

Mapping the Performative Body in the Practice of Jazz Improvisation

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A musical improvisation performance is created in the context of social collaboration.¹ Instantaneous music-making is a continuous interaction between multiple bodies of participants. The improviser's body plays a significant role in musical improvisation, its expression and the experience.

Drawing on personal experience as a performer and as a composer, I explore the multilayered performativity of the body in the context of musical improvisation. This paper is written from the perspective of a performing artist and the knowledge about the practices described is derived from my own practice and training as a jazz musician. The goal of this paper is to explore the feeling of creating or experiencing music with the body. It is also aimed at investigating how the improvisation has an impact on the improviser themselves and their experiences during the process of improvisation. The study will rely on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, suggesting that performativity is "the act that one does, the act that one performs, in a sense, an act that's been going on before one arrived on the scene".² Performativity, in Butler's sense, is a stylised repetition of acts, i. e. imitating or miming the dominant conventions of the act performed. It means that someone's behavior creates their identity. If a musician adheres to a musical genre that has already undergone a history of performativity, and learns and repeats that performativity, then they perform the given performativity of the genre.³ "Performativity cannot be understood outside of the process of iterability – a regularised and constrained repetition of norms".⁴ A certain act that has a capacity for repetition constitutes a subject within a performance practice of music

1 Cf. Meelberg, *Colloquium on Artistic Research in Performing Arts*, 2014.

2 Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution", 2003, p. 104.

3 There is a difference between performing acts to create personal identities (such as gender) and performing an art adhering to genre conventions. The performer does not create their identity but showcases the conventions of the genre and inscribes them into the tradition.

4 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 1993, p. 95.

improvisation. “This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production”,⁵ determining the subject and the environment of the performance. The multifaceted co-ordination and communication that occurs between improvisers in a group is a very interesting and experimental research field.

Different types of body performativity can be found through the detailed examination of the collaborative improvisational act itself; performativity showcasing the conventions of a certain genre (social identity) and a subjective bodily feeling (individual identity) during the instantaneous musical interaction that merges both individual and social into a unique collective expression. In this complex interplay, it is important to consider the performativity of the body on several levels:

- a. performance as an act;
- b. genre performativity – peculiar to improvised music, adding up to a social identity;
- c. performativity of the body (parts of the body i. e. arm, leg, etc.) and
- d. the internal dynamics and co-ordination of the body movement as a spontaneous behaviour that can characterise a musical improvisational expression.

These body performativities are all an integral part of musical content and a means of communication used among the participating musicians and between the participants and the audience.

In the following sections, various representations of the body performativity, observed in two different jazz genres, will be approached: jazz standards and free improvised music. The two improvisational practices differ in the musical form and framework, collaboration methods, and interpretational contexts that vary due to cultural, historical, social and artistic influences.

Performativity in jazz standards

“The way a song becomes a standard in the first place is because many people record it. There used to be [an] unspoken law in the jazz world is that you had to know a significant amount of standards”⁶

A jazz standard is a composed piece or tune that consists of a melody and an accompanying harmonic progression, which provides the structure for improvisations throughout most of the history of jazz.⁷ This structured composition is written by a composer and takes on the form of a proposal opening up the possibility of multiple interpretations, in which the soloist has the freedom to influence the content and participate as a co-author in the creative process. The jazz standard, by its structure, is a consistent musical form but entails variability in the configuration. Berliner explains that in this music piece, performers commonly refer to the melody or theme as the head and to the progression as chord changes or simply changes. Musicians take turns improvising solos within the piece’s cyclical rhythmic form in between the themes at the beginning and at the end.⁸ Movement, such as improvisation, is possible within the determined length of the piece: as an inserted part of the piece – a solo – or as a general improvisatory character that determines the interpretation of the whole piece. The improviser receives a constructed framework, which is temporally and harmonically stretchable and transformable, yet, to a certain extent, structured. Nevertheless, in agreement with the other members of the ensemble, the interpreters are open to modulate all the elements, from the melody to the harmony.

The modus of how to integrate changes and modulations in a jazz standard are historically established on the bandstand during the performance and, by repeating it, evolve over time as the rules that represent this genre. There are syntactic expectations in jazz standards, prescribed roles for different instruments and historically determined perspectives within practice. Performers agree on the meanings of a certain behaviour, communication, signs or gestures in culture, in a particular musical genre and not limited to the jazz standard genre. These performing behaviours have been repeated to such an extent that they have become ritualised. When someone ‘calls the song’ (says the name of the standard), for example, in a classical jazz quartet

6 Cornish and Gray, “What Makes a Jazz Standard”, 2018.

7 Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 1994, p. 66.

8 Ibid.

setting (drums, bass, piano and solo instrument, e. g. saxophone, trumpet), everyone in the group knows what is about to come next. When a keyboardist or soloist whoops “Autumn Leaves!”, band members recall not only the melody, tone, composition, harmony, tempo and atmosphere of the song that is to be performed but very often the composition arrangement too. This ‘circle’ is immutable, clearly defined and repeated. Through the musicians’ communication and interaction, with a dose of freedom to transform and change the open form, the unwritten musical elements carry a definite, *a priori* agreed, meaning.

This particular way of playing and understanding the practice has been established since the genre emerged. Communicative signals have been repeated in practice so many times that they have become rules of the rituals, i. e. performative acts as an integral part of historical performance practice of the genre. A song written in the 1940s, for example, carries the hallmarks of the swing era, which, in the stylistic sense, implies certain rhythmic patterns, harmonic functions, accents phrasing the notes, combinations of connecting harmonies, transitions between parts of the song and scales and patterns used by the performers. The rules within the ensemble are also implied in this style: ways of the musical interaction between participants and the gesture as a communicative tool. It suggests that the style is not only embodied in the music material but also carries the playing modes and bodily habits, technique and sound preferences of a certain historical situation/group of musicians of a genre. In a way, the jazz standard improvisational style re-embodies past bodies by following rituals not only codified in written records (musical notation) or an abstract style or composition but also repeating a complete bodily playing and performing practice. These communicational models established a collective expression of the practice, applicable regardless of time and contemporaneity.

Performative acts are forming historically determined perspectives within the practice of a jazz standard. These acts carry the rules written in the musical text, role characteristics and communication between participants that define the song elements. Within a song, once established as a piece that belongs to the genre of the jazz standard, a next level of more spontaneous performative interactions can be recognised; bodily movements or gestures may serve as explicit signals in communication with other performers in the group. When a musician steps forward, for example, their solo starts. The movements also include tapping on the head, which is a movement in jazz that signifies a return to the beginning of the theme melody after soloing and pointing to another soloist for the ‘next solo’ while showing the number (2, 4 or

8) using fingers indicating the number of measures set for 'improvisational exchange' between several musicians. The arrangements made during the performance are a result of gesturing, looking, moving the body or directing attention while sharing roles and tasks within the composition that is being performed. These movements are established and repeated widely in the practice, but there are no strict rules and they are open to variations. While the genre performativities influence the musical text, the bodily movement allows smaller, more intuitive and in-the-moment changes of the song arrangement. Movements are more suitable to solo decision-making in arrangements, individual changes and modulations within a song, while genre performativities influence the collective expression of a whole musical piece.

The roles within the band are clearly divided in the genre of jazz standards, thus, everyone performing knows who the soloist is and who is accompanying, who has the role to keep the pace and who is the one to arrange on the spot. If we observe the practice of jazz standards as one where identity formation can take place, it can be seen that group identities are performative. According to Butler, the derivation of identity arises from the repetition (production, reproduction) of behaviour patterns characteristic of a particular culture. Clear performative acts have ensured the performativity of the body and communication among the participants, as well as keeping the relationship between the participants and the jazz tradition innovative and evolving for almost a hundred years of performing and repeating the practice of jazz standards. Moreover, performativity is also institutionalized and taught in schools, along with its elements: behaviour, habits, customs and modes of interrelationship. No matter the country the performing musicians come from, nor the continent where the song is performed, the musicians who practice this genre will understand the rules or the ritual. The musical expression inherent to this genre is not only musically stylized but also contains history, culture, tendencies and social identity that directly influence the participants who produce and perceive it. This identity is derived from the very act of improvisation, whilst the performance also defines the bodies performing the act. In this practice, the body acts as knowledge storage; the body itself is trained to perform these conventions. Although identity formation works in the social environment of a musical group, it is essential that the musical content produced by an improviser carries individual hallmarks, style, musical and artistic expression. In the same way, although performing social identity within a group, the improviser's body carries elements of individuality within the

performance of convention. The collective expression is filtered through the individual language and body experience in improvisation.

In order to explain the genre performativity within the practice of jazz standards in more detail, I will mention two great musical examples, referring back to the standard *Autumn Leaves* mentioned above, written by Joseph Kosma in 1945. One version of this standard is by Chick Corea from 1988 and the other by Ahmad Jamal from 2017. This song has been performed and recorded by countless interpreters. Although it was written in 1945 when jazz was a popular genre, it remained a popular song and was interpreted in different styles by different ensembles and performers. There are versions of this song played by Édith Piaf in 1950⁹, by Grace Jones in French in 1978¹⁰, Eva Cassidy in 1996¹¹, Iggy Pop in 2009¹² or even Seal in 2017¹³. Referring to two different versions of the same composition within a similar music genre draws connecting lines in interpretation performativity, as defined by Iyer, presenting the improvisation as the real-time interaction with the structure of one's environment.¹⁴

Since embarking on a solo career in 1966, Chick Corea, 23-time Grammy Winner, has been at the forefront of jazz both as a renowned pianist forging new ground with his acoustic jazz bands and as an innovative electric keyboardist.¹⁵ His version of *Autumn Leaves*¹⁶ from 1988 accompanied by his band (John Patitucci on bass, Tom Brechtlein on drums) with guest vocalist Bobby McFerrin is a great example of musical structure emerging in real time. The complexity of the interactive 'on the bandstand' arranging and improvising through the dialogue explicitly represent various levels of performativity during the performance. As mentioned above, a) performance as an act, b) genre performativity, c) performativity of the body and d) the internal dynamics and co-ordination of the body movement as a spontaneous behaviour can all be witnessed during this performance. The free improvised introduction in a duo (Corea and McFerrin) gives us insights into a wide range of communicative strategies within jazz improvisation. Composing music content in the

9 Piaf, *Autumn Leaves*, 1950.

10 Jones, *Autumn Leaves*, 1978.

11 Cassidy, *Autumn Leaves*, 1996.

12 Pop, *Autumn Leaves*, 2009.

13 Seal, *Autumn Leaves*, 2017.

14 Iyer, "On Improvisation", 2004, p. 164.

15 Chick Corea artist website, <<https://chickcorea.com/>>.

16 Corea, *Autumn Leaves*, 1988.

moment caused by the interaction between these two participants is obviously greatly influenced by performativity; how performers move on the stage introducing the duo section, using stylistic points of reference but never playing the exact theme, giving bodily signs to each other marking the next part of the composition and the internal co-ordination of the body that influences the musical outcome (e.g. breath, body parts bending, short break in the hand movement over the next note). Gestures and signs in the duo's body movement lead both the fellow musician and the audience through the scenario, intentions, musical tensions and resolutions. Referencing to the theme of *Autumn Leaves* after almost three minutes, they get big applause by bringing the audience 'home' to the known place, which represents the performance as an act. The band follows the form for the first few turnarounds, interpreting the theme, solos on the given chord progression, but then the harmonic and rhythmical rules break down and open up into internal points of references. Chick Corea and the band members perform solo exchange, giving signs where the next soloist takes over, where the end of a chorus is, at around 10:00, short solo exchange begins where the body movement in obvious and more sophisticated ways leads the atmosphere, arrangement, but also influences the sound quality, music content and the internal dynamics.

Another example representing the qualities of the jazz standard performativities is another *Autumn Leaves* version played by Ahmad Jamal (piano), James Cammack (double bass), Herlin Riley (drums), and Manolo Badrena (percussion) in a Paris performance from 2017. Ahmad Jamal is an American jazz pianist, composer, bandleader and educator.¹⁷ He has been one of the most successful small-group leaders in jazz for five decades. It is possible to demonstrate the 'rules' of genre performativity easily in his version of the famous jazz standard.¹⁸ Immediately after a short solo introduction, the band leader gives a head sign for the tempo and the beginning of the song introduction to other members. This introduction is already a foreshadowing for the song, since this specific intro has been added to the original song in many other performances before until it became a hallmark of the standard, although it was actually composed on the bandstand many years ago. The pianist, as a leader of the group, in this genre is entitled to give orders to the other musicians when to enter, arranging the song in the moment. He is using hand gestures and the

17 Ahmad Jamal artist website, <<https://ahmadjamal.com/>>.

18 Jamal, *Autumn Leaves*, 2017.

musicians are reacting by nodding. With one hand up, he signals the beginning of the song theme. Playing the first three notes of the theme, he turns his head to the audience, giving a big smile for the applause to come, revealing the well-known song to everyone. His theatrical behaviour is easy to follow, reminding us of a storytelling scenario. Even for those who are not too experienced in jazz music listening, his stage appearance takes one on the journey through the history of arranging and conducting this standard. Raising a hand on 2:23 directly influences the sound dynamics and rhythmical picture, but also creates tension in forecasting the next possible move. At 2:54 he points to two musicians to trade a few measures of soloing and filling in until the next theme. His movements, gestures and signs are typical of this genre. The same signs have a different meaning according to the particular point of the song at which they are used, recognisable to all the participants. At one moment, pointing to a fellow musician means that he is the one to fill in between two musical phrases, but at another time, the same sign means to play the lead melody (4:18). The communication between the other musicians is also crucial: smiling, nodding and waving with the body parts simulates the atmosphere change, confirmation of a previous musical resolution done well or an improvised 'trading'¹⁹ part that pushes forward to the next section. In this version, Latin jazz as a cross genre enters with its own performativities, where all the movements are more emphasised, gestures are more obvious and more diverse, recalling the dance movements.

These performativities can be recognised by any other performer or experienced audience involved in jazz standard music practice. These gestures do not only serve as the storytelling and arranging tools, but also greatly influence the musical content, intentions and every next section of the song.

Free improvised music and its performativity

There is a growing interest in the function of free improvisation as a creative process of music-making through which one can explore the collective and collaborative dimensions of artistic work. Although solo improvised music is an important segment of free improvised music, in this paper, my concern is focused on the group

19 'Trading' in the jazz jargon stands for the interplay between the participants, where musicians exchange short solo parts one after the other.

practice's dynamics in ensemble as a unique technique of music creation. The analysis of free improvised music cannot use the same criteria as that of either Western musical analysis or of the jazz standard music analysis. The roles of composers and performers in the process of music-making need to be redefined. In addition, the concepts of structure, form, the integrity of a musical piece, of composing or improvising, perceiving or listening, should also be redefined, while reconsidering the aesthetics of the genre. While rethinking the analytic priorities of approaching the larger-scale dimensions of free improvisation, I would like to suggest that we should be concerned with the interactive processes by which the improvisation emerges. We should look at free improvisation not only as a musical genre but also as a collective method of music-making. Free improvised music is a collective momentary composing on stage where musicians start a performance 'from scratch'. There are no rituals, given framework, harmonic progression, melody or tempo. This improvisational method is the interaction between the repertoire of the cultural expressions – the general musicians background that the musicians bring to their performances and the momentary context created during the improvised event.²⁰ Relating individual bodies during improvisation is in itself an act of social interaction.²¹ The way the body reacts to what the body receives influences the meaning of the gesture in the action performed next. In other words, interpersonal co-ordination cannot be easily isolated and analysed without taking into account the atmosphere or the collaborative interaction in which each body reaction is, in relation to the other, expressed musically. The experienced improviser Vijay Iyer believes that it is not the task of musicians to spontaneously produce innovative, musical expression from the myriad combinations of musical content they have at their disposal individually. Instead, he explains that in live improvisation, performers must simultaneously be producers and receivers of musical signs with their co-improvisers.²² Musicians simultaneously interpret music in co-ordination with the content produced by other performers instead of individual independent music content.

The instrument technique's limitations, ideas, previous experience, memory, personal musical vocabulary and social environment can limit the practice of improvisation. Avoiding learned rituals within a music practice, patterns, predictable contexts

20 Borgo, "Sync or Swarm", 2005, p. 58.

21 Steinweg, "Improvisational Music Performance", 2012, p. 3.

22 Iyer, "On Improvisation", 2008, p. 276.

and repetition of ideas is one of the greatest challenges that free improvisation performers face. Although there is a personal initiative of a musical idea in collective music-making, it is created, shaped, transformed and led by the collective. In this situation, the roles of an initiator, leader, composer or conductor are more fluidly distributed and shared between participants. The division of roles into a composer-soloist-accompaniment relationship disappears. The predetermined content, concept, name of the compositions, positions or numbered parts disappear as well. Although each musician has their semiotic discourse – a certain range of personal vocabulary, intentions and ideas – the context of what is said and the meaning of the symbols are variable and transformed through the communication of the musicians. In other words, the practice of genre performativity is not influenced by the norms of the jazz standard but by the adoption of a self-organised system of meaning within the collective.

Conventionalisation of behaviour in free improvised music is not firmly fixed compared to the jazz standard, but it is a more spontaneous, ‘improvised’ behaviour. My own free improvisation trio could serve as an example of the egalitarian role division within a group, and the one-of-a-kind communicative strategy assuring the experience of ensemble-as-social-group. Miklos Szilvester (drummer from Hungary) and Ksawery Wojcinski (double bass player from Poland) have been my dear colleagues for a couple of years now. The concept of our collaboration is to use no score, have no talk before the session, no strict roles and not even fixing the metre, tempo or tonality. The journeys into never played before realms are the biggest challenges one musician can face in this genre. Courage, reliance and mutual trust are crucial for this kind of musical adventure. The concept we share is that the moment we feel secure and comfortable in the present moment of music making, it is time to consider changing the section, role or a musical element. Constantly insecure outcome pushes our personal languages or semiotics further into new exploration and investigation. Whenever I play something I recognise as my own vocabulary, it means that my attention is gone and that I am not following my music partners; it is time to set a focus back.

A few years ago I rehearsed for five days and performed with the great drummer Hamid Drake. Once he told me: “Let me take you to the unknown”, after I bored him with a speech about free improvisation and unconventional methods in interactive improvisation between us. He was actually talking of ‘letting go’ of any rules, beliefs how something should sound or who should be responsible for the outcome. The

flow of awareness that becomes a collective state after some time of mutual interaction was the key to the beginnings of real collaborative free music-making.

Spontaneous music-making in a collaborative free improvisation uses the body as a medium, provoking interactive sounds by transcending the bodily performativity of the musicians. A redefined role of the performer in a momentary compositional process of free improvised music emerges. Here, a musician is not only a body that interprets music but also a body as a source that produces a musical event as emergence and structure in relation to its movement, reactions and observations. The improviser's significant insightful attention to the collective spontaneity and the unpredictable effects caused by thoughts, gestures, social environment and the body-instrument interrelationship of the participants is a crucial element for a successful performance. There are fine gestures and co-ordination during communication between performers which requires continuous adaptation to the content that is spontaneously produced. At the macro level, an individual sense of pace and the anticipation of the next reaction during the selection of improvised content provoke bodily reactions. Such reactions affect the co-ordination of the interaction between the performers directly. The anticipatory co-ordination of movement is significant in initiating transitions into new modes of expression during a performance.²³ Even an unintentional change in performance can be crucial in the development of a new musical structure. These fluctuations (changes, movements) may occur at both kinetic and sonic levels. As the English saxophonist Evan Parker said: "Sometimes the body leads imagination."²⁴

The importance of body movement during a musical performance is also recognised by Iyer. He emphasises kinetic patterns of the bodies that determine elements, such as the genre of music being performed, the structure of the instrument and the personal identity of the performer.²⁵ Body movement is not only important for understanding the production of sound and music but also for its perception. The audience, and the active musicians who take part in a creative event, can experience the bodily articulation of the performer directly: the dynamics, the power or the change of sound or musical content, movements and facial expressions. Body gestures represent visual information relevant to the perception of the performer's musical content, atmosphere, feeling and mood. Body mediation and body action

23 Novembre and Keller, "A Grammar of Action", 2012.

24 Walton et al., "Improvisation and the Self-organization", 2015, p. 3.

25 Iyer, "On Improvisation", 2004, pp. 159–173.

play an important role in both the creation of musical content and the communication between the improvising participants. In other words, it is not only about the movement of the body but also the understanding of the atmosphere that the mediator (body) creates in a collaborative event. 'Understanding' the environment where music is produced is a central purpose of music-making and perceiving, both for the audience and the performers.

When a group of musicians, such as a jazz trio, plays freely improvised music, their activities become co-ordinated by making common decisions, and it is obvious that there is a unique synergetic system rather than a collective consisting of individuals. The principle of dynamic self-organisation is based on the "natural time scale of body and mind as a single group system".²⁶ The performers are simultaneously the producers and the ones who perceive musical cues in spontaneous improvisation. In other words, the performers' bodies communicate with each other within the group. In this case, each performer allows himself to be conditioned by the sonic and kinetic signals obtained from the activities of another improviser. Paired together during a musical performance, the signals of the performers, who both produce and perceive them, not only match but also limit and thereby affect each other, thus, allowing the production of more complex dynamics of the musical content. This kind of collective expression can only exist as long as all the improvisers involved in the event allow themselves to be influenced by the others. The movements of a performer's body are macroscopic signs, performativity that has evolved through interaction with colleagues as a result of auditory and visual communication.

These 'signs' are bound to a social and cultural situation, specific musical training and genre expectation, they are not universal. Although I represent free improvised music as a genre without a conventionalised set of behaviour, there are still certain sets of cues derived from this practice itself. Nevertheless, the 'improvised', spontaneous behaviour is more common in this genre.

As a free improviser myself, drawing on my own artistic practice, I present here some of the clear kinetic arranging gestures common to my practice that influence the further development of the musical content directly. Although not universal for the entire genre, these cues are relevant to this practice. Stepping forward is a sign that the performer takes the initiative in the solo section. Head movement or a gaze towards the next performer addresses a musical question, therefore, a reaction is

26 Ibid., p. 168.

expected. Moving the instrument towards a particular member introduces dynamics, so, the louder part of the performance is coming. When the whole body bends downwards, it is an indication that the quieter part is following. Moreover, swift movements of the entire body could signify a great change and the coming of the next micro event in the piece. Although this reduced co-ordination is at the microscopic level, it also affects the sonority of the musical content directly. Movement of fingers, placement of the lips on a wind instrument in a different, unusual way, movement of the foot over the instrument – all these gestures emphasise changes in the quality of the sound. The co-ordination at the macroscopic and microscopic levels of communication through body performance is just one of the ways in which performers detect, predict and signify the change in improvised music. Musical movements are not peripheral as they provide direct access to the perception, action and reaction, moods and feelings of performers communicating with each other.

The movement of music is reflected in the body

It is necessary to focus on the sense of sound and physical movements of all participants in order to achieve musical improvisation that has the potential for successful interaction between performers who are simultaneously listeners and active participants. The practice of musical improvisation requires proper perception of the bodily movements of the improvisers. Rolf Pfeifer and Josh Bongard show that musicians are truly moved by the movements of their fellow musicians. They note that human subjects have so-called mirror neurons that respond when a subject performs a movement or observes a movement of another subject. The acts of performing actions and observing actions activate the same areas of the brain. When observing a movement, a subject can sense it within their own body, as if they are actually performing this movement.²⁷ This is also the case with the practice of music-making. When the musicians watch their colleagues play, they can sense the movements of those musicians in their own bodies because of the way their mirror neurons function. The physical movements of their fellow musicians are literally felt inside their own bodies.²⁸

27 Pfeifer and Bongard, *How the Body Shapes the Way We Think*, 2007, pp. 213–243.

28 Meelberg, “Musical Improvisation as the Performance of Embodied Knowledge”, 2014.

Sounds, especially those that provoke expectation and resolution, can create autonomous reactions in the other perceiving participant's body. Sounds can cause a bodily reaction (sound evokes a sense of a movement) that happens on an unconscious level. A sound affects the body of someone who, at the same time, produces and perceives it. Due to this reflection, a certain sound can be labelled as the cause of other sounds. Thus, listeners can distil a kind of temporal development from the sounds they are listening to. Moreover, the body is also involved in musical performance as it senses the movement that the musical sound evokes kinaesthetically. The movement of music is reflected in the body. Sound vibrations are translated into bodily movements that can be sensed. Supporting this claim, Marc Leman suggests that the sound literally does something to the bodies of the listeners. These bodies kinaesthetically sense and then process the dynamics and physical properties of sound and music.²⁹ They are literally moved by musical vibrations; they kinaesthetically move along with the movement of sound.

As a free improviser myself, I was interested in the further artistic research related to this subject. When a musician improvises freely, without form and clear intention, the production and perception of music is left very much to the environment and one's experience of the present moment. The bodily sensations and, of course, thoughts and emotions are first to react to the audio stimuli. I was interested in exploring to what extent we react with the body and what these reactions mean in connection with the music production and perception. A few years ago, I carried out artistic research exploring the 'inaudible' sound vibration of my own biofield, measured by an SCIO³⁰ device while playing music. I applied an eight-week-long method of music creation, investigating how this idea of body vibration and a specific yogic routine could aesthetically affect music I compose and perform and how this music can affect my body.³¹ This research was presented as a chamber music album of seven original compositions *Flow Vertical*.³² Last year, I had a great chance to analyse and measure the brain activity as a central concept of the work *I Sit and Worry About Her*.³³ The

29 Leman, *Embodied Music Cognition and Mediation in Music*, 2007.

30 SCIO – Scientific Consciousness Interface Operation system is a biofeedback quantum technology which measures the body's resonance or a biofield.

31 Jovicevic, "Flow Vertical", 2019.

32 Jovicevic Sextet, "Flow Vertical", (Essex: FMR Records, 2018) [FMRC475].

33 Jovicevic, "I Sit and Worry About Her", artwork is described at <www.jasnajovicevic.com/music-mind>, 2019.

project explored the applications of electroencephalogram technology in order to not only deepen the practice of musical perception and creation but also make visible the effective micro performativity of the body. The results of this research were presented in the form of a music performance. Through these artistic explorations, I came to a deeper understanding of the spontaneous interactive relationships of the participants during musical improvisation.

Group improvisation is a complex social phenomenon. During a performance, there is a subtle, rhizomatic web-like interplay of individual psychological needs and intentions, technical tasks and difficulties associated with playing musical instruments, awareness of the audience (if the performance is public) and, most centrally, conscious and unconscious reactions to sound stimuli. Cognitive distributions³⁴ in this context occur between a musician and an instrument, between or among two or more musicians, and between musicians and the music itself. Any of the relationships mentioned above builds and rebuilds new musical content. Free improvisation is an acute state of readiness in the present moment; the freer the structure, the more active the interaction has to be. The multiple musical bodies must co-ordinate spontaneously while simultaneously engaging in both musical perception and action.³⁵ They engage in a continuous negotiation – anticipating and co-ordinating their playing behaviour without the guide of musical notation, but it comes from the aware active perception.

Presenting the music of the free jazz trio I am part of could serve as an example of the mutual communication that can vary from notated parts of composition to entirely improvised sections. In this video³⁶ of a live concert at the Jazzire Festival in 2019, some parts are focused streams of musical activities, where it seems like the musicians improvise independently. Exactly the non-ordered, non-role divided sections look different from the highly interactive jazz standard play. However, the more attentive listening reveals counterpointing dialogues among melodies, rhythmical sentences or affective extended instrumental techniques. Dynamics in this music cannot be forced; we have to listen closely to each other, follow, imitate, oppose or communicate with each other in such a way that we never jump into the known

34 Walton et al., “Improvisation and the Self-organization”, 2015, pp. 3–6.

35 Ibid., p. 3.

36 Jovicevic/Miklos/Wojcinski Trio, *Escape from Binary*, 2019.

environment that takes us ‘to the safe place’. Therefore, it becomes rich in specific dynamics and textures.

Although I am just at the beginning of my research, I find it important to consider the event of musical improvisation from multiple perspectives of analysis, starting with the social interaction as a key to the context of the body performativity in a particular cultural discourse. What also needs to be considered is the production and perception of the sound of the improviser’s body within the framework of collective performance.

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