

Appendix 4

Transcription of *stillefelt* post performance discussions

The following discussions took place during the *stillefelt* residency in October 2019 as close to the end of each performance as possible. The final, longer discussion took place two days after the final performance. These are presented as they took place. The emphasis was on conversation rather than interview, although I often took the lead and posed questions which I thought would clarify our practice. The participants are:

Chris Mapp (CM)

Percy Pursglove (PP)

Thomas Seminar Ford (TF)

Notes

[] Contextual clarifications or identifying the subject being addressed.

... Generally indicates an unfinished sentence, thought or pause rather than missing text.

Wednesday 23rd October 2019, 11:07pm

PP: For me I always bring the weight of the instrument, the technical, the technical heaviness of the instrument. So...

CM: You're on about historical...

PP: Just my own struggles with the instrument on a physical level rather than an intellectual level. And it's, for me it's difficult in this band, because partly the dynamic. And also, partly the name of the band and your [Chris] idea of the band originally...

CM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PP: ...and, I mean, it's evolved a little bit since then but it was always like "I wanna do a quiet band, do you wanna be in it?" kind of thing.

CM: Yeah. I was talking to a group of composers about this the other day, and like, they were saying "that's your composition".

PP: Right.

CM: Essentially, I've set out a name and an aesthetic and everything happens within that...

PP: Framework.

CM: ...thing because we're all thinking about that thing.

PP: Because you build the frame and then the canvas is painted from within, but you [Chris] provided the framework and not the landscape that's painted within it.

CM: I think so. That's a conscious thing as well, for me. I definitely wanted that to be the case with this [stillefelt] where as I wouldn't always... It's different maybe when you're playing with *Paul Dunmall Quintet* or something, that doesn't have a, well, maybe it does have a thing! [laughs]

PP: A different kind of thing!

CM: Yeah! I quite like this idea of a project being a composition, or part of a composition.

PP: Sure, absolutely.

CM: Or part of the aesthetic.

PP: I totally agree with that. You select the ensemble.

CM: Yeah, I chose you guys to work with.

PP: There's a reason why you did.

CM: I wouldn't do this with deps!

PP: Yeah, right. But, it's also interesting this, the way you select the set, not that we... every time we play it it's looser, right?

CM: Yeah.

PP: It's nice that we...I don't know, it's not my, it's not my...I say it's nice! But, it's absolutely...I like the fact that it evolves between each...even though you chose the order of the numbers [of pieces], which is nice (I like it that they don't have names) it's a sequence...

CM: [laughs]

PP: ...everything's got a different sequence...and the way we navigate through these pieces...

CM: Do you think anyone's leading that?

TF: I think from my point of view, especially when I'm playing, in terms of like...sometimes it can feel like maybe somebody does take the initiative to go somewhere, but then sometimes it feels that maybe that's quite a presumptuous... well quite an assumption on my half if that is the case because it might be that they didn't feel like they were leading it. Even if they initiate it, it might not be a conscious choice to be like "right we're going here now", it actually might be quite a natural...And, sometimes it feels, maybe,

sometimes it definitely feels like everyone kind of ends up somewhere kind of...in a synergy way it just kind of gets to that place.

There's something I'm always quite conscious of before these gigs, especially, is I always think "how much will we stick to that [the order of pieces] this time?" Because I always know there's the chance that you'll give us a sequence of numbers but we might not even get to the first number.

PP: Right.

TF: And I'm always consciously aware...it's more before the gig, I'm not thinking about it when we play (there's no point even considering that then) because then it would be almost like I'm trying to make a conscious decision not to do that.

CM: Yeah.

TF: But, I don't know how much it effects how I play in terms of improvising on the material, but it definitely is the biggest thing that goes into my head, thought-wise, is how much are we gonna honour what is in front of us [the written material]. And then if you do give a list of numbers, it's like, will we do all of that? So far we've done every gig [played all of them] and sometimes I'm amazed that we do it! And within a quite specific time limit. It's quite weird! But then every time we come back to it I'm always thinking like "will this time maybe be a time when something like..." Because it's like, the setting is there, like you said the aesthetic is there. I don't think we're going to stray out of the aesthetic too much. But the actual written material that's there is kind of like a springboard. Sometimes I wonder "will that break at some point?" But, I'm not gonna cause that! You know, I'm not gonna throw a spanner in the works, I'm not pushing for that, I'm just aware that it could happen. That's the thing that I think about a lot with this band, it's like, "could that happen one day? And if it does, what happens then?" But I only ever think about that before or after, I never think about that during. So it doesn't...I don't know how much that would effect what I'm doing when we're playing.

CM: I though tonight it nearly might have done [snapped the springboard] it felt like a point where we might have just sacked it off [the written material] and carried on. There was one bit and like, I knew we were just going to go away from this little bit and then we sought of came back to it, which was...yeah. It felt like, I can't remember when it was, about half an hour in I think, it just felt like we were gonna go somewhere else. I don't think we've ever dropped down to a soloist, really, before either, that was a different thing tonight.

PP: The end here, with Tom?

CM: Yeah, that felt, like, interesting.

PP: Yeah.

CM: And I wasn't sure if that was gonna be the ending and I didn't know if it felt like we could finish with a solo? When it was happening I was like "what happens now?" That could have finished, I think.

PP: As soon as you [Chris] started, I mean, the ending became clear, didn't it?

CM: Yeah, right it sort of...

PP: We could see where we were going.

CM: Yeah, I felt like "this is gonna be a coda", right?

PP: Right.

CM: Maybe that's...So, one thing I'm trying to think about at the minute is like, how to describe this process. In terms of improvising. I kind of want to make the argument that this [stillefelt] is still free improvisation but within certain parameters and then the freedom is within those parameters, which are the things that we bring ourselves and the bits of music as well. So it's not like...you're not free to do anything, but then the freedom is contained within that setup, I guess. Is that how you think of free music or, do you think of it as something else? Like tonight, for example, it feels different to me from what previously would have been a free improv gig but I don't think there's any contradiction in calling it free improv, but I'm aware that there might be.

PP: Yeah, I mean that's such a... [laughs]

CM: [laughs]

PP: ...you can so quickly fall into the label thing and then with that, the definition of genre becomes...

[Anita (audience member) comes past where we are talking and goes to leave and we pause to say goodbye]

PP: ...for me there's a certain that goes with the word "free improv". That's a whole other discussion.

CM: Exactly.

PP: But the thing is, is it really that free what we're doing here?

CM: Here?

PP: Yeah. I mean, I dunno. For me we're still working within certain frameworks, I mean there are frameworks dictated by you [Chris], however flexible. You still dictate certain...there's certain requirements, like we said, partly coming from your concept of the ensemble. And in a way I feel a little bit restricted, I feel naughty if I go out of what I perceive as...I'm

never really clear of what your vision of it is! It's like, every time we play it's maybe slightly clearer.

CM: Yeah!

PP: But still I feel like I restrict myself because I'm projecting what I feel your thing is.

CM: Yeah, right. Okay.

PP: So from that sense, I'm not free at all, I feel absolutely restricted. Also, we're still playing within the sensibility of these pieces, right? Which doesn't happen if you're playing a set with Evan [Parker] or whoever, it's a different kind of freedom.

CM: Exactly!

PP: Or a different kind of restriction.

CM: Yeah, I would say it's a slightly different restriction, right, because he's [Parker]...although in that specific context you're free to do more, but you're still defined by what *he* is, *his* thing...

PP: Sure.

CM: ...it's still playing *with* Evan, or playing with a person...

PP: Yep, sure.

CM: ...and their whole thing comes with that.

PP: And we all are limited by our own, for want of a better phrase, autoschediastic-ness, the shit that we do. You know, we have this thing, like our own language...and we're limited by the physicalities of what we're...

CM: Do you mean musical language or...?

PP: Yep. Like, individualistic processes. Which I quite like about this [stillefelt] because sometimes I just don't know what to play. And in that sense it's both restrictive and incredibly open. And it really can be, play anything. Because I know that you don't care.

CM: I care a lot! [laughs]

PP: No, no but like what we play.

CM: No, no I care about creating a situation in which you can play what you wanna play.

PP: Yeah!

CM: But I have been quite specific in this case [stillefelt] about certain things, which is unusual.

PP: It's interesting and it's challenging.

CM: I find it really hard to play in this band.

PP: Yeah, me too.

CM: And it's my fault because I've set it up! But, that's why I wanna keep doing it [playing together].

PP: But because of the way you've written the music, which is super melodic isn't it? And sometimes it's just...

CM: It's very diatonic.

PP: It's diatonic but it still, for me, it has a melodicism and that definitely impacts upon the way I'm approaching it. I find myself improvising melodies. Which, I don't know whether that's what you [Chris] want. Maybe you don't care.

CM: I don't know if that's what I want either! I think, ideally, I'd be really happy if we just played without the music but thinking about the music. Does that make sense?

PP: But that's kind of what...we're sort of doing that.

CM: We're sort of doing that, we're kind of half way between I think, because we're still obviously, and I include myself in this, playing bits of the music as a kind of...because sometimes I don't know what to do! [laughs]

PP: But also it's beautiful. I kind of wanna play it. Also, we're all coming from the jazz tradition, we're used to playing lead sheets.

CM: Yeah, yeah.

PP: That's also embedded in the conditioning.

TF: There's definitely a reaction to seeing chord changes and stuff.

PP: Yep.

CM: And the *Sibelius* font.

TF: There's definitely like a kind of impulsive reaction to that that you can't...it's hard to break out of that. I think every time we play it's getting further away from that. To start of with it really was just playing off the chart.

CM: Yeah, totally.

TF: It's a similar thing with the kind of diatonic stuff that's going on with the material...in some ways it is that...and then the aesthetic of the band. Because it's only me perception of what I think this "quiet field"...

PP: Exactly.

TF: ...I've got this version in my head of this. And then with that it's kind of like...I feel..I mean, it depends on definitions of improvisation which s like a massive thing. So it's the sense that you could argue that...I mean, some people, many people, have argued that in Classical music you can improvise all the time because it's all about how you approach things. It doesn't matter that everything's dictated to you.

PP: Sure. It's an interpretive thing.

TF: Yeah. So the improvisation then becomes on such a minute level that...so then it's like why is that not free? If a person's like expressing themselves in their...what's the distinction between that and an Evan Parker gig? But then I feel you just get bogged down in an endless debate about what/where the parameters are.

CM: Yeah, I think it's not healthy to do that in this context. But, the parameters of this gig are: it's happening here, now. So how much of then coming in and seeing the gig before, the slightly rushed set-up and like, the very close proximity to the audience and stuff. It's very quiet in there, it's quite a reverberant space, even though it's quite small it's go that weird echo. So then does that make it even more difficult to play quietly especially for you [Percy]? Like, you played with a mute for a lot at the start and I sort of felt that maybe that was a reaction to the setting and the context of the gig.

PP: Yeah, it's a tricky, it's a tough room.

CM: It's a hard room for you, yeah.

PP: And actually for guys that have got tons of stuff, all those pedals and stuff, you played quite quietly!

CM & TF agree

PP: I was like "oh man, this is a tough gig."

CM: And I played quite a lot of "natural" sound as well tonight...

PP: And you [Tom] did.

TF: Yeah, the same. Yeah. Part of the choice of bringing that guitar was an attempt to move a bit towards your [Percy] area. I can't do much on it timbrally, it's one sound pretty much. And I used half/less pedals, that was my fault because I forgot a plug. But, in a way I like this band because it's one of the few...with all it's limitations, in the sense of the aesthetic

and the music in front, it does make it hard play. I do like the fact that all my stuff could break and we could still do a gig. In the sense of approaching it from an improvising standpoint...[trails off]

CM: Do you think we could do it, I'm not suggesting we should, but with just acoustic guitar, double bass and trumpet?

TF: I think so.

PP: Yeah.

CM: Would it still be the same thing? I wonder whether it's [the concept] gone beyond the instrumental lineup, it's just sort of personalities plus aesthetic.

PP: It would be harder. One of the lovely things about it is the ostinato thing which you can set up which is, you know, there's a layering thing that can happen without much energy expelled.

CM: But like tonight, for example, there was a few times when I was like "this has gone on too long" [laughs].

PP: Really?!

CM: Yeah. But then I pushed myself to carry on because I think I always do that, I give up on ideas too quickly.

PP: It's the inner[inaudible] thing, the way we perceive the passing of time. Never, at any point, did I have that.

TF: I was really surprised when we stopped and it was ten past eleven. I thought we were really fast tonight and I thought it was gonna be about quarter to eleven. So I felt like that to me, it felt like that set went really fast. And it felt like we were really blasting through all the material.

CM: Yeah, I think we did at the start like, we moved quite quickly maybe. I dunno?

PP: How long did we play for?

CM: It was forty minutes exactly, pretty much.

PP: Right. Is that what you [Chris] were expecting?

CM: Up to an hour. I think maybe there was a temptation to play shorter because there'd been quite a lot of music already maybe. I got a sense that maybe the audience were tiring and, you know, leaving. Which is fine.

TF: Yeah

CM: But that sort of then made me think “okay, maybe it’s coming to an end now” rather than pushing on for another twenty minutes.

PP: But it felt complete, right?

CM: Yeah, I think so.

PP: But that idea about who’s leading, who’s pushing things forward. There’s the musical thing...and a lot of the ones [pieces] you chose had a similar tonality. So, the edges can be blurred sometimes. But then that’s the lovely thing of the page turn...

CM: Yeah! There was quite a few coordinated page turns, like everyone sort of went at the same time tonight which I thought was interesting. Maybe that’s a signal I’ve not thought about.

TF: One of the few things that comes in my head as a thought in these gigs...when’s it like not to do with the...and it’s only when that [page turn] happens cos that’s a break from what’s going on. Because of the type of music it feels like quite a weird unnatural break to stop and turn the page. But I always think “what do people think is going on?” And if there are people that are musicians here, I wonder what they think is happening right now.

CM: Do you think that while you’re playing?

TF: It’s the one thing that...but it’s only when I turn...at that moment sometimes, cos I stop playing, so there’s a moment where I’m like outside of the music for a moment just to turn a page.

PP: Sure.

TF: And a few times a thought’s come in my head while I’ve turned the page “I wonder what everyone thinks is happening right now.” Because this must seem...[trials off]

CM: Because of what’s going on musically doesn’t match up with the way you turn a page traditionally?

TF: Yeah. For me that’s the one moment I break the fourth wall. Because I’m not playing at that point. There’s a split-second where I leave, turn the page and come back. And in that split-second I kind of feel like “I wonder what everyone else is thinking now.”

CM: Yeah. Like, one of the other guys was like “what’s going on with the music?” And, yeah, it’s quite a weird thing isn’t it? We don’t all turn the page at the same time or like seem to be doing...[inaudible]

PP: Yeah.

CM: One last thing maybe. I maybe get this a bit more because I've listened to the recording that we did, for mixing [purposes], but when we're playing the things [pieces] because we're playing stuff that we've played before, are you thinking about ways we've played it before when we're playing it, or not? Is it just, you're trying to approach it fresh or...

PP: I can't help but hear the last thing, the last time we played it.

CM: Even though it was eighteen months ago?

PP: Yeah, I still hear that. Not that it's having an impact on the what I'm doing in the moment. But it's still there in the background. But sometimes it's good to not do that, to know what it is...like, a few times we've played melodies totally differently or we've played a different melody. There was a nice moment where we improvised an entirely different thing together [Percy and Tom].

TF: Yeah, there was a really nice point where it was suggestive of the music in front of us but it wasn't that.

PP: It wasn't that.

TF: And we were really together...that was, they're the kind of moments that, I know they're possible. But then this might imply the next time...because that's gonna be in my head, that *will* be in my head now. That's not going anywhere, that's a kind of poignant moment of something happening. It's not that I'll try and recreate it.

PP: Sure.

TF: It's just there...

PP: And was it number seven where you [Chris] kind of played the melody. The one where it was like...

CM: I started that one playing bits of the melody, yeah.

PP: ...but there's the two halves. Is that seven?

CM: Yeah. I started in the second half or something.

PP: Well we kind of mucked about with that and then we played it like, super-fast almost.

TF: Yep.

CM: Yeah, right. And I liked that sort of counterpoint thing actually. [laughs] Just playing quavers was really nice for a bit. That arpeggiated quavers thing. I was like, "where the fuck has this come from?!" That's a new thing that we've...[trails off]

TF: Yeah, I'd forgot that had happened.

- CM: When you [Tom] started I was like “yeah, this’ll be nice”. I dunno, I just sort of wanted to join in with what you were doing. Because it felt different from anything we’ve done like that before. Such a different sound I think, dry guitar.
- TF: I think, like Percy said, I don’t of an isolated event of when we last played, but the accumulation of everything we’ve done up to now is definitely...there’s kind of like a balance in my head of like stuff I’m kind of aware of that this band does and sounds like. It’s just things get added on top of it. But, as I say, and it’s the same with the free improv question, for me it all relates back to the same thing of like, I know that there’s the chance one day...not through anyone’s choice, because I don’t think this a band where people are thinking to make pre-planned or pre-destined choices before, or like during a gig being like “I’m doing this now”. It doesn’t seem to be like that, it seems to be a lot more sensitive and organic.
- PP: Yep.
- TF: But I still think there could be that moment where nothing happens that we’re expecting. And it’s not that any of us are trying to...it just doesn’t happen. And I think because we’ve all played in environments that you’d consider, well some people would consider more like free, you know, like...what they’d expect from free improvised music, I know that there’s that thing hovering underneath. It’s there, and it kind of like surfaces now and then in the [stillefelt] sets. But I know that one day...it might happen in the middle, it might happen right at the start and this all comes back to...I dunno, I think there’s like a break through that...but it might never happen and that’s what I really like.
- PP: Yeah.
- TF: And, to me, that’s almost like I feel, event though there’s the limitations...and it is really hard to play in this band, for me as well. Sometimes I literally think like...it’s not even thinking, I’m like “I don’t know what to play”. Cos I wanna stay within this kind of world...
- PP: Right. Because it feels like a delicate thing that you’ve created.
- CM: You don’t wanna pop that bubble by playing the wrong thing.
- PP: Or playing something, I feel every now and again we do this, playing something that isn’t...this sounds mean, but...playing something that isn’t entirely appropriate. Do you know what I mean?
- CM: You think we *do* do that sometimes?
- PP: Every now and again we do.
- CM: Yeah, yeah. I think so. For me, I do that when I’ve run out of things to do maybe or I’m thinking where the next...I can’t quite decide how to play the next thing, to stay in that

state. So maybe your mind wanders for a sec' while you're doing that and you're kind of drawn into something else? I dunno.

TF: I mean I've sometimes thought, especially with the material because it's all kind of related keys, there are some shared tones that would work all the way through. I've sometimes thought, it's not on gigs...I've thought about this as a thing...sometimes before a gig I've thought "I could play A for this whole gig. I could just play A."

CM: This is the C major band, right?!

TF: Just one A but not change, it's strict, that's not changing. That's what I'm playing for the whole gig. And sometimes I think that maybe that's more this delicate thing. Maybe that's more true to what the image is of this in my head. maybe I'm adding too much. Even the stuff that is appropriate, maybe I could boil it down to be even more appropriate.

CM: It's funny to have a sense of what's inappropriate as well. I know what you mean, but I don't think I could define it. [laughs]

PP: Yep.

TF: If I was gonna draw this band as a picture instead of playing music, I can think how I would put these inappropriate parts into the picture that just don't need to be there.

PP: They're superfluous, yeah.

CM: Yeah, okay. [in agreement]

PP: But also, it's funny that this band more than others, when people talk about it, it has a kind of transcendental effect. People go somewhere when they're listening to it. That's also in my mind a little bit. That experiential thing.

CM: For you or for the audience members?

PP: For the listener, which is interesting because I often don't care about the listener! [laughs] But it's interesting that...offering that as an experience there's a delicacy to it, there's a fragility to maintaining that in order for people to have that experience.

CM: Do you think it's partly the aesthetic that makes us more aware and people [audience members] more self aware? Because if they're moving or making a sound it's more likely to be heard and make an impact. So we're all more aware of each other

PP: But generally we move very slowly, you know. Like the lady before us when she was doing the thing, incredibly slowly, it's actually really powerful isn't it? Slow movement has a big impact. Especially nowadays where you're used to...everything moves so fast we're used to muddled sounds. Also the free improv gigs you go to, it's inhabiting a certain...I used that phrase "free improv"! It's inhabiting a certain...it has its own language, right?

- TF: Yeah.
- PP: It has a certain sound. You expect a certain handful of events.
- CM: Yeah, I'm very much of the opinion that "free improv" is a genre rather than an approach.
- TF: Yeah.
- PP: Agreed. Which this isn't, which I like about it. I mean, we know it really well, so we know the sounds of this band. But actually, for the listen it's a different experience.
- TF: There's definitely much less of a barrier. I'm really the same in that I usually couldn't care less what people think when I'm playing. I don't really care.
- PP: You can't help it for the most part. [what people think]
- TF: To me it's like, anything I do if there's people there it will elicit a reaction in them, so whatever that reaction is, I win. That's how I've always seen it. So if they really hate it, I'm glad...the stronger the reaction, regardless of which way it goes, I'm happy because I think that's what art's for, to provoke an emotional response in someone. Whereas this band...usually there's a level of a barrier, it feels, between [the musicians and] the audience, in the sense that...whether it's the music itself, or the aesthetic or the dynamic of the music or the people you're playing with. Usually there feels like there's some level of barrier between you and the audience. This band is probably the most exposed I've felt performing in front of people. It feels like being naked almost in front of people. There's nowhere to hide, there's not the usual things you can hide behind. So, as much as like I don't really care what people come out of it [a performance] with, but when it's happening...All of our audiences have always been there from the start to the end. There's never people that seem to just be drifting off. I have a hyperawareness of that which makes me...you don't want to drop the ball, especially with this music. And it's not hard in the sense of technically difficult, but it would be really easy to drop the ball at any moment.
- CM: It's like a different technique isn't it? Like a non-musical, or a non-practical technique, like a sensibility.
- TF: Yeah, and that's hard. It's really hard because...if improvising can be seen as an expression of your own personality, regardless of the parameters in which you do that, within this [stillefelt] it means that that sensitivity is on full show. So you don't have as much chance to hide behind...it's that thing, even if you're doing free jazz, as you said, you bring stuff that's there, that's intrinsically part of what you do. There's certain things you know you can rely on to keep that distance between people [the musicians and the audience], keep that control. Whereas with this [stillefelt] you don't have that. I can't rely on the things I know that I can just be like "well, I'm not playing too well now so I'll just do this thing and then I know everything will be alright".

CM & PP laugh in agreement

- TF: There's not that so it's that thing of, if I am going to see this thing that I'm doing [making music] as this offering, as my creative persona to people, in this band it's on full show. And it's on full show in parameters of yours [Chris] that I can't choose. And that's why it becomes really...that sensitivity goes to a whole new level because I don't have anywhere to hide, but I'm also in a place that's not my choosing. Which is not a bad thing, it's just quite a different way to...[trails off]
- CM: Which is weird because I feel that about myself! And I've created the situation! Maybe more so because I know it's me that's made that situation...not more but a different way, maybe. I've made this situation so it's my responsibility in some ways. And I know I'm making you guys uncomfortable, so I feel responsible for that. But I'm also making myself feel uncomfortable by making you feel uncomfortable by...
- PP: But it's not a negative "uncomfortable".
- CM: Yeah, "uncomfortable" is maybe the wrong word.
- PP: But it's interesting you're [Chris] not only the composer but the curator of this ensemble. You called two of the guys that play the most notes!
- TF: That's a common thing I've heard but I do like it. There's quite a few people in Birmingham have commented on the choice [of musicians]. And I love it because a few people have said, they've checked out the record or seen us playing, "Oh, it's really interesting to hear you play like that because it just seems like not the three people to do that".
- CM: Interesting that people have an impression of how you play as well, I think that's a fascinating thing.
- PP: Of course they do. You have an impression of how other people play.
- CM: Yeah, yeah.
- PP: Which would be a totally different impression of how they view themselves.
- CM: Exactly.
- PP: I also love this Hegelian thing like, $1 + 2 =$ at least 3. Because there's the one thing, and there's another thing and then there's the thing that those two create. So the equation becomes more complex when it's three...so actually these three individuals, all out of their for want of a better phrase "comfort zones", we all create this other thing. Which actually, from the reaction of audience's, is a whole other experience, relaxing and transcendental.
- CM: Soporific if you're some of the audience! [laughs]
- TF: I do, like that from a point of view of genres and things that do exits already, this project could easily become a pastiche of many things. But it really isn't. Partly, the written music

does help in that way and the way that we're playing it, in the sense that there's kind of free choice in a lot of ways. But also, it doesn't sound like...I had a pre-conception before we first started and you asked me about it, in a sense that in my head I already know how this is going to sound. In my head I heard Jakob Bro, and I'm going to go into this and play like Jakob Bro...

CM: I'm going to make you play a Jakob Bro tune tomorrow.

PP: [laughs]

TF: ...this was subconscious as well, it's not like me planning out. And in my head I was like Percy will play like Arve [Henriksen] and it will sound like this and I had this big picture of this lush soundscape where somehow I played not like myself! And it's just nowhere near that. Which is good, it shouldn't be anywhere near that.

PP: Which it shouldn't be.

CM: But I still think it's connected to those things because that's the stuff I listen to, so in my mind it's not removed from that stuff.

TF: No, but it's not imitating that stuff and I think that's the main thing. Because it would be easy for us to...and it would have been easy for you [Chris] to write music that's more imitative of that and you'd be like "I specifically want [you to play] this." But there's none of that, there's been none of that, which means it's quite like a standalone...I can't really think of anything that sounds specifically like this at the moment, that I've heard. Which is good.

PP: Yep. But what's the point of it sounding like something else? This is the greatest challenge I think.

CM: To try and create something that doesn't sound like anybody else .

PP: Obviously there's gradations of this.

Coda.

PP: I like this band!

CM: I thought you were about to say something profound as I reach for the stop button!

PP: It's classic isn't it? You know, when you do these things. You wrap it up but then you leave it going cos then the good stuff happens!

CM: Someone absolutely nails it! Sorry if this has been awkward, I never do this. Normally you just pack up and go and...

PP: Well musicians don't do this. Like when do you actually have frank discussions about...

TF: It should happen more often.

PP: I think so.

TF: I think especially with this kind of gig it's good to talk about it, but it's also easier to talk about it. But I think the gigs that are maybe more...the gigs where we probably feel more "comfortable", where we feel we fell more comfortable, what we were talking about we feel we can't do on these gigs. I think they're probably times where this [process of discussion] would be even more helpful. Because that comfort probably comes from a sense of...

CM: Sure.

TF: On this [*stillefelt*] it feels really constructive to do this and it's just great to voice opinions but then there's definitely other...it's not really awkward but definitely there's circumstances where this would definitely be more important to do. It should happen more. People should talk about what they're up to and how everyone feels. Because it just doesn't happen.

PP: It's also quite English as well. We shouldn't really criticise each other an...[inaudible]

CM: It would be very easy for someone to get offended.

PP: Yeah.

TF: But I think having an open platform for everyone to say what they felt first, it can be like a group exercise. I mean, there could be a case where someone's saying "you're not doing the right thing" or...

CM: You've been being inappropriate all night!

PP: Yeah, right! Inappropriate! But you're [Chris] generally always poker faced, you don't really give much away.

CM: [laughs] I'm like a swan! on top, it's serene but underneath...I don't look at anyone, I think. I don't look at you guys.

PP: No, you don't. And sometimes Tom does.

TF: Now and then, yeah.

PP: But [you're also like that] in terms of being prescriptive or any kind of directives at all. And after the gigs you're always like [nonchalant tone/shoulder shrugs] "Yeah."

CM: [laughs]

PP: You rarely kind of go “man, that thing that we did was cool.”

CM: I think that’s more because I’m worried about myself. As in, is everyone okay in this situations that I’ve created? I don’t want to be like...

PP: We’re *totally* okay, just roasted. In a good way! But I really like this band!

TF: I’ve been really excited about doing four gigs in a row for a long time

CM: I’m definitely looking forward tomorrow.

TF: This is a rare treat.

Thursday 24th October 2019, 10.45pm

CM: So, was tonight still fun?!

PP: I dunno, what do you think?

CM: It was weirder because there was a much higher percentage of people I know [in the audience].

PP: Right. That made a difference?

CM: I think so.

PP: Does that generally effect you? Thinking about audiences?

CM: Not like, [worried tone] "oh shit there's loads of people here I know", it's like [relaxed tone] "oh, there's lots of people here I know, that's nice. We should play well."

PP: People don't hate me after all!

CM: Yeah! [laughs]

TF: What I think was interesting today, especially just in comparison to yesterday, the act that preceded us yesterday could have definitely...if you were gonna take a wild guess [at which set followed yesterday's act], the set we did today...you'd probably pick that one [rather than the previous day's set]. I just find it a bit weird because yesterday the way we played was kind of in a certain space, whereas tonight was a lot more wild, it was a bit more off piste.

PP: Today?

TF: Yeah. In the sense of this thing we were talking about [the previous day] what's acceptable and what's not. I mean, I think anything's acceptable in some ways, but tonight it seemed like there was more things that you could...if you were just gonna talk about the aesthetic of what we're aiming for...

PP: Yeah.

CM: Where did you [Percy] come from tonight?

PP: Home.

CM: I just wondered if you'd come from the other gig.

PP: And you?

CM: I came here quite early.

PP: So you saw the...

CM: I sat out here [in the adjacent room], but I listened to the polite comedy, yeah.

TF: Was it poetry?

CM: No it was a comedy night, but it's called "A very lovely night" or something like that. It was quite inoffensive comedy. I just wanted to be here a bit early to check out... I wanted to tell them [the comedy audience] that we were doing something. I just wondered if you'd come from...

PP: ...seeing other music. No. Do you think it was different today because of the post facto discussion?

CM: Yeah.

PP: In what way?

CM: I think I looked up more! [laughs] Quite consciously, actually, a couple of times.

PP: So it was like a kinaesthetic thing for you?

CM: Yeah, it was very literal I was thinking "I don't look up." I was thinking about that today, [how] I'm just very much kind of head down in this band. So I was like, "what happens if I look up a little bit?"

PP: And what happened?

CM: I smiled a little bit...

PP & TF laugh

CM: I was definitely more aware of the fact that we'd talked about it last night. The [act of] looking up is inconsequential almost, it's just that we had a talk about it and that made me at least think about these things. And talking about enjoying it last night was nice because I felt like I could enjoy it a bit more tonight. It's good to say "we enjoyed it last night, so let's push it a bit tonight", maybe...is that what you [Tom] were saying?

TF: Yeah, I don't know if I can pinpoint a reason why...as I said, if I was in a blind testing I'd have put that [tonight's performance] after yesterday[']s previous act]. It wasn't...we played completely differently yesterday, maybe it was the talk that allowed that, so it's a fact of hearing music or seeing music or even being in a gig before something like this might have no effect actually. Because the act that was playing yesterday, it really didn't make me want to play...it didn't set a tone of "oh, this is what this night is we've gotta..." There was no real consideration of what she was up to. I think the choice of pieces tonight definitely changed...like, some of the material tonight, the numbers that we didn't play

last night basically, there were things that included way more variation in harmony. Last night was more...

PP: "C" world.

TF: Yeah, whereas tonight there a lot was more, within pieces, modulations or straying away from any diatonicism within some of the separate pieces.

CM: I think in 9 I noticed that.

TF: Yeah, 9 is all over the place!

CM: [laughs]

TF: And even 1, the one we ended with, because it has that ending tag but the harmony itself is quite...

CM: Yeah, it's different.

TF: That definitely changes how we play.

CM: I felt like, I don't know I'd have to listen back, but it felt like there was a bit more "changes" playing. As in, we were actually following the form [of the pieces] a bit more.

PP: Yeah, and you [Chris] were playing time, you were playing in time for a whole thing...

CM: For quite a while actually. On 7 was it?

PP: Yeah.

TF: Yeah.

CM: I just kept playing the form for ages, yeah. I don't know why.

PP: I was kind of..."oh!" [surprise]

TF: Yep.

CM: Do you know what, actually, this was a conscious decision but I didn't realise it! Is that possible?!

PP: [laughs] A conscious subconscious!

CM: I didn't wanna do 2 today. I decided that because it's a thing.

PP: It's a thing, right? And we have to play it as a thing.

CM: Because it's got quite a strong rhythm...

PP: And we practiced it!

CM: Yeah, right! We've got to play this because we practiced trying to play it! But then at that point in the set [when I started playing time] I realised I was missing some time, I think.

PP: Ah, okay.

CM: So after I started playing that I was like "yeah, actually let's have a bit of time" because we haven't had that other thing [piece 2]. So maybe it needs to have...I don't know, I'd have to listen to some of the other things we've played but, maybe we need to have a point [in the set] where there's some time. I dunno. Maybe I need there to be a point where there's some time.

TF: Yeah, maybe you [Chris] wanted time. But then it's like completely valid, it was one of those things. There was a lot more sticking to changes at times but, I think as a personal choice, if you want to then you want to. You do it. You might not consciously decide to do it, but you might want to. There might just be an urge to fulfil that, so...I'm not sure if the actual music itself needs time sometimes but maybe you [Chris] wanted that and that's maybe all that matters.

PP: But for what reason is that? Because you feel that's what we do.

CM: I don't know, it just seemed appropriate at that moment. In the context of what we [had] played, I thought that was a moment where we could play a bit of time. And it was like yeah, this would work now so let's try it and see. we haven't had that so far and maybe that will work if we do it and it sort of felt like it did so I did it again! And kept doing it and doing it. I think maybe you [Percy] joined in playing something, I was like, "if no one goes with it, maybe I'll stop" but...

PP: I forget now.

CM: But *that* was quite conscious. I think I made a few more conscious decisions tonight. I don't know if you [two] did that. Actual things where I was like "I'm gonna do this next".

PP: Yeah, I had that thought at one point but then it...yeah. Sometimes it's like "Why am I doing that? Why am I preparing the next thing when actually it might not be appropriate when we get there?"

CM: Yes.

PP: Okay, for me it [the previous day's discussion] sent me in two different directions. I left yesterday feeling a little bit more e, I dunno, empowered about playing whatever the fuck you wanna play. Like, it doesn't matter. But also, thinking back about it on the drive home, thinking actually how much of what I played was superfluous. So I was like actually, feel free to play more in this way but actually don't play as much! I felt like, today, that didn't have such a great impact on what I did.

CM: Why not?

PP: Because it was, I dunno...it felt too dense.

CM: Texturally?

PP: Yeah, or I was just forcing myself to not...it wasn't an organic thing.

CM: Do you think that's the situation? Like, there's definitely a different feeling tonight when we were playing. It felt more of a concert rather than a happening. Last night was kind of a bit loose and, you know, in terms of the environment I mean. Whereas tonight we turned up, everyone came for our thing and then [sound to represent something passing in an instant] we played our thing. So maybe is it related to that?

PP: Maybe, I don't know.

[longish pause]

TF: I do think the setting...it's a case of like, the setting of the gig itself, I do think it can have an effect. If it has an effect on one person's decisions within the band then that's going to have a knock on effect on everyone. I mean yesterday... I definitely felt different just by the fact that we set up in front of a load of stuff really quickly. And just the layout, the room felt completely different last night. Everything about it felt different.

PP: Yeah.

CM: Yeah.

TF: I mean, for me, last night was more enjoyable in the sense of the setting. Just because it was a bit more like...I dunno, there was a lot more space. There was probably just the same amount of people at both gigs.

CM: I think there probably was, yeah.

TF: But the kind of blasé set up of the room yesterday definitely...I dunno, stuff like that, maybe subconsciously, make me feel a bit more comfortable. Whereas don't, as you say, it did feel like a concert. It almost felt like a jazz festival gig, but a mini one, a tiny tiny one.

CM: A jazz festival consisting of one gig! [laughs]

PP: [laughs]

CM: I know what you mean though, yeah. I thin kit could have been maybe because everyone just turned up for the gig and then left. That's got a festival feel about it, everyone gets there for that one thing. Whereas last night people were just sort of here [for the previous acts].

TF: Yeah.

CM: It almost didn't matter if we played or not last night, I felt. You know, because it was tagged onto the end of something else. Maybe that gave us a bit more of a license to do shit or...Tonight it was like, we *have* to do something because people are coming specifically for this thing.

PP: For me, no. That doesn't make any difference.

CM: You don't consider that?

PP: Purposefully.

CM: Oh right, you *choose* not to consider it.

PP: For me, there could be no one there and I would still aim to do the same thing.

CM: Yeah, I was gonna ask about that because for a while I thought there might be no one here for little while! And I was like, well, we should play anyway...

PP: Yeah!

[Big gap to say goodbye to an audience member we all know.]

TF: I did think when I turned up...I was fully prepared for there to be no people here. Because there was no one else that we knew here, yet. There was clearly no one else here to see the gig yet and there were various people packing up [from the comedy event before hand]. But I think...I *do* think that the difference between last night [environment] and tonight made a difference. Maybe not in how I played, just an awareness of how I think was different. So it might not actually have an effect on what I play, that's something I'd have to concentrate on to know. But I definitely think tonight, if no one had turned up, I wouldn't have played any differently. It wouldn't have made a difference. If no one was here, it wouldn't have made a difference. Whether that's because I mentally prepared for it anyway, I don't know. But, I wouldn't have been unenthusiastic to play, I would have just played. For me, it would have been the same if there were people in the room or not. And it was the same last night. I was prepared last night when they said "Right, we're gonna have a ten minute break and then there's another band on", there was a part of me that thought "all of these people are gonna leave" but it's fine because we're gonna play.

PP: Sure.

TF: I don't think that would effect...yeah, it's weird. It's not too much the people, the room setup does make me think a bit differently. So, last night it was more like the set up of the room. And we were sitting in a different place [to tonight] so the sound..like today we

were in a different place. Things like that do make me feel different just because the actual sound's different. And that can effect things because you hear things differently.

CM: Were you thinking about that while we were playing? Were you thinking about last night as we were playing tonight?

TF: Not as we were playing, no. Only now, now that we're kind of considering stuff. So while we were playing, I wasn't really thinking that's what happened, to be honest.

CM: I expected that I would, I think. Especially the ones [pieces] that we played last night. When I picked it out I was like "oh shit, if we play that I'm gonna think that it's going to be how we played it last night". And then it wasn't. So maybe that's why this thing happened with 7 [playing the chord changes in time] because I wanted to not play it like we'd played it last night in some ways...

PP: Sure. That was at the back of my mind for your approach. Because it was really, really different.

CM: I think it was a reaction against playing last night.

PP: It that another conscious subconscious thing?! [laughs]

CM: [laughs] I need a word for that. I think I was thinking about it.

TF: I don't know. I'm definitely sensitive to where chairs are.

CM: Yeah! [laughs]

TF: Just where things are. It sounds weird but...like last night I really liked the lights. Not that that should effect it but I really liked it.

CM: Yeah, I nearly brought some lights tonight actually.

TF: Tonight was very clinical.

CM: We were under the spotlight, weren't we? In a white room. I think if you look at the GoPro [video footage] it's going to look really weird because we're framed in a white box.

TF: I don't think that necessarily effects how I play, but I'm just aware of it. And that's the thing, I don't know. I'd have to start thinking every time I do a gig now, about this stuff, and then listening back to stuff and seeing if there's any different. But I don't think it does, but I am aware of it. So tonight, even when was playing, I was like, in the back of my head, "oh, I wish that cool light that made everyone's amps really noisy was on". And the TV set behind me and the old tape player...I mean it's superficial, there's no need for it, it just looks nice but...

CM: Yeah. Well, it's part of how we're set up and presented isn't it?

TF: But I don't think it changes the way I play. To some other people watching it, it might change the way they perceive it. like "I was this cool band and there was an old TV behind them and some weird lampshades"...they might not say it, but it might be part of the whole experience. But I don't think the music changes necessarily.

CM: Were you tempted to play the Jakob Bro tune?

TF: No. No.

CM: I just wanted to put it in to see if you [both] would be tempted to do it. Because we were talking about it last night...because Tom said that was his expectation of what this [stillefelt] might sound like, I was like what happens if we have it there, will we be tempted to actually do it? I wasn't [necessarily] expecting anyone to play it but if it's there maybe we'll use it. Or is it the fact that you know it could be there....

PP: I was ready for it but it felt complete what we did, didn't it?

CM: Yeah, yeah.

TF: That's the thing, it felt like the end when we got to the end. You know, doing the Jakob Bro tune for *me*...it's somebody else's music for a start. And also its almost synonymous with like a band that's written a load of good original material and then they're like "and now we're going to do *All of me*." And it's like "What? Why are they doing that? Why do you need to?"

PP: But that also happens!

CM: Yeah, exactly! [laughs]

TF: It does, it does! So it didn't feel necessary [to play the Jakob Bro tune]. I like that it's there in the pad though.

CM: I thought it would be a nice thing to have. It's like, it's in the background, you've actually got it in the pad. It's like an obvious influence which is sitting there, it could come in, but it doesn't need to.

PP: It's somehow still resonating on the page.

CM: Yeah! Because I thought about it a couple of times like, maybe we should go this way towards that thing. And then something moved a little like that, but it didn't go towards that tune. So, just don't play it! There was one point where I thought "maybe I'll start playing it" and then I just decided that it was wrong. I thought we were going to finish there was like a big...I was playing like a big B major chord for some reason, or like a [note] B and a D sharp and you guys were playing that kind of went with it [harmonically]. And then I sort of stopped and you two carried on and I was like "Oh, yeah! Right! There is an extra bit to this [set]. It's going to go somewhere else. Maybe it should go into the Jakob

Bro thing *here*. Maybe this is the point.” And then I was like “oh, no. It doesn’t sound like that’s where we’re going at all.” We sort headed somewhere else, and then it...

TF: I definitely think that the last, the number 9 sheet is drastically different to everything else in the pad. And the way we okay on that is really different. Because there’s no linear structure to it...there’s no clear...you don’t play through it. So with that one it’s definitely like...’cos it’s not diatonic. It’s quite easy to have completely jarring sections happening at once.

CM: Yeah.

PP: Yeah, right.

TF: And also there is no instruction on what to do. So, that one can set the tone, in a sense, because that happened quite early on.

CM: I considered starting with that one actually.

TF: I think it can change the rest of the course of how we...like, I think that’s why number 7 sounded, maybe, so different, or 5, or 1 or one of the ones we played last night that’s like A minor kind of thing. I notice we play quite different on that one [9]. Just because it doesn’t have these big, nice epic chords and stuff. It doesn’t have that really. It’s just a snapshot of ideas in there.

CM: I don’t mind either way, but should it not be there?

TF: No, I think it should. I think it definitely should. And I love the weird little sample bit in it! It’s just really good to have little things like that...I dunno it’s just different, isn’t it?

CM: Yeah, it’s sort of somewhere else to go isn’t it? In some ways we’ve got quite limited resources, even though we’ve got a lot of things we could do with pedals. There’s only three of us! There’s only so many things you can do isn’t there?

TF: I still think I’d like to try it completely acoustic after what you said last night.

PP: Part of me wants to go absolutely the other way as well. I kind of want to be engulfed by the sound you’re making.

CM: So, is it weird for you, because every time we’ve played before you’ve [Percy] had a mic with at least some reverb on it, but [here] you’re very out sonically.

PP: It’s hardcore, yeah! Also, having done a few things recently where I’m being [live] sampled that gives a different...[in this context] it’s like the sound finishes here [gestures towards where the end of his trumpet would be during playing]. In a room like this, it’s gone.

CM: Yeah, sure. There’s no decay is there.

PP: But also the idea can't be manipulated or rotated or whatever.

CM: You like that though, right? We've spoken about this before.

PP: Yeah, I like that thing. It's nice to work with. I mean, I can't do that electronic thing but I like working within that environment.

CM: Maybe we need to sort something out for you tomorrow...

PP: But this is also cool.

CM: I'm just aware that your sound is in a very localised space. In the acoustic space, and we [me and Tom] can go other ways.

PP: But it does have an impact, that psycho-acoustic thing impacts on what you do.

TF: Yeah, I think it's one of the common things that can really ruin gigs for me, just the sound of a room. And I find it really hard to over come that, it's probably like the biggest issue I've got. You know that gig we did...for me personally that was one of the worst gigs I've done all year. Just because of the sound in the room. I couldn't hear things how I hear them normally.

[TF & CM discuss another similar gig with similar acoustic issues in the performance space which affected the playing]

CM: But I don't find that here [at this venue].

TF: Here's fine.

CM: But it's probably harder for you [Percy] having an acoustic instrument. Or different, not necessarily harder.

PP: Yeah. For me, in this room, you guys sound small, which is weird. Maybe I'm just sitting in the wrong place.

CM: Yeah, we've not really sorted out monitoring or position of the speakers or anything...

TF: We're playing quite quiet as well, just because it's [the room] just like a stone box. So, my amp's [volume is] pretty quiet and even that...there's a very fine line in that kind of room where it could go from tolerable to unbearable.

CM: But it was really fucking loud in there last night [when the other bands were playing] so why are we worried about that?!

PP: Because it's called *stillefelt*!

CM: I ruined it with the name! [laughs]

PP: You destroyed it with a concept before we even got together! [laughs]

[At this point Sam Slater joins the conversation. As well as being a musician, Sam was present at the performance under discussion and is very familiar with *stillefelt* as he has been to previous performances and released the trio's debut album on his label *Stoney Lane Records*. He was aware of the project and what we were trying to achieve in discussing the music and the performances.]

SS: As a P.S. on the end, it sounded very different to the last time I heard you play to when I last heard you play together.

PP: How?

SS: I think it was a big thing the trumpet not having reverb added at least. It felt, not necessarily in a bad way, it felt more contrived. As in, you were using more of the composition to base stuff on.

CM: Tonight? [surprised]

PP: Really? [surprised]

CM: I'd have thought the other way.

PP: Yeah.

SS: It felt more natural [at the previous performance] in the black box, whereas here I could actually see you turning a piece of music over, or whatever you were looking at I assume it's music!

CM: Should we explain that? [the use of music] It half crossed my mind tonight to explain what we were doing before we started.

SS: It might be interesting but I don't think it's necessary.

TF: [Name removed] asked me about it actually.

CM: Yeah, someone asked me before we started tonight as well.

SS: I guess especially if people have seen you [*stillefelt* performance] before.

CM: I quite like the mystery, I have to say.

SS: Yeah! This isn't a negative thing, just an observation.

CM: I quite like the fact that it looks like were reading music and no one can work out if we are or not.

- SS: You can see the few points where you jump into something or there's a clear change.
- CM: Yeah.
- SS: I liked it though. It was different again to what's happened before. I'm not sure which [performance] I prefer to be honest, it's all good. But, the room...you find that with every gig you do, the room and the sound and the light in the space makes a massive difference. And then your own personal vibe that you come in the room with in the first place. Have you had a good day? etc.
- TF: I find that I do, generally, my best gigs hungover. The harder the music, the more hungover I am...and it's a weird thing, I've noticed it actually has a massive impact and I tend to do way better. And it's because I'm not concerned when I'm hungover. It's not my main concern! My main concern is that I get through the gig, go home and go to bed. And then I tend to have a really good gig! Because any kind of negative thoughts are gone, all the negativity is focussed on the hangover. I might get really drunk tonight!
- [everyone laughs]
- SS: The other thing is that it changed a little bit in vibe, it felt more...about two thirds of the way through, maybe three quarters of the way through the volume dropped a little bit, I think. It also felt like you [all] let go a bit more. I think it was not far from your [Percy] circular breathing thing...that felt a bit more [like you were all thinking] "Ah, okay. Fuck it."
- CM: It still didn't go like total "fuck it" though! I think we still had that thing of "well, we can't go *that* far."
- SS: It was holding on, yeah.
- PP: Yeah.
- SS: That's the space as well. The lighting, you could see everyone. Whereas the black box, you can't see anyone so you just go for it.
- TF: I have thought quite a bit since yesterday, after when we were talking about the setting and the aesthetic you've [Chris] created, mainly with the name and what the words translate to this whole thing...something I did think about today, as we were playing, which I was consciously thinking "if I create this kind of quiet field in my head (like what my version of this is) does it fit in my picture." And I was actually consciously doing that. And the only reason [I did that] is because we were talking about this yesterday. So I was actually trying to imagine imagery in my world of what this thing is.
- CM: Kind of like synaesthetic?

- TF: Yeah. So I was just trying to think “okay then, if this is going to be all within this aesthetic then what’s my imagination going to come up with? And how is it going to keep within that aesthetic?” Because you kind of use a lot of these sounds for anything if you want. So how do I keep within the boundaries of what I’m hearing? And it didn’t leave. It didn’t have to leave the field, so to speak! Because there’s lots that can happen in a field! There’s the very obvious though of tranquility, but I think that comes in loads of different forms.
- CM: There’s also the different meanings of “field”. As in you “feeled” it, you “felt” it. It’s a deliberate...it’s a tactile word because I want it to be tactile music. Music that has another quality to it almost, that isn’t sonic. It feels like it has got something you can touch. So you’re thinking of it as a visual thing, whereas I’m thinking of it as “how does it actually feel?” What would it be like to grab hold of it?

Saturday 25th October, 2.08pm

TF: ...[the gig last night] felt a bit more serious...serious but not in a contrived way but a kind of like a bit more fun.

CM: Do you think [refers to a specific audience member] being here can have that much of an effect?

PP: [Answers immediately] Yeah.

TF: Yeah.

CM: One person? I mean I agree! [laughs] It's amazing isn't it?!

PP: In all seriousness, for me, no. I don't think so.

CM: Do you think those things before [you play an improvised gig], those chats with people before effects stuff? So here's an example of a gig I did with you [Percy] that I felt really did something. We did a gig at The Vortex with [Paul] Dunmall, do yo remember that one?

PP: Yep.

CM: And he had Elton Dean's sax case with him and gave it back to his [Elton Dean's] widow before the gig and I think we were standing right next to them or something. I didn't realise that was going to happen and then they stayed for the gig and that made quite an impression on me, that they were there. It sort of felt like they [the audience] were already on our side. Does that make sense? You're playing to the home crowd or whatever. There's people here who support this music so we should...you know?

PP: Sure.

CM: So like last night there's people that we know, friends that are here so maybe we should play for them.

PP: I don't feel like that. Maybe this is me being idealistic...I don't tend to think like that because they're not as important...as the music. So if it was like a hierarchy of importance for me, for what I'm working for, what I'm putting my energy towards, it's like at the very top of the pyramid it's music and then you guys [Chris and Tom].

CM: So how is the music abstract from people that are listening to it then?

PP: The thing is, if the music is strong and if you're fully committed and approach it with absolute purity and commitment then it will resonate with people, people will appreciate it. But if I try and play *for* people, then the music suffers, in my opinion.

CM: I guess it's not playing *for* people as such but a sense that you are...like the trust that we have as musicians, that we can play like this [within *stillefelt*], I think that if I've got a

similar trust with an audience that then...it's not like I'm trying to play to impress people or play a certain way but if you're being afforded the opportunity to perform for people, who are trusting that you are going to deliver something, I think that impacts on me a little bit.

PP: What about your listening experiences when you are the audience? Do you ever get a sense of the ensemble, whoever it is and whatever format, is playing *for* you or playing for the music or playing for each other?

CM: I think sometimes when I watch things and I get a sense that they [the musicians] are not interested in what the audience are thinking, then I am less interested in what they are doing. It's not that I want them to be sympathetic to what I want but if I get a sense that I feel like I don't need to be there, then I feel like I don't [need to be there].

PP: Some of the best concerts I've ever seen it just so happened that I was in the room. And actually it could have been that group of people in an empty space or their front rooms just playing for the sake of playing, either for the music's sake or each others's sake. And it's so joyous that, even if it's [musically] dark, there's a joyfulness that emerges irrespective of environment or occasion.

TF: I do think that sometimes from a very base level, I was talking to someone about this earlier, I literally don't care what people think or how they react. The last thing I want is for people to be present but somehow not present. So, if somebody was around when I was playing anything and then after they just didn't say anything and I was like "Did you enjoy that?" and they said they weren't paying attention or couldn't remember anything or didn't care, that would be the worst. Because it's like...not that it matters if people are there or not, but if what's happening doesn't elicit any kind of response, whether that's an emotional response in them or a clearly visceral, instantaneous thing, then there's a failure on my behalf. The only difference between playing in a room just for the sake of music or playing in a room for the sake of music and there's people there, I do feel there's a difference. There's kind of like a moment of connection between the audience and the musicians where it's shared. This is *so* subjective. From my point of view there's definitely a kind of response of energy from people. I mean sometimes people can make that clear by kind of...

PP: Making noise?

TF: Yeah, they want to congratulate certain things or not. But sometimes even if you don't look up or say the room was dark, I sometimes feel you can sense when people are *there* and it's almost like a shared thing then. So then the music becomes like a shared experience. I feel...It's just different, those times are completely different to when you just play for the sake of music and it doesn't matter if people are there or not. So there's different events but I don't think it actually affects the music itself, that's the thing, I just think it's a nice thing to experience. But I don't think, once audiences start to engage, or if they're there from the very start and there's this collective thing from the beginning, I don't think it would necessarily change how I played. I think I'd still play the same. It's not like when you're running a race and everyone's shouting at you and you get extra

momentum. It's just nice in retrospect to be like, that was a really nice shared experience. You kind of feel like you're with everyone.

PP: It's a funny thing isn't it, it's counterintuitive that the process of not caring actually has a positive impact on the music and it dilutes the ego doesn't it? Because you're not working towards pleasing people by doing something "impressive" or...

CM: But, that is impressive in its own right!

PP: For sure, yeah! But it has a *positive* impact on collective music making as oppose to a negative.

CM: What do you think about this idea, maybe we've touched on it there, that there's a "start", there's a time, if there's an audience or not, here's the start of what we're going to do. As in literally when the music [sound] starts. Or that sort of slight pause before we start [making sound] that always seems to happen, there's a little anticipation. I don't mean us [exclusively] I mean generally [within the practice of freely improvised musical performance]. Something I've been thinking about is that that isn't necessarily where the improvisation begins and that things you bring before that "start" kind of then impact on what's happening. Whether that's to do with other people or your own thing or...So, trying to that improvisation isn't the same as saying this is when it starts, it's other stuff that happened to you today or this week or year has brought you to a point where we're going to stay the "music is starting" but actually the improvisation's begun before that. It's not trying to say that the music's always ongoing or whatever but if you take an isolated event, it's impacted by other stuff.

PP: For example the interactions that we have?

CM: Yeah.

PP: Before we even set up [to perform] or the process of putting the music together? All of that being part of the performance?

CM: Setting up, parking, you know...It's not part of the performance necessarily but things happen to you that naturally shape the improvisation. You can choose to engage with that or not. You could really go with it. You could say "this thing happened so I'm going to make it part of my performance" like, the thing I was saying about going to Norway and meeting the guy who released something I played on and then using that as part of the performance. For me that means that that performance actually began way before the start. That's a very literal example but then there's other things as well...

PP: It's subjective though isn't it? Or are those interactions, those events, just informing what happens. Because this music's weird isn't it? Because we don't go "Ah 1, ah 2, ah 1, 2, 3..." There isn't...that's interesting that moment before something happens, that anticipation of who's going to play and the way that that makes you feel.

CM: It's that idea that [performing] improvising is just beginnings. That's the artwork in improvising, creating a situation where a beginning can happen. And that's all improv is in a sense. As soon as you start [claps hand] that's it, you've made a mark, you're already limiting your freedom by even doing that first thing.

PP: But even that event has its own hierarchical nuances doesn't it? Like who does what when. Like, I did that thing with Evan [Parker] the other week.

CM: And everyone waits for Evan! [laughs]

PP: Because its Evan, everyone waits for Evan! So he made this announcement [to the audience at the start of the performance] and he sat down and Mark Nauseef started, he was playing all these wonderful bells, and Evan went "Oh, thank you Mark". He recognised that, and then we were in, it was like a relief for him [Evan].

TF: It's a funny thing that because last night I made a conscious decision, I started.

CM: Yeah! And weirdly I'd made a conscious decision not to start.

PP: And I was there with you [Tom]. I got a sense that you were going to and I was like "I'm gonna be right there from the start".

TF: That's the thing you [Percy] were straight in and you [Chris] waited for quite a while. But it was a thing there was just like...thinking this is funny because even though this is not...a lot of people would argue that this [stillefelt] isn't free improvisation in a sense of the "genre" but, there is this common theme of when somebody leads a band you wait for them to start. And I've had the same thing doing gigs with Mark Sanders where, when I was younger, I'd be like "I'll wait for Mark".

PP: Sure.

TF: He's the more experienced person and this is his space.

PP: But it's also more delicate than that isn't it? Even though any expectation is tacit...it's slightly different in this group as we've talked about with the concept, we know about your [Chris] concept...but in a purely improvised setting, you get such a sensibility of setting the tone from those from those first moments. And in a way I often see it as a light being turned on. From those first few moments it casts this like visualisation of the whole journey of that set.

CM: Do you think the structure's then made in that first bit?

PP: I think it has a huge impact. Because, certainly the way I see it, when you play with good people who are on the same wavelength, the story is already unfolded, you can already tell how many chapters there are in the first few seconds.

- CM: Yeah, I don't think that. But I remember talking to you about this before and you saying that you're sort of thinking of it as a story. I don't know if it's quite as strong as that for me but it does have a part in shaping the whole thing, what happens at the beginning.
- PP: I remember Evan saying something interesting that's relevant [to this], that the best music happens in soundcheck and rehearsals. And at the time he said it I was like "Really?" And the more I think about that, that's exactly how I feel.
- CM: Really? [laughs] I'm doing the same thing!
- PP: And with this group, I've had an equally fulfilling experience, musically when we played in your [Chris] front room as we do in any of the performances.
- CM: I think it certainly felt as much as a challenge playing just in my living room as it did here. And if that's what you're interested in in music, which I think we all are into the challenge...
- PP: That's definitely a thread, yeah.
- CM: ...then that would seem to be true I think.
- PP: But in terms of moments of beauty, whether that's like angry beauty or ugliness...
- TF: I think my list of the hierarchy of like when good music happens, at the very bottom would be a recording studio. And I feel I'm getting to the point now where I'm objectively listening to other people's albums that have been recorded in studios and I'm just like "this sucks" because it doesn't sound right, it's this like "not them" version of it. I'd rather just listen to a live recording, even if it's bad quality and there's mistakes...
- CM: Yeah.
- TF: I think playing live, as you said, there's a point where...just with other people in the room and the negotiations between a group of people. I mean luckily in this setting there's only three people which is nice and it's easier to navigate between who we are as people and what we expect from it. But definitely when ensembles get bigger, people have different needs, they have different expectations when they perform...which you don't tend to get as much in a rehearsal, cos people all of a sudden don't tend to feel like they're performing, even though they are because they're playing music.
- CM: I think three is the ideal number for me, for this.
- TF: I think trios in general I prefer... as soon as bands get to a certain point, if there's a lot of improvising going on, there's a certain point where I kind of feel that there's too much to negotiate between people.
- CM: I feel less able to contribute anything to the shape of the music sometimes if it's a large or really large ensemble.

- PP: Do you ever think about...sometimes when you're playing, in this group, when you're playing I feel like, and this is my own issue here, you know how old school radios you can kind of get between a station and you lose focus a bit sometimes, remember that thing? And you have to move the dial it's a bit blurry it's a bit...Sometimes I feel like the focus and the thread is lost, it gets a bit blurry sometimes. And we're not really zoned into the right station.
- CM: Do mean as an individual or do mean overall?
- PP: Of course as an individual, and yesterday I struggled a bit with that...and therefore maybe that was my fault that every now and then we'd kind of lose the direction and lose the [radio] tuning.
- CM: Hmmmm....yeah...That's the kind of, the chance element I suppose of this music.
- PP: I mean, yeah that's improvising your way through things.
- CM: That's the thing that 90% of the time it's dogshit but it's worth it for that 10% because it's so good! [laughs]
- PP: It's *impossible* to be good all the time!
- TF: I think especially with the format of the written material there's always going to be...it's kind of like random chance to a point. So like there's times when I'll be looking at what's in front of me and I might not be playing and I'm like intently listening for who, if anyone, is going to go to this next bit. Or is there going to be any...and sometimes there's not, so then I'll just either sit out until I feel there's a right time or I'll kind of crow bar into it. But then this is like when you're driving in a car and you're on a border between two different radio stations and they start overlapping...I think there might be a time where we somehow kind of all move together...I don't think that's a case of focus, I think that will be more luck just because of the limitations of having that [the notated material] there. So, there's a specific chord there, there's a specific harmony which would potentially come next.
- PP: Right.
- TF: And think there's actually, from the number's we did over the last two gigs, there's one point specifically where there's two minor chords and the last one is a semitone away from the next piece. So at that point it's quite like...that's one of those points where it's not diatonic anymore so that's one of those clash points. It would be incredibly...it could happen...but I think it would just be a coincidence if we all landed at the same time.
- PP: Sure.
- CM: Yeah.

TF: And the other side is that everyone drops out and one person leads it on their own, but...

PP: Which happened yesterday, you [Chris] ended up doing a solo and it was “bass guitar”, you were playing bass guitar!

CM: That was weird wasn't it?!

PP: It was kind of weird, yeah! And at one point you giggled!

CM: Yeah! I think I was just laughing at the absurdity of it really. All this stuff, all these people and I'm just sitting there playing like...

PP: You played really high, didn't you?

CM: Yeah, yeah. It felt kind of weird. The only other thing I wanted to talk about was bringing in the recordings [of the previous performances] and what you thought about it.

PP: There were some killing moments last night and it was like you [Chris] triggered that stuff at exactly the right moment. And somehow it felt like your [Chris] perfect pitch kicked in and you knew exactly what was about to happen! It felt like that was a perfect moment.

TF: From my point...it felt like you'd [Chris] sampled me.

CM: Yeah, I was saying just as you got here, an audience member thought that's what was going on. They thought it was processing [live sound].

TF: I thought you were processing me and all of a sudden I was like, how is this happening? Like you [Percy] said, there was a moment when I was playing and you [Chris] brought in some stuff and when you first did it to Percy it sounded like you were processing live and I was just like “wow, that's super cool!” Because it does feel like it's part of the music, it feels like interactive.

PP: Yeah. And that five minutes around that it was just like worlds aligned.

CM: Technically it's not actually very complicated and it did do something I think.

TF: I liked it a lot.

CM: I'm going to try it again today [during the final performance]. Cool.

TF: I think I'm going to get a cake...some sugar...

Monday 27th October 2019, 2.14pm

CM: I think it [the residency] was really good, I don't know what you felt, in terms of the development of the band to do that. To have that thing, not just the gigs, but the talking as well. Listening back to some of what we said, it seems like we were thinking about what we'd said before in the next day, a little bit. Not massively but there was a couple of things where people said "I was thinking about that from yesterday", me and Tom particularly. That was nice to hear, a nice little bonding exercise! [laughs]

TF: I think it's been really beneficial, like Percy said during on of the chats, it's a shame it doesn't happen more. Maybe just jumping into the last gig, because we didn't really chat about that [yet]...I feel, for me personally, that was the highlight, musically. I just felt things... we all felt more together. There seemed to be, I don't know if it was a conscious effort on everyone's...because Percy had mentioned, just prior, about this whole thing about focus in certain times, it was almost like...that did stick in my head and it made me focus in a different way.

CM: About the radio thing?

TF: Yeah. So originally I'd kind of thought there's a point where, especially with improvised music, even with the stimulus of pieces in front of you, there's always a chance element that it might not work out. You know, we might be on different pages. But I felt there was an intent of me to focus more in that performance and then it seemed a lot more seamless. As a musical statement from start to finish, there was not many times where I felt a bit like...

PP: ...we lost focus.

TF: Yeah.

PP: I totally agree.

TF: For me that was like, out of every time we've played together, that was probably like the best time. I felt like the four day residency and just being used to that room, plus these discussions...everything subconsciously settled, at least in my mind. It was kind of like, "I feel a lot more comfortable". Because, as we've said, the music's difficult and it's a difficult band to play in. But, all of a sudden, that day it was almost a joy to...it was more joyous. All those concerns I usually have about what's difficult had gone. In a sense it was just like, we've discussed all these things that we struggle and think about...And it didn't just feel like it from my perspective but my view...what I heard coming from both of you it felt like we were all in this different space all of a sudden.

PP: I remember you [Chris] saying after Saturday that...

CM: ...I didn't like it as much. Yeah, definitely.

PP: What's that based on?

CM: I don't know, I just felt like I couldn't get going. I felt like I couldn't...everything I went to do just felt like a dead end in terms of contributing to the wider thing. So I'd start something and be like "oh, no. That's not what I wanted" or I felt like I was never quite...it didn't feel like anything was like a progression it just felt like everything was lots of little bits. I didn't feel like I was playing through the thing, I just felt like I was starting and stopping. Something that we've talked about a lot, or has come up a lot, is the idea that this [approach] is a bit more restricted than other types of improvisation, free improvisation for example. It sort of felt like to me, on Saturday, that I was butting my head up against some of those restrictions I think. In terms of feeling like I didn't have anywhere else I could go. So what was interesting to me was that, and I think we've all sort of touched on this a little bit, is that I have certain things that I can do, which I chose not to do to get out of that situation. So, for example, in a different improvising context I might have gone and done this certain thing, like a certain sound area or there are things that I'm familiar with that I could do in order to keep making a contribution. But, I chose not to do that on Saturday because, maybe, all the things we've said about it [stillefelt] being like creating an aesthetic and not wanting to break that. We've been talking about things being appropriate a lot. And I certainly had a sense that some things I'd do normally as a sort of way of progressing something on would be inappropriate.

PP: In what context? Like, a solo context or...

CM: Yeah. So, maybe as a quite literal example, sometimes I'm up for making a big noise and seeing what comes out of that but I wouldn't do that, on Saturday. And there were times when I was having to stop and rethink, because I was about to do something like that, and then I was like "No, I can't do that. Because it will spoil this whole thing, it's inappropriate". Is that any less free than choosing to do the thing [make a big noise]? Because you're still making a choice, in that context, you're choosing not to do the thing instead of choosing to do it. So this whole idea of free improv is not actually about being free to do anything, it's about creating a situation where you're free to make a choice. And the choices I made were to not pursue an idea that I wanted because it was inappropriate for the setting. I wrote down this note about "restricted improv". It's not free improv, because that's not interesting to me in this context. But restriction improv is interesting because maybe it allows more freedom, in the sense of you're having to make choices. Whereas if there's no restrictions or, you know, a limited amount of restrictions in a "normal", for want of a better word, free improvised sense, you've actually got less choice, in some ways, because you're playing almost anything. You're not confronted with choice constantly. Whereas in this context, because of maybe the compositions and the way we've set it up, I've set it up, you're constantly having to make choices about what's appropriate. Both of you were saying things about having a sense of what the aesthetic is, whether it's a picture or an actual field or a like a book having a story, and then making choices to fit that narrative, to fit that picture. And is that then where the freedom is? That you're choosing to create this thing because we could all do something else. That's musically proven in our histories that we're capable of doing other things. That's what's interesting for me, that feeling of "what am I going to do?" and really having to confront that in a way that keeps things moving.

- TF: I find an interesting distinction with that is, is that a place you arrived to having experienced...I, definitely, am in this place that when you have an option to make a choice there's the potential that you're actually freer because there's more options in front of you and therefore more consequences of the choices you make. Would you only arrive there if you'd experienced total freedom and were comfortable with this idea of doing whatever you want. So, say for a musician that would consider themselves an improviser but has never experienced the setting of what you'd call free improvisation, would they have the same, you know...because they'd still be making choices but their choices might be more limited. In a sense that, for them, it might be the choice of like...between two chord inversions that they know. But it's not going to ruin...it's not like "if I step on this pedal here it's going to create a massive sound that's going to overpower everything" and then we're somewhere new. Do you think you're at this point because you've been in situations where you can make any sound you want? Does coming from a point of view where you've been completely free to improvise whatever you want with no restrictions mean that potentially then, as you see things as choices, everything you do is free improvisation?
- CM: Yeah, possibly. But, I think also in this context, we've maybe all said this at some point over the last few days, there is a sense that we're free to do whatever we want in this band but few all choose not to. So, is that then making it less free because of something that I've established that's saying we shouldn't do this thing? Not that we shouldn't exactly, but that's not what I'm trying to achieve with this thing. Or are we all choosing to do this collectively? So actually that is an expression of freedom. We've chosen to be there, to try and commit to this certain way of playing, creating a certain aesthetic, and that's the choice, that's the freedom then because we could all do, we're all technically capable of doing, other things. I think that's what I was butting up against on Saturday when we were playing. Maybe because it was the fourth [gig] out of four, I was starting to feel like I was wanting to take it somewhere else but then feeling like I shouldn't because of...and that frustrated me at the time but looking back I'm thinking maybe that was actually what was needed. To create that freedom then. It's good, like a measured choice.
- PP: It also gets more complex when you think about the way you quantify "good". What makes something good? Because then you're also dealing with the individualistic thing. For example, if you go for a run but you don't quite get far enough (I don't know anything about running!)...far enough for you to consider...or you have to turn back early do you consider it a run or that you haven't fulfilled what you deem necessary for what you call exercise or whatever. In this context it might be that you haven't played the stuff that you feel like you want to play, or you haven't ticked the boxes. But actually, and I'm not presuming that that's your [Chris] perspective, but in terms of the way that I'm perceiving the events of Saturday, in comparison to the other three days, as a success, how do I measure that? And why is it that you measure...you analyse your own input as not quite so successful? Because actually from without it felt like we, as a group of three brains working together, it was *really* much more successful.
- CM: I think it's interesting that we can have that different experience of the same event, in some ways. This kind of goes back to the thing you were saying about two plus one being

more than three, I can't remember exactly how you phrased it but the Hegel thing...we can create this thing but it has different implications for everyone involved. So the three of us together make one thing, but actually that's three separate things plus the thing that it is for everyone else [audience members] as well.

PP: [Paul] Dunmall talks about the free thing, have you ever had that chat with him? Like playing with the people who are the real hardcore lot like "No pitches! No rhythm!" And he's like, I can't think of anything less free than that.

CM: Sure! So, a lot of those guys, I'm making a generalisation here...

PP: The hardcore free lot?

CM: Yeah, so those people who have come out of that Derek Bailey lineage, for want of a better word. My sense of how that thing has developed, which maybe isn't true, is that it was a reaction against what was happening in jazz at the time. Because, obviously Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley, they started as jazz musicians. The *Joseph Holbrooke Trio* thing, they started off by playing a set of standards and then played a set of free, it's very much coming out of a reaction against jazz improvisation. And Derek Bailey talks about wanting to avoid the jazz idiom and how restrictive that is on his playing. I get the sense that that continues through that scene, that it's always reacting against an idea of something else. Whether that's immediate or in its history, that's a different thing. So what are we doing? [laughs] Because we're all jazz musicians. So how does what we're doing here relate to jazz? Does it have any connection to it? For example, Tom said something about having a lead sheet and that being...we are trained to see a lead sheet and do a certain thing. So a set of chord changes with a melody has a certain resonance because of the training we've received as jazz musicians. If I've presented us with a set of lead sheets then what were doing with them...is it or isn't it what a jazz musician would do with them? And therefore, regardless of the sound, is this jazz? I don't want to label it either way but...I'm just interested in that connection.

TF: Say, for example, number 2 of the pieces, I could definitely hear a quartet play that, with drums. That one could be played as a piece. Number 5 could be played as...I mean, a lot of the pieces could be played pretty much. They could just be transferred into a traditional quartet setting or even trio setting, with drums, bass and any kind of frontline or harmony instruments. They'd work straight away. So, in some respects, I feel the initial way we're responding to them is no different to how I would respond to any kind of lead sheet. The difference being that, one, the lack of drums and not counting stuff in means that we don't have to...and you [Chris] said straight away "this is just ideas, I don't care if you play it". That was one of the early things that we were told, that you don't actually have to play anything that's written. So, for example, on Saturday when we did number 2, the melody was never played.

CM: Yeah, there was sort of hints of it wasn't there.

TF: Percy kind of implied it and based his on melodic ideas off the melody, but there was never the statement of the actual melody, it didn't happen.

PP: It's funny you say that... [laughs]

CM: What's the truth?!

PP: ...because I just thought "I'm going to play it totally rubato and over the groove and somehow it's gonna work." And it kinda worked. But, I also got it a little bit wrong!

[everyone laughs]

TF: I guess in the setting of what you'd consider jazz in the...if it was like a Spotted Dog gig with a drummer and whatnot...say if it was other people playing that song, if we weren't involved, you'd count it off and then play through it to the end and then solos happen. But, then I don't think there's really any difference between, from a view of everything that's happened within the genre of jazz and that idiom of improvising, I still think what we're kind of doing is firmly there. I don't think there's any argument that...I mean there's definitely some people around the UK who'd quite confidently come up and say "that's not jazz". But, you know...that's a subjective kind of... [trails off]

CM: Yeah, I'm less interested in where it fits, genre-ly where it fits, with jazz. Just more like the attitude and...

TF: For me it does.

PP: Is that because you consider yourself a jazz musician?

TF: Ummm...I mean, this is an issue of semantics, of labels in music. So, to me, jazz is a genre. But really what I feel is that I'm an improviser and I feel that you are and I feel that you are and I feel the majority of the musicians I work with are predominantly improvisers. And that's an approach to being a musician, first and foremost. And unfortunately jazz has this label that's "jazz" where like...and we kind of refer to ourselves as jazz musicians when really I feel that we just, we focus on improvisation as the main facet of what we are as musicians, as creative artists that's what we do. So, we're improvisers. And I feel that in that sense we're approaching this music as we would...if it's just talking about improvisation...

CM: We're not improvisers in the tradition of like, Indian classical music for example.

TF: No.

CM: So we're still...we're still jazz improvisers in that sense. I don't know how you want to phrase it but...improvisers with a background in jazz language, like there's still certain things we play that sound like jazz or...

TF: Absolutely, yeah.

PP: Yeah, yeah.

- CM: Just on that melody thing, this is something you said Percy that interested me, you said that you find yourself improvising melodies in this. But you said it in such a way that you might not, that's not how you improvise in other settings? So...
- PP: Well, again, the word melody can be, it can be interpreted in different ways. And also like...however abstract...I guess for me, because of the way the material is presented, it's very melodic isn't it? Even the harmony, the flow of the harmony, the root notes of the harmony has a certain beauty to it, like a melodic beauty to it. Because a lot of it's so diatonic as well.
- CM: Yeah, but do you think we're sort of associating melody with being in a key? Because, obviously, melody can exist without a key signature.
- PP: Yeah, for sure. But, I mean, I see this group...it's funny we all said that this is a difficult band to play in. But why is it difficult? I think because of the way that you [Chris] presented the material initially, it has a particular aesthetic that I think is unique. It's not like anything else I do. And it feels like there's boundaries but they're boundaries that we've imposed on ourselves. So, it's like working towards an aesthetic and with that in mind the approach, for me at least, the approach to improvising melodic material, that's appropriate within this aesthetic that I perceive whether it's ideal or not...
- CM: Yeah, there was a lot...we were talking about this idea of being appropriate. But also a lot of it, I think both of you guys said something like you didn't know if what you were doing was what I wanted. Whereas, what I want is for you to do what you want! [laughs]
- PP: And if we were to imagine...if I were to ask Tom "what do you think Chris wants you to do?" The answer would be "I think he probably just wants me to do whatever I like!"
- CM: There's still a sense that you want me to want you to do something though?
- PP: It's because of your description of the ensemble, the name of the ensemble and also the sensibility of the music that you initially brought forward in those pieces.
- TF: I think there's also the experience of working with other people that do have that kind of limitation of, not only they present the music that they want you to play but they also give you very strict kind of limitations on how they want you to play it. Like I said, we could have easily, from the start appropriated this to sound like a lot of ECM records. Whereas you [Chris] never said at any point to check out these records and I kind of want it like that. You just said "here's the music", that's it. And then after every gig it's like you just go "yeah, that was good" [nonchalantly].
- [Everyone laughs]
- TF: But I like that response because it's like...there's nothing disingenuous about that response.

PP: It's like, "yeah, that happened"!

TF: And I think it's umm...it's that fact that you get used to people having...you know in rehearsals people will be stopping and like "actually, that bit there I want it specifically like this even if it's not fitting to you as a musician. I've asked you to do this band and this is my project and I want you to go against what you usually do at this point because I specifically want this". So, there's is this point that you expect people maybe to be kind of...so it's natural to be thinking that what we play is what Chris wants us to play. You just get used to, especially of the world that we're in, people being quite like "I want this specifically". And it's not a bad thing, it's just habitual...

PP: Yeah.

TF: ...It's an expectation. I think that's going, I'm getting more and more comfortable with...I'm not so concerned cos there'll be good times and bad times and they're all just events and that's...I'm more interested in each event, now, happening. I mean, I'd like to continue talking after all the gigs now, because it feels like this is, it feels like it's a really healthy way of dealing...well, just talking though stuff. Yeah, I think it's definitely important to be aware of the fact that, from the start, none of us have seen this as a pastiche when we easily could of. And it's not really effected how...it's quite clear none of us have done that. There's no kind of impressions going on of other musicians, it just hasn't happened, which is what I like. And then this feeds into...we do have a lot of freedom, we're not being...we are within an aesthetic and we have a choice. Like, you have the choice whether to essentially ruin it in a split second, I do and you do, but, at the same time, I don't think that...there's no point where we're not being true to who we are as improvisers within it. So, I feel quite free as myself in it, I don't feel like...I don't feel I'm on the wrong gig, you know? Even though a lot of people have been like why have you got someone who plays really fast, distorted stuff usually [doing this gig]?

CM: I think that's part of creating this thing, right? There's a reason for choosing you guys, there's a reason for forcing myself to do this and that's to create that situation where you're confronted with having to make a choice that you're not normally...that isn't the 'natural' choice perhaps, for you as a musician.

PP: Was that a conscious or subconscious?

CM: It was a conscious decision at the beginning. I mean, I wanted to do something with you guys anyway, I wasn't sure what that thing was. And then I was like [thinking] well, let's try and...there was two reasons mainly. Firstly, because I wanted a reaction against Gonimoblast and I wanted to try and push this writing for improvisers thing and how imposing the restrictions [brought about by notation] would create a different sort of freedom, essentially. But I think then also forcing us to do something maybe a little bit different has really opened up other things which maybe wouldn't have been accessible if I'd of just said "we're just going to get together as a trio and improvise". With no other direction. As in, not saying this is a quiet band, this is the name of it...If we'd just been like Ford/Pursglove/Mapp, or whatever, and gone out [to perform] as an improvising trio I don't think we would have achieved anything constructive maybe? Or, you know, the

music would have been good but it wouldn't have been a challenge in the same way that this is a challenge. I don't think. It's impossible to say, I suppose. I doubt we would have arrived at this particular thing if we'd just been playing with no pieces, barriers, whatever.

PP: That's definitely for sure.

CM: Do you want to listen to something?

TF: Does any want any more coffee?

CM: Definitely.

PP: Yeah, for sure.

[Tom leaves to get more coffee]

PP: Yeah, it definitely wouldn't have worked. We wouldn't have found this music without...

CM: But it's there! We've made it! We've drawn something out that was a potential but if you'd said at the start of us getting together with none of the other things...like Tom said, you know, people are surprised because of the amount of notes we all normally play or whatever, the sounds that we normally create, and then this comes out. That is surprising.

[Tom returns with the pot of coffee]

TF: Who said that?

CM: The thing you were saying just now. And people have said it to me as well "why are you making these guys play no notes when they always play loads of notes?" Well, that's interesting to me...

PP: Yeah, it's interesting for me too!

CM: It would be boring...we would have just got some badass drummer and played some tunes. It wouldn't have had the same impact.

TF: I know Luke particularly likes the personnel choices.

CM: Yeah, he's said the same to me in the past. Questioned what we're doing, basically! I still want him to keep coming and recording it though. That's another thing, a whole other thing. Maybe we haven't got space for that.

[Tom leaves to get the brownies he made]

PP: What the cataloguing thing?

CM: Yeah. And choosing the right person to do that or the wrong person to do that and how...I think it's interesting to put Luke in that position where he's literally just documenting something because his...what he wants to do, I get a sense of, whenever I've heard stuff he's been involved with he makes his mark on it. In terms of the production choices or whatever. Whereas in this context I'm just asking him to document it, I don't want you to do anything with it, just give me the files and that's it. And that's putting him in an uncomfortable position as well. Well, maybe not uncomfortable but it's giving him a restriction. So even that point of having a restriction extends to that process. I could have said to him "can you take it away and mix it and send it back?" And then he would have put his thing on it. But I just want him to capture it and leave it. Maybe that's hard for him, I don't know. I'd need to ask him about that. Maybe that's difficult for him to do because he's hearing things that he wants to add to the music in terms of the mix or...it's about giving everyone restrictions.

PP: Do you have a sense of where it's going to go further, like how this can extend?

CM: Not at the minute. I've always said this, since the start, and I still believe I'd be happy if we completely lost the sheet music and just played. And played within that space we've created.

PP: I think we'll do that at some point

CM: Yeah, maybe it is going that way and that's great that we could do that. But...

[Tom returns with brownies and everyone takes a moment to appreciate them]

CM: But, just to finish what we were saying I'm genuinely interested in just creating a situation. Creating a set of circumstances and allowing us to explore the potential of what those are. And the resulting music is...almost irrelevant actually! In some senses...

PP: Right, the process...

CM: Yeah, the process is what really interest me. And I'm aware that, obviously, we are creating music, we are creating a product in that sense, we're creating a "work", we're creating something that is sellable by releasing material, that is a whole thing within itself. But, actually if that wasn't [financially] necessary in terms of sustaining the life of the ensemble I would be just as happy...there's no musical expectation in that sense. I'm more interested in just playing together and seeing what happens. So, there's no sort of urge to go in a particular direction or...I might write some more things but beyond that, no.

[We choose to listen to an extract based on a comment Tom made in our first interview about not breaking the springboard (page 3) We listen to an extract from Performance 1 which is the loudest and most tonally abrasive section from across the residency (around 21 minutes into residency video 01). The extract continues to play whilst we talk.]

CM: So, is that the aesthetic springboard nearly breaking do you think? And then we're returning back to the...

- PP: It's definitely true that we could've taken that much further, dynamically and in terms of intensity.
- TF: This is a perfect part to get at...I can't remember, I think it might have been the second day when we were talking about the aesthetic and the way I've been dealing with creating a mental image and trying to imagine each moment and how it fits into that mental image. So that's like a perfect moment of the quiet field kind of thing in the sense that...there's kind of...I don't think it always has to be this perfectly tranquil idea. In the sense that, it will return to that, that's just a natural occurrence, in the sense that here [in Birmingham] we've had the kind of crazy rain recently. But in a really literal sense of imagery to me it's like, well, I can see it happening in my mind...
- PP: A field and the events that are happening?
- TF: Yeah, I can see the events. It's this weird...it's quite childlike, in a sense, but I can see storm clouds appear and a load of crazy stuff happen. But, as long as the intention's not forced, and it is more of a natural response to what's happening, the different impetuses from each of us, then I think it's within the aesthetic still. Because you can't really control kind of...in my head, in this version of...there's no control over it, events just happen. It's like a little silly kids thing where a sun comes up and goes down and things happen within it. But there's no real reason why they happen they just do. So, we could have gone further. There's a point where it's a choice. That's the whole thing about, you could choose at that point to just ruin it, ruin this image where I feel it could still contextually stay within the aesthetic. But then there's a point where it's just like throwing a bomb in it and it's just gone.
- CM: But that [the extract we just listened to] feels like definitely a moment where we all made that choice together. Like you were saying, we could have gone a lot further. But I think all three of us decided to take it back down again. Maybe there's like a limit we've collectively decided on...I don't know 90dB is too much! [laughs] We have to bring it back down to...this [the recording which is still playing in the background and has now returned to a quieter dynamic].
- PP: This, the transition to this, was very beautiful.
- CM: It's nice. Sounds better than I remember!
- PP: Yeah.
- TF: I mean, you can see as well from the waveform [on the computer screen] that it was all together.
- CM: I don't know who started it, as in who started the diminuendo, but it went through all of us very quickly, didn't it? We all got back onto this and then it went into...the end of 2...or is this 7? I can't remember!

[continued listening to the extract as it develops]

PP: Which is the one with E flat major seven sharp eleven going to A minor over E?

TF: Oh, that's um...the end of [piece number] 7?

CM: Yeah. Yeah? Yeah.

[music continues]

TF: This is 5, I think, maybe. I don't know!

CM: No, it's 7. This is 7! [laughs]

[music continues]

CM: Then also this isn't anything. This is something...it's not quite any of them, in some respects. I think I started playing the melody...from 7. And this is kind of 7.

PP: It's just...this feels like a new melody, for me.

[music continues]

CM: Yeah, 7.

[music continues]

PP: Yeah, this is kind of what I was talking about when we're playing 7, but it's not the melody of 7.

CM: But is this then just playing on the [chord] changes?

PP: Ugh. It's not just *that* though, is it? It's more of melodic...a co-generated melodic sensibility.

CM: The timing too. You're [Percy] not just playing something across the top of a steady...

PP: It's not soloist in any canon.

[music continues]

TF: I know it's just part of the composition but this thing of like springboards and things...I feel that choice of that C major seven sharp eleven chord, that in itself, compositionally, is like a little cut, a change in...

CM: Just that F sharp?

TF: Yeah, and it really does...I think even compositionally, I mean listen to what I'm doing there, this only starts after that C chord. That is implied and then all of a sudden...

PP: It's the gateway.

TF: Yeah. Hearing that one note that's not diatonic it's just like, I'm starting to play not really diatonically.

CM: It's sent off on a different thing isn't it. And that was a deliberate compositional choice, to have one thing "outside".

[music continues, which has developed into a duo between Tom and Chris]

CM: We're both at slightly different points.

TF: Yeah.

[music continues for a few more moments and is then stopped]

CM: Just listening to that bit, that section...for me, when we were playing that, I remember that now, it felt like it was going on for a long, long time.

TF: What, that like weird counterpoint?

CM: Yeah. But listening to that, then, that wasn't very long and I could have taken more of hearing where that was going. I remember thinking at the time "let's draw the idea to a close" or "I'm gonna stop doing this thing" because it feels like it's reaching its conclusion. Do you ever get that sense? I find it very hard sometimes to step outside of being, doing the thing.

PP: The passing of time thing. But, for me, that was how I remember it, I mean I wasn't playing at that point. That's exactly how I remembered it. And it finished at...for me it was like, that thing, that idea was a dead end. It had to close, where could we have gone with that?

TF: Thinking about that, I think this happens a lot, especially on *those* pieces that are these kind of diatonic chord progressions with little bits here and there that change, like little deviations. It feels like a lot of the time we play them, say number 5 or number 7...there's this sense I get that it is a collection of like, kind of, motivic ideas that last to a certain point and then come to their natural end.

PP: Yeah.

TF: Sometimes we'll play 5 for a long time...so there'll be times where me and Percy might end up playing kind of duo and then it will come to its natural conclusion. Maybe it goes round the form once, maybe it doesn't, maybe we just come to point where it kind of concludes. And then you'll [Chris] start playing the same piece and it feels like we're kind of playing these little minuets within, you know? So there are times when...the other day

you [Chris] started playing time in one of those pieces, that was kind of like, we'd been playing it really open and gesturally and then all of a sudden you started playing solid time. But it's almost like, we're still playing that piece but it's like variations of the piece within it.

CM: And in this residency context maybe variations, maybe it's one performance in that sense. Because it's a variation from the previous night. Did we play 7 every night? It might be the only one we did. And we ended up playing it in different ways each night...cos I still had the sense of how we played it the day before, I think, when we were playing it the next day.

PP: You still felt that and you did something to oppose that?

CM: Yeah, it was a reaction against how we'd played it. And that was definitely "I want to do this".

PP: This reminds me of the film by Jørgen Leth and Lars von Trier, *The Five Obstructions*. It's really interesting because Jørgen Leth is like his [von Trier's] guru and he challenges Jørgen Leth to remake one of his famous pieces [*The Perfect Human*] but he's got to remake this classic piece five times with specific obstructions. The first one is, there can only be a really limited amount of frames per shot before he has to change. And he's like this is impossible, how am I going to do this? Anyway, he finds a way of doing it. Another one was that it has to be a cartoon, but he hates cartoons. So, he finds these ways, because of these obstructions, he finds these ways around and then from that this new beautiful piece emerges even though it's based on the same thing. That's a really interesting concept. So, you impose obstructions on yourself, I don't want the same thing to happen so the obstruction becomes "I have to play time".

CM: I have to think of something new.

PP: Yeah.

[extended pause]

PP: It's funny that joint compositional mindset, or at least that's the way I view it. Because it's totally projected. I'm like "well, of course that moment had to end" because me, in my limited outlook, sitting there, couldn't see a way that we could develop this thing because anything I do would be wholly superfluous in this environment. And yet you [Chris] were like "Ah!" [wanting to hear more].

CM: Do you think it seemed, I don't know, maybe I'm misremembering previous performances to this week, that there were more occasions this week where just one or two of us were playing?

PP: Than before?

CM: Than previously.

PP: Than other gigs?

CM: Yeah.

PP: No.

CM: Really, is it not the case?

PP: Not for me, no. I felt like I played more for the last few days.

CM: More notes or...

PP: More of the time.

TF: I find it really interesting that we never drop the sound, we never stop. It's the only thing over the last four gigs that's started to bother me.

PP: Really?

TF: A little bit, just because I...only because of this choice thing again. What happens if we just stop one day? But then, at the same time, I don't want it to be [agreed] let's at some point, stop. You know? But, then I've just thought well, why hasn't that happened. It's annoying me more the *why* hasn't it happened. I don't care if it happens or not, to be honest. It doesn't bother me. It's more the fact that it hasn't [happened] that's bothering me and why it hasn't.

CM: I was thinking about this exact thing yesterday. Who said we had to not stop?

TF: That's the thing! It's just naturally not happening and the thing that's bothering me is why? I don't have an answer.

PP: I don't know. Well, we're not playing these pieces as pieces, right? And actually a lot of the really interesting stuff happens as transitions. So, if we stop we lose that potentiality.

CM: But if we stopped, then that's the ultimate transition! To silence. This week we've always played about forty minutes, almost all exactly the same length. And there's a couple of things [in previous conversations] of us all saying that felt like the end. But there's no reason...we could have got to that forty minutes, people could have clapped and we could have started again. But I never felt like...I always felt like it was appropriate to then say thank you and I didn't ever feel like, we've stopped, applause and we should do something else.

TF: Yep.

- PP: But, you know, space and silence is so powerful that it's kind of something you don't want to give away lightly in this context. There's such a depth that you can't...and it punctuates so well, you know? Unless the aesthetic is to include the sense of movements.
- TF: But that's the thing, I wouldn't want that. Say if we played for roughly seventeen minutes and then it naturally came to a stop. In this band, I know, there would be a weird sensation. I'd be interested to see how it would effect us if then all of a sudden there was applause...
- CM: It would break that bubble...disrupt that world that we've created.
- TF: Yeah, all of a sudden there's something that's completely out of our control. This is the problem with silence. It can be incredibly powerful when a whole room is silent and you can start hearing sounds you don't normally hear or are aware of. But you run the risk of the fact that people react to silence in music with applause. Usually awkwardly. It's almost an involuntary reaction. But I'd be interested...I think it will happen at some point, maybe, who knows? I'm not that bothered if it does or doesn't, it's more that I'm interested that it doesn't. And we've not really spoken, like you said, you've never said we have to play all the way through or...
- CM: Yeah, I was trying to think if I had [said to do that]. If it was one of the things I said at the beginning, that we have to play all the way through.
- TF: No.
- PP: I don't remember you saying that.
- CM: I don't think I did.
- PP: Maybe it was an expectation?
- CM: Possibly. We've sort of arrived at it though...
- PP: I like it that it doesn't stop.
- TF: There are times as well when it's got incredibly quiet on a gig...there's some things I really like and they happen in this band a lot. I don't know if you both are influenced by similar things as I am in this sense, but, there's times where it might just drop down to one of us, or even all three of us, but we'll be incredibly quiet and the sounds that are being made are more repetitive. So, like an extractor fan or something. I really love stuff like that. Sometime I love just listening to the environment I'm in and hearing something. And there's definitely these quiet times where it's almost as if it's silence, still performing but...because what's happening at times is just repetitive noise whether that's repetitive in a systematic or a kind of random way...sometimes because of the effects it can sound more random based noise but it's still that non-pitched, non-rhythmic atmospheric noises. And that's kind of close to silence when we're in those zones. It's not that far away from it. I really like that thing, sometimes it literally sounds like a tumble dryer on but three

doors down. When it's really quiet and you can just hear...I love sounds like that. This is one of the few, well probably the only project I'm part of where those kind of are...I don't know if it's a conscious thing because I don't really think that I want to sound like an air-con or something. That's not the intention. It's more that those repetitive sounds are there all the time and I don't think, as improvisers, you can ignore the fact that they subconsciously become imbedded. You're just used to hearing repetitive sounds that don't seem to have any purpose but they are sounds so they're just as valid as any other sound. And I think they're there...there's some comforting element to it. Sometimes I think those bits embody the aesthetic the most. You know?

CM: Maybe this is a nice way to segue on to talking about the audience a little bit because, I haven't been through the survey responses, but one I did notice had a comment that they were initially really bothered by the setting, that there was other noise going on, the tea and coffee being made. But the they just took it as kind of part of the performance and I think that's sort of what you're saying, it becomes a background noise or the background noise becomes the performance.

PP: Saturday particularly there was a lot going on. People were dropping shit and the curtain was opening and closing and the kids were coming in and out. So it was different to the other days, there was more environmental sounds.

CM: Yeah, like, comparatively, Thursday night was like playing in a morgue!

PP: And Wednesday was weird, probably because of the performance beforehand, people felt like it was the thing that you could go in and out...

CM: Or walk right through the middle! That's what happened to one of the earlier bands, the whole night had that kind of feel about it. There's a couple of things when we're talking about audiences that crop up. The whole thing about the...sheet music is an interesting thing with the audience I think.

PP: As in, they're interested in it? What's going on.

CM: I think so, as in the the physicality of it, the page turns. I think it sort of creates something. Especially because there were musicians in the audience. I think you [Tom] were saying something about wondering what their expectations were. So we've got this thing going on where we've all said at some point that we don't really care about the audience being there or not and that we feel that, musically, it wouldn't be any different if they were there or they weren't there. But, actually, we are all aware of the audience in some way. You [Tom] were saying the one moment when you break out of...start thinking about, in the moment was when you turn a page and you think "I wonder what the musicians in the audience think is going on there."

PP: Right!

CM: And for me that's a really important part of what I'm trying to do as a solo player, but as well in this context, I'm aware of the audience and I have a certain kind of...sense... of who

the audience are, what they're doing. And at those moments, the page turn moment or the coffee machine moment or someone dropping something, suddenly you're kind of pulled into this thing that it is a performance. And how does that then change, if it does, what we're doing? Because we *do* have a sense of the audience. None of us want to say that hey [the audience] are responsible for the music. But they're responsible for how we behave, in some sense. So are they then responsible for the music?!

PP: Well, I'm still standing by my guns here. Particularly on Saturday because my old mate was there and I barely ever see him these days. But, we've practised together and at one point I saw him all the time. And, in the back of mind I'm thinking "well, I hope he likes it". But, actually, the reality of it is, I don't care if he does or not. It's more about...I'm working more for you two. I'm trying really hard for you two! And then primarily for the music to be really good.

CM: Yeah. And you said something about, which I agree with, that if you're doing an authentic job of creating the music then people will engage with that.

PP: He'll like it.

CM: What do you mean by "like" the music. That he'll appreciate it aesthetically or like the effort that you're putting in to craft it? You're interested in caring for the experience as much as you are caring for the music?

PP: The word "like" is probably not definitive enough. Or...I presume, people [audiences] want an experience. And for me, being relatively open-minded, I don't mind being offended by things because it makes you feel something. Or I don't mind going along and being inspired by something if it was a bit cack. Because you go away and it inspires thought as to why think that was. And then what could have been different about the whole thing, if anything.

TF: It's the eliciting a reaction. I think any creative expression in any medium, any art form, it's primarily...apart from you as a person, I mean we do it for us and the music first and foremost. For anyone else that's there, for anyone else that goes to it, I think the only purpose is to elicit a reaction. The reaction, whether negative, positive or neutral, doesn't matter. It's a reaction.

PP: That's the important thing.

TF: I mean ultimately I don't care what people think as long as they think. And that's my biggest worry. People not thinking, if that's possible. There's some breakdown if people are so disinterested it doesn't even cause them to...but then even disinterest is a reaction, so...But, I think the stronger the reaction, whether negative or positive, is better. Being nonplussed by something...I'd rather someone really disliked something, or really enjoy it. I kinda like it when I actually really dislike something I see...

CM: It's provoking a reaction.

TF: ...because then I think “why do I dislike this thing so much?”

PP: Exactly.

TF: Do I have a good reason to dislike it so much? But, yeah, I think the whole audience thing...It was weird because we saw a lot of people we knew, every time. And, like for example on the first day [name removed] was curating the rest of the night and I use to play in her band and recorded a bunch of stuff with her and I’ve known her since I was sixteen. We’ve known each other a long time. It didn’t matter, there was no concern. Even getting here I was like “oh, they’re here”...but it wouldn’t have made a difference if she was there or not, ultimately. It was the same with [names removed] once we started playing it was actually was a case of...the realisation that my reaction to them was just as them as people. Because we weren’t playing music when we first got there, so you talk to people...But once we started, it didn’t really matter that those people were there.

CM: Right, okay.

TF: It might as well have been anyone.

CM: So, if it might as well have been anyone, is it still important to have a sense of someone? If individual personalities don’t particularly matter, is the sense that people are there an important part of the process, not necessarily the music but...the appropriateness of what we play, is that defined by the musical structures or is it in some way defined by the fact that there’s other people in the room? And that, to play something inappropriate might offend their sensibilities or...or are you not interested in exploring that?

TF: It’s tricky because I think even if there was no one, say we played now in this room...like Percy said, there’s the whole side of the idea of what this is and what the aesthetic is and making a choice that I’m committed to that. But then there’s also committing to us three and it being as...I’d still have the same sense of there’s certain things I feel are inappropriate. And it doesn’t matter if there’s people there or not. It wouldn’t be that I’d take more wild chances. I’d still feel like I owe you two and the music a certain level of respect. Even for myself. I don’t think we’d play that differently.

PP: Me neither. I mean, if you’re looking for the impact of the audience in a significant way, I think it would require them having a more active role. That post-autonomous thing where they actually have...they actually shape the direction of the art in some way. Like that Ai Weiwei installation with the millions of sunflower seeds and you was over it. And as you walk over it you get a particular sensation but you’re transforming that art, in the moment. So what role they play...I mean, maybe other musicians would have a different answer and they’re like “well, they’ve paid good money and I feel a bit nervous about this thing and there having an impact, I’ve got to be a little more reserved because I want to get it right”. But maybe, in this context, there’s no right is there.

CM: I have no expectation of how the audience should behave, other than putting chairs out. We don’t specify that you have to be quiet. I actually said every night “you can go and get drinks”. But, I wasn’t aware of anyone moving at all during any of the sets! So, they’re free

to shout out, applaud whenever they like, but mostly people choose to behave in a similar way. Is that conditioning from going to other gigs? Or...

PP: Yeah, I think so.

CM: But at the same time we do care about what their experience is because like you [Percy] were saying, it was nicer when the lights were there from the other guys and I considered bringing lights and sort of making it more of a “thing” because I was aware of the fact that we were just playing in this white box. And that maybe it wasn’t the greatest experience for an audience. So we obviously do care about them to some extent, as in you want the experience to be a thing. But actually when it comes to the music, you care less about what they think. Which just seems a strange thing! And this is me too. I agree, I want there to be a nice audience experience, or to have *an* experience, whatever that is. But then I’m not fussed about whether they like the music or, you know...I just want them to have an experience. But we do care about them. We curate that experience

PP: But there’s gradations of that isn’t there? You [Chris] didn’t specify what we were to wear. I mean the lighting is one thing. But the impact that the visual element has on the way they hear things is a whole other thing.

TF: I mean, with a band like this we could easily all be in, like, white boiler suits and with, like, masks on. And straightaway, we could play exactly the same music...and how people would interpret that, as soon as they saw us...there’s a pretence then. But it’s not a musical part. I kind of like the fact that the lights were cool, but they weren’t out of choice. I kind of like the fact that when we do play, however people react to it or respond to it, it is really just about the music. There’s no limits...

PP: However, that person who was sitting on the front row. She was talking about...do you remember this?

CM: Last night?

PP: Saturday afternoon, yeah. When that chap was coming to have a go! She was saying “if I was just listening, it would be a different experience”. And she likes the way that...

CM: Yeah, she was saying she wanted to come to a *performance* not listen to it at home.

[There’s a brief break in the conversation here where Tom leaves the room and Percy and Chris talk about the practice of a fellow musician that involves a greater degree of audience participation before Tom returns.]

TF: I don’t like being made to interact [as an audience member]. Because sometimes...the only issue...it depends what it is and it depends on the parameters of audience participation, because it’s music. In a pantomime there’s clear...you know what the interaction is, it’s almost a given, it’s, like, scripted. *But*, in music it’s like a big kind of thing to start allowing the audience room...because some of them have no experience of actually doing that. It’s this...where do you draw the parameters for them? And then, by

that, there's more limitations than on what we do. It's a fine line. I mean, you could just say "everyone do whatever you want". But, you're kind of saying that already and people are just sitting there in silence.

CM: [laughs] Maybe that's what they want! Maybe they don't want to break the springboard either. They could.

TF: But I've thought like that ever since I was at school, I've always had this reoccurring thought in my head about doing the most inappropriate thing, at any time. Because we all have the capability to do it and no one does it, generally. Every now and then there's an occurrence. I remember just sitting in assemblies and just thinking I could literally just stand up right now and do the first thing that comes into my head. Nothing planned, I could stand up and make a statement of some kind. Whether that be a verbal statement or some kind of physical statement. But I don't. And it's the same thing, I've always wondered why not, you know? Why, and this is a very human thing...

CM: From society?

PP: It's received that you don't do that.

TF: Yeah, but the option's there.

PP: Of course. Though, it's funny. I remember going to this concert in Italy in this beautiful old theatre in Palermo. It was a string quartet with Paulo Fresu and we had these cheap seats right at the back. It was the most incredible place. So, we were sitting next to these people, who obviously weren't used to going to concerts or whatever, so they were just literally sitting on their phones. Screens super bright. I think they were, like, chatting and one person even made a phone call! During the concert! And I was like "what are you doing?!" Obviously there's a cultural difference and that [behaviour] is maybe more acceptable. Whether that's received wisdom or they're just not used to going to concerts.

TF: You could see it as even anti-social behaviour. It's like when you're travelling on the train and people get on who are extremely drunk after a football match or a rugby match or something. And it's funny [because] those choices are made that they normally wouldn't do, under normal conditions. But with the audience, I think, that's the thing...at any gig I do, if somebody stood up and started screaming, but not because they were distraught but because it was some kind of weird form of self expression, I'd just be like "fair enough". I wouldn't have any issue with it, myself, but other audience members might because they might think that's very inappropriate. Like, you've ruined this experience. And I think that's the fine line with audience participation is, once you've kind of opened the door a bit, because people aren't used to it without set parameters that are really strict...you open up the door to something essentially ruining the experience for everyone else.

CM: Yeah.

- TF: But, then, is it worth the risk? Because then everyone will go home with a strong reaction. But that's completely out of our hands then.
- PP: Unless maybe you plant people in the audience!
- CM: Yeah, I was just thinking you could maybe create a situation where you have people do that for you.
- TF: You see it happen now and then to street performers every now and then. Somebody will come and try and sabotage their performance. Or buskers get sabotaged. For some reason in that instance, because there's not, like, a venue and people haven't turned up for the performance it seems to be more acceptable to do what's unacceptable to that performance, whatever it is. Although you do get it. We've all done those gigs where, especially playing improvised music that sometimes quite delicate, where you'll be in a bar or somewhere that serves alcohol, and there'll be people that have never been to something like that and they'll just sit there talking. Not talking about anything to do with...they're just oblivious to what's going on. Even at *The Spotted Dog*, you hear it happen there. There's been times that are worse than others. Whereas at a staged performance, especially where we were in the back room of a nice little coffee shop that has very interesting things happening there's an expectation of...
- PP: Sure, you're not stumbling there for...you're there for a reason. Do you think there's something in the fact that the stage used to be more of a sacred place than it is now? Things like *The X Factor* and, you know...
- CM: As in, anyone can have their time?
- PP: Anyone can get up there and give it a go and you go from gutting fish to being super-famous and rich.
- CM: Like, social media has the possibility to do that as well.
- PP: YouTube...
- TF: I think also the notion of people living through social media means that the actual outcome of the events that happen, in reality, are inconsequential to them...so long as they're selective about what appears online. So, if somebody goes to...say, we're just playing in a pub somewhere that has jazz nights on and somebody stumbled in from the main bar and walked up to the front in a quiet moment and said "my friend here is a great singer", you know, above everything...the problem with that is, if they make a fool of themselves and ruin the experience for everyone else...as long of none of that appears on social media for a lot of people they actually don't care. Because it is inconsequential to their life. Because they don't live...that's not how they express themselves [it's] through carefully selected moments. So, in their head it's like, we let them on stage, they do a song, their friend records it and then that gets put on social media. In their head that's the expectation and if they don't get that, then they move on. Because of *The X Factor*, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook it's created a lot of this kind of, like, staged reality. And

anything that's happened in-between, whether it's offensive or...it doesn't matter because no one has to see it again in the wider world.

[Short break for more coffee]

CM: [Earlier in the week] When we were talking about something that happened on the third gig...I agree with what you [Percy] said. You said it was weird that I played something that was "just" bass.

PP: Yeah!

CM: And I thought that was weird and you said I laughed, and I probably did.

PP: You did a little giggle!

CM: [laughs] I'm interested in the fact that we can have all this technology, we can use it all and then, when we don't use it or choose not to use it and the natural, for want of a better word, sound of the instrument comes out that *that's* weird. That's unusual.

PP: We also had that a minute ago [when we were listening] with you two playing duo...

TF: Just dry.

CM: Yeah. So, you create a context that's so driven by using pedals and computers or whatever, that then it becomes weird, or unusual, or stands out when you take that away. Is the reverse true? If you're in an acoustic gig and suddenly someone trod on a pedal do you think that would be the same thing? Or...I'm not really asking a question, it's more of an observation I suppose.

PP: I think that, having heard just a little bit just now, there was one moment where, I don't know how you would describe the sound that you're making, a particular corner of processing or...something. And the natural trumpet sound against that sounded really weird. It didn't fit, at all. Whereas there's other things you do and actually it sounds nice.

CM: Yeah, I'm not sure these gigs have been good for trying to blend the thing together. Thinking about that, the whole using the [previous days'] recordings thing, you said something that I totally agreed with. There was five minutes where...around the third day, when I think I first brought in the recordings and you [Percy] described it as "when worlds aligned". And actually, for me, that five minutes is worth four days worth of work.

PP: Right.

CM: To achieve that five minutes where something happened.

TF: Shall we listen to that bit?

CM: Yeah.

[We spend some time trying to find the right moment in the recordings. At first we play the wrong section but none of us notice at first. We eventually find the moment we have been talking about.]

CM: It's strange, now I listen back it sounds different to how I remember it.

PP: Yeah.

TF: It's really different to how I remember it as well.

CM: Maybe it was another section? Anyway, irregardless of how it sounds now...there's a couple of things. I really love the whole thing of not knowing who's doing what. So when we were talking about this [moment] the day after some of the language you guys were using was interesting, like Percy said it felt like it was triggered exactly and with the perfect pitch at the perfect moment. And Tom, you said it felt like I'd sampled you, even though I made it really clear at the beginning of the gig what was going on and you understood what was going on and...You said you thought I was processing you and how was that happening. So I'm thinking that's really interesting that you know exactly what's going on [technically] but in the moment you can still have that feeling of like something "else" is happening. And I think that's what I'm interested in with the electronic side of things. You can collect all this stuff together for that one moment where it's like "what the fuck is going on? How is it happening?" And that's like the 'magical' moment for me. Bringing that stuff together to suddenly create a whole new thing. And not using anything new, just recycling performances, adding reverb, nothing 'magical' happening really. But actually, it's sort of lifts the performance. Or certainly lifted me when this, almost coincidence, thing happened. Or the next day when that exact same note...that was just pure chance, you know, I just picked that section vaguely from the same piece that we were playing. I just happened to turn the fader up as you [Percy] played the same note. Little moments like that which are, sort of, contrived chance I suppose completely change, for me, the performance or the sense of...the coherence. Does it have the same effect on you?

PP: Yeah, for sure. Yeah.

CM: Can that be achieved without technology? Because we can achieve the same feeling acoustically...

TF: Well, it's different. It's just different. Because that's almost the same as saying, like, could you achieve the same effect in this band without me and Percy? Because it's just taking stuff away. It's the same as, can we get the same thing by adding a drummer? Each form of...whatever it is musically that's happening, whether it's literally just you playing parts of a performance [from] before on a laptop while we're performing, that is in itself is a whole other thing. So taking it away, I don't think you can recreate that exactly. But you can recreate the feeling of stuff happening...we're constantly creating instances that make things happen and we react to. But I feel that because that's [playing recordings] such a thing, it's the same as taking a whole musician out or putting a whole new musician in. It's

not like the extension of your bass and your pedals, which I see as one instrument, the laptop and recordings is a new thing.

CM: But within that, I think of it just as being an extension of you, right? It's not a laptop, it's three separate voices which are part of your voice, you've already contributed that. You [Percy] said something about, not on the tape, but you said something about I played something [through the laptop] that was what you were going to play. One of your own ideas, played back to you at that moment, was what you felt like you were going to play anyway. So this is just a way of confronting you with your own ideas, making you aware of the fact that there are certain things that you bring yourself that limit your freedom in a sense, but actually...like, the idea that habit is a good thing. We shouldn't necessarily think habits are bad, you're so used to being told to stop your bad habits or break them...but actually habit is a positive and it demonstrates freedom because you're choosing to do the same thing again and again. It's a free choice, you could not do that thing. You could not play that thing but you choose to do it because, to you, it's the right thing. So maybe this bringing in previous recordings is actually showing that you're choosing to do the right things or the same thing, not necessarily the right thing, but you're always choosing similar things and maybe that's part of...it's just a way of speeding up that process or highlighting that process that you do anyway as a musician.

TF: I think what was interesting with that was though, at the time, it felt diatonically perfect. Whereas listening back to it, it's not at all. And it shows a lot of the expectation and the reaction...there's a lot of clashing notes. It's almost like you said, at the time it felt like that's what you were going to do anyway...but then listening back...I mean it's you playing! So, of course it's what you would have done because you did it! And it's weird, listening to that then, it's so different to how I perceived it at the time.

PP: But, it's a snippet and we're not really getting the context in it's entirety like we were.

CM: And that maybe goes back to what that audience member was saying about having to be there in the performance. Listening to that now I don't get the same sense of, you know, wonder or whatever I felt at the time when it suddenly felt like two and a half days or three years worth of work had suddenly come together in this one amazing moment where something happened.

PP: Sure

CM: And whether anyone else felt that or not I don't know, or particularly care, but for me that was *the* thing. But listening back to it now it has none of that sense of that moment, I guess.

[short pause for more coffee, TF leaves]

CM: It's weird.

PP: It is weird. Was it even that point?

CM: That's what I'm thinking, is it even where it was? It's so different to how I remember it. [pause to check Logic file] It must have been, it's the first time the laptop...came in. It's right here.

[plays excerpt again]

CM: I remember this bit of trumpet just being...[trials off]

PP: Yeah, I remember that concert F [sings note] being the "woah, how did you know how to play that note!"

CM: Well, *you* knew how to play that note and that's the thing! I didn't play it you played it!

PP: No, but you triggered it at that point.

CM: I didn't, I just chose a bit at random.

[plays another excerpt]

PP: Which bit was that, was that Saturday?

CM: This is the last day, yeah.

[more searching through for other examples of laptop moments. CM plays an extract where CM and TF are playing chordal, diatonic and in time with each other and PP is adding more brash guttural pitch-less sound]

PP: I wondered about these moments where you guys [TF and CM] are playing beautifully and I'm trying to do the...do the other role and whether it actually works or whether it's just getting in the way.

CM: At the very beginning of the recording for the album that thing happened. I wonder if I've got it, I'll play it to you. I sent a copy to Tom Tebby so he had something [to listen to] for the artwork and he was like "I was listening to it..." and there's a thing where me and Tom start " and then there's this noise! And I was like, what's wrong with my stereo?!" So, there's a bit where you [Percy] go [makes a loud intake of breath] and he [Tom Tebby] thought something had broken, but that was perfect for the recording, and thought it was a shame that it wasn't part of it! And then he listened to it again somewhere else and was like "oh, it is!" This is it...

[plays beginning of *stillefelt* album]

CM: That noise, he thought that was a noise that wasn't intentional but should be there. And that for me is the same as that moment [the laptop moment we were discussing above].

TF: That kind of noise, the kind of noise of incidental stuff you just hear...

CM: It fits, that contrast, that's what makes it interesting. That's what makes it sound different to other stuff or doesn't make it a pastiche. Because if you [Percy] were just doing some beautiful, lyrical thing across the top...let's just put a pop record out!

[pause]

CM: So, yeah. It's totally appropriate! [laughs]

PP: It's funny, in the moment, particularly in that room where it was like when you guys were quiet I felt so loud.

CM: So the room is another thing I wanted to talk about. We both [CM and TF] said we played quite quietly and we talked about how that impacted on you [Percy] I guess.

TF: It's hard, it's a hard room. It's that thing, especially with an amplifier and stone, well concrete concrete concrete concrete, there's a really fine line of being like...once you pass that line it's unbearable. And it's not that loud, in a room like that. We've all done jazz gigs in those kind of rooms, with a drummer, and it's hard because it's so reflective and so loud. It was almost like we both [TF and CM] automatically responded to the room we were in without even talking about it [at the start].

CM: Yeah, there was no discussion.

TF: But then, for you [Percy], you don't have the luxury of the volume control.

PP: Yeah. I mean I can play quite quietly but being able to do all the the...

TF: It puts a massive technical strain on you.

PP: Yeah.

CM: But then, you [Percy] used the mute for the first half of the first gig. I think that was because of that, right?

PP: Yeah, but then that becomes restrictive as well because...it's not the solution, really.

CM: And as we've said, the previous bands [who played before us on the first night] played really loud. So there's obviously no expectation that you have to play quietly in that room. But we chose to play quiet...

TF: That first night, when I arrived, even standing outside and that act was on, even standing outside in the cafe area it was almost painful. Like, the audio level of what was coming out until the technician went and turned down the desk. All I kept thinking was "I'm so glad I'm not actually in the room" because that would be almost unbearable.

CM: And the previous bands had been louder, I think. Maybe that's why we played quietly! Because of that.

TF: It does have an effect. The weird thing is, say when we played in Manchester in that church, I wouldn't have had my amp much louder than I did in Artefact but there's the space so for you [Percy]...

PP: It was great, that was a luxury for me.

TF: Because all of a sudden there's this huge space to play in that soaks up a lot of your [Percy] volume.

PP: It's built for acoustic music.

TF: It's concrete boxes, they're always difficult to perform in.

PP: But then the philosopher in me goes "well it's just a barrier through which you create something else."

CM: It's just another restriction, right? we wouldn't have got, maybe, we wouldn't have got a church to play in for four days. Whereas in an arts space, they were very happy and very accommodating to allow us to do that, I think. To allow us to chat afterwards and everything. I felt bad that we were keeping them open an extra hour but they were like "no, no, just carry on". And so maybe it's like partly we have to sacrifice a perfect acoustic in order to have the experience of doing that thing [the residency].

PP: The environment is more important than just simply the sound.

CM: It's beyond the physical space, yeah. It's sort of part of the whole thing.

PP: Its holistic for sure.

CM: And I felt comfortable in that space [Artefact] and I would have felt less comfortable in other spaces. Like in a more formal concert space we would have had more expectations as to what we had to play. Deliberately making it free entry so that there's no commitment to you know, "I didn't get my ten pounds worth" or whatever. Well this is free, so you can't say that.

PP: And how did you feel at Symphony Hall?

CM: I liked it. But, I liked it because no one was expecting us to be there!

PP: Right!

CM: The audience had come to see Sara [Colman] and it was all very last minute. So there's no pressure to do anything.

TF: My ex-Production teacher from sixth form was there and he did all the acoustics for college, the new college and he loves sound. It's the first time I've seen him in years. He's

an amazing teacher, super-great all round person, really enthusiastic, he's an incredible chap. He was there, but he was just interested in the way we were creating sound together. And he was very much like...for him, it's rare to hear performances where you can focus on how people are consciously choosing to create sound as an ensemble, not just performing music. He said, more often than not he sees people just playing their music and not really caring about the sound of it. Which was great to hear, because I find it really difficult to play in that room usually. Especially with an amp, because it's not really designed for it. I find it incredibly difficult to play because the acoustics are very specific.

CM: You can hear yourself, really clearly.

TF: Isolated as well...From experience of other projects, for example when I did the Aldeburgh open space residency with Phil Dawson, for the first year of that we were put in one of the smaller performance spaces in Snape Maltings. Beautiful acoustics, but it was really hard to get anything, you know. Because we had to get there at a certain time, the building shuts at a certain time, there was no flexibility and it started presenting these huge issues with actually making anything happen. In the end we managed to...they own an old pump house in Aldeburgh that's like an old water pumping house. It's horrible, it's a wooden barn with a concrete floor and stone walls and it sounds awful, and they occasionally use it for the Aldeburgh festival for certain things and whatnot. And we were just like "can we have that? Can we have the keys to it?" And they said "yeah, if you want, there's no heating" so they had to bring in a big gas heater...but like you [Chris] said, the sound in that room was terrible, but we got so much more work done because it was so much more accommodating. Similar to this, say if we'd got St. Mary's church around the corner from here, which is a beautiful space with a lovely acoustic, that would have been great but limitations on when we could have...it wouldn't have been the same. It would have been like "you've got this time limit". And it felt like that at Snape Maltings, when we got put in the pump house, it was our space. And that's what it felt like at Artefact, while we were there although there was other stuff going on, it was our space. We could do whatever we wanted, we could put the seats where we wanted, we could kind of start when we wanted, there was no moment when someone came in and was like "sorry, can you not..." or "can you guys hurry up because..." There was none of that. We were only there for a couple of hours each night, but having that freedom, that stuff makes a big impact. Like you [Chris] said, it's worth the sound in the room being difficult for that luxury.

CM: Yeah. As you said the 'f' word, maybe the freedom in the thing extends to that, being able to perform how you want. You're right, there was no expectation. I asked them if we could do it there and they agreed. They didn't ask us, so there was no...

TF: And I'm sure that out of all these recordings here, you could put out an album. Not that you will but there's probably stuff there where you could actually release it. Whereas I know that if we'd booked a studio and did a day there probably...you know? It's just not the same. That album that's coming out is a gig, that's what you're putting out.

CM: Yeah, and if you listen to the stuff we did [previously] in the studio, it's very different. It's the same material but it sounds totally...we approach it in a totally different way. Because we're playing a gig and we're not going to stop for forty minutes or whatever, there's an

audience there so we play a different way. Whereas in the studio, we were just playing bits of pieces and then I kind of stitched them together. But that became part of it for me as well, I don't know if you guys ever listened to any of it or if you listened to it a lot, but doing that first thing, I had this a bit with *Gonimoblast* as well, making the recording is part of this curation of a project I guess. That defines who we are, whether we react against that then or go with that. But that gives us an identity, I suppose. This is part of the compositional thing, maybe. like, with *Gonimoblast*, we recorded a lot to get a sense of what the band was going to be like. And then it kind of plays in that certain way now. It has a thing that it does because of the recording process. This has got a little bit of that. I don't know if you guys have even listened to it but for me that's then set a precedent for what I want to achieve. Which maybe then reflects on how you guys approach it because it's my thing, as we've said.

PP: It's difficult hearing things. I remember listening to it when it first emerged and that's it for me. I can't...it's hard even listening to a little bit of yourself.

TF: I don't normally listen to stuff I've done, I'll maybe check it out once.

PP: Yeah, me too.

CM: Me neither, but I am now! I'm forcing myself to!

TF: I try not to...I know it's good to hear yourself, in a sense. I tell my students all the time to do it. If someone records a gig I've done and shares it I don't even open them, I don't care. It happened and far as I'm concerned. I really don't care to hear it. I feel I'm at a point now where, if anything, it will just go negatively. If I get over-obsessed with listening to what I've done it could just get, just for me personally, it can have a negative effect. I listened to the studio recording though. There was some stuff on it I really liked, there are some really nice moments in it. Some nice sounds as well. The thing I like with this band is that even with the aesthetic and even though we all always to some extent stay true to what we feel like it should be, every time we play there's something new. And, sometimes when I'm listening, I'm completely unaware of who is doing it or how. Even with you [Percy] playing an acoustic instrument, there are times when I actually can't differentiate between you, Chris or me. Which is a really amazing thing.

CM: Just listening back to that, then, not that bit particularly but nearer the beginning of the bit we listened to, it sounds like more than three people. I don't always get that sense when I'm playing, because I know what I'm doing. But, it sounds like there's more than three of us even though...or there's more than three things happening at one time.

PP: Well, there's three egos and then... if $2 + 1 =$ more than three there's a kind of exponential curve. [laughs]

CM: I guess! I just kind of had the sense that there's more than three things going on and so maybe that's what people [audience members] mean when they say "what's going on?" There's extra or...

PP: For sure, yeah.

CM: One last question. We were talking the other day about the whole bandleader thing. You [Percy] were saying about Evan [Parker] not starting and there being a sense of a start or whatever, and you said this phrase which I really like and I want to know what you mean by it. You were contrasting this band with a “purely improvised” setting”. What is a purely improvised setting? Cos I think I know what you mean. Is it an absence of sheet music or an absence of concept, if that’s even possible?

PP: I don’t think that’s possible. But what I meant by that was compared to...it was just because last weekend, or the weekend before, I was with Evan in Poland when that thing happened. There’s no series of numbers to play pieces by or...it’s more complex because there was ten of us and seven, maybe six of those people were using electronics. So it was a very different world to play in. That’s what I meant, there was no pre-determined material.

CM: I just wondered what “purely improvised” meant.

PP: For me, I struggle to define things because I don’t like the word ‘free’. And then it’s like “Oh, do you mean pan-genre?” Fuck off. It’s like you [Chris] said the other day. The name of these things changes and you just categorise things. That doesn’t work either “purely improvised”, I don’t know.

CM: It just struck me, contrasting this [stillefelt] with “pure improvisation”. And I know it’s a struggle...

PP: Yeah, define ‘pure’. Define ‘improvisation’!

CM: I’ve come across these things recently. Do you know Dan Tepfer?

PP: Yeah.

CM: Have you seen those videos he’s done recently where he’s made an algorithm in SuperCollider, which is a computer programme, and he has a visual thing as well. And he’s playing a ‘player’ piano, like a digital player piano, and he plays something and the algorithm responds in a certain way and plays notes back. So one of the things is he plays a note and it pitches it up an octave and plays it back and the visuals go with it as well. He’s presented it in a series of ten things and each of them have a different name, each algorithm does a certain thing and is called a different thing like, I can’t remember exactly but like, “Up and Down” or something! The name kind of relates to what the algorithm is doing. All the way through he talks about it being freely improvised. And not just once but in all the [YouTube] descriptions it’s “free improvisation”, when he’s asked a question about it in the comments he says it’s him “freely improvising” with this algorithm. And he knows what he’s talking about! He’s a...

PP: He’s an improviser!

- CM: He's a boss! So, he's not accidentally calling it free improvisation but to me it could be a composition that he's improvising over...with. So maybe the thing of "free" is just a contextual thing...
- TF: I feel it's just a label. You can justify it when you want to use it but it doesn't particularly mean anything out of context. You create your context at any moment. In the sense of if someone rings me up for a gig...
- CM: And asks you to do it for free?! [laughs]
- TF: Ha! No it's like as in "it's like a 'free thing'". Even though I don't like that term I know in that context what it means.
- PP: Everyone knows what it means.
- TF: Yeah. But, it shouldn't have a bearing on the music. One thing I really dislike is playing that have a massive expectation of...like you [Percy] said no pitches, no rhythm thing. For me, that's when it's like well it's not free then is it. This is just more choices.
- CM: So, what about, for example, Anthony Braxton's stuff that has defined areas or tonalities, or 'small sounds' or...That duo record with Derek Bailey where it's pieces in a certain 'Area'. That's free improv, right? Or is that Braxton's composition that they're extemporising...
- PP: There are specific directives like "A dog barks", you know. But beyond that it's interpretive.
- CM: But is that any more or less free than what we're doing? I'm not trying to come up with a definition but these are the things that are troubling me at the minute! [laughs]
- PP: I had this argument with Daniel Galbreath, he just finished his PhD, he runs a choir and we've done loads of stuff together. His thing is like, aleatory is...you know like indeterminate, fractal compositional bits and bobs, he argues that the choir is improvising those. And I think are they, really? It's so predetermined...it's non-specific in a way, it's got an indeterminacy to it but it wants them to do these specific things in this order. He would say that they're improvising but...
- CM: But, outside of the context of what they 'normally' do, that's improvising. So maybe freedom *is* contextual in music, at least.
- PP: So, if I play the Haydn trumpet concerto, which has predetermined pitches, but maybe in terms of terms of phraseology and changing note lengths and articulations and dynamics, I'm now improvising that piece?

- CM: Well, someone like Benson would make that argument, yeah. That improvisation is in your choices of how to present a composed work. So each individual choice is an act of improvisation.
- TF: That's a justification for how classical musicians improvise. Are those choices, articulation, phrasing...I mean if you compare the two Goldberg recordings by Glen Gould, he plays it massively differently. Really differently. But the pieces of music are exactly the same. But, is that improvising?
- PP: But, what happened to interpretation?
- TF: Then you're into what's the difference between interpretation and improvisation?
- CM: And in that context where's the work as well? Is it the physical piece of paper? Is that the authentic work of art, or is it the performance itself?
- TF: This is interesting because, last night there was fireworks, and the dogs hate them. It was Diwali last night. So, they were up there in the bedroom and I had a "Classical Chillout" playlist on because it's good for them and it actually calms them down! It seems to work. But Lucy got home and we were listening to stuff and it's funny...the cello suite in G major came on and I knew it was Yo-Yo Ma because of the sound...
- PP: The tempo.
- TF: Yeah, the sound he has is him. So then it's just like, well, where's the piece of art here? I see that cello suite as a piece of art in itself, but then it's not really about Bach when he's [Ma] playing it, it's him. My first thing when I heard it was "I'm pretty sure this is Yo-Yo Ma". It sounds like him, it's got his way of playing, his tempo his articulation. His sound's massive, his sound is such a big part of how he performs. So this is interpretation but then within that is there improvisation to a degree? Because he's making choices. And is improvisation then just choices.
- PP: But that's prepared in the practice room and then you come to the recording or the concert and you play the preparations. Then that's surely interpretation.
- TF: I think that's hard to know and that's the interesting thing. With somebody like Ma, as a soloist it would be interesting to know what he does and how he approaches it. I'd like to think he just rocks up and plays it how he feels! But he might not.
- CM: Even if he doesn't is he any less free? If he's choosing to do it the same way he always has, if freedom is just choices...then shouldn't be the case that we're equally free?
- PP: Certainly, that's not what interests me about improvisation. It's a more of an in the moment expression. Real indeterminacy dependent on context and whatever else is happening. I'm not showing up to this band with a predetermined set of stuff that I intend to do. Even though I might come up with the same ideas or similar, that's

definitely not the intention. Or maybe it's the intention behind what you're doing that's the important factor.

END