feat of slotting new pieces of data into place. "Rather, it is a genuine experience … an encounter with something that asserts itself as truth" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 483). This can only happen if we have thrown ourselves whole-heartedly into the play (or interaction) between what we already know and the unknown. If the new knowledge fits neatly with our preconception or foreknowledge then "the preconception is reinforced and continues to condition our understanding" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 64). Often however, something new confronts us that doesn't fit with what we already understand and "the preconception is forced to undergo revision" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 64). Preconceptions sometimes need to be torn down after encountering something new that refutes them.

Hermeneutics is woven through this whole project. In conservative hermeneutic terms, my analysis of the interview transcripts constantly moved from the parts to the numerous 'wholes', contextualising individual sentences or ideas with the whole of that participant's interview data or with everybody else's thoughts on that particular idea. My comprehension of methodological issues relevant to the project grew slowly through cycles of absorbing new information and then returning with greater understanding to previously read texts. The much greater impact on the project was through the moderate hermeneutical concept of play. As my appreciation of the centrality of the concept of play in the band's music expanded, I grew more willing to allow play into the research approach. I let the project develop where *it* wanted to, without preconceiving how the finished dissertation would appear. I let the various texts and interviews *affect* me and allowed my conception of "interactions in improvised music" to change.

A final hermeneutic contribution to the project is in its concern with context. Everything presented as data in this project is "constructed through interactions between the researcher and participants" (Patton, 2002, p. 115). As I am part of the context, exploring and explaining my goals and background is vital to a thorough presentation of the project.

Presuppositions

I interact in music performances best when I am able to listen uncritically, unselfconsciously and without presuppositions, to the other members of the band and to myself. This attitude to performance translates directly to the research interviews. I can consciously attempt to set aside what I 'know' and listen with fascination to the stories the participants tell me. This attitude is of central importance to the research tradition of phenomenology.

Phenomenology

For Merleau-Ponty, the French phenomenological philosopher, the source of all our knowledge is our experience (Crotty, 1998, p. 85). Phenomenological inquiry therefore constantly returns to the immediate experience and aims to uncover the essential features of that experience (Goulding, 2005, p. 302). To successfully enter "into the life-world of the research participant" (Ashworth, 1996, p. *i*) researchers must suspend their presuppositions, which in phenomenological terminology is 'bracketing' or the 'epoché'. Phenomenological researchers must deliberately set aside existing theories and knowledge on the topic. They must also consciously set aside their presuppositions about the topic and suspend any judgement on the validity of the research participants' stories. "Here we have a basis for research aimed at describing actual, empirical life worlds" (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998, p. 418).

The emphasis for much phenomenological research is on common understandings. First the essence of each participant's experience is sought. Different participants experience the same phenomenon differently and the meaning it has for them may not seem similar at all. The next stage of phenomenological analysis looks for commonality in these different meanings to find the essence of a phenomenon for that group. If we accept that culture is involved in the construction of our thoughts, feelings and reality, then "phenomenological research of this kind emerges as an exploration, via personal experiences, of prevailing cultural understandings" (Crotty, 1998, p. 83).

Phenomenology's focus on shared understandings makes it unsuitable as a methodology to use in this project. The two main participants straddle several different musical sub-cultures. Rather than search for the essence of what it means to 'be a jazz musician' or to 'interact to

make music' I am more interested in the uniqueness of each person's experiences. I would like to celebrate the diversity of experiences: that people who have been to the same concert describe it as though they had been to different concerts. I have read studies that involve phenomenological analyses of performing musicians' experiences and, in their formal language and focus on the essence of those experiences, they lack the vibrant chaotic diversity that I hope to portray in this thesis.

Phenomenography

Phenomenography is a research approach for describing and mapping the qualitatively different ways that a phenomenon is experienced and understood. It is sometimes grouped with phenomenology as a qualitative research method, but the two have quite separate aims. Phenomenography developed as an empirical and pragmatic approach, focused on practical rather than philosophical issues (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 321; Hasselgren & Beach, 1997, p. 192). I will outline the phenomenographic approach to research in some detail, as it made a substantial contribution to this project in two distinct ways. Firstly, as discussed earlier in this essay (pp. 29-30), theoretical writings about phenomenography helped me formulate and clarify the methodological approach and topic of this study. Secondly, phenomenographic studies of researchers' conceptions of doing research helped me at various stages of my candidature to come to terms with what I was doing as a researcher and why.

Phenomenography "is not a method in itself, although there are methodical elements associated with it, nor is it a theory of experience, although there are theoretical elements to be derived from it" (Marton, 1997, p. 111). Marton is one of the best-known proponents of the phenomenographic approach to research and has written about theoretical issues associated with it. He states that phenomenography is an approach to "identifying, formulating, and tackling certain sorts of research questions, a specialization that is particularly aimed at questions of relevance to learning and understanding in an educational setting" (p. 111).

Phenomenography aims to explore the variation in the way a phenomenon is experienced, whereas phenomenology searches for the essence or central meaning of that phenomenon. Larsson and Holmström (2007) illustrate the differences effectively in their study of the two methodological approaches. They perform both phenomenological and phenomenographic analyses of transcripts of interviews with anaesthesiologists, comparing the two analytic

approaches. The phenomenographic analysis explores the differences between the participants' conceptions of their work. It results in four categories of ways that anaesthesiologists understand their roles, with some people holding one aspect in focus and others having a more comprehensive understanding of their work and able to shift between the different aspects. The internal relations between the categories are then examined and it is seen that some are more comprehensive, logically embracing others.

The phenomenological analysis of the same interview data shows the essence of what it is to be an anaesthesiologist, to help us "grasp what it really means for a person to live with this work" (p. 62). In contrast, the phenomenographic findings open up new ways for professionals to understand their work and broaden their "repertoire of action in clinical situations" (p. 62). Larsson and Holmström demonstrate that even though phenomenography and phenomenology have much in common, they are separate methods that have different aims and goals, and provide different results (p. 63).

Phenomenographic studies mainly focus on higher education, occupying a prominent place in that area of research. One type is developmental phenomenography which "seeks to find out how people experience some aspect of their world, and then to enable them or others to change the way their world operates" (Bowden, 2000, p. 3). Another type is pure phenomenography "where the concepts under study are mostly phenomena confronted by subjects in everyday life rather than course material studied in school" (ibid.). Overviews of the development and applications of phenomenography can be found in Marton (1981, 1997), Bowden (2000), Entwistle (2005), and Hasselgren (1997). Discussions of theoretical issues concerning phenomenography include Svensson (1997), Ashworth (1998), Dahlin (2007), and Säljö (1997).

There is a growing body of research that uses a phenomenographic approach to explore the experiences and conceptions of professionals across a range of fields. Some examples of such studies are: Marton, Fensham and Chaiklin's (1994) study of scientific intuition through examination of interviews with Nobel prize-winners; Sandberg's (2000) study of human competence which looks at the ways workers in a car factory conceive of their work; Brew's (2001) study of the way research is experienced by senior researchers across a range of disciplines; and MacGillivray's (2009) thesis on the perceptions and uses of boundaries by respected leaders, which employs "phenomenography to reveal qualitatively different ways of understanding and working with boundaries" (p. 44). There are many phenomenographic

studies in the field of music education: Burnard's (2004) examination of learning in secondary music classes; Fodor's (1998) dissertation on precollegiate music combos; Reid's (1997) examination of tertiary instrumental teachers and students; and Petersson and Nyström's (2011) study of musicians learning music therapy. Phenomenography would be a useful approach for studying interactions in improvised music and there is a clear lack of existing studies of the experiences of performing musicians, but after the first round of interviews I realised that this project doesn't have the necessary sample of participants. Despite the fact that jazz is an egalitarian music and audiences co-create a performance, bandleaders have a different role to other band members and performers' roles differ from audience members. Mapping different conceptions of these tasks would require more than one bandleader and more than one band member.

Brew's (2001) phenomenographic study of people's experience of doing research was extremely helpful at a difficult time during the project. She investigated "how research is experienced by established senior researchers" (p. 271), and provided a report in non-technical language on how they understood their work of doing research. The report outlines four distinct ways in which research is understood. For some researchers, "research is viewed as a series (often a list) of separate tasks, events, things, activities, problems, techniques, experiments, issues, ideas or questions, each of which is presented as distinct" (p. 276). Their task is to combine these elements into a coherent whole. A second group see data as containing layers of meaning. For them, research is a process of "discovering, uncovering, or creating underlying meaning" (p. 280), rather than of synthesising separate elements. A third group see research primarily as a "social market place where the exchange of products takes place" (p. 280). This group focuses on research reports, publications, grants and social networks. A fourth group of researchers see their work as "a personal journey of discovery" (p. 280). The underlying life issues posed by a research question are more important than the content of the investigation, and researchers grow or are transformed by their encounters with the data. Brew made no judgements on the effectiveness or relative sophistication of the four categories (p. 281). The report shows that some researchers principally operated from one of those conceptions while others spanned two or three. The analysis in the report provides a framework for understanding the perspectives of different researchers and groups of researchers. Brew states that understanding these different perspectives can help researchers communicate with each other more effectively.

Reading about senior researchers' conceptions of their work helped me to better understand the meanings this project had for me. Part of my research effort involved solving a variety of specific problems and undertaking diverse tasks such as reading academic literature about music and about qualitative research, organising concerts, conducting interviews, transcribing and analysing those interviews. Often in this process it seemed that rather than assembling a body of data to present in the thesis I was peeling away preconceptions to uncover meanings that were already there. I wanted to produce, after three years, a credible thesis of 40,000 to 60,000 words that would increase my academic standing. The project itself was at the same time a deeply personal journey of discovery, worthwhile in itself whether I managed to write up a thesis or not. It was liberating to have these disparate perspectives of research clearly articulated and validated in Brew's essay, and to understand that they need not be in opposition to each other.

Grounded theory

The methodological design of this project incorporates cycles of performance, interview, analysis and participant feedback. Organising research in successive cycles like this is a key feature of the grounded theory method. Research projects that are designed like this are able to use findings from the project to focus and re-focus the research question, changing the emphasis and even the direction of the project itself. In this project, the focus was initially quite broad, and it was only after investigating the first round of interview transcripts that I was able to refine the research topic and take steps to more effectively explore musical interactions.

During the interviews following the first performance, many people discussed nerves and tension in our performance. During analysis of the interviews I discovered that the major contributor to nerves and tension was uncertainty amongst the performers and the audience members about why we were there. My previous performances at the Conservatorium had all been assessment tasks – playing music for marks. My strategy for getting through those tasks had always been to control the musical product by planning it carefully and then leading the performance clearly and firmly. That strategy wasn't useful for the performances in this project. The band already had a leader and it wasn't me. We weren't performing for marks, we were playing to "stimulate conversations about interactions in improvised music". That's how I

phrased it in the critical notes for the first recital, but that's not necessarily how it *felt* to all the participants.

Consequently, before the second concert I made sure to clarify the goals of the performance. I made it clear to the bandleader that it was *his* concert and that the sets of music were his to organise, like all our other gigs. I reassured both musicians that I wasn't being assessed for the performance, so they didn't need to create musical space for me to feature in any way that was different from usual. I spoke to the audience and explained briefly that the concert was part of my research project. For the rest of the evening the bandleader spoke to the audience and led the performance as he normally would. Doing those simple things transformed the performance, and allowed the subsequent interviews to move on from discussing *problems* to discussing some of the joyful aspects of musical interaction.

The idea of discovering theory through a systematic process of qualitative research was put forward in 1965 by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). In an era "when qualitative research was under attack for lacking "scientific" procedures and rigour" (Goulding, 2005, p. 295), they argued for qualitative research as a credible and valuable means of generating substantive theory. Their classic book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) came out two years later. It outlines a rigorous approach to conducting qualitative research in which emerging theory is firmly grounded in the data. The process begins with a broad research question. Successive phases of data collection and analysis lead to a more and more specific topic. Categories, themes and concepts are developed by identifying patterns in the data and through the constant comparison of data in the various categories. Eventually it is possible that a core category will emerge that ties everything together into an integrated theory that is firmly grounded in the data. This is a grounded theory. The method of data collection and analysis which may (or may not) result in a grounded theory is properly called the grounded theory method (Bryant, 2002, p. 27).

Exploring the research topic through successive phases of data collection and analysis enabled this project to evolve in many ways. In the interviews after the first 'recital' I realised that the audience participants were all students or teachers at the conservatorium and shared similar conceptions of what a 'recital' at that institution should be like. As part of their course,

students give recitals and critique each other's performance. This had given them a common basis for their comments about the interactions in my performance. Analysis of their interviews revealed a commonality of views that pointed to a need for different types of participants to be included in the project. Grounded theorists let the research guide the collection of data, purposefully gathering data that can elaborate their emerging concepts. This is termed "theoretical sampling" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I was able to get two people to join the project who weren't music students or professional musicians. These two made significant contributions to the project in the subsequent interview rounds.

The second concert was informed by analysis of the first interviews, and the second round of interviews wandered through areas of the topic that hadn't been considered in the first round. Similarly, the third concert benefitted from the breadth of interview material that had already been analysed. In the third round of conversations many of the respondents, aware that this was their final interview, spontaneously summarised their thoughts on the project and brought their ideas on interactions to a conclusion. I allowed this to happen in a natural way, letting the participants say what was on their mind. If the project had followed the grounded theory method properly, the process of seeking new data would have been more rigorously undertaken. "Theoretical sampling continues until all categories are saturated; that is, no new or significant data emerge and each category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 157).

In grounded theory research there is

> a set of specific principles for analysing and abstracting the information. These include the "constant comparison" method, where, for example, interview texts are analysed line by line, provisional themes noted, and subsequently compared with other transcripts in order to ensure consistency and also to identify negative cases. The next stage is to search for links through the identification of concepts that may go some way to offering an explanation of the phenomenon under study. This process is normally associated with axial coding that is achieved by specifying relationships and delineating a core category or construct around which the other concepts revolve. (Goulding, 2005, p. 297)

The purpose for a grounded theorist is, after all, to construct theory (A. Strauss, 1995). If the primary purpose of this project were to construct a theory of musical interaction then the grounded theory method would have been a useful approach to take, and I would have needed to do some things differently. I would have needed more concerts with a variety of musicians,

and a range of different audience participants. My focus would have been on finding themes and pursuing them in conversations with the different participants rather than on allowing the conversations to roam where they did.

The emphasis in the grounded theory method on the importance of using specific procedures to produce rigorous and objective analyses "opened the door to qualitative inquiry … especially as a basis for doctoral dissertations" (Patton, 2002, p. 127) in many academic institutions. For followers of the grounded theory method the procedures for analysing data are laid out in great detail. There are variations in procedures and in the names of procedures offered by different practitioners, but all involve "coding" or identifying units of meaning in the textual data (Tan, 2010, p. 102).

The first analytical step is open coding, which is "the process of defining what the data are about" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). This means labelling each small segment of data in a way that categorises and summarises it. These initial codes begin the task of defining the data, and can be applied word by word, line by line, or incident by incident. They are then developed into categories through a focused selection and organisation of the "most significant or frequent initial codes" (p. 46). This second step of focused coding should move forwards and backwards through the initial codes, constantly comparing data to data and revising codes as new insights emerge. A third type of coding is axial coding, with the purpose of sorting and synthesizing the data into a new and coherent whole. Concepts are grouped together around a category (McCann & Clark, 2003a, p. 13). This category forms an *axis* around which concepts are clustered (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60), hence the term *axial* coding.

The process of developing higher order, more abstract concepts requires inductive and deductive thinking (McCann & Clark, 2003a, p. 13). It is also not a linear process, but cyclical. Insights arising along the way can make it necessary to adjust the initial codes, so the analyst must move from level to level, constantly comparing and modifying codes and their inter-connections. After I had spent some time working on analysis of my second round of interviews the analysis of the first round data seemed extremely limited. I couldn't see how to expand or develop that analysis, so I started from scratch with the interview transcripts, developing new initial codes and playing with different ways of connecting and assembling them into new patterns.

The grounded theory method offers many strategies to assist researchers in gaining the most from their analysis. Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in particular, offer a wealth of formal analytic tools and procedures for researchers to use. They provide a "structured or rule-governed approach to data collection and analysis" (McCann & Clark, 2003b, p. 25), which has been criticised for being formulaic and inflexible (Melia, 1996, p. 370; Tan, 2010, p. 108). I didn't follow their procedures from beginning to end, feeling that a more flexible approach was more compatible with my goals. However, the conceptual tools that they provide are invaluable. Strategies suggested include: ask who? what? why? when? how much? of the data; focus on 'time' words such as before, since, after; look at the metaphors used in the conversations; look at the opposites or take things to extremes. Analysis also involves examining the context or conditions that surround the topic, working from a global scale through national, community and group, down to the individual, and tracing the relationships between these scales. Grounded theorists also analyse for process, identify causal conditions, and analyse the implications of what is happening (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Glaser, one of the creators of the grounded theory method, is concerned with Strauss and Corbin's highly structured approach, arguing that it doesn't allow the data to speak for itself (Melia, 1996, p. 371). He objects to asking who? what? why? when? how much? of the data, because those questions can force the data and bring preconceptions (Melia, 1996, p. 373). For him, the constant comparison method is, in itself, enough.

> Using constant comparison method gets the analyst to the desired conceptual power, quickly, with ease and joy. Categories emerge on comparison and properties emerge upon more comparison. And that is all there is to it. (Glaser, 1992, p. 43)

I liked the sound of this simpler and less structured approach, but still had a major concern with the grounded theory method – "it unabashedly admonishes the researcher to strive for 'objectivity'" (Patton, 2002, p. 488). 'Data' is not seen as problematic, it just *is*. Some authors acknowledge that complete objectivity is impossible, but still strive for it. They "recognize that subjectivity is an issue and … take appropriate measures to minimize its intrusion" (A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 43). There is a positivist stance in the literature on grounded theory method that continues up to the present (Bryant, 2002, p. 31). For Bryant, the grounded theory method is "an extremely well-developed programme for conducting qualitative research" (p.

34), but the failure of grounded theory method to directly address its philosophical inconsistencies is a weakness.

Although the work of grounded theorists has informed this project and guided my initial data analysis, this research project doesn't completely follow the grounded theory method. In the analysis of the interview transcripts presented in Chapter Five I am acutely aware that I have *constructed* a picture. The participant interviews yielded, not 'data', but equivocal statements that needed to be approached cautiously and with an awareness of context. In this project the

> 'Data' do not stand as transparent evidence of that which is real. Neither are they homologous with something that is real. Statements or descriptions reveal the ways in which sense is being made, rather than the object of the sense making. They reveal the manner of pointing to the real, of making signs about the real. This is not the same thing as saying that there is nothing real or that there are no objects, but to state the limitations of data, and what it is that we legitimately say that data can do. (Davies, 2004, p. 4)

I empathise with graduate students who "become frustrated and paralyzed by the realization that research products (findings) are merely human constructions and not objective Truth" (Baptiste, 2001, p. 10). I accepted that constructing this thesis was a creative process. The challenge then was not to find the 'truth' in the form of a theory, but to create a clear and openly reflexive account of the project.

Writing

Writing is part of the analytical process. Writing memos about interviews, writing notes on academic sources and writing down random insights as they occur are all means of sorting ideas, exposing gaps and processing the complex of data that qualitative research generates (Stout, 2007, p. 228). For me, writing the different sections of the thesis needed to take place in cycles. Each new sentence and paragraph as it was constructed cast previously written sections in new light. In a process of hermeneutic analysis the thesis grew through cycles of constructing and comparing the different paragraphs to the whole, until there was a harmonious account of the research project.

Writing is not easy for me. I like to have everything clear in my mind before setting down words on paper. Unfortunately that didn't work for a project of this size. Just to get the thing going I had to deal with writing sentences and paragraphs and even whole sections that I knew were jumbles of half formed ideas that would never make the final essay. Writing isn't just a reflection of thinking, "writing *is* thinking" (Wolcott, 2009, p. 18). Writing the thesis was not a matter of merely setting out the facts that had been established in the research, but of selectively representing the different meanings that arose through the research process (Denzin, 1997, p. 5). Put another way, a major part of writing up this qualitative research was deleting data, communicating the heart of the matter rather than cataloguing everything I had learned (Wolcott, 2009, p. 16). Writing shouldn't be perceived as something that happens after the research is complete because the way we choose to present the research doesn't only depend on what has been found – it affects what we see. "We tend to seek what we know how to find" (Eisner, 1997, p. 7). When I started this project I assumed that there was a 'proper' format and writing style for presenting a doctoral thesis, and that I would learn what it was and adhere to it. But as I talked with the project's participants it became apparent that for them, playing music is at its best an uncomplicated activity. Consequently, a writing style that is as straightforward and non-technical as possible conveys their world most effectively. This, and not adherence to a particular style, guided the evolving dissertation.

Poststructuralist and post-representational theorists argue that language doesn't represent or reflect reality "but rather produces meanings and creates social reality" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). Some approaches to writing poststructuralist research reports have included poetry, multivocal and multigenre texts, stories and literary techniques that may be open to multiple interpretations. However, for this project I have tried to write with "a lucidity that comes from not relying on the theoretical clichés of established disciplines and practices" (Davies, 2004, p. 4). I have aimed for "a certain clarity that comes with specificity, with the insistence on an embodied (rather than abstract) knowledge of that which is written about, and with the refusal to run away from ambivalence and ambiguity" (Davies, 2004, p. 4).

Reflexivity, or writing the researcher into the project, is "accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to legitimize, validate, and question research practices and representations" (Pillow, 2003, p. 175). The question of validity and legitimisation will always be uncomfortable in postmodernist research, where the subject is acknowledged "as multiple, as unknowable, as shifting" (Pillow, 2003, p. 180). In the case of reflexivity, the subject is the researcher – the multiple, unknowable and shifting me who affects the research outcome at

every stage. There is not, then, a correct method of reflexivity, just as there is not one correct method for conducting research. Pillow (2003) suggests that we need to live with "a reflexivity of discomfort" (p. 192) acknowledging the impossibility of collecting and presenting "truths", even truths about the researcher's place in the project.

Summary

My methodological approach evolved to meet the specific needs of this particular research project. I was exploring the unknown rather than answering a clearly defined question, so the research was a cyclical process in which each phase of data collection and analysis led to a re-framing of the research question. Grounded theorists follow this methodological approach and their texts provide a wealth of information on dealing with the large amount of interview material that is generated in a project such as this. However, the grounded theory method is primarily concerned with generating a *theory*, and its practitioners usually strive for objectivity. This project has grown into a local, situated and contextualised account rather than a search for a theory or general truth.

This is a practice-led research project. This chapter has been loosely organised around the inter-relationship between my musical practice and the research process. One goal of my exploration of texts on research methods was to achieve resonance or synergy between my research practice and my music practice by uncovering and discovering the tacit knowledge I brought into this project.

The focus of the project, as clarified by phenomenographic texts, is the *experience of interacting* to make music, not the people who create the music or the music produced by the musicians. Meaning lies in the relationship between the person and the phenomenon, not in trying to separate subject and object. This non-dualistic world-view is connected to the constructionist view that knowledge is constructed in the interactions between people and their world. People construct their world through their interactions but are at the same time embedded in a culture that is a controlling source of their knowledge. For constructionists, and also for poststructuralists and postmodernists, language is the medium through which we think and share knowledge. Language doesn't just represent reality – it helps creates reality. Consequently, writing is not something to be saved for the last stage of the project. Writing *is* thinking, and needed to be done from the beginning.

Hermeneutics deals specifically with texts and language, and provides a theoretical framework for dealing with all aspects of this project. Unpicking the impact of words such as *recital*, *accompanist* and *play* was crucial in allowing the project to evolve. *Play* is a central concept of philosophical hermeneutics and play permeates this project. Play is an open-ended interpretive activity that describes not only making music in a group but also reading texts. This chapter has focused on my encounters with a range of texts about research approaches and philosophies that affected me and hence the course of this project over the last three years. In hermeneutics, parts are played against wholes in cycles of ever-increasing understanding. The 'wholes' include the context, which of course includes me, the researcher. For this reason, I have positioned myself openly in the research by organising this chapter around my understanding of playing music in the band – understanding that became explicit through the course of the project.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS USED IN THIS PROJECT

In this chapter I describe the methods used in this research project. I have many years of experience as a musician but had none of doing qualitative research before this project began. I have tried to use both my experience as a musician and lack of experience in qualitative research in the best way possible. As an experienced musician I have insight into the world of musicians and bring sensitivity to the research topic. As a novice researcher I don't have a fixed way to go about things and am open to the vast world of methodological possibilities. This chapter also details specific theoretical issues that affected my methodological decisions.

Overall structure of the project

I developed the overall structure for the practical work of doing this project during the first six months of my candidature. I planned that the first year would be for reading, typing and preparing the first concert at the end of that year. This would allow time for me to explore the literature on qualitative research methods and on musical interactions, to find research participants, develop a methodological strategy and secure ethics approval. Immediately after the concert I would interview a number of participants about "interactions in improvised music". The second and third concerts would take place at six monthly intervals during the second year, allowing time between each for exploring the interview data. The third year would be for final analysis of the data and for writing up the thesis.

As a novice qualitative researcher I had no idea how messy and chaotic this process was going to be. My exploration of research methods didn't quickly lead me to the "right methods" to use, but became an obsession to understand the different strands of qualitative research and the different ontological and epistemological stances that underpin them. When the ethics approval for the project was granted it was not the end of the matter but only the first step in an ongoing process of reflexive ethical practice. This study doesn't neatly fit into any particular research strategy, but draws on a number of different research traditions. In the previous

chapter I discussed these traditions and their influence on the project. In this chapter I introduce the participants, the performances and the interviews.

Performers

The primary participants are a pianist, a drummer and me. We had been performing together as a trio led by the pianist for many years before this project began. I enjoyed the diverse ways we interacted in performance as we had developed a strong sense of mutual trust and a willingness to take risks. I had always valued the experience of playing music with them highly, finding it challenging and exciting. Before asking them if they would like to be part of the project it was therefore important to assess what impact their involvement might have on our working relationship and on their lives. To do that, I needed to examine the financial and social circumstances of our work together. Despite the strong bonds we had experienced on stage, we rarely saw each other between performances. The band had also never been a significant moneymaking venture for any of us. We had done perhaps four concerts in the previous four years and all were for modest fees. As a professional musician I usually consider how much money is being offered before accepting an engagement. I find out what the bandleader requires from me, and while I'm at that engagement make sure to behave in a manner that satisfies those requirements and might lead to future employment. However, with this trio money wasn't a consideration. We came together to interactively create music for fun, not to make a living. I couldn't foresee that their involvement in the project would bring any harm to the band, but even if it did there would be minimal impact on their professional lives.

Another consequence of our sporadic working relationship, which I hadn't foreseen, was that the focus of our interviews was the aesthetic reasons for playing. Monson (1996, p. 20) notes that her participants' elite status created a certain type of positive bias in their interviews. I will never know for sure, but can speculate that the following conversation (taken from the third round of interviews) would have been less likely to happen if we were accustomed to promoting the band's concerts and CDs as our livelihood.

I Did you enjoy it? [the concert]

B (laughs) Ah .. I had a hard time, actually.

I Really?

B I just think I was .. had a lot on my mind I think. I found it hard to stop thinking about everything. (Ben, 3)[4]

Sentiments like the following are expressed rarely in the studies I've read.

> I thought you sounded really great, and I just thought "what am I doing?" I had that whole thing like, I shouldn't play jazz, you know… What I tend to do in a situation like the other night is I go through that thing in my head where I'm not 'happening' and then I immediately go, right … I've got to do my fair share. (Henry, 3)

The mental states Ben and Henry describe above affect interactions in performance. The effects are explored at some length in Chapter Five. This important contribution to the thesis may have been missed if we had been in the habit of promoting a positive view of a busy working band.

Any ethical research project needs to be grounded in the principle of *respect for persons*, meaning that we don't blindly use people as a means to our own ends, and that we "respect their privacy, their anonymity, and their right to participate – or not – which is freely consented to" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 47). My research supervisor sent emails to the pianist and drummer outlining the project and inviting them to participate. This provided them the easiest way to refuse if they weren't able or didn't want to be involved. Both responded with an enthusiastic yes.

Performances

Our three concerts were all held in the Music Café, which is at the entrance to the main conservatorium building. It is spread over two levels, seating around seventy people at various sized tables, and is open all day as a café. It was designed as a venue for a small jazz group and holds regular jazz performances. There is a low stage with a grand piano. Compared with the more formal recital halls deeper inside the building, it is a relaxed venue. I was able to

[4] Quotes from interviews with the participants are labeled with the speaker's name and a number that indicates whether it is from the first, second or third round of interviews.

schedule the performances for the early evening, making them as much like a normal jazz gig as possible. In this way I hoped to achieve a relaxed performance with a wide range of interactions providing the richest source of data possible. I paid the pianist and drummer a standard fee for the performances, which seemed fair as the concerts were booked months in advance and required a commitment from them to not take other paid engagements.

Recording

Video recording was not appropriate for either the performances or the interviews. I wasn't aiming to gain an objective viewpoint by 'looking at' the participants. I hoped to achieve some special moments of shared interaction in both the concerts and the interviews. Although much of the communication in a conversation is visual – gestures, looks, body language – I felt that a video-recorder would inhibit me, and no doubt the participants too. Gelso has demonstrated that, at least in some interview contexts, video recording can inhibit self-reflection and this effect does not diminish in subsequent interviews (Gelso, 1973, p. 455).

The concerts were recorded by a single portable digital audio recorder mounted on a microphone stand in front of the band.[5] The interviews were recorded by a similar recorder placed on a random surface somewhere close to where we were talking. In many musical projects, a recording of a concert would be considered an accurate representation of the event, and be of primary importance. For this project the concert recordings, though a necessary resource, were referred to infrequently. The recordings of interviews are the major source of data, and multiple copies were kept in secure places.

Audience participants

To gain a broader picture of the performances I arranged to interview members of the audience after each concert. These participants were initially recruited from Bachelor of Music (Jazz) students at the Conservatorium, as I thought they would find the music and the research

[5] A CD, or online set of audio files, accompanies this thesis. It includes recordings of seven tunes from the three concerts that are discussed in Chapter Five. Brief descriptions of each tune can be found at Appendix Three.

topic interesting, and would have useful feedback to share with me. I spoke about the project in one of their classes and left a sheet for the students to write their email address if they were interested in participating. I don't teach at the Conservatorium and it was made clear that involvement in the project was not related to the students' progression in any unit. Six students came to the first concert and were interviewed afterwards. Five of those were able to attend the two subsequent concerts and interviews. Two teachers from the jazz faculty also attended different concerts and agreed to be interviewed. To further broaden the range of responses, two people who were neither music students nor professional musicians were interviewed after each of the last two concerts. So, the data for this project consists of recordings of three concerts, the critical notes I wrote for each concert[6], my reflections after each concert, six hour-long interviews with the other performers, twenty-three interviews with audience participants with an average length of fifteen minutes, and my notes after each interview.

Interviews

The interviews were arranged at times and places which suited the participants.[7] I did this out of respect for their busy lives, and because there was no financial reward offered for their time. For the music students, meeting them at the conservatorium was most convenient, before or after their classes, in their practice rooms or in the public spaces around the building. I thought of the place as their turf – they were there full time, whereas I only came in briefly every few weeks to meet my supervisor or use the library. I was grateful that they had agreed to talk to me and genuinely interested to hear about their experience at the concert and their thoughts about interactions. When any of them expressed negative feelings about our performance I felt pleased and encouraged that they were comfortable enough with me (and my digital recorder) to do so. Patton (2002) encourages interviewers to adopt a non-judgemental stance towards the participants' thoughts and emotions while maintaining an

[6] These critical notes can be found at Appendix Four. For interested readers they may provide a sense of the emergent nature of this project, as each essay captures my research focus at that particular point in time.

[7] More specific detail on the scope of the interviews is covered in the section on Analysis: Talking, on pages 65-67.

empathic stance towards the person. This "empathic neutrality" works to build rapport and open communication (p. 53). I thought I was getting to the essence of their experience.

With more reflection and reading of methodological texts I realised this was a little naïve. Kvåle (1996) points out that rather than the interviewer uncovering the true essence of the participants' experience, meanings are developed through the course of the interviews (p. 226). From a postmodern perspective meanings are not fixed things or substances with an essence, but an activity. "Meanings are constantly changing, and are produced and reproduced in each social situation with slightly different nuances and significances depending on the nature of the context as a whole" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 3). I had not considered the context of the interviews from the students' points of view. I was a similar age to their lecturers, asking them questions on a topic they were coming to terms with as students, and speaking with them inside the building in which they were taught and examined. My interviews with them were varied and interesting, but a close reading of the transcripts suggested that perhaps there was an element of their trying to give the 'correct' answers or telling me what I wanted to hear.

Interviewers bring preconceptions and intentions to each interview, some of which they are aware of and some of which they're not.

> The same is true of the interviewee. The language out of which the questions are constructed is not bound or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time. (Scheurich, 1997, p. 62)

Scheurich suggests that from a postmodernist perspective, the meanings of questions and answers shift over time, and that changing the venue of an interview changes its outcome. Many of the interviews with music students following the second concert were conducted outside the building in parks or on steps. I met the pianist and drummer in cafés that they liked. Some of those second round of conversations seemed less guarded. Some participants interviewed me for periods, and some told stories that weren't directly related to the topic. From a positivistic perspective this might indicate poor interview technique, but from a postmodernist perspective such events are inevitable and provide a rich source of information. During this round some of the participants seemed to realise that there were no correct answers to my questions, and that what seemed true or important at that moment wouldn't necessarily stay that way.

I have already mentioned that I consciously chose not to video-record the concerts or the conversations. I also made the decision to conduct some conversations in less than ideal acoustic environments. Even though this made the transcription process a little more tedious, I wanted to make the conversations as uninhibited as possible. If placing the recorder slightly away from us removed it from the centre of attention, then I was content to deal with a reduced sound quality. If a café environment helped the participants relax and express their thoughts more freely, then I was happy to sit and listen to coffee cups clattering over and over as I carefully typed up their words.

Establishing rapport with the interviewees is crucial to research that relies on in-depth one-to-one interviews. Many researchers, especially those embracing a critical methodology, argue that developing rapport helps to reduce unequal power relationships between researcher and respondents (Henn, et al., 2006, p. 163). In the interviews with the music students I needed to consciously address power issues, or at least their perceptions of an imbalance in power. Changing the interview venue and maintaining empathic neutrality as described above, were two ways. A third way was through written feedback to the participants. Prior to the second concert I sent a summary feedback sheet to all the participants in which I outlined the breadth of their different views in a totally non-judgemental way.[8] Prior to the third concert I incorporated quotes from each participant into my critical notes and also wrote explicitly about postmodernism in qualitative research, about power relationships in interviews, context, and chaos.

My previously established relationship with the pianist and drummer helped us to fully and frankly explore the topic, even when that involved sensitive personal issues. The bandleader began to establish this trusting and mutually respectful relationship from the moment we first played together, years before this project was conceived. He consistently treated the members of our trio as equal partners in creating the music, inviting and welcoming our input at all times. This is not always the case in inter-band relationships (Berliner, 1994, pp. 342, 418-419), and I would like to acknowledge here how much I appreciate his band leading approach.

[8] The feedback sheet is included in Appendix Four

Transcribing the interviews

In the days following the first round of interviews, while the conversations were fresh in my mind, I transcribed all the interviews. The mechanics of recording, then listening back and typing were easy. A small digital recorder recorded the conversations with excellent clarity. The sound files were imported into a computer. I worked slowly through the recordings, typing up the conversations verbatim and making notes. In only a couple of places I couldn't figure out a word, so I asked the participant, by emailing a bit of transcript with the missing word and surrounding sentences for context, and also the corresponding section from the audio file.[9] Technology made this type of problem easy to address. However, the process of converting the sounds of conversation to a written text was much more complex than I had imagined. The participants hardly ever completed a sentence, and to make it worse, neither did I. Our conversations, which had seemed so natural and clear, looked awkward on the page. Berliner notes the "liabilities of translating oral discourse onto the page" (1994, p. 9).

> Language that sparkles in conversation - enhanced by inflection and by various features of nonverbal communication - sometimes appear dull when printed. Moreover, the asides and redundancies of speech, normally filtered out cognitively in conversation, seem disproportionately weighted in print and can be distracting. (Berliner, 1994, p. 9)

There are many ways to deal with transcribing spoken conversations, from "naturalism, in which every utterance is captured in as much detail as possible" to "denaturalism, in which grammar is corrected" and stutters, pauses and other idiosyncratic elements are removed (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p. 1273). Oliver, Serovich and Mason place naturalism and denaturalism at opposite ends of a spectrum of varied transcription practice. They state that transcription is a "powerful act of representation" and suggest that researchers reflect on their transcription decisions and choose a style that suits their research (p. 1274). Kvåle would agree. He writes that "the question "What is the correct transcription?" cannot be answered - there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode" (1996, p. 166), and urges the researcher to use whatever form of transcription best matches the purpose of the research. To put it another way, a transcript *cannot* objectively re–present a conversation, so it is up to the researcher to make sure it is tailored to suit their theoretical aims (Mishler, 2003).

[9] I'm not unaware that this approach would be methodologically unsuitable for some investigations. However, it works in this project because the intended meaning of the participants is the focus.

Many researchers report that they transcribed their interviews “verbatim” (Åkerlind, 2005b, p. 4; Dall'Alba, 2000, p. 93; Green, 2005, p. 39; MacGillivray, 2009, p. 228; White, 2010, p. 88). Åkerlind points out that the transcripts become the focus of analysis, not the interviews themselves (2005b, p. 4), so the time spent in the process of transcription is useful for increasing the researcher’s familiarity with the data (2005a, p. 116). Transcribing “verbatim” is not a straight-forward process. I spent considerable time ensuring that the transcriptions were as faithful to the meaning of the participants’ statements as possible, and in the process became much more familiar with their words. I decided that a detailed linguistic transcription was unnecessary for this project. My primary aim was to interpret the participants’ intended meanings, not to analyse the structure of our conversational exchange as Conversation Analysts do, so a standardised and detailed transcription system was not needed (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). From reading about the grounded theory method I was aware that my conception of the topic might change dramatically following each stage of analysis. The transcription phase was too early in the research process to make judgements about what was and wasn’t relevant, so I put as much information as possible into the transcripts. They include all the words that were spoken, including my own, with pauses and laughter noted. Sometimes simple textual devices like capitalising letters or starting a new line were enough to clarify meaning. Where the words on the page seemed at odds with the sounds on the recording I made footnotes on the transcription. I was able to do the transcriptions soon after the conversations while they were still fresh in my mind, which made the task easier.

An example from the first round of interviews illustrates some theoretical decisions I faced in transcribing. In the following quote, the interviewee is telling me that it is important in performance that the musicians know the tunes very well.

> So there's a kind of, there's some, there's a, I don't know, a .. (pause) I don't know what the difference is. I think that, like how you kind of don't play something so much that you're sick of it but, I don't know, I just think that if you really know the stuff you don't .. you can just relax, you know .. play. (Yvette, 1)

It is tempting to delete the redundant words and leave this:

> I think that you don’t play something so much that you’re sick of it, but I think that if you really know the stuff you can just relax, you know .. play.

The edited sentence retains the character of her voice and the point she was making. However, by retaining all the extra words in the transcripts I am reminded of the difficulty she had in

expressing this point. I am reminded that I had written in my critical notes for the concert that we wouldn't prepare a fixed set of music but would create it fresh on the night, which she equated with being under-rehearsed. My mind goes back to the particular practice room we were sitting in with my digital recorder resting to one side on a music stand, and I remember her enthusiasm for the conversation and determination to be open and honest. In short, the data is contextualised.

I recognise that the audio recording is not, in itself, a complete record of the conversation. Non-verbal communication such as looks, body postures and gestures is lost in an audio recording. When the recording is converted to written text, variations in volume, pacing, pitch and vocal timbre are also lost. "The full flavour of the interview as a lived experience is therefore unlikely to be represented in the transcript" (Poland, 1995, p. 292). Consequently, it becomes imperative that as much contextual information as possible is available, including repetitions, pauses, laughter, and my own notes made after the interviews. Having my own parts of the conversation was essential for the analysis. It helped me to trace where and how new ideas had arisen in the conversation. This project is focused on the experience of the participants, so being able to follow the twists and turns of our conversation was vital to interpreting the meaning and intention of their words.

It was important for me to do all the transcription myself, not only to become familiar with all the conversation data, but also to avoid the theoretical and analytical perspective of an external transcriber from intruding into the data at an early stage (Tilley, 2003). A transcript is sometimes viewed as an exact copy of talk that has some official status. The act of transcription is however, a creative act that transforms the conversation from one medium to another, oral to print (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 311). The transcript becomes the source of data for the project, so it is vital to recognise that it is a *construction* arising from the interaction between the sounds that have been recorded and the person performing the transcription (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Sandelowski, 1994). The transcription process is an analytical process (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Although I recognise the transcript as a construction that poorly represents a conversation, I also strived for the greatest possible accuracy. Like Poland, I find value in "holding certain paradoxes alive for what they teach us as opposed to rushing to resolve them, maintaining an awareness that on one hand this, yet on the other hand that" (Poland, 1995, p. 295).

To help with analysis, I used a computer program HyperResearch that placed restrictions on the format of transcriptions. Once coding began, it could not cope with any changes made to the transcriptions, requiring me to stop tinkering with them and make a commitment to a final version. It also could not deal with text formatting features such as underlining, bold and italics. I had used these features in the transcriptions to visually represent the sounds of the conversations, so had to return to the audio recordings and make sure that the conversations were represented as accurately as possible with these new restrictions. Dots, spaces and returns (starting a new line), all make an impact on the look, and hence the meaning, of the transcription.[10]

In the presentation of findings in this thesis I was careful in the way I represented the participants through their words. I asked the ethical question of whether I am "doing them a disservice in presenting their imperfect speech to the world" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 167). Even before the difficulties of translating conversations to a written text, there is the "fundamental frustration … [of] translating musical experience and insight" into spoken words (Monson, 1996, p. 74). The participants in this project are intelligent, thoughtful people who struggled at times to articulate the non-verbal processes that are involved in creating music. By presenting unedited portions of the transcripts in this essay there was a danger of misrepresenting the participants and of detracting from the observations they were making. A verbatim transcription was necessary for a thorough analysis but would not necessarily communicate their thoughts clearly to the reader. On the other hand, the participants' own words have a unique flavour that I was hesitant to change. In this essay, where the participants are directly quoted, the only alterations made to their original words were to omit some. Where I've done this is usually indicated with three periods, like … this. Not always, because sometimes the dots themselves start to interfere with coherence. Here is an example of an original transcript used in analysis.

> It's an opportunity to play music the way/ well just be free enough to play whatever comes to mind and see what that is. And if I'm feeling, um, you know, free, which I think I was last time, I mean the time before, then it's a real opportunity to kind of, um, to have/ to really sort of fly I guess. But if I'm hampered then it's just like going to the airport and them telling you the plane can't take off because the weather's bad. (Henry, 3)

Here is the same text as it is presented in the essay.

[10] Appendix One shows the transcription conventions used throughout this dissertation.

> It's an opportunity to … just be free enough to play whatever comes to mind and see what that is. And if I'm feeling … free, then it's a real opportunity to really sort of fly I guess. But if I'm hampered then it's just like going to the Airport and them telling you the plane can't take off because the weather's bad. (Henry, 3)

Two of the omissions have been indicated with dots, retaining the original text's emphasis on the word 'free'. The word order is intact, as is the intended meaning, and dots have been left out of the quote where they would only distract from the meaning.

A minor but effective change to interview transcripts is the use of formatting devices such as 'returns' and text alignment. For example, the quote on p. 121 in this essay appears in my original transcription as "Just be committed to what you're doing. Enjoy it, maybe. That's it." By keeping all the words in their original order and merely placing each sentence on its own line centred in the middle of the page, the poetry inherent in her words becomes more evident. I have not experimented any further than this in re-presenting the participants' words for this thesis. For many researchers though, creative representation is an essential part of their work.

> Researchers need to be aware of many ways to re-present data and to experiment with them to learn about their data, themselves in relation to the data, and about their skills and abilities to communicate inquiry in different ways. (Glesne, 1997, p. 219)

Richardson (2005) in particular considers "writing as a *method of inquiry*, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic" (p. 923), and advocates creative approaches to research practice and representation.

It's ironic that having decided to not do musicological research with its focus on analysis of transcriptions of recordings, I ended up doing research focusing on .. analysis of transcriptions of conversations. One way of compensating to some extent for the loss of information that inevitably occurs in the transcription process is by making memos.

Memos

In a research project that takes years to complete and that undergoes many cycles of transformative data collection, analysis and reflection, it is easy to forget transitory ideas and feelings about the project. Most qualitative research handbooks recommend making memos regularly to guard against this. I made short reflective notes after each of the concerts with my

perceptions of the performance, and notes at the conclusion of each round of interviews. A few brief examples can be seen in Appendix Five. I also added comments at the bottom of some of the interview transcriptions, clarifying where the written words didn't clearly convey the spoken meaning, and noting things like the way a person sat with arms crossed, or that it was a relaxed interview sitting in the sun on the grass. I also prepared critical notes of 4,000-5,000 words for each concert, which are included here in Appendix Four. These documents were a wonderful way of setting down my thoughts on the project in a more formal way and provide a record of my changing perspectives on the project.

Get up and move around

Going for walks with the project quietly bubbling in the back of my mind and recording random insights as they popped up was an indispensable part of the research process. Even getting up from the desk and drinking a glass of water was often enough to get things moving when they became stuck.

As this project evolved I became more and more aware of synergies between my performances in the band and the production of this thesis. Both are creative intellectual, emotional and *physical* activities. "Improvisation in music is the fully embodied attending to musical possibilities" (Nardone, 1996, p. 82). Writing a thesis is also a creative physical act, and attending to the body's needs is part of that process. Reading a thesis is also a creative physical act …

Analysis

… or interpretation

The word 'analysis' tends to be used officially to describe a process of breaking something down into its components (Beaney, 2012) and is frequently contrasted with *synthesis*. This is not the only conception of analysis, however. *Analysis*, in ancient Greek thought, "referred primarily to the process of working back to first principles by means of which something could then be demonstrated" (Beaney, 2012, p. para 1.1). It also frequently involves the transformation and interpretation of information (Beaney, 2012, p. para 1.1). These different conceptions of

analysis are not necessarily in opposition, and it is not my intention to contrast these activities as Spiggle (1994) does. Nor will I attempt "a classification and description" (Spiggle, 1994, p. 493) of the various analytical operations that were undertaken. In this dissertation I use the word "analysis" in its broadest sense. Analysis of data then, includes the participants' interpretive acts of finding words to describe their experiences of a concert. It includes the twists and turns of our interview conversations as we explore and clarify various ideas. It includes transcribing the recordings of those conversations and breaking the transcripts down into different categories. It also includes the writing process and my long contemplative walks.

Talking

I began the first interviews by asking the participants to tell me anything at all about "interactions" that related to the concert they had just seen. The concert that we had all experienced was the stimulus for the conversation, and the questions were deliberately open-ended. Examples from the first interviews with the music students follow. After a couple of minutes spent signing the consent form, turning on the recorder and some general chatting, I brought the conversation to the concert and their experience of interactions.

I How was the concert on Monday for you? Did you get into the music or were you thinking about it and trying to analyse it?

Y I just listened to the music. I don't analyse it too much, unless I want to work out what they're doing. Unless I think "oh that's interesting, I wonder what they're doing?" Normally it's an emotional thing for me. (Yvette, 1)

I … So I'm talking about interactions. It's totally open-ended and I'm just really interested in what it was like for you.

Z I thought it was really dynamic, not volume wise obviously, but everything you played was so different. Even within normal standards you took them interesting places and changed them so it wasn't the same old standard. That interested me because I knew all the tunes but I could sit back and hear essentially a completely different tune. Fresh, new ideas. (Zane, 1)

I Did you feel that the band was interacting to make that happen, or was it coming from one person, or ..

The interviews were all unstructured, to allow different conceptions of the topic to emerge. From the first sentences spoken in each interview, several theoretical and analytical threads came into play affecting the course of the conversation.

From thinking phenomenographically, it was clear that I was focused on the person's experience of interactions at the concert – not on the person's theoretical understanding of interactions and not on the music. With this focus, it was easy to set aside any presuppositions about interactions I had gained from reading Berliner (1994), Brinner (1995) and Monson (1996) – in phenomenological terms, achieving the epoché. My feelings about the merit of the music we'd played also became irrelevant to the focus of conversation. As a musician on stage, I was concerned that the music we produced be of the highest standard and that it reached out to the audience. There was a danger that that attitude might impinge on the interview process and compromise the project. However, that wasn't the case. Some of the participants wanted to hear about my experience of the concert, so I told them. For example:

> Z Yes. (pause) I don't know if what I'm telling you is relevant.
>
> I Neither do I! I suppose I'm on stage with the lights in my eyes with all the nerves of people staring at me, so I'm curious
>
> Z (interrupts) Do you normally feel like that?
>
> I No! It's only playing there because there are examiners. So I'm curious how other people perceived it.
>
> Z I think once you guys got playing you got more relaxed. You seemed a bit nervous at the start. (Zane, 1)

I was aware, from postmodernist and constructionist ideas discussed in the previous chapter, that we were co-creating the data and some of the conversations needed more input from me. I accepted that my values would find their way into the project and that it was fine to express them openly. But the analyst in me kept bringing the focus back to the participant's experience of interactions in that specific concert, asking myself "how is this person's experience of the concert different from mine?" Contemporary research into popular music suggests that the differences in people's experiences, and not just commonalities, are of interest (Guilbault, 1997; Matusov, 1996). I tried to tease out the uniqueness of each person's experience and their conception of what is involved in "interactions". I didn't assume that I knew what they meant if they had difficulty articulating their thoughts but gently probed until their intention was clear.

Hermeneutic philosophy provides another way of thinking about the analytical dimension of the interview itself. Gadamer points out that a dialogue is the only situation in which interpretation is not an extra activity that happens after a text's creation. In a dialogue, each statement is an interpretive act that challenges and clarifies the previous statement. In dialogue "we go to the essence of the matters themselves" (Gadamer, 1984, p. 63). The interview is being interpreted as it is being created, which is a form of analysis.

Coding

By the time I'd finished transcribing the conversations I was very familiar with them. The text documents evoked the sounds of the recordings, which in turn evoked memories of the actual conversations. In this project the context – of each sentence, of each conversation, of the performances, of the research – is a vital factor in understanding and presenting the findings, so this period of familiarisation was crucial to the integrity of the research (Staller, 2002, pp. 474-476). However, at some point the transcriptions needed to be broken down into smaller pieces and related to small pieces from other conversations, so that some sort of interesting story could be constructed. Just as I have sometimes called our music 'jazz' for convenience, I will now, for convenience but with an awareness of the paradoxes involved, called the transcripts 'data'.

I tried many different ways of *coding the data*, or organising the interview transcriptions into different categories. Coding is a "procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments and identifies or names those segments" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 26). Of course, the computer doesn't create and name the codes, the researcher does. I began by tagging – "the process of selecting … bits and pieces that satisfy the researcher's curiosity, and help support the purpose of the study" (Baptiste 2001, para. 31). As I was using this phase of analysis to help define the topic I *played* with organising the data in different ways. I sorted the data using Brinner's (1995) theoretical model. I contrasted comments that supported Berliner's (1994) findings with statements that offered a different perspective. I grouped the data by the particular tunes in the concert that were referred to. I juxtaposed the performers' comments with audience comments. Grounded theorists, particularly Corbin and Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; A. Strauss, 1995; A. L. Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) were helpful at this point for offering different ways of arranging the data.

However, my attempts to use the program to find order in the chaos of interview data were frustrating. Above all, I realised that "the data do not speak for themselves" (Baptiste 2001, para. 38). I was constructing different stories with the data. There is no objective truth for this project, and I accepted that it would be quite possible for different researchers using this data to "produce quite different (but equally trustworthy) results" (Baptiste 2001, para. 39). Playing with the data became a search for more elegant or beautiful ways of re-assembling it, by "positing a parsimonious, integrated set of associations and relations between and among the various concepts" (ibid., para. 37). In other words, aesthetic criteria rather than objectivity became of prime importance. I was careful to treat that period as play, and not become too attached to those early efforts. It was a period of learning *not to know* what I was looking for (Glaser, 1992), a vital step in allowing the meaning to emerge. It was also a period of searching for theoretical perspectives that could accommodate data that didn't fit into neat patterns.

Of the twenty-nine tunes that we played for this project there were two that were particularly memorable for the pianist and drummer. In the next chapter there are lengthy written discussions that explore their experiences during those two tunes. The key features of our interactions during those tunes are quite simple, but deceptively difficult to disentangle from pervading cultural perspectives. Musicians in Western society are frequently concerned with the acquisition and demonstration of skills, and Western studies of musical interaction tend to focus on these aspects rather than on the more elusive and unquantifiable qualities of *praxis* as introduced at the start of Chapter Three. To effectively portray the participants' experiences of playing music I needed to find ways to express their practical interpretive understanding of playing music and their concern with values and aesthetic judgements – in other words with *phronesis*, knowledge that "is intimately concerned with the timely, the local, the particular, and the contingent" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 208). I found the perspective I needed for this analysis by exploring and playing with a metaphor that both the pianist and drummer used to describe playing in the band – it is like painting.

Presenting the findings

The findings presented in the following chapter have been arranged to express the thoughts of the project's participants as clearly and simply as possible. Many ambivalences and apparent paradoxes made this a challenging task. I am conscious of shaping the outcome of

the research in many and unavoidable ways and accept the impossibility of presenting a complete and accurate picture of the participants' views. But rather than presenting the research as a confessional tale[11] I chose throughout the project to keep bringing my attention back to the experiences of the participants and making those experiences the focus of the report. I also accept the impossibility of finding universal truths about musical interactions and acknowledge that the participants' views aren't stable but subject to change during and after this project. Neither are they representative of a particular cultural group. I am not writing about "musicians" or "jazz musicians" or "Australian improvising musicians" but specifically about one band and its audience for three concerts. I hope that many of the stories the musicians and audience members communicate will resonate with readers. If I continually intrude on those stories with reminders of the specificity and limitations of the project it can only reduce the value the words might have.

[11] See Pillow's (2003) article on reflexivity. "I want to ask of all texts what they open up or close off in terms of what more we understand and question after reading the text – did I need the author's confessional tale to read the data?" (Pillow, 2003, p. 183).

CHAPTER FIVE: PEOPLE AT PLAY

The pianist

"If there is no audience, well at least we can make some nice music.

No-one will hear it, but we had an interaction and it's the same sort of feeling you get as sitting down and having a good conversation.

It's great. It's still a good thing.

But what I wanted to do was the three of us to move people."

(Ben, 2)

Ben is the pianist, bandleader and composer of most of the band's repertoire. His professional musical life involves recording and performing music in a variety of genres. Our trio is very important to him. "This is the most special thing I've done, and one of the most special things that I've heard. The things that I do with this band and the music I write for this band is the only musical contribution I make that I value" (Ben, 3). The experience of creatively interacting with the band is its own reward but he would like the music to reach out and interact with an audience. He aspires to move an audience and for them to experience a feeling that he's feeling.

In performances he welcomes and encourages active contribution from the other band members. "That is the value that I've found my playing has, that I let everybody have an equal part and make something that's much better than I could ever be" (Ben, 3). Sometimes in concerts the tunes we play take unexpected turns, becoming completely new and without ties to past performances. He'd like to be able to play like that all the time.

"the joy of starting with a blank canvas and painting something"

(Ben, 3)

The drummer

"I love the interaction of humans playing instruments, making music together.

I love the feeling when I'm involved in music and it has flow and I'm not really in my mind.

I love that more than anything, and that's what keeps me coming back."

(Henry, 1)

Henry is the drummer. I asked him if he thinks of himself as a 'jazz' musician.

> H No. No, I don't think so. I mean, I think improvised music is probably closer to what I'm interested in. Well, you know, having said that, a huge amount of my background and musical training is in the Great American Song Book, and emulating the great American jazz musicians.
>
> I I know we're all interested in jazz, but do you think of yourself as following the tradition?
>
> H No, not really. I'm pretty sure I made that decision a long time ago, that I wasn't going to narrow my perspective to one sort of genre. Because actually, playing a straight-up country feel with a couple of really good acoustic guitar players and a mandolin player .. is a really joyous thing for me, you know. And just as difficult, I think. Just as difficult to make it do what *it* has to do, in order for me to walk away and feel like it sounds good. (Henry, 1)

Some of the greatest nights that he's had were in a small room "playing a blues shuffle with a really good band, and no-one actually doing very much, except the feeling of that music causing people to dance". He plays in soul, R&B and funk bands, and has experienced many nights with those bands that felt "really great" (Henry, 1).

Henry is drawn more and more to improvised music, including music that falls under the umbrella term 'jazz', because it offers him the opportunity to "paint more freely" (Henry, 3).

"It's an opportunity to play whatever comes to mind and *see what that is*.

It's a real opportunity to fly."

(Henry, 3)

Musician interactions

Play

When a music performance is going well, Henry says it's like "painting and working on a concept of colour and brush strokes and design, draftsmanship, and being able to pull something out that's like, 'I actually *really* like that'" (Henry, 3). Working in different musical genres provides him the opportunity to paint with different techniques, but music with a greater improvised element provides him with an opportunity to "paint more freely" (Henry, 3). Ben uses the painting metaphor too. His main motivation for playing with the band is for "the joy of starting with a blank canvas and painting something" (Ben, 3).

It's play! As a music student, and part of us is always a student of music, it can be easy to get caught up in mastering the physicality of playing an instrument. We may play our instrument rather than playing the music. Later, as a professional musician, it can be easy to get caught up with the business of attending to the demands of an employer and with producing a style of music that an audience will want to consume. But we shouldn't forget that playing music in a band is fun, and we can't understand interactions without an appreciation of the motivation to *play* that drives performances. If there is a first principle from which all the other aspects of interactions can be derived, then it is found in the aesthetic dimension of *why we play* music.

Just because it's fun doesn't mean it's not serious. Playing in a band is only fulfilling if the players are totally absorbed in it. Someone who doesn't take the play seriously and is not totally committed to it spoils the game. It is not about being playful or playing *at* music. The play, or the collaborative act of creation, takes precedence over everything else for the duration of the performance. It's important to Henry that he doesn't come to a performance "fully armed [and ready to] bring everything I know to every tune in a muscular way" (Henry, 1). Instead, he immerses himself in the "interaction of humans playing instruments, making music together" (Henry, 1). He thinks: "How does this music sound? What is it drawing from me?" (Henry, 1). The seriousness of play is, for him, in allowing the unfolding music to be the most important thing in the world, more important than demonstrating his skills. Of course, sometimes what the music draws from him is complex and technically demanding drumming. When that happens:

> It's not a question of me thinking that I *should* be out there kicking the ball around rhythmically and playing more and being a part of this more intellectual playing. But sometimes I am, and I believe I am led there because of the environment. (Henry, 1)

What he means by "the environment" is "the musical environment that the trio creates" (Henry, 1). He is part of that environment, so "if it [a more technically demanding style of drumming] feels right, then it's almost like *it's already happening*" (Henry, 1).

Ben expresses his commitment to the moment of performance in the same terms. "Well I really only have one idea I think, and that is to let the music decide what you're going to play" (Ben, 3). For him though, there is another important element: "that I'm true to myself" (Ben, 2). He expresses how he feels through the music, and doesn't try to make happy sounds if that's not the way he feels. For Ben, "being honest is the only way of getting the ultimate outcome you want" (Ben, 2), which is "that you want them [the audience] to know that you always tell the truth and they'll trust you" (Ben, 2). Whether the music is melancholy or exuberant, it is beautiful.

> Everybody wants to do the same thing in this band. Everybody wants to make something beautiful. It seems like we all have the same goal. (Ben, 1)

Ben's purpose in playing is to make something beautiful. He says: "I don't *try* to have fun, but I just do because I love how everybody plays" (Ben, 1).

Later in this essay I will explore interactions with the audience in detail, but I need to mention here something that directly relates to the musicians' motivation to play. The audience is involved in the music creation. They are not passive observers on the outside looking in, but are necessary to make the activity complete. However, the musicians, if they are to be totally absorbed in and committed to playing music, cannot be primarily concerned with pleasing the audience. Some musicians that Ben performs with "want to appeal to the lowest common denominator in the room, and I don't think that's a way to make art. That's how *no* art gets made" (Ben, 1). A consequence of Ben's aesthetic approach to performing in this trio is that although he would like the music to move people, he also doesn't

> care if the audience leaves or falls asleep … It wouldn't matter because, you know, I can only say what I have to say. If some people don't want to listen to it, that's fine. (Ben, 2)

A corollary of Henry's aesthetic approach of letting the music lead him is:

> I don't think about the audience much when I'm playing, just about the music. I figure if the music is good, they'll be happy. (Henry, 1)

Blank canvas

The canvas on which we paint is never truly blank. The trio improvises over structures called tunes. We play tunes written by the pianist for the trio and *standards*, tunes that are widely known and frequently performed by jazz musicians. It matters not at all to Ben whether the tune is an original composition or a standard, only that it embodies a particular mood or emotion that he would like to express at that moment.

> I tend to pick a song based on how I'm feeling … I try and play songs that I know what they're about … There's a moment at the end of a song where the last sustained note stops, and there's this feeling, you can feel it … And often there's silence. People don't clap straight away because they want to feel that feeling. Well that feeling is what I'm aiming for, for the whole song. (Ben, 2)

Another way in which the canvas is not truly blank is that there are expectations that come with every label applied to the band. The *jazz* label was particularly powerful in this project, as the concerts were held in a conservatorium and attended by teachers and students from the Jazz Department. Ben explains that the band fulfils some *jazz* expectations, by

> improvising. And we are taking, sometimes, standard songs, and elaborating on them in our own way. And we also have a standard jazz orchestration - a piano trio. So there's a lot of things that would lead you to say it's jazz. (Ben, 3)

He uses jazz harmony, "but I also like classical harmony, and I like just playing dissonance" (Ben, 3). However, the label *jazz* brings to his mind a particular type of modern "American jazz where the idea is to play to cut people down – that type of music. I'm trying to rebel against that type of music, that attitude in music" (Ben, 1). So when I ask him if he is a jazz artist he replies "Oh, no. I don't know. I don't know, *and I'm not*" (Ben, 3).

Henry also notes that the band plays tunes that "are from the American traditional jazz thing" (Henry, 1). For him, part of the expectation in developing as a jazz artist is that "chops [techniques on the instrument] get better and the understanding gets better and what you can

play on the tunes gets more complicated" (Henry, 1). He definitely does not bring that approach into this band.

> The thing that I am trying to be conscious of when I'm playing the drums is to allow space to happen for you and Ben … The role of the drums the other night was to engage in a kind of dance with you guys. (Henry, 1)

Henry talks about what people expect from him in some jazz contexts:

> the drums kind of going boom boom boom. You know, like this is the beat. We're sort of roughly around a hundred beats per minute and I'm playing the "jazz beat". And I'm improvising on the "jazz beat". "I'm comping", you know? (Henry, 2)

In this band he doesn't think of himself as a jazz musician. "No, just a *musician*" (Henry, 3). But does that mean that he consciously avoids playing in a way that would be considered *jazz*?

> No, because I love Jack DeJohnette and Paul Motian and people like that, but it's almost like I want to go back to people like 'Papa' Jo Jones. I love that feeling and I know that I do go there. I love that big four-feel that he gets going, or the two-feel. It's quite strong and simple … and I often go there just because I like the feel of that and the almost dance element of it … Sometimes I feel that it's good for me to play very simply so his [Ben's] ideas are easy to understand because the background is simple. I think "someone's got to stay home". Either the bass player or the drummer. Someone has to play some straight time so it makes the other stuff make sense. (Henry, 1)

Henry and Ben are aware that the band's music can be classified as jazz, and this creates an expectation that certain stylistic elements will be met during the performance. They neither accept nor fight against these expectations, but bypass them by aiming for a state where the music itself leads them in what to play.

Part of the fun of playing in the band is playing with the boundaries of what is musically acceptable in performance. Learning the unwritten rules about playing certain musical styles is part of learning to be a successful musician. Henry spends much of his professional musical life playing a role, fulfilling a specific musical function with his drums according to the rules of the particular genre. But playing music isn't always like that. It can be more spontaneous. Henry describes *Doxy*, a tune that we have performed regularly.

> The way we used to play that was like twelve year olds running around the playground and pushing each other and falling over and laughing, and getting up and calling out "Watch me", “Yahoo!” you know? (Henry, 1)

Breaking the rules can be fun. Talking about one performance of *Doxy*, he said:

> I think it was great for everyone. And you know, we don't really have a/ … most/*let's face it, most vehicles you're not allowed to drive like that!* (laughs) You know? Most situations we're really not allowed to go there, because we're there for another reason. (Henry, 2)

Contributing to the musical journey in a group performance is like driving a vehicle. It can be driven sensibly, but sometimes it is fun to get a bit reckless. When Henry helped to drive another tune to a higher level of intensity: “I think I changed gear and started adding more to the [mix]” (Henry, 2).

Here is another metaphor from Henry to end this section on having fun – playing music is like eating dessert.

> I do remember sort of thinking “Yeah. Yeah! I feel like this. I feel like having the ice-cream with the chocolate sauce, as opposed to the apple pie”. You know? Like, this feels good. Let's push this a bit. (Henry, 2)

Restraint

Henry balances his enthusiasm with periods of gentle restraint.

> That song, I remember thinking that it just wants to be as beautiful as possible. I think that's just a beautiful love song. It felt almost like I would like to be sitting in the audience, because the drums just need to be … I don't know what they need to be. Perhaps like a heartbeat. Just don't get in the way of the music because it's a beautiful piece of music. “How can you be beautiful on the drums” is what I was thinking. How gentle, how tender and loving can you be on the drums. (Henry, 1)

Restraint needn’t be a holding back or curbing of enthusiasm. As Henry describes it, playing very quietly and simply can be an exploration of musical expression that requires just as much engagement with the music as playing with a high level of energy or complexity. Interaction in improvised music doesn’t just involve responding to melodic or rhythmic figures with ones of

your own. Interaction with an unfolding piece of music might manifest as quiet simplicity, or even as silence.

Remaining silent can be a powerful type of interaction with the music. Silence from somebody in the band can be an active and vital contribution to the musical performance. In our last concert, Henry didn't play at all on *Prepare To Be* (Track Three on the accompanying disc). To set the scene – we were all on stage, we'd played three long tunes and Ben had just announced to the audience that we would finish the set with a tune called *Prepare To Be.* We hadn't played this tune enough recently for Henry to remember what it sounded like. He didn't know in advance what pieces we would play because Ben created each set spontaneously, tune by tune.

H *Prepare To Be* was where I sat and did nothing, right?

I Yes. How did you feel about doing nothing?

H Well, it worried me at the start because I couldn't quite hear what he [Ben] said .. I don't know what he said. It was like the sort of thing where he'd look around and say "It's a ballad". You know, he said something that was supposed to mean something to me but I didn't really hear it so I thought, ok, now I'll wait for the music.

I Yes.

H And then I got a sort of .. what would you call it, an environment .. an aural sort of environment.

And then I thought I should .. come in at the top of the form, but I think the form was odd? I think like a seventeen bar, or a fifteen bar something. There's some oddness .. (Henry, 3)

It is customary in this sort of music for the structure of the tune, "the form" to be repeated many times. The first time through is usually a melody statement. Subsequent repeats are for solos that follow the harmonic structure of the form. The performance of the piece usually concludes with a re-statement of the melody. Any textural changes such as a new solo starting – or a drummer starting to play – generally happen at the start of a new repeat, "the top of the form". *Prepare To Be* has some deliberate harmonic ambiguity built into its structure. The bar length is even, thirty-two bars, but the harmonic movement is unusual and resolves in odd places. (It is not necessary to refer to the musical chart, but for those who are interested there is one of *Prepare To Be* at Appendix Two.) Henry sat listening through the first cycle of the

form, thinking that he would join in the next time we came to the top, but it's difficult to tell exactly where the top is.

> There was a couple of moments where I thought I could start .. (Henry, 3)

Henry has the experience to be able to join the music seamlessly at any time. From listening to the melody statement he understood what sort of sounds he could make with the drums that would work with the bass and piano – "the aural environment".

> And then I thought … "but I'm thinking that I have to make some sound here", and that didn't sit right with me.
>
> So I thought "something else is driving me to make some sound on the drums. I'm not going to play [just] because I think I should." (Henry, 3)

Henry knew that it was the last tune in the set, and that usually involves the participation of all the band members. He knew that the expectation at the beginning of the tune was that he would play. But there was nothing compelling that he wanted to play, or that he felt the music needed. It takes some courage to sit on stage and not play in that situation. The music sounded fairly complete, and the longer he sat there not playing, the more Ben and I worked to make the tune whole as a duo.

> There was quite a lot of dialogue between the two of you, and I thought "actually this is sounding very whole" … and after I'd been through all of that other shit going through my head I sort of thought "Well actually, it really doesn't need anything from me."
>
> It was a bit like, as I was thinking "I don't think I need to play", you guys were probably building it as a duet. And that's … that's fantastic. That it can work like that. You can do that. You can back away, or not engage.
>
> It's not like I'm getting paid by the beat, you know. (Henry, 3)

Yes! A contribution to the music can be making a sound, or not making a sound. Henry's silent contribution to *Prepare To Be* made it one of the most memorable tunes of that concert. When I met Ben to talk about the concert, he said:

B One thing that sticks out is *Prepare To Be*. Because .. it just sounded so different to what I thought it would. [Ah!] Of course, it was the same tempo and the same chords, but Henry – it was almost like he was sitting there thinking: "This sounds so good without me I'm just not going to play." And I spent half of the song thinking "I wonder when he's going to come in?"

And he never came in.

And the longer he didn't come in, the longer I thought I'd see how "outside" I could take the piece … I was just seeing if I could play a couple of bars without playing any of the notes that were in the chord, and still not lose my harmonic way.

I And that was fun?

B I loved it. And I think because of that I made an effort to play it more deliberately, like choosing the notes with more intent. Maybe because one part of the trio equation was removed. It was just you and me.

I But he wasn't [removed]. He was really present.

B He was there but he just wasn't playing. He was playing rests through everything. (Ben, 3)

When musicians interact in an improvised music performance, their attention is on the music they are jointly creating. The most important interactions are not between one performer and another, but between each performer and the piece of music as it unfolds. By "playing rests" (Ben, 3) through an entire tune, Henry made an important contribution to that tune. The tune became the most memorable one of the concert for all the performers – one that stood out as a satisfying creative experience.

Restraint, or taking your time, can be a direct result of a desire to interact with the music. Often you don't know what that music is going to sound like until it's happening around you. For our first concert in this project, (our first play together in two years,) Henry's initial approach was "gentle and sparse and spacious – to give space to what is going to happen between the three of us" Henry, 1). His reasons for this were:

> It's been a while since we played, so … I'm going to stand back a little bit. The point I want to make is that in two years the way I think about music has changed a lot. How I perceive it and how I hear it is changing. Things change, so I don't want to come in expecting you to be the same. … I haven't played with you and Ben for a while, and haven't played this music for a while, so *I need to hear what we sound like*. (Henry, 1)

Things do change. People change. Playing is one way that people learn about the world, and as musicians we continue to learn and grow by playing music. Henry didn't assume that he knew what the band sounded like after a gap of two years, but took his time to allow something fresh to develop between the three people that we had become.

Creation

An important aesthetic principle in improvised music is that it be created fresh each time. It is creation, not *re*creation. The same three people playing the same tunes night after night will strive for something new to happen in the music. And that is more likely to happen when people play together regularly, are comfortable with each other, the acoustic environment and the tunes. Ben says that there needs

> to be a certain amount of comfort level in order for everybody to take off. Otherwise you end up getting bogged down in "How am I supposed to play this next bit?" or "What chord does it go to?" (Ben, 2)

Because our first concert for this project was our first performance in two years, Ben tried to

> pick the [tunes] that maybe have shorter forms. And we play them once or twice through and it's like "Oh, that's how it goes" and we don't have to worry about it. (Ben, 2)

He avoided some of his compositions that have longer, non-repetitive structures.

> Some of those original pieces, the longer ones ... have to be played more than once every six months to sound good. Just so we're playing way above the song rather than trying to remember how it goes. (Ben, 2)

"Playing way above the song" (Ben, 2), "taking off" (Ben, 2) and "soaring" (Ben, 2) are images that Ben used to describe the feeling of playing music when it is all working well. Henry also used flying to describe the feeling when performances don't go well,

> then it's just like going to the airport and them telling you the plane can't take off because the weather's bad. (Henry, 3)

In the previous section I discussed the performance of *Prepare To Be* in our third concert. It was a satisfying experience partly because the way we played it was unexpected. In our second

concert, the rendition of the jazz standard tune *Doxy* turned out different from all of our previous performances of that tune. When I met Ben later to discuss the concert, he raised that tune.

> *Doxy*. Can we talk about that? Because I was thinking about that on the way over … When you do the same song at every gig you tend to play it the same or similar, or similar ideas each time … But I thought the way we played it at that gig was .. that's never happened before. Nothing in it had ever happened before. It was completely without ties. Probably how I would most like to be able to play every song at every gig. (Ben, 2)

Ben is talking about *his experience* of playing with Henry and me to create that particular version of that tune. He says "nothing in it had ever happened before" (Ben, 2), but of course many elements were consistent with previous performances. The written melody (a chart is at Appendix 2) was performed at the beginning and end of the performance. Solos were played over repeats of the harmonic structure of the tune. What was different was the way we interacted throughout the performance, assuming different roles and creating different textures.

If you listen to *Doxy* on the accompanying disc (Track Four) you will hear that the drums aren't playing a steady beat. Henry is deliberately avoiding the traditional role of the drummer, and although he plays sounds that are reminiscent of jazz drum-beats, he breaks a fundamental rule of jazz – that the pulse be steady. Many stylistic elements of jazz rely on the underpinning of a regular pulse. The swing feel and the polyrhythmic textures that pervade most jazz music can't happen unless there is a steady beat. So although the sounds we hear from the drum kit are fairly spacious and quiet – he is using brushes – they are making a powerful statement. You can hear at the end of the first chorus (approximately 30 seconds into the track) that the piano stops playing for a few moments, providing an opportunity for Henry to settle into a steady beat if he wanted to. He doesn't, so the piano resumes with another full chorus of melody statement, this time with bass joining in. At the end of this second chorus the piano and bass pause, and again the drums continue to play steadily, but without a regular pulse. The third chorus starts (at 1'25") with the bass playing a walking bass line, but at an unsteady pace similar to the drums. After four bars the piano starts a solo. The performance at this point has many traditional jazz stylistic elements. There have been two choruses of melody statement, a piano solo has started over the harmonic structure of the tune, the bass is playing a walking bass line and the drums are providing bass drum, cymbal, and snare drum

beats. Only one element makes this performance strikingly unusual – the absence of a steady pulse.

In the interviews I had with Henry, he remembered overall features of the concerts but details of specific tunes had faded quickly from memory. In contrast, when I asked him if he remembered what he did in the performance of *Doxy*:

> I remember it vividly what I was doing! And then I also remember a little while on thinking, you know, should I abandon this. "Should I abandon this?" And I thought, no I'll just keep going and see what happens. And it was fun … (Henry, 2)

The pauses after the first and second choruses provided him with opportunities to abandon his out-of-time drumming, to establish a steady pulse and settle into a more conservative style of playing. However, he was having fun and just kept going. At the end of the third chorus Ben played a rhythmic figure that established a steady tempo (2'00"). The bass joined in at that tempo and the fourth chorus commenced with piano still soloing, bass still playing a walking line, but now there was a steady pulse.

With the establishment of a steady pulse the tune could have settled into a more traditional *jazz* approach. Henry could have chosen to interact with the bass and piano in simpler or more complex rhythmic ways. He could have brought to the music a whole armature of drum techniques that are used in jazz performances around the world.

> I thought I could jump on here .. you know I could jump on here and I could probably hear [a member of the Jazz Department faculty] breathe a sigh of relief in the back of the room, but I just thought, no, fuck it. (Henry, 2)

You can hear in the recording that Henry doesn't "jump on" to the steady pulse, but maintains his initial drumming approach throughout the performance. He provided two more metaphors for the experience:

> I'm either bailing out or I'm going to move more finances over into this account, you know? I'm going to commit further here. (Henry, 2)

He could "bail out", because this tune was being "driven recklessly" and he could jump to safety, or he could bail out because we were "flying" and he could parachute to the security of solid ground. Instead he decided to "move more finances over into this account" because he

found himself in a precarious (but fun) position, and decided to commit more of himself to maintaining that position.

In *Prepare To Be* Henry found himself in a precarious position by accident. By interacting with the unfolding music rather than with the weight of expectations, he remained silent and allowed that performance to grow into something memorable. In *Doxy* he found himself in a precarious position as a result of his own actions. By interacting with the unfolding music in the way he did, rather than taking a safer path, he helped that tune to grow into something memorable. His playing broke an unwritten rule about playing in time. In effect, he changed the rules or "moved the boundaries" (Henry, 2). Through his playing he told the other players in the band that:

> this fence is moving half a kilometre that way and it takes in all this silly stuff. So you can understand that I'm in this kind of mood and we can play in this area should you wish, otherwise I'll come back and play over here. (Henry, 1)

We *did* want to play in that area, and perhaps you can hear Bens' joy in straddling two different types of interaction – with the regular pulse of the bass outlining the form of the tune, and with the free textural approach of the drums.

Henry is constantly challenging himself to get better at playing music. He puts himself into precarious positions because that's what the music draws from him, but also because he can learn from those situations.

> It's a challenge. I think it's something that when it's really working, and this goes for any sort of improvised music I think, when it's working .. it's the best .. the best thing. It's the *best* thing. And I continue to want that feeling. I want to feel that freedom of hooking up musically with people and I want it more and more in an improvised situation. … So that's why I do it. Because it's a challenge, and to get better at it, and maybe understand more about how I can enhance the music with a set of drums. (Henry, 3)

Trust

Ben and Henry usually need to feel comfortable for these special performances to happen. Some of that comfort can be found in trust that develops between band members over time.

Ben talked to me about trust in relation to some of our earlier performances of *Doxy*, in which he would deliberately break another unwritten rule of jazz – *thou shalt not slow down*.

> The slowing down thing we do in *Doxy*, or doing anything in that song like we often do, I think we have been able to do that, and have done that, because we all trust each other. It sounds clichéd, but it's because if I slow down Henry doesn't think "Oh no, he's slowing down", he thinks "He's doing it on purpose". So he has enough trust in my playing and my ability not to slow down that he decides "I'm going to slow down too". (Ben, 1)

In most jazz performances, if a musician sounds like they are slowing down it is either a deliberate polymetric device that relies on the other musicians maintaining a steady pulse, or an accident that needs to be fixed by the other musicians maintaining a steady pulse. Ben points out that in all the bands he works in, the only time that he can deliberately slow down and have the whole band go with him, is in this trio.

Now and then a special piece emerges

I have discussed the extraordinary performances of two tunes. Choosing tunes as memorable implies the opposite, that not every tune can be a peak experience for the performers. The interactions that go into a music performance may be delicate and easily hampered, leaving the performer frustrated or unhappy with the experience. The concerts that are the backbone of this project were hampered, just by being a part of the project. It was much more difficult for the performers to lose themselves in the play of interaction when they felt the weight of some other purpose. As bandleader, Ben felt this the most.

> But I thought the only problem, because the gig is for a purpose there's a lot more crosstalk in your head … Any gig like this one is always going to have ten or fifteen percent of your brain occupied with "What is the purpose of this gig?" This gig had a purpose. None of our other gigs had a purpose except to make music. (Ben, 1)

The purpose of the gig was to stimulate conversations about musical interaction, which would provide the data for this dissertation. That seemed clear in my mind, but it wasn't clear in Ben's mind, and my behaviour at the concert reinforced his uncertainties. I interfered with his normal band leading activities in several ways.

I provided a list of tunes and asked Ben to select tunes from it spontaneously as the night progressed. Ben's usual approach to constructing a set of music is to allow it to unfold spontaneously as the concert progresses. I thought my list might give him enough freedom of choice while giving me specific pieces to write about for the program notes. But Ben found having a list of tunes restrictive, and in the following quote he relates the topic of interactions to that list.

> Once or twice in the gig I'd look at the list and I thought "Oh I don't want to do that", you know, nothing would fit ... The list doesn't take into consideration the moment. It takes into consideration the moment you wrote the list, but it doesn't take into consideration the people in the audience, or how we feel, or if we're playing well. (Ben, 1)

Ideally, our musical interactions are spontaneous, totally absorbed in playing in the present moment. By attempting to control the tunes we could perform I reduced Bens' ability to fully enjoy the moment.

Another way that I inadvertently added anxiety to the performance was by starting the concert with solo bass. I felt that as a candidate for Ph.D. (by performance) I needed to demonstrate some technical proficiency on my instrument. I thought if I did this during the performance, it mightn't be in the service of the music. So I decided that if I performed a technically demanding solo piece at the beginning of the concert it would satisfy that need and get it out of the way. However, all it did for Ben and Henry was reinforce the notion that this *wasn't* a regular gig, and spread some nervousness around the room. I asked Henry how he felt during the first concert.

> Well, probably slightly anxious ... There were periods where I relaxed and felt comfortable, but generally speaking I was slightly on edge. (Henry, 1)

In addition to my misguided attempts to control the performance, there were other factors that affected Ben and Henry's comfort. Different venues present different acoustic problems for musicians, particularly for drummers. That was concerning Henry.

> Maybe the new acoustic environment. I hadn't played there before ... In that room I can't start slamming things around, and more notes are probably what I don't want to do, because it's going to fill the acoustic space up and become messy and clattery. (Henry, 1)

Ben commented on other physical properties of the room, which also affected his performance.

> Also there's a slightly different environment to where we used to play. We used to be in a very dark room, often with three or four people, whereas here people were sitting there looking at us like that, with lights on. It was still daylight even when we started. It's a different feeling .. (Ben, 1)

Henry enjoyed the second concert much more than the first, and reflected that a little bit of familiarity can go a long way to make playing easier.

> When you kind of know what the acoustics of the room are .. like you know what's ahead of you? It's easier. A little bit. Or that we'd done it once and I knew what to expect. So that was a big thing I reckon, last time. (Henry, 2)

Not just factors specific to the performance have an effect. When a performance begins the musicians make every effort to become absorbed in the play. However, Ben says that our own mind can get in the way of feeling free and enjoying the moment of performance.

> It's also affected by what happens in your life during the day, and your week. It's all affected by your mind, but your mind is affected by all those other things. It's different every time because it has to do with your state of mind at the time you're playing. (Ben, 1)

But sometimes playing just doesn't feel right. Henry calls this "having my bad head on".

> I think it really worked the other night - which is kind of like my head wasn't connected? I didn't have my bad head on ... So I think the other night, because it clearly had from the word go .. *it was ok*. I don't know how that works, but I certainly had a feeling like "Yes, I'm sort of in command a little bit of my own world and we're able to create the way we want to create." And that's not something that's a regular occurrence I don't think. (Henry, 2)

At the second concert Henry had arrived early, "set up, had a little tap on the drums to check out the acoustics again" (Henry, 2). When the concert started:

> I had a sense that I could accompany what was going on, but I didn't have to play all the time. I really did that thing like I wanted to, I wanted to leave some holes? [Yes] I probably wasn't thinking that much. I was just listening. I think that's probably the difference on when I say I'm not having a bad head on. (Henry, 2)

This is his ideal performance state. He is comfortable in the venue. He is enjoying the sounds from the other musicians and doesn't feel that any particular drumming style is needed from him to make the music work. And most importantly, his mind is not overactive and distracting him from full engagement in the "interaction of humans playing instruments" (Henry, 1).

Ben describes what it is like for him when his thinking brain stops him from becoming totally absorbed in playing. One thing that can activate this interference is if he has to play to musicians in the audience who he "respects enormously" (Ben, 3). He finds it "intimidating" (Ben, 3).

> I get quite self-conscious to a point where I start thinking more about "I'm being listened to", or "I'm being looked at", than I'm thinking about the music. (Ben, 3)

He was disappointed after our third concert because he "had a hard time" (Ben, 3). He arrived at the venue with a lot on his mind, and then just before we were due to start, a pianist who he "respects enormously" walked into the room. Luckily the pianist only wanted to say hello to Ben and have a quick chat, and he left before we started playing.

> I became so anxious when he was there. As soon as he walked out I went "thank God". But I still had this sort of adrenalin thing that didn't help me.
>
> Despite that, I still had moments of elation throughout different parts of a song, or sometimes a whole song. I think it's just that I wasn't able to switch off part of my brain that interferes with me just letting us, you know, go to another level, I suppose. Transcending playing, and .. making something inexplicable. (laughs) It was all too explicable. (Ben, 3)

Sometimes the experience of playing music *is* inexplicable. When conditions are favourable and thinking doesn't interfere there can be magical moments that feel like flying. This feeling motivates Henry to play with the band.

> I love the feeling when I'm involved in music and it has flow and I'm not really in my mind. I love that more than anything, and that's what keeps me coming back, even though a lot of it is hard and painful because it's not like that. (Henry, 1)

He feels that he has sufficient skills to guarantee that his performance will at all times be at a professional standard.

> I can guarantee that I'll show up and my drums will be ok and that I can play most of the music that has to get played and people will be able to solo and I'll be able to get through the form. It can be a good night. I can probably guarantee that. (Henry, 1)

But the peak moments of how he feels during the performance are more elusive.

> But in terms of how I feel, I can't guarantee that immaculate feeling of connectedness which happens on occasion. I've externalised that and say that the music comes to different places - it's not up to me when it arrives. Actually it's more like – how I feel I can't guarantee. (Henry, 1)

He makes an immediate and important distinction here. There is no direct correlation between the sound of the music and how he feels during the performance. He does not judge the quality of the music produced by how he feels during a performance.

> But the other side of it is that in six months time I might listen to it and think it doesn't sound any better than the other one when I know I didn't feel good. (Henry, 1)

This provides some consolation in moments of performance when he struggles to find the feeling of connectedness and flow that marks a memorable concert.

> It's a head thing, and although it hampers your decisions and your risk taking and your gay abandon musically .. for me it chokes me up – but maybe that sounds good! Maybe if I'm going "Oh God if I can only get to the end of this tune I'll be happy" it sounds nice and contained and maybe that gives a lot of space to the rest of the music. When you listen to it back you might go "man that guy sounds great!" Because he plays perfectly what's necessary. (Henry, 1)

Ben also says that feeling bad during a performance does not mean that the music will sound bad. When his mind is overactive it interferes with his enjoyment of the musical interaction, but not necessarily with the quality of music produced.

> I think all of the problems had to do with the inside of my head. I think it's one of those performances where when you listen back to it without all the cross talk, it actually sounded great. (Ben, 3)

He takes this point even further, suggesting there might be an inverse relationship between the two.

> I often find that though – where the gigs that you felt were the worst were the ones that sound the best. And vice versa. (Ben, 3)

This extends to how an audience experiences his performances too. In fact, he expects that however many people there are in the audience, that's how many different experiences there will be of the performance. Even if he hasn't enjoyed the experience, and feels that his music

hasn't reached out to express his emotions to anybody at all, he accepts that the audience members might not feel that way.

> I think what I feel is a very poor judge of the success or not of the night, if success means that everybody was swept up along with you. … Well, I didn't feel it but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. It is still successful if it happened and I wasn't aware of it. That just proves that my head was elsewhere. But it still didn't affect the music making. (Ben, 3)

People come to watch them play

So far I have explored the musicians' experiences in the three concerts. The interactions that are most important to them are their interactions with the music that they jointly create. Playing music as a group, with total commitment to the present moment, whatever that may be, is a joyful experience. And as Ben says, that experience is more complete if there is an audience to share it.

> I mean if we showed up at a gig and there's two people, I'd think "that's good there's two people". And if they left I'd think well at least we can make some nice music – no-one will hear it, but we had an interaction and it's almost like the same sort of feeling you get as sitting down and having a good conversation. It's great. It's still a good thing. But *what I wanted to do was the three of us to move people*. (Ben, 2)

Ben had hoped, when he formed the band many years ago, that enough people would enjoy the band's music to make it a sustainable activity – one to which he could devote a large part of his professional life. He says it's great that *we* enjoy it, "but for it to have some longevity or have some sort of impact on the musical world that we're in, you actually have to play it to people" (Ben, 3). After some years of trying to achieve some wider interest in the band's music he became disheartened. This is not uncommon amongst creative artists, whose enjoyment comes from creating art, not selling it. I have friends who enjoy marketing their music. They study audiences' reactions to their music so that they can better understand how to engage and keep their listeners' interest. They enjoy the buzz of a large audience and are excited by media attention and sales of their musical product. Ben is not like that. He likes a small audience and is uncomfortable with actively selling his music to the public.

An audience's relationship with music at a concert and the band that is playing that music is perplexing to many musicians. Many writers describe bands' relationships with audiences as

problematic. Henry says, “the audience is always a pain in the arse” (Henry, 2). To put this sentence in context, he was thinking of a concert that he had recently presented to launch his own CD. He had to talk to the audience at the beginning of the concert which “was really nerve wracking because I don’t like it. I’m not very comfortable with it” (Henry, 2). Once the band started playing he was comfortable, in his element, absorbed in the world of sound. It’s clearly not the audience that was a pain in the arse, only the fact that he was nervous talking to them. He actually loves performing for an audience when the music goes well.

> There's something about “dropping your strides in public”. You know. Obviously, no matter how much you try and deny it, and I think I probably try and deny it, there's something about people coming along to look and listen to what you do that is a great thing. (Henry, 2)

It is not possible to completely abandon oneself in *play*ing music without also abandoning defensive shields – becoming exposed and vulnerable to the music and your fellow musicians, but also to the audience. There is more than a hint in Henry’s “dropping your strides”, of enjoying the experience, and even revelling in it. Henry often expresses binary opposite points of view, as he does here. Both are true, at different times. The audience is a pain. It’s a great thing when they come to listen. He ignores them and focuses only on the music. He enjoys exposing himself to them.

Ben and Henry don’t consciously adjust their playing to please an audience. The audience is there to share a musical experience. If people were to leave in the middle of Ben’s performance, “it wouldn’t matter because I can only say what I have to say” (Ben, 2). Saying what he *has* to say, expressing how he feels in the moment, is the most important thing to him. Deliberately playing a tune to please an audience is “the way *no* art gets made” (Ben, 1), and producing art is his goal. But at the same time: “I do want people to come along on a ride. That’s why I do it” (Ben, 3).

Audience interactions

When people write about audiences in relation to music performances, they tend to look for consensus amongst their participants – if enough people in an audience think the same thing about a performance then it must be true. However, there is another way to approach an analysis of audience and that is to accept that everybody will experience the music differently. As we have seen, Ben and Henry don't equate their experience of a concert with the merit or quality of the music that is made. They accept that their experience is highly subjective and dependent as much on their internal state as on the musical moment. In talking to the audience participants after the concerts it became clear that each person in the audience also interacted with the music in a unique way.

The following section on audience interactions is not a coherent tale with an overarching theme. One person's attention was drawn to the sound of the bass, while others were attracted to the drums or piano. One enjoyed the band's interpretation of standard tunes while others enjoyed the original compositions. One person noticed the bandleader looking after the other band members while playing. Another commented positively on frequent gentle shifts in leadership during performance. Others felt the lack of strong leadership. The band's informal clothing distracted one person. The lack of information given about each tune was frustrating to some. Others enjoyed the informality and relaxed to the music.

There are nine characters introduced over the page. To help the reader keep track they are grouped alphabetically. I've called the music students **T**im, **V**ictor, **W**ayne, **Y**vette and **Z**ane, the music lecturers **J**ohn and **K**eith, and the others **E**mma and **F**letcher. The music students all study at the conservatorium where the concerts were held, and their interview transcripts sometimes reflect the learning experiences they have shared. I have at times in the analysis juxtaposed their views with those of the others. However, their thoughts on interaction and their experiences of the concerts were unique and reflect their individuality. The following section explores that diversity.

The audience participants

Tim, Victor, Wayne, Yvette and **Zane** are all studying jazz at the Conservatorium. They were able to come to all three concerts despite the heavy workload of their course. Tim is slightly older than the others, plays saxophone and teaches music as well as attending the Conservatorium. Victor is a drummer who offered great insights into Henry's contribution to the music. Wayne is a trumpeter with an off-beat and eclectic take on the world of music. Yvette is a passionate and committed pianist. Zane plays trumpet and sings, performing in jazz, Latin and Afro-Cuban bands.

Emma and **Fletcher** joined the project for the second and third concerts. Emma is a university student and music lover who has been to many of the trio's performances over the last few years. She has great empathy with the trio's music and provided invaluable insights into our performances. Fletcher is a professor of statistics and also an accomplished amateur classical musician. He hadn't heard the band or a lot of jazz before this project, which placed him in a unique position to contribute a fresh perspective on our performances.

John teaches jazz at the Conservatorium and is a highly acclaimed jazz musician. He was asked to attend the first concert in an official capacity. He was absolutely exhausted that day and had to run to a rehearsal later that night. He came to our concert "under sufferance a bit, but as soon as you guys started playing my mood changed. It was great" (John, 1). John later agreed to a short interview with me that was very helpful for the project.

Keith also teaches as the Conservatorium and he too is a highly acclaimed jazz musician. We first met as jazz students about thirty years ago and he's been one of my closest friends since then. He is a thoughtful artist with extensive experience both as an accompanist and in leading his own bands. I was delighted that he was able to come to the second and third concerts and contribute his thoughts to the project.

Each person at a concert experiences the music differently.

In the previous section I discussed the performances of two tunes, *Prepare To Be* and *Doxy*, which were memorable experiences for Ben and Henry. Next it would be logical to broaden the study by exploring in detail the audience members' reactions to those tunes. However, whereas Ben and Henry instigated conversation with me about those particular tunes, the audience had very little to say about them. Each member of the audience brings their own preoccupations and interests to a concert, so different tunes or aspects of a performance will resonate in an individual way. I will begin to explore those differences through a discussion of their reactions or non-reactions to the performance of *Prepare To Be*, which happened in the third concert.

After the third concert, Victor said nothing about *Prepare To Be.* He said that he felt drawn into the music and found it "totally way more relaxed. … And it was nice to hear those arrangements" (Victor, 3) of the two 'standard' tunes we played.[12] He didn't mention any other particular tunes, talking mostly about the highlight which was "well, definitely seeing Henry again. Because I really liked his treatment of the music" (Victor, 3).

Wayne also liked Henry's drumming.

> I'm starting to really like hearing Henry. I'm totally digging his drumming and the way he sort of/ the way he emphasises the groove. Like, incredible. It's so totally subtle. It doesn't stand out, but he makes it feel great. (Wayne, 3)

He didn't talk about *Prepare To Be*, or any particular tunes, but said he enjoyed the concert because "there was sort of more cohesion or trust or .. something in the band it felt like it was .. I guess it sounded like you guys were communicating more sort of fluently, or something like that" (Wayne, 3). His interest in the concert was with overall dynamic and textural shapes, "just the way the music was layered and structured [which] was determined by the way that you guys were communicating" (Wayne, 3).

Tim didn't mention *Prepare To Be* either. He "liked that Latin tune in the first set" (Tim, 3).[13]

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[12] The first of those tunes is *No Moon At All* – Track One on the accompanying disc. See Appendix Three.

[13] That tune is *Paper Plains* – Track Two on the accompanying disc.

> Yes, I was trying to pick. Do I know that one? It sounds like something that's familiar, but not quite/ it kind of got a good groove going and it was kind of … a salsa-y sort of thing. It was sort of a fast feel that [the drums] were doing. So that had a good vibe to it. (Tim, 3)

The performance of "that Latin tune", *Paper Plains*, concluded with an extended drum solo that interested Tim. "It was a good drum solo because it actually had this journey to it. It sort of felt like telling a story and that sort of thing" (Tim, 3).

Zane didn't name particular tunes but he said, "I really like Ben's tunes. They're beautiful. Just really nice pretty tunes. Very easy to listen to" (Zane 3). Neither Emma nor Fletcher referred to particular tunes. They both reported that they enjoyed the performance as it was gentle and seemed to draw them inside the music. For Fletcher, it was "gentler and freer" (Fletcher, 3). He felt drawn in "particularly [by] the improvisation on the piano, the melody. I tend to listen to melody more than bass, because I play a melody instrument" (Fletcher, 3).

Yvette, on the other hand, "was just paying more attention to [the bass] and I thought your sound was really clear and nice and your articulation was perfect and clear … That's what I was into" (Yvette, 3). She enjoyed *Prepare To Be* and is one of only two people who specifically mentioned that tune. She is a pianist studying jazz, and says that for a pianist a strong duo performance is "really hard to pull off" (Yvette, 3). She said it was a "good job, working together, and Ben really filled up the sound with the piano". At first, she "didn't even notice that the drummer wasn't playing" (Yvette, 3). Henry's personal journey – of not knowing what the tune was, indecision about when to start playing, and then commitment to not playing – was not apparent to anyone in the audience. Henry's facial expressions and body language didn't display his shifting emotions. He appeared to be sitting calmly at the drum kit, just enjoying the music. Ben said he enjoyed playing "outside" (playing notes that weren't inside the harmonic structure of the tune) as an interaction with Henry's silence, but Yvette was the only person who commented that his solo was more dissonant. "There was a lot of chromatic stuff. It was good though." She finds "it exposing when it's just piano and bass" (Yvette, 3). Her engagement with the tune was with Ben's ability to make a duo performance sound so full and strong, something that as a piano student at the Conservatorium she is currently working towards.

Keith is the other person who mentioned *Prepare To Be.* For him it was interesting not because Henry played nothing on the drums or because Ben explored dissonance in his solo, but because the composition itself was interesting. He said, "I was really fascinated with … the

duet. Is that influenced by Lyle, that tune *Chorinho*?[14] … It's a fascinating bass line" (Keith, 3). Keith is a composer, pianist, and bandleader. Finding and writing interesting compositions for his bands is a big part of Keith's life, so this tune was particularly interesting to him. He referred to the performance as "the duet" because it was the only tune played by a duo – the label *duet* easily specified which tune he was talking about. That it was performed by a duo wasn't, in itself, significant to him. I agreed with him that it is a fascinating composition and asked him if he had noticed that Henry couldn't find the place to come in. He hadn't.

> Oh … He's supposed to play … Ok, well that's amazing! That blows my theory out of the water, because that means it was very spontaneous. (Keith, 3)

Keith's "theory" is that there is an attitude current amongst jazz musicians that a set of music and each tune in it should be thoroughly prepared before a concert. I explore this theme in the next section.

Preparing a cohesive concert

> We like to have a design. … We've got our agenda and that's what we're doing, sort of thing. I'm very aware of that because I've been doing that for so long now, of trying to map out a structure of performance and .. and I think I'm just starting to let go of it. (Keith, 3)

Keith thinks that over-preparation of music performances is pervasive in the music industry. He sees that most bands around him have a "firm concept" (Keith, 3) and most of the music they play is preconceived. He wonders what relationship this attitude has with jazz. As a lecturer in jazz history at the conservatorium he is "just starting to see that possibly the tradition of jazz is not so much that" (Keith, 3). For his own professional life he has realised that it's "more about the moment and what's going to happen in this moment, or *what is happening in this moment*" (Keith, 3). This echoes almost exactly Henry's observation that it's not a question of planning what to play, "if it feels right then it's almost like *it's already happening*" (Henry, 1).

[14] He is referring to Lyle Mays' composition *Chorinho*, from the album Street Dreams. 1988, Warner Bros. 47249

Keith's preoccupation with over-preparation of jazz performances probably influenced his perception of our concert, so that it sounded "scripted". He heard Ben's preparation in everything that was played. Listening to the concert was like reading a book written by Ben.

> It's just so beautiful to read someone's book, you know. And you guys were very clear about your book last night for me. It was very, very enjoyable … I really enjoyed everything about it last night. I was just wondering, where is *that* and *jazz*, that's all. And I think your study is about interaction .. (Keith, 3)

It sounded to him that Ben had a complete sense of what each piece was going to do. "He seems to have quite a map of dynamics and structure." The band sounded like a "working band" (Keith, 3), which means that:

> I felt that you and Henry were absolutely in tune with what was supposed to happen. What this tune does. What that tune does … It just seemed very clear to me last night that there could have been an earthquake and you guys would have just sort of stayed in your concept. (Keith, 3)

It seemed to Keith that the band members were willing to change and explore new ideas if something unusual happened, "but it did sound to me like things were pretty set. Texturally as well" (Keith, 3). In contrast, when I asked Ben if the evening proceeded as he would have liked, he said:

> That's a hard question. I don't know how I would have liked it to have proceeded. I sort of let it proceed/ that's how it proceeded. If I have an expectation about how it's going to proceed then it's never the same. (Ben, 3)

Perhaps it's possible for a band to sound thoroughly prepared and to be pursuing the leader's vision if the members of the band are determined to, as Henry says, "allow the music to entice me into a place that will make me play in a certain way" (Henry, 1). Perhaps this single-minded focus on the unfolding music is enough to guarantee a sense of cohesion in the performance. But paradoxically, the music might then sound over-prepared. And perhaps when the performers lose themselves in the moment of co-creation then the audience won't get a sense of their individuality. Keith's feeling after the concert was that

> we know how Ben's music sounds, but we don't really know how you, Henry and Ben *were* last night. We didn't get *your* story, but we got how the music is. (Keith, 3)

When I told Keith that Ben hadn't planned a set of music, and that *Prepare To Be* was not planned as a duo, he was surprised. "Well that's amazing! That blows my theory out of the water" (Keith, 3). At the end of our conversation I summed up Keith's experience of the concert, that "it didn't seem very personal. It was more a presentation of something". He interrupted, saying "Yes .. I don't know what that's about. That's more about me than you" (Keith, 3). This realisation that his perception of our concert was as much a product of his preoccupations and preconceptions as it was of the music, was to become a major theme of this dissertation. And while it may be true that Keith's observations say more about him than about the band, his perception of the concert arose as an interaction between him and the music. It also tells us a lot about the music, as I will explore in the following paragraphs.

Interacting towards a cohesive concert

In my reflective notes after the concert I wrote that I had played conservatively and only what was necessary for the music. I was happy with the concert because it sounded cohesive, subtle and restrained, without the silliness that sometimes infects the music and particularly my own playing. The concert sounded to me like "a team of professionals doing what was required to portray the music effectively" (see Appendix Five: Samples of reflective notes). Ben and Henry both told me after the concert that the performance was difficult for them. Ben had a lot on his mind and "found it hard to stop thinking" (Ben, 3). In our interview he said that

> all of the problems had to do with the inside of my head. I think it's one of those performances where when you listen back to it without all the cross talk, it actually sounded great. (Ben, 3)

Henry was having a *bad head day*, experiencing negative thoughts about his ability to play music, and having to "lock down into survival mode" (Henry, 3). What that means for him is that he thinks:

> I've got to do my fair share. And if my fair share is just playing some nice grooves and keeping the thing buoyant or whatever … I just kind of take care of business a little bit more. And there's nothing wrong with that. (Henry, 3)

Three musicians with the three perspectives I have just described would be likely to focus on carefully building each tune in a cohesive way. They would be unlikely to spontaneously throw

in ideas that might upset the flow of the music. They would be unlikely to exuberantly thrust themselves into the spotlight in a way that might reveal their individuality. There might not be the surprises that mark a performance as particularly memorable, but it could certainly be "polished", "cohesive" and "beautiful" (Keith, 3).

Delight in the unexpected

The other memorable tune that I discussed earlier (pp. 81-84) was the performance of *Doxy* in the second concert. Keith found *Doxy* exciting for the same reason that the band had – it was different from what he expected. He'd heard the band play *Doxy* at another venue about six months earlier, and it "sounded like a piano/drums duet, where [the bass] was reacting always. They were instigating and you were reacting" (Keith, 2). He had enjoyed that performance. "It was a wonderful, wonderful approach. It was fantastic" (Keith, 2). When we started the piece at the second concert, he expected the same pattern of interaction to emerge. He expected that the band had developed this "concept" for that tune, and would continue to follow that concept. However, it didn't happen that way.

> I think it was only in the second or third chorus, there was a pause, and you [the bass] brought in the 'one', or the beginning anyway, and they fell in behind you ... I thought that was quite exciting. (Keith, 2)

It is not necessarily exciting when a walking bass line starts and then piano and drums play along with it. That a walking bass line would start at *that* moment, on *that* tune, when he expected something entirely different, *was* exciting.

Unexpected events in a concert can make it memorable. Many of the other audience participants heard us play *Doxy* for the first time at the first concert, and that was a vivid experience for them. (This first performance of *Doxy* is Track Seven on the accompanying disc.) I will explore that first performance over the next few pages. The trio has been playing *Doxy* for many years and I need to briefly explain our history with the tune and its significance for us. We usually perform it in an overtly non-traditional way, incorporating fluctuations in tempo. It is an integral part of most jazz performances that tunes are played at a steady tempo. Establishing a good rhythmic feel requires a steady tempo, and jazz musicians devote a lot of time and energy in developing this aspect of their playing. The first time that Ben deliberately

started slowing down in *Doxy* during one of our performances, I was extremely uncomfortable as this was not something I had ever experienced in concert. It was in the end, liberating, and since that first time our performances of *Doxy* have often revolved around the idea of breaking with tradition. When we played the tune it was usually at a high point in the concert. Energetic. Exuberant. Out of time or out of tune. Or both.

Traditionally, the last tune in a set is a dynamic high point, and at the first concert the last tune in our first set was *Doxy*. I was feeling nervous and self-conscious, uncomfortable with my dual roles of researcher-presenting-his-concert and accompanist/collaborator in a band. This made me uncomfortable with playing an exuberant and tradition-breaking tune. Henry was also feeling nervous. The trio hadn't played together for a while, so he was trying to remember the tunes and was also struggling with the acoustic environment for his drum kit.

> [Doxy] did a particular thing, which was that everyone knows the tune so we could get pretty crazy with it, and we often did. So when we played it the other night I thought "Oh here we are, we have to be intense and everything, and I'm not sure whether I'm ready for that right now." When we were playing I was trying to remember how we got "out". Did we play the first few choruses straight and then "deconstruct", or did I just hit a cymbal somewhere and decide I was going to be in Venezuela, on a trumpet. (Henry, 1)

Henry did the best he could under the circumstances and didn't know how it turned out. It was a struggle for me, especially at the beginning. Ben thought "it was a bit more straight than we normally play it, maybe because of what we were thinking about while we were playing. But it was still great. It's always great" (Ben, 1).

The audience members spoke of *Doxy* as a high point of the concert. For Wayne,

> *Doxy* was really cool. It was refreshing because it gave everyone in the band their own little spot, and it evolved into something which everyone contributed to. (Wayne, 1)

Yvette loved it. She said that she

> liked how you guys just played with it. Played with the time and played with the phrasing, and made it exciting. You were like sitting on the edge of your seat going "what are they going to do with it?" (Yvette, 1)

Zane "really enjoyed it". He enjoyed "that it was so different to every other time I've heard it" (Zane, 1). I asked him what was different about it.

> The time for starters. Just dragging it all over the place and changing it completely … I think it made everyone more relaxed hearing you guys mucking around. I sat back and went "Oh, cool." Something a bit different, less serious I guess. (Zane, 1)

The tune was unexpected. It seemed less serious than the previous tunes, which helped the audience relax and enjoy the experience. They expressed interest and pleasure at hearing our unusual approach to the tune. When they heard us playing *Doxy* at the second concert it was familiar to them, and consequently less remarkable.

Keith had heard us play *Doxy* before, so why was his response to hearing it at the second concert so different from the other audience members? Perhaps because he has more experience of leading and following in music performances. Or because I have played in his bands regularly over many years, and he knows my playing well. I can only guess, because I didn't directly ask him these questions, but I think he recognised that the role my bass took in that second performance of *Doxy* was unusual. When it sounded to him that I had taken the initiative [at 2'00" on Track Four] and the others in the band had fallen in behind, he found it exciting. For him, this hearing of *Doxy* was just as surprising as his first had been, but for different reasons. The other members of the audience, either less familiar with my patterns of behaviour at the bass, or with subtle shifts of leading and following within a tune, experienced the performance as being similar to the first. Zane talked about the second performance with familiarity. "I liked *Doxy* again. I like that tune and I think it's fun what you did with it. It's a cool arrangement" (Zane, 2). It's worth noting here, that "It's a cool arrangement" reinforces Keith's observation that many bands have concepts, designs and structures for their performances. In Zane's musical world, bands develop arrangements. He expected a second performance of the tune to follow the same pattern that he'd heard the first time, and if he were to hear it again he would expect it to follow the same pattern again. However, from the band's perspective there is no arrangement for *Doxy* – just a shared history of often treating some aspect of the piece in a non-traditional way.

Four different perspectives on a pivotal moment

Figure 1 is a partial transcription of five bars from the second performance of *Doxy*. These bars contain a pivotal moment in the performance that set up an extended period of interaction that the band members, and Keith, found particularly exciting. Keith described this

moment as the bass bringing in the "one" and the others falling in behind. From his perspective, the bar at letter *A* is the last bar of a chorus. The bass plays a solo walking line that clearly moves from the dominant chord (F7) to arrive at the tonic on the first bar of a new chorus at letter *B*. As Keith remembered it, the bass clearly established the start of a new chorus and the others "fell in behind" (Keith, 2).

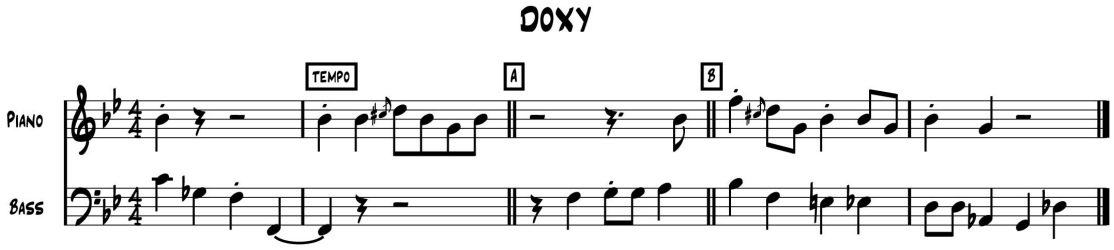

Figure 1. Piano and bass at 2'00". *Doxy*, Track Four.

From Henry's perspective, this is the point at which he thought, "well I could jump on here" (Henry, 2), but decided not to. In Keith's terms, he decided *not* to "fall in behind". Instead Henry became more committed to *not* playing in time. For the next few minutes from this 2'00" point in the recording you can hear Ben's piano engaging in a kind of dance between the steady bass line and the completely *un*steady drumming. His piano lines relate harmonically and metrically to the bass line while also engaging texturally with the drums. The tune was a highlight for Ben because at this pivotal moment Henry chose *not* to fall in behind.

When I listen to the recording now, I realise that Ben had already established a steady time feel and clearly marked the start of a new chorus in the previous bar. From his perspective, the first bar of transcription corresponds to the second-last bar of the form (there is a chart of *Doxy* at Appendix Two). The bass is, at this point, still playing out of time, but seems to clearly outline the chord change from C7 to F7 that occurs in the second-last bar of the form. The piano figure brings in a clear tempo over the last bar of the form, leading to a new chorus starting at letter *A*. Ben must have undergone a moment of mental adjustment when he heard the bass clearly starting a new chorus *a bar after he already had*. Nonetheless, he quickly made that mental adjustment, and adapted his improvisation to match where the bass was, at letter *B*. So from my perspective now, and I'm sure Ben's perspective then, the piano brought in the *one* and the bass fell in behind.

Minor misunderstandings such as this may happen often in performance. When the band members are motivated by *play*, chances are taken, new ideas tried and boundaries pushed. It is inevitable that adjustments will need to be made from time to time. With a combination of individual experience and time working together as a band, these adjustments can become almost instantaneous and not disruptive to the flow of the music.

Weights of influence

Ben is the leader of the band.

> So, when I initially sit down and nobody's played anything, I think probably the only thing that I do that is a leadership role is I start a song. And pick how fast it's going to be. (Ben, 3)

How long it takes to "start a song" varies. Most of the tunes on the accompanying disc start with a whole chorus of solo piano that establishes a mood for the tune, but it often happens that Ben names a tune and counts in the tempo for us all to start. In that situation the mood is jointly created as the band plays through the tune together. The melody statement can be like a "launch pad" (Ben, 1), and if Ben feels that somebody "wants to take off" then he will "just let them go" (Ben, 1). If someone in the band is "surging emotionally" (Ben, 1) it is natural for that person to surge into a solo, but if it's not obvious to Ben he might stop playing momentarily to "see if somebody steps forward" (Ben, 1).

A consequence of his approach to band leading is that each performance of a tune is different, depending on how each member of the band feels at that moment. A gushing bass solo might follow the melody statement, or there might be a piano solo and no bass solo for that tune at all. The opening melody statement might lead into a sudden textural thickening, or conversely to a tentative period where each musician is waiting to see what will happen next. In circumstance like that Ben says:

> If you just literally stop playing, so you don't play a chord for a bar, or two beats or something, it's just silent. Something happens to make you realise what you're supposed to play next. (Ben, 1)

Henry also holds an open view of what might happen at any point in a tune. When things are going well for him (and he doesn't have his "bad head" on),

> I'm just thinking, here is some music and I can interact with it this way without knocking the thing over or stopping you guys from doing what you perceive is good for the music too. I can push it in a certain way but I'm also open to it going all quiet or me dropping out completely. (Henry, 1)

As an alternative to thinking of leaders and followers in a band, it can be useful to think in terms of shifting weights of influence. I asked Henry if he was aware of moments in the concert when he was leading the performance in a particular direction.

> I think it's like, I feel it like .. almost like .. like .. "weight". So, the music might be weighted between the instruments. (Henry, 2)

As he's playing, he listens to how much each instrument is contributing to the overall sound, and their weights relative to each other. But his response to the different weights isn't predictable.

> Ben might be playing more, so depending on how much you're [the bassist] playing with that, then … I'm either able to pull back or I'm gonna go "Well, I want to say something!" (Henry, 2)

This attitude makes Henry fun to play with. He is careful not to "knock the thing over" (Henry, 1), nor sabotage the other players' musical output, but he's also willing to "say something" (Henry, 2) when he feels like it, even if there is already a lot going on in the music.

A flexible approach to leadership can lead to unexpected results. Different people will push themselves forward at different times, nudging tunes towards places they hadn't been in previous performances. One band member might not feature much at all during a concert if others in the band are contributing with "more weight" (Henry, 2), or "surging emotionally" (Ben, 1), or just "have more to say" (Ben, 1). This can be confusing to an audience if the person who seems to be contributing less is the leader. Culturally, we are more used to assigning creative output to a single leader (Resnick, 1996). We acknowledge the composer, the bandleader and the soloist (Sawyer, 1992, 2006). As a lecturer at the conservatorium, John encourages students to be sensitive to the context of performances – to feature themselves as leaders and to accompany others sensitively when required. He was asked to attend the first concert for this project in an official capacity, and was expecting that since the project was in my name, then I would have demonstrably been the leader.

> The context was that you were presenting music … If I was booked to play with your band then I wouldn't come out and roar … I think that within that context he [Ben] should have been playing a bit less, and allowing you to speak. (John, 1)

The concert didn't have enough of *me* in it for John. He "felt that Ben was driving a lot of the interaction" (John, 1).

> I felt that he was playing a lot and that you and Henry were, whilst interacting with each other, reacting to Ben more than he was reacting to what you or Henry were doing. (John, 1)

This was a disappointment for him, and he felt it was inappropriate for the context, which was that it was my recital.

As I talked with the participants after the first concert, it became clear that the question of leadership concerned some of the audience members. I made an extra effort to talk to the audience before the second concert to explain that although it was my project, the concert was of Ben's trio, and he was the bandleader. I explained that I had encouraged him to treat the concert as one of his gigs in every possible way. For Yvette, that made it "a lot better".

> It was clearer. "Ok, this is Ben's trio." [Right.] That made a big difference! Just knowing that! Like, I'm surprised at that, how much difference that made. Just knowing that it wasn't your trio. (Yvette, 2)

Knowing that I wasn't the bandleader let her enjoy the concert without concern that I might not have enough of the spotlight. And it may have helped Henry and Ben to hear me say it out loud in public. Perhaps uncertainty about the context and purpose of the first concert made them a little hesitant to *surge* or play with extra *weight* or just to *say something* whenever they felt like it. Tim thought the band sounded a bit hesitant in the first concert.

> Sometimes in the middle of the set you would have preferred if someone had taken charge, because you were a bit in the air about what you were going to do next. You almost on purpose didn't want to be too forthright, three of you, in terms of "let's do this", because it might come across like I'm being too leaderly. (Tim, 1)

When leadership roles in a band aren't clear, it may cause the music to sound uncertain. This may happen if somebody who is accustomed to leading is employed as an accompanist. Have they been employed on the basis of their leadership skills, or are they expected to sensitively

follow their employer's lead, or both, at different times? It can help if issues surrounding leadership are explicitly discussed before a performance.

If a music performance is undertaken in the spirit of play, then leadership shifts gently and often between the players. Fletcher is one of the participants in this project who is not a music student. He is unfamiliar with jazz and the protocols involved in improvisation. He wasn't sure how much organisation had gone into each tune and how much was improvised.

> And you could hear in some of the pieces that the control goes to different people at different times, and that might be something that you've arranged in advance or it might just be that you're ready for it, and you're happy if somebody looks like they want to take control they take control. That, I'm not sure of. But from the outside it looks like different people take control at different times. And it's not an autocratic thing. It seems like a gentle control. (Fletcher, 2)

Fletcher is not involved in the conservatory world of recitals and their assessable criteria. His preconceptions of leadership for the concert would have been very different from faculty members and students who are regularly involved in recital assessments. Consequently, he was able to see clearly that rather than one leader controlling an entire performance, different people push the music in different directions at different times. Gently.

In our performances nobody forces the others to go a particular direction. That would be against the spirit of playing. Ideas are offered, or invitations extended. Victor spoke about this in relation to the performance of *Doxy* when the walking bass line started.

> If you were laying it down [playing a strong bass line] they were sort of free to come and go as they pleased. Does that make sense? … It was a sympathetic sort of thing. Like, nobody was forcing, you know, "I'm going here", and making it really obvious "so you should come with me". (Victor, 2)

Sometimes, as in the second performance of *Doxy*, the music was more effective because the musicians didn't follow each other. It is possible to play music with an awareness of the different voices in the ensemble, to hear a musical idea offered and sense the possibility of following that idea, and then choose not to. I return to this aesthetic later, in a section on rhythmic interaction. Not interacting, or interacting by *not* responding to what you hear, is sometimes an aesthetic choice that contributes greatly to the unfolding piece of music.

I conclude this section on leading and following with Emma's observations on Ben's leadership qualities that extend a long way past the start of each tune.

> I noticed him [Ben], he'd play a whole bunch of stuff and then he'd look up and he'd make sure that neither you or Henry was staring at him, you know, like needing some sort of direction. And he'd sort of glance up and he'd be like "Ok, everything's good", head back down and keep playing. (Emma, 2)

Emma's observation is that Ben used his eyes to watch out for problems, as if we *immerse* ourselves in the world of sound with our ears, and use the visual sense to *detach* from that world when necessary.

> Yes, I just noticed that. And I noticed that you looked at Ben occasionally. You very rarely looked over at Henry, and Henry didn't look at anyone. (Emma, 2)

From Emma's observations, it seemed that Ben was behaving as a leader, responsible for the wellbeing of the rest of the band. This was at odds with the information she had been given in the program notes, that the trio was an egalitarian endeavour.

> E For me watching, I could tell that you were part of a group and that you were constantly sort of/ especially, I don't know/ I guess you don't call Ben the band leader but he's the .. [Mm?], you know (pause) .. Ok. So he was always checking to see if you guys were good ..
>
> I By "good", you mean if we were happy with what was going on?
>
> E Yes, yes. And then, even though usually you all seemed like you were in your own little world, it's sort of like there's a thread connecting you all. (Emma, 2)

Musicians don't need eyes to respond to the sounds around them. It may seem, to look at them, that they are not interacting at all, but are each in their own worlds. The interactions that an audience can *see* are a tiny fraction of the interactions that take place. One thread that connects the musicians is the aural world of the music that they are creating.

Looking at a band

> And tonight was sort of like I wished that I'd just been lying on the floor, you know, on a bean bag or something with my eyes closed … Last time was more emotionally varied but it wasn't as intense – for me [as this time]. (Emma, 3)

Emma's reaction to the music is a perfect complement to Ben's goal of expressing how he feels through the music, and taking an audience on an emotional journey. But Emma also enjoys *watching* the band. "There's a very strong chemistry. That's why I like watching you" (Emma, 3). When people say they are going out to *see* a band it is not a metaphor. People go out to look at bands just as much as they go to listen to bands. Zane says:

> Well, at the end of the day, you go to *see* a live band. Because it's live, you know what I mean? And as much as that's because it's improvised and it's different every time, it's also because you're there to *see* them. Otherwise you could just, you know, whack an album on. (Zane, 2)

He thinks it's important that a band visibly interact. A live performance is aural *and* visual. "It makes you pay attention when things are going on" [visually]. An audience will enjoy a band more if it is "more entertaining to watch" (Zane, 2).

> You're paying money to go and see a band, and if you get there and they all just stare blankly into space and don't interact with the audience or each other, it's a bit boring. As much as they might be playing really good music, but if they were playing really good music and being entertaining to watch then it just makes the whole experience ten times as good, you know? (Zane, 2)

He's not suggesting that jazz musicians should employ dancers and put on light shows. Little gestures make a big difference.

> Oh, just when you make eye contact with each other or, someone might do something someone else likes and they'll smile, have a laugh or something. [Yes.] It keeps that energy positive in the room. (Zane, 2)

Zane is studying jazz at the conservatorium but is already working as a musician in a variety of professional settings and looking towards a career as a performing artist. He is very conscious of the need to make a living as an *entertainer*. When a band performs for an audience it has "a duty to entertain" (Zane, 3). Even when the purpose of the performance is to make art or to

share emotions, the presentation of the performance can't be ignored. "You don't want to come across as ignoring the audience, or not acknowledging them" (Zane, 3).

I'd like to untangle these comments of Zane's into what appear to me as two separate topics. Acknowledging an audience by speaking to them between tunes is different from consciously monitoring how you appear during the performance of a tune. I can understand how these two ideas can be grouped together. The "bunch of guys staring at the floor playing their horns" who "stood still and were a bit boring to watch" (Zane, 2) probably didn't communicate well with the audience between tunes either. However, being conscious to smile and tap your feet would prevent the total immersion in the activity of co-creating music that is needed for the best performances.

Yvette also thought that it's important how the band looks when they're performing, and commented that how we dress can affect the way an audience responds to us.

> It makes a difference because we're visual. As much as we'd like to think that we aren't because we're musicians and we listen to the music, we're actually looking at you guys. You're there, and we're going to notice stuff if it stands out. (Yvette, 3)

"Stuff that stands out" can be how a musician is dressed. It can distract Yvette from enjoying a performance. She knows it's "got nothing to do with the music", and feels that it's "such a shame because you miss out on the music because you're distracted by something stupid" (Yvette, 3). For Yvette, not dressing well for a concert can be disrespectful to the audience. "Like, it's a good gig. Give it some respect" (Yvette, 3).

> I know this sounds weird, … you had a collared shirt on and you looked like you were there to do a performance … Ben looked alright but it was like he didn't give a crap. You know, like he just showed up with his t-shirt on and stuff. You know what I mean? That just, just .. I've just learned you've got to respect your audience. (Yvette, 3)

Talk to the audience

The other issue that Zane raised, separate from what a band looks like, is the verbal information they give to the audience. Many of the participants in this project thought that it was important for the bandleader to talk to the audience. Yvette doesn't analyse music too much when she's out listening. "Normally it's an emotional thing for me" (Yvette, 1). But she

still likes to hear information about the music. And here she echoes Zane's point about making an effort to go out and hear a band: "Yes, obviously the music should speak for itself, and it does .. but I could put a record on" (Yvette, 3). I asked her if she ever listens to records without reading about them first.

> Yes sure, especially now. You just download stuff. You don't have liner notes. Yes, sure. Sometimes you don't even know who you're listening to. I find that a little bit annoying. [Do you?] I like to know who's playing. I want to know who's playing, you know? (Yvette, 3)

It's not just to satisfy her desire for information about the tunes and the band members, although that is a part of it. If a bandleader talks to the audience it helps her to feel a part of the event.

> I know it's that thing in jazz where we don't talk to the audience. We don't have to talk to the audience if we don't want to because we're not really entertainers. We're artists. But I just think that's rubbish. It's a communication thing that's going on and if you don't talk to them they .. I like it when they talk a little bit about themselves. I feel like I'm part of something. (Yvette, 3)

Fletcher notes that in classical concerts distancing between musicians and audience is deliberately achieved by formal a dress code (the opposite of Yvette's too-casual dressing), and by not talking to the audience.

> As opposed to some other music where people get dressed up in black suits and bow ties, and they don't talk to the audience and they come on and they, very strictly, start playing. And that's all a distancing thing. Whereas, from what I can see of jazz, they usually try to avoid that distancing. (Fletcher, 2)

Audiences at concerts want to feel part of something, and bands want them to as well. Talking between tunes can help to bridge the distance between band and audience.

The audience doesn't need a long talk, according to Tim, just some basic information.

> Even the names of the songs and what they were, who wrote them. Not that every song you have to do a whole story about, but just now and then. [Yes. That's a good point.] Because then that engages you as an audience because you go "Oh, ok," and you start to think about what you're going to hear or what you just heard. … It focuses the attention on the emotional, the storytelling side of the music. (Tim, 3)

At our concerts Ben briefly introduced some of the tunes. Most of the music students in the audience thought that if he had spoken more and given a little information about every tune it would have helped them engage with the music and the event. Only Victor disagreed.

> It was strange that day, it was really hot, and it was, you know, a summer day. And then having that gig which was really relaxed .. and I don't think, there wasn't/ I don't think talking to the crowd would have really done anything. It was just nice music and, you know, there were some beautiful solos ... (Victor, 3)

Like the two non-music-students in the project, he was quite happy to listen to the music in a relaxed way without being *informed* about each new tune.

I wonder why some people need to have information about the tunes before they can relax and enjoy them. Perhaps for the students, the whole situation was too similar to their academic work for them to relax. The performances were in an informal café, but the café is where they sometimes perform for assessment. The habit of listening critically and analytically in this environment would almost demand that they have supporting data or information to frame their experience. Especially as they knew I would be interviewing them afterwards about their experience. Wayne was aware of this and consciously tried "not to think too much" (Wayne, 1).

> Too much analysis takes away .. (pause) If you try to categorise something, that's a sure way not to experience what it is. Just putting it in a box, you know? You're not *in* the box. (Wayne, 1)

I found the interview with Wayne a little frustrating because he didn't have anything to say about the concert – he had experienced it but not thought about it, and there was little he could put into words to share with me. Perhaps he was an excellent audience member, but not an ideal interviewee. The others' comments about wanting to know more about each tune came most frequently in the interviews after the first concert. By the second concert the issue came up less, and as well, most reported that they enjoyed the concert more. The band was more relaxed and enjoyed playing more, but perhaps the audience enjoyment had as much to do with their being more familiar with the band and my project as it had to do with the qualities of the music.

Comfort

Just as the band members need a degree of familiarity and comfort to perform well, the audience needs some familiarity and comfort to listen well. For the band, that comfort can come from familiar repertoire. When discussing how he chose tunes to play, Ben said: "I need there to be a certain amount of comfort level in order for everybody to take off" (Ben, 2). For Henry, the "big thing" about the second concert "was actually knowing the space and knowing the situation" (Henry, 2). These sentiments are true for the audience too. The second time around was "a lot better" (Yvette, 2) for Yvette because it was clearer to her that it was Ben's trio, not mine. She was also more familiar with the look of the band and recognised some of the tunes. She

> was more used to what you look like when you're concentrating … you're looking down, and you're listening, you really listen intently. … [At the first concert] I wasn't into his originals [Ben's compositions]. But I was more into it this time. I think I had more understanding. (Yvette, 2)

The others also expressed these sentiments. We played some of Ben's original compositions in both concerts. Some in the audience recognised them the second time, which made them feel comfortable. Zane observed that knowing at least some of the tunes a band plays helps the audience enjoy the performance.

> So if you weren't into the originals it would give you something to relate to – not that you weren't into them. But if you were a non-musician I think they would bring you back in, if you heard a tune you knew. (Zane, 1)

All of these comments point to the audience needing comfort and familiarity, so they can relax and enjoy a concert. Familiarity can come from knowing the repertoire, knowing the musicians, understanding the purpose of the event.

After the second concert Victor "felt it was more relaxed. I think definitely there was a different/ it seemed like a different crowd. I'm not sure if I remember seeing more official uni people there the first time" (Victor, 2). In fact the crowd was almost identical. What was different was that the band and audience members were all more familiar with what was going on, and were feeling more relaxed. I would like to propose that a relaxed and comfortable feeling could be encouraged by the way that tunes are introduced. Talking to the audience might be re-conceived. It needn't be entertainment, or marketing of musical products – "this

next tune is from our album *Jazz Hits*, selling for only twenty dollars". Instead, the purpose of talking might simply be to bridge the physical gap between band and audience and to provide information that will help the audience relax and enjoy the concert.

Tim suggests that the role of a listener at a concert is quite passive and detached. "Well I think from an audience point of view … you want to sit back and watch the performance" (Tim, 2). That applies specifically to this band, which has a "thoughtful" approach to playing.

> The music that you play actually has a concert environment feel to it. … You're expected to sit and listen, as opposed to stand at the back and have a chat and check a bit out as you go along. It's got more of a .. "listen" .. especially Ben's sort of playing. It's quite, what's the word, "thoughtful", his approach. (Tim, 2)

Tim also thinks that for this concert style of performance a band should prepare a program of music. The band should "know what's going on", "take over", and "present you with something. Then it feels like you can relax a bit as an audience member" (Tim, 2).

On the other hand, audience members could do more than sit back and *watch* a band. Instead of needing to know about a tune and passively absorbing it, they could *play* with the music. They could allow it to engage in a dance with their preconceptions until each person came to their own understanding of what was going on. Emma and Fletcher were better able to enjoy the music this way than the music students were. As Fletcher sat listening to the concert, "at various times in my mind were various counter-melodies to the piano coming in, which I thought was a bit strange" (Fletcher, 3).

> But I wasn't consciously thinking "let's put another part in here" or anything. It's just that as I was listening to it was sort of washing through and melodic ideas were coming in … I don't have much experience with improvisation so in a way I don't get that stuff. I really enjoy it, but I don't get it. .. If it been an evening of just ad lib-ing, just jamming, then I probably would have joined in. I'm not expert but I think I could have taken something like a bass recorder which is low enough not to interfere and still much higher than your bass, and put in something. But I mean, it could well have spoiled the whole thing of course. (laughs) It's just, that was going through my mind as I was listening to it. (Fletcher, 3)

That is a wonderful way to enjoy a concert, and one that we wouldn't hear about from a music critic or other 'expert' listener. Fletcher wasn't concerned with understanding the concert or anxious that he didn't *get it*. It was just an opportunity for him to become absorbed in the sound. He became a co-creator of his own concert experience in a very obvious way.

> Any concert that I go to I don't like sitting right at the back for instance. I feel like if I'm sitting right at the back I'm just listening to the music, and when I'm sitting right at the front I feel like I'm part of it. … Sometimes it's better to sit further back, for the blend of the sound, but actually that doesn't worry me. I always like to feel like I'm in there in the middle of it. (Fletcher, 3)

Emma has heard the band many times before, so she didn't need information about each tune like the others did. She is familiar with the band's music and has developed her own framework for experiencing the concerts. She talks here about listening to *Doxy*.

> You did that crazy one that sort of didn't .. fuse together until the very end. You were all sort of playing in your own little .. um .. and it was funny. And I didn't really know whether that was all set up to be like that. You're all playing and it sort of sounds like you're playing different songs. And then it's half way through and then you're like "Geez, are they just *really off* or is this what the song's *supposed* to be like?" And then it comes together in the end and you're like "Ohhh". … In the back of my mind I knew that it was supposed to sound like that. (Emma, 2)

She knew that everything was OK. She had heard us playing the tune many times before in the previous years, but was still able to immerse herself in the play of the performance and enjoy the chaos of the moment.

Many audience members expressed a need to know about each tune so they could better enjoy the music. On the other hand, band members like to know how the audience feels about their concert. But it's difficult for musicians on stage to tell how the audience is receiving their music.

> You can only tell by maybe the way people clap. You hear a bit of a "yeah" or something like that. You know, like it's hard to kind of .. know .. how they're responding. (Yvette, 2)

When a musician's intention is, as it is for Ben, to honestly express their feelings and to take an audience on a journey the performance can be draining, especially if there is self-doubt and distracting mental chatter. When the audience response is confined to polite applause at the end of a tune it can be difficult to interpret.

> I think that I do want everybody to come along on a ride. … On an emotional ride. Whatever it is. And when I don't feel like it's happening, or even if it's because I look around and I make an instant judgement based on a whole lot of blank faces .. (Ben, 3)

Ben was disheartened after our last concert, partly because of the way he interpreted the looks on the faces of the audience. If he had glanced out and seen some sparkling smiles he might have enjoyed the concert much more, and this more positive emotional state might have resulted in a very different performance. I am not suggesting that people in an audience have an obligation to monitor their appearance while they listen to music, just pointing out that audiences and bands co-create musical performances.

Visual cues

Visual cues help the music come together, and clear lines of sight between the musicians are needed to assist this type of interaction. For all three concerts the piano was stage left with the lid lifted up to project the sound into the audience. Ben was consequently angled slightly away from the audience, looking across the piano to bass and drums. Henry set up his drums stage right, near the front and facing across the stage straight at Ben. I set up in between them and slightly to the rear so we could all see each other easily. This stage plan is common in piano trios, and that's not just a tradition or to look good for the audience, but to aid the interactions between the band members.

The trio has been working together for around ten years, so our directional interaction (cues and signals to change the direction of the music) is clear and understated. Working together over time increases the clarity and subtlety of interactions within a band. Eventually, communication can become almost subconscious and things seem to happen by happy accident. Sometimes this 'serendipity' is actually the result of correct interpretation of subtle bodily cues caught in peripheral vision. A torso moving down can indicate hands pressing onto piano keys for a final chord. An intake of breath or lift of the shoulders can precede a hit on the drums. A slightly lifting head can indicate a shift of focus from inward to outward, from one's own solo to the next.

Deliberately not looking at another musician can be an effective signal too. Our solos are over the harmonic structure of a tune, sometimes once through that structure, but often twice or more. If a soloist does not look up from their instrument at the end of one of these cycles, that can be an effective signal that the solo is not finishing but will continue on. Glances between the musicians aren't all directional. They can be encouraging, surprised or empathetic

and just a part of the ongoing communication focused on the music being played. This aspect of the performances fascinates Emma.

> You all sort of, you look up, and you communicate with your eyes, and then one of you will sort of have a funny grin. And then, you know, if you went for a note and you didn't quite get it or you didn't quite do what you wanted, you wince and then Ben would make a face .. (Emma, 2)

So while not all of the visual communication between band members is intentional or needed to direct the course of the performance, it is a part of the musical interaction. Watching the performers' physical expressions while listening to their musical expression is another facet of the concert experience.

Rhythmic interaction

It's not just the humans that interact. The sounds from their instruments interact. Rhythmic interaction is common in jazz music, and is something that the jazz students noticed in our performances. Yvette noticed Henry's rhythmic interactions during piano solos. "There's a lot of communication that goes on between the drummer and pianist. Because he's feeding him rhythms and stuff" (Yvette, 2). Tim observed that bass and drums were constantly alert for rhythmic figures from the piano that they could contribute to.

> You could see that it was a watching from you and Henry if there was an opportunity to pick up on a figure that he was doing then you would do it. Not that you did do it all the time. It was just you could see that that was the feeling that was in the air. (Tim, 1)

He raises an interesting point that we didn't respond rhythmically all the time, and goes on to say that if players interact rhythmically too much then the music "becomes too busy and in a way it's *not* a dialogue" (Tim, 1).

Henry learned early in his career that soloists didn't always like him picking up their rhythmic ideas. At one point he was playing with a world-renowned jazz pianist who stopped their rehearsal.

> He said "Don't! Get off my back! Don't attach yourself to my ideas." He said it in a very nice way too. He said, "No. Do your own thing." (Henry, 2)

That experience was “a great learning thing” (Henry, 2) and he carries that lesson into his performances with this trio. Playing a soloist’s rhythms is something to be done sparingly, but “the exception proves the rule, you know. Like, sometimes it's such a groovy thing and it sounds good when you do. And it feels good too” (Henry, 2).

Ben expands the concept of rhythmic interaction to include instances where accompanists consciously play very simply. In the first concert he particularly enjoyed playing *The Way You Look Tonight* (Track Six on the accompanying disc). Henry and I played conservatively in that tune without reacting to Ben’s rhythms, which allowed him to explore some interesting rhythmic ideas.

> I had all this freedom to do anything bizarre. I was interacting with your non-interaction. But it was an interaction. I was able to play what I played because I realised that you had decided to lay down the pulse. (Ben, 1)

There is no single rule about rhythmic interaction in this music, there are many. It’s wonderful to have enough skill to be able to interact rhythmically with other musicians, but often it serves the music best to do so sparingly.

I thought at the beginning of this project that a large portion would be devoted to rhythmic interaction. I thought another important section would be on the visual and aural cues that musicians use to co-ordinate their journey through a tune. However, the aesthetic dimension of musical performance has subsumed these two topics. Once we have an appreciation of *why* the musicians play then the details of rhythmic and visual interaction become merely a catalogue of effects. Sometimes musicians do one thing and sometimes the opposite.

Playing, learning, hermeneutics, context

The musicians in this project become better at playing together by playing together. While playing, they are committed, vulnerable and use self-restraint in recognition that the others have something to say. The outcome of their play is unpredictable. In moderate hermeneutic terms (see “Play” in this essay, pp. 37-39), this playing situation is a perfect environment for learning and understanding to take place. In the context of this project the person who had the most opportunities for play, and hence for new understanding, was me. I played with the performers on stage, with the participants in the interviews, with academic texts, with the

interview transcripts and with the evolving dissertation. The central place that these various activities have had in my life over the last few years has provided many opportunities for my understanding of musical interactions to expand. In contrast, the project was only a small part of the lives of the music students. Their attendance at the three concerts and participation in three short interviews over an eighteen-month period was peripheral to their music studies. I had initially hoped that the project might impact in some positive way on their musical lives, but one could reasonably expect that their minimal exposure to *playing* with the topic would result in only minor changes in their understanding of musical interactions.

Looking longitudinally across the interview transcripts, it is difficult to find evidence that the participants' conceptions or understandings of musical interactions developed from the first to last rounds of interviews. However, by the last round of interviews some of the music students were much more interested in talking about the context of the performances and their own place in the project. Victor's thoughts turned to the interview interaction itself. I asked him for any final thoughts on what was important in 'interaction', and in the excerpt below he speaks about the context of the research project.

> And I think talking about music/ a lot of people don't do it enough, some people do it way too much. I mean it shouldn't be, especially when we're at a music school .. it shouldn't be an academic study talking about a concert … And I think you can just treat the music as it is, and you don't have to be forced to take a controversial position on the concert, or/ and not feel like you have to butter it up and say it was the most amazing musical experience. (Victor, 3)

Interactions between musicians, and between a band's music and its audience, are frequently ineffable. Victor alludes here to the fact that many aspects of a music performance can't be analysed, particularly in terms of the technical skills he is being taught in the academy. Also, a concert is not simply one thing or the other. It is many different experiences to many different people.

In the following passage taken from Yvette's final interview she reflects on how difficult it is to state objective truths about music performances.

> It's a very subjective thing isn't it, performance? It's completely about how people feel. It's a very interesting thing, like you can be blown away by someone's technique and playing, or you might not be impressed at all by that on that particular day and just go "Oh yeah, we've

> seen all that before", you know? "So you can play. Big deal!" There's something else that goes on as well, some communication that goes on, you know, that's important. (Yvette, 3)

When I ask her what is important about musical interactions she speaks in almost hermeneutic terms, describing the essence of play.

> Just be committed to what you're doing.
> Enjoy it, maybe.
> That's it. (Yvette, 3)

CHAPTER SIX: THE LAST CHAPTER

> *Conclusions suggests an ending, a linear progression that can be resolved in some neat way. I see no conclusions here, but rather openings.* (Glesne, 1997, p. 218)

> *.. qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text. Just as a piece of literature is not equivalent to its "plot summary," qualitative research is not contained in its abstract. Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading.* (Richardson, 2005, p. 960)

This project began as an open enquiry into musical interactions. As the participants and I explored the various meanings of "interactions in improvised music" the project gradually found focus in the diverse experiences of each person at the concerts. This thesis follows a meandering course through previous research into musical interactions and a diverse range of methodological texts rather than carefully building a defensible theory. It attempts to bring to life the musical worlds of the participants. My early attempts to summarise the participants' words and synthesise their thoughts with the existing literature on musical interactions seemed only to detract from the power of their stories. Consequently I didn't want to write a concluding chapter. I was also mindful that I had already consciously and unconsciously shaped their words – by asking certain questions as we talked and by choosing and writing up the parts of our conversations I found most interesting – and didn't want to further impose my own interpretations on their words. The ideas that I find central to the project now, are not necessarily the ideas that will be significant to me in a year's time, nor in two years, nor are they necessarily the ideas that will be significant to you, the reader.

Even though I didn't want to write a conclusion, the people who have read this thesis are unanimous that a concluding chapter is necessary. They have offered different ideas about its focus, which reinforces the notion that audience members each experience a concert, or in this case a thesis, differently (pp. 96-98). In the following pages I revisit many of the ideas encountered in the previous chapters and make connections between them. Perhaps this chapter will labour over themes you consider unimportant and skip others that seem central to the project, but this should merely be seen as an inevitable consequence of the constructed nature of our realities (pp. 29-31).

I will first revisit Brinner's concepts, introduced in Chapter Two. Traditionally the music played in this project is called "jazz", but because the musicians in this project don't identify themselves as jazz musicians (p. 74, pp. 77-78), it was helpful to consider the musical interactions from an analytical perspective outside the jazz research tradition. Brinner's (1995) theoretical structure, developed from his exploration of music-making in Java, provides such a perspective. His constellations of concepts are explored in this thesis on pp. 21-23, and in Appendix Four pp. 156-161. One concept is the *interactive network*, or relationships of influence and control between the musicians. Examination of the interactive network in this project reveals the complexity and fluidity of the leadership role, an egalitarian ethic explored by Becker (2000) and Sawyer (1992). The leader of the band in this study considers that his only duties in that role are to choose the next tune to play, start it and choose a tempo (p. 105). During the performance of each tune the leadership role moves gently from player to player in shifting weights of influence (pp. 105-109). This process is not premeditated and roles change many times within each tune and from night to night, depending on the needs of the music and the individual performers. Some audience members expected a particular type of strong leadership to be evident during performance, and were troubled when this wasn't the case (pp. 106-109). They were able to enjoy the music more when the nature of the band's interactive network was made explicit.

Brinner suggests that we can also investigate interactions through analysis of a band's *interactive system,* or the ways that the members communicate during performance and coordinate their way through tunes. Visual cues (pp. 117-118, 157-159) are part of that communication, and research into musical interaction often relies on video-recorded evidence of musicians' gestures in performance (e.g. Branker 2010, Doffman 2012, Fodor 1998, Reinholdsson 1998). However, much of the interaction during a performance is invisible, particularly in well-established groups. Rather than interacting with each other, musicians interact with the sound of the music as it unfolds, and with shared memories of previous performances (pp. 75-87). Ethnomusicologists (Berliner 1994, Jackson 1998, Monson 1996, Murphy 1990) emphasise that musicians communicate through systems of shared knowledge and their studies focus on shared understandings within musical cultures (pp. 15-18). This project has developed a different focus, exploring the variation between individual understandings. It explores the responses of individuals in the audience to the music in relation to their expectations (pp. 94-117). Many of their most pleasurable experiences during the concerts were isolated moments of surprise when expectations were confounded.

The musicians' most memorable moments also came from unexpected musical events (pp. 80-86), which they actively sought not only for pleasure but also as a way of increasing understanding about playing music (p. 86). During the course of the project, parallels between the musicians' experiences of creating music and the researcher's experience of creating a thesis became evident. Unexpected events often led to increased understanding of the topic. By allowing research participants to change the direction of interviews (pp. 59-61, 68-70) and by pursuing academic discourse into unexpected topics despite their apparent lack of immediate relevance, my conception of the project continually evolved[15]. The project became a deliberate interaction between my preconceptions and the unknown. In hermeneutic terms, this interaction is a necessary condition for new understanding to take place, and is described as *play* between preconceptions and the unknown (pp. 37-41). "People at play" in the title of this thesis includes the participants as performers or audience members and also as co-researchers. A hermeneutic understanding of play was invaluable in creating synergy between my music practice and the research practice.

Any contribution this thesis might make to knowledge will vary from reader to reader and arise through their interactions with the text. The research data comes from interviews with a small group of participants at three concerts, and the thesis is a local and situated account of interactions in that specific context. However, other practitioners might find value in the accounts of the musicians' motivations that pervade Chapter Five. Brinner (1995) observes that any study of musical interaction should attempt to discover *interactive motivations* because "musical interaction is not a mechanical system but a way of human being" (Brinner, 1995, p. 202). In his analytical framework *interactive motivation* encompasses the goals, rewards, pitfalls, ethics and aesthetics of interaction. Although I did not initially aim to explore these areas, the diverse musical interactions encountered during this project cannot be understood by only examining *how* people play and *what* they play, but by appreciating their motivations to *play*. I can't say what you should find significant in this dissertation, but one thing I have gained from doing this project is the knowledge that everyone's experience is different. That knowledge has influenced my practice of music. It has helped me to be less concerned with 'expert' opinions on musical works and musical styles, and more with creating a performance environment that allows each musician and audience member to enjoy their experience.

[15] Evidence of the changes in my conception of the research can be found at Appendix Four – in the critical notes that were written at six-monthly intervals during the project's first and second years.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Transcription conventions used in this essay

..	Two periods indicate a short stretch of silence in the conversation.
…	Three periods indicate that words originally spoken have been omitted from the transcript.
/	A forward slash indicates that the interviewee has started a new thought mid sentence.
(laughs)	Lower case words in parentheses indicate an action or sound made by the interviewee.
[Yes]	Upper case words in brackets are words spoken by the interviewer.
[bass]	Lower case words in brackets are the author's clarifications. In some cases the clarification involves a person's name [Henry], which necessitates an upper case letter.
"Oh, OK."	Quotation marks indicate that the interviewee's intonation suggested that they were quoting some speech.
your	Words in italics indicate emphasis by the speaker.
I	I've included some transcribed conversations between a participant and me. I am "I".
I liked Ben's tunes	Where a quote includes the name of another participant I have changed the real name to the pseudonym without any indication.

Appendix Two: Music charts

Doxy

Prepare To Be

Appendix Three: Audio disc

Track One **No Moon At All** comp. Mann/Evans, 1947 (3rd concert)

This tune started our final concert. We had never played this tune together before. I enjoyed playing this tune, but the drummer felt he wasn't having a good day. You can hear him playing in what he calls "survival mode", where he plays "some nice grooves" and just "takes care of business" (Henry, 3). Notice how clearly he delineates each eight bar section of this thirty-two bar tune.

Track Two **Paper Plains** (3rd concert)

This was the second tune of our final concert, another tune that we had not played together before. Tim enjoyed this one because it "got a good groove going" (Tim, 3). It finished with an extended drum solo that "had this journey to it … sort of like telling a story" (Tim, 3).

Track Three **Prepare To Be** (3rd concert)

This performance is discussed in the dissertation (pp. 77-79, 94-97). Perhaps you can hear the growing impact of the drum's silence as the piano and bass gradually build in intensity.

> It just sounded so different to what I thought it would. (Ben, 3)

Track Four **Doxy** (comp. Rollins, 1954) (2nd concert)

This performance is also discussed in the dissertation (pp. 81-84, 98-101). This 'jazz standard' tune is often used by the band as a vehicle for exploring non-traditional ways of playing. You can hear the drummer's unusual accompaniment at the start of the tune and his commitment to maintaining that approach throughout the piano solo.

> Let's face it, most vehicles you're not allowed to drive like that. (Henry, 2)

> Nothing in it had ever happened before. It was completely without ties. Probably how I would most like to be able to play every song at every gig. (Ben, 2)

Track Five **My Romance** (comp. Rodgers/Hart, 1935) (2nd concert)

This is a popular tune from 1930 that has become a favourite of many jazz artists. I wanted to include this tune from the second concert because both the pianist and drummer enjoyed it. This performance opened that concert in a gentle and fairly conservative way.

> I thought that would be a nice song to start. Because I was sitting with [ ] and thinking she's my romance. As simple as that. (Ben, 2)

Track Six **The Way You Look Tonight** (comp. Kern/Fields, 1936) (1st concert)

The bass and drums adopted a fairly traditional swing style throughout this tune, which allowed the pianist to explore some interesting rhythmic ideas.

> I had all this freedom to do anything bizarre. I was interacting with your non-interaction. But it was an interaction. I was able to play what I played because I realised that you had decided to lay down the pulse. (Ben, 1)

Track Seven **Doxy** (comp. Rollins, 1954) (1st concert)

This performance was the last tune in the first set of the first concert. It made a big impact on the audience, as it was their first experience of the band *playing* this way. They liked the way we "played with the time and played with the phrasing" (Yvette, 1), "just dragging it all over the place and changing it completely" (Zane, 1).

> You were like sitting on the edge of your seat going "what are they going to do with it?" (Yvette, 1)

Appendix Four: Critical notes

The following three sets of critical notes accompanied each concert. Each was prepared in the month preceding the concert, and they have been included here, unedited[16], as a record of the evolution of the project.

In the first notes I am wrestling with what I perceive as a conflict between the formal constraints of the academy and the casual atmosphere I want to create for an interactive performance. I have read my first texts on qualitative research methods and texts about cognitive scientific research into music. Those areas are discussed in the notes, so the participants can get some ideas about my hopes for the project.

By the time I came to write the second notes I was much clearer about the purpose of the concerts, and more confident of my place in the academy. The notes document my growing awareness of the importance of recognising and reconciling the different aims I have for the concerts, but they show that I am still largely concerned with interactions between the musicians. At this point in time I am also preoccupied with making an order out of the wealth of interview material, and Brinner's (1995) theoretical model seemed the best way to organise that material. The bulk of these notes are organised around his terminology.

The third notes have a very different focus. I had spent the previous six months reading about research methodologies, veering inexorably closer to postmodernist texts. I discuss the impact of words such as 'recital' and 'accompanist', and reflect on power relationships in the interview situation. It is the first set of notes that I called 'concert notes', abandoning the word 'recital' as inappropriate and misleading for the performance. Most of the essay is about research rather than music, and it is at this point in the project that I started to make correlations between playing music and doing research. In these notes I also try to encourage and validate the research participants by reflecting on our previous conversations and including at least one quote from each person. At this point in time I have not read Gadamer's analysis of play that would provide a central theme for the project.

The feedback sheet was sent to all the participants prior to the second concert. I included a range of views they expressed, without commentary or judgement. In this way I hoped to include them more in the research process and help them feel more like collaborators.

[16] The names of the participants have been removed to maintain their anonymity. The bibliographies have been renamed to avoid confusion for readers of this thesis.

First Concert

Gary Holgate 306268884 PhD

Critical Notes for Recital – Oct 18th 2010

Musicians

- piano
- drums

Gary Holgate - bass

Repertoire List (*in alphabetical order)*

A Gift
About Michael
Away With You
Body and Soul – (comp. Johnny Green)
Doxy – (comp. Sonny Rollins)
Galileo
Goodbye
If I Should Lose You – (comp. Ralph Rainger)
I'll Be Seeing You
It's Who, You Know
Let Me Off
Looking Up
My Liege
Scattered Leaves – (comp. Marc Copeland)
Somalia
Something Good – (comp. Richard Rogers)
The Way You Look Tonight – (comp. Jerome Kern)
The Shadow Of Your Smile – (comp. Johnny Mandel)
Too Young To Go Steady – (comp. Jimmy McHugh)
When I See You
When Phytogen Met Nycteris

The musicians for today's recital performed regularly throughout 2004 as the [name omitted] Trio. Our repertoire was a mixture of original compositions and jazz standards, and our regular venue was a small club in King's Cross called "Bar Me". The atmosphere was relaxed and informal, affording us a wonderful opportunity to work through new tunes and find fresh ways to explore old ones. *Ben* wrote the tunes and was responsible for booking the band, but through his playing, he encouraged us to be equally responsible for the music that we produced. His egalitarian attitude taught me much about playing music, and this perspective has underpinned the preparation for today's recital.

The repertoire for today includes a number of 'standards' of which "Body and Soul", written by Johnny Green in 1930, is the oldest and perhaps most widely known. It is a popular tune for jazz musicians to improvise on and there are hundreds of different recordings available. "Doxy", by Sonny Rollins, is a well-known jazz tune first recorded in 1954. "The Way You Look Tonight" won Jerome Kern a Grammy award for best original song in 1936, and "The Shadow of Your Smile", by Johnny Mandel, won the award in 1965. "Something Good", by Richard Rogers is from Rogers and Hammerstein's 1959 musical *The Sound of Music* and will evoke, in many people, memories of Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer singing the song in the 1965 movie.

Balancing these well known 'standards' in the program are *Ben's* compositions, which will be unfamiliar to many listeners. Some of his tunes, such as "When Phytogen Met Nycteris", "Away With You", "Looking Up", and "I'll Be Seeing You", have the common 'AABA' song structure that helps make them readily accessible to most listeners. Like "Body and Soul", "Doxy" and "The Way You Look Tonight", these tunes are structured with two similar 'A' sections followed by a bridge (usually in another key) and concluding with a final variation of the 'A' section. In "Doxy" each section is four bars long. In "Body and Soul", "I'll Be Seeing You" and "When Phytogen Met Nycteris", they are eight bars long. In "Away With You" and "The Way You Look Tonight", each section is sixteen bars long, and in "Looking Up" the 'A' sections are sixteen bars long with an eight bar 'B' section. The strength of the simple 'AABA' structure has made songs of this type popular with jazz musicians since the 1930s, as they provide a familiar base from which to launch improvisational explorations (Coker, 1964).

In contrast to these tunes, others by *Ben*, such as "A Gift" and "Somalia", have more complex forms where the solo sections are different from the melody statements. "A Gift" is a majestic piece which in performance frequently runs over twelve minutes. The melody is in

two distinct sections and is followed by two new sections for bass and piano solos. Similarly, "Somalia" has a harmonic structure for the solos that is different from that of the melody statement. In contrast to these epic works is "When I See You", which is a through-composed vignette for piano and bass; no solos, just a simple and complete musical statement. Some of the tunes to be performed tonight seem like old friends to the band members, having been performed dozens of times, while others are less familiar. "About Michael" and "My Liege" will be played for the first time. Variety and contrast are features of the repertoire list, but all the tunes chosen for this recital share the characteristic of being evocative pieces with lyrical melodies.

It is customary for these recitals to have a set list with each tune in order.[17] I have asked that today's performance be more casual and flexible. In this way I hope to be able to establish an environment where each of the participating musicians (and to a certain extent each member of the audience as well) can contribute spontaneously to the creation of the music to the greatest level possible over the course of the evening. This egalitarian approach is in some ways at odds with the fact that the recital is being used to assess the progress of my studies at the conservatorium. In acknowledgement of this recital's place in my academic pursuits I will begin the concert with a solo improvisation on "If I Should Lose You". Written in 1936 by Ralph Rainger, this song has been recorded by dozens of jazz artists. (I particularly enjoy Dave MacRae's version on *...Some History...* and Kurt Rosenwinkel's performance on *Deep Song.)* I have been reflecting on the nature of bass lines and the differences between an accompanying bass line and a solo, so the opening tune for today's recital will be a musical expression of these thoughts, and also a concession to my position of bandleader-for-the-day. After this opening item the order of tunes to be performed will be decided spontaneously by any of the band members according to whim, emotional need, or ideally, by a perception of what the recital as a whole *needs* at that point.

This recital is an integral part of my Ph.D. research that is examining interactions in improvised music, and more specifically, people's experience of these interactions. I have noticed that people experience musical events differently to each other. One person may be moved to tears by the beauty of a tune while another finds it contrived and shallow. One might

[17] In fact, the process of registering on-line for these recitals requires one to list the items to be played, not only in order, but with a timing for each tune.

be disappointed that the band is having an off night, while another is absorbed in the depth of their subtle interplay. One person might view the pianist as leading the band while another feels that the music is all revolving around the shifting energy of the drummer. I've done many gigs where my perception of the quality of the band's performance is totally different from the perception of another band member. I don't believe any of these perceptions or necessarily right or wrong. Rather than asserting that the 'truth' or reality of the music can be found by consulting the wisest and most experienced listener, or conversely that it can be found through musicological analysis of its recording, I take the non-dualistic stance that it lies in the internal relationship between each person and the music. Each individual's *experience* of the music is the subject of my research, and each step in the preparation of the recital has proceeded from this fact.

It is impossible for any single person to comprehend the totality of an event involving multiple musicians and audience members, so any musical performance is experienced differently by each participant as different aspects of the whole are discerned and focused on (Marton, 1997). Each person's experience of the concert is consequently a partial experience of that event. By discovering the range of people's experiences of the music and then describing and structuring the variation in these experiences I hope to gain a fuller understanding of the complex interactions that comprise a collective musical improvisation. As an example of how describing and structuring different people's experiences might be of value, imagine a study of novice musicians getting a band started to play a tune. One novice might understanding the task of bringing in a band to be to count "1, 2... 3" to denote a starting time but not a tempo - as in "ready, set.... go." Another might click their fingers at a steady tempo until the band members decide to start playing. A more comprehensive way of understanding the task that encompasses both of these understandings would be to denote a starting time and a tempo by counting in the band at a steady tempo. Yet another way of understanding might include both tempo and starting point, and also express an energy level or type of rhythmic feel in the verbal articulation of the counting-in words.[18]

Three recitals will be presented during the course of the research, and after each performance interviews will be conducted to gather information from each performer about their experience of the recital. The data from these interviews, with supporting data from

[18] One of my first experiences of Don Burrows (former Head of Jazz Studies at the Conservatorium) was counting in the student big band in a way that was exciting to hear. We knew from his five seconds of count-in the exact tempo, feel, and dynamic level that was required for that tune.

interviews with volunteer audience participants, will form the basis for the eventual dissertation. This qualitative approach to music research (finding out about music by interviewing musicians) has become more prevalent since the 1990s. Two of the most influential books on jazz from that time, *Thinking in Jazz* (Berliner, 1994) and *Saying Something* (Monson, 1996), are the results of qualitative research. My preliminary work for the research project has involved wide reading: of ethnographic studies including Berliner's and Monson's; in creativity research (Sawyer, 1999, 2000, 2006; Cropley, 2008); in qualitative research design (Creswell, 2009; Kvåle, 1996); and in phenomenography (Marton, 1981, 1997, 2005; Bowden, 2000). Each of these subject areas has had an impact on the preparations for the recital and I will discuss each area, beginning with creativity research.

Creativity needs constraints. According to one creative dance teacher's experience, "if you tell children that they can dance "freely", in whatever way they like, they typically produce mostly stereotypical movements. But tell them that they must keep one foot placed within a circle drawn on the floor, and they are more likely to produce very creative dance movements" (Dahlin, 2007, p. 340). Cognitive psychologists study the mental processes involved in creative acts, and discuss the *frames* (Nettl, 1998), *points of departure* (Sloboda, 1985), or *referents* (Pressing, 2005) that improvisers use to guide and aid their music production. The referents or frames that most jazz musicians use are song forms, harmonic and melodic structures that form the basis for the improvisations. By using these forms, the improviser is freed from the composer's decisions concerning structure and direction (Sloboda, 1985, p. 139). This has the effect of freeing up cognitive resources for "interplayer interaction, increasing the chances of reaching a higher artistic level" (Pressing, 1984, p. 52). The process of choosing repertoire for the recital consequently needed to incorporate an awareness of the range of freedoms and restraints inherent in each song form.

Ben's compositions have many constraints built into them. "A Gift", for example has the order of solos incorporated into the chart; and the energy levels of each solo, while not explicitly stated, are certainly implied by their positions in the overall structure. Each of his tunes has specific harmonic sequences to be followed during the solos, and for most of them there is an expectation that the tempo established during the melody statement will be maintained during the solo. Having these constraints, as Pressing (1984) found, grants a secure base for the musicians and allows for focus on creative collective improvisations.

Many of the constraints that an improvising musician feels during performance are culturally based, which is why ethnomusicological studies of jazz have become so influential. These social or cultural constraints are most apparent when playing the 'standards'. There is no written law stating that tempos should stay fairly steady, or that the bass should outline the harmonic sequence and play in tune. However, there is such a deep-seated expectation that these things will happen that if they don't there is a strong feeling of wrongness. On rare occasions performing with this trio I have somehow found myself transgressing these unwritten laws. Those occasions have been memorable to me, and have arisen from a feeling that the music at that point *needed* me to play out of time, or out of tune, or the 'wrong' notes. I wouldn't say that these events have become a feature of the band and that we will be constantly looking for opportunities to flout jazz conventions, merely that cultural constraints are a part of the larger body of musical constraints built into the performance of each piece. I would like to note here that in discovering people's experience of the music I am not seeking a consensus about what it means to 'be a jazz musician' as ethnomusicologists do, but rather to explore the diversity and breadth of people's experience in improvising to create music together.

There can be tension between creativity and expertise (Cropley, 2008, p. 109). Consequently, there is often less improvisation on stage than one might imagine. "The musician is often 'playing it safe' by using improvisatory devices which have worked well in other circumstances, so as to create the best effects he knows how" (Sloboda, 1985, p. 149). Taking risks is an important element of many improvised performances (Nettl, 1998, p. 16), and it is essential to my research that in this recital the musicians are free to explore areas that aren't safe or familiar. If they feel free to do this the resulting music is more likely to be interactive and co-operative. The band will not be over-rehearsed, and it will be made explicit to the musicians that we are interested in the activity of creating music rather than in a polished final product. The principal task in the preparation of the recitals is to engage each person present as fully as possible with the interactivity, in order to eventually gain the richest interview data. The focus is on the *process* of interacting to create music rather than on the *product* of the interaction, so consequently my preparation has been focused on creating an environment where creative interactivity is enhanced. The venue itself has an effect on the performance and so my thanks go to Craig Scott for allowing us to perform in the more relaxed atmosphere of the Music Cafe.

Cognitive scientists assume that group behaviour can be best understood through study of the individuals in that group, and that the individual's creative processes can be best understood by breaking down higher level cognitive functions into smaller components. Creativity is therefore a property of human brains, and can be modelled and simulated with computer programs (Borgo, 2005; Pachet, 2003). This approach doesn't get very far in answering my research questions because analytical models that focus on individual components are unable to apprehend the phenomenon of group creativity, which depends on collaboration (Sawyer, 2006). Sawyer has written extensively on 'collaborative emergence', in which all members contribute interactively to the performance so the creativity cannot be associated with just one person. "Recent studies of emergence by complexity scholars suggest that emergent phenomena are unpredictable, contingent and hard to explain in terms of the group's components" (Sawyer, 2006, p. 148). He writes that there is an instinctive tendency to try to attribute a group's creativity to an individual: the leader, soloist or organiser.

> Resnick used the example of the flock of geese, migrating south in a 'V' shape. When you see a V-shaped flock of birds, you probably assume that the bird in front is leading, and that the other birds are following. In fact, this isn't the case -- most bird flocks don't have leaders at all. Rather, the orderly 'V' shape that crosses the sky emerges from all of the birds acting together, each responding only to the ones nearby. Like group creative performances, the flock is organized without an organizer. (Sawyer, 2006, p. 156)

It has been a liberating process for me to understand that I don't need to be the leader all the time. In fact it is essential that in the course of the performance I *not* be stuck in the role of leader, to enable the other band members to be more than just followers. By being a *collaborator* or co-creator I encourage each member of the group to also co-create the music, thereby increasing the range of interactions between us, and enhancing the opportunities for an emergent group performance.[19] Reflection on the broader issue of identities has proved helpful. "Social constructionist theories suggest that people have many identities, each of which is created in interaction with other people, rather than having a single, core identity. These identities can be contradictory …" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 10). In the course of this research project I will be adopting different identities – such as researcher, interviewer, data

[19] The collaborative theme extends beyond the performance into the interview phase of the research project. Rather than representing of the interviewer/researcher as a miner searching for nuggets of truth, Kvåle adopts a postmodern perspective in which the interview is a conversation during which the data is "coauthored and coproduced by interviewer and interviewee" (Kvåle, 1996, p. 159).

analyst and interpreter, bandleader, accompanist, teacher and student. Adopted unconsciously at the wrong time, any one of these can be counterproductive.

There are many reasons why [*name omitted*] and [*name omitted*] are ideal musical partners for this project. We have played together enough to have established a rapport but not enough to have settled into predictable improvising patterns or routines. Our professional lives rarely intersect, so we have a wealth of diverse musical perspectives to draw from. I am aware that both of them see and hear the world differently to me, and that we each experience the challenges of negotiating the journey through a piece of music differently. I would like to thank them for agreeing to participate in my research project, and look forward to sharing the journey with them.

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Second Concert

Gary Holgate SID 306268884 PhD

Critical Notes for Recital - 9 May 2011

Musicians

- piano
- drums

Gary Holgate - bass

This recital is the second of three recitals by the [*name omitted*] Trio that form part of my research project. Each of the recitals is followed by a round of interviews with the band members and with audience participants. The topic of the project is "interactions in improvised music" and the aim of the interviews is to explore the participants' conceptions and experiences of the topic with respect to the recital. The first recital was held on 18 Oct 2010, and the interviews were conducted in the following week. The participants shared the common experience of being at the same recital, but their views on the recital and on the topic of interactions were all different. As a result of our conversations my own conception of the topic has changed, which has affected the preparations for this recital.

The most dramatic changes have resulted from a reappraisal of my goals and aims for this recital. Many of the participants commented on the nervousness of the band during the first few tunes of the first recital, and observed that interaction between musicians is more difficult when they are nervous. The band has played together for many years and nervousness is not usual in our performances. I have realised that the tension of conflicting goals and aims was responsible for my feelings of nervousness. As undergraduate and even postgraduate music students we are accustomed to presenting recitals that demonstrate our technical skills and our ability to lead a band through a prepared set of music. As a member of the trio I usually avoid displaying virtuosity on the bass, and strive to allow the unfolding music to lead me into what to play next. The first recital was prepared with the aim of meeting all these goals:

exhibiting my ability to lead a band and play the bass proficiently, and also; to interact spontaneously with the other musicians to create some beautiful music.

To satisfy all these different goals the first recital began with a solo bass performance, followed by a programme of trio music in which we selected tunes spontaneously from a prepared list. The solo bass tune satisfied my need to display some technical proficiency to a panel of experts. The set list of tunes gave me something to write about in the required analytical notes. The flexibility of not proscribing the tune order in advance was (as I wrote in the analytical notes for that recital) an attempt

> to establish an environment where each of the participating musicians (and to a certain extent each member of the audience as well) can contribute spontaneously to the creation of the music to the greatest level possible over the course of the evening.

Of course, attempting to satisfy all of these conflicting aims created tension, which resulted in nervousness, which affected the performance. Becoming aware of these conflicts (through the interview process and subsequent reflection) has provided me with the opportunity to consciously discard those aims that are incompatible with the main objective: to interact in the moment with the other band members to create some beautiful music.

To meet this objective as fully as possible it is necessary to understand the ways and means by which musicians, and in particular the ones in this band, interact. In other words, having established *why* we interact, explore *how, when, where* and with *whom* we interact. Interactions can be analysed from several different perspectives. Brinner proposes four constellations of concepts through which interactions can be explored (Brinner, 1995, p. 169). These are not discrete categories to enable dissection of the topic into separate parts, but rather overlapping perspectives from which to examine 'interactions'. *Interactive network* looks at the roles assumed by performers and the relationships or links between them. *Interactive system* consists of the "means by which the performers communicate, coordinate and orient themselves" (p. 183). The interactive system includes the conventions that musicians entrenched in one specific musical culture may take for granted. *Interactive sound structure* is his third constellation, which deals with "constraints and possibilities inherent in the ways that sounds are put together" (p. 169). Finally, *interactive motivation* looks at the 'why' of musical interaction, the goals, rewards and pitfalls, or the ethics and aesthetics of interaction.

The interactive network in the trio is flexible and constantly adapting. Roles change many times within each tune and from night to night, depending on the needs of the music and the individual performers. From the first notes, the musicians respond to, and interact with, the sounds they each produce. The final product, the set of music, is not preconceived but emerges bit by bit through the improvised interactions of the musicians. Sawyer (1999, 2000) uses the term "collaborative emergence" to describe this process in improvised music and improvised theatre groups. Over the last ten years we have developed a level of trust in each other that enables risk-taking and pliancy in our musical interactions. One of the stable points around which such flexibility revolves is the band leading of the pianist. By band leading I am mainly referring to choosing and starting the next tune in the set. As composer of many of the tunes it makes sense for "Ben" to do this.[20] In attempting to share the job of bandleader with the pianist, I can destabilize the interactive network, limiting the scope of possible interactions. So for practical reasons, and in keeping with our goals, the recital will be presented with *Ben* as leader of the group. Perhaps "Gary Holgate presents the [*name deleted*] Trio" is closer to reality than "Gary Holgate's recital".

The value of a flexible interactive network in improvised music has been long recognised (Bastien, 1988) and the improvisatory organisation of a jazz band has been explored as a model for organisational studies (Hatch, 1999; Weick, 1998; Zack, 2000), organisational learning (Barrett, 1998), and product innovation (Kamoche, 2001). Barrett (1998) describes the traits that organisations need to develop in order to survive in the twenty-first century.

> [W]e need a model of a group of diverse specialists living in a chaotic, turbulent environment; making fast, irreversible decisions; highly interdependent on one another to interpret equivocal information; dedicated to innovation and the creation of novelty. (p. 605)

An improvisation by a jazz band, he suggests, provides such a model. Each musical utterance by each musician is "equivocal information". Decisions about what to be played next must be made quickly and once something is played it can't be taken back (Barrett's "irreversible decisions"). The physical set-up of the trio facilitates clear communication between the members, vital in the chaotic environment of a collaborative improvisation.

[20] His method of choosing the next tune is, in itself, an interactive process. Sometimes a sound pops into his head, prompted by what we've just played. Sometimes this unconscious process is moderated by conscious consideration of what sort of sounds he perceives that the set of music needs at that point.

For the previous recital the piano was situated stage left with the lid lifted up to project the sound into the audience. The pianist was consequently angled slightly away from the audience, looking across the piano to centre stage. The drums were stage left, near the front and facing across the stage towards the pianist. The bassist was positioned towards the rear of the stage with clear lines to sight to both other musicians, and not obstructing their view of each other. This is the most common way for piano trios to set up, and it is not just a tradition or to look good for the audience, but to aid interaction between band members. Where musicians are not positioned close to each other with clear lines of sight between them, there are often power issues involved (Brinner, 1995, p. 184). A rock or pop bandleader might, for example, situate his musicians straight across a stage and place himself out the front where they can see him, but not each other, easily. In this way the band's attention is all on him for direction, and the audience's too. Usually, larger ensembles such as orchestras or stage bands have one clear leader and the musicians are arranged in rows facing this person. All cues in the music and direction for changes come from this person. The stage set-up of the trio reflects its more democratic nature, with leadership shifts from moment to moment.

The trio has been working together for around ten years, so our directional interaction (cues and signals to change the direction of the music) is clear and understated. It may seem self-evident, but it is worth noting that working together over time increases the clarity and subtlety of interactions within a band. Eventually, communication can become almost subconscious and things seem to happen by happy accident. Sometimes this 'serendipity' is actually the result of correct interpretation of subtle bodily cues caught in peripheral vision. A torso moving down can indicate hands pressing onto piano keys for a final chord. An intake of breath or lift of the shoulders can precede a hit on the drums. A slightly lifting head can indicate a shift of focus from inward to outward, from one's own solo to the next. These cues are not available to blind musicians, or to people with their eyes closed. I have worked with blind pianists and have been surprised at the number of unconscious bodily cues I was making (which they couldn't respond to because they couldn't see them) and the number of times I was waiting for visual cues from them.[21] Many musicians close their eyes during parts of their own solos. If they were to do that at critical times such as the beginning and ending of tunes and solos it would become apparent how prevalent these visual signals are. It is therefore vital that bands set up on stage so that they can not only hear each other but also see each other.

[21] In this situation one must enter solely into the world of sounds and find ways of cueing changes in the music with sounds from your instrument.

Not all interaction between band members is directional. Many of the participants observed how non-purposive communication between band members transformed the atmosphere of the performance. They noticed band members laughing at each other's musical statements or interjecting comments through their instruments. "'Playing with musicians is like a conversation,' Chuck Israels observes. 'If when I speak, you say, 'Yes' or you look at me and blink your eyes or interject some comment of your own, that keeps me going'" (Berliner, 1994, p. 354).

Interactions between the band and audience were discussed in the interviews following the last recital. As well as commenting on nervousness some people said that the ambiguity of leadership roles weakened the presentation of the band's music. This issue has been addressed in the preparation of this recital by clarification of aims and goals as discussed above. All participants expressed their enjoyment of the ambience of the Music Café. Three main reasons were give: the atmosphere is less formal which favours improvisation and spontaneity; the audience can be physically closer to the band which allows them to engage with, and feel a part of, the music; the acoustic environment is more favourable to the drum kit than the recital halls. The drummer participants explained that in performances in the recital halls, the physical constraints of playing the drum kit quietly enough to blend with the other instruments made it more difficult to interact freely with the music. While this was still an issue in the café, the acoustic environment there made their job a little easier.

The relationship between improvising musicians and their audience is problematic. Their sensitivity to their environment puts them in a position to be directly influenced by the audience (Bailey, 1992, p. 44). A desire to put on a 'professional' performance can lead to safer and less creative improvisations. A musician dependant on audience approval can become little by little an actor who repeats his tricks when the audience reacts favourably (ibid., p. 44). Many musicians are ambivalent about their relationship to an audience, "stating that the performance is more creative when the musician is not influenced by the audience" (Sawyer, 1992, p. 256). This viewpoint was echoed in the interviews after the last recital, with one person stating that

> [some people] end up doing the lowest form of anything they can do because they want to appeal to the lowest common denominator in the room, and I don't think that's a way to make art. That's how no art gets made.

Another participant said that he doesn't think about the audience when he's playing, just about the music. "I figure if the music is good, they'll be happy." Despite this ambivalence, most improvising musicians feel that interactions with the audience are a vital part of the performance (Sawyer, 1992, p. 256). Ronnie Scott [British saxophonist and club owner] said in interview, "There must be someone there, because I can't think that it means very much if you're playing to nobody" (Bailey, 1992, p. 45). For John Coltrane, listening to music is an act of participation in the music. An audience member who is moved by the music is "like having another member in the group" (Kofsky, 1973, p. 861). The equivocal attitude musicians have toward their audience is an area I will be exploring more in the next round of interviews.

As well as looking at the *interactive network* and its implications for the organisational and physical set-up of the band, it is useful to consider interactions from the viewpoint of the *interactive system,* the means by which we negotiate the journey through each tune and the conventions under which we operate. Like the majority of jazz groups, this band plays tunes and improvises over the harmonic structures of those tunes.[22] Unfortunately, using the word 'jazz' can invite debate about what jazz is, and whether we're even playing jazz. Is jazz an "indigenous American music and art form … a uniquely American musical synthesis and culture through the African-American experience"[23], or something broader based on a perception of jazz's musical characteristics? Wherever possible in this essay, I use the term 'improvised music', which is more culturally neutral.

The usefulness of Brinner's *interactive system* as a viewpoint from which to study jazz can be recognised in the wealth of sociological and ethnomusicological studies into the music during the last two decades. Works by Berliner (1994), Jackson (1998), Monson (1991, 1996), Murphy (1990), and Wilson (2005), emphasise that the performance of jazz is dependent on shared practices and meanings, which are "inseparable from social and cultural contexts" (Wilson, 2005, p. 395). They recognise that not only do musicians communicate through a system of shared knowledge and expectations, but that an important creative impulse comes from the tension between innovation and tradition, which can only be understood if the

[22] Other less common approaches to music making, which may or may not be labelled 'jazz', include: reproducing pre-composed music; improvising over non-chordal structures (melodic motifs, graphic scores or verbal instructions) and; improvising without structures.

[23] From the United States *Congressional Record - House,* 23 September 1987. Quoted in Walser, 2002, p.302. Also reproduced in Berliner (1994), *Appendix A: House Congressional Resolution 57* (p. 759).

tradition is understood. As Australians in 2011 our cultural context is different from that of a jazz musician in New York in the twentieth century. There is a vast range of different shared expectations across groups currently performing in Sydney. In some bands, shared knowledge that is vital to their performances may include not only the history and conventions of American jazz, but of Korean music, Indian raga, contemporary Scandinavian improvised music, or hip-hop.

Sometimes when a band is not working coherently together it is due to the musicians applying differing conventions to the performance. It can be challenging in this multicultural world to discover and articulate the different conventions that have been adopted. One convention, which is practically inviolable is that tempo, once established, should remain steady. Only then can the music "swing" and achieve such fundamental things as "striking a groove" (Berliner, 1994, p. 349). Improvising musicians employ syncopation, polyrhythmic devices, harmonic retardation and anticipation, "sitting up" and "laying back" on the time, to create interest in their performances.[24] Without a steady pulse underpinning a tune, none of these devices make sense. It is deeply embedded in our musical culture, and is one of the first aspects of musicianship that a jazz student must deal with. In our performances the trio regularly plays a traditional jazz tune called "Doxy". At some point in our improvisation on this tune we explore shifts in tempo, slowing down gradually, speeding up, and playing out of time with each other.[25] Transgressing the convention of a steady tempo in this way has a powerful

[24] A whole modern branch of ethnomusicological research deals with the concept of "groove". Keil's theory of participatory discrepancies or PDs - that the *process* of creating the vital drive or "groove" is much more important than *structure* in music, and that measuring the discrepancies between players in their placement of notes in relation to the beat can bring light to this topic - caused heated debate in ethnomusicological circles. The articles below outline that debate.

Keil, C. & Prögler, J. A. (1995). [the Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report: Searching for Swing: Participatory Discrepancies in the Jazz Rhythm Section: Rhythm as Duration of Sounds In "Tumba Francesca"]: Rejoinders, *Ethnomusicology 39*(1), pp. 97-104.

Cowdery J. R. et al. (1995). [the Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report; Searching for Swing: Participatory Discrepancies in the Jazz Rhythm Section; Rhythm as Duration of Sounds In "Tumba Francesa"]: Responses, review of The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report; Searching for Swing: Participatory Discrepancies in the Jazz Rhythm Section; Rhythm as Duration of Sounds in "Tumba Francesa", *Ethnomusicology 39*(1), pp. 73-96.

[25] This practice of deliberately manipulating the tempo occurred spontaneously during one of our early performances of the tune, and we have performed it that way ever since. It is another example of interaction - of "The Ongoing Interplay between Collective Improvisation and Precomposition" (Berliner, 1994, p. 383), where "the spontaneous and arranged elements of jazz presentations continually cross-fertilize and revitalize one another".

effect on most audiences. During the interviews, the participants commented more on “Doxy” than on any other tune. “Doxy! I loved it! It was awesome. It was really good. I really liked it”. “It was really cool. It was probably the best I’ve ever heard it”. “You were like sitting on the edge of your seat going ‘what are they going to do with it?’” The interplay between innovation and tradition, between convention and breaking convention, is another topic I am keen to explore as the research progresses.

During our interviews, participants said that a motivation for playing music is the feeling of connectedness between band members that can occur during a good performance. Berliner’s (1994) book on improvisation has a section titled “Ascending to the Music’s Heights” in which musicians describe their best musical experiences. They inevitably describe collaborative moments, “everyone’s locked in there together” (p. 388), “the total communication” (p. 389), a “heightened state of empathy” (p. 390), rather than individual achievements. The preparations for this recital have been focused providing an environment and a framework that provides the best chance for a truly collaborative performance to emerge.

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Third Concert

Gary Holgate SID 306268884 PhD

Critical notes for concert – 24 Oct 2011 6pm - 7.45pm

Musicians

- piano
- drums

Gary Holgate - bass

These critical notes are for the last of three performances that are the basis of my research project into interactions in improvised music. In the critical notes for first recital I introduced readers to the [*name omitted*] Trio and described the band members' egalitarian and interactive approach to playing music together. I described many of the tunes that we play and explored the constraints built into each tune that provide a framework for our improvisations. I explained that there was no set program because we prefer to allow the set to emerge spontaneously during performance. The notes also included a brief outline of the project's methodology, which involves interviews with band members and audience participants.

During the interviews that followed the first recital, a broad range of interactions were talked about, many that I hadn't previously considered. This resulted in a catalogue of types of interactions including: interactions between band members involving leading and following cues, and also purely conversational interactions; interactions between band and audience; interactions between band members and the unfolding music in the particular acoustic environment of the concert. Some participants noted their performances were informed, and sometimes hampered, by previous performances by themselves or by other artists, for example, influential recordings of a tune. Most of the interviews also focused on problems associated with performing for an audience: self-consciousness and nervousness; unfamiliarity with the

repertoire; conflicting goals such as displaying technical accomplishment or entertaining an audience versus providing space for the other musicians or expressing emotions.

In the critical notes for the second recital I wrote that the first round of interviews had influenced the preparation for that recital. I was able to clarify my own role as a collaborator in the band's performance, and wrote about how that affected preparations for the second recital. For the second recital I didn't attempt to restrict the bandleader's freedom by supplying a list of tunes from which he could chose. I didn't attempt to co-lead the group, or set aside a tune to display my technical skills as I had in the first recital. Afterwards, we all felt that the recital had been more enjoyable, and during the following interviews the participants reported that it was "freer", "more relaxed", "a lot better", and "more interactive".

I also wrote in those notes that the interconnection between improvising musicians and their audience is problematic and that many musicians are ambivalent about their relationship to an audience. This topic came up in many of the subsequent interviews. Put together, the various comments on 'playing for an audience' that were made during those interviews are interesting and informative. I have put some of them here. You may recognise your words.

Playing for an audience

"A jazz band can get together and have a play and it's not necessary that they have an audience."

"It's the same sort of feeling you get as sitting down and having a good conversation. It's great. It's still a good thing. But .. what I wanted to do was the three of us to .. move people."

"There's something about the performance aspect of what we do, I think. There's something about "dropping your strides in public". There's something about people coming along to look and listen to what you do that is a great thing .. you want people to be there."

"So people are always conscious, I think, if someone else walks into the room, someone they respect, and they think, oh no someone's listening who I respect. I'd better play better."

"I get quite self-conscious to a point where I start thinking more about "I'm being listened to", or "I'm being looked at", than I'm thinking about the music."

“I think the more relaxed the band is, the more relaxed you feel as an audience member.”

“At the end of the day, you go to see a live band because it’s live .. it's improvised and it's different every time, it's also because you're there to see them. Otherwise you could just, you know, whack an album on.”

“There were points .. where I wasn't even listening to the music. And I was just sort of watching all of your faces and trying to figure out why B was laughing, or why H was sort of like zoned out, or .. you all have your own little dances.”

“You want to sit back and watch the performance. And so, if .. it feels like the performers are taking over and they're presenting you with something, then it feels like you can relax a little bit as an audience member.”

Some people said that when the performers talk to the audience between tunes it can help them feel included and receptive to the music.

The audience provides feedback to the band with noise. “You can only tell by maybe the way people clap. You hear a bit of a 'yeah' or something like that.”

The audience also provides feedback to the band with silence. “There's a moment at the end of a song where the last sustained note stops, and there's this feeling .. People don't clap straight away because they want to feel that feeling.”

The music itself will dictate what sort of audience a band has. Audience members don’t necessarily want the experience offered by a band, and if they leave that’s ok. “I don't really think it questions my quality as a musician or anything. It's just a taste thing or what somebody wanted on a particular night.”

“Ideally what I wanted to do was .. to move people or to/ I sort of want them to experience a feeling that I'm feeling.”

“The human body reacts to sound, which seems like a fairly mysterious thing. Like, sound is one of those things that can bring on a lot of emotion.”

Performing Live

Band members interact more effectively if they are comfortable and familiar with each other, the tunes, and their physical/acoustic environment. Attention can then shift from the details of playing, to an overview. “Really just the sound. The overview is sort of like .. it's actually hearing the group.”

"A good live performance isn't necessarily one that doesn't have any so-called mistakes in it."

It can be an opportunity "for trying anything that we want to try and you know that you have the respect and support of the other musicians. Let's face it, most vehicles you're not allowed to drive like that!"

Generally, playing along with other people's rhythmic motifs is undesirable, however sometimes "the exception proves the rule .. it sounds good when you do. And it feels good too."

Leading

Leadership during a group performance shifts gently and can be described as shifting weights of influence, or invitations to go in a particular direction.

"It looks like different people take control at different times. And it's not [an] autocratic thing, it seems like a gentle control."

"If you were laying it down they were sort of free to come and go as they pleased .. it was a sympathetic sort of thing. Like, nobody was forcing, 'I'm going here', and making it really obvious 'so you should come with me'."

"I feel it like, .. the music might be weighted between the instruments. B might be playing more, so depending on how much you're playing with that, then .. I'm either able to pull back or I'm gonna go 'well, I want to say something'. If there's some sort of natural space for that idea you can play, then that could be a point of direction."

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At the start of this project my focus was mainly on interactions between the musicians. That focus expanded to look at interactions between the music and its audience. (About eighty per cent of the audience was research participants, so I could have said "between the music and the research participants"!) I've been encouraged by the relaxed nature of the last recital and by the range of views expressed in the interviews, to expand the focus even further this time to look at interactions between the *research* and the research participants, to step away from the music a little and look at the whole project. Two questions that are vital to any research project are: What is the value of this research project and; to whom is it of value? To

help address those questions it would be helpful for me to know what the experience of being involved in this project has been like for you.

It is fairly easy to imagine how new knowledge and understanding from research into education, nursing and sociology can have important benefits to the lives of (for example) students, teachers, patients and minority groups. It is more difficult to see how research by performing artists into their own performance can benefit society. However, there is growing recognition that creativity, the arts and aesthetic experience are becoming more important in society and in the economy (Bakhshi, Desai, & Freeman, 2009; Jaaniste & Haseman, 2009). Research which uses performance to research performance is "a relative newcomer to the academy" (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Nicholson, 2011, p. 252) and has recently "been the topic of fierce debate amongst practitioners and researchers in various areas of the creative and performing arts, from the visual arts to theatre and music" (Schippers & Flenady, 2010, p. 1). Artists bring creative approaches to research and new forms of knowledge, which can enrich our lives (Bennett, Wright, & Blom, 2009). There are also financial reasons why performance based research would be fiercely debated amongst artists, researchers, and the academic community. The amount of funding for this type of research is a minute fraction of the total research expenditure (Grueber & Studt, 2010; Roth & Buttsworth, 2010), but for a struggling painter, dancer or musician, research funding can be vitally important. Performance-based research also benefits academic institutions because each completed research project brings extra government funding and recognition to them (Hanrahan, 2005).

Musicians often see themselves as on a lifelong journey of learning and discovery, with reflection on their own performance an integral part of their professional life (Kurkela, 2004; Small, 1998, p. 2). Many would like the opportunity to have this 'research' recognised by the academic community (Paltridge, et al., 2011; Wright, Bennett, & Blom, 2010). A recent study of creative artists who teach in universities found that there is a lack of recognition for creative practice in the academy (Bennett, et al., 2009). The "government-directed research environment .. is unable to quantify [and therefore] recognise the value of creative research" (p. 1). The study states that "the lack of recognition for creative practice either condemns the artist academic to the lower ranks of the university system or condemns creative practice to the realms of an extra-time activity or, at worst, to inactivity" (p. 3). Some artist academics have mixed feelings about creative practice as research, expressing concern that analysing the creative process might put their creativity at risk (p. 9). Others believe that having to express their ideas in words may corrupt or spoil the art (Hanrahan, 2005), and that it "distorts the

communication of practice" (Haseman, 2006, p. 100). Haseman calls for a whole new research paradigm of "performative research". He argues that research findings expressed symbolically in artworks should be just as acceptable in the academy as research findings expressed through the symbols of words and numbers in a dissertation. Despite these mixed attitudes, research using creative practice is already expanding rapidly in universities, bringing new ways of thinking about and conducting research. Smith and Dean (2009) believe that creative practice as research can revolutionise academic research, and are committed to exploring the reverse, how "academic research can impact positively on creative practice (p. 1).

There are different types of performance-oriented research. The type that arouses the fiercest debate is called practice-*based* research (Candy, 2006). In this research, the artist or performer formulates a topic to do with their practice and studies it through their practice (Bennett, et al., 2009). The outcome of the research process is a design, artwork or performance. Words are used to describe the project but a complete understanding of the research is only possible through direct experience of the artwork (Candy, 2006, p. 1). For many scholars, this is unacceptable as research. A research project is about putting ideas into words. The act of writing shapes the ideas, and it also shapes the person who is doing the writing (Kamler & Thomson, 2007). To have the work recognised formally as a research project, an artist/performer needs to fully articulate his or her thoughts and demonstrate a "conscious, critical and creative relationship with the principles that determine his or her conception of the unknown that we call reality" (Kurkela, 2004, p. 59). This process of fully articulating ideas is not only beneficial for the scholar but for the academic community, as it encourages exchange between the different arts and disciplines (Hanrahan, 2005). Unlike practice-*based* research, in practice-*led* research the results of the project are fully described in words (Candy, 2006). It aims to advance knowledge about practice (for example, playing music) and uses practice as an integral part of its method. Practice-led research is often undertaken "without a clearly defined question or hypothesis" (Bennett, et al., 2009, p. 8). Participants who've had interviews with me will recognise this feature of my project!

Central to my practice-*led* research project are the three music performances. I could have researched 'interactions in improvised music' without involving my own performance. I could, for example, have interviewed a number of musicians about interactions in bands that they play in. However, playing in the trio is fun. It is an opportunity to explore the boundaries of making music rather than 'playing a style' or 'doing a job'. The opportunity to undertake a Ph.D. program that included putting on concerts with this band was irresistible, especially

when I finally understood that their purpose wasn't to assess my ability as a bass player. The performances stimulate my own thoughts about interaction, as they stimulate the thoughts of the other members of the band and the people in the audience. The research process has already impacted positively on my creative practice, as I described in the third paragraph of these notes. In some of the interviews after the first recital we discussed how the goals implicit in presenting "Gary Holgate's recital" appeared to conflict with the goals of a [*name deleted*] Trio performance. Bringing the conflicts to consciousness and articulating them helped to resolve them, resulting in what all the participants said was a more relaxed and enjoyable second recital.

The words we use to describe and think about our activities have a powerful effect on those activities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). I have used the word 'recital' because that is the term used in the Conservatorium Handbook. However, the word 'recital' is not an appropriate description for our performances, and carries negative implications. A recital is "a musical or other entertainment given usually by a single performer" or "the act of reciting" (Delbridge, 1982). It entails the idea of repeating something "from memory, especially formally or publicly" (Delbridge, 1982). A performer who has spent considerable effort in learning a challenging program of music to present to an audience is indeed putting on a recital. However, to describe our improvised performances in those terms is to trivialise the skills required to present a set of music that emerges spontaneously on the night, and to devalue our common goal to co-create music in a fresh way each time. An alternative word to 'recital' that is often used for a jazz performance is 'gig'. Gig is a colloquial term, which refers more to the employment aspect of a performance. It is a "booking for a jazzman or pop star" or "any job or occupation" (Delbridge, 1982). Calling the performance a 'gig' encourages a less formal attitude, which could help to relax the participants. However, for at least one person during the last interviews, it fails to capture the 'thoughtful' and 'serious' nature of the music that the trio presents. He suggested the word 'concert'. The Macquarie dictionary offers several definitions of the word. It is a "public performance, usually by two or more musicians". The word also means "agreement of two or more in a design or plan; combined action; accord or harmony" (Delbridge, 1982). These two quite separate definitions of the word encompass the performances of the trio in a more positive way than the words 'recital' or 'gig' do, so I'm calling our final performance a 'concert'.

Another defining word in this project is 'accompanist'. There was some awkwardness in my first recital notes as I juggled the words (and the concepts) 'accompanist' and 'collaborator'.

There was nervousness during the recital as I wrestled with trying to lead while not leading. Underlying this was an unarticulated feeling that less worth is attached to accompanying than to leading, particularly when the leader also wrote many of the tunes. Band leading and composing are skills that are more highly valued in our society than accompanying (Johnson, 2002; Sawyer, 2006, pp. 153-154). Public and academic recognition is usually given to composers and leaders. Accompanists in the classical world often feel undervalued (E. L. Rose, 1981). In 1989 the accompanying program at the University of Southern California was renamed "Keyboard Collaborative Arts" as it was felt that the name 'accompanying' has some negative baggage attached to it (Lee, 2009, p. 5). Despite any negative connotations the word might have, in this case I don't feel a need to find a replacement. An examination of the reasons behind any discomfort with the word is enough. This project is not directed towards finding out what is necessary to become a successful leader. The information gathered during the interviews in not being compiled into a manual of 'how to lead your own interactive band'. I am *not* trying to develop a hierarchy of understandings of music performance with bandleaders at the top of the pyramid, accompanists or collaborators beneath that, musician audience members next, and obviously audience members who are not full time musicians should be at the bottom of the heap. (In fact, I found the interviews with the non-musicians especially interesting last time.) Instead, the different experiences and insights of the participants have each been equally important in building a comprehensive picture of a live, interactive, improvised music concert.

As I described earlier, many performance oriented research projects are directed towards the production of a work of art. This project is focused quite differently, on the process or *doing* of music, rather than on producing a recording that documents our music-making activities. Christopher Small (1998) asserts that music is not an object, but an activity. This activity, which he calls "musicking", involves both performers and audience. He distinguishes composed music from improvised music by noting that

> composed music is the account of the journey of exploration, which might well have been momentous, but it is over before we learn of it, while improvisation is the journey itself, which is likely to make small discoveries rather than large, or even no discoveries at all, but in which everything that is found can be of interest or value. (Small, 1998, p. 176)

Another researcher who focuses on the *processes* of making music rather than on the *products* of doing musical work is Paul Brinner (1985, 1995). The focus of his research is music-making in Java, where music is a social activity more than a professional activity producing musical

works for public consumption. His books have helped me to a clearer understanding that there are many different ways to evaluate a music performance. There is more than simply judging a recording of the performance on its potential for release as an album, or whether it might be worth transcribing and analysing. It is possible to consider the ephemeral activity itself involving interactions in the moment of performance between all the people present, who each bring different skills and values to the performance and each have different perceptions of what is happening.

Weaving all of these different perspectives together to portray the richness of a group improvisation is a challenging task. It has become important for me to embrace the chaos and uncertainty that comes with this project. In a postmodern world, research into musical interaction cannot hope to find fixed meanings. Instead, there are "descriptive nuances, differences, and paradoxes" (Kvåle, 1996, p. 225). Kvåle points out that rather than the interviewer uncovering the true essence of the participants' experience, meanings are developed through the course of the interviews (p. 226). I bring preconceptions and intentions to each interview, some of which I am aware of and some of which I'm not.

> The same is true of the interviewee. The language out of which the questions are constructed is not bound or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time. (Scheurich, 1997, p. 62)

Scheurich suggests that from a postmodernist perspective, the meanings of questions and answers shift over time, and that changing the venue changes the outcome of the interview. Many of the interviews following the last concert were conducted outside in parks, on steps, in cafés. Some of those conversations seemed less guarded. Some participants interviewed me for periods, and some told stories that weren't directly related to the topic. From a positivistic perspective this would indicate poor interview technique, but from a postmodern perspective these events are inevitable and provide a rich source of information. I think many of you are realising that there are no 'right answers' to my questions, and that what seems true or important today won't necessarily be so tomorrow.

Context is vital to contemporary qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). Postmodern philosophers have shown that research is not an objective activity.

> [They] have asked questions that focus on: the role of the researcher in producing the research; the location of the research within more general social and political structures;

> the limited and historically located nature of all research; and the problematic, changing, and inconsistent nature of reality. (Ezzy, 2002, p. 19)

Rather than aiming for objectivity, researchers can focus on sensitivity, putting themselves into the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 32). They can examine the context of the project, from the individual to the group and community, to national and global relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 88-95). This project is located in a conservatorium that presents courses on the American tradition of jazz music. The texts and repertoire used in the courses are predominantly from that tradition. The American cultural hegemony permeates these performances and dominates the research literature on improvisation. It is not possible to conduct this project in a methodologically sensitive way without exploring the impact of these contextual issues of power and resistance. For example, early in their first interviews, both band members asserted their aim of <u>not</u> playing in a traditional American way.

For many researchers, research always involves political issues and issues of power (Ezzy, 2002, p. 33). For them, exploring issues of dominance and resistance is an effective way to bring about positive change in the world. Scheurich (1997, p. 71) discusses the dominance-resistance binary of discourse analysis in the context of the interview situation itself, showing how these characteristics permeate the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. He agrees that there are power asymmetries in the interaction, but that this doesn't completely describe the situation. He would add a third space labelled "chaos/freedom" (p. 72). His thoughts on interviews could apply equally to the interactions of making music. For this project, presenting all the information from the interviews in terms of different domains of dominance and resistance couldn't encompass the experiences of the participants. However, adding 'the chaos of expressive freedom' to the analytic framework offers exciting possibilities.

I don't know how this project will turn out, just as I don't know what will happen during our next concert or the interviews, however I am looking forward to finding out. Thank you all for your involvement.

This feedback essay and critical notes is in confidence for the project participants only.

Please do not disseminate it.

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Feedback from musical interactions project

Nov 2010 Gary Holgate

The participants described a broad range of interactions that are important in the creation of group improvised music. Their conceptions of the subject "musical interactions" also varied greatly. Some of their observations on different types of interactions are briefly described below.

Interactions with band members, which include:

leading and following with visual and musical cues;

responding (or not responding) to rhythmical ideas in a conversational way not intended to change the direction of the music, but which establish good feeling and energy in the band;

playing together over time, which increases the band's ability to interact freely.

Interactions with the audience

The audience responds favourably to musical risk-taking, and to music that is created in the moment (not a re-creation of a previous performance).

The audience responds favourably to visual evidence that the band members are enjoying themselves (foot-tapping, smiling, laughter).

"I don't think about the audience much when I'm playing, just about the music. I figure if the music is good, they'll be happy."

Some musicians "appeal to the lowest common denominator in the room, and I don't think that's a way to make art."

Interactions with the unfolding music

A different perspective to interacting with people (band members and audience) is that of interacting with sounds around you by creating sounds on your instrument – the sounds, not the people, are interacting. From this perspective the musician is using silence, space, rhythms, dynamics and timbres with an awareness of their effect on the music in the present moment in the particular acoustic environment of the room.

Interactions with previous performances

Musicians allow previous performances by other artists, and by themselves, to inform the present performance. However, some participants noted that pre-occupation with previous performances (for example, consciously trying to duplicate a previous rendition of a tune, or consciously trying *not* to sound like a previous performance) can stifle the current performance.

Interactions take place inside a system.

Each tune has its own structure. A high level of interaction is easier to achieve if that structure is familiar to all band members (so they're not reading a chart).

A group of tunes can be structured into a set. The unifying effect of this greater structure can be desirable, but most participants enjoyed the freedom of allowing the set to evolve spontaneously, in the moment.

> ".. where the statement is in the ordering of the songs and that sort of thing. I'm not particularly good at that. I tend to have an order and then get up and change it at the last second. I don't know why. I probably don't want to be boxed in."

The **goals and aesthetic values** of the musicians affect the way they interact.

A common goal expressed by the band members was to "make something beautiful", rather than to display technical virtuosity.

Other goals stated were: to express how one feels through the music; to create space for the other musicians; to 'flow' with the music in a non-intellectual way.

The ability to interact optimally is affected by your mind, which is affected by your life experiences prior to the performance. It is also compromised when goals and purposes appear to conflict. For example, a goal of displaying technical proficiency to a panel of examiners may conflict with goals of expressing beauty through the music or of providing space for the other musicians. Attempts to 'entertain' a disinterested crowd may also conflict with these goals.

This summary sheet is in confidence for the project participants only. Please do not disseminate it.

Thankyou all, for your time and for your thoughtful responses during the interviews. I look forward to next time.

Appendix Five: Samples of reflective notes

Keeping notes is vital in a project of this length. I made notes after each concert and interview – just describing how I felt, without evaluation of whether it might be useful or relevant to the project. I have included just a few short examples here.

Reflection after concert – evening 18th Oct 2010

The Way You Look Tonight

For the main part felt that we were playing a style (doing it well though).

I enjoyed B catching odd bits during the drum solo - then I caught one too (fun - it seemed an obvious phrasing of melody).

During the last head I deliberately under-reacted to piano dynamics to keep a continuity to rest of the piece.

I'll Be Seeing You

I kept it smooth as a contrast to the last tune. Felt relief when B took the first solo as that made it different from previous performances and the album. Being different from previous performances is/was important to me.

Let Me Off

doing my job for this piece - which is laying down a solid groove. Responded to B's intense part of solo (which was different = good) by focusing more on drums and keeping the time steady.

Reflection after interviews – May 2011

Interviews with B and H were carried out in Cafes of their choice - just because they were busy. I didn't notice that the interviews were any more relaxed or frank.

Interviews with students were undertaken outside the Con. I was more conscious of (?or I imagined) their perception that there were right

and wrong answers, and that they mightn't be giving relevant answers. Being outside helped take them out of student role, into more open role.

Only Z was interviewed inside a practice room, and he had crossed arms (a bit defensive?) and said he didn't know if he was being helpful.

Reflection after concert – evening 24th Oct 2011

I played fairly safe. I was happy with the evening and my own performance.

I felt that I played what was necessary for the music.

It was more subdued and restrained than the others. More honest. Less silliness.

Away With You was very happy (restrained but happy on the inside).

Prepare To Be had strong emotional content. Conscious that there were no drums and that H might be uncomfortable - but felt it perfect as is.

I became aware at one point that I had been playing unison lines with the pianist's left hand, and decided not to - it was habitual and unnecessary.

I'll Be Seeing You, I played some bass line up quite high - despite an awareness that it was risky with intonation it felt worth it.

Let Me Off had less value for me than the others.

Looking Up had a different drum feel and took a little while to feel right. I made my only clanging error in the coda of the song.

Interactions restrained, subtle. Stronger connection with piano than drums

It was a team of professionals doing what was required to portray the music effectively.

Appendix Six: Ethics approval documents

Performer participant information statement

(1) What is the study about?

The focus of the study is on interactions in improvised music.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Gary Holgate and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Anna Reid.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study will involve three recitals at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, each of which will be audio recorded. This will be followed by an interview conversation about the participant's experience of the performance.

(4) How much time will the study take?

Each recital will comprise two forty-five minute sets. Each interview will be held as soon as practical in the week following the recital, and will be approximately one hour in length.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording of that interview will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

You may withdraw from the performance if you do not wish to continue, however as the performance/s involve other artists the recordings of performance/s up to that time will not be erased.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. The outcomes of the study will be published through the dissertation.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

There will be no direct benefit, however many people find the interview conversation to be an enriching experience.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Gary Holgate will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Gary on ph xxxx-xxxxxx, or Professor Anna Reid (details above).

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

Performer participant consent form

I, ...[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: A study of interactions in improvised music

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I understand that I can stop the performance at any time if I do not wish to continue, however as the performance/s involve other artists the recordings of performance/s up to that time will not be erased.

8. I consent to: –

i) Audio-taping YES o NO o

ii) Receiving Feedback YES o NO o

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback Question (ii)”, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

_____

Email: _____

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Audience participant information statement

(1) What is the study about?

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(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Gary Holgate and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Anna Reid.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study will involve three recitals at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music that will take place during the next eighteen months. In the week following each recital individual interview conversations will be conducted at the conservatorium with each participant about their experience of the performance as an audience member.

(4) How much time will the study take?

Each recital will comprise two forty-five minute sets. Each interview will be held as soon as practical in the week following the recital, and will be approximately fifteen minutes in length. It is preferred that the participants attend all three recitals and their subsequent interviews.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

There will be no tangible benefit, however, many people find the interview conversation to be an enriching experience.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Gary Holgate will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Gary on ph xxxx-xxxxxx, or Professor Anna Reid (details above).

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In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to: –

i) Audio-taping YES o NO o

ii) Receiving Feedback YES o NO o

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback Question (ii)", please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

_____

Email: _____

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____