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Iterative Processes: Notating, Composing, and Performing as Journey Forms

Lauren Redhead

*This essay posits that the practices of notation, composition, and performance are not creatively distinct from each other when observed, in particular, in radical works of graphic or text notation that make no or little reference to the western tradition of music notation, and whose composers offer no or few indications of the methods by which they should be interpreted or their intended performance outcomes. In such works of experimental music, performer choice and creativity are highlighted, but issues of composer choice and creativity may be equally observed, alongside the performative practices of notation. Understanding these practices as iterations of the same process means that the activities of notating, composing and performing can be considered as equal without the need to posit the performance of experimental scores as a compositional practice in and of itself. These ideas will be explored in examples from the works *ijereja* (2015–2016) and *glíwmæden* (2016)*

Keywords: Graphic notation; Experimental music; Alison Knowles; Performative writing

Notation as a Practice

The role of notation in experimental music is perhaps a contentious one. Many performative and compositional approaches in this tradition attempt to create music that is in some way beyond the score, privileging the experience of the music in its moment of sounding or creation. In many ways, this is one of its significant departures from the tradition of western art music, directing the attention of the composer, performer, and listener to the ‘event’ of music beyond the work concept, and situating its unity in that moment alone. As such, the work’s identity in many examples of experimental music is both conceptual and ephemeral.

An example of this approach to the work can be found in Jennie Gottschalk’s book *Experimental Music since 1970* (2017). In the introduction to this project, Gottschalk

describes the ‘practice’ of experimental music—its execution or enactment—as one ‘of openness, of enquiry, of uncertainty, of discovery’ (1), and further states that through this practice, ‘potential sonic outcomes [of activities] including performance, improvisation, installation, recording and listening’ are explored (2017). Notation is not mentioned here, and Gottschalk is not alone in exploring experimental music from the point of view of its sonic and its listening practices: although ephemeral, these practices are clearly linked to the embodied practice of experimental music for all of its participants. Despite this, notation is and has been a key part of experimental music practice, too. The creation and discussion of scores—as instructions, and as objects—is often close to the heart of any discussion of experimental music, but the nature and object of the score is perhaps only considered in its relationship to its sounding result and as such is situated outside of the consideration of conceptuality and ephemerality. Manfred Werder describes exactly this in his statement on indeterminacy that situates ‘scores as such occurring as *incident*’ (Werder, quoted in Lely and Saunders 2012, 201).

An example of this consideration is Gottschalk’s brief discussion of Alison Knowles’ work *Play Paper* (2003), which mentions the score’s materiality, but also its status as a set of instructions (2017, 93). Knowles is quoted as saying ‘I think the main thing I’ve discovered about paper in the past five years is that it can form itself... you get something which you never could predict’ (Knowles, quoted in Robinson 2004, 113). Whilst the performative outcomes of the notation of *Play Paper*—involving everyday objects and sounds—are obviously of importance, there is good reason not to consider them to be the only outcomes of the work. In her own short description of the piece, Knowles ([n.d]b.) describes the ‘oversized notations’ that are used: objects that clearly announce themselves as a part of the performance, not because of their sound but because of their dimensions. *Play Paper*, in fact, has a relationship with a thread in Knowles’s work that begins with *Onion Skin Song* (1971–), where notations are created from onion skin, its materiality and imperfections. Of this ongoing practice, Knowles writes,

[p]erformer[s] study and execute the onion skin score to make music. They see the clusters of skins and fragments sandwiched in a transparent plastic prototype before the performance. Each selects an instrument and decides how to treat the score. An Onion Skin Score is made afresh for each performance. (Knowles [n.d.]a)

While this description does explain the interpretive outcomes of *Onion Skin Song*, it also describes how this is derived from what might be thought a notational practice: that is, a process of making that is practiced, sustained, and renewed with each iteration of the work, as a dimension of the work (both of its conceptual/ephemeral dimensions, and of its labour). The everyday nature of sound and objects is foregrounded in performances of Knowles’s works such as *Onion Skin Song*, and this foregrounding could be read as an expression and iteration of the everyday practice of material culture that gives rise to the score materials. Thus, notational

work—when re-thought as a performative practice in the case of *Onion Skin Song*—becomes musical work. This re-establishment of musical work in the domain of notation in Knowles's practice could therefore be considered part of what Julia Robinson describes as the 'far-reaching politics' of her art practice, something that 'restores time and labor to our experience of objects' (2004, 115).

The approach to notation in experimental music—epitomised by Werder—perhaps unintentionally holds much in common with the work concept in western art music that experimental music may seek to move beyond. Many experimental practitioners might argue that Lydia Goehr's definition of the work as a concept with an original and a derivative (1992, 89) does not apply to this tradition and, in particular, that the score cannot be considered an original, or a recording or transcription of an original. However, should the conceptual idea of such works be considered as 'original', then many 'works' of experimental music could be considered in this way. For example, they might indeed be described in Goehr's terms as 'regulative', 'projective' and 'emergent' (1992, 90). In addition, in Goehr's explanation, musical works are identified by their ideals (something that their practitioners strive towards) rather than by their identity conditions (or properties) (1992, 98): the work concept is therefore something that orders the structure of practices (1992, 102); and the practices of notating, interpreting, performing and listening might all equally be considered as structured practices. Goehr states that the work concept is predicated upon the idea that 'composers produce works and not just performances or scores' (1992, 106) and as such—by diminishing the role of notation in the object of the score—it might be argued that composers of experimental music have conversely reinforced the concept of the work by centring the practice of striving towards its ideals. *Onion Skin Song*, however, potentially disrupts this, not because it has no concept but because that concept is not situated as the idea of the work. Rather, its central idea might be described as its practice and re-performance of notational labour. This reconsideration and re-positioning of the score as a work (labour) of notation, and not as a representation, is also at the centre of the practice that I will discuss in this essay.

Notation and Practice Research

The approaches and attitudes described so far do not make up the entirety of Gottschalk's conception of experimental music, and I will not address all of its elements here. However, one further element that is of relevance to this essay is that of the role of research. She describes research within this tradition as the design of 'a process or interaction through which a particular question can be, if not answered, at least more directly considered' (2017, 3). In relation to this, James Tenney's statement that the meaning of the term 'experimental' is, for him, 'just ongoing research', is quoted (Tenney, quoted in Gilmore 2014, 26) These statements are both helpful and unhelpful: they point to a potential relationship between notation, indeterminacy, and enquiry whilst also potentially conflating a colloquial

definition of research (that of finding things out) with an academic one (that of the creation of new knowledge). In this essay I will consider notational practices potentially to be academic research practices—heron in described as practice research,¹ and indeterminacy will play a role in this consideration of research. However, it is not a corollary of Tenney's statement that specific experimental music practices are themselves always identifiable as academic research practices as a result of their indeterminacy or relationship with an experimental tradition. Producing something in a specific way, or in a specific tradition, is not automatically assumed as a pathway to knowledge, and nor should it be. Within the academic conception of research—into which the practice research described in this essay falls—it is for the work itself to articulate its process of enquiry.

Considering notation as a practice is here the first stage of such a research process. As described above, even within the experimental music tradition, approaches to notation most often fall within what Christopher Williams has described as the 'prescription-preservation model of the score' (2016, 'Chapter o: The Ground'). In such a model, notation is used to preserve a set of instructions that may be re-created or re-interpreted, or else is considered a transcription of sound. While many examples of graphic, text, or alternative notation do not appear to fit into this model, in practice they are often treated as transcriptions for *sounding actions*. In relation to Goehr's work concept, this understanding of notation relates it to a practice—that of composing or performing—but does not consider it to be a practice in and of itself. As such, notation is always outside of the work, as a form of documentation, rather than inside the work, as a part of its creation or re-creation. Even Paolo de Assis's formulation that 'notation [is] the totality of words, signs, and symbols encountered on the road to a concrete performance of music' (2013, 5) centres work that takes place beyond the score or the notation in its attempt to suggest an expanded consideration and practice of notation. Of more relevance to this work is Williams's consideration of 'notation as part of an ongoing process of discovery—an active journey rather than a passive reproduction' (2016, 'Chapter o'): while it takes into account the 'totality' that de Assis suggests, this definition further stretches the understanding of notation towards something that might be a complete process in and of itself. This process might be considered in conjunction with further processes of composition and performance—as in Williams's project—but is not necessarily defined as being so.

The 'active journey' described by Williams offers a parallel with Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of the 'journey form' (Bourriaud 2010, 106–131), one that I have used elsewhere to describe my practice. Journey forms are not only negotiations of the semiotic properties of the materials of the art work and their connotations, but artistic exchanges in and across time and space. Bourriaud considers contemporary visual art practices in these terms; however, it is easy to see how the 'journey form' concept is of relevance to contemporary musical practices, too. As a structure, the 'journey form' represents the traces of the negotiation of the materials and influences (such as de Assis's 'words, signs and symbols') that are encountered and related to the

artwork. This is articulated by Bourriaud as a spatio-temporal model, where the art object is not considered as fixed or static but as

a matrix [that] furnishes a motive (knowledge of the world), an imaginary universe (the history of exploration [...]), and a structure (the collection of samples or information along a path). (2010, 107)

Through this model, Bourriaud describes the artist as a ‘semionaut’ (2010, 103), foregrounding their acts of travelling or wandering in this ‘imaginary universe’ as their artistic practice. As a result, entirely through this conception of movement, the artist is able to *viatorize* (2010, 184)—or give energy to—forms that may have previously been considered to be dormant. Dormant forms (which may be ideas, materials, other art objects, or the paraphernalia of everyday life) have previously been considered as completed, or as obsolete, or as uninterpretable, or as waste. This giving of energy, then, is both a form of performance and a form of meaning-making and, as such, it is a practice that is re-constituted in each new work, and is embodied by the artist as an individual.

In terms of the ‘research’ of notation, I will here describe the practices and processes of two works: *ijereja* (2015–2016) and *glíwmæden* (2016), as practices of *viatorizing* forms in the manner described above. While both works involve processes of writing, of graphic notation, and of collage or bricolage, they also differ in some contextual aspects. *ijereja* is a project that involved notational practice as one of a multi-layered collection of practices, including improvisation, recording, and the creation of fixed-media audio, and text-based practices such as concrete poetry, all of which led to performances and further iterations of notation and performing. As such, in this project, notational practices are included in an iterative cycle of practice that is always incomplete, and while certain scores exist as a result of these practices, more may yet be created. This process is one of accretion, in that more materials of all types may be subsequently drawn into the project without changing its identity. In comparison, *glíwmæden* exists as a single score on a single page. This score is complete, as no more materials will be added to it and, further, no instructions for its interpretation will or could be given. This process is one of exclusion, in that it represents a closed or finished practice that defines what is not a part of it. Beyond the generalisable similarities of notational practice in these works, however, there are some further similarities in terms of their specific materials that are drawn from historical art or writing practices (from Minoan art and script and from antique maps in the case of *ijereja*, and from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the case of *glíwmæden*) that specifically speak to the ideas of the ‘journey form’ as an exploration of these signs and signifiers, and to the *viatorization* of forms that have been considered obsolete. In addition, while the research questions of the projects that gave rise to each of these notations are broader than those that only relate to the practice of notation as a ‘journey form’, in both cases observations about the nature of notation as a practice were derived. It is specifically these observations that this essay is concerned with.

Embodied and Objectual Practice

The issue of embodiment, mentioned above, is not a merely corollary of the observations about notation that have arisen from this practice, but rather a central aspect of their experience and consideration. It is precisely the embodied aspects of these practices that influence their relationship with knowledge and without which aspects the artist's claims to know would be unfounded. Ben Spatz (2015) has addressed such embodied knowledge and its expression in practice research as a transference of technique related to practice. What he calls a 'strong' conception of practice research

argue[s] on epistemological grounds that practice can itself be a research methodology, leading to the discovery of new knowledge in the form of new technique. (Spatz 2015, 232)

Spatz's conception of embodied knowledge as research knowledge is therefore an argument for certain approaches to practice, rather than research framings of practice. This conception of research also re-directs the focus of evaluation of practice research from its product (for example, the performance, which Spatz terms as singular) to the process through which the knowledge is gained. He writes:

Far from being secondary to the production of singular events, the development and transmission of knowledge in the form of technique can be seen as the primary activity of many practitioners in physical culture and performing arts—the ground upon which the 'singular event' can be realized and without which there can be no event at all. (Spatz 2015, 233)

In relation to Spatz's construction, composing and performing can both be considered as embodied practices. In my previous work, I have explored this aspect of embodiment as an overlap between the practices of performing and composing in the interpretation of open notation in works of experimental music (Redhead 2016b). In many ways, the overlap of embodiment, and thus of creative experience across these two types of practice, seems intuitive, especially in a discipline such as experimental music where the activities of composing and performing (or improvising, or 'interpreting') clearly and often overlap within the work of individuals. In reflecting on my work with the notation of others, I considered the creative processes at play as part of the journey-form negotiation of signs and symbols, but still always within the confines of a 'translation from a nontemporal to a temporal presentation', as Gottschalk describes the interpretation of graphic or otherwise spatial stimuli in experimental music (2017, 96). I now contend that my assessment of those practices was not yet radical enough, or not yet complete. That exploration considered notation as finished simply because, in the cases of the works I analysed, the notation was finished at the time that I came to interact with it. This caused me to exclude what should have been considered an equally significant practice as that of composing or performing: that of *notating*, not as a practice of explaining or transcribing but as one of writing.

Spatz's discussion of 'technique' is relevant here, when applied across the spectrum of notating, composing and performing. In the cases of embodied practices such as these, 'technique' should not be understood in the everyday use that refers to doing these things practically well but in terms of enacting strategies for doing and knowing through them. In such cases, then, the 'singular event' of a performance is a fallacy, and rather the outcome of several processes of embodied knowing. Again, this statement may seem intuitively true in the case of works of experimental music where no singular performance can be thought to define the work, and where the work in performance might be more productively thought a series or a multiplicity. Similarly, in these cases, the transmission of technique is not about teaching others to do what one has already done, but transmitting methods of gaining and embodying non-linguistic knowledge. This is less straightforward, since such strategies might not be easily shared: just as composing and performing in a certain way cannot be described as guaranteed pathways to knowledge, embodied practices cannot be assumed to be transferable from one body to another, or from one individual to another. In this case, it is not the specific practice that must be transferred as technique, but the pathway to embodiment, one that requires the researcher to enter a specific space of unknowingness with respect to the research and its outcomes, and one of first doing rather than practicing.

In order to isolate such a pathway to embodiment, the performative practice of notation should be described. In so doing, something considered 'nontemporal' (to take Gottschalk's phrase) must be considered as temporal, even where the creation of notation is in fact the creation of a material object. Such a temporal, performative, practice in relation to something material can be compared to what Karin Knorr Cetina describes as an 'objectual practice' (2001). Objectual practices are practices of knowledge that are enacted in conjunction with an object—and its related concepts—and can be opposed with habitual practices, which might be thought practices of use. In the case of notation, transcription is a habitual practice that uses notation in order to approximate or describe sound; despite being a skilled practice that may involve tacit and expert knowledge, this is not yet an objectual practice, which would further critically engage and interrogate notation. Knorr Cetina explains how, in such an objectual practice, the subject-object relationship is brought into view, and as such the epistemic object of research has 'the capacity to unfold indefinitely' (2001, 181). Such epistemic objects are by their nature incomplete, not because they are unfinished, but because they are 'in the process of being materially defined' (2001). Such objects enter the sphere of research, and of knowledge, through their relationship with the researcher in this process of definition. Their incompleteness results in an '*unfolding ontology* [that] is difficult to combine with our everyday notion of an object' (2001, 182). That is, when conceived as part of an objectual rather than habitual practice, epistemic objects reveal their changing nature as a part of the practice research process.

Knorr Cetina's epistemic objects are described as being 'unfolding', 'dispersed', 'signifying', and 'nonident[ical] with themselves' (2001, 184). These particular

characteristics offer a parallel with the concept of the journey form and its relationship to the contemporary artwork. In addition, Knorr Cetina stresses that although motion or direction might seem to be implied in some of these terms, a process of linear development is not intended or described by objectual practice. Rather this is a nonlinear process or, in her terms, has an ‘angularity’ and a ‘continual lateral divergence from itself’ (2001, 186). Again, this links with the practice of movement or travel within the journey form that might be more akin to the psychogeographic *dérive* than an intentional direction of travel. Therefore, in this discussion I consider the practice of notation to be an objectual practice. I consider the score—as a work of notation—to be an epistemic object, and its creation as a potential practice of knowledge that is both embodied and unfolding to the researcher in a non-linear process that is metaphorically comparable to Bourriaud’s conception of the journey form. This understanding of knowledge practices in relation to the embodied and material counterparts of notation also offers a further layer through which the embodied practices and processes of performance and composition in disciplines such as experimental music might be considered.

Performing Notational Practices

In describing notational practices in each of my case studies I will describe the resultant notation in terms of its source materials, its constituent parts, and its layeredness. I will further note and reflect on references to the western tradition of notation that are made and the ways that the notation otherwise does not interact with this tradition. Finally, I will describe the performative aspects of these scores, not in terms of the performative actions that they elicit, but in terms of the performative actions that *made them* in order to draw further conclusions regarding notation, performativity and embodiment. Finally, the objectual practice of notation will be linked to the conception of experimental music through this open-ended process.

glíwmæden (2016)

Although the second of the two pieces to be written, I will begin this description with *glíwmæden*, because of its status as a ‘closed’ or finished project (Figure 1).

The ‘source’ materials for this score were decorative practices that can be found in multiple examples of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (and, indeed, may also be found elsewhere). These practices include those of illumination, of framing, and non-representational adornments through the use of decorative lines, shapes, and dots. In their employment, these practices were not intended to call to mind a specific document or work, but rather a generalised ‘pastness’ and ‘manuscript-ness’ that might be associated with ideas of making by hand, and with historical practices of writing as an art practice as well as one of documentation or recording.

The resultant work is presented in black ink—although colour might be imagined in relation to the original source materials—and as a single page work. Nevertheless,

Figure 1. *glíwmæden* (2016), score.

despite being a single image, separate and constituent parts of the notation can be identified. The notation implies a collage of three layers: first, the implied 'song' which is represented in staff notation; this is implied to be fragmentary in the places that it seems to continue beyond the score. Second, a layer of decoration includes the illuminated letter 'G' and the decorative markings that also 'interrupt' and fragment the staff notation by appearing to overlay it. The third layer is that of the 'frame' which both borders and interrupts the two layers below it. While the western tradition of notation is referenced, these elements of the score work to contradict or obscure each other, too. The 'song' is alternatively given as tones and harmonics, without completely determinate pitch owing to the absence of clefs. Further notation is situated in the 'frame' of the piece, which perhaps situates it as a 'decorative' rather than a communicative practice. Repetition is present in all of the staff notations, paralleling the repetitive aspects of those notations that are derived from decoration. A final signifying layer might be the majuscule text itself, which also includes the elements of repetition and interruption as does the rest of the notation. This text combines words relating to (female) performers, to dissonance or disharmoniousness, and to music or creation; as such, it could be read as a set of instructions rather than as lyrics. Indeed, although singing is implied in its presentation, a literal sung performance of this notational aspect as presented is not possible because of the presence of unvoiced consonants.

There are many possibilities for this score in performance, and it is not intended for there to be any instructions relating to the way it should or could be read.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that the interaction of its different layers and materials may work to de-hierarchise the relationships between staff notation, drawing, and writing that could be inferred from a western tradition of notation, and cause the viewer or interpreter to question whether decorative practices might themselves have a ‘notational’ or performative aspect. This aspect itself was experienced in the creation of the score, which does not only signify handcraft but was made that way, too. Therefore, embodiment and technique can both be considered not only in relation to the ideas or concept of the score, but in relation to the actions that created it.

In the process of making, aspects of repetition that are reflected in the notation were experienced not only in their abstract but as concrete actions that were performed and reperformed: not only *some* decorations, but *this many* decorations. In the act of writing, lines and markings do not only imply direction, but they *are* directions; repetitions do not only imply small and subtle changes over time, but they are experienced as such. Similarly, in the act of collage (through the iteration of staff lines from manuscript pages), staff notation is not only encountered as a conceptual object that delineates a pitch-space, but as a physical object that takes up its own space on the page. In creating the staff element of the score through collage, imperfection is introduced and allowed both a role and a usefulness in the performance practice of the notation: aspects of imperfection become aspects of notation themselves. Thus, this can be understood as an act of bricolage where the staff is repurposed as its own notational symbol rather than a pitch-space for notation. As such, in the case of *glíwmæden*, the performative practice of notation came to be understood as a practice of notation and of manuscript, but also one that yielded the results of the performance as a complete object: that of the score itself.

As a result of this experience, the score is considered ‘closed’ in the way of a finished performance. Its outcome was indeterminate before the process of making began because, although a plan for the notation was created, its exact appearance, constituent parts, nature of layering, and interrelationships were not determined except in the performative act of making. For this same reason, no instructions for its subsequent performance are possible because in some senses its ‘performance’ is complete. New performances can now begin, but they may be rather considered performances *after* rather than *of* the score: in such performances, the interpreter navigates and *viatorizes* its collection of signs and symbols as the composer did in the performative act of creation. This, then, is an instance of the same performance in its journey form, perhaps temporally distinct from the score and enacted through sound rather than notation, but nevertheless an embodied expression of the same set of actions. Thus, in moving from the score to the performance, the transference of technique takes place as the pathway to embodiment of these actions and symbols, rather than to their sounding.²

ijerjea (2015–2016)

In comparison to *glíwmæden*, which exhibits a comparative autonomy of materials, the source materials for *ijereja* were drawn from a wider range of sources and resulted

in a larger number of pages, actions, and expressions, without the consideration that the work was—or could ever be—complete.³ These materials were created through a performative process of translation, layering, and re-creation, and include the Cretan-Minoan script known as Linear B, Minoan art (particularly involving depictions of octopuses), antique maps and decorative practices relating to these, and text drawn from (mis)translations of Linear B, and explorations of the idea of maps and territory. The title, *ijereja* is a transliteration of the word for ‘priestess’ in Linear B; the sound of the word *ijereja* is an invented pronunciation based on the syllabic substitution of Linear B. This itself offers a parallel with the processes of making and remaking in the project, which involved iterative approaches to composition and performance, over-recording,⁴ and notation as performance. An impetus for working in this way was to allow the interrogation of the potentially liminal space between performance, voice, speech, language, text, writing and notation. As types of performance all of these activities are considered equally.

There are three general categories of score notation in this project: maps, texts, and notations derived from octopuses. The maps are produced through collage, which layers and links aspects of individual maps, focusing on decorative detail such as compass markings, sea monsters, evidence of human occupation, and other images that otherwise furnish such documents. Sometimes combined with staff notation, and sometimes not, performative strategies such as over-drawing, framing and linking are used to notate pathways through these images in the score, in some ways creating a figurative depiction of a journey form exploration of these images. The text notations draw on a fixed pool of texts that were created for the project. Treated at the level of either the word or the short phrase, these notations employ collage to re-order the text either as a readable new text or as a layered text that implies multiple readings. In some of these scores, the practices of framing and linking used in the maps are also employed. In some of the performances, this category of notation was described as a ‘libretto’. The octopus notations further employ collage and overdrawing to re-create the images of octopuses found in Minoan art, also employing decorative practices in a manner like that in *glíwmæden*. Aside from the staff itself, these scores do not contain references to the western tradition of notation.

These scores can be used separately, or together, or not at all in any performance. Their layeredness is not only that of notation but of the super-position of the performances on each other. Each score can itself be considered a performance of the journey form of *ijereja* in that it visually represents the exploration of the work’s materials as signs and symbols. Thus, this performance practice might be re-enacted at any point to create a new score in any of the categories described above, or one that freely moves between them. A further category of ‘notation’ in this project might be considered fixed media sound that has been created in relation to or using these notations and can be played back in performance. This sound relates both to the written and performed aspects of the notation in the project, and does not seek to actualise it but to re-perform it. Two examples of this practice are the

recording of performance to be later played back in future performances, and the editing of audio in a DAW using a graphic approach to automation that mirrors the appearance of the notation but equally, and indeterminately, distorts the sound.⁵

This category of notation interacts with ideas of notation as both preserving and distorting sound: while recording preserves something of the sound of a performed action (although not everything: any recording equipment introduces a unique and indeterminate layer of distortion), as a ‘transcription’, the re-performance of notations—in situations such as through the DAW in the example described above—is both creative and destructive. Similarly, ‘writing’, or text, can here be considered as both a notation of sound and a potential for future sound: its meaning becomes unfixed from its notation while further meaning is created in the performative practice of its sounding or placement. This directly links to the idea of *viatorizing* forms: the energy and meaning-making that arises from this process is not that of unlocking inherent or already-present meanings, but always of recreating new ones in the performative action of exploration. In this way, no clear difference can be discerned between ‘notating’ and ‘performing’; these reflexive and iterative processes were the starting point of a compositional technique where the creation of notation, studio practices, and performances could all be considered parts of the embodied performative practice of the work.

Notation, Politics and Aesthetics

The consideration of notation as performative in these examples is not only an attempt to account for indeterminacy in the creation and re-creation of these works. Nor is it only an attempt to move beyond the work concept in western art music. In relation to these observations, the multifaceted question of the politics and aesthetics of notation is raised. Just as Robinson (2004) considered the unveiling of the political dimension of Knowles’s works through the experience of temporality and everyday life in the encounter with her work and notation, the encounter with performance through notation and notation as performance in this work is one that raises questions relating to the status of this practice.

It might be argued that the designation ‘notation’ is itself political, since in western musical practice it implies hierarchy in its relation to the work concept. Similarly, it might be argued that the designation *as* notation is also a performative practice: the content of ‘notation’ is not necessarily distinct from the content of products in other art forms, especially when forms of graphic, text, sculpture and video notation are considered. This is the case in the examples discussed in this essay: art practices and writing practices here might be described as ‘repurposed’ as notation; the products of these practices might elsewhere be categorised as visual art or as concrete poetry. Indeed, there is a long history of graphic notation being presented as visual art through gallery presentation that does not necessarily require its performance in sound for it to be considered or read as music—this has also been the case with my works. This is a consideration of the score as an aesthetic object that is somewhat

at odds within its status as a prescription or preservation of sound. Similarly, the consideration of notation as a practice interferes with any definition of the score as only an impetus for sound. As such, the work can be considered both an object and a processual artefact, and its performance practices, although they relate to creation—of notation, of sounds, of objects—as embodied aspects of its journey form. Zubin Kanga describes a similar experience to this in his creation of the solo piano performance of the watercolour score *Not Music Yet* (2012) by David Young. Beyond the work's indeterminate elements, Kanga identifies the creation of 'a body of work-specific performance practice' (2014, 21). What is important in this construction is not the potential for indeterminacy in the interpretation of the music, but the suggestion of performance-as-interaction that gives rise to an embodied technique that belongs simultaneously to the performer and the work.

Above, I argued that to create something in a specific way is not in itself a pathway to knowledge. Nevertheless, I have also argued that the process of creation of these scores in the specific way that I did so has allowed insight into the performative nature of notation, its journey form, and subsequent meaning-making. This process might be compared with the discipline of performative writing, which both understands writing as a practice, and as one that is able to investigate this practice itself through and beyond its meaning-making. Della Pollock describes performative writing not as rhetorical but as a practice that 'recasts rhetoric as a constitutive aesthetic' (1998, 95). Pollock's six aspects of performative writing—that it is evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous (both 'anxiously crossing' and 'neither willing nor able to stop moving' [1998, 90–91]), citational, and consequential (1998, 80–95)—might all be applied to the work undertaken to create the notations described in this essay.

Beyond this, however, the political connotations of the practice of performative writing might also be considered. Ronald Pelias describes how performative writing, 'expands the notions of what constitutes disciplinary knowledge' (2005, 417). This is in itself considered political since it throws into question not only what disciplines contain or describe, but the way that knowledge is accessed and communicated within them. In this case, the consideration of notation as performative offers a challenge to the dominant discourses in music surrounding the nature and purpose of notation, and also to the dominant discourse of experimental music concerning the primacy of sound and of listening. Even further, Peggy Phelan questions the nature of knowing itself, as experienced through the practice of writing, suggesting that,

[a] statement of allegiance to the radicality of unknowing who we are becoming, writing pushes against the ideology of knowledge as a progressive movement forever approaching a completed end-point. (Phelan 1997, 17)

Within musical work, to consider the score as an aesthetic object offers one type of challenge to the work concept, in that it situates the ideals of the work beyond performance in sound. However, to consider it as a performative process offers a further, and perhaps a more difficult, challenge, since in this case the ideal of the

work is situated even beyond its material culture and within the embodied experience of individuals. Its claims to knowledge are therefore further situated beyond considerations of style, genre, or sound. In this case, performance practice is therefore offered as a paradigm through which the journey forms of notation, composition, and performance collaborate in the realisation of such pieces, but can further be considered as disconnected and unrelated practices that arise from the same embodied and semiotic processes of creation.

This practice of notation, in the case of the two projects described in this essay, could be seen as documenting some of the components of the ‘work specific performance practice’ conceived by Kanga. They involved performing and re-performing, actions, sounds, and notations, and each time re-embodiment and re-evaluating them as a result of their embodied experience rather than their sonic experience. This is not a compositional process that can be set in opposition to a performance process, but an embodied process of discovery that comes from performative action. These projects, then, offer me a chance to reflect on the nature of knowledge in research, as it conceptualises the performative and compositional journeys of non-standard notation as journey forms in which the composer and performer take part. Rather than considering indeterminacy as an aspect of the performance of these scores, it is now possible to conceive of the creation of notation *as* a performance of indeterminacy.

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Notes on Contributor

Lauren Redhead is a composer of experimental music whose work is published by Material Press (Berlin), a performer of music for organ and electronics that has been released on the sfz music and pan y rosas discos labels, and a musicologist who writes about the aesthetics and socio-semiotics of twentieth and twenty-first century musics. She is Senior Lecturer in 20th and 21st Century Music and Co-Head of Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Notes

- [1] I refer both to ‘practice research’—academic research that is conducted through artistic practice as its primary method and mode of communication of knowledge—and ‘research practices’—(in this case, performative) actions that are executed or enacted to undertake research. There is, of course, considerable overlap between these in the sense that the latter might be carried out in order to achieve the former.
- [2] A performance realisation of this notation can be heard as the first track of the album *hearm-leop-geiddunga* (2018a, pyr262).
- [3] A selection of score materials relating to this project can be seen in the portfolio *ijereja and entoptic landscape: Music as an Iterative Process* (2018b).
- [4] ‘Over-recording’ in this context references the visual art practice of ‘over-drawing’, cf Wood (2007, 3–4). An over-drawing creates a new image on the top of an existing image that may or

may not have been created by the artist. An over-recording adds a further layer on top of an existing recording that, unlike a layered track or stem, cannot be or is not removed and thus permanently alters the sound of the original recording.

- [5] A performance realisation of this notation can be heard as the album *ijereja* (<http://www.panyrosasdiscos.net/pyr180-lauren-redhead-ijereja/>).

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